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A Case Study of Jamaican Children's Lived Play Experiences

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A Case Study of Jamaican Children's
Lived Play Experiences

by

Carol A Long

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Childhood Education and Literacy Studies
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children's voices

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my husband Wayne and my children, Meisha and Monique, for their patience, love, and support. Also to my parents Jack and Peggy Williams, my grandmother Geraldine, and great-grandmother Ada, who provided a solid foundation, which has been instrumental in shaping me and making me the strong individual I am today.

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ABSTRACT

Although research on children's play is abundant and considerable advances have been made in young children's play, the majority of these studies have been based in western developed countries and written from adults' perspectives rather than with children. Additionally, very little research has been done on children's play with active participants from smaller developing countries. The voices of society's youngest members have been lost or are only marginally represented.

The purpose of this qualitative research is to explore, understand, and describe young Jamaican children's lived play experiences as related through their eyes. The theoretical frameworks used to guide this study are sociocultural theory and narrative case study. Narrative case study focuses on a particular phenomenon and, through rich description, each participant's story relates the complexities of this phenomenon. Sociocultural theory is related to the social, cultural, and historical theory of a people and is constructed as they participate in culturally pertinent activities.

The examined literature, which draws on diverse theoretical frameworks, including Vygotsky and Rogoff's sociocultural theory and Bronfenbrenner's work on socioecological theory, discusses types of play, the relationship between play and children's development, indoor and outdoor play at school, and play as perceived by children. A key theme in this literature is children's beliefs and values observed through a cultural filter.

The three 5-year-old children, their teacher, and parents were purposefully selected for this single-bounded case study. The methods of data collection include video-cued interviews (VCI), a researcher's journal, and observation and field-notes. An understanding of the history of Jamaican education and its people is essential to the successful implementation of the play-based curriculum. The importance of knowing how children view their play and its manifestations and meanings is compelling to the Jamaican people and will help inform teachers, teacher education programs, parents, national and international funders, and other stakeholders as they try to fuse Jamaican culture with global elements of young children education.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

You are worried about seeing him spend his early years doing nothing. What! Is it nothing to be happy? Nothing to skip, play, and run around all day long? Never in his life will he be so busy again (Rousseau, 1762).

*Wey yuh don' know oldah dan yuh
(Jamaican Proverb)*

Growing up in a relatively small suburban community in Jamaica, I recall being given the opportunity to play, to explore, to be creative, to get dirty, to play rough with the boys, and to learn to cook with the best chefs in the community – the mothers. Life at home and at school was full of playful moments: chasing bubbles, jumping rope, flying kites, swinging from trees, running freely into the wind, lying on my back and making shapes with the clouds, or playing a game of football. These “playful” experiences gave me the freedom to try and try until I succeeded, or got tired of trying (which was not very often), and to assist others in their trials and errors.

Later, as a teacher educator, I noted the sense of importance placed upon children’s education in the Jamaican society. “There is the strong motivation, even in the poorest families, towards education and the determination of parents to provide children the best possible schooling within their financial resources” (Morrison & Milner, 1997, p. 51). The mindset of teachers and families I worked with in schools reflected a deep-rooted cultural belief that work and play are dichotomies (Roopnarine, 2011). School was a place for work, and children played

to “let off steam.” When this “extra” energy was exhausted through play, children returned to the more serious business of schoolwork, household chores, etc. There was little overlap. Play and learning were two distinct activities. Play, although a valued part of childhood in the Jamaican context, is not often seen as an educational tool. The concept of play as a part of school learning did not resonate well within the Jamaican adults’ framework of what constituted a good early childhood education.

Given this dichotomous view and the difficulty to pinpoint a single characterization, I became intrigued with the intricacy of play’s definition. Play’s complexity is grounded in its ability to morph based on the interpretation of an individual’s or a group’s interaction at any given place and time. For example, a simple household chore such as washing the dishes can easily be identified as play through the eyes of the child. In contrast, through the eyes of the adults the division between play and work are rarely blurred (Children’s Play Council, 2001; Elkind, 1998, 2007; Moyles 2001; Pellis & Pellis, 2007; 2004; Sutton-Smith, 1997; Tannock, 2008).

Understanding the relationship between play and learning has long been a focus of scholarship in the field of early childhood education (Clements & Fiorentino, 2004; Fromberg & Bergen, 2006). According to Sutton-Smith (2002), play is multi-dimensional and complex, displayed and expressed through a variety of forms and activities. Other researchers have asserted that play fosters children’s physical, social, language, and emotional skills development (Parten, 1932; Piaget, 1951; Vygotsky, 1976). Still others have noted the natural occurrence of this phenomenon in children across nations and cultures (Fraser, 2007; Pellegrini, 2002, 2005; Rogoff, 2003; Roopnarine, 1999; Slavin, 2008; Tobin et al., 2009; Wertsch, 1993).

Despite this, the role of play in early learning has been a controversial topic over the years and has been increasingly sidelined for more “academic” activities (Frost, 2010; Sutton-Smith, 2002). Zigler (2009) postulated that the emphasis of early education has changed significantly, concentrating mostly on cognitive development and treating the other areas of development, such as social and emotional domains, with less importance. He stated, “[t]he whole-child approach, which focuses on nurturing growth in these subsystems (social, emotional, physical and mental health) in addition to the intellectual sphere has been replaced by the cognitive child” (p. ix). As a result, many preschool administrators are pressured into providing a curriculum that will ensure children’s readiness for elementary school (Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff, Berk & Singer, 2009).

One of the most influential documents in the field of early childhood education is the U.S.-based National Association for the Education of Young Children’s Guidelines for Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP) (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). This document was developed as a response to the concern about a “drop down” curriculum where the kinds of activities that take place in later school years, such as didactic instruction, are utilized in early childhood school contexts. DAP advocated for play as a “medium for learning.” In this view, play was critical for children’s health, well-being, and learning (Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2009). Teachers and administrators were encouraged to include play in early school experiences (Frost, 2010; Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2009). Children understood their world, themselves, and others in more meaningful ways when they were actively engaged in exploration and discovery through play (Piaget, 1951; Sutton-Smith, 2002; Vygotsky, 1962), whether together or as soloists. They fed on each other’s energy to be creative, they assisted each other, directly or indirectly, and learning

took place. Many developing countries such as Jamaica looked to DAP to guide their thinking about what early education should “resemble” (Rogoff, 2003; Tobin et al., 2009).

During my experience as a graduate student in the United States I had the privilege of observing preschool teachers as they engaged in their field experiences and internships in schools. As I observed the children as they were immersed in outdoor play and as they transitioned from outdoor activities to classroom teacher-directed work, I noted similarities and differences with all the stakeholders – interns, teachers, and students. These experiences gave me the opportunity to be immersed in DAP discourses as they played out in some U.S. schools and raised new questions concerning the impact that cultural beliefs have on young children’s play repertoire. As I spent more time in the U.S. preschools, I saw Jamaican preschools with fresh eyes.

I revisited the Jamaican preschool system as an outsider, constantly remembering that my posture was shaped by previous interactions with my Jamaican cultural heritage. I reflected on my experience as a preschool student in a cramped classroom of 35 students with one teacher; the feeling of freedom when sent to play on the dusty playground and the development of movement sequences with my peers in this bounded space. My inner musings were shaped by the wider peripheral view of early childhood education as seen from the western developed choreographers – such as smaller classroom settings with 18 children to one teacher and an assistant and highly supervised outdoor playtime.

My motivation to understand and embrace young children’s play was invigorated first by accepting the existing differences between other cultures’ and Jamaican ideologies on young children’s play; and second, to understand and embrace Jamaican preschool children’s views of their play – to give space and time to their voice. As I sought deeper meaning and understanding

of the Jamaican children's play repertoire, I found there was a paucity of literature that addressed this issue. I was compelled to move forward with this study because greater understanding of play in the Jamaican context was needed.

Statement Of The Problem

In keeping with UNICEF's Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) policy (1990), initiated over 20 years ago, the Jamaican government has made significant strides in protecting the children of its nation. CRC's Articles 28, 29, and 31 (1990) address children's right to education, maintaining that education provides a platform for holistic development and for children to participate in play and recreational activities. Honoring children's rights and in keeping with previously mentioned articles, the Jamaican government pledged to meet the basic needs of the state's children, ensuring the primary goal of having the best interest of each child taken into consideration. Legislation such as the Child Care and Protection Act (2004), Early Childhood Commission Act (2003), and Early Childhood Act (2005), combined with institutions such as the Early Childhood Commission (ECC), and the Child Development Agency (CDA; established in 2003), were responsible for the overall development and protection of young children.

Primarily the Ministry of Education (MOE) administered children's education in Jamaica. Formal education was "provided mainly by the Government, solely or in partnership with churches and trust, as well as by private institutions" (Vision 2030, Jamaica, National Development Plan, 2009). In accordance with the Jamaica Education Act (1980), there were four levels of the educational system: namely, early childhood, primary, secondary, and tertiary. Formal early education began at age 3 and is offered through approximately 2,700 early

childhood institutions (ECIs), including infant and basic schools, infant departments of primary and all-age schools, as well as in nursery and kindergarten schools.

Basic schools were primarily community-operated institutions intended to serve children from low-income families, while churches and corporate entities, such as the National Commercial Bank and the Grace Kennedy Group of Companies, operated nurseries and kindergarten schools. Infant schools and infant departments were publicly operated entities; infant schools were independently operated institutions and infant departments were “attached to schools offering primary education” (UNESCO/IBE, 2010/2011). In its 2010/2011 report UNESCO/IBE published the following statistics:

According to the Annual Statistical Review of the Education Sector, in 2008/09 of the 135,539 children in the 3-5 age group in the population, an estimated 87.9% was enrolled in 129 government-owned and community-operated schools, with community operated schools accounting for 88.8%, infant schools and departments 10.3% and the primary level the remaining 0.9%. Total enrolment in infant schools and infant departments of primary, all-age, and primary and junior high school was 13,234 children assisted by 690 teachers.

One of the most recently established agencies playing a dominant role and taking leadership in early childhood development in Jamaica has been the Early Childhood Commission (ECC). Founded in 2003 as an arm of the Ministry of Education, its primary role was to be the gatekeeper for the holistic development and sustainability of early childhood programs across the island. Important functions of the ECC were to: (a) supervise and regulate all Early Childhood Institutions (preschools, basic schools, day care centers, and infant schools); (b) ensure that these institutions are managed efficiently and effectively; and (c) ensure that they meet the health and

developmental needs of children, which were embraced in the ECC National Strategic Plan (NSP) for Early Childhood Development 5-year plan, initiated in 2008. ECC NSP's main goal was to, "meet the needs of the Jamaican children and their parents through its collaboration with both the private and public sectors" (p. VI).

Now in its fourth year, as of 2012, the ECC's NSP has seen some of its vision realized in areas such as (a) initiation of the parenting education and support services, (b) some health centers across the island offering better quality services, ensuring healthy children and households; (c) more on-going services being offered to early childhood (EC) practitioners such as workshops to assist them keeping abreast with current and relevant information; and (d) more tertiary (higher education) institutions offer early childhood programs relevant to the Jamaican society (Vision 2030, Jamaica, National Development Plan, 2009).

One of the aims of upgrading teachers at the basic school level was to ensure quality EC practitioners being employed at this level. Another aim was to encourage and enable stability and sustainability among basic school teachers (Vision 2030, Jamaica, National Development Plan, 2009). With the implementation of the certification program for EC practitioners employed in preschools, some challenges have been reported (Vision 2030). For example, to gain meaningful remuneration after becoming qualified, most basic school teachers found employment elsewhere instead of returning to their schools. This lack of upward mobility was based on a principle initiated by the MOE, which stipulated for each one hundred students enrolled at any particular basic school, the MOE would fully compensate one certified teacher. This resulted in qualified EC practitioners moving away from the basic school system, finding employment in either private schools or government-funded elementary schools. Uncertified staff members were subsequently used to replace them (Evans, 2007). Although the board of the ECC had knowledge

of the Catch-22 situation, nothing has been implemented to date to rectify the circumstance (informal interview with Dr. Davies – Member of the ECC Board, 2009).

The Jamaica Early Childhood Curriculum Conceptual Framework (2008) operated in conjunction with the EEC's NSP. Its role was to outline the “purpose, rationale and guiding philosophical principles of the [EC] curriculum and also the developmental goals and learning outcomes desired for Jamaican children” (p. VI). One of the guiding principles of the curriculum was “Learning Through Play” (p. 7) and its importance in integrating this principle in the teacher-learning experiences for both the children and their facilitators. Conversely, there were ongoing debates in regards to the progress of the adaptation of this principle in schools as many preschool teachers had not fully adapted nor infused play into their daily teaching and learning activities. Teachers were concerned about the academic requirements needed for the 5- and 6-year-olds as they transitioned from the preschool classroom to grade one at the elementary level (Vision 2030 Jamaica, National Development Plan, 2009).

Children moving from basic, infant, or kindergarten grades to grade one were given the Grade One Readiness Inventory (GORI) test, which theoretically assisted the teachers with knowledge of their new students' competencies. In a report issued by UNICEF in 2009, concerns were expressed regarding Jamaican children's performances on national and regional examinations. Test results indicated that “[i]n the Grade One Readiness Inventory, only about 42% of the children mastered all four domains [motor coordination, visual discrimination, visual and auditory memory and figure ground]...” (p. 7). The Grade One Individual Learning Profile (GOILP), administered for the first time in 2008, replaced the GORI. The GOILP measured the proficiency level of students in six subtests, namely general knowledge, number concepts, oral

language, reading, writing and drawing, work habits and classroom behavior. Reports issued by the MOE in 2007/08 showed that

of the six tests administered under the new assessment, 18.5% (22.8% of boys and 13.9% of girls) of the pupils showed no mastery of any area. The highest rate of mastery for the writing and drawing test was 29% of girls and 18.3% of boys”
(Government of Jamaica, 2009).

Currently, results of young children’s performances on the GOILP were unavailable and, therefore, it cannot be determined if the children’s proficiency levels have improved.

Areas of concern for advocates and other major stakeholders, such as the ECC, that have not been addressed include class size and additional and/or improved infrastructure. In the past eight years since its inception, the ECC’s mandate of class size reduction from an average of 30 students to 18 or 20 with a qualified teacher has not materialized. As of 2012, most basic schools operated with one teacher per classroom and accommodated an average of 30 children. The teachers, until approximately six years ago when the certification program was introduced, were paraprofessionals expected to educate 3- to 5-year-olds based on workshops attended once a month. Training officers from the ECC conducted the workshop sessions.

Early Childhood Institutions (ECIs) were aligned to an eclectic curriculum that provided “developmentally appropriate care stimulation, with emphasis on the affective, psychomotor and cognitive domains” (UNESCO/IBE, 2004). A thematically integrated curriculum was utilized as the teaching/learning tool in a quest to prepare young children holistically. However, there have been challenges affecting the achievements of the program. In its account on education, Vision 2030 reported that circumstances that impacted the EC program included under-resourced institutions, as demonstrated by a “lack [of] equipment, trained personnel, and appropriate

physical and social environments” (p. 60). Vision 2030 also reported primary caregivers’ inability to adequately provide for their wards as another challenge. One of the results of these challenges was that children were ill prepared for upward mobility. The result was “under-perform[ance] at higher levels of the school system” (Vision 2030, p. 60).

Many changes in the curriculum, such as the Early Childhood Commission’s play-based curriculum, have been met with resistance by the EC practitioners and parents (informal interviews conducted with EC teachers and parents). The cultural stigma attached to play has impeded the goals and objectives of the transformation. The resistance to these modifications influenced the methodologies practitioners use to educate their students. This view was conveyed to me through many informal talks with teachers, parents, and members of the ECC training department. The implementation of the play-based curriculum being pushed by the ECC was ineffective due to the practitioners’ and parents’ lack of understanding of the curriculum, as well as the practitioners’ and administrators’ of the basic schools conformity and/or commitment to the program (ECC Training Officers, 2010). Many EC practitioners are still not on board with the idea of using play as a teaching/learning tool. Practitioners’ understanding of play was the result of a culture that defined play in the context of the history of colonization and further reinforced by “adults’ ideas about what constituted childhood social and cognitive competence” (Roopnarine, 2011, p. 21).

As noted by many Caribbean historians, Jamaicans’ educational ideology was influenced by their history of colonization (Chevannes, 2006). Education was utilized as a means of upward mobility and play was not factored as part of this repertoire. Most Jamaican adults observed play as an activity to be utilized at the end of the workday or as a means of getting “rid of extra energy.” Only very young children (infants and, on occasion, toddlers) were given the luxury of

playing without being reprimanded for being “idle.” The school environment – more precisely, the classroom – was considered the workplace of the child, and therefore, play was either done at lunchtime or at the end of the day.

This philosophy has not changed over the centuries. Many older EC teachers still hold the old adage, “if it is not broken, why fix it?” as their motto and, hence, have side-stepped the use of play in the classroom and ignored the notion that “[p]lay is not a frivolous and aimless flutter of activity...” (Joos-Esteban, 2009, p. 5). The younger generation of EC teachers not yet experienced or confident in their teaching methodology was pressured into following the old ways. This further removed or limited the use of the play-based curriculum.

In its initial stages of development (1973), the Jamaican early childhood program curriculum guide was fashioned mostly by research done by outsiders (non-Jamaicans); very little information regarding Jamaican children’s play and its impact on their learning was utilized. The guide was heavily prescriptive as it was developed to give the para-professionals a “step-by-step approach for presenting content from traditional subject areas” (Maye-Hemmings & Wint, 2010, p. IV). Administrators of preschools and kindergarten were given curriculum guidelines adapted from many strategies of the western industrialized countries without looking within for answers to help in educating the young children.

Currently, EC organizations such as ECC use international research on play coupled with local research in child psychology and health (Samms-Vaughan, 2005) and the Caribbean family life (Roopnarine, 2009; Samms-Vaughan, Williams, & Brown, 2003) as a springboard to inform the new curriculum guidelines initiated in 2010 by the MOE. Although there has been some influence of Jamaican culture imbedded in the present curriculum, the guidelines set out by ECC used literature from developed western societies as the benchmarks.

After a thorough search, I realized that there was a paucity of literature on Jamaican children's play. This deficiency spurred me to embark on a quest to understand Jamaican children's play behavior in school context. Most of the information I gained regarding young children's play has been from personal experience through informal interviews with teachers, parents, children, and observation of my own children. As an educator, I am interested in understanding young children's play behavior as seen in the school context through the eyes of young children. As a graduate student I have gained experience in understanding the need to document these experiences through interviews and systematic observations.

Purpose And Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to describe and explain the lived experience of play from the viewpoint of selected Jamaican children. In addition, I would like to use the information gained to contribute to the developing literature on Jamaica's play-based curriculum. The overarching question was, "What challenges exist in understanding the role of play in the cultural context of Jamaican schooling?" The following exploratory sub-questions, supporting the overarching question, were used to guide the study:

1. What is the nature of children's play?
2. What perceptions and understanding are derived from young children's play from the child's viewpoint?
3. What factors contribute to these perceptions and understandings?

Rationale For The Study

Bishop's 2009 book *When Play Was Play: Why Pick-Up Games Matter* revealed similarities between children's play in the U.S. during the 1950's and 1960's and the majority of the Jamaican children's play today. I experienced pick-up games such as street baseball, tag, and street soccer, and so did my children. In Jamaica, there was only limited empirical evidence (Clarke, 2009; Samms-Vaughn, 2004) that this play pattern occurred during an earlier era and there was no research describing the changes that have occurred more recently to the play patterns of young Jamaican preschool children.

There are many articles, research studies, and books written on children's play and its importance to the holistic development of children, but these findings were based mainly on research done in developed western countries such as the United States, Canada, England, and Sweden (e.g., Bloch & Pellegrini, 1989; Rogoff, 2003; Tobin et al., 2009). Very little has been written about Caribbean children and even less, if anything, on the Jamaican preschool child specifically (Roopnarine, 2011).

To understand the importance of play in the curriculum, the education of stakeholders is important. In Jamaica, the primary caregivers are essential to the basic schools' existence, and assisting caregivers in understanding the importance of play in the curriculum was one way of ensuring that educators and administrators comfortably included it in their curricula. Doing this study added to the literature of early childhood research, both nationally and internationally, and enlightened the Jamaican community to understand play through the lenses of Jamaican children, teachers, parents, and caregivers.

An understanding of the history of Jamaican education and its people was essential to the successful implementation of the play-based curriculum. The importance of knowing how

children viewed their play, its manifestations, meanings, and significance to the Jamaican people will help to inform teachers, teacher education programs, parents, and other stakeholders, such as national and international funders. The ‘dancers’ in this repertoire who, through their intentional involvement, helped to choreograph the movement were: (a) the children, (b) the teachers, (c) the primary caregivers, and (d) the researcher (one of their own). The audience targeted included but was not limited to: (a) MOE, (b) ECC, (c) teachers’ colleges, (d) other teachers and practitioners, (e) administrators, (f) primary caregivers, and (g) other national researchers. To be successful in informing stakeholders of this research, a connection to the Jamaican context must be made and realistic documentation of preschool children and their environment (home and school) must be accurately delivered. Past circumstances will effect decisions that various dancers make in the future.

My experience as a physical education teacher and an early childhood teacher educator specializing in movement education had me uniquely positioned in that I was constantly involved with varying elements of play. Given my educational background, my view of the world was embodied in and connected to culture, personal histories, individual development, and social structures. I expected my preservice students to be proponents of play, to embrace it with more positive attitudes, and to be instigators of the play paradigm in their own worlds. The goal of seeing this actualized was what brought me to this juncture.

I believed that in Jamaica there have been shortcomings in the utilization of play at the early childhood level. I hoped that through this study I will begin to add to the growing discourse of and literature on Jamaican children’s play. My need to understand the essence of Jamaican children’s play through children’s voices was the passion that propelled me to do this study.

Definitions

Young Children – In this study, “young children” and “young preschool children” refer to children between the ages of three and five years, with the primary focus being on children during their last year at this level.

Basic School – In this study, the term “Basic School” is used to describe the school in which young Jamaican children typically attend between the ages of 2½ and 5. Its fundamental structure was based on the United States Head Start program. A community-based entity, the Government of Jamaica, through the Ministry of Education (MOE), subsidized the daily operation and teachers’ salaries.

Primary Caregivers – In this study, the term “primary caregivers” refers to the person(s) who had legal custody of the children. In Jamaica, this could be one of the following: the biological parent(s), sibling(s), relative(s), and/or close family friends. The primary caregivers for the children in this study were their biological parents.

Organization Of The Study

The remaining chapters are organized in the following way: Chapter Two is a review of relevant literature. The examined literature discusses the nature of play including types of play, play and children’s development, play at school (indoor and outdoor), and play as perceived by children, and their beliefs and values as seen through a cultural experience. Chapter Three delves into the research design, the participants, the methods of data collection, which include video-cued interviews (VCI), researcher’s reflective journal, observations, and field notes, and the data analysis procedures. The challenges encountered, the ethics, and informed consent utilized are also addressed in this chapter. Chapter Four presents the data via the use of narrative description

of each child's play experiences. Chapter Five provides my analysis, interpretations, limitations, personal lessons learned, and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

“Play is not a luxury but rather a crucial dynamic of healthy, physical, intellectual and social emotional development at all ages” (Elkind, 2007, p. 4).

“...play is often defined in terms of what it is not”(Pellegrini, 2009, p. 8).

This study was designed to describe and explain the lived experience of play of selected Jamaican children from the viewpoint of the child. In addition, it was hoped the information gained would contribute to the developing literature on Jamaica’s play-based curriculum. The overarching question was, “What challenges exist in understanding the role of play in the cultural context of Jamaican schooling?” The following exploratory sub-questions, supporting the overarching questions, were used to guide the study:

1. What is the nature of young children’s play?
2. What perceptions and understanding are derived from young children’s play from the child’s viewpoint?
3. What factors contribute to these perceptions and understandings?

In this chapter, I explore the larger body of literature related to play and early learning, focusing particularly on understanding the nature of play, ideas about the role of play in early learning, and what has been learned about children’s, teachers’ and families’ perspectives on play and learning through a sociocultural lens. My approach for disseminating information utilized a funnel-like style, which began with broad observation posed in a sociocultural framework. It

then filtered to a narrow and more distinctive description as it related to the Jamaican play context.

Definition And Theory Of Play

Scholars generally agree that play is a natural human occurrence in children of all ages and can occur in almost any setting (Vygotsky, 1933; Piaget, 1951, Bruner, 1972; Sutton-Smith 2004; Pellegrini & Smith, 2005; Göncü , 2005, Gaskins, 2006). The term “play” was established centuries ago and, as culture changed, so has the meaning of the word (Göncü, 2005, Gaskins, 2006). The word “play” has different meanings according to both the Oxford and Webster Dictionaries, which has made it multidimensional and applicable in many different contexts. Widely used textbooks in early childhood education frequently define play listing essential characteristics that include: positive affect, intrinsic motivation and free choice. As noted by Johnson, Christie and Wardle (2005), there are numerous definitions of play that range from the natural enjoyment of the function to the relationship between the interplay of play and nonplay. The relationship between play and work was a central theme in this scholarship.

For decades, I struggled to assign a concise definition to this term. According to Mark Twain, any activity can be play, depending on the approach one took or the specific conditions. For example, washing the dishes may be play if one tried to identify different shapes of bubbles made as they are formed or counted the cracks on the ground as he/she swept the patio (Sutton-Smith, 2000). However, these activities could be chores if they are viewed differently, such as if one was not in the mood to do the activities. According to Elkind (2007), pleasure was not derived from the activities and a lack of pleasure negated the ‘playful’ nature of the activity. Johnson, Christie, and Wardle (2005), noted, “...the essence of play is difficult to define but not

so difficult to recognize...[it] is much more than just fun. Play is needed for a healthy and balanced life” (p. 15). Isenberg and Quisenberry (1988) defined play as “ a dynamic, active and constructive behavior...a necessary and integral part of childhood, infancy through to adolescence” (p. 140).

Vygotsky’s (1976) sociocultural theory stated that play evolved from the manipulative play of toddlers to the socially-oriented play of older preschoolers and kindergarteners and finally to games. Sutton-Smith’s (2001) definition of play was, in some experts’ eyes, the most influential theoretical framework in the second half of the twentieth century. “His theories of play have evolved over the past thirty years and this evolution in many ways provides a bridge between modern and postmodern theories of play” (Johnson et al., 2005, p. 25). Sutton-Smith theorized that play impacts cognitive development, creativity, and problem solving (1967). More recently (2001), he stated that play can be seen as an ‘adaptive variability.’ Therefore, as the environment changed, play changed, adapted to meet the demands of the ever-evolving world, and could be ambiguous. It took on meaning, values, and theories according to the context in which it existed. While there were many varied meanings, one view constantly emerged: the importance of play to human nature, irrespective of race, creed, and culture (Elkind, 2005; Ellis, 1973; Johnson et al., 2005; Huizinga, 1950; Pellegrini, 2004; Rogoff, 2003; Roopnarine, 2011; Sutton-Smith, 2001; Tobin et al., 2009), and is a needed entity.

Play being recognized as an important element in children’s development and learning has resulted in redesigned early childhood curricula. The Head Start program, established in the United States over 45 years ago, is one such program. It was designed to include play as one of the major tenets of the curricula. The program’s emphasised the whole child, focusing on “physical health, nutrition, social and emotional development, education, services for children’s

family, and community and parental involvement” (Singer, Golinkoff, & Hirsh-Pasek, 2006, p. 25). Numerous Head Start performance standards focused on play, where the, “primary strategies for promoting children’s cognitive and language skills... [and] physical development...which [include] supporting play as a way for children to organize their experiences and understand concepts” (Singer et al., p. 25 - 26) were identified.

The effectiveness of the Head Start program as a holistic approach for young children’s development has received mixed reviews. In a 2010 report compiled by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), which involved 383 randomly selected Head Start centers spread over 23 states and engaged 4,667 three- and four- or older year-old children, indicated the services provided by the Head Start program have had positive effects and have met the needs of the whole child. Whether play was used as single variable or was combined with other factors to measure this positive effect was not explicitly conveyed by the study.

It was interesting to note the report’s findings of environmental effects on the students. For example, Head Start graduates entering grade one and placed in school settings such as disadvantaged school populations responded poorly by their second year of school in relation to their peers who were placed in more appropriate climates (DHHS, 2010). Interactions between the child and his or her environment shaped the expectation of the child and other members of the immediate and wider community. He or she learned what was appropriate based on available information and adjusted behavior accordingly, and on occasion, the environment in turn adjusted to comply. The following section addresses the relationship between children’s development, play, the environment, and culture.

Defining Play: A Cultural Perspective

According to Roopnarine and Johnson (1994), “children’s play...is an outcome of being a participant within a particular culture or subcultural milieu” (p. 4). Therefore, to fully understand the nature of play in children’s learning, culture must be an important component of the dance. The cultural context must be understood in order to make informed decisions regarding the importance of the play behavior in young children’s holistic development.

The value of play is viewed differently among cultures and reflects the norms of a society. Culture is a very integral part of each society; it is the foundation upon which people build their existence (L’Abate, 2009). It is a learned pattern of behavior that connects past generations to the present through language, music, food, arts, religion, literature and other elements of learning. It consciously and subconsciously, overtly and covertly fashions our beliefs, views, ideologies, and perceptions, resulting in the formation of habits. However, with and through the influences of other cultures and societies, changes to cultural habits frequently occur (Frost, 2010; Rogoff, 2003). Cole, Hakkarainen and Bredikyte (2010) defined culture as, “historically accumulated knowledge, tools and attitudes that pervade the child’s proximal ecology, including the cultural ‘practices’ of the nuclear family members and other kin” (Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development [online]). This definition indicated that culture is a flexible variable, where participants demonstrated changeability not only at the societal and community levels, but also at the individual and family levels.

Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological system demonstrated how the child’s environment was directly or indirectly associated within and across systems at multiple scales and how these systems intimately reacted with each other. His development of ecological theory in the late 1970’s and early 1980’s was used as a model to understand the complexity of interactions

between the different levels of the environment and their effects on human development. His theory separated and labeled each of the ecological systems (microsystem, exosystem, mesosystem, macrosystem), showing interconnected layers of influence.

The microsystem was the fundamental context in which human development took place and included family, peers, and school influences. An exosystem encompassed more distant social environments, such as the primary caregivers' workplace. Here the child was not actively involved in this environment while other members of the system to which the child belongs were. The mesosystem showed the relationship and interaction between and among the different settings of the microsystems. According to Bronfenbrenner, a mesosystem was formed by the interrelations among microsystems (Tudge, 2008). The macrosystem was the holder and the shaper of the social institutions of culture and subcultures. This was where the gene pool for all the organizations originated.

As Bronfenbrenner improved his theoretical model, he included the application of the "PPCT model of development... [which] requires one to consider the interrelationships among four key concepts: Process, the Person, Context, and Time" (Trudge, 2008, p. 67). "Proximal Process," as suggested by the word "proximal," is the relationship experienced during this process. It originated from the immediate environment and required a fairly regular source of reciprocal interaction for prolonged phases, such as playing with a child on a daily basis. The character of a person was important to the role one played in the social situation in which she or he was involved; whether passive or active, there was a reaction from being in that space and time. Context refers to the environment, which was represented by the four interrelated systems. An example of each: (a) microsystem (the home, the neighbor); (b) mesosystem (relationship between two or more microsystems); (c) exosystem (the parents' work place); and (d) the

macrosystem (the wider environment, such as a particular cultural group sharing values, beliefs, and ideologies). Time, the final element to this dance, was very important as it encompassed one's development through phase and space – including aging or historical events. Time, whether fast or slow, was an important instrument in cultural change.

Bronfenbrenner's ecology theory examined the impact the total system had on the reciprocal development of an entity – in this case, the child – and the impact the entity had on the other systems. While each system served a pivotal role in the child's development, all systems interacted with each other and shared the overall outcomes. One could not describe one system without evaluating the features of the other systems. The child's overall behavior was manipulated by each of these systems and so too were the systems influenced by the child's behavior; they coexisted, each dependent on the other.

Rogoff's (2003) work on culture and human development constructed sociocultural theory from both Bronfenbrenner's ecological system and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. She infused more cultural interplay in her theoretical framework than Bronfenbrenner. She saw all of his systems as having an impact on each other and being instrumental to either the relatedness to or effectiveness of the proximal process. She noted that for human development to be understood, the cultural process must be understood; for an individual, groups, or large societies to be comprehended one could not simply observe and record biological and psychological processes, but additionally the cultural aspect must be examined, as well as the sociocultural perception used to evaluate the context.

Rogoff's theory suffused Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which stated that children's higher-order function was a result of interactions between individuals at varying levels of their development. Rogoff's sociocultural theory was defined as the "individual development [which]

constitutes ... cultural-historical activities and practices” (Rogoff, 2003, p.51). To further understand this theory, Rogoff elaborated that “...culture is not an entity that influences individuals. Instead, people contribute to the creation of cultural processes and cultural processes contribute to the creation of people” (p. 51).

We are encouraged by Rogoff to observe cultures outside the developed Western countries to fully appreciate the true essence of culture and the effect it has on the environment and its people. Her work highlighted the differences in numerous communities and in diverse environments and the way that the systems Bronfenbrenner described shaped children’s play behavior through intricate and complex maneuvering. However, she believed that we share similarities and differences with each other, which were attributed to both culture and biology working in tandem.

Rogoff saw children’s play patterns through a cultural and biological context. She proposed the idea that children’s play was based on guided participation that utilized two processes: “mutually bridging meaning” and “mutually structuring children’s opportunity to learn.” Children’s play behavior emulated adult activities and other social roles observed depending on range of access given or denied, to the children by the adults. Play was a composition of ideas, thoughts, and feelings acted out during children’s opportunities to interact with time and space (mutually bridging meaning) but channeled by the adults’ role as deliverer of wisdom, facilitated by cultural artifacts. Therefore, according to Rogoff (2003):

Children’s play builds on what they observe, but what they have the opportunity to observe differs greatly depending on whether they are included in the full range of their community’s activities or are segregated from many settings that are restricted to adults. (p. 299)

This accounted for the fact that play behavior was constructed and labeled differently in different groups.

The classification of play is a representation of the cultural environment it evolved from. In the following section, I highlight some terminologies and descriptions used to portray play. Also, three specific play types – pretend, social, and physical play commonly used by Jamaican children – are emphasized. The descriptions and views were based on the ideologies of western theorists.

Types Of Play

For centuries play has been studied and categorized, resulting in numerous types of play names. To understand its complex dimensions, play has been categorized, "...because there are multiple kinds of play and multiple kinds of players" (Sutton-Smith, 2001, p.3). Although these play behaviors have been itemized, there were numerous overlapping qualities between the categories, hence, "additional modifiers" (Johnson et al., 2006, p. 14) were needed to capture the true essence of this phenomenon. For example, children engaged in outdoor play activities may be participating in either rough-and-tumble play (R&T) or baseball. Both had similar characteristics such as running, chasing, and tagging, but one was a spontaneous activity where children created rules during the course of play while they had already learned and adhered to the rules for baseball.

Play was seen and valued in accordance to the player, which made it one of the most ambiguous manifestations. Each player brought his/her own agenda to the playground. Play may be used by social scientists such as the educator and the sociologist "as a window...to study... children's language, their social relationships, the development of gender, and their ability to

solve various kinds of cognitive problems” (Engel, 2005, p. 95). Anthropologists pursued play as a means to understand the connection between rituals and play (Huizinga, 1950; Rogoff, 2003; Roopnarine, 2011; Sutton-Smith, 2001). Psychologists and biologists observed players as they utilize this phenomenon for relaxation, fun, enjoyment, and entertainment (Burghardt, 2011; Johnson et al., 2005; Sutton-Smith, 2001).

Johnson et al. (2005) gave some examples of play to sensitize us to the plethora of names, descriptions, and/or meanings associated with the word:

- Play as progress: emphasis – children learn something useful;
- Play as fate: games of chance;
- Play as power: usually applied to sports;
- Play as identity: usually refers to festivals and celebrations – group identity;
- Play as imaginary: refers to improvisations, creativity, and imagination;
- Play as self: the role in shaping the personality; and
- Play as frivolity: activities of clowns and comedians.

Other elements and descriptors of play exist and are used to classify young children’s developmental stages, whether cognitive, emotional, social or physical.

Because of the myriad of definitions on play, it would be unmanageable and unrealistic to focus on and impractical to try to infuse all these areas into the study. With this in mind, the focus of the study was limited to three types: pretend play, social play, and physical play. These were significant categories because they were more relevant to the type of play exhibited in the Jamaican EC play culture, (Roopnarine, 2011; Roopnarine, Johnson, & Hooper, 1994) and, in addition, some of the definitions and functions overlapped with other play categories (Coplan, Rubin, & Findlay, 2006). The descriptions of these play behaviors were based on theories of

researchers from large, developed, western countries (e.g., Vygotsky, Pellegrini, Sutton-Smith, L'Abate, Fromberg and Bergen, and Singer and Singer). I utilized the sociocultural framework of theorists such as Bronfenbrenner, Vygotsky, and Rogoff as lenses as I explored Jamaican children's play behaviors.

Pretend Play

Play at the early childhood level was important and beneficial to young children's holistic development (Frost, Wortham, & Reifel, 2008; Marion, 2010; Vygotsky, 1975). As active learners, children constructed their own understanding and knowledge of the world through play. Pretend play, sometimes referred to as make-believe, role-play, socio-dramatic play, symbolic play, or fantasy play was very natural for most preschool age children (L'Abate, 2009; Pellegrini, 2004; Rogers & Evans, 2008; Sutton-Smith, 2005; Vygotsky, 1932) and was an avenue through which they understood and embraced their world. Pretend play involved and was similar to other types of play and included:

(1) practice, (2) improvised drama, (3) traditional drama, (4) games with rules, (5) imitation, (6) symbolization, (7) pretense in the sense of "false appearance," (8) storytelling, (9) imagination, (10) delusions in disturbed individuals, and (11) holiday rituals and celebrations (L'Abate, 2009; Pellegrini, 2004; Sutton-Smith, 2005; Vygotsky, 1932). Many of these components were observable features of young children's pretend play and were linked to social interaction, articulation, and determination (or lack thereof) throughout the developmental stages.

From a sociocultural perspective, children's pretend play developed through the facilitation and influences of their social environment. These environmental factors included

culture, ideologies, and the historical contexts in which children were situated (Rogers & Evans, 2008). Bronfenbrenner's (1979) socioecological theory highlighted the impact that a multilayered and complex environment had on children's pretend play. The configuration of the behavior was contingent on the settings of the environment. What was conceived as acceptable or inappropriate behavior by children as they interacted on a small playground dictated the manner children interrelated with their peers and their environments.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasized learning as a social process and played an integral role in cognition. Children's cognitive development depended on their response to their own culture, artifacts, and society. For example, how children perceived themselves and interacted with others were learned behaviors embedded in culture and society. Rogoff (2003), whose works drew on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, and Roopnarine (2011) noted the importance of accepting the contrasting differences of children's realities that influenced their pretend play activities. In their studies of non-western cultures such as Jamaica, Guatemala, Brazil, and Japan, Rogoff and Roopnarine indicated the diversity in how, when, and where pretend play occurred.

During pretend play, children impersonated the adults from their immediate surroundings and in their communities such as their mother, sister, teacher, or the 'Don Man'; personalities viewed in the media that were important to them such as Spiderman and Dora the Explorer; turned mundane objects into magical ones, e.g., sticks became swords or a box turned into a car. In remote communities, their pretend play mimicked the actions of the farmer or the healer.

Young children used this method of play to intricately fuse their world and that of the adults to understand and embody their cultural environment. As noted by Kavanaugh (2011), "[i]n its earliest manifestations, pretend play incorporates objects but adds a critical 'as if'

element...” (p. 296). The contexts in which young children participated in pretend play afforded them time and space to “exercise and develop their social competence” (Rogers & Evans, 2008, p. 35). They created their pretend world based on their immediate and broader environmental structures and influences.

For example, children in rural societies of Caribbean States embraced play within the context of work. Their role playing and pretend play patterns were influenced by difficult economic conditions, as they were required to assist with daily chores, such as reaping crops for sale in the market place or collecting water for daily use. During these workdays, young children often mimicked adults’ activities as they worked along with the adults (Roopnarine, 2009).

Through these activities, young children learned about their cultural world while also being productive. The stark line that separates work and play as seen in many developed western countries, and to some extent in developing countries, was not easily identifiable. Play was utilized as a “lesson” for further developmental skills as the children got older and took on more complex activities in their communities. Supporting children’s pretend play was intricately linked to the immediate and wider environment.

From the literature reviewed on young children’s pretend play, I have garnered the following points:

- Pretend play supported a multitude of important skills such as representational thinking (Rogers & Evans, 2008);
- It was influenced by the environment (Rogoff, 2003; Roopnarine, 2011);
- It encouraged language development (Trawick-Smith, 2010);
- It facilitated children’s need to utilize complex cues from their diverse environments and make it their own (Bodrova & Leong, 2007);

- It afforded children the latitude to combat fears and unconscious emotions (Nourot, 2006); and
- It built self-confidence and assisted with self-regulation (Coplan, Rubin, & Findlay, 2006).

Pretend play, a complex and enriching activity, afforded children the capacity to construct meaning and create stories representing others' truths as well as their own. Additionally, children gained autonomy, time to socialize with their peers and other members of the community, and enjoyment of the learning process (Nourot, 2006).

Social Play

Another category of play was social play, which was characterized by either playing by ones' self or playing with others. It was also representative of the culture in which children lived. According to western theorists such as Parten, Rubin, and Smilansky (Frost, Wortham, & Reifel, 2008), social play described "how children gradually become more able to relate effectively with others as they play" (Henniger, 2009, p. 131), and occurred among dyads and larger groups. The behaviors associated with preschool children's social play were: (a) solitary play; (b) parallel play; (c) associative play; and (d) cooperative play. These play behaviors were seen in many categories of play, such as pretend play, which "appear[ed] to be the preferred form of social engagement" (Rogers & Evans, 2008, p. 71), as well as physical play (discussed later).

During solitary play, children played alone, at a distance from other children, or in 'parallel play' beside a peer. During these play sessions, children usually interacted with toys, either commercially manufactured or imagined. These toys could have been different from those of other children in close proximity. While few attempts were made in interacting with others,

there were on occasions some private conversations. Katz and Buchholz (1999) identified four types of solitary players: (a) shy; (b) non-shy soloists; (c) isolated; and (d) depressed. Katz and Buchholz (1999) and other researchers have argued that of these four groups, the latter two could be problematic during preschool years. There was, however, a consensus calling for more research in this area and for the inclusion of other cultures outside of western industrialized countries.

In parallel play, a continuation of independent play behavior occurred. As noted earlier, parallel play happened when children were in close proximity to their peers. Both associative play and cooperative play showed children developing bonds, forming friendships. In the former, small playgroups were established and bonding was “more important than the activity itself” (Henniger, 2010, p.133). The latter, Trawick-Smith (2010) noted, was the more complicated and complex form; it highlighted children’s abilities to plan, negotiate, and follow through. Playgroups were still prominent elements of this play; however, children now took on specific roles within the group in pursuit of a shared goal (Henniger, 2010; Trawick-Smith, 2010). Incorporating their peers in their play was one way they learned to interact with others and learned about themselves and their culture.

Looking at social play through the sociocultural lens revealed that children’s play was not an individual construction of their play but was “contextually specific, guided by others, and mediated by particular cultural tools and artifacts” (Robbins, 2005, p. 143). As preschoolers interacted with their social world, their play was dynamic. The activities in which they were involved transformed and evolved constantly; preschoolers not only responded to influences of their environment but also were themselves integral parts of the environment (Robbins, 2005).

As with pretend play, children involved in social play moved from the use of realistic items and situations to incorporating pretend names, places, things, etc. They were informed by the inclusion of “cultural practices and circumstances of their communities” (Rogoff, 2003, p. 4). This fluid type of play behavior accommodated children’s needs “when familiar activities are performed with noncustomary objects or in noncustomary contexts” (Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff, Berk & Singer, 2009, p. 25). Through this type of play, children engaged in metacognition and learned to cooperate with their peers and adults. Cultural experiences were interwoven in their play and were communicated through storytelling episodes fueled by observations and interaction with the environment (Rogoff, 2003).

Physical Play

Physical play has also been referred to as active play, big body play, and rough-and-tumble play (R&T) (Pellegrini, 2004, Carlson, 2011). While some researchers suggested that this activity was very male-dominated, other researchers described instances where female children took part in this vigorous playtime (Pellegrini, 1998, 2006; Smith, Smees, & Pellegrini, 2004; Sutton-Smith, 1988). This type of play was evident in the Jamaican context, both at school and home, and both genders at the early childhood age were actively involved.

Rough-and-tumble play (R&T) was usually associated with very energetic behaviors such as “wrestling, grappling, kicking, and tumbling” (Pellegrini & Smith, 1998) and was usually demonstrated during pretend play and social play. It was a robust social activity that, at the early childhood level, transcended language, gender, and culture. Because pretend play was common in R&T, children demonstrated their understanding of their culture. This combination “allows [children] to become familiar with local traditions and practices” (Rogoff, 2003, p. 295).

Research showed that R&T facilitated the development of social skills, which were important characteristics of adult life. R&T allowed space for immediate feedback and helped in creating opportunities for a classroom of children from diverse backgrounds to spontaneously work together (Pellegrini & Smith, 1998; Jarvis, 2006) giving them the opportunity to “independently test and recalibrate interaction skills within the social ‘classroom’ of the playground” (Jarvis, 2006, p. 281). This type of collaborative learning was “a process of cultural creation rather than cultural transmission” (Bjorklund & Pellegrini, 2002, p. 201). Jarvis (2006) noted,

R&T play...whether...undertaken within mixed or single sex groups, put children into authentic situations where they can simultaneously practice spontaneous, autonomous, competitive and cooperative interaction, developing many of the complex social skills that fundamentally underpin primate adult life ...feedback emerging from the reactions of the other players give children opportunities to independently problem-solve and autonomously self-correct in order to remain within the group activities...It is the developmental activity in which [one] can clearly discern culture and biology interacting in the play of juvenile evolved humans growing up within...social environments...highly dependent upon ...linguistic constructions. (p. 281)

Through this highly complex type of play, children constructed narratives/discourses that were culturally different from the culture of the classroom (Rogoff, 2003). Through this activity, children shared their culture and traditions in a nonjudgmental forum. Rough-and-tumble play was regularly neglected and additionally, though instinctive play behavior of young children, it

was very often prohibited in schools (Jarvis, 2006, Pellegrini, 2004). For the complexity of R&T to be understood, one had to understand the definition as seen by theorists.

Rough-and-tumble play (R&T) consisted mostly of gross motor activities, loud noise and laughter; was very often associated with outdoor activities; and was sometimes referred to as physical activities (Kamii & DeVries. 1978), physical play (Colwell & Lindsey, 2005) or big body play (Carlson, 2011). According to Pellegrini (1998), the term “rough-and-tumble” was first utilized by the social and behavioral scientist Harry F. Harlow in the early 1960’s when he discussed the social play of rhesus monkeys. The activities of these monkeys were very similar to those of preschool children as they played and included high-energy play-wrestling, superhero play, exaggerated movements and gestures, and soft-handed hits. When ethologists and developmental psychologists studied the similarities of human and monkey behavior, the term “rough-and-tumble” was used to describe the behavior associated with children’s play.

Confusion between R&T and aggression was often expressed because the two activities often demonstrated similar actions. Children involved in R&T typically demonstrated playful, nonaggressive, and social behavior that was identified and characterized by laughter, running, jumping, wrestling, hitting with open palms, light chasing and fleeing, and role reversal. Conversely, frowning, hitting with closed palms, pushing, taking and grabbing, and sometimes inflicting pain intentionally were recognized as aggressive behavior. Negative affects were noted as the aggressor usually left after an aggressive act has been committed, where as in R&T there was sustained social interaction even after an accident has occurred (Pellegrini, 1998).

From a sociocultural stance, R&T was viewed in a variety of ways and was representative of the shared cultural thinking and activities of the community, referred to as “cultural tools” (Rogoff, 2003; Robbins, 2005). Examples of these tools were “language,...art

works, diagrams,...and all sorts of signs [and signals]” (Robbins, p. 146). These tools were instrumental in communicating and connecting sociocultural activities. As noted by Robbins, “tools can not be separated from the activity in which they are embedded, from the thinking of the child, or from the meaning, purpose, relevance, and value being appropriated to them by the child and others” (p. 146).

In many cultures, R&T was an acceptable tool by which traditional artifacts were passed on. Examples included a traditional game played by Japanese children that mimicked the fight of Sumo Wrestlers (Trawick-Smith, 2010), the spear shooting/ hunting activities of the young Kalahari San children of Africa (Sutherland, 2009), and the fast-paced chase and capture of the bull in the Jamaican game of “Bull in the Pen” (Murphy, 2002). Rough-and-tumble activities experienced by young children not only embraced cultural traditions, history, and language, but also empowered them. It afforded children the ability to access and explore their world within a sociocultural context, the opportunity to expand their repertoire of skills (social, cognitive, physical), and to understand the meanings and functions of each within their cultural context. Robbins (2005) stated that these functions “are imbedded in sociocultural activity” (p. 146) of the society – a part of the fabric of a people.

Summary

This section gave the general definition of play and highlighted specific types – pretend, social, and physical play – utilizing a sociocultural framework to contextualize the information. The descriptions of play have now laid the foundation for the rest of this study’s analysis of areas such as play patterns and behaviors used to imply outcomes. My working definition of play is highlighted in Chapter Five.

In the following section, play and early learning in the school context are addressed. Perspectives from children, teachers, parents, and caregivers are included. Even though they are based on international data, I hope they supply material to assist in understanding the dynamics of the Jamaican school culture as it relates to young children's play behavior.

Play And Early Learning

Children's play in general has been the subject of research for many years and numerous results have indicated its importance in the development of children's learning as well as its impact has on teaching strategies (Hannaford, 1995; Brown, 2009; Macintyre, 2001; Yelland, Lee, O'Rourke, & Harrison, 2008). The role of play in early learning became more visible over the years, partially because more dominant organizations in the field enunciated its importance in children's development.

Play is a natural occurrence for children (Elkind, 2005; Pellegrini, 2004; Piaget, 1932; Vygotsky, 1975). NAEYC (2009) and early childhood practitioners have for many years recognized its importance in children's holistic development. However, many stakeholders and researchers have voiced concerns regarding the diminishing and devaluing of play in the school arena and agenda (Elkind, 2007; Glover, 2006; Pellegrini, 2004). They believed that this devaluation has proved detrimental to children's development. As noted by Glover,

...there is concern that childhood play is seriously being undermined...this concern is based on the premise that without adequate opportunity to play, young children's development and learning will be seriously hampered...[hence] ...children are being placed in inappropriate situations which will, paradoxically, put their learning at risk. (p. 7)

Building on the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) established in the early 1980's, organizations such as National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the Association of Childhood Education International (ACEI), The Association for the Study of Play (TASP), and the International Play Association (IPA) continuously play instrumental roles in setting agendas for the inclusion of play in early childhood curricula. These associations and other institutions are facilitators and instigators in changing curriculum to reintroduce play. Play should be seen not only as the child's right but also as a developmentally appropriate tool used to empower children.

Through its work as an advocate for children's play, NAEYC has formulated guidelines (Developmentally Appropriate Practice, 2009) and has assisted many institutions and other organizations in the construction of their own philosophies on play and its function in young children's development. NAEYC's framework was fashioned from a western, developed culture orientation; therefore, its ideal of developmentally appropriate practices was skewed to that culture. As such, international practitioners utilizing these guidelines must adapt them cautiously. An infusion of their own culture is needed in the reframing of the guidelines.

The flexibility of the practitioner, the administrators, and other stakeholders in the adaptation of the guidelines is to be noted. Some of the areas that were not considered developmentally appropriate in the United States, and other western societies and seen as inappropriate by NAEYCE's standard were perfectly acceptable in other societies. For example, children left unattended on the playground was broadly culturally unacceptable in the USA, but was a tolerable practice in the Jamaican school culture. As with all designs of policies, adaptation was not often a given; there were many facets that had to be examined, reconstructed, and decontextualized before adaptations could happen.

As adults continued to govern the conduct of children's learning, the long-held belief of some stakeholders that children wasted their time playing and needed to do more productive work resulted in the 'more work less play' attitude (Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2009). This attitude was demonstrated through play where most children performed adult-led and highly supervised play activities such as organized sports, physical education classes, and extracurricular activities (Elkind, 2007). Children have less freedom of choice in the type of play they engaged in and are hurried through their developmental stages in an effort to meet the prescribed standards being set (Elkind, 2004; Nichols, & Berliner, 2007).

Generally, adults were the creators of even the most preferred playthings such as computers, video games, other electronic toys (Elkind, 2007), and designed playgrounds. With such a lack of child-initiated play, children's instinctive playful development was short-changed. Ailwood (2003) suggested that play was being used as "a technology of governmentality in early childhood educational settings" (p. 286). Because play was seen as a means to manipulate and control children's behavior, play has lost its spontaneity and creativity.

Some researchers, such as Hirsh-Pasek et al., (2009) believe that the utilization of play to assist children to decipher and express their emotional issues, their uncertainties, and their apprehensions was not being fully employed. Ailwood (2003) theorizes that both young and older children have lost the ability to be critical thinkers and spontaneous movers and shakers of their world. They have acquired and displayed all the symptoms of learned helplessness and lethargy. American researchers Nichols and Berliner (2007) hypothesized that learning and teaching were no longer challenging activities in a productive way; instead, the challenges faced were tedious and negative in some aspects, especially within communities that were

predominately African-American and minorities. This, they said, has led to the downfall of engaging and creative education at the early childhood level.

Social Development

When young children entered preschool, they learned of and gained independence from their other world – the home. They learned to interact with peers of similar age, and similar social backgrounds. For some, this may be the first time they are placed in a formal educational setting. Cultural background and beliefs regarding play shaped not only young children's methods of socializing but also the quality and quantity of socialization. In socialist societies, group work is stressed and is practiced, whereas in an individualistic society such as the United States, the form of play was different; in both groups, adults controlled the quality and quality of play for young children (Berk, 2008). As young children adapted to their new environment, play was utilized to interact with their peers and to form new relationships. The relationships formed offered opportunities for them to experience a variety of social behaviors that included collaboration, disagreement, aggression, friendly rivalry, and rejection on a different plane than those experienced at home or with adults.

Physical Development

From the literature reviewed on young children's play, this phenomenon could be used as a vehicle for learning. At the preschool age, children further developed their fine and gross motor skills through their physical abilities, language, social, and emotional skills, and through interaction with their peers, teachers, and their environment (Rogers & Evans, 2008). Activities

such as ring games and tag taught lessons with ‘playful’ medium. Children not only had some autonomy over their activities, they learned about negotiation, turn-taking, culture and history, self-expression, self-regulation, and self-efficacy (Pellegrini, 2004; Sutton-Smith, 2001). They learned to master their physical abilities and tested their boundaries as they played in groups or individually as they swung, slid, hopped, jumped, chased and were chased.

Cognitive Development

Children’s cognitive abilities such as memory, attention skills, logic and reasoning, auditory and visual processing were enhanced during varying types of play. Rogoff’s (2003) sociocultural theory aided us in understanding the complexity of children’s cognitive skills. Her research of both industrialized and agricultural cultures highlighted each society’s use of a variety of teaching strategies such as cooperative learning, reciprocal teaching, and the community-of-learners model, which promoted the structure of cognition in culturally adaptive ways. Many societies used play as a means of scaffolding children’s cognitive development. During play, children interacted with their environment, such as objects and individuals, which enhanced their cognitive skills (Veal, 2001).

In summary, play exposed a vast array of feelings and advanced many interpretations. One such interpretation, according to Vygotsky, (1962) was that children inherently chose play to help liberate themselves from circumstantial limitations, which assisted them to eventually gain control over their inadequacies. He further hypothesized that through play, children were able to function at higher levels of development because they were constructing information from everyday activities and developing higher levels of cognitive skills as they engaged in recreation and other forms of physical and non-physical activities. This, Vygotsky believed, was

important as through this variety of activities practitioners could assist children's learning in more accommodating and meaningful settings.

A synthesis of the literature suggested that allowing play both in and outside the classroom had many benefits because it afforded children time to practice skills learned both at school and at home. It allowed them the luxury of taking real world activities and absorbing the values, habits, and methods of their culture in their own space and time. In the following sections, teachers', parents', and children's perspectives of play are addressed. The views are based on research done in mostly industrialized societies by western theorists and researchers.

Teachers' And Families' Perspectives

Looking at the many ways that play evolved and the category I chose to focus on – the school environment – I thought it imperative to examine teachers' and caregivers' (in this case, the children's parents) perspectives on play. I approached my search cognizant of the fact that there was limited research on Jamaican preschool teachers' as well as parents' perceptions on young children's play. Therefore, an overview of empirical data based on teachers' and parents' perceptions from other cultures were the lens from which I informed my writing.

Play in some U.S. schools today looks a lot different than it did in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Like many other aspects of society, play evolved to meet the needs of the developing civilization (Frost, 2010). According to Bodrova and Leong (2006), play was no longer used only to assist the child to develop skills that were needed later in life but also to quickly introduce the child to both what will be needed now and in the distant future. Bodrova and Leong stated, "[m]odern play is nonpragmatic in that it does not prepare the child for specific skills or activities, but prepares the child's mind for the learning of tasks of today as well

as future tasks that humans cannot yet imagine” (p. 167). This affected the roles teachers were required to perform.

In many developed countries, children no longer enjoyed the freedom to be spontaneous dancers in their play repertoire. The majority of their pieces were rigidly choreographed without much thought being put into individualization. Instead, a “one size fit all” philosophy (Janesick, 2005) was utilized. Teachers were pressured to deliver high quality education, stay accountable to stakeholders, and maintain transparency at all times. Although most of these stipulations directly affected elementary schools and higher grade levels, preschools educators and administrators were affected by the trickling down effects (Elkind, 2009; Frost, 2010; Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2009). Teachers’ responses to the challenges faced were reflected in their views of play and early learning.

As formal learning is introduced to young children, the methods utilized have to be in keeping with young children’s learning style. Studies indicated that preschool teachers in many countries worldwide have embraced the early childhood play curriculum (Brodhead, 2006; Edwards, 2003) and used this forum as a means of understanding young children’s learning. As noted by child development experts such as Froebel, Piaget, Vygotsky, and Montessori, young children learned best when they have direct interaction with their world, so educators needed to apply this mode of thinking to their teaching. Elkind (2007) reinforced this notion as he suggested that young children learned differently and teaching methods should address their unique learning style.

Teachers of young children were encouraged to utilize this information to guide their teaching method. However, as Pica (2006) suggested in her article, “Movement Madness: Keeping Kids Off the Wall,” many teachers hesitated to facilitate this learning style “because

when they think of children and movement at the same time, they immediately form a mental image of children “bouncing off the walls.” Teachers’ perceptions of play were based not only on their values, knowledge, and beliefs, but were also influenced by stakeholders, such as administrative bodies, MOEs, and funding agencies; these entities directly and indirectly influenced teachers’ responses to how and when children played. Their opinions and beliefs regarding young children’s play repertoire both in and out the classroom created some tension between what the child wanted and what the teacher believed the child needed.

Ranz-Smith (2007), in her research on teachers’ perception of play, noted that this tension resulted from the pull between traditional teacher-initiated activities and child-initiated ones. Other factors that may also have created this breach, as noted earlier, were the pressures to deliver quality education while being held accountable for children’s learning outcomes. In trying to bridge this gap, Ranz-Smith advocated for teachers to be “eclectic in their approach as they attempt to respond to the play process of children while meeting societal pressures for the work ethic” (p. 274).

While recent research on teachers’ views on play took a more global approach, most of the data were collected from formal learning settings in industrialized societies. In their study of teachers’ perspectives in three countries (Japan, United States, and Sweden), Izumi-Taylor, Samuelsson and Rogers (2010) reported that teachers’ views varied according to their cultural beliefs. For example, out of 140 participants, 61 (28 Swedish, 22 American, 11 Japanese), “indicated that they perceived play as a process of learning and development,” and most of the Japanese participants viewed play as empowerment. Neither the Swedish nor American participants articulated this view, they perceived play as children’s work; none of the 40 Japanese teachers perceived play in that way.

Tobin and Davidson's (2009) book, *Preschool in Three Cultures: Japan, China and the United States*, and Rogoff's (2003) research in agricultural societies, indicated the power of cultural artifacts on the perceptions of educators. Izumi-Taylor et al. (2010) in their study reiterated this and suggested:

Researchers and teachers not only need to understand play and its relation to children's learning but also to scrutinize play as a cultural phenomenon and try to create more knowledge about the general and cultural aspects of play.
(Reflections on findings, para. 5).

Although there were no studies or research done recently on teachers' perspectives on children's play originating from Jamaica, there was sufficient empirical evidence from other developing countries that suggested that teaching strategies were informed by cultural experiences and artifacts and should be embraced in the culture of the teaching and learning.

Another aspect of the teacher's environment affected by many variables is the classroom. Through improved technology and increasing migration, cultures are being crisscrossed around the world and teachers are educating in multicultural classrooms (Trawick-Smith, 2010). The learning environment has become more diverse, hence has embraced various cultural norms and ideals. Teachers' perceptions are now shaped to embrace these changes or be challenged. Perceptions were not born but were created through learned behavior (Rogoff, 2003). Perceptions being reshaped is not a simplistic matter of changing directions of the dancer on one level, but required the choreographer to redesign the cultural thinking of the dancer by adding levels and complex patterns to each movement; this takes time to internalize before implementing.

In their research on differences of practitioners' understanding of play and the implications of children's perceptions of play, McInnes, Howard, Miles and Crowley (2011) stated that teachers were not "comfortable with play, child-led activities and allowing children choice" (p. 122). They rationalized that this was due to a combination of "lack of knowledge regarding play and how play relate[d] to pedagogy...[which resulted in] a mismatch between what practitioners [said] and [did]" (p. 122). In essence, what was needed was the teacher to accept the possible fusion between her beliefs and those of the wider society and arrive at a compromise that fulfilled the needs of the holistic development of the young child. Teachers are expected to embrace the diversity of the multicultural setting as they perform appropriate teaching/learning strategies.

As with teachers' perspectives on play, parents' perspectives are embedded in their cultural beliefs, societal norms, and values of education. Studies indicated that the emphasis parents placed on the value of children's education varied according to their lifestyle (Frost, 2011). In preindustrialized societies, the welfare and survival of the child were the most dominant goals of parents, "whereas in postindustrialized societies parental goals [fell] in line with the demands of the technological and highly structured environment" (Roopnarine, Lasker, Stacks, & Stores, 1998, p. 209). Rogoff (2003) identified differences between parents' views regarding play. Her research noted that play was described and prescribed according to societal needs and children's play varied accordingly. In some societies, play is intertwined in the everyday makeup of chores and duties. In others, it is a means of escape from these activities. In others still, it is a compilation of learning and enjoyment.

In the Jamaican context, parents' views on play varied. The nation's education evolved from a colonial past and still embodies some tenets of the older British system of education.

Many British principles, doctrines, and values are still embedded in the current educational system. Decades of slavery and white indoctrination have left the Jamaican populace with the desire to be empowered and to govern themselves. The result of this was their belief that ‘serious’ education was the only way (Chevannes, 2006; Manley, 1990; Mordecai & Mordecai, 2001).

With this in mind, it must be noted that Jamaican parents’ perceptions of play was built on their shared experiences with their colonial past. The rigid structure, which was an inherent part of colonialism, helped to shape the dichotomous view of work and play; hence, there was a time and place for everything and play was done when work is over. In the neo-colonial setting, the value of play was seen from varying viewpoints of the social stance of the society; its acceptance at home and school varied. Because of an unconscious bias, values taught to children included rigid gender roles and discrimination (who played with a specific type of toy and who was given more freedom to play; Roopnarine et al., 1998).

Parents in both developed and developing countries placed great emphasis on play. It formed an integral framework for “...rituals, festivals, and sociocultural activities in some societies that individual ‘just play’” (Roopnarine et al., 1998, p. 209). However, everyone did not readily accept the use of play as a teaching tool in schools nor were they aware of the value of play as seen by ‘others’ in the North. Its value was ascribed according to the culture and circumstances – economic, political, and historical.

Summary

In summary, parents’ and teachers’ perspectives on play were culturally driven, based on their collective and individual sociocultural climate, which in turn shaped the child’s thinking

and beliefs. Play was intimately linked with the child's home and school environment and influenced the structure of educational policies. As part of these intertwined movements of the dancers, which involved the development of the child, both the teachers (who were possibly parents themselves) and the parents were made cognizant of the different perceptions of play and, therefore, were encouraged to seek the best solutions for the benefit of the children for which they were held responsible. Gradual restructured thoughts to complement redefined movements seemed destined to collide with a fast-changing environment.

Children's Understanding Of Their Play

For decades, children have been a topic of research. They have been the main topic in many fields where education and health agencies were the primary researchers. In earlier decades, children were not active agents in the research process. They were silent partners; research was done "on" them and not "with" them. Over the past twenty years, researchers have recognized the importance and value of having children actively engaged in the research process (Clark, 2011; Clement & Fiorentino, 2004; Pellegrini, 2011; Tudge, 2008).

Similarly, play environments, materials, equipment, and resources were often constructed without children's input or intervention. Children were rarely given a choice in how, where, when, and with whom they played (Play England, 2011; Burke, 2008). The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989) stated that children had the right to express their views on matters that affected them and for their voices to be taken seriously. Play England's 2011 report stated that when children were asked who and what was important to their play, the older children (primary age group and older) responded that friendship, opportunities, and

choices were important; children in preschool reported they liked to have more choices in what they played and when they played.

Waller and Bitou's (2011) research with English children between the ages of 3 and 4 investigated children's understanding of their play from a sociocultural point of view. Children were given participatory tools, such as cameras, to conduct their research. The aim of the inquiry was to study children as active participants and to give them a voice. In their evaluation of the research, it was noted that children lacked full autonomy even though they were considered co-investigators. This investigation gave the authors more to think about as some aspects of the joint investigation led them to question the influence of power. "The recognition and acceptance of this position has required the development of new ways of investigating and communicating children's perspectives, in addition to a change in power relationships" (p. 15). They examined the relationship between adults and children and what effects the relationship had on the final outcome of their study.

Miller and Kuhaneck (2008) conducted an investigation on children's perceptions of their own play. Ten purposefully-chosen participants were children from both genders between the ages of 7 and 11 who spoke English and lived in varying environments. The purpose of the grounded story was to "explore, understand, and describe children's perceptions of play" (p. 408). Miller and Kuhaneck established that children characterized an activity as "play" if it was "fun." Although the children were unable to define "fun," they were able to give examples, which were associated with pleasurable feelings such as "happy and enthusiastic" (p. 410). Fun was also used as a criterion for choosing a particular activity (e.g., tag, sports and outdoor games).

Other categories also highlighted as play were characterized with terms such as level of difficulty and the level of “active participation or activity level (Miller and Kuhaneck, 2008, p. 410). The research also revealed other characteristics that the children in this study associated with play such as relationship (whom you played with) peers’ attributes (age, ability level, gender) and context (environment, location of activity).

Miller and Kuhaneck (2008) deduced from their model that play was linked to emotion and was a dynamic attractor “in drawing the child toward a particular play choice” (p. 411). What was regarded as play was the determining factor for the child’s choice of play. Interestingly, children in this study did not label television as play, although they spent many hours watching it. Another factor that was brought out was that of boredom. Children said that play became boring when the activity was too easy.

In a third paper on children’s understanding of play, Stamatoglou (2004) completed an ethnographic study with 50 children between the ages of 3 and 5 years (21 boys and 29 girls), utilizing photographs and video footage as methods of data collection. Nine members of the nursery staff and 20 parents (18 mothers and 2 fathers) also took part in the study. Interviews lasted 30 minutes and were conducted at the nursery during regular school time.

Children’s responses were recorded during interviews conducted while they watched video playback of their play behavior. The interviews were then coded. During the interviews, children responded to their images on the screen by talking about what they did. In trying to understand children’s view of play, Stamatoglou (2004) found that “children did not elaborate on their views of what play [was]” (p. 11). They, however, made comments, “on the process, properties and management of play” (p. 11). In defining the difference between work and play,

”some children said work rather than play happened when they were on the computer...” (p.11).

Children also commented on the difficulty of certain activities and the role of the adults.

Was there any relationship between the children’s play experience and learning?

Stamatoglou (2004) believed the data provided evidence. Video footage of children involved in various activities in the classroom was used to initiate conversations with the children.

Children’s responses indicated that they were aware of whether or not they had grasped a concept. Stamatoglou also argued that there was sufficient evidence that showed that children were learning when literacy and numeracy were done through play activities. Though not explicitly stated, learning was taking place as children used play to practice, perform, and refine social, cognitive, emotional, and personal skills.

Bret, Valle-Riestra, Fischer, Rothlein, and Hughes’ (2011) research on preschool children’s and teachers’ perceptions of play in the classroom found that children’s perceptions were similar to results found by Stamatoglou insofar as children identified and classified their play “based on the context of the activity rather than on its intrinsic characteristics” (p. 72) and if it was self-initiated. Howard, Bellin, and Rees (2002) in synthesizing studies eliciting children’s perceptions of play, stated that “children in more structured settings dichotomized play and work more readily and did not perceive play as learning” (p. 11). Another finding was that children associated play with outdoor activities – “playing with specific items, games, playing with people, dramatic play, and art activities” (p. 77). Bret et al.’s results were based on interviews done with 72 4-year old children and 46 teachers in the year 2002; they then compared their findings with a similar study done in 1987, and it was found that children from both studies had similar ideas on play.

Children's enjoyment of play is realized through their ability to experience introspective thoughts within the space they occupy for their play and where the central element is fun. According to Meire (2007), the fun children gain from their play is derived "from the feeling of control or challenge, from sharing or...being part of the social, material, and imaginary environment, and/or from bodily sensations" (p. 44). However, this deduction was made from adults' observation of children's indoor and outdoor play. The importance of understanding children's play through their lenses is significant to alleviate adults' assumptions of children's play experiences. As Howard et al. (2002) stated in their paper presented at the British Educational Research Association's annual conference, more research was needed where "children's descriptions of their experiences were considered" (p. 5). They specified,

Whilst observational techniques provide much information into the nature of children's play, and allow us to make inferences about development and involvement in activities, they do not tell us about children's perceptions and do not therefore allow us to make judgments about individual definitions of playfulness.

They suggested that findings could be utilized in making relevant contributions to curriculum development.

Summary and Concluding Thoughts

The research papers presented look at three different age groups and their perspectives of play. What was evident was that children could identify the term "play" but were not always able to verbalize a salient definition or describe the activity. All the cases showed children's ability to identify and classify "play" and "non-play" activities, the emotions associated with them, and

whether or not learning was taking place. Also evident in the studies presented was the call for more inquiry into children's own perceptions of their play.

For this purpose of this literature review, the following objectives formed the basis for determining directionality:

- To examine the current definition of play as it relates to social, psychological, and physical aspects of child development;
- To examine the current status of play based on teachers', parents' and caregivers' perspectives of play – both positive and negative; and
- To define play in a larger context by exploring cultural perspectives and embracing the socioecological and cultural theories of Bronfenbrenner, Vygotsky, and Rogoff.

The chapter provided a platform that showcased play from many angles. It embraced the social, cultural, and political underpinnings driving the theory and practice. The literature reviewed looked at a broad definition of play, play through the cultural lens, and the impact that play has on children's learning. The chapter concluded with teachers', parents', and children's perceptions of play.

The literature reviewed focused on a sociocultural and ecological framework. Due to the gap in the literature on Jamaican children's play, many of the references employed were taken from developed western societies' research on play. My method of investigation in understanding Jamaican children's play will be informed from this literature as well as my personal experience as an early childhood teacher educator.

CHAPTER THREE: METHOD AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to describe and explain the lived experience of play from the viewpoint of selected Jamaican children. In addition, I would like to use this information to contribute to the developing literature on Jamaica's play-based curriculum. The overarching question was, "What challenges exist in understanding the role of play in the cultural context of Jamaican schooling?" The following exploratory sub-questions, supporting the overarching questions, were used to guide the study:

1. What is the nature of young children's play?
2. What perceptions and understandings are derived from young children's play from the child's viewpoint?
3. What factors contribute to these perceptions and understandings?

In both Chapters One and Two, the discourse indicated that young Jamaican children's play has not been fully examined nor clearly defined. Similarly, Jamaican children's voices, as they perceived their play, were not studied; hence, Jamaican children's thoughts on their play behaviors are in need of investigation.

Like research, a dance grows from an idea, an inspiration, a desire, or a story, and then mushrooms to movements of either a single dancer or an ensemble of dancers as they perform the interpretation of the storyteller through the choreographer. The choreographer utilizes different methods to extract the best from each dancer in order to tell authentic stories. This chapter embodied this ideology and included the following: (a) the research approach (a descriptive

account of the method and methodology utilized); (b) the exploratory questions used to guide the study; (c) the site and participants observed; (d) data generation (data sources utilized); (e) creditability and confirmability of the study; and (e) ethical considerations such as informed consent.

Research Approach

I have longed perceived the need for a deeper understanding of Jamaican children's play repertoire to fill what Merriam (1998) calls "an intuitive grasp" (p. 16). As discussed in Chapter One, play was my passion and I have never questioned its value. I simply enjoyed it. However, I wanted to know more. I wanted to see and hear the children's play stories utilizing a holistic approach (Stake, 1995) in order to understand the dynamics of these stories and the underpinnings that influence and shape their forms (Janesick, 2011).

A qualitative approach was adopted in order to describe and explain the lived experience of play from the viewpoint of selected Jamaican children. A distinguishing characteristic of most qualitative research is that behavior is studied as it naturally occurs. The use of qualitative inquiry was based on the need to gain full understanding of the phenomenon as it occurred. The focal points of qualitative research are on individuals' perceptions, their experiences, descriptions of the phenomenon, and minimal disturbance of the natural environment by the researcher (Janesick, 2011; McMillan, 2011). Qualitative research delves in the processes that stimulate transformation in human behaviors, allowing researchers to transcend the topic itself and "learning what is important to those being studied" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 15).

Achieving my goal of understanding young Jamaican children's play was facilitated with the use of a qualitative case study. According to Stake (1995), a case study is considered when we

seek to understand both the “uniqueness” and the “commonality” (p. 1) of people and programs. He further stated that case studies: (a) afforded all participants the opportunity to share their thoughts, ideas, and descriptions of a phenomenon; (b) enabled a close collaboration between participants and the researcher; (c) empowered participants as they constructed their stories based on their perspectives; (d) gave voice to the participants as they related these stories to the researcher; and (e) enabled the researcher to gain a better understanding of the participants’ movements (Clark, 2011; Creswell, 2007; McMillan, 2012; Stake, 1995).

Another advantage of conducting a case study was that it allowed me to engage in comprehensive analysis and create detailed descriptions of a single entity by obtaining diverse and in-depth viewpoints. As noted by McMillan (2012), case studies enable one to “...fully understand the essence of [the] phenomenon [through]... intensive interviews” (p. 14). Case studies therefore facilitate and validate participants’ voices. However, the researcher’s “willingness to put aside many presumptions while we learn” (Stake, 1995, p. 1) is an essential element in accurately documenting participants’ stories. To produce a dance that is reflective of the story being told, the choreographer must stay true to the storyteller’s convictions by embracing the quality, thoughts, ideologies, and emotions brought to that time and space for the creation of the dance.

A case study is an “in-depth analysis of one or more events, settings, programs, social groups, communities, individuals, or other “bounded systems” in their natural context...[it is] an investigation of one entity, which is carefully defined and characterizes by time and place” (McMillan, 2011, p. 279). Doing a case study, I was aware of the mixed signals that I encountered. I was acutely aware of everything and anything related to the case and allowed the representation of the data to be controlled by the participants. With the use of “bracketing,” I tried

to free my mind of previously held notions of the phenomenon (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Stake, 1995) so as to report data in a creative, flexible, and authentic manner. As noted by Mayan (2009),

The researcher uses all five senses to work creatively and flexibly through a process that is rarely neat and linear. Connecting with people, taking risks to explore new ground, and managing the unpredictable nature of qualitative research can produce rich and important knowledge... (p. 12).

Some qualitative researchers referred to the “rich and important knowledge” as “rich thick data” (Creswell, 2007; Janesick, 2011; McMillan, 2011) because of the in-depth information that was discovered and reported as they worked and explored with participants.

According to Stake (1995), placing boundaries on a case assists the researcher in focusing on particular objectives pertaining to the case. A case may be bounded by: (a) time and activity (Stake, 1995), and/or (b) time and place (Creswell, 2003). For this study, the case was bounded by time (the period participants are being studied), place (Jamaican basic school), and activity (play). The intimate nature involved in conducting a case study required me to be very attentive to the real life context examined. A small number of individuals and a small study was the ideal setting to work with because: (a) the thick rich data compiled from complex descriptions and interpretations of the phenomenon was more manageable; (b) it was more cost effective; and (c) it allowed me to become fully immersed in the data by using an inductive approach (Stake, 2006). Utilizing the case study approach afforded me more opportunity to interact with individuals and observe them carefully as they move through time and space and interacted with their environment.

Site And Participants

The site and participants were chosen because of an existing relationship that I had with the principal and some members of the staff. There were established connections and trust between the staff and myself as I have supervised teachers in training during their field experiences at the school. In addition, because of the time spent on the campus previously, I had an understanding of the culture of the school and the nearby community. I was also aware of changes that had taken place since I last visited the school, so I was prepared to establish intimate connections with the new staff and students.

While the site and participants were selected based on convenience, they were also rich sources of information central to the intention of the study. I selected purposeful sampling in order to focus on particular characteristics of the specific participants that were of interest to the study and enabled me to answer my research questions. The study was conducted at a Jamaican basic school with three five-year -old students, their teacher, and parents. The principal did the selection of the teacher, while each the teacher and the principal selected each child. The children were the primary source of data but the inclusion of both the teacher and primary caregivers helped build further understanding of the sociocultural context to which the children were exposed.

UPC Basic School

The Jamaican Basic School program, based on the United States Head Start program, originated and was implemented approximately 40 years ago. It was established through D. R. B. Grant's groundwork of organizing the training of teachers at the preschool level and was funded by the Bernard Van Leer Foundation in the Netherlands. Basic schools were built in low socioeconomic communities and emphasized strong community support for the viability and

sustainability of the program and with the goal of uplifting the people of lower monetary status.

This brought a new wave of community service to the island.

Currently, the Jamaica's academic school year is divided into three terms, beginning with the Christmas term (September to December), followed by the Easter term (January to March or April, as determined by the date of the Christian Easter dates), and Summer term (April to the first week in July). A program issued from the Ministry of Education's (MOE) agency the Early Childhood Commission (ECC) guides the daily structure of basic schools in Jamaica. The daily routine begins at approximately 7:30 a.m. and ends at 2:30 p.m. Some basic schools offer an after care program that ends at approximately 5:00 p.m. The routine for a typical day at a basic school is:

- Arrival
- Free play
- Devotion
- Circle time/group time
- Guided learning
- Transition periods
- Lunchtime
- Outdoor play
- Rest time
- Snack time
- Creative activities
- Departure and free-play

The UPC Basic School that participated in this study was situated in lower St. Andrew, Jamaica, and served low socioeconomic communities. At the time of the study, the school had a population of 264 students, of which 250 regularly attended classes (approximately 4 out of 5 days per week). Faculty and staff consisted of nine paraprofessional teachers, six volunteers, a principal with a B.A in Education, the principal's secretary, and four ancillary staff members (a cook, a 'grounds-man,' and two cleaners). They were housed in a low raised L-shaped building with nine classrooms (eight individual classrooms and one classroom that shared the space with the hall and was separated by wooden walls); a small kitchenette from which meals were prepared for the students and staff; and the principal's office, one of two rooms situated at the top of the only set of stairs located to the northwest end of the school. The other room located upstairs was a classroom for five-year-olds. Each classroom had its own bathroom facilities with the exception of the classroom at the end of the hall, which shared the facilities. Another bathroom for faculty was located in the principal's office.

A library was created at the southwestern end of the school behind the 4-year-olds' classrooms. It occupied a triangular space and contained a small collection of children's books, three child-sized tables, and metal chairs. Posters were pasted on the walls and a few mobiles hung from the ceiling.

Located to the front of the school was the playground. It was bordered off from the parking lot to the north by shrubs and a chain-linked fence, to the east by another chain-linked fence (approximately seven and half feet high), and to the south and west by classrooms. It was equipped with one three-tiered monkey bar, two sets of swings, and two metal slides. Gravel, approximately one inch deep, surrounded the base of the swings, slides, and the monkey bars; the remaining sections of the playground had patches of grass, gravel, and dirt. Used car tires were

scattered on various sections of the playground. At the northeastern and extreme southeast ends of the playground were two fairly tall, old Poinciana trees and large shrubs, which were the only vegetation that provided shade during hot mid-morning and afternoon play times.

While the school served the students and primary caregivers from the immediate community, approximately 30% of the current student population was from distant communities; these students were accommodated as their primary caregivers worked in close proximity to the school. Many of the families were comprised of single parents, siblings, and/or extended family members such as grandparents, aunts and uncles. The school's funding was raised from school fees, sponsors, fundraising events, primary caregivers, and other stakeholders. Teachers' salaries were subsidized by the MOE; the principal's salary was paid directly by MOE.

The students who attended UPC Basic were between three and six years of age and were placed in classes depending on age. Their matriculation to the following grade was determined first by age and second by performance on given tests. These informal tests were administered by the classroom teachers and consisted of basic elements appropriate for the age group. If children had difficulties meeting the goals that were necessary for them to be functional at the upper grade they were retained until they mastered the basics.

Early work and free activity began at 8:00 a.m. and the formal school day began at 8:30 a.m. Some children, however, were often at school from as early as 6:30 a.m. because many primary caregivers had to be at work earlier and relied on public transportation. Breakfast was provided for early arrivals and, in many instances, for late arrivals as well. Children were also provided with a cooked meal at lunchtime, which was served between 10:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. Because lunch was a paid meal subsidized by the school, not all children receive cooked meals – some brought their own lunches. Children were often provided with cooked meals by the school

although their caregivers had not paid; the teachers or principal sometimes made the payment or the money was taken from petty cash. Children were allowed to go to the playground after they had consumed their meals and cleaned their respective eating areas.

Recess was unsupervised, informal, and lasted for the remainder of the lunch session – approximately 30 to 45 minutes. Rest time, which followed recess, was approximately half an hour and was followed by snack. Children supplied their own snack. However, on special occasions, such as Child's Day or Career Day, the school provided treats for the children. The formal school day ended at 2:30 p.m.

Because many of the children lived in the immediate area, they walked home either with an older sibling or unaccompanied. Children from outside the immediate communities often remained on the premises until their primary caregivers arrived to take them home. Many parents and caregivers tried to collect their children during their lunch break. There have, however, been instances where children were on the campus for a total of 11 hours (6:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.).

As noted earlier, there were nine classrooms: three classrooms for 3-year-olds, each housing an average of 25 students and one teacher; three 4-year-old classrooms, also housing an average of 25 students; and three 5-year-old classrooms, housing approximately 38 children. Five volunteers worked at the school – three were assigned to the 5-year-old classrooms and two assisted as “floaters” for the other classes. On several occasions, a volunteer substituted as the principal's secretary. All classrooms were equipped by MOE with chalkboards, tables, and chairs for the teacher and volunteer, and basic school supplies such as books, chalk, chalkboard erasers, paper, and art supplies (water paint, news print, glue, scissors).

Originally, a variety of desks and seats were provided for the children. In the 3-year-old classrooms and two of the 4-year-old classrooms, children were provided with bulky wooden

desks and benches; these were joined at the base and could not be moved easily, creating a rigid teaching and learning space. Since my initial visit, all classrooms have been refurbished; desks were replaced with child-sized wooden tables and a few individual desks were retained in each classroom. The classrooms are now equipped with child-sized aluminum chairs and individual wooden tables and desks. The desks have wooden lids and metallic bases, which were painted grey. The feet of the chairs and desks have no covering and create a cacophony of scraping noises when students move the furniture across the concrete floor.

Participants

Mrs. Richie (pseudonym) was the principal for the past eight years and was the only teacher-trained faculty member. She earned her B.A. in Education from one of the traditional teacher training institutions on the island. She was previously employed as a senior teacher at a private early childhood institution before moving to UPC Basic. Her responsibilities included the daily management and administration of the school and supervision of the teachers and volunteers, including observing and providing feedback on lessons taught and lesson plans. She also assisted with on-site training of her staff. She reported to the Chairman of the Board and to the MOE.

Three teachers were enrolled in part-time teacher certification programs and the remaining six teachers were pre-trained paraprofessionals. Volunteers were not certified as teachers but often assisted as support personnel with the daily routines in the classrooms. One volunteer was currently enrolled in a part-time teacher education certification program. All faculty members received training on writing lesson plans, classroom management, and personal development

through workshops done by former education officers (EO) in the MOE and current inspectors and training officers attached to ECC.

Participating teacher. The participating teacher was identified by the principal and was: (a) enrolled in a part-time certification program at a teachers' college; (b) the teacher of the selected five-year-old students; (c) willing to be interviewed at least once during the study's timeline; and (d) willing to allow video footage to be taken of classroom play sessions. The teacher's experience and comfort level working with five-year-olds in the Jamaican context were important factors in this study, as well as, her knowledge and/or use of the recently implemented play-base curriculum. Coupled with this was the teacher's understanding of the school's culture and environment, which directly and indirectly impacted all participants (Cole, Hakkarainen & Bredikyte, 2010).

Participating children. Both the teacher and the principal selected the three children who participated in this study. Selection was based on the following criterion: (a) regularly school attendance (no fewer than four days a week); (b) five years old, irrespective of gender; (c) would matriculate to grade one in the coming school year (Fall 2012); (d) were healthy and had the physical ability to engage in play activities both indoors and outdoors; (e) liked to be engaged in play activities; (f) highly verbal; (g) lived in the community; and, (h) their primary caregivers were willing to consent with them being observed, recorded, and interviewed for documentation purpose. Because the school was a member of the partnership program with three teacher-trained institutions in the corporate area, the children had previous experience being observed and were comfortable with outsiders in their space.

Participating parents. The educational setting followed the Jamaican Basic School construct, which was built around the idea of community-level involvement for growth and

sustainability. Many parents of the children who attended basic schools were from the lower to middle income strata of the society. Most were determined to have their children get “good schooling” and supported the upkeep of the school to the best of their abilities. Therefore, the parents of selected children were: (a) members of the community that the school served; (b) willing to allow their children to be recorded with the understanding that only the child would be viewing his or her own video footage during the study but that the recording could be subsequently used for presentations; and (c) willing to be interviewed at least once during the study’s timeframe.

Data Sources

The intent of this study was to gain firsthand accounts of three five-year-olds’ lived play experiences. The overarching question was, “What challenges exist in understanding the role of play in the cultural context of Jamaican schooling?” The following exploratory sub-questions, supporting the overarching questions, were used to guide the study:

1. What is the nature of young children’s play?
2. What perceptions and understandings are derived from young children’s play from the child’s viewpoint?
3. What factors contribute to these perceptions and understandings?

These questions were constructed deliberately to fill gaps in the literature on Jamaican children’s play. Other questions emerged while study was conducted.

Four data sources were utilized: observations, video-cued interviews, researcher’s reflective journal, and semi-structured interviews. These sources assisted in providing me with an appreciation and in-depth understanding of the essence of the phenomenon as seen and lived by

the participants. The use of the visual stimuli (video footage) prompted individuals to freely discuss feelings and attitudes experienced (Thompson, 2008). As one of the main instruments of data collection, I listened, watched, felt, captured, internalized, tried to understand, and then reported, as accurately as possible, the true essence of the phenomenon. The children's voices were critical to this study, as children are often not positioned to tell their own stories (Smith, 2011). This study was used as an avenue to empower these young storytellers by letting their voices be heard. Figure 1 provides an overview of the case study design and research questions.

Observations

Observations are essential elements of qualitative research; they are the primary source of data (Janesick, 2011; Stake, 1995). They are derived from the settings where the phenomenon takes place and give firsthand accounts of the phenomenon and are good sources of thick rich data. Although considered to be subjective, observations can provide a good foundation for “producing trustworthy results” (Merriam, 2009, p.118). I did a qualitative case study and relied on observations. This was essential to my study because: (a) it afforded me the ability to see occurrences, which had become routine to participants with “new” eyes (Janesick, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995); (b) it facilitated me time and space to interpret information gained from other data sources, such as interviews and other artifacts, by triangulating developing outcomes; (c) it provided me with latitude for reference, therefore enabling me to understand the participants' actions; and (d) it afforded me respectable distance between myself and participants when needed.

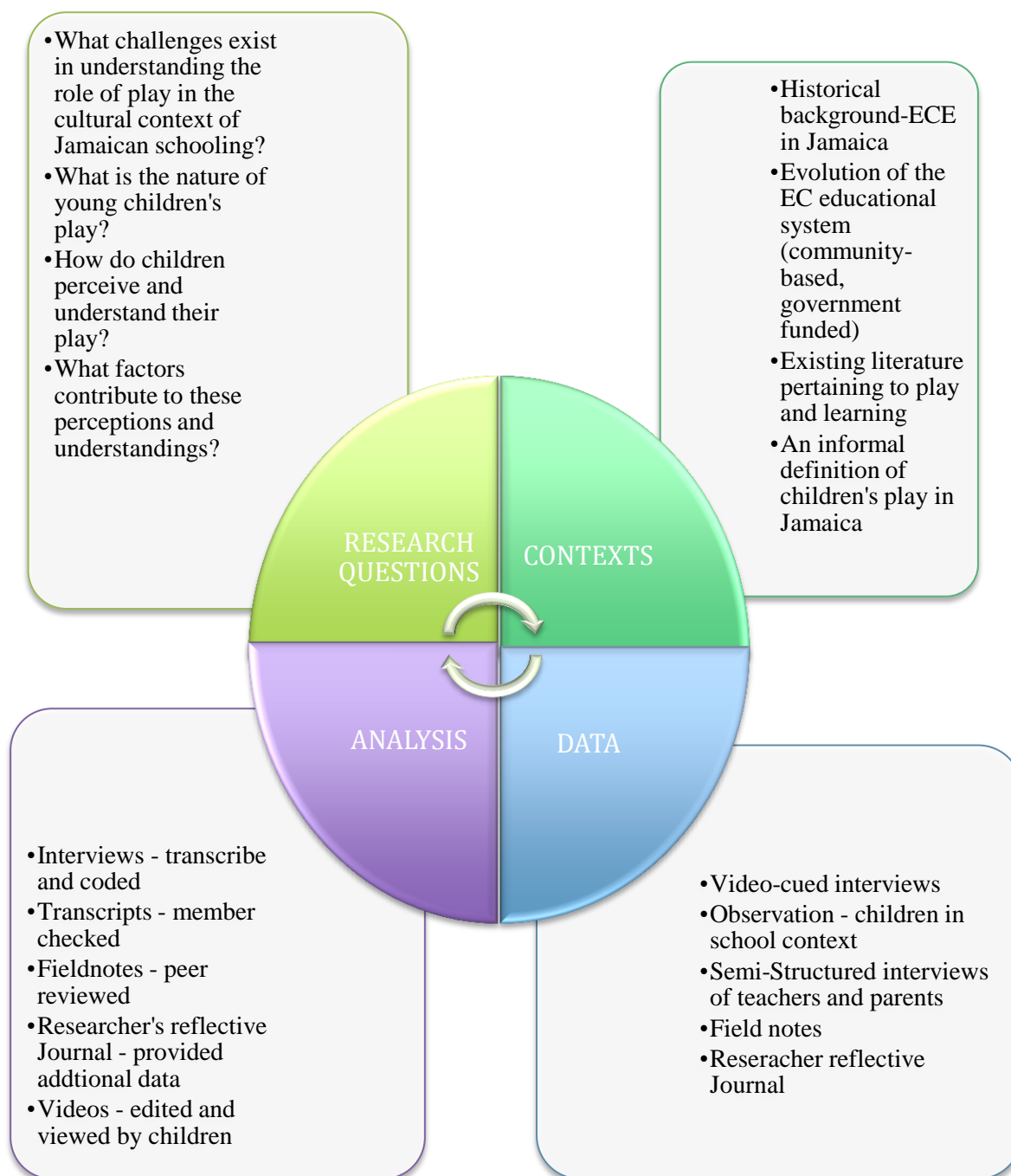


Figure 1: Overview of Case Study

It was also essential for me to know what to observe. In this particular case study, while children's play behaviors were observed, there were other elements that contributed to and shaped the behavior of the participants. These included (a) the physical setting; (b) the participants'

individual psychologies; (c) activities and interactions; (d) verbal and nonverbal exchanges; (e) unplanned factors; and, (f) my actions, reactions, and behavior (Merriam, 2009). Each factor contributed to the thick rich description of the data retrieved and reported.

The first week of observation was used to acquire general information and ascertain the layout of the environment, to observe patterns and frequency of activities, to understand the norms of the school culture, to have members of the school environment get accustomed to my presence, and to be in tune with my personal actions and reactions as I interacted with the environment. I looked at the broad picture, reflected on my personal agenda and how it shaped the information I processed before narrowing the lens to the individual child. Notes taken and data collected during this period assisted in laying the foundation for positioning the participants and myself in this study.

During the initial week, I reacquainted myself with the physical environment and with faculty and staff members. I used the time to allow the children to get accustomed to my presence in the classroom and on the playground. I introduced them to the camera and allowed them to use it and watch clips they made. I observed the children in their classroom, on the playground, and as they went through daily routines. These observations afforded me the opportunity to map out the vantage points I used for video taping and interviewing. I also used this week to conduct informal interviews with the principal, other teachers, parents, caregivers, and children. I was formally introduced to the school population by the principal during assembly at the end of the week.

Focused participant observations began the following week and occurred over a period of five weeks. Three children were observed in the natural environment of the school. Observations were conducted when children were engaged in outdoor play (recess) and indoor play (free activity) times. On-site field notes of each child's behavior were recorded as he or she engaged in

the activities. As noted earlier, there were many variables that impacted what was seen and used to inform the researcher's notes (Creswell, 2003; Janesick, 2011; Stake, 1995). Therefore, I paid careful attention to details, both big and small, that I believed was important to the study.

Each child was observed for one day during school hours (arrival at 7:30 a.m. until the end of school at 2:30 p.m.). Detailed field notes were recorded during this period. Simultaneously, a narrative in the form of a reflective journal was updated. Additionally, video and audio recordings were compiled to complement the written notations. The length of observations differed from child to child as each was unique and brought varying levels of individuality to the performance.

Video-Cued Interviews

Video-cued interviews have been conducted for many years in fields such as psychology, anthropology, and educational research (Clark, 2011). An assemblage of naturally occurring movements captured on video is essential when the focus is meaning-making and the descriptive element of "social and behavioral mechanisms and regularities that people use to coordinate and organize their activities with others" (Jewitt, 2012, p. 5). For this study, the use of video-cued interviews to document the children's play was essential because it facilitated me in understanding the children's perspectives. As noted by Wagner (1999), "placing images in the foreground or talking with children can increase opportunities for getting a clearer sense of what kids think" (p. 4). It also forced me to listen closely to what the children were saying. Finally, the use of visual images stimulated, refreshed, and "reframe[d] conversations between [me] and [the] children" (p. 4). This method was imperative because this study focused on immersion in a diverse population in order to extract pertinent information (Tobin et al., 1984, 2009) and to empower children by allowing them to express themselves in their own words (Forman, 1999).

Other studies have successfully integrated visual images and video-based fieldwork into research. For example, Tobin et al. (1984, 2009) employed a video-cued multivocal ethnographic approach at preschools in “Preschools in Three Cultures,” (1984) and “Preschools in Three Cultures Revisited” (2009). This method was utilized in order to garner responses from participants. Daily activities were recorded in selected preschools for each culture. Tobin’s team then edited the tapes to 20-minute footage and showed it to focus groups. Each group of educators watched the same footage. Then, elicited conversations were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. Specialists in the field were given completed transcripts to analyze through a peer examination, and participants executed a member check after being given completed transcripts to review and authenticate. Detailed descriptions of the experience, discussions of the observations, and thoughts of prospective research were then reported.

Forman (1999) also utilized the video camera to capture young children’s activities in their classrooms. After being recorded, the children were quickly approached to discuss the events shown on the screen. Children’s perceptions of their actions were documented and analyzed. Forman noted the impact that videotaping had on children’s reaction and responses. Children became more thoughtful of their actions when a video-based methodology was employed. Viewing the recordings provoked a more reflective and in-depth thinking process. Forman utilized Vygotsky’s term “tools of the mind” to describe the call-and-answer elicited by instant video.

In this study, I utilized video technology. It allowed both the participants and me to actively engage with the data collection process and afforded us – the children and me – time and space to take another look. It assisted me in realizing and confronting assumptions of children’s play behavior. As noted by Jewitt (2012), “[t]he features of digital technology enable time to be

both preserved and interfered with – slowing down and speeding up a video recording to see ‘naturally occurring events’ in new ways” (p. 6). In other words, the use of video “reawaken[s] the memories and experiences of [the] researcher [and the] participant” (p.12). One of the advantages of video observations, as previously noted by Heath, Hindmarsh, and Luff (2010), was the fact that the camera’s eye was not selective in what is being recorded. It captured the images that were in its view at that moment in time. It also captured interactions that I had previously overlooked.

However, both the representation and trustworthiness of data captured via video have been questioned. To use this medium as a data-collecting tool effectively and efficiently, training was essential. Prior to going to Jamaica a videographer coached me and I completed 5 1-hour sessions at the University of South Florida’s iTeach Lounge where I learned to use a video camera and iMovie software. I also completed 3 1-hour Transana workshops. Additionally, while in Jamaica I worked closely with videographer who specialized in editing.

Equipment and staging were important elements of my data collecting. Two digital cameras, Canon PowerShot SX10IS and a Fujifilm FinePix S2950, and one video camera, a Flip Mono Video camera were specifically designated to data collection. Each had the capacity to capture two hours worth of footage and was used both indoors and outdoors. All were compatible with the Apple MacBook on which data were downloaded and stored. A Dell computer, an external hard-drive, and a website (all password-protected) were used as alternative source of data storage. Images stored on the cameras and video cameras were deleted after they were downloaded onto the computer, external hard-drive and online storage page. Because of its size, the Flip camera was used in the classroom; it was less intrusive and required less space for setup.

The Canon was the main camera used for outdoor activities because it was sturdier and heavier than both the Flip and the Fujifilm and withstood the heavy winds and dust.

In addition, this study explored participants' positive and negative reactions to the video camera being brought in their space. It had been predicted that this "invasion" would alter the "natural behaviors" of the participants, altering the construction of data. While many researchers have posited that people, irrespective of age, have a wide variety of responses to the video camera, the majority, especially children, returned to "normal" behavior soon after taping has commenced (Clark, 2011; Fargas-Malet, McSherry, Larkin, & Robinson, 2010). It was noted that approximately 20 minutes after the introduction of the video and/or the observer, the video camera and the observer "fade[d] into the background," (Rosenstein, 2002, p. 8), which left space for accurate representation of activities to be recorded. To safeguard against misrepresentation of data I strategically and intentionally allowed the participants and their classmates to be 'filmmakers', 'directors', and actors in activities noted below.

A video camera was placed on a tripod in various locations in the classroom, depending on the specific location of the child being observed. Two days during the initial week of observation were devoted to capturing general daily activities. Specific times of the day were recorded, such as the start of the school day, early morning work and free activity time, recess and the end of the day activities. At the end of each day, the recorded footage was edited, analyzed and circumstances such as my location at the time of the filming (Heath et al., 2010) were noted. I was able to take notes of the children's general movements while in the classroom. Changes were implemented during the next session and reviewed for additional modifications as needed. From these notes I was able to place the video cameras in spaces, which would capture the children

during their morning activity. On occasions, the camera was handheld to gain better access to children's activities.

During the initial stages of data collection, reactions to me and to the equipment were carefully observed and documented. The first morning I entered the classroom, the children paid very little attention to my presence. Approximately 15 minutes after my arrival, I introduced the video camera; the majority of the students were intrigued and I allowed them to play with it. During the course of the first week, children were often given the opportunity to use the video camera and still camera in the classroom as well as to observe me as I took video footage and photographs of them. By the end of the first week, as children's interest in the instruments dwindled, I was not the visitor with a camera but simply "Ms. Carol". My initial role as an observer changed to that of participant observer (discussed further in role of the researcher).

Next, each participating child's activities were recorded in the following way: each child's outdoor play and indoor play were recorded for a day; outdoor play was recorded for approximately thirty minutes; and indoor play recorded for roughly twenty minutes. At the end of each day, the footage of each child was compiled and edited to a fifteen-minute segment and shown to the respective child to provoke thoughts and encourage dialogue on the clips being viewed. The following criteria were used to edit children video footage:

- the first two minutes of arrival followed by activity after going to his/her seat
- the last three minutes of early morning/free activity time
- the first five minutes of recess (leaving the classroom after lunch is eaten)
- five minutes of interaction with peers

During the video-cued interview, children were afforded time to reflect on the images and given the opportunity to return to past segments of the video when asked. Irrespective of the

circumstance these were the footage children were exposed to during their interviews. I, however, utilized information from their respective videos to formulate additional questions when necessary.

While one 20-minute interview was scheduled for each child, due to changes in the school schedule one child had to be interviewed twice, with each interview lasting approximately fifteen minutes. Interviews conducted with the other two children lasted more than twenty minutes because they requested playbacks of their videos. Because of the change in the school schedule, the initial plan to use every other week to video and interview children had to be modified. Videotaping was done within a span of five days and interviews were conducted over a one-week period. (See Table 1 for detailed timeline). Two out of the three interviews were conducted in my car because it was one of the quietest places on the school's campus. The only child interview to be done outside the car was done in the classroom during rest time when the noise level was at its minimum for the day. This was possible because a number of students were out of the classroom in rehearsals for graduation.

The following open-ended prompt was used as a springboard to encourage the children to focus on their play behavior, such as their "play choices and preferences, play experiences, and the meaningfulness of or the emotions associated with play" (Miller & Kuhaneck, 2008, p. 408):

"Look at the video and tell me all about what you are doing."

The follow-up prompts were:

"Tell me about the play that you are doing in the video."

"How do you feel when you play?"

"What are some of the things you like to play?"

I transcribed data from video-cued interviews conducted with the children, as well as discussions captured during their play episodes. Occasionally, the language of the 5-year-old children was not clearly articulated and cultural nonverbal nuances in response to questions proved a little challenging to report. However, the use of video footage and audio recordings allowed the episodes under scrutiny to be replayed repeatedly. This assisted me in revealing and retrieving necessary and valuable information. The use of video afforded me the opportunity to get close to real-life situations and to have sustained contiguity to the studied reality.

Video technology also afforded me space and time to pose questions used to understand the case (Stake, 2006). Additionally, it prompted new questions that were further investigated. My perceptions and those of the participants shaped these questions within the particular time and space. The phenomenon being studied was shaped by two types of perspectives: etic (outsiders' observations used to categorize events) and emic (the analysis and categorizing of events as noted by the subjects; Stake, 1995). My etic knowledge of the culture studied was constructed based on perceptions shaped by personal knowledge, worldviews, and research. Emic knowledge was constructed by and intrinsic to the participants in the study. Answers to exploratory questions were examined during the course of the study. New questions arose as connections between the insider and outsider perspectives were explored.

Semi-Structured Interviews

As noted in Chapter Two, children's beliefs and values are shaped by adults' ideologies and a variety of other cultural artifacts. Parents and teachers play vital roles in helping children construct their worlds; it was therefore necessary to gain some insight into adults' thinking in order to better understand the sociocultural context within which children were placed. One 30-

minute interview was scheduled for each adult – the participants’ teacher and parents. All interviews, with one exception, were eventually done at the planned time (one interview lasted 30 minutes and the other three interviews lasted at least 10 minutes longer than planned). The adults were very open and eager to discuss their opinions of children’s play.

Initially, the classroom teacher’s interview was scheduled for the first week of observation. This plan was modified because she had to assist the principal with special assignments and was off campus many hours that week. The interview occurred two weeks later on Tuesday, June 5, 2012. Dates and times of the primary caregivers were also modified on several occasions to suit individual’s needs.

The initial prompt used to guide the interview with the teacher was:

“Can you share your experiences as a teacher with me?”

To gain further insight, the teacher was given the following prompts:

“Tell me about the children’s play in this school setting.”

“Tell me about aspects of the curriculum that are enhanced by play.”

To gain an understanding of the primary caregiver’s experience with the school, the following prompt was used to guide the interview:

“Tell me about your experience as a member of this school’s community”

Follow-up questions used were:

“How is this experience different from your experience as a child?”

“How is your child’s play experience at school different from your early childhood play experience at school?”

The structure of the interviews is shown in **Figure 2**.

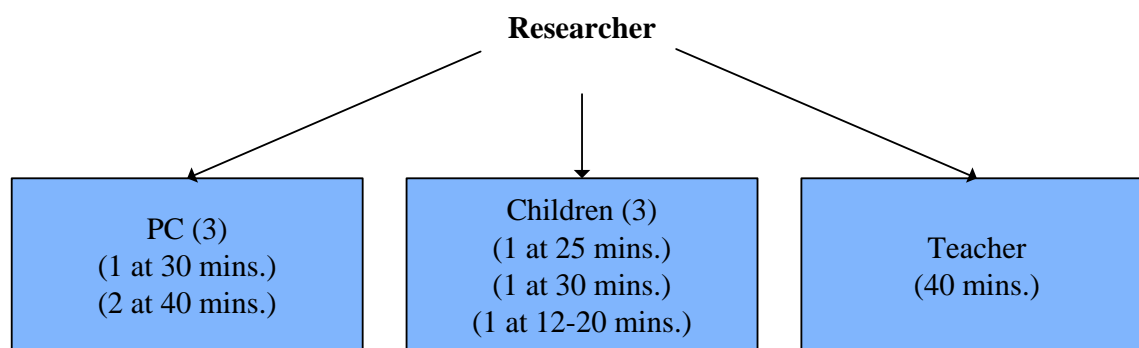


Figure 2: Interviews (Total approximately 3½ hours)

Field Notes and Reflective Journal

Field notes are written records transcribed from data collected during observations and interviews. Field notes and reflective journal are tools that help the researcher to keep accurate, detailed, and extensive account of the data collected (Janesick, 2011). A reflective journal is a personal log in which thoughts, concerns, questions, and ideas based on information collected from observations and interviews are recorded (Janesick, 2011). In this study, I chose to combine the two formats as I found it practical given the quantity of data I collected. Information was usually recorded in my field notes as soon as it was physically possible after interviews and observations (Janesick, 2011; Merriam, 2009). As my role changed from observer to a “collaborative partner”, it was easier to jot down notes cryptically during observations and interviews and later write detailed reports based on these jottings. My car became my sanctuary; at the end of each day’s observation or interview, I locked myself in the car, took approximately 30 minutes to expand information from my jottings and added more detailed information on the

day's activities. Combining the detailed observations with personal notes helped to extend my perspectives.

The use of my Researcher's Reflective Journal (RRJ) presented me with the opportunity to think critically, to process my understanding of the daily activities I observed, and to analyze. In my RRJ, I described the events as I experienced them, noting my feelings and reactions, and made note of questions that were evoked from my ponderings. The RRJ afforded me the freedom to think deeply without wondering if the forthcoming ideas were relevant to the cases being observed. It was a liberating tool, which helped me understand my role as a researcher, as graduate student, and as a Jamaican.

Role of the Researcher

In conducting a qualitative study, the researcher is the "key instrument of data collection" (Creswell, 2007) and is responsible for all data collected and analyzed (Janesick, 2011). My initial role was as a non-participant-observer; I had minimal involvement with the participants' daily routines and they were fully aware of my role as a researcher. However, as the research progressed, my role shifted to that of a participant- observer. Children, teachers, and parents included me in daily activities such as assisting children with activities and taking pictures during special activities at the school. My goal was to get close to everyday activities, interview participants in their natural settings, and get their interpretations of particular circumstances; being a participant observer met that goal. I was ultimately able to extract information and produce thick description of the data.

As a participant observer I was given the privilege of working closely with the participants as well as their parents. I engaged in class activities, assisted children with one and one class

work, such as mathematics and literacy, and accompanied the children to their school leaving rehearsals. The principal and parents requested my services as a photographer during the special events and for class portraits. During these occasions I had informal conversations with the children and the adults and gained additional information/insight on the views of play.

Information obtained through my personal relationship with the subject was not excluded from my data. I used observations, interviews, field notes, and my reflective journal to record data. The field notes enabled me to record events as they occurred; my reflective journal was critical because, as noted by Janesick (2011), it afforded me the space and time to record my thoughts, ideas, questions and reflections in detail and helped me to broaden my perspective without losing the participants' voices or my own. However, I was also cognizant that the final data produced reflected the participants' voices as seen through my eyes, which was influenced by my background as a Jamaican, my insider knowledge of the environment, and my roles as researcher, student, teacher, parent, friend, and advocate.

To prepare for this assignment, I enrolled and completed four qualitative courses. These helped me understand my role as a researcher and writer. I learned about data collection techniques and the reporting process by attending workshops and training sessions. I assisted with data collection for a qualitative study, which involved conducting and analyzing audiovisual data from a student project and teacher candidates' reflections. Because video-cued interview was fundamental to this study, the training I received in video editing was essential in the study's success.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis was conducted using the following resources: (a) transcriptions of audio recordings of each of the semi-structured and video-cued interviews; (b) video recordings and field notes created from observations of play, and (c) informal conversations with participants. These data were used to identify and code themes that emerged as related by each preschool child, caregiver, and teacher based on their personal comments. Coding involves representatively assigning salient themes to a cumulative portion of the data that capture the “essence” of the phenomenon from the language or the visual data (Saldaña, 2009). It is an interpretative method of organizing data that requires time to visit and revisit data to extrapolate more information as needed. I drew from Stake (1995) and Saldaña’s (2009) coding methods in order to identify patterns and themes. I reviewed the data records and generated open codes from passages in the data. This was done on several occasions before finalizing the themes that I felt represented the participants’ voices.

Video footage of the children’s play episodes was downloaded to the Apple MacBook and edited using iMovie. In editing the videos, the following criterion were used: activities done during early morning free activity session – five minutes; first five minutes of play after leaving the classroom; interactions with peers on the playground – five minutes; the last five minutes of recess. The audio recordings of children’s video-cued interviews were transcribed and relevant sections were coded to edited sections of the video. Themes were generated from each child’s transcription then grouped in categories; subcategories were also identified. I reflected on how and where I had positioned myself to video the children as they played and how this influenced what I saw as I edited the video, as noted in my journal:

It is a very subjective way to edit video clips as I have intentionally positioned the camera to exclude some areas of the environment (e.g., the immediate area where Azikiwe sat as he worked in his workbook and played with his classmates at the table. Once he moved to other areas of the classroom, he was out of the camera's eye unless I could quickly get to the instrument and manually operate it. Today, I lost his interaction with Ms. Lawson as it was out of the camera's focus.

Fortunately, I recorded the activity in the field notes. This made me more aware of the camera's limitations and the need for very detailed description of activities outside of the camera's range. (Researcher's Reflective Journal, June 15, 2012)

I found it effective to identify codes, themes, and sub-themes manually. Each transcript was reproduced, read several times, and then relevant sections were coded, and highlighted with predetermined colors representative of the specific code. Post-it notes labeled with each category were placed on different sections of the wall and with the use of a pair of scissors transcripts were separated, grouped accordingly and placed under the appropriate Post-it. For example, from each individual transcript when the participants spoke of imaginary play the section was highlighted in blue.

It was time-consuming and messy, but I felt comfortable using this method because I was able to spread a large volume of data on the ground then physically move blocks of information around. It was similar to choreographing a dance; the choreographer has a theme or topic in mind and, as the movements are performed and new ideas are created, the sequences and patterns changed. As I visited and revisited the data, more themes and subthemes emerged and the order, placement, and patterns changed. With each adjustment of data, the transcripts were reproduced, recoded, highlighted, and placed under new headings. As a mainly kinesthetic learner, this

physical interaction with the data enabled me to not only move the data around on a tactile level, but also assisted me to replay related images in my mind as I played with the data. I internalized the events and became one with the data. This helped me to see connections clearer, which assisted me in meaning-making. With each revisit the categories became more concise which resulted in five main themes.

To ensure transparency and trustworthiness, transcripts generated from each interview were given to the respective individuals for member checking (Stake, 2003). Primary caregivers read children's transcripts to them; on one occasion I was asked to assist with this process. Although the adults tried to respond to questions in Standard Jamaican English (SJE), many times they slipped into the Jamaican Patois (JP). The children seldom spoke SJE during the interview. This made reading time consuming as most Jamaicans are not accustomed to reading JP, as this is an oral language and the adult participants in this study are from that majority. My recording of the transcripts was also very time consuming because I had to create words phonetically as I listened to each interview. The timeline for the study is shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Timeline

Steps	Activities
<i>Step 1: Obtained IRB and Committee Approval</i>	
April – May 2012	Approval from school board to use school facilities; Letter from Researcher to Board via Principal of the school; Proposal defense May 7, 2012.

Table 1 (Continued)

<i>Step 2: Research and Data Collection</i>	
May 21, 2012	Arrived in Jamaica, May 21, 2012.
May 22 – 25, 2012	Week 1: Observation and video of school environment (all day Tuesday, Thursday, Friday); acquainted children with cameras; began researcher's field notes.
May 28 – June 1, 2012	Week 2: Observation of children within the classroom environment; updated field notes.
June 4 – June 8, 2012	Week 3: Video-taped and observed Child 1 (during free activity and recess); full day of shadowing; interviewed class teacher (approximately 40 min); transcribed teacher's notes (approximately 3 hrs.); edited video (use approximately 10 min); updated field notes; began analyzing.
June 11 – 15, 2012	Week 4: Interviewed Child 1's PC (approximately 30 min); Child 1's video-cued interview; observed and videoed Child 2 (during indoor free play and recess); transcribed notes from PC's interview (approximately 3 hr); edited video (use approximately 10 min); video-cue interview with Child 2 (twice); observed and video-taped Child 3; updated field notes; continued analyzing video and interview.
June 17 – 22, 2012	Week 5: Transcribed notes from Child 2's interview (approximately 2 hr); updated field notes; edited Child 3's video; video-cued interview with Child 3; transcribed notes from Child 3's interview (approximately 2.5 hr); updated field notes; continued analyzing.
June 25 – 29, 2012	Week 6: Interviewed Child 3's PC (approximately 40 min); transcribed notes from PC's interview (approximately 3 hr); had informal interviews with children; continued to do general observations and updated field notes.

Table 1 (Continued)

July 2 – 6, 2012	Week 7: Interviewed Child 2's PC; (approximately 45 min); transcribed notes from PC's interview (approximately 3 hr); updated field notes; continued analyzing; identified and coded themes using Rubin and Rubin (2005) and Saldaña (2011).
July 9 – 13, 2012	Week 8: Wrap-up session with participants; Rubin's (2005) guidelines for data analysis and Freeman and Mathison's (2009) and Stake's (2006) guidelines for visual data analysis.
July 16 – 20, 2012	Week 9: Compared results for inconsistencies; did final member check with participants (conducted off-site).
	<p>Weekly:</p> <p>Audit trail – Videos were edited using iMovie; both video footage and audio transcription were electronically stored on MacBook computer; each individual's interview (teacher, primary caregiver and children) was dated and stored in separate folders.</p> <p>Transcribed interviews were given to each interviewee for member checking.</p> <p>Children's transcribed interviews were read to them by PC.</p> <p>Peers were given copies of data and interpretations for scrutiny during research timeline.</p> <p>Approximately 3 hr of writing per 40 min of interview with each adult for a total of 12 hr; approximately 2.5 hr of writing for each 25 minutes of interview with child for a total 7.5 hours; overall total 19.5 hr.</p>

Table 1 (Continued)

<i>Step 3: Interpretation and Analysis</i>	
August 2012	Field notes included in respective folders.
September – October 2012	Updated field notes included in folders. Coded and identified categories and themes.
November 2012	Got feedback from peers.
January 30, 2013	Met with Graduate School personnel regarding ETD.
February 1, 2013	Met with major professor.
February 8, 2013	Submitted complete document to major professor.
February 14, 2013	Met with committee member regarding methodology.
February 15 – April 22, 2013	Did additional edits to chapters 4 and 5.

Trustworthiness And Confirmability

Just as the choreographer and dancers/storytellers work together to present a dance repertoire, researchers and participants construct meaning together. This study's report was an authentic representation done by the performers (the children) based on the choreographer's (researcher-author) knowledge (etic and emic) and particular insights and interpretation. The audience's response to the piece presented will be subjected to the message expressed by the dancers as shaped by the choreographer. Was the story authentic, truthful, and believable? The methodology used to gain data from participants and then presented to the audience was flexible in order to stay true to the voices of both the choreographer and the dancers/storytellers. There was a connection felt between the dancers, the choreographer, and hopefully of the audience as the story was presented.

Qualitative studies give detailed descriptions of events in which people are involved. It was important for me to convey these events truthfully, purposefully, and accurately (Janesick, 2011; Stake, 1995). Because qualitative research is based on human beings as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (Janesick, 2011; Mayan, 2009; Merriam, 1998; Rubin & Rubin, 2005), closeness to the participants shape the interpretation of the reality of the data presented (reality used here to mean authenticity). It was important that as I reported my findings to the readers that the participants' perspectives were understood in the contextual framework in which they were situated, and that they were presented through a "holistic interpretation of what was happening" (Mayan, 2009, p. 203). It is hoped that readers will have confidence in the study as they see that the research was conducted comprehensively, that my work was seen as credible, that the results were reported meticulously, and that the data were confirmable.

Trustworthiness

The role of trustworthiness is an indicator of the extent of the study's potential to be compared to other similar activities across populations of persons, settings, times, and outcomes. In qualitative research, because observations and results are based on human beings, repeating the exact conditions of the study is difficult. The research is done explicitly with a specific set of persons at a specific time and place. With each selection of participants, the composition and the feel of the dance change. While the design could be imitated and the same site utilized, other factors such as time of year, or even time of day, could yield a completely different set of responses (Stake, 1995). Interpretations of movements are influenced by the relationship between people and contexts such as culture. As noted by Stake (1995), trustworthiness of the study is based on (a) accuracy of the account as reported by the researcher; (b) the fact that participants'

viewpoints, thoughts, intentions, and experiences are accurately understood and reported; and (c) a theoretical explanation from other research is used to interpret incidences experienced in the study.

In this study, I ensured consistency in the collection and reporting of data. As noted earlier, videoing then editing each video was afforded the same time. During the interview sessions, each child participant was allowed time to get comfortable with the video clips and given latitude to return to the footage if required. The data collected were accurate and truthful as each recorded interview was transcribed verbatim then reviewed by the interviewee. Bias based on my closeness to the situation was reported in the RRJ and included in the final report. From information received and the method utilized, it is hoped that it would be applicable to other similar studies, thereby allowing readers to relate and apply findings to studies of comparable conditions.

Confirmability

Each researcher brings a unique perspective to the study. To ensure trustworthiness, a high level of confirmability is needed. Confirmability refers to the degree of neutrality where the participants' interests shape the findings of the study, not the researcher's preconceptions, motivation, or interest. It also refers to the ability to match research findings with reality and ascertain how well the discoveries are supported by the data collected (Merriam, 1998). It is important that information from the research is congruent with reality.

In this study, the following strategies were used to increase trustworthiness and confirmability:

1. Triangulation, which included the use of multiple theories and perspectives to help interpret and explain the data; a junction between different data collection methods, such as observations, interviews, field notes, researcher's reflective journal, and video taping. Although it was a time consuming process, it afforded me time to process information/data collected and ensured credibility of the data.
2. Member checks. I requested participants to review the notes about what was said or done. Parents read children's transcripts to them and, on one occasion, I was asked to assist. Adults checked areas such as the initial coded themes to ensure that I had truthfully represented their information accurately and completely. Drafts of the interviews were shared periodically with each adult participant. After reviewing completed transcripts once, all parents were in agreement with their transcripts. The teacher asked for clarification to be done to one section of her transcript. Once edited, she reviewed and returned it.
3. Long-term observation and being closely engaged with the participants helped enhance the study. It afforded me the opportunity to fully immerse myself in the environment in which the participants operate. For this study, I was in the field four days a week for approximately six weeks. Though the time was limited, the nature of the descriptive case study facilitated in-depth data collection. Each child was observed for one school day – 7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The play sessions were video recorded – a total of two for the day. Field notes and journal entries were also utilized.
4. Peer examination and debriefing. Colleagues who were experts in the field of early childhood education and qualitative analysis were consulted to review and provide unbiased review feedback on the data presented. One colleague from the institution where

I worked and another early childhood specialist knowledgeable on Jamaican early childhood education and children's play provided feedback on themes extracted from the data and of categories chosen. They were provided with sections of the transcripts, initial codes, and themes. Once feedback was given to me, I used these notes to reorganize my data coding or to justify the codes and themes. The colleague from my institution assisted with this process twice while the professor and author of children's play assisted me on numerous occasions as I reorganized/reclassified subthemes and themes. As 'outsiders', questions asked by my major professor and another fellow doctoral candidate were instrumental in keeping me true to the data.

5. Researcher's internality. My reflections, which accompanied my field notes, helped to make my background and values visible. This narrative was reported in a divided notebook and included observations of children's activities, personal thoughts, feelings, and reactions to events as they occurred. It also included notes from informal conversations with participants, other children, teachers, and parents, and quotations that I thought captured the moment and diagrams as I brainstormed ideas. Notations were messy but helpful as they were written in both SJE and JP aided with diagrams and doodles; these tactics helped me synthesize feelings and thoughts/ideas under specific headings.

Ethical Considerations

To proceed with this study, approval of the University of South Florida's Institutional Research Board (IRB) was obtained. Once approved, the selected participants received letters of invitation to join the study. This correspondence described the purpose, process, and goal of the study and included the informed consent, which assured the individuals of confidentiality and

their ability to withdraw from the study at any point without any questions asked. In the case of the children, the parent gave consent on his or her behalf. I addressed all ethical issues that occurred during the study on an individual basis. At no point in this study did I attempt any intervention that went against the rights of the child as in accordance with the Jamaican laws on children's rights.

Young Children in Research

Conducting research with children, especially young ones, as co-investigators posed unique and complex challenges. Some of the potential challenges faced were selection of participants, confidentiality, privacy, trust, and comprehension of the study. To overcome these obstacles, it was critical to spend time with potential participants and their primary caregivers (Harcourt & Conroy, 2011). Young participants must understand their active role in generating information from proposed research. This empowers the individuals and strengthens the level of trust between adult and child. In addition to eliciting the child's consent and cooperation, there are other gatekeepers who are part of the important decision-making process such as primary caregivers, the principal and staff of the school, and other children (Fargas-Malet et al., 2010). It was the child's right to accept or refuse to be an active agent in the research; he or she also had the right to express his or her own opinion "on all matters affecting the child" (Robson, 2009, p. 182).

In this research, children were asked to be honest and open about their activities. An invasion of personal space and time was solicited to accommodate this research focused on sociocultural views of children's play. It was very important to include the Jamaican children's active voices in order to assist in broadening the sociocultural context on this topic. Another

important aspect I considered when I involved the children in this research was the importance of the topic to them (Smith, 2011). Was it meaningful and engaging?

Selection of Participants

Children selected for this study showed keen interest in the topic and were members of the school and immediate communities. Due to the qualifying factors employed, decisions made regarding the selection of children to be included in the study were left to the principal and the classroom teacher. After the site was selected and prior to the selection of the participants, a letter of support addressed to my major professor and me was obtained from the principal. An information session was conducted that included parents, the student body, and faculty and staff members.

Informed Consent

There are protocols to be observed at all levels of the research process and any research that utilizes human participants necessitates informed consents. Fargas-Malet et al. (2010) stated, “[i]nformed consent should be freely given (without coercion, threat, or persuasion) by children who can make an appropriately informed decision” (p. 177). It was important that participants were informed of the nature the research they would undertake prior to signing the consent form. Rubin and Rubin (2005) stated that an informed consent should include the following: (a) a statement describing the purpose(s) of the research; (b) “background on the researcher” (p. 104); (c) the benefits and possible risks [if any] “to those involved” (p.104); (d) length of the study; (e) availability of the results for the participants to scrutinize; (f) an offer for the participant to

withdraw at any time for any reason; (g) indication of the degree of confidentiality of the results (p. 104); (h) the transparency of the study; and (i) the availability of the researcher in the event there are queries from the participants. Once the consent forms were written, they were given to the participants with a reasonable time to read and sign (two weeks).

After I gave an initial informal individualized introduction, participants received a cover letter (Appendix A) that highlighted details of the research and a consent form they had to sign to participate in the study. The child's assent was obtained orally after agreeing to take part in the research. A form (Appendix E) written with the use of appropriate language for that age group was read to the child by the primary caregiver. Primary caregiver and teacher consent forms (Appendix C; Appendix D) were given for signature of agreement. Permission for the utilization of the site was obtained from the relevant authorities – the Board Chairman of the basic school and/or the head teacher/principal (Appendix B). At the general staff/faculty meeting, other members of the school community were made aware of the research to be conducted.

The participants were informed of the purpose of the study. They knew that: (a) all interviews were recorded; (b) some recess, lunchtime, and classroom activities involving play were video-recorded; (c) only the children observed will view their individual videos; (d) if at any point in the study participants felt uncomfortable and wished to withdraw, they could do so without any questions being asked; and (e) all documents including videos, audio recordings and other personal information and items would be immediately destroyed if the participant chose to withdraw from the study. The use of video made anonymity and confidentiality challenging. However, with the aid of improved digital reconfiguration it was possible to obscure facial features and alter clothing to assure some level of confidentiality, if deemed necessary. All relevant documents were stored, scanned, and uploaded to the password-protected Apple

MacBook, and internet storage page. Videos and audio recordings were stored on a password-protected laptop, internet storage page, and external hard drives.

Summary and Concluding Thoughts

In this chapter, I focused on the methodologies chosen for data collection, data analysis, creating a timeline of the study, and working with participants. I outlined some of the limitations and challenges that impacted the study and shared how some of these obstacles were lessened or eliminated. While being involved in a study with young children proved challenging, there were positive outcomes gained from doing research with young Jamaican children. As a member of the community, I saw numerous incidences of engagement where the children were involved in a study that gave them the ability to be active participants in developing and informing the greater public.

Although the data presented were not generalizable, it is hoped the design of the study added value to the existing early childhood literature on play. I also hoped that the stakeholders in the Caribbean and Jamaica are sensitized to the importance for the need of more empirical data that address the cultural childhood norms. Chapter Three illustrated the significance of utilizing the case study as a method of data collection. In Chapter Four, the children's stories will be related through the lens of a sociocultural theoretical framework as the data are presented. Chapter Five will cover the themes that emerged from participants' lived experiences, present the analysis of the findings and implications to the play-based curriculum in Jamaica, and discuss the influence the results may have on future research in Jamaica.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

In play a child always behaves beyond his average age, above his daily behavior. In play it is as though he were a head taller than himself.
- Lev Vygotsky Russian psychologist 1896–1934

So mu getti, so mi sell it,
(Jamaican Proverb)

The purpose of this study was to describe and explain the lived experience of play of selected Jamaican children from the viewpoint of the child. In addition, it is hoped the information gained would contribute to the developing literature on Jamaican's play based curriculum. The overarching question was, "What challenges exist in understanding the role of play in the cultural context of Jamaican schooling?" The following exploratory sub-questions, supporting the overarching questions, were used to guide the study:

1. What is the nature of young children's play?
2. What perceptions and understandings are derived from young children's play from the child's viewpoint?
3. What factors contribute to these perceptions and understandings?

All participants in the study were assigned pseudonyms. Each child's assigned name is based on the child's personality and is of African origin as all the children are of African descent,

as noted in the narratives. From a group of 28 students, Chiku Petchary, Azikiwe Doctor Bird, and Radhiya Barble Dove were selected for observation. As noted earlier, both the principal and the classroom teacher chose the children utilizing the criteria that were given to them. All participating adults' pseudonyms were reflective of a significant part of their personality. Ms. Naki, Chiku's mother, meant first born; she was the first child in her family and this played an important role in her formative years. Mr. Kafil's name, Azikiwe's father, stemmed from the meaning "protector and provider." He was the only working adult of the family and believed it was his responsibility to protect and provide for his family. Mr. Kontar, Radhiya's father, was assigned a name that meant "only child." This was representative of his life as an only child, which played a very important part in his ideology on his child's upbringing.

The chapter, divided into descriptive segments, includes the setting, introductions to the participants, the stories of the children's lived play experiences, interpretation, and the themes that emerged from each individual case as each exploratory question was asked. Quotes from conversations with the children, teacher, and parents were used to give authenticity to interpretations supplied. I end each section with a summary.

Initially, I had planned to use a chapter for each child's play story. However, after reflecting on the children's lived play experiences, I noted that this would not be a true representation of their stories. Their perceptions intertwined with each other's play stories and had to be told as parts of a whole. I told their stories through the use of quotes from interviews, my field notes, reflective journal, and the original videos.

Because the emphasis was based on the premise of understanding play through the eyes of the child, I included quotes from the parents' interviews, putting their thoughts together with their respective child's. In this way, I show the reader connections between the children's views

and that of their parents. The teacher's views are listed separately and connections between her views and the other adults' views are explained. I have also included some Jamaican proverbs/sayings that capture the true essence and nature of Jamaican culture reflected in the stories being told.

Setting and Contexts

UPC Basic, a preschool founded in February 1973, is situated in the eastern region of Jamaica and serves approximately 260 students whose age range from three years to six years. Approximately 70% of the children live within a five- to six-mile radius of the school (the surrounding communities) with the remaining 30% coming from as far as 10 to 20 miles away. Many of these children reside within households consisting of extended families and/or friends of the family.

A 2008 report indicated parents from three out of every ten households in Jamaica migrated to other Caribbean islands, North America, or the United Kingdom for "economic opportunities" (Lewis, 2008), leaving children with grandparents, other family members, older siblings, and family friends. Unfortunately, many of these "barrel children," as they are called, are often left to their own devices with minimal adult supervision; this resulted in poor school attendance and behavioral challenges both at school and home. The term "barrel children" became popular as children received barrels containing material items such as books and clothing from their parents residing overseas. The caregivers received remittances for the general upkeep of the children.

In other situations, mothers were the breadwinners. Hence, fathers who were often unemployed were responsible for the 'drop off' and 'pick up' of the children. In the absence of a

father, children were left to fend for themselves, and it was not unusual to see a kindergarten student being the responsible party for his or her preschool sibling or relative. In other circumstances, parents or caregivers who lived in “common-law” relationships and those legally married shared responsibilities for the children’s educational needs and often alternated other responsibilities.

The school is located in the center of these communities. A tertiary school, two car dealerships, a building for a service club, and law enforcement facilities such as a court, a holding area for petty prisoners, and training and living accommodations for both the army and police force border it. The school is sponsored by non-profit and non-government agencies and relied on subsidies from the Ministry of Education to assist with salaries for both the faculty and staff.

As noted in Chapter Three, there are nine classrooms, three for each year group. The five-year-old classrooms occupy two spaces, two located beside each other immediately beside the playground and to the south of the car park, and the third located at the western end of the administrative block. My observations were conducted in the classroom to the right when facing the two classrooms from the playground (see Figure 3). This classroom was purposefully selected because (a) the teacher was enrolled in a part-time teacher education program and was interested in being included in the study; (b) the children were comfortable being observed as this was often done by teacher-candidates doing field experiences and other stakeholders; and (c) the group of children were involved in extra school activities where they were often photographed.

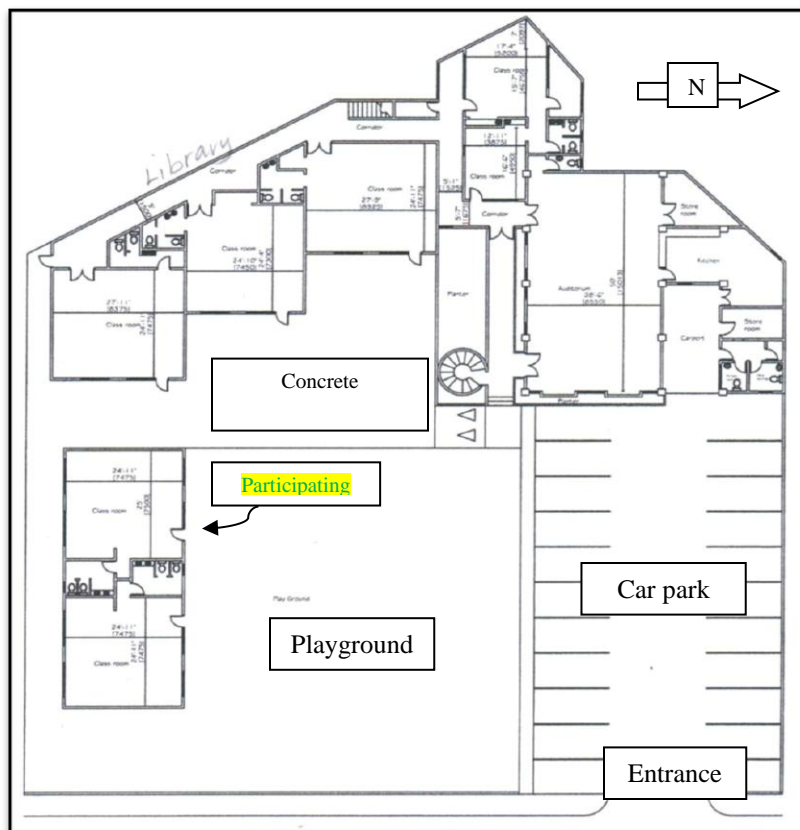


Figure 3: UPC Basic School Layout

The Classroom

The classroom was set up so that one entered into the back of the class on the east side. The bathroom was adjacent to this and the blackboard was on the opposite wall. The classroom walls (the parts that could be seen) were painted with two colors. The lower half was a practical mixture of dull red and deep burgundy, hiding the dirt and scuffmarks, while the upper half was a pale lemon yellow that added brightness to the environment. The walls were covered with numerous handmade and commercial charts of varying sizes and colors, illustrating many of the basic rules and common learning elements associated with early childhood learning, such as days of the week, months of the year, the alphabet, how to wash your hands, Jamaica National heroes,

word wall, duties, and rewards (see Figure 4). There was little display of children's work on the walls. Children rarely looked at the charts or posters unless the teacher made specific reference to them during guided learning sessions, such as language arts and social studies.



Figure 4: Classroom (Southeastern section)

Two sizes of white aluminum windows punctuated the walls on both sides of the room. Many of the larger windows had broken levers, operated often by the children themselves, who pushed the blades of the windows up or down to open or close them. These windows had burglar bars over them that were painted the same color as the bottom half of the wall. I rarely saw the small windows, located above the larger ones, opened.

The wooden exterior of the roof was covered with galvanized zinc, which made the roof very hot during the mid-morning to late afternoons, and noisy when it rained. To overcome the heat, two large white overhead fans were installed that constantly hummed during these periods. A third fan stood beside the teacher's desk and this supplied additional cooling during extra hot days. It was also utilized during parent consultations with the classroom teacher.

The single doorway was painted a bright pink. Behind this door was a set of cubbies. Past the bathroom door, behind a thick six-inch protruding concrete wall used as a notice board, stood a second row of natural colored wooden cubbies. Together, there were 18 spaces to accommodate 28 children (see Figure 5). No names were written on each space; however, each child appeared to know where to put his or her belongings.



Figure 5: Entrance to Classroom

Immediately in front of the second set of cubbies, separated by about 18 inches of space, was a blue, three-tiered open shelf. This formed one of the ‘walls’ for the dramatic play area. On the floor, below a set of the barred windows in the space created by the two shelves, a small three-foot square area, boarded to the front by a red wooden plank and to the back by the wall, was a variety of plastic toys and blocks.

Because of its dimensions, the dramatic play area could hold only two or three children at a time and was not very conducive to interactive play. A few boys mostly utilized the small-sized toys, such as trucks, cars, action figures and a few dolls along with blocks of varying sizes and

shapes, for short periods during the morning free activity session. Very often, the children removed the toys and blocks from the area and played with them either at their tables or in the open space at the back of the classroom. On occasion, the area was utilized at the end of the school day, but then children were always sternly reminded by the classroom teacher to neatly replace all items and ensured that none of the toys were missed. Children usually returned the items responsibly and either went outdoors to play or sat at their tables waiting to be collected.

The small classroom was filled with 12 child-sized tables, four small wooden desks, the teacher's table, a desk for the assistant, and 36 child-sized green metal chairs and four red ones (more than needed for the 28 students). In addition, there were three adult-sized metal chairs with padded seats covered in what appeared to be leatherette. Each of the children's tables seated four or more students and were pushed against each other to form three groups – one group with six tables, one with four, and the other with two.

One wooden desk was placed at the back of the room near the teacher's desk, approximately three feet from the other tables. It was used as a means of monitoring students who had challenging behaviors or who were disruptive. During my weeks of observation, one particular child frequently occupied this seat. He was the sole occupant for four of the weeks I observed this class.

The remaining desks were pushed against the north wall and were used by the teacher and her assistant when one-on-one work was done with students. The remaining space against the north wall was occupied by another set of natural colored wooden cupboards where additional classroom supplies were stored. The doors to these cupboards were closed and children had little or no access to the supplies placed in them. Placed on top of the cupboard were children's workbooks, a tape recorder, a clay flowerpot with a fading unrecognizable plant,

and the assistant teacher's black and silver 15" Acer laptop. Art supplies such as paint, glue, ink, and paper towel were placed on a table located by the teacher's desk and children never took the initiative to use these items. They were utilized only during creative learning time or when the classroom teacher, assistant teacher, or the Spanish teacher used them for a project.

The Playground

Located at the front of the school, the playground was bordered to the north and the east by a four and a half foot high open linked metal fence, to the south by two of the five-year-old classrooms, and to the west by an open concrete walkway, three classrooms, and an enclosed spiral staircase that led to the administrative section of the school on the second floor. At the western end of the playground located about four feet from the edge of the concrete pathway were two sets of swings, one with two swings and the other with three (see Figure 6 and Figure 7). Metal legs and crossbars were painted in colors of red, yellow, blue, and green and showed signs of constant use and weathering. There were no forms of shade to protect them from the blaze of the sun's rays or rain and children constantly climbed the crossbars. The swings had seats comprised of recycled tires and were attached to the crossbars by heavy-duty metal chain links varied in distance from the ground.

At the northwestern end of the playground, approximately five to six feet from the swings, stood multicolored three-tiered monkey bars. This equipment was a layered open-faced cuboid made from metal and also showed signs of weathering as it too was left to the elements. The faded colors could also be as a result of the wear and tear from its daily use by a majority of the children.



Figure 6: Southwestern end of the playground



Figure 7: Northwestern end of the playground and administrative building

Facing north, and approximately six to seven feet to the right of the monkey bars stood the first of the two slides; the second slide was another four feet to its right. The legs and steps of both slides were made of metal and the slides appeared to be of thick smooth aluminum. Both shared the same multicolored pattern as the swings and the monkey bars. Although the slides were fairly close to two old weathered and fairly tall Poinciana trees planted on the other side of the fence, they never received any of the shade cast by trees' shadows. However, this did not deter the children from utilizing any of the equipment mentioned because they could be seen enjoying each with lots of shouts and laughter and made use of them in very ingenious ways. They also enjoyed playing with tires in the center of the playground or on the concrete pavement located between the playground and the four-year-old classrooms.

There were two more Poinciana trees, a large shrub, wild vines plus branches of a large flowering tree whose trunk reached across the fence and nestled close to the edge of one of the five-year-old classrooms. These trees provided the only shade for the playground during early mornings to mid-afternoon. As the sun moved westward, the shade from the trees was lost except for the section just beside the five-year-old classrooms, along the southern fence.

I was not surprised to see that many children played under the shade of these branches; however, the time spent there was limited as they were constantly moving from the shaded area to face the hot sun's rays. Two variables may have accounted for the children's ability to withstand the heat. One was the time of day recess was taken (mid-morning), and two was the time of year (late spring). During this period, there was usually a constant breeze, which seemed to temper the heat and gave the children the much needed cooling to stay on the playground.

The children utilized the playground twice a day — during the mid-morning recess and at the end of the school day. After lunch was consumed, the children were allowed to exercise




autonomy by directing their own play. During this period, teachers took the time to eat and prepare for the afternoon sessions. Because all classrooms faced the playground, teachers were able to keep watchful eyes on the very noisy, boisterous, and apparently chaotic proceedings. On very hot and dry days, the constant motion of the children as they played on the gravel created clouds of dust that appeared to hang on the sun's rays and hovered just above the children's heads with some of the dust resting on their sweaty bodies. This caused noticeable lines on their faces as perspiration streamed through the dust.

Occasionally, teachers could be seen playing games with their students on the shaded section of the playground during the early part of the day. Very rarely were teachers outside with the children during the afternoon as this was the hottest period of the day and shade was very limited. After recess and before the end of school, the playground became a "ghost town" with only the occasional wind playing chase with the dust or caressing the leaves of the trees and shrubs located on the periphery of the playground.

Participants

As explained in Chapter Three, participants were purposefully selected. The primary caregivers (PCs) were the children's biological parents and were referred to as "parents." Basic demographic information of each child and adult, including length of time at UPC Basic and family background, is listed in Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 2: Children's Demographic Data

Data Gathered	Chiku Petchary	Azikiwe Doctor Bird	Radhiya Barble Dove
			
Age	5 yrs, 10 mths	5 yrs, 11 mths	5 yrs, 11 mths
Time at UPC	3 years	3 years	3.5 years
Family Background	Lived with single parent and older sibling; seven other siblings	Lived with married parents, three older brothers and one younger sister	Lived with mother and father (unmarried); an only child

All three children were involved in after school activities and were the top scoring students in the academic subjects of the three 5-year-old classrooms. At the time of the study, all three children would matriculate to grade one at different elementary schools within a five-mile radius of their present school. Each school had an average population of 900 students and class size of approximately 35 to 40 students with one teacher.

All three parents were raised in rural areas then moved to Kingston, the capital of Jamaica, to further their education and to seek jobs. Ms. Lawson, the classroom teacher was raised in the corporate area (Kingston), completed grade 11, and began her career as a teacher's assistant. At the time study, Ms. Lawson was enrolled in a teacher training certification program where she was introduced to play as a teaching/learning tool and was also engaged in workshops conducted by training officers (TO) from the Early Childhood Commission. During these sessions, the TOs conducted training to assist teachers in the implementation of the play-based curriculum.

Table 3: Adults' Demographic Background

Data Gathered	Ms. Naki Chiku Petchary's Parent	Mr. Kafil Azikiwe Doctor Bird's Parent	Mr. Kontar Radhiya Barble Dove's Parent	Ms. Lawson (Teacher)
Age	Early 30's	Mid 60's	Late 30's	Early 30's
Profession	Teacher/Administrator	Retired civil servant/social security	Private sector employee/supervisor	Para-professional (In training)
Family Background	Single parent of two; unmarried	Married parent of five children	Parent of only child; unmarried; lived with significant other	Single parent of one child
Education	Completed formal three-year teacher training	Completed 9 th grade and three years of trade school	Completed 11 th grade; currently in a training program	Teaching for 10 years; first year in teacher training certification program

Pop Story Gi Mi – Tell Me About The Latest Information

During my weeks of observations, I realized that there were many layers to children's play behavior. In the following sections, the reader will be introduced to each child as a case. For each case, I have intentionally labeled the play behavior in response to the exploratory questions in the following way: (a) *de chips nevva fly far from de block* (characteristics); this Jamaican phrase speaks to the traits exhibited by a child. It suggests that the characteristics of an individual exhibit the traits of his/her parents or other members of their family and/or community; (b) *cum wi guh play crocodile* (nature or types of play); the nature and type of play behaviors exhibited

by many Jamaican children are high energy, fast-paced, role shifting, selfless, and spontaneous. Crocodile, a type of tag, is a game, which captures all these elements; (c) mek wi play sint'ing (play contexts and materials); the word sint'ing is used to capture what, how and where play happens; (d) mek mi ears eat grass (play purposes); adults often use this phrase to regulate children's activities; and (e) ben' de tree wen it young (work or play tensions); similar to the previous phrase this phrase proposes how children are trained and what is taught to them, this begins at an early age. Each child's play experience was summarized and an overall summary concluded the chapter.

Chiku Petchary (Talkative, Full of Life)

Chiku was an average-sized five-year-old girl whom many members of the class gravitated to as soon as she entered the classroom. She was of a light brown complexion, had dark brown eyes protected by average-length thin eyelashes and framed by neatly shaped eyebrows. She had a small pug nose, and average-sized lips, which revealed small perfectly white teeth when she parted them. Her brown hair appeared to be of a soft texture and was always neatly plaited either in elaborate cornrow style or regular plaits. On many occasions, her plaits hosted either red and white hair clips or red ribbons. Her uniform, a red and white plaid or green and white plaid tunic, was always neat, clean, and crisp. She was very deliberate in fixing the pleats of the skirt, placing them in order so as not to crush them when she sat. During 'regular' school days, on her small feet she wore navy blue socks, which came up to approximately two or three inches above her ankle and black 'Mary Jane' style shoes. These appeared to be made of leather uppers and hard plastic soles. On other occasions, she wore white sneakers with either white or navy blue socks.

De Skool Yaard: A School Day in the Life of Chiku

Chiku was the social pigeon. Her morning operation or ritual began with social greetings and gatherings. As she entered the classroom, several of her peers called her name. Some would leave their activities to physically greet her with a hug or just a touch, while others would wave, smile, or nod their greetings. As she shed her blue and white lunch kit and her matching colored Tinkerbelle backpack, she held an audience with her friends, laughing, talking, and listening to those within the immediate circle, looking occasionally to the others as they moved around the classroom. Some mornings her mother would assist her by taking her lunch kit to her assigned spot in the wooden cubby at the back of the classroom while she hung her backpack on the back of her metal chair.

Her next phase of operation was to employ her peers in some activity, often initiated by the items she had removed from her backpack – a coloring book and crayons, a puzzle, or a deck of cards, to name a few. Her morning play usually included the children sitting within close proximity to her table. However, on numerous occasions, she moved among the other tables and desks and invited specific friends to join in on the “fun” (her words). During her periods of socialization, I was privy to see her perform the role of village lawyer (negotiator or mediator) between friends and offer what appeared to be reasonable solutions. Her expressive facial mien (scowl, smile, or eye rolling), vocal sounds (“kissing of the teeth”, chuckle, sigh) and animated body actions (arms folded across the chest, hands flashing vigorously, or palm raised and waving from side to side) said more than her vocabulary expressed. More interestingly, her peers seemingly understood every nuance and incomplete sentence she exchanged with them and they responded accordingly.

On many occasions, during the early morning work time, it was not uncommon for one of her classmates to approach her seeking assistance such as borrowing a pencil or an eraser (also known as “rubber”), or to support him or her in an activity. She initiated actions and/or verbal responses; she either responded favorably or resisted the call for assistance. The latter was rarely seen.

Several mornings, Chiku was called on by the classroom teacher to conduct devotion (a ritual observed by most Jamaican educational institutions). In some instances, she offered her services when others were reluctant to be the leader of the devotional sessions. Chiku also exhibited occasions of “quiet spells.” During these moments, she either concentrated on the job at hand, such as class work (reading, math, or Spanish), or looked with interest at what others in the class were doing. Her posture was usually the same – her elbows positioned on the wooden table bearing the weight of her head as she rested her chin on her palms. Her eyes darted from table to table; occasionally a frown or a slight smile would appear on an otherwise somber face.

De chips nevva fly far from de block: Characteristics of Chiku’s Play Behavior

“de chips nevva fly far from de block” is a Jamaican phrase that speaks to the traits exhibited by a child. It suggests that the characteristics of an individual exhibit the traits of his/her parents or other members of their family and/or community. The characteristics of Chiku’s indoor play varied. At times, she initiated activities and took a leadership role, but she could also participate as a member of a group or generously assist a friend by loaning him or her items to play with. She often moved through the classroom hovering from one table to the next, talking and laughing with peers. A brisk reminder from Ms. Lawson or Ms. Fairweather to sit and finish the morning work would see her slowly and reluctantly return to her seat. I also

observed short periods of solitary play. During these sessions, she could be seen with her “princess doll”, doing her puzzles or writing various words in her “special book” (her words). It appeared her writing was inspired by items in the class or things the children said. On several occasions, I witnessed her observing the other children and then turning to her book to jot things in it.

She spoke to me of the toys she brought to school to share with her friends and “giving dem all sorts of stuff ‘cause ah like to ‘elp dem yuh know.” (She gave them many different things because she liked to help them.) She elaborated on the fact that she loved to help her friends and they loved to help her. She also spoke of “liking everybody,” as she spread her arms wide and smiled. This was evident to me when on one occasion she gave her homemade “flip phone” to one of her classmates and explained, “Ah len’ it to Nicholas ‘cause ‘im nevva have anyt’ing to play wid.” (I lent it to Nicholas because he did not have anything to play with.) She displayed empathy and nurturance toward others.

During recess, Chiku again demonstrated leadership by initiating an activity, but also participated as a member of a group, or simply enjoyed solitary play. Her outdoor play included using most of the equipment on the playground; however, she was most often on the swing or the monkey bars. Her indoor personality of being in-charge was also seen on the playground. It appeared her classmates often allowed her the privilege of being the leader. She openly displayed emotions such as generosity and happiness – joyful laughter, chasing and being chased – when out on the playground (as noted in my field notes). There were also occasions where she exhibited actions that showed her flexibility as a member of the play community, moving from leader to group participant. Like all good leaders, she can move back and forth between taking charge and following someone else’s lead. As noted in the following dialogue taken from video-

cued transcript, she easily shifted from one position to the other (some sentences translated to SJE):

Me: Why did you decide to make a cake?

Chiku: Cause...I want to...

Me: What are you telling them to do?

Chiku: I was just telling them to go look for sticks...like candles for the cake...

Me: Who decided that you needed candles?

Chiku: Me, I told them what to do...

[Change of activity – video showed she moved to the swing]

Me: Are there rules for how you can swing?

Chiku: Yep.

Me: Who made up the rules?

Chiku: Ahmmm...mmm...Debbie. She told...she told...she tells me. And then the next day shi tell us what to do and wi duh it. Shi say follow her and then yuh can turn around and swing. (Debbie told me, and then the next day she told us what to do and we did it. She said follow her and then you can turn around and swing.)

She showed some autonomy in the process as she went on to say, “Well, I can swing with one hand, zero hand, or two hands.” As I reflected on the activities, I noted in my journal the ease of Chiku’s shift from being in charge to working with her peers. This behavior was also noticeable with the relationship she had when working with her class teacher. Her daily rapport with her teacher went from following instructions to explaining an event/situation and working through it either as a team or by herself.

During these play routines, her ability to be persuasive and engaging with each of her peers was demonstrated repeatedly. She seemingly knew how to tolerate disappointment, which was demonstrated when she was instructed by her teachers to return to her seat and when her playmates destroyed one of the cakes she had made.

Me: What is happening here? [watching the video together]

Chiku: Debbie was...getting some dirt to put on de cake and den shi jus' jump on di cake and making it flat...is her wi develop it for yuh know (...getting some dirt to put on the cake and then she just jumped on the cake making it flat...we had made it for her.)

Me: Were you upset? [expecting her to react negatively]

Chiku: Yes...no, is har cake...shi can do whateva shi want wid it (Yes...no, it is her cake...she can do whatever she wants with it.) [said with flair and in a demonstrative manner]

Although her body language of pouting, kissing of teeth, followed by her arms crossed over her chest, frowning and looking angrily at the child indicated that she did not agree with what was done, she never attempted to stop her playmate from destroying her cake. However, there seemed to be a non-verbal agreement between the children as the negative actions were followed with some compensatory response such as the remaking of the cake. The children involved smiled at each other, and through some telepathic talk and body language, they resumed the play. As noted in my field notes and my reflective journal (RRJ), this type of behavior was witnessed on several occasions with other children during the six weeks of observation.

The spontaneous transition from one activity to another, or from one leader to another, was common.

Chiku: Den we finish wid de cake an' ah want to guh fin' more tings for di cake...

(Then we were finished with the cake and I wanted to go and find more things for the cake) then we played with the candles and we shared out the candles...den Debbie jus' put di stick dem on mi back den shi sey cum wi guh swing...(then Debbie just put the sticks on my back and then she said let's go and swing).

Me: Were you finished making the cake?

Chiku: No, but we all want to swing.

From my observation, and later as I reflected on the activities, I noted that the children never seemed bothered by the instantaneous shifts in activities or changes in leaders. They just 'went with the flow.' Those who wanted to stay and play with the candles stayed (two girls) and those who wanted to swing chased off towards the swings. The autonomy of their play – what to play – and their spontaneous method was observed daily during outdoor play.

Many of Chiku's behavioral patterns I inferred were learned from both her parent (mother) and the classroom teacher. During the weeks of observations, the teacher's non-verbal communication with the children in the classroom was repeated by Chiku; for example, the folding of the arms across the chest while tapping a foot and 'giving the eye' to another person or the occasional exclamation of "Cho man" as she worked, which indicated frustration or annoyance. Occasionally, when Ms. Naki, (Chiku's mother) visited the class, she assisted the other children with work being done or sat and listened as they related stories. I gathered that both the children and the teachers appreciated her appearances in the mornings, as they intentionally attracted her attention when she entered the classroom. As I recalled Chiku's mannerisms and reflected on them, I noted in my journal the connection between the child's

activities and speech and what appeared as extensions of her mother and her teacher; I witnessed these actions demonstrated repeatedly by the adults during my weeks of observations.

Cum wi guh play crocodile – Nature/Types of Chiku's Play Activity

The nature and type of play behaviors exhibited by the Jamaican children I observed were often high energy, fast-paced, role shifting, selfless, and spontaneous. Crocodile, a type of tag, is a game, which captures all these elements. Chiku's indoor and outdoors activities could be identified using three types of play that captured the spirit of Crocodile, including pretend play, physical play, and games with rules. During the early morning sessions, she often indulged in her pretend world as she shared her princess book and accompanying items with her friend. Her imaginary play seemed to be influenced by activities that took place either at home or in class. For example, the cake-making that was done on the playground was inspired by events that happened in class the day before. In a conversation with her she informed me:

Annakay did 'ave her birt'day party yesterday in di class and she did 'ave a big bir'day cake it taste so gud... but Debbie and Kayla nevva get any bir'day cake...an' is dem bir'day tuh suh ah decide to mek a cake fah dem. (AnnaKay had her birthday party yesterday in the class and she had a big birthday cake and it tasted so good. But Debbie and Kayla did not have a birthday cake and it was their birthday too so I decided to make a cake for them.)

There were other instances in which I observed her making references to things that occurred at home and using them to inform her movements, such as telephone conversations she had with an imaginary friend or her father who resided overseas. These conversations were very animated

and included words her mother and sister had said or things she heard on the television (as noted in my field notes). Her mother also commented on her role-playing when at home,

Sometimes she plays the role... "I'm the teacher or what is this plus this."

*Sometimes I would play that with her and she would say, "ok mummy, write this,"
and she gives me spelling and she gives me the answer.*

It seemed that her mother accommodated her role-playing at home and was proud of her daughter. As chronicled in my journal, when she spoke of these sessions it was often accompanied by a smile; it seemed these were important occasions as she often referenced them as she spoke of Chiku's play patterns.

During my weeks of observation, it was obvious that Chiku not only enjoyed pretend play but also seemed happy being involved in physical and social play. During her indoor play, she interacted with most members of her class as well as her teachers. As noted earlier, she shared her toys with both boys and girls and tried to include many of her friends in her activities. She showed these similar traits when she was out on the playground as she invited her friends to play with her and joined others in their games.

Although rough and tumble play was not allowed in the classroom, there were occasions when I witnessed Chiku running between tables and chairs as she chased or was chased by a classmate. Her love of this type of play was even more evident on the playground where I observed her playing 'crocodile' and 'stuck and pull' – chase games – with not only her friends from her class but also with the children from the other five-year-old class. She would laugh loudly and run with free abandonment from one end of the playground to the next.

She seemed to be a risk taker. There were several instances I observed her climb up the side of the monkey bars then hang upside down using her legs as anchors and her arms hanging

down. After a few seconds, she would raise her arms, grip the bar, release her legs and swing them between her arms, flip over and land safely a few feet below on the gravel. She would repeat this activity several times before running off to the swing where she would either lie or stand on the seat of the swing. She said she loved standing on the swing and swinging. During our video-cued interview, Chiku explained her love of the swing:

Me: Why do you turn on your stomach and swing?

Chiku: Ah jus' do it. (I just do it.)

Me: Why did you do it?

Chiku: Cause it feel gud. (Because it feels good.) [Said excitingly].

Me: Tell me what it feels like?

Chiku: It feel like yuh on a bird sleeping...Ah love doing dat to [pointing to the computer screen]. (It feels like you are on a bird sleeping...I love doing that too.)

Me: What is that?

Chiku: Standing up on the swing and swinging.

Me: Why you like to do it?

Chiku: Cause...when ah do it it feel like ah standing up and watching TV...an when ah jus' duh dat..ahmm...ah jus close mi eye...and ah feel natural. (Because when I do it I feel like I'm standing up and watching TV...and when I am doing that I just close my eyes...and I feel natural.)

Me: What do you mean by natural?

Chiku: Yeah, feel like somebody...nobody is not pushing me...it feel free (Yeah, I feel like somebody...nobody is not pushing me...it feels free).

Her usual posture while swinging was head held back, her face with a smile and raised towards the sun. Her explanation indicated she seemed to move into another world as she stood in the swing and moved through the air.

Her times out on the playground and in the classroom were a constant mixture of pretend play, rough and tumble play, and social play, and she appeared to enjoy varying levels of each type of play. In many instances, I observed as she initiated the activities and set the rules, but was also a very willing participant of games in which others were in charge and adhered to their rules. There were times there were negotiations done to either decide how long one got to stay on a piece of play equipment or who got to play with the group. On one such occasion, I witnessed her negotiating with one of her classmates for time on the swing:

Chiku: Is my time now. (It is my turn now.)

Friend: One more push and den yuh can get it. (One more push and then you can get it.)

Chiku: How much more swing yuh have?

Friend: Five.

Chiku: Alright mek wi count. (Alright, let us count.)

At the end of the counting period, her friend stopped the swing, alighted and Chiku climbed on, first sitting then standing. However, I also noticed there were periods where she was not so cordial to her classmates, as noted in this exchange between her and another member of her class.

Friend: Ah can get a turn? (May I get a turn?)

Chiku: Guh sidung, mi wi call yuh when mi dun. (Go and sit down. I will call you when I am finished.)

This exchange was not unusual, as Chiku seemed to love being on the swing and would often negotiate for more time on it. She would ‘save’ a swing for her friends rather than giving up her ‘space’ as was done following this conversation. As soon as a swing became vacant, she quickly called her friend over and stopped others from getting on, pointing out that someone else was before them. However, it was not unusual to see her abandon a swing if she felt she had to help her friend, as she stated in her interview, “I love to help my friends.”

She seemed to play many games that had pre-assigned rules. In her interview, Chiku spoke of many board games she played with her sister, as well as ‘made-up’ games they played when she went to visit her other siblings. I also noticed that the games she played at school, both indoors and outdoors, were governed by rules and were initiated by her classmates or herself. In one of my informal interviews with her, Chiku indicated her joy as she played with her friends and loved making rules for the games they played. She also indicated that everyone got a chance to make up rules; however, these were not often adhered to. This was observed and noted in both the field notes and my reflective journal.

Mek wi play sint’ing: Chiku’s Play Context and Materials

The word *sint’ing* is used to capture what, how and where play happens. Chiku’s mother and her sister supported her play activities. In her interview, Ms. Naki stated:

...not that all the time her sister wants to play with her, but...she does...

sometimes she would love to come and play with me and I’m not in the mood for

that... but, of course, I do play with her. [said very enthusiastically]

Chiku also verified that she played with both her mother and her sister.

I was playing cooking with my mother an den ah come to school and cook... one day me an' mi sista play sling shot on mi brother. Ahmmm and wi just...we win, the girls [said very excitedly]. (I was playing cooking with my mother and then when I went to school, I played cooking too...one day my sister and I played sling shot with my brother...and we won, the girls).

Chiku shared other occasions where she and her sister played board games and/or did activities on the computer. The other items she enjoyed working with were play dough, dolls, cards, puzzles, and her bicycle. Her mother spoke of Chiku's love of riding and use of her paint set. She noted,

riding the bicycle that is an activity...if you allow Chiku to ride the bicycle she will ride the bicycle even when it is in the night... when she's ready she'll spread them all out...sometime my house is a mess [smiled as she reflected]; she'll spread them all out [chuckled] and she'll paint and she'll paint and she'll paint and shi say 'mummy this one is yours', and shi will come and say 'mummy dis is pretty' and whatever, and this is for her sister. Another time she will make little cards and stuff and she writes...she's like that...she's like that, she makes her own stuff, and she likes to do that.

Chiku's play was done in many different areas. During the interview, Ms. Naki talked of the play spaces Chiku utilized where she was most creative, areas such as the living room and the bedroom. I observed her create a play space in many areas of the school playground, such as under the slide, or the open space under the shade of the tree, and on occasions the corridor outside her classroom. Her table and the open space at the back of her classroom were the areas she mostly utilized for her indoor play. Occasionally, she would use another friend's table to

accommodate her play. I did not observe her using the dramatic/toy area nor the items from that area.

From my observations, I noted Chiku's play initially began as solitary play, often with her having conversations with herself; then after a few minutes she would invite others to join her. It also seemed that her play was influenced by the space and availability of play equipment. As noted earlier, she used the gravel and other items from the environment to make cake for her friends, and at home she utilized toys and the available space to be creative, using her paint set to make cards for her mother and sister, or play dough to create 'food' to cook. Her play seemed to involve or be influenced by others even when she worked alone and motivated by availability of space and her environment.

Mek mi ears eat grass: Play Purposes

Adults often use the phrase, "Mek mi ears eat grass" to regulate children's activities. From my observations and the interviews conducted with Chiku and her mother, I learned that play was an integral part of Chiku's daily modus operandi. Her mother commented on some of the purposes of play – fun, educational, and practicing responsibility – as she recalled Chiku's role-playing being a teacher at home with her:

It's not just not for fun....sometimes it is educational... and it kind of help in terms of her responsibility, because ah mean giving out instruction... she would say I can do this just like how my teacher is doing this I'm able to do this and do that as well.

However, she also alluded to the fact that she used play as a means to get time for herself:

I gonna tell you the truth, sometimes I allow her to play outside like ride her bicycle, to get her out of my hair [said affectionately....smiled, then chuckled], because she can be a handful at times.

She commented on the other benefits of play:

...and I think when they play...it gives them a chance to...to kindah get rid of some of the energy that they have, right. It gives them a chance to get rid of it and when they play they get tired and all of that. It helps them to sleep as well.

Ms. Naki loved that Chiku got the opportunity to play as she believed it afforded her the opportunity to socialize, giving her the ability to “get along with her peers... this is where you really interact and socialize with your peers.” She explained that during these periods of play children got a chance to know about each other. She also voiced her concerns about the current trend of children’s play. She reflected on her own play as a child and the type of play that takes place today:

Well, to be frank I think playing then was totally different from playing now. Ahmm...you might see a little bit of reflection of play now as it was then, but not too much because these children, this new era children, what I notice there are more on to technology, so they don’t spend enough time playing with each other apart from when they are at school. When they are at home they don’t have any time to play and stuff like that. They are mostly on the computer they have games, and they are so caught up in all of these new technologies right.

She also expressed that most of today’s children’s play is very sedentary and their exposure to active play is done at school during “outside playtime.”

Chiku identified play as fun and Ms. Naki talked of her playtime with Chiku as a time of enjoyment. During an informal interview with Ms. Naki, she expressed the sessions she had with “Chiku’s friends in the mornings were very often very relaxing and I enjoy playing with them or just listening to them. Sometimes they say things as they play which make me laugh.” Chiku also seemed to enjoy these sessions as well as her outdoor play sessions. As we spoke of her playtimes, her facial expressions and her body language expressed excitement. Her laughter as she dangled from her legs on the monkey bars or stood swinging on the swings suggested she enjoyed being on the equipment and enjoyed sharing these times with her friends. As I observed Chiku during her solitary playtimes, whether indoors or outdoors, she seemed to enjoy her activities, as on several occasions a smile lit up her face, and on one occasion she did a dance with her doll.

As noted in my journal, Chiku simply enjoyed her playtime and was not aware of the many skills she acquired as she played, as noted by her mother. Ms. Lawson also supported Ms. Naki’s thoughts of play as a means to ‘mek mi ears eat grass.’ In the Jamaican creole, this means to give a person some ‘breathing space’ and is usually accompanied by ‘guh outside an’ guh play’ (go outside and play). Ms. Lawson emphasised the importance of outdoor play as the time when she can get a few minutes to herself and to be able to regroup for the afternoon session. She also stated that this was the time the children learned to be sociable and exercise their “gross and fine motor skills when they are play with their friends and on the equipment.” She emphatically expressed the need for this period during the school day, stating how beneficial it was to both her and the children. As she explained,

Although there is plenty noise out on the playground, ah still have peace and quiet in the classroom to clear my head and to do something for mi self. It is my

de-stress time and I think it is their [the children's] de-stress time too, because they get to do what they like without me telling them to keep quiet or to go and sit down (chuckled).

As I reflected on the adults' interviews, I noted their reasons for play's inclusion in the daily activities of the children – play assisted them (the adults) in managing their time and space, as well as allowing the children to acquire a level of independence, social skills, and physical aptitude. However, the main value was on acquiring breathing room for the adult.

Ben' di tree wen it young: Play/Work

To 'ben di tree wen it young' is the Jamaican way of saying start training a child in the way you want them to grow from their early years. The role of play and work had to be established from very early in children's lives. Although there were many positive attributes of play mentioned by both Chiku and her mother Ms. Naki, there appeared to be some tension as it related to the time and space where play was allowed. This was also echoed by Ms. Lawson, the classroom teacher. During my conversations with Chiku, she never mentioned play as an indoor activity; it was always associated with recess or 'special days' such as Child's Day or Career Day. On one occasion, I witnessed Chiku running through the classroom chasing another classmate who was holding a water bottle. Both children were laughing as they made their way through the rows of tables. The chase came to an abrupt end when the teacher reprimanded them for "running up and down" in the classroom. When I asked Chiku about the incident, she quickly pointed out she was not playing but was trying to retrieve her bottle, she never indicated that she was enjoying the episode. There were other such incidences and each time I asked her about it, her answer was similar. Her interpretation/definition of play was associated with outdoor

activities and may have been influenced by the teacher's constant reminders that play is not done in the classroom during 'work' time and the only time it was tolerated in the classroom was during 'special' occasions such as 'Child's Day' or 'Career Day'.

I noted in my field notes and reflective journal the distinctions between Chiku's indoor and outdoor play behavior. There were a specific words used to define or identify play indoors and outdoors. When describing her activity indoors, which she did not view as play, Chiku used terms such as 'fun' or associated it with an ultimate goal – retrieving her bottle or helping a friend. In contrast, she identified her outdoor 'play' with words such as "chasing", "being free", "being natural", "being happy" and "playing." This distinct separation was also noted in the way her mother, Ms. Naki, spoke about play. There seemed to be an appropriate space and time for play, as noted by Ms. Naki,

So I think it [play] is an important part of school, it is an important part of the child's development. And then now it has to do...it has to do, ah mean if you don't allow your child to play, I think that child will become antisocial in some form of a way.

However, she went on to state where play should be done.

Play...find something fun to do, maybe swing, ahmm...run tires, whatever facilities that they have that will allow them...to...to go out and socialize...outside of the classroom.

During other informal conversations with Ms. Naki that I recorded in my reflective journal, I sensed she felt play was important for her child's development (physical and social) in that it was also an outdoor activity. Her own childhood play experience may be one of the influential factors for her interpretation/definition of play. In her interview, she revealed that

although she had several siblings she never grew up with them and lived in rural Jamaica with her aunt and uncle who had no children. Her play references were from activities done at school during break, recess, and the end of the school day, as well as during ‘free time’ at home when chores were completed, as noted in the following quote:

I did not grow up with my mom. I spent about two or three years with her and then she came to...migrated to Kingston and then I was sent back...I came to Kingston with her, but then I was sent back to...to the country to live with my uncle who did not have any child at the time with his wife, so I grew up in that environment. I played with my neighbors, and when I went to school I played... I played at school with my peers during break and lunch time. When I was at home I played with my neighbors after I finished my work...you know chores. Those had to be done before you got to play.

During my interview with Ms. Lawson, the classroom teacher, she also commented on play being done at specific times and places. Her memory of play was that it was mainly done at lunchtime. Additionally, she did not have much opportunity to play at home because she was the eldest child and had to help with her siblings.

I was the eldest so there wasn't much play time when you go home...cause you as the eldest you would have to make sure that every body get look after, and so forth. And then at school we only play like when the bell ring, and is lunch time and you go outside, is not like most of these children they come in early in the morning and they have free play. That wasn't [paused to think] in my school settings [laughed] when I use to go to school.

I noted in my journal that it seemed these lessons may have been implicitly passed on to Chiku; during some of our informal interviews, she seemed uncomfortable labeling her early morning activities as play. Instead, she called it “having fun” or, as noted earlier, having a specific goal; it was not spontaneous. Her mother, who explained to me what was to be expected of Chiku as she transitioned from basic school to primary school, may also have translated her understanding of where and when play was accepted.

I don't expect her to...to now go to the primary school with all this playing. As a said in the former years they are expected to play, but I don't expect she will go there and just keep doing it [play], I don't...cause you know too much playing can be too bad. Yes it can be. Cause they will want to play all the time; they...they...they will want to play all the time, which kind a ...maybe they will kind a lose focus on the real thing what school is and all that.

She also commented that she had to limit her playtime at home, “Sometimes I allow her to play because it’s her time to play...I don’t restrict her at all, but sometimes I do...because when it is time for her to do her school work it’s time for work...no playing around at all.”

Although Ms. Naki mentioned Chiku’s play being multifaceted she never mentioned her use of it when working with her as they did “school work.” She seemed more concerned about Chiku learning that there was a place and time for play. Occasionally, Ms. Naki seemed anxious as she spoke of her daughter going to primary school in the new school year (Reflective Journal, July 3, 2012). She explained that she intentionally chose that particular primary school because she had a history with the school and they knew how to keep the children focused on school work:

That primary school is...well...ahmm one of the better ones in terms of academic performance, in terms of social skill. It [the primary school] kind of expose them to a little bit of everything, but they will keep them focused on school work and not so much on play and from previous experience with that school that's why I chose that school. I think it is a good school.

I wondered if as a trained teacher she never saw the connection between the play Chiku did and the work she wanted her to accomplish. I also wondered how much of Ms. Naki's childhood influenced her actions and understanding of young children's play (Reflective Journal, July 3, 2012).

Tie up de link: Chiku Petchary – Summary

My summary of Chiku's play was linked to the three exploratory questions. Reviewing Chiku's video-cued transcripts, videos, field notes, and reflective journal, I have recognized that the nature of her play shared similarities between her play behaviors and those that have been identified in the literature describing young children from western developed countries. During her indoor and outdoor play episodes, Chiku exhibited empathy for her peers, leadership qualities, spontaneity, and autonomy as she engaged in solitary play, pretend play, and rough and tumble (physical) play. I noticed she also exhibited the ability to accept disappointment without throwing a tantrum, as in the case of her classmate destroying a cake, which was not my expectation of behavior for a typical five-year-old. This last behavior may be attributed to her being the youngest family member among female adults. The mannerisms displayed as she played (hands on hips, finger pointing, kissing of teeth, air of authority) could also have been imitations of her social interactions with adults outside the school environment.

Chiku described her play as “free”, “natural”, and “excited” with regard to her outdoor play. Conversely, words such as “fun” or “helping” were used to define her indoor play. She seemed to relate quiet activities such as her puzzle-making and playing with her “princess doll” not as play but as activities done only during the permitted early work/activity time. Vigorous, noisy, fast-moving and risk-taking activities were labeled ‘play’ and were done outdoors. During the 24 observational sessions I witnessed, on only one occasion did she have a planned activity for her outdoor play session – this was the cake-making episode mentioned earlier.

Factors such as the sociocultural environment apparently influenced Chiku’s understanding and perceptions of play. Over the six weeks of observations, I noticed that Chiku’s play episodes appeared to be dictated by her environment (Reflective Journal, June 19, 2013). Her play behavior seemed to be influenced by the confines of the classroom where she conformed to quieter, task-oriented activities. Her outdoor play was noisier, spontaneous, physical, and self-generated. Her understanding of place and time for play were both implicitly and explicitly learned from her social worlds of home and school. During informal interviews she explained, “Miss sey wi mussun mek any noise in de classroom, or run up an’ dun” (Miss said we are not to make any noise in the classroom or run up and down), or “Mummy sey wen a want to mek plenty noise or run up an’ dun a mus guh outside” (Mummy said when I want to make lots of noise or run up and down, I must go outside) (Reflective Journal, June 19, 2012), illustrating her desire to play within the bounds of expected behavior.

Azikiwe Doctor Bird (Full of Vigor, Versatile)

Azikiwe was a friendly, unusually verbose, five-year-old boy. He was of average height for his age and had very warm, rich, dark chocolate skin. He had an effervescent smile and rich

contagious laughter. His dark brown eyes sparkled every time he laughed, which was very often. Long, thick black lashes cast shadows on his smooth well-defined cheeks. Neatly arched black eyebrows framed his slightly sloe-shaped eyes, which were equidistantly separated by a small up-turned nose. The bridge of his nose was fairly prominent and the nostrils slightly flared. A pair of small lips was very often apart as he smiled readily, showing well-proportioned white teeth. His school uniform – a short-sleeved button-front red and white plaid shirt with two front pockets on either side, worn with khaki pants – fit his small-framed body comfortably. He wore what appeared to be a pair of black leather shoes, and on the days when he wore short khaki pants, navy blue socks were shown. His small round-shaped head was capped by well-groomed low-cut black hair.

De Skool Yaard: A School Day in the Life of Azikiwe

Azikiwe's quiet confidence was evident as he entered the classroom and conducted the morning routine of putting his lunch kit in his cubby, then sitting at the table with his friends. He often arrived alone and without much fanfare. His presence was known or felt after he had taken his seat by the laughter or the greeting he would extend to those nearby. His cheerful "Good morning, Ms. Lawson" always elicited a smiling response from his teacher. From my observations, I noted his classmates were also very eager to give him their well wishes for the day; some would stand around his desk as he spoke, while those seated nearby would pull their chairs closer to be part of the cheerful group. His happy-go-lucky mannerism attracted children and adults alike. It was not unusual to see the assistant teacher, Ms. Fairweather, sitting with Azikiwe and his friends, sharing a laugh or two. Nor was it unusual to hear Azikiwe say that his friends were funny and he liked working and playing with them.

Azikiwe was well organized. His workbooks were always neatly placed on his section of the table. If there were unused writing implements, they were quickly returned to the pencil case he took from his backpack. I often heard him voice his dislike for ‘dirty’ work followed by rapid movements of an eraser on the area of the page he worked on. During ‘work’ time, his usually smiling face took on one of complete concentration. His top teeth occasionally gripped his lower lip and slight frown lines marked his usually calm face. While thinking, he would look up from his work, and with the eraser end of the pencil pushed to the side of his mouth, stare straight ahead, eyes moving quickly from side to side, seemingly seeing but not seeing. A few moments later, he would return his attention to the page on the table and continue working. He would ‘consult’ with a friend, only if this was allowed.

Obedying the classroom rules was of extreme importance to Azikiwe as he made sure to adhere to them. He also encouraged his friends to follow the rules, both in the classroom and out on the playground. On several occasions, he could be heard telling his friends, “Remember Miss sey yuh not to...” (Remember Miss said not to...), or “Is not suh it guh” (that is not how it is). He was the gatekeeper. Although he played with much vigor and vitality, and occasionally was reprimanded by both the class teacher and her assistant for laughing too much, they often referenced him to his fellow classmates as an example to emulate.

De chips nevva fly far from de block: Characteristics of Azikiwe’s Play Behavior

De chips nevva fly far from de block is a Jamaican phrase that speaks to the traits exhibited by a child. It suggests that the characteristics of an individual exhibit the traits of his/her parents or other members of their family and/or community. The characteristics of Azikiwe’s indoor play was not as active and vibrant as his outdoor play and was usually done

from the confines of his table. His activities normally consisted of playing with his friends as they manipulated a toy/object on his table or working in his workbook. During the early morning work and free activity period, children were allowed to select their activity; however, very often this period was used to finish ‘work.’ Very few children were involved in free activity as most were busy completing tasks in their workbooks. The children who had completed the work played quietly at their tables or had their heads resting on the desk. As noted by Azikiwe,

Teacher say if any...if anybody finish the book must close it and rest dem head down... It's not a free time to play. But teacher say who...who don't do the work right not gawne get no free time to play. (Teacher said once we had finished our work we were to put our heads down...it was not a free time to play. She also said that if the work was not done correctly then we would not be getting any free time to play.)

Children who had completed their work would periodically congregate in the open space at the back of the room to play a word game or to talk. It was during these periods that I noticed Azikiwe taking charge of the game as he ensured the ‘rules of the game’ were being adhered to (Field Notes). It was also during these periods his infectious laughter often led to the disbandment of the game, as the teachers usually sent the children back to their seats because “there’s too much noise.” It appeared that he was not easily despondent when this happened because he would readily return to his table and engage in quiet games with his friends instead (Reflective Journal, June 6, 2012).

On several instances, I watched Azikiwe as he observed the other children involved in a word game at the back of the classroom; however, as noted in my journal, he never seemed fascinated enough to join them. He seemed more interested in being engaged in conversations

with his friends or Ms. Fairweather. His lively discussions were on various subjects he had seen on television or on a video game he played with his brothers. His demonstrations would get very animated and often “shushed” by Ms. Fairweather as she tried to quiet his heightened excitement. On occasions Ms. Lawson would call his name, give him ‘the look’ and he would once again settle down.

During “special” occasions such as Child’s Day, when the children were allowed to be very active during the early morning period, Azikiwe would interact with his classmates by moving among the many groups. Occasionally, he would instigate an activity, but most often he was a follower taking directions. His flexibility in moving from leader to participant seemed to be very natural. The amount of time he spent with each group varied. When I asked him about this, his response was “ah jus’ like playing wid all a dem” (I just like playing with every one). He seemed to be comfortable interacting quietly with his friends as they engaged in “school work,” or played with improvised toys such as pencils and any other item found around the classroom (Reflective Journal, June 7, 2012).

His outdoor play behavior was very different from classroom activity. As soon as he completed his meal, Azikiwe would calmly walk to the back of the classroom, deposit his eating utensils, and then move towards the door in controlled excitement. Once outside, he transformed. He became high-spirited, often running the length and breadth of the playground, with arms flying, loud laughter and being much more expressive in his mannerism. His facial expression showed excitement and the exuberant movements were mirrored by his peers.

His activities on the playground were a mixture of group and solitary play, and on many occasions he was one of the only boys playing with a group of girls and seemingly enjoying their company. On one occasion, I noticed Azikiwe being involved with the cake-making activity the

girls had undertaken beneath the slide. His first act was to jump on the ‘cake’ then he smiled and ran off. Two of the girls chased him, and in the middle of the playground a discussion took place. Shortly after, he returned to the area and with a smile handed his classmates some sticks, which were placed on the new “cake.” He continued playing with them until they all spontaneously dispersed. As the only male in a female play activity, he seemed quite comfortable. I noted numerous occasions when he assisted the girls if they fell or needed any other assistance.

There were many other occasions I noticed Azikiwe being helpful to the girls and the smaller children on the playground. This appeared to be a natural act. On further inquiry, Azikiwe informed me “my father told me to be kind to girls and anyone who needed help...that’s the Christian thing to do” (Interpreted from original informal interview). Mr. Kafil commented on this aspect of Azikiwe’s upbringing.

I teach all my boys to be respectful to women, to look out for them and to be kind to everybody, not just people who are sick or poor. Me and my wife are Christians and we want our children to grow up with those principles. If they don’t learn it from us, then who’s gonna teach them?

Azikiwe’s actions, both indoors and outdoors, demonstrated that he was very cognizant of these expectations. Like Chiku, Azikiwe illustrated an understanding of expectations learned from parents and teachers.

Another characteristic that was displayed during both indoors and outdoors was Azikiwe’s curiosity. It was not unusual to hear him voice a question such as “‘ow fass yuh tink dis will spin if a use mi lef’ hand?” (How fast do you think this (a gig) will spin if I used my left hand? [he was right handed]). During the ‘Heroes Day’ break – a holiday celebrating Jamaican National Heroes – additional gravel was placed on the playground and a large metal plate was

placed over a hole in the ground. This was not removed once the job was completed. I noticed Azikiwe's interest in the metal plate. Bending down on one knee he peered under the small space, then tried to lift the metal plate. When I asked him about the incident his response was:

Azikiwe: Ah trying to see what's under there

Me: What's under there?

Azikiwe: I don't know.

Me: You didn't see anything?

Azikiwe: No, just some dirt. I wondered why them put it there? [Shook his head]

Me: How are you gonna find out?

Azikiwe: [Shrugged his shoulder] I don't know.

During my weeks of observations he was the only child who showed any interest in the area. He did not seem sufficiently interested to make further enquires; however, he revisited the area on two other occasions with each visit lasting longer than the previous one. On his third visit, he tried once again to move the metal plate. His casual shrug as he got up from the dirt, while brushing dust of his pants, suggested that he was resigned to the fact it was impossible for him to displace it.

Although Azikiwe spent time with many different friends, he seemed to get more pleasure from time spent with Max – his best friend – whom he labeled “the funny guy” because “im mek mi laugh all di time” (he makes me laugh all the time). He would await his best friend's arrival on the playground where they shared very lively activities as they explored the swings, the slides, and occasionally the monkey bars, and indulged in rough and tumble play. During one of my observational sessions I noticed Max emerged from the classroom and stood by the blue post located along the corridor. As he stood there, Azikiwe ran from the far end of the

playground and joined him. On his arrival, the boys seemed to contemplate their next move, and without what seemed to be any lengthy verbal discussion, both boys ran across the graveled playground towards the slide. Once there, Azikiwe assumed leadership of the activities.

Other children joined them and the activities on the slide were changed when Azikiwe headed the line atop the slide. Occasionally, Max and the other children assumed the role as leader. This change in leadership was often done without any consultation, and if any of the children were not 'comfortable' doing the activity s/he would either do something different or opt out from doing the task. On one occasion Azikiwe stopped and sat under the slide as his friends continued playing. After a few minutes, he rejoined the group. I asked him about his action to which he responded, "I wanted to hear what it sounded like from under there" [translated from informal interview], which displayed his natural curiosity. This ability to leave and rejoin an activity seemed seamless and no questions were asked as each child moved in and out of the play.

Cum wi guh play crocodile: Nature/Types of Azikiwe's Play Activity

The nature and type of play behaviors exhibited by many Jamaican children are high-energy, fast-paced, role shifting, selfless, and spontaneous. Crocodile, a type of tag, is a game, which captures all these elements. Azikiwe's play was comprised of social play, imaginary play, and rough and tumble (R&T) play. All three types of play were infrequently observed during his indoor play sessions. Azikiwe seemed very restrained during the morning early work/free activity period. He used this time to indulge in imaginary play with small objects he found in the classroom or retrieved from his bag. He played either alone or with Max, and occasionally with a few of his other classmates seated at his table. On occasions he would reenact scenes from

television shows and video games for his friends or Ms. Fairweather. I observed him tell his audience of the antics his brothers did or the things he did with his sister as he ‘taught’ her how to defend herself against her brothers.

In contrast, during outdoor playtime Azikiwe’s activities became more demonstrative and he indulged more in R&T play with friends. There were many occasions where he enjoyed bringing to life the games he played at home with his brothers. He would use sticks as swords as he defended his friend or himself, and used tires as get-away vehicles. His father also commented on Azikiwe’s play at home:

When Azikiwe plays with his brother he is fearless. He keeps up with the big boys, anything they do, anything they play he does. His play is usually very physical and he fights with his brothers as they play, not backing down. Sometimes his mother tries to stop them but it never works. But when he plays with his sister he is more softer. He tries to teach her how to defend herself against her brothers...so he’s sorta teaching her how to be tough.

On one occasion, I noticed Azikiwe being pushed and kicked at as he played with Max on the swing. I asked him to explain what was happening: “ah trying to mek him cum down off di swing...an’ every time ah try climb up ‘im kick mi down” (I’m trying to get him off the swing but each time I try he kicks me down). This explanation was accompanied by a loud chuckle, and as I looked a little puzzled, he gave further explanation of “we duh dis all di time” (we do this all the time). This was the norm, he furthered explained. He also did it to his friend when he was on the swing “‘cause wi jus’ love to be on di swing” (...because we just love being on the swing).

Azikiwe’s involvement in other R&T games included the use of tires and a game of chase. In several instances there were collisions of tires, tires used to hit each other as they rolled

them around, and tires used to confine each other to specific spaces. Both boys and girls participated in these games. If injuries or confrontations occurred, very often Azikiwe assisted as mediator/negotiator aiding his friends in working out the ‘problems.’ His “what seems to be the problem?” followed shortly by his laughter seemed to have a calming effect on his peers. I often witnessed Azikiwe’s prowess of quickly dispelling altercations among his friends via various arm actions and other body movements followed by his laughter. The pair/group would then either disperse or resume the activity in which they were involved.

On several occasions when he took the leadership role, he laughed loudly when his friends “mess up because dem nevva follow de rules.” (...made a mistake because they did not follow the rules). A majority of the games he played with his peers had rules, and although he was not sure who made up the rules, he told me they were “just there”, and “I just know them”; he adhered to them. I observed that he also made up and modified rules as he played. He recalled his play with the tires,

We were playing wid di tires. Going in and out of dem... we were just doing something. Remember the police and teef ting I tol’ yuh bout? I made up di rules...no getting out of de tire when de police is not sleeping...de tires are de jail...yuh can push down de tire suh yuh caan get out, de bad man ah mean, and I was de police” (We were playing with the tires. Going in and out of them...we were just doing something. Remember the police and thief thing I told you about? I made up the rules...and I was the police.)

This was not the only occasion he made up rules or was the person in authority. In several instances when he played with a tire, he began alone, then was joined by Max and/or other friends. As they pushed the tires, a competition would develop. The rules were never the same as

they varied according to the number of participants and the final outcome. On one occasion, the game began with Azikiwe and his friend Max moving from one end of the playground to the next, each trying to outdo the other. I noticed no spoken instructions being exchanged between the boys as they pushed the tires along. As noted in my reflective journal, this mode of non-verbal communication was frequently exchanged in a fluid manner (Reflective Journal, June 19, 2012).

After completing the chase twice, they were joined by three other children – two boys and a girl. As with other activities, this one also had rules (unspoken). After the first cycle of going to the top and returning, the activity came to a stop, and taking a leadership role, Azikiwe issued additional rules – “to win you have to go to the top, go around the swings and back to the fence, ok?” (Field Notes). They all nodded in agreement and after a “on your marks, get set, go” they began the race. This scene ended with laughing children piled on each other at the base of the Poinciana tree. Still laughing, Azikiwe pulled himself from the pile, jumped around with arms flying in the air and proclaimed himself the winner. Although the others disputed him, he never wavered and suggested they go again.

The competition went on for two more rounds with different children being victorious, and as suddenly as they appeared, the children ran off to another activity. This spontaneous decision seemed to me normal because although no words were spoken – only brisk arm movements and pointed fingers – the children seemed to know exactly what was expected. Azikiwe and Max separated from the group and went to the swing where Azikiwe straddled the seat of the swing and his friend sat on the crossbar. They pushed and pulled each other with both landing on the ground. They also assisted each other in gaining speed and momentum on the swing. For that particular day, they stayed at the swing for the remainder of recess alternating

positions. I questioned Azikiwe about his play on the swing to which he supplied the following explanation:

Me: What do you call that?

Azikiwe: Yippey yei yeo.

Me: Explain that one to me, please.

Azikiwe: Is a game that you just do it like that...and then swing side to side.

Me: What is 'like that'?

Azikiwe: Like sit on it [the swing] and ride it like a donkey.

Me: Ok...and what you call it?

Azikiwe: Yippey yei yeo.

Me: You have rules for that game?

Azikiwe: Naw [shook his head and smiled]. You just get on the swing and sit

sideways on the swing and swing and pretend you are riding a donkey. I like...I

like to go in the swing when I play, I like to go side the swing, I like to go up the

swing when I play.

Me: Why do you like the swing so much?

Azikiwe: Because you get to go back and front, when you swinging on it. It make me

feel happy...and make mi body shake.

Me: What do you mean shake?

Azikiwe: [Sighed, looked at me and shook his head] Mi body guh...guh up an' down

an' a move fass, fass, and it feel gud. (My body goes up and down and I move

very fast and it feels good.)

As he spoke he demonstrated the movements his body did while on the swing. I deduced he felt most uninhibited on this play equipment; he felt free to be able to do anything without being restricted by rules and regulations (Reflective Journal, June 19, 2012).

It was not unusual to see the two boys running from the swing to the monkey bars and to the slides. Azikiwe's sense of adventure was displayed by the many different ways he utilized the play equipment, especially the slide. On one occasion, I observed Azikiwe and his friend move to the steps of the slide where Max took the lead and quickly climbed to the top. As he moved down the slide, he shouted loudly "ooohh", and jumped up quickly when he reached the end. From his perch atop the slide, Nate inquired, "What 'appen?" "It 'ot", [It is hot] responded Max. "Well, duh like me," [Well, do like me] instructed Nate, who got into a squatting position, held his hands out in front of him and began his downward slide. He landed in the gravel and laughed. Amid laughter, the boys repeatedly performed different variations of moving down the slide, where Azikiwe initiated most of them. For example, he climbed to the top of the slide, using the smooth metallic surface of the slide to get to his destination. Once there, he laid on his back, folded his arms across his chest and crossed his feet at the ankles. His descent was accompanied by a loud shriek as he crashed in the gravel at the foot of the slide, which sent some flying in all directions. This action apparently amused the boys because they huddled together in a fit of laughter for a few seconds, then returned to the top to repeat the activity.

At the end of recess, he seemed to make a mental adjustment and prepared to transition from the playground to the classroom, and unlike many of his classmates, it was uncommon to hear his named being called for inappropriate behavior, such as loud chatter. Once in the classroom, while he refreshed himself, he spoke softly to his classmates and was occasionally

‘called out’ for taking too long to get to his seat. If this occurred, he briskly moved to his seat, placed his head on the table, and observed the other members of his class prepare for rest.

During this period he rarely slept, but when he did, he seemed to be a little disorientated when he was awakened approximately half an hour later. On days when he did not sleep, I observed him playing with objects found either at his table or taken from his bag, and he seldom interacted with anyone at his table. Although he appeared to like being in control of his activities outdoors, when he was indoors he returned to being the child who tried to abide by the rules and infrequently took the initiative to do anything that was not requested by the teacher. His teacher commented on Azikiwe’s attention to rules:

He [Azikiwe] is a very obedient child...a don’t have to tell him to behave too often. One thing he loves to do is laugh and that get him into plenty trouble...because he will cause the other children to laugh and then often times they get very loud...and he is the cause of it (shook her head and smiled). But a really don’t have any problem with him because he knows how to behave in the classroom...he does his work... and he will help his friends most of the time. I don’t have to repeat instructions to him over and over, like a have to do with plenty of the other children...[paused to think], and if he want to know anything he knows how to follow rules.

Azikiwe’s ability to adhere to rules of the classroom seemed to be a redeeming quality his teacher greatly admires.

Mek wi play sint'ing: Azikiwe's Play Context and Materials

The word *sint'ing* is used to capture what, how and where play happens. Azikiwe was a 'Spider Man' addict, as he explained the activities he enjoyed doing.

Me: What do you like to do?

Azikiwe: I like to play and do tricks.

Me: Tricks, like what?

Azikiwe: Like climb on walls, jump on them and jump off, jump over fences, stuff like that...like 'Spider Man' [smiled].

Although this type of play behavior was not often demonstrated at school, it was accommodated at home:

Me: Do you play like that at home?

Azikiwe: Yes.

Me: Mummy and daddy are ok with that?

Azikiwe: Yes! (nodded and smiled)... I play a lot at home, when my father goes to work when...when 'im come back to the house he make a lot of space so we can play. (Field Notes)

Azikiwe also spoke of the other games he liked to play, both at home and at school, such as 'hide and seek' and 'stuck and pull.' He also told me that both girls and boys played these games, and he played them with the children from the other five-year old class and his friends from the neighborhood.

As Azikiwe spoke of the games, I enquired if he was the one responsible for making up the rules. His negative response led me to ask, "Who did?" Interestingly, in response to my query, he started off by explaining the classroom rules, as noted in this exchange.

Me: Who makes up the rules for the games?

Azikiwe: I don't know [shrugs his shoulders and smiles]. I read them in class.

Me: The rules for the game?

Azikiwe: No, the class rules.

Me: But when you are outside playing...

Azikiwe: Oh, the rules...I jus' know them.

I tried on many other occasions to ascertain who made up the rules, but I was met with sighs and head shakes. However, he told me the rules of the games, which intriguingly incorporated rules that were given to them by the classroom teacher. As noted by Azikiwe:

[the] set of the rules is not to go somewhere far and not go somewhere where they can't find you to hit you or something...you have to stay on the playground...don't go inside there [pointed to the stairwell], and don't go upstairs. You can go in the hall but you mustn't play in the hall. Don't climb on the fence or the trees.

I noted in my Reflective Journal that as Azikiwe talked of children who disobeyed the rules, his facial expressions and rigid body exhibited his annoyance.

On one occasion, as he recalled how the children climbed on the fence, his eyes narrowed and a frown marred his forehead as he spoke. He then turned to me and said, "If dem did drop off I not gwain help dem yuh know, 'cause dem not suppose to be up dere" (If they had fallen off I wouldn't help because they are not to be up there). "Would that be the right thing to do?" I asked. His negative response was followed by a short pause, which he seemed to use to contemplate his earlier response. Then, in a subdued voice he said, "if they were hurt bad I would help, but if nothing bad happened then I wouldn't help." (Field Notes). I noted in my

journal that although he was not pleased with the children's disobedience, he never mentioned that he would report them to the teacher.

His previous statement seemed to put closure on the topic because, as he resumed watching the video, he quickly moved on to talk about his play with the tires:

I like to play with the tires...I roll it and sometimes I let it go and catch it back, and sometimes I...and sometimes when I'm rolling it I go somewhere and I don't know where it is [paused, appeared to be thinking, then continued]. Sometimes I imagine that the tire is a car...sometimes I think that round there is my house [pointed to the area behind the classroom] in my imagination. (Translated from interview notes)

His pretend play was further displayed when he spoke of the 'police and thief' game he played with his friends:

Sometimes we build a police something but it not that big, we use tires we put tire on tire and that's the jail... And anytime the thief comes out, when the police hears this sound [made the sound of an alarm], the police wakes up and starts to run down the thief. When you catch them, you put fake handcuffs on and put them back in the jail.

As noted in my journal, this activity was done daily, and may be directly linked to the environment the school was situated in. As stated earlier, a correction facility was in close proximity to the school, and the sounds of the siren on the vehicles indicated the daily arrival of inmates.

Azikiwe's activities combined pretend play with physical play and he seemed to enjoy both. As noted earlier, he used his play to 'match up' to his brothers or, on some occasions to get out of trouble with his mother. (Interview with Azikiwe's father). As noted by his father,

Azikiwe believes he can do anything his brothers do and then some. He tries to walk on the wall pretending he's Spider Man...you see the color of that chair (pointed to the large sofa in the living room) he (Azikiwe) is the reason for that. He would run from outside, jump on the arm, then on the back then on the floor. Sometimes his mother tries to stop him but I tell her to let him go as long as he's not hurting himself or anyone else...let him be Ninja Turtle or whatever he wants to be. (Translated from interview notes)

I observed his creative use of space and material at school during his outdoor play as he utilized the slide, the swing, and the tires. His indoor activity consisted of recreating video games he played with his brothers or shows he watched on the television. He also created play space on his table or during his occasional interactions with his friends in the open space at the back of the classroom.

Interestingly, I never observed Azikiwe utilizing the dramatic/toy area during 'regular' school time. However, on one occasion I observed him retrieve and play with an action figure at his table as he waited on his father to collect him. His play behavior during this time was very quiet and he appeared to have dialogue with the toy figures. His indoor play seemed to be governed by the rules of 'no playing in the classroom,' making it very quiet and subdued. His outdoor play was almost limitless to the things he could do; however, he seemed to be cognizant of rules and regulations and tried to comply.

Mek mi ears eat grass: Play Purpose

Adults often use the phrase “Mek mi ears eat grass” to regulate children’s activities. Play at Azikiwe’s home was accommodated by both parents and very often was used to “keep the boys occupied during weekends and holidays.” As noted by Mr. Kafil (Azikiwe’s father):

Because we have four boys and only one girl we have to give them plenty of playtime to get rid of the energy they have. I make space for them to play especially after they watch a movie or a video game; they want to act it out, so I make space for them to get it out of their systems. Even the little girl, she wants to play with them and when the bigger boys don’t then Azikiwe will play with her.

Mr. Kafil also mentioned other reasons for allowing the children to play:

It keep everybody happy and active giving me and their mother time to do something else. But sometimes I just sit and watch them because I never played with my brothers and sisters like how I see my children play. That is why I give them time to play. It is interesting to watch them. Sometimes their mother play with them too, but most of the time she has things to do so she’s happy when they are playing.

He also noted that it was important for the children to play as it taught them valuable lessons such as “learning to get along with each other and how to interact with other people. It [play] also makes them more responsible for each other.” He noted that he also allowed Azikiwe to play with the other children in the neighborhood:

Because our street is not on the main and very little traffic comes through here I allow him to play on the road with his friends. I teach him what to do and to be very observant...always looking out for the cars. Sometimes if I am not busy I

watch them as they play and they play rough, but he (Azikiwe) knows how to handle them...he learns from his brothers. It teaches him how to be smart, how to interact with other people other than his brothers and sister or his mother and he also learns how to behave himself, and to be responsible.

Azikiwe's idea of play was to have fun with everyone, and from discussions with him, he seemed to enjoy playing with his siblings. He spoke of the "fun I have with them" as they played video games, "sometimes I beat them", laughing as he said this, or the late nights he was allowed to stay up with them during the holidays.

Mr. Kafil: Sometimes we just spread sheets or blankets on the floor and let them spend the night in the living room playing their video games or just watching tv...sometime me or their mother have to come out and break up fights that they have, but I believe that is healthy too. Sometimes I leave them to work it out themselves...but Azikiwe (shook his head and smiled) he just won't let go of it if thinks he's right...we have to talk to him or let his big brother (he is 15-years-old) deal with him. I think that during this time (play) they learn a lot of things about themselves and each other. Many time we all just laugh it off instead of getting vex...and that works.

This information gave me further insight into Azikiwe's actions in dealing with the confrontations on the playground and in the classroom. It seemed his laughter was an intrinsic mechanism he learned from his home environment and carried over to his play at school.

During the six weeks of observation, I noted Azikiwe's enjoyment as he played outdoors compared to his subdued manner indoors. I also noted his adherence to rules and regulations and the occasional times he 'tweaked' the rules to accommodate his play. He also seemed to love to

be in command of his actions/activities, but was flexible in being a group participant. As we spoke of his play, he stated it was “fun because I can do things on the playground when I want to...sometimes with my friends and sometimes by myself.” He seemed to like being autonomous, adventurous, and “just being with my friends”, and play seemed to be the avenue that he used to accomplish these feats. His eyes and animated hands spoke of this love of play.

Notably, his reference to play usually alluded to outdoor play, and when I ventured to discuss play in the classroom, his response always referenced the ‘special’ days and times when “Miss was not in the classroom.” However, I observed the spark of lights, which shone from his eyes as he described all the activities done, occasionally laughing, as he told his stories.

Ben’ di tree wen it young: Play/Work Tensions

To “ben di tree wen it young” is the Jamaican way of saying start training a child in the way you want them to grow from their early years. Unlike many of the other students in his classroom, Azikiwe’s parent rarely accompanied him to the classroom. During my weeks of observation, I noticed that his father walked with him to the open concrete court adjacent to the playground and waited until he was safely inside the classroom. I observed only three occasions when Mr. Kafil visited the classroom: once when he returned the signed consent forms, once to gather instructions from Ms. Lawson regarding ‘graduation’, and once to collect Azikiwe early from school. When I asked about this, he assured me that Azikiwe, “was a very responsible child and don’t need me to go to class with him. I use to do it in the first term in the other class, but trust me I don’t need to do it now.”

Mr. Kafil appeared to be always confident, and Azikiwe seemed to be a young version of his father. Mr. Kafil proudly stated this observation:

Of all my children Azikiwe is more like me. He likes to do all sorts of things and is always trying to learn something new. He likes to work with his hands too...so he's not only book smart but he can do other things too.

This quality seemed to be extremely important to Mr. Kafil as he explained,

I never finished high school but I could make anything...I love to make things and work on all types of projects...that's how I got to where I am in the force...after I finished training I worked in the repair shop during my free time and I loved that more...that was my gift from God...using my hands, so I asked if I could stay there. I worked hard and moved up in rank. I am glad Azikiwe likes to do that too. I see him making things all the time when he is playing with his brothers or sister, especially his sister...that's a good thing.

For his children to be successful, Mr. Kafil felt it was important that there be an equal mix between academics and play. Although he spoke of the importance of play, he involuntarily stressed the need for his children to be competent in their academics and to “play by the rules.” This phrase did not only apply to play but also to the children’s daily activities. It seemed there was a ‘rewards system’ in place at home and it appeared there was ‘friendly’ rivalry among the children for compliments from their mother.

From informal interviews, I learned that his mother always complimented Azikiwe when he did the ‘right thing.’ This seemed to set a standard for Azikiwe because from my observations, he seemed to gain pleasure from being singled out by his teacher for his ‘good’ behavior, neat work, and paying attention to the class rules. Mr. Kafil stated that Azikiwe’s older brothers were doing exceptionally well in school, and to maintain that standard, his wife had set rules and regulations to which the children adhered.

It appeared Azikiwe's drive to always abide by the rules was pushed by both his teacher and parents. His mother was a stay-at-home mom, and at the time of the study was enrolled in a part-time course as a teacher-candidate at a traditional teachers' college; his father was employed to the constabulary force and had recently retired. Both parents believed rules were important to be successful. As noted by his father,

It is very important to have rules...they help children adapt to situations...they learn how to behave. For example, they know that they can play anytime they want but if it is during school time homework must be done first before any playing is done...that's the rule and they know they have to follow it.

However, both parents also believed that play was very beneficial to the development of the child. His father explained,

I want my children to play especially with each other because I didn't do much of that as I child...I was a loner even though I have a lot of brothers and sisters. I now know the importance of play to the development of the child...I was watching a documentary on it [play] the other day and I see why it important. It helps them in so many ways...and I can see that as I watch my children play, especially Azikiwe. He is always trying something new and trying to compete with his bigger [older] brothers and then he's teaching his baby sister [younger] to do like him. So during his play with his sister I notice that he is teaching her the rules we teach him and he is learning some other rules from his brothers as they play their games. However, [paused, thinking deeply then continued] they must understand that there is a time and a place for everything.

When I asked Azikiwe to tell me about his playtime, he spoke of the times he was allowed to play and the things he enjoyed playing:

Me: Do you play a lot at school?

Azikiwe: Yes, when is playtime.

Me: When is playtime?

Azikiwe: Playtime is when you have finished eating lunch then you can go outside and play.

Me: Do you get to play in the mornings?

Azikiwe: You can do that if you come early and finish your morning work.

During my formal and informal interviews with Azikiwe unless I mentioned play done in the classroom he never spoke of play and the classroom in the same sentence. He was not comfortable referring to play being done in the classroom. During the video-cued interview, I asked him to explain the activities being done in the morning with his friends:

Me: What's going on there?

Azikiwe: This is the funny guy [pointed to his friend]

Me: Funny guy? He's funny?

Azikiwe: Yes.

Me: Why do you say that?

Azikiwe: He's always giving jokes [smiled broadly].

Me: So tell me what's going on there. Are you playing there?

Azikiwe: No. I'm working.

Me: What are you working on?

Azikiwe: [Paused...looked at the activities on the screen].

Me: That looks like you are playing. What are you doing?

Azikiwe: I'm working in my math book, but sometimes I have fun while I'm working.

Me: Ok. Do you always have fun while you're working?

Azikiwe: Sometimes...not all the time...he [pointed to the boy sitting to his right] gives us jokes.

Me: So you do play while you're working.

Azikiwe: [Shook his head] Not really, we are just having fun.

Even though he did not deny playing, he labeled his work activity as "fun."

During recess, Azikiwe played as vigorously as the other members of his class; however, at the end of school day, when the others went to play, he would sit quietly in the classroom and wait on his father to collect him. On occasions, he would be involved in after school activities. During the study, he participated in rehearsals for special performances that would be done at graduation (school-leaving ceremony). Although Azikiwe was a very active, playful child at home, his frequent, wild abandonment at school, which appeared only in outdoor play activities, was something his father was not aware of. He was not sure if Azikiwe played at school because he was always indoors when he collected him.

Mr. Kafil: I'm not even sure if Azikiwe plays at school...he has so much energy when he gets home in the evenings I'm almost sure he doesn't play at school; plus he is always waiting on me when I go for him. I never have to search for him and if I don't see him when I get there I knew where to find him, either in the hall or doing something for Ms. Lawson.

More facts about Azikiwe were revealed as I continued the interview with his father. Azikiwe's older brothers were all 'bright' students. His 15-year-old brother was awarded a special reward and featured in one of the local newspapers for having attained one of the highest overall scores at the high school level. His other two brothers, eleven and seven years old, were in the top five at their respective schools. During summer breaks, Azikiwe's mother had specific times set aside for 'school work,' which Mr. Kafil believed was the reason for the children's successes:

...summer wasn't always about playing, they had to do book work, it helped them get ready for the next class [grade] they were going to when they went back to school. There's a time and place for everything and they [the children] must learn that. It is important to play but it is more important to learn their lessons. That is what is going to get them through school.

Azikiwe's play and learning behavior at school seemed to follow the expectations set by his parents and echoed by the classroom teacher, Ms. Lawson. Although she saw the value play has in the development of children, the teacher also saw the need to 'educate' them first. As she explained about the "class" when she first got them:

These children that we have, when we first got them in September they couldn't read, couldn't count properly and we had to do something about that...these children were very difficult...they had...all of them had behavioral problems. So it was like when we get the class in September the first thing we had to do was to attack the behavior. Cause these children use to just get up and walk all over and do whatsoever they use to do. So we had to attack the behavior, be aggressive with the behavior to get the behavior problem under control. And then most of

these children they were way behind for them to go out to primary school; so we had to...it took a lot out of us to bring them to the level to where they are now. So we use to have to cut...because apparently they...they had a lot of free play from the class that they were coming from...so you had to show that is not only free play... you have to have guided and direct work, so we had to structure that with them. We had to be strict with them. So play was not allowed until they finished their work. That's how we got them to where they are today.

From Ms. Lawson's account, the children's ideology of free play had to be reshaped, which meant removing 'free play' from the classroom until the appropriate behavior was attained. Although she admitted that more 'free play' was allowed in the second and third terms, there were several occasions when some of the children still had to be reigned in and reminders given about the rules of when and where play was accommodated "because if you don't keep at them they will get loose."

Tie up de link: Azikiwe Doctor Bird Summary

The nature of Azikiwe's play was a mixture of social, pretend, and R&T (physical) play. The most obvious display of these play behaviors was during his outdoor recess. During these periods, Azikiwe showed a predisposition for being a mediator/negotiator with his peers. His play behavior encompassed both leader and follower and he had a pleasant disposition. He displayed curiosity, solitary play, and group play, and seemed to have been guided by expectations in his immediate environment.

Unlike the other participants, Azikiwe was from a fairly large family, including four siblings and married parents (a stay-at-home mom and a much older father). In my review of

transcripts, field notes, Reflective Journal and videos, I noticed that his play behavior reflected not only that of a typical five-year-old as noted by developed country theorists, but also many of the idiosyncrasies of a developing country once ruled by colonialism. These idiosyncrasies included adherence to rules controlled by adults; play and work are dichotomous; and play being associated with outdoor activities.

Azikiwe's perceptions and understanding of play surfaced as he talked about his indoor and outdoor pursuits. As he spoke of the activities he did in the classroom, he used descriptions such as "fun" and "quiet time" to categorize play. In contrast, play activities engaged in outdoors were labeled as "fun," "free," "natural," "happy," and "being with friends." He also referred to outdoor play as "time when he and his friends can play anything", but when in the classroom the teacher's instructions must be adhered to (informal interview).

The adults in his immediate circle influenced Azikiwe's perceptions and understanding of play. He followed their explicit rules and regulations without much hesitation. Although he enjoyed both play and work, the manner in which Azikiwe spoke of both indicated that they could not occupy the same space and time, and he struggled with naming the behavior related to the work context as play. This was also perpetuated by the manner in which the adults from home and school alluded to work and play. He, however, got fully immersed in the activities he was involved in and was totally committed to his peers as they engaged in play. Both his parents and his teacher agreed that to ensure children got the most out of their schooling, play had to be 'streamlined' until the appropriate behavior was achieved. Azikiwe seemed to have learned to dichotomize play and work, with work seemingly having preference over play when at school, and the reverse at home.

Radhiya Barble Dove (Agreeable, Quiet)

Radhiya was a quiet five-year-old (with only a few weeks before her birthday) and an only child. She lived with her unwed parents in an apartment complex and was the only child in that section of the complex. She had dark rich mahogany complexion, big bright dark brown eyes, long black eyelashes, and thick well-shaped black eyebrows. Her thick hair was parted in sections plaited or in cornrows and was on many occasions slightly untidy as she frequently played with a plait. Her nose had a wide bridge and slightly flared at the end of the nostrils. Her thick, dark chocolate colored lips were often parted, revealing two missing upper front teeth. The remaining teeth were very white. Her teeth showed signs of a slight over-bite, which may have been a result of her subconscious ‘sucking’ of her tongue when she was in deep concentration.

Radhiya became a member of the school’s community when she was 2.5 years old. Her father recalled,

Although the school wasn’t our first choice...it was the only school in the area that would accept her at that age. We decided at first to let her stay for a year then move her to our first choice; but after we saw the improvement in her performance after her first year there, we decided to let her stay.

She was the tallest girl in her class and the tallest student in the three five-year-old classes in the school. She appeared to be the consummate classmate; she cooperated with her peers during play and assisted them when faced with academic challenges. However, despite her height and academic ability, she was not the leader of the class as Chiku and Azikiwe constantly overshadowed her. Sporadically, she exhibited confidence as she quietly voiced her opinions, either on the playground or in the classroom, but mostly she faded into the background. Interestingly, she shared a worktable with Azikiwe, sitting to his immediate right, while Chiku

sat opposite to her at an adjoining table. Azikiwe shared quiet conversations with Radhiya; however, he was more involved with Max, who sat to the right of Radhiya.

De Skool Yaard: A School Day in the Life of Radhiya

Radhiya's arrival in the classroom was often met with varying reactions from her classmates. During 'regular' school days (when there were no special activities), her peers infrequently addressed her as she entered the classroom; however, on 'special days' such as Career Day or Child's Day, she was greeted by her 'best friends' (her words) Amanda, Azikiwe, and Nigel with exuberance. Her father accompanied her to school every morning. He assisted her with her morning rituals, such as placing her red and white lunch kit in the cubby and placing her green and white knapsack on her chair. When she was seated at her table, he would often play with the other children while she sat and watched with a smile on her face. When finished entertaining the children, he would deliver a kiss on her forehead and briskly move his tall lanky body through the door. Radhiya often watched as he got in a blue two-door sedan and drove out of the parking lot, she then turned her attention to the other children who worked or played both indoors and on the playground.

During the morning activities, Radhiya would either sit at her table reading, playing with an object she got from the table or from one of her classmates, or she would get close to a group to observe the activities taking place. She rarely asked to be included, and when she was invited to play, would enter the arena with exuberance and followed her peers' activities. She seemed to enjoy the early morning work that was set on the board or in her workbook, as well as the word game that some members of her table often engaged in. She usually was the first to respond to questions asked, and when she got the answers correct, did a little jig in her seat.

On several occasions, during early morning activity, I observed Radhiya walk through the classroom looking at some of the charts on the wall. When I questioned her about it, she smiled and responded, “ah jus’ love to look at de colors and to read de words...I love to read plenty, plenty” (I just love to look at the colors and the read the words...I love to read a lot). The final phrase was said emphatically. I also noted her love of reading or being read to as I often heard her tell her friends of the book she and her father read before she went to bed. Her eyes shone as she spoke of this period of time she shared with her parent. Ms. Fairweather, the assistant teacher, reinforced what I heard and saw of Radhiya’s love of reading,

First time, before all the children could read properly, she [Radhiya] was the first to be able to read without too much help from any of us. I use to see her reading when it was rest time, and if her father is late picking her up and she is not doing any extras (after school activities) then all she would do is read. She is the spelling champion of the school and the zone for her age group (said with pride).

Although Radhiya was considered a “bright” child by her teachers and classmates (information gained from informal discussions), she was not what Jamaicans called “an up front person.” She liked partaking in events but kept in the ‘shadows’, and when asked to take the lead would often seek assistance. She seemed to like group pursuits, especially when the activities involved personal work being displayed, such as performing in front of the class or the school. On several occasions during my observational sessions, I noticed that when Radhiya was asked by the classroom teacher or the assistant to take the lead for devotions, she would ask for reinforcement, and often either Chiku or Amanda was her support crew. During these moments, her face shone with pride and she exhibited confidence, poise, and happiness.

De chips nevva fly from de block: Characteristics of Radhiya's Play Behavior

“De chips nevva fly from de block” is a Jamaican phrase speaks to the traits exhibited by a child. It suggests that the characteristics of an individual exhibit the traits of his/her parents or other members of their family and/or community. Most of Radhiya's play sessions, both indoors and outdoors, alternated between solitary play, group play, or with Amanda, her ‘best friend. Occasionally, she could be seen with children from the other five-year-old classes, but her engagement was with her classmates. Also, she enjoyed indulging in R&T play with the boys in her class, especially Azikiwe and Justin, on the playground during recess.

During early morning/free activity sessions, Radhiya spent most of her time seated quietly at her desk, often working in her book, reading, or observing her peers. Her play was often initiated by her friends and seldom was her voice heard unless it was during one of the word games the children frequently played in the mornings. On many occasions, she took directives from Chiku and Amanda and very rarely voiced her opinion.

Radhiya enjoyed playing with her classmates on ‘special occasions’ such as ‘Career Day’, when physical play was allowed in the classroom. She came alive as she moved around the classroom going from group to group. She would first observe what each group was doing before joining the activities. However, I witnessed on several occasions that she stood on the outskirts of the groups, smiled as she observed the activities her peers were involved in. but never asked to be included in them; neither did she give the impression she wanted to be involved. It was during these sessions that I noticed how Radhiya's eyes would sparkle as if she was involved in a play taking part in her own little world. When asked what she was thinking about when she watched her friends played, she replied, “a jus’ like watching dem, ‘cause...” and ended with a shrug and

a smile. She was unable to give voice to her thoughts or perhaps preferred to keep her thoughts to herself.

Unlike Chiku who carried various items to school to play with and invited her classmates to join her, Radhiya never brought a special toy to school and seldom invited others to play with her. When asked about her toy, she responded with a pronounced lisp, “I have a dolly with long black hair and a pretty green and white dress, but I don’t carry her to school because I don’t want her to get dirty or lost.” When asked what she enjoyed doing in the mornings, she responded,

Sometimes I...ahmm draw stuff, and I color stuff... sometimes I paint and do Spanish... I love Spanish... [paused], I also like to do things with Amanda and sometimes with Azikiwe...but he likes to play with Max...so I just read sometimes or play with the plastic gig and Azikiwe’s toy or watch my friends play.

The objects that captivated her were items made from book leaves such as paper dolls or the finger game toy made by folding paper in squares and operated with the use of the three fingers. Occasionally, Radhiya and a few of the children at her table engaged in the latter game; however, their interest often waned after a couple rounds and they would move to another activity, leaving Radhiya to join them or resort to occupying herself.

On several occasions during the early morning sessions Radhiya talked with Amanda, but it was not unusual to see her quietly play with the boys who sat at her table. She enjoyed the time spent with the boys as her quiet laughter, which often echoed Azikiwe’s, could be heard as she played with their gig or other improvised toys they made or found in the classroom.

During the weeks I spent in the classroom, I rarely heard Ms. Lawson or Ms. Fairweather reprimand Radhiya for inappropriate behavior. Her teachers often singled her out for her quiet, appropriate behavior:

I don't know why some of you children can't be more like Radhiya...look how quiet she is...she's not running up and down the classroom like a chicken without a head...or trying to make me deaf with the loud talking.

During these periods, Radhiya's facial expressions flickered between pride and slight embarrassment. Some of the girls would turn and make faces at her while the boys at her table would 'hi five' her or giggle in their hands then return to their individual activities.

Radhiya was more comfortable with the boys than the girls and was often seen relating to the boys at her table as well as the "terror" of the class, Justin. Although Justin was an overactive child, it was interesting to watch his subdued play sessions in the classroom with Radhiya. They fed off each other's energy – Radhiya's calming mannerism and Justin's highly contagious effervescent behavior. As she shared her books or toys with him, he shared his animated version of the stories or created new ways to play the game. This friendly and meaningful exchange was often cut short; Justin's commanding voice and over-the-top movements always got him sentenced to his isolated seat at the back of the classroom. This resulted with Radhiya continuing on her own or joining with a group. If she chose the latter, she seemed more inclined to play with the boys. This behavior was also noticed as I observed her on the playground.

As noted in my journal, I was very curious about her play preference and asked Ms. Lawson (her teacher) about it. According to Ms. Lawson,

I believe she enjoys playing with the boys because they don't talk as much as the girls...you know how some of these girls can talk non-stop, real chatty-chatty...and they [the boys] do more running up and down which I don't believe she gets much when she goes home....she's an only child you know, and where she lives I don't believe plenty children don't live there. The boys accept her for who

she is and they don't care that sometimes she's untidy or messy... (paused, as a slight frown marred her forehead), well that's what I believe.

Radhiya was usually one of the last girls to finish eating lunch before heading out the door for her daily fill of “romping.” Her outdoor play often involved lengthy sessions of physical activities, such as tire play or ‘crocodile’ done mostly with boys. She could be heard laughing and shouting, “Grab ‘im...grab ‘im!” (Get him!) or “Stan’ behin’ mi” (stand behind me) as she protected her friend. Her outdoor play usually began with a skip to the corridor outside the classroom. She paused and spent a few minutes looking at the activities on the playground and beyond; she explained, “I’m looking to see if there are any swings free or where my friends are.” Once she decided what to do, she raced across the graveled playground, arms flying in the air and the wind playing with her skirt and ribbons.

Many times her path led to the swing where she would jump in the seat and quickly set it in motion. However, if no swings were available, she would run to the concrete patio, collect a tire and began a journey, which took her from the gate across the patio and on to the playground. Several times her classmates and occasionally children from the other five-year-old class would join her; her laughter and expressions became more animated when this occurred. She engaged in lively competitions such as racing tires across the playground and was not discouraged when she did not win, which was often. She gained pleasure being involved with a group and explained her pleasure to me during one of many informal talks:

Radhiya: When I playing wid de tire a jus’ push it fass fass an mek it
guh all de way down dere suh [pointed to the far east end of
the playground], den a run after it an’ take it back to de top an
guh again.

Me: Why do you like playing with the tires?

Radhiya: It feel so gud when a running free...an' den sometimes mi friends dem cum an' play wid me an' I like dat...sometimes is plenty of dem yuh know, an' wi jus' run up an' down wid de tires until wi tired...dat feel so good. (It feels so good when I'm running free...and then sometimes my friends come and play with me and I like that...sometimes there are plenty of them, and we run up and down with the tires until we are tired...that feels so good.

Me: What feels good, playing with the tires or playing with your friends?

Radhiya: [Paused, then she smiled broadly, which exposed the spaces waiting for her upper front teeth to grow] everyt'ing...playing wid mi friends and playing wid de tires...but a like it more when dem [her friends] play wid mi. (Everything...playing with my friends and playing with the tires...but I like it more when my friends play with me.

Her explanation suggested that although she liked playing this fast game, she enjoyed it more when her friends accompanied.

Radhiya enjoyed her role as an assistant/helper and was often seen pushing her peers on the swing or assisting the smaller children with tires. Sometimes her actions appeared to be out of character; she became assertive when she championed a cause for Amanda:

Sometimes nobody wants to give Amanda a chance on the swing so I just go and ask Chiku to give her a chance. Sometimes she says 'go and sit down and wait' and I do it but if I think she's on it too long I just stand there until she comes off. Then I call Amanda and then I help to push her.

During weeks of observations, I noticed other incidents where Radhiya became assertive and protective; all these sessions involved Amanda, her ‘best friend.’ I asked her to talk about one of these sessions:

Ah don't like it wen dem push Mandy off de swing before is time to stop or wen dem don't give har a chance on di slide. Dem not to be mean...it is not nice to be mean...an' most time shi not gwain sey anyt'ing to dem...so ah just sey it for har or ah just stop playing dem an' me and Mandy play togedda. (I don't like it when they push Mandy off the swing before it is time to stop, or when she is not given a chance on the slide. They must not be mean...it is not nice to be mean...and in most cases she is not going to respond to them so I say it for her or I stop playing with them, then me and Mandy play together.

She quickly went on to reassure me that this did not happen all the time:

Is not all de time dem mean yuh know...just sometimes...but is our frien' dem and we play togedda all de time plenty, plenty...an me an Mandy love to play ‘crocodile’ cause wi get to run up and down fass fass. (They are not mean all the time, just sometimes, but we are all friends and we play together all the time. Mandy and I love to

play ‘crocodile’ because it allows us to run vigorously and very fast).

This protective attitude was also displayed when she played with her cousins during her visits to her grandparents’ home. As her father, Mr. Kontar explained:

Radhiya loves to play with her cousins and all of them are either younger or smaller than her so she is always careful not to hurt them. I think she is like me in that way. I love kids and I hate to see them hurt so I am very careful with them...even when I play with Radhiya and her mom I ensure that neither of them

will get hurt. I am a big man and I could easily hurt any of them; and she [Radhiya] is much bigger than most of her classmates. Also, I think because Amanda is her best friend she looks out for her...and I think that that is only natural.

Although Radhiya enjoyed more physical activities, there were occasions when she engaged in quieter games with the girls. On numerous occasions, she ventured over to the slide or under the shade of the large Poinciana tree to watch the girls play. As with her movements in the classroom, she always stood just outside the area of play and rarely asked to be included. However, when she did enter the play activities, she was exuberant and compliant to all the verbal and nonverbal rules and cues. Occasionally, she would spontaneously leave one group and join another more active group, then return to the first group if they were still involved in the activity.

I observed Radhiya's activities as she moved from indoor to outdoor play activities. The characteristics of her play behaviour were similar to the other participants; however, there were noticeable differences. Her indoor activities were quiet, and she easily shifted her role from observer to group participant. She enjoyed physical play as well as solitary play for very extended periods. Her lifestyle at home (being an only child living in a complex where there were no other children) accommodated her love of reading and perhaps accounted for her preference to stay on the outskirts of group activities.

Her love for her friends could be seen as she stood up for them when they needed her help. She was also empathic to both boys and girls in her class and to other children in the school as I often observed her assist the younger ones as they played or play with the "outcast" (Justin). It was during these periods that she became animated and expressive, often scowling, not in a

mean way, but some of the children did not seem to understand this. She was often asked by Chiku, “Why yuh love mek up yuh face suh? It nuh look gud” (Why do you like to frown? It does not look good), to which she always responded with a shrug, “A not making up mi face, a t’inking” (I am not frowning, I’m thinking). After this exchange, the children resumed their previous activity.

Cum wi guh play crocodile: Nature/Types of Radhiya’s Play Activity

The nature and type of play behaviors exhibited by many Jamaican children are high energy, fast-paced, role shifting, selfless, and spontaneous. Crocodile, a type of tag, is a game, which captures all these elements. Radhiya got pleasure from being actively involved with the children at her table or reading more than being involved in the imaginary game Chiku and the other girls indulged in. During Career Day, she was more interested in utilizing the doctor’s tools than talking about what each person brought. However, because she brought only one item she used the opportunity to go to each “doctor” and inquire about the instrument(s) they brought. She had an inquiring mind; as she played with each instrument, she asked about its use then tried to utilize the instrument in a similar manner.

During this special day, children had the opportunity to have free play in the classroom. Initially, Radhiya was the observer. However, as the play got more interactive she joined in and was soon totally involved in the chase, which moved from inside the classroom to the adjacent corridor. As the noise increased, Ms. Lawson stopped the play and ushered them to their seats. As the students slowly returned to their seats and with no further instructions, all but Radhiya resumed their talk about their ‘costumes.’ She turned her attention to playing with the small

stethoscope she had retrieved from her pocket and not lost interest in learning about the various careers and attires her classmates were excitedly speaking about.

Radhiya's awkwardness around her classmates was overshadowed by her love of physical activities. As noted earlier, during my weeks of observations, I noticed Radhiya's play often led to physical activities with tires or on the swings. Her connection with the girls in the class seemed to be a little strained and when I asked her whom she enjoyed playing with the most, boys or girls, she responded:

Radhiya: I like playing with everybody...everybody is my friend ...I like playing with Amanda because she is my best friend...I like playing with Chiku because she always let me help her with her puzzle...but sometimes she's mean...and I like to play with Azikiwe because we play racing with the tires or 'crocodile'...and the other boys too.

Me: Why is Amanda your best friend?

Radhiya: Because she likes to run up and down with me and play tires with me and we can do the tires better than some of the boys in the class...we can beat some of them [with a big smile]...I like to help her on the swing and she helps me on the swing...she is nice to me and she likes when I help her.

Me: Why is Chiku mean?

Radhiya: She likes to tell you what to do and if you don't do it she gets vex...and I don't like that [a frown marred her face]. She does not like to listen to anybody, she like to be always the leader...but I still play with her because she is not the leader all the time.

Me: Why do you still play with her?

Radhiya: Because [pauses]...everybody plays with her...everybody plays with everybody...and she is my friend.

Although Radhiya was compliant with most of her classmates, she enjoyed healthy competitions with her best friend and the boys. This seemed to stem from events done at home as noted by her father, Mr. Kontar,

I ensure that we play with Radhiya at home. I especially play with her because I know what it feels like when you have no one to play with. That happened to me when I was growing up and I don't want it to happen to her...I play all different types of games with her like racing, football (soccer), and hide and seek. Sometimes her mother plays with her, and when we take her to her grandparents' house she plays with her cousins, but I'm her main playmate. When we are not playing outside, she's inside reading or helping her mother with something, like housework.

Her point of reference for play initiated from the play she indulged with her parents, especially her father, and may account for her preference of playing with the boys rather than that of the girls. In one of our informal interviews, Radhiya spoke of the type of play she did at home:

I play plenty, plenty wid my faddah and sometimes wid mi moddah but when a not playing a like to color and a like to write...an' a like to read...my moddah have plenty book for me to read...yuh know...an' a read dem...an' a like to read de ones from de library an' den a sometimes tell Mandy 'bout de story. Sometimes we pretend to be de people in de book...but not all de time cause sometimes dem [pointed to the children in the class] don't know de story...so a jus' play gig wid dem...and a like playing gig (smiled widely) cause mine most time spin long, long,

long...and don't stop yuh know! Den a jus show Justin 'ow to do it...Justin like when a tell 'im some of de story dem dat a read (I play a lot with my father and sometimes with my mother. When I am not playing I like to color, and write, and read books. My mother has a lot of books for me to read. I also like to read the books from the library and then tell Mandy about the story).

There were other elements to Radhiya play behavior. As I observed Radhiya when she spoke, I thought how much of a storyteller she was. During her interviews, as she recalled what she did at home or at school, her stories usually began very slow-paced and gradually gained momentum. She constructed her play/stories from activities that happened on the playground and her grandmother's home, as well as from the people she made contact with in her books and in reality. Her imagination was vivid, yet she never seemed confident to display this side of her persona with her friends.

Mek wi play sint'ing: Radhiya's Play Context and Materials

The word "sint'ing" is used to capture what, how and where play happens. Radhiya's actions in the classroom were usually passive and frequently involved activities with items she made or found. She enjoyed working with her hands and experimented with the various items as she played. On one occasion, I observed her retrieve blocks from the 'play area' and constructed various shapes, remodeling them making different shapes and sizes. She also enjoyed working on puzzles. Her "I love to make things with the blocks because I can take it down and go again," confirmed her enthusiasm for working with items that were challenging.

I noticed that some her fellow tablemates did not often share her enthusiasm. On several occasions, I witnessed her inviting Azikiwe to join her as she experimented with the blocks and

several different other items such as books, pencils, and hands. They worked for a few minutes before Azikiwe turned to Max and they got involved with another activity.

This led me in noting the length of time Azikiwe spent with Radhiya during early morning work/free activity. I deduced it was determined by Max's arrival to school. For example, on several occasions Radhiya and Azikiwe were the "early birds" at their table and they shared games using blocks, a gig, and a "fudge stick." Usually when Max arrived the game was suspended as Azikiwe had to "meet and greet." Occasionally, both boys returned to the table and resumed the game with Radhiya. During the suspension of the game, Radhiya continued playing with the gig and the stick, as she practiced perfecting her aim. Interestingly, on a few instances, on the boys' return, she took over the leadership role as she explained the rules to Max with Azikiwe doing the demonstrations. The rules of the game varied according to the children's interest, such as number of attempts each player had in hitting a block down or being able to use the gig before the next player got his or her chance.

On other occasions, Radhiya retreated into a different world as she read books she retrieved from her bag or from the 'reading corner (a desk in the northwest corner of the room), or as she engaged in activities from her workbook. During these periods, she became very quiet and occasionally glanced up from her book only if addressed by an adult or to gaze into space. Radhiya's indoor play was very structured when compared to her outdoor play, and she was more at ease being alone during these sessions than getting involved with the other members of her class.

From observations during the outdoor play sessions, Radhiya was least interested in the slides and the monkey bars. Her play on the slide was usually brief and only utilized if she was playing with another classmate. She used it as a "time saver" as she waited for a vacant seat on

the swing. Several times, I saw her on the monkey bars but she never climbed to the top, always hanging from the second row or standing on the bottom rung. Although she was encouraged by her friends to “come up, Radhiya,” she never ventured. She explained her reluctance, “The children like to play hard on the monkey bar and I’m afraid I’m going to fall off. My daddy said I’m to be careful and not to go too far up to the top.”

Radhiya’s facial expressions became very animated as she pushed a tire around the playground, played ‘crocodile’ (a tag game), or flew through the air on a swing. She enjoyed the tag (crocodile) more than any other game. Her joy was displayed as she raced across the open playground and onto the concrete open court adjacent to the playground. The game usually began with her and Amanda but others would join in, and it was not unusual to see at least 8 to 10 children participating in this game of chase.

Radhiya’s laughter and squeals were easily identified as she was chased or she chased a friend; even as she rested and watched the game from the “safe zone,” her shouts and laughter as she shouted, “run fass fass, yuh have to run faster” were still heard. After having rested for a few minutes, she would re-enter the game, sometimes opting to be the chaser. Her love and knowledge of the game were explained to me one day as we sat on the corridor by the post near her classroom:

Radhiya: I just love to run and play with everyone. It feels good to run all the way down there and all the way up there [pointed to the east and west ends of the playground]...and when I’m tired I just come over here to sit down ‘till I am ready again. When I’m running the breeze just blow in my face and that feels good.

Me: How do you know where the base is?

Radhiya: Everybody knows where the base is...because that's where everybody always goes.

Me: What happens when you are at the base?

Radhiya: That's where you are safe...the crocodile can't eat you when you are there.

Me: Who told you about the rules of the game?

Radhiya: [paused before answering] Everybody knows the rules long, long time. We play the game from we were in Ms. Avery class [four-year-old class teacher].

Me: Do you play crocodile when you play at home?

Radhiya: No, I play with my mother and father and sometimes he tickles me and we run around the couch. Sometimes my mother plays tickle with me too or sometimes we play 'Snake and Ladder'...but I play football with my daddy and racing, and sometimes I win him.

Me: You seem to like to go on the swing.

Radhiya: Yes [her face lit up]! Ah jus' love to swing 'cause ah feel good an' ah can guh up high and mi belly feel funny" (I love to swing because it makes me feel good and I can go up high and it makes my belly feel funny.) I love how the wind just blow in my face...and it makes me feel so good like I'm up there [pointed to the sky] near the clouds. I can look down on everybody [she smiled].

Interestingly, during my informal talks with Radhiya, I was able to ascertain more information about her play than when I did video-cued interview. She was usually distracted or reluctant to voice her thoughts as she watched her friends and herself on the screen. During this session, her main interest was to have me show the video to her friend and to her dad.

In my Reflective Journal, I noted that Radhiya's love for this physical type of play was based on her feeling of freedom, as she ran uninhibited around the playground or as she pushed tires or played tag. There were occasions when she indulged in pretend play with the girls but very often she left the area of activity to swing, or play with a tire or a game of tag before returning to play with the girls.

Me: Why do you like playing with the tires?

Radhiya: I like how it feels and it goes fast, fast, fast. Sometimes it goes so fast that I cannot catch it until it drops...sometimes it hits somebody and I just laugh, then I pick it up and run again...it is fun. I can make it go anywhere I want.

Me: Tell me what is happening here. [She watched the video that showed her standing by the legs of the swing.]

Radhiya: I am waiting for a time to swing...see Amanda swinging [pointed to the image of her friend]...then she asks me to push her...and I do it. [She continued watching the screen]. See Jason over there getting up off the swing and I just run and get on it. I love to be on the swing [her face lit up as she talked about the swing].

It appeared this love for the swing was more than being a physical activity but possibly one where she could escape into her other world uninhibited.

Mek mi ears eat grass: Play Purpose

Adults often use the phrase "Mek mi ears eat grass" to regulate children's activities. From interviews conducted with Radhiya and her father and from my observations, it was apparent that play was an activity both parent and child enjoyed. However, from conversations

with Mr. Kontar, I became aware that he was specific about when, where, and how often play was done. He explained:

I think play is very important to a child...a child learns more while playing and actually singing than sitting down and listening. If they are playing a ring game and they are having fun I can guarantee you that after the ring game...they will...even if they are hearing it or seeing it for the first time they will latch on to it much, much faster than in the classroom environment.

He also commented on his role in her play activity:

She is an only child right now, so she plays with her mom and me. She is very close to her mom and me. I try my very best to ensure that my daughter have me to play with, instead of trying to find somebody else, because there is no other sibling...right at the moment, so I try to ensure that she has me to play with. She is like me when I was child...an only child I grow up without a father, in fact there wasn't any father figure around so I told myself that I would never ever allow my child, to grow without, or my kids to grown without their father, yes. Certain fundamentals or certain things that when you grow older as an adult you realize that you miss out on you try and ensure that your child gets all that and more.

Mr. Kontar further spoke of the other purposes of play. "It allows her to be active and to burn off the extra energy, especially when she's out playing during recess time...and when she goes to her grandmother she gets to socialize with her cousins as she plays." He also spoke of the differences between his play as a child and play of children of this millennium:

It is very different these days. Ahmmm...when I was growing up I played like marbles, I played gig, because St. Mary was in the country so I played gig. I

played a little bit....a little bit of karate, although it was dangerous you know but we as males (chuckled...then laughed) are very disobedient at times so we played a little bit of karate. Now-a-days kids...kids play with computers, they play video games, ahmm...there isn't much outside play, there isn't much outside play now as there was when I was growing up.

He continued,

My play was very active and theirs is very static and dangerous as well. Cause as a child...(paused to think), playing helps as a child, especially when...when it is physical it helps as a child. And if the child is around the computer from she's home playing games, or talking to friends, that child will not have enough time to...to...ahmm play outside. Exercise is key and playing is a form of exercise. That is why I ensure that I play with my child, it is important that she gets exercise and play with different things. I play gig with her too [he smiled].

Mr. Kontar expressed pleasure knowing Radhiya was given the opportunity to play at school.

Although he mentioned that play allowed his daughter to “exercise and to be creative,” he never mentioned that play was necessary for his child’s cognitive nor social development, nor was there a need for indoor play at school. He believed the guidelines that were given by the teacher regarding play were important and helped children, especially his daughter, to follow rules as they worked and played. He also expressed that play, although not often done outdoors when they were home, was an activity Radhiya frequently indulged in by herself when he or her mother were busy. As he explained, “when we are busy she can play by herself...it keeps her occupied and we don’t have to worry that she is getting into any trouble.”

My informal discussions with Radhiya regarding the pleasure she derived from play, resulted with her response being, “I like when we ‘ave a lot of fun like playing crocodile or on di monkey bars...an’ on di swing...an’ den when we finish we get quiet because dey don’t disterve anybody.” (I like when we have a lot of fun...and then when we are finished we get quiet so that we don’t disturb anyone). The quiet period she spoke of was the rest time after recess. As noted earlier, during this period Radhiya enjoyed reading.

Radhiya’s body language as she spoke of her playtime spoke more than her words. During our conversations, as she spoke of her activities, she often did a little shuffle, or swung her legs and arms, or danced a little jig on the chair, with a constant smile on her lips. Occasionally, she paused her movements long enough as she shifted her position and watched her classmates. Unlike her classmates, she referred to her activities in the classroom as “free time play”, which was done with her friends at the table and to have fun before “real work” began. She also spoke of “real play time” being the time she spent outside either on the playground at school or in the backyard at her grandmother’s home.

Ben’ di tree wen it young: Work/Play Distinctions

To “ben di tree wen it young” is the Jamaican way of saying start training a child in the way you want them to grow from their early years. Similar to the other parents, Mr. Kontar saw the value of play in the development of his child’s physical attributes. He also saw it as a necessity for the release of ‘extra’ energy. From my observations and conversations with Radhiya, she saw play as a means of having fun with her friends during early morning time and again when out on the playground. She told me of the different types of activities that could be done in the classroom during the early morning work and free activity time:

“Yuh can’t run up and down in the class...yuh haffe be at your table...but I like to read suh ah jus’ stay at mi table an’ read or draw stuff and color stuff. Miss sey when yuh in di classroom is not time to play is time to work.” (You are not allowed to run around in the class...you must be at your table...but I like to read so I stay at my table and read or draw or color things. Miss [Ms. Lawson] said when you are in the classroom it is not play time. It is work time.)

These rules aligned with Ms. Lawson’s belief mentioned earlier of children being kept in control and being taught when and where play was allowed. There was a distinct space and time allotted for play and work.

Mr. Kontar expressed that his earlier experiences as an only child helped to shape his understanding of where and when play was done.

Mr. Kontar: I was often criticized of playing too much...even in high school I was criticized of playing too much.

Me: Who criticized you?

Mr. Kontar: My grandmother, my form teachers, the vice principal...she even criticized me of leading the flock. I don’t want that to happen to Radhiya so I tell her to leave the playing to outside the classroom, and during class time while the teacher is teaching you cannot play...those are the basic fundamentals.

Ms. Lawson also spoke of these ‘basic fundamentals’ as she expressed her understanding of the benefits of play:

...they [the children] are learning as they play; they are learning and developing their speech, their vocabulary, and more of their cognitive development...they

interact much better with their peers while they play...I learned these things in the course I am doing.

However, she added that to do this type of play in the classroom “there has to be more time...the play has to be more structured...the material that they [the children] play with can be more creative, and we have to be more inspired.” She continued,

this will not happen for now because we have to assure the parents that these are young children and they learn....develop not only cognitively but by playing...it help them with their interpersonal skill, so I have to explain that to them....so for now I have to keep a strict rule of when and where play can be done....if I don't do that they will be wild. Remember I told you how they were when they first came to us? Plus the parents want to see work in the books at the end of the day and they are upset if they think that all their child did at school was play. So I make sure to give them play when they do something good or finish their work.

Interestingly, Ms. Lawson also spoke of the difficulties faced in implementing the “new” play-based thematic curriculum being implemented in basic schools nationally.

We [the teachers] now have a new curriculum that is play-based and to tell yuh the truth I really don't know how we are suppose to use it when what they are asking us to do we can't do...because first thing is we don't have the space...and the second thing is some of the things they [ECC] want use to teach I don't think the children here ready for it...for example, wedding...and is not Jamaica wedding they want us to teach about, is about another country wedding...really, why we must teach that and some of these children still not ready for primary

school. Primary school is very different from basic school so we have to get them ready for that environment...you know what I mean? Is too much pressure on us...pressure from the parents, from the principal and even the EO [Education Officer]...that is plenty stress.

Mr. Kontar also shared Ms. Lawson's former sentiments regarding place and time for play, and added his own take on education at the primary [elementary] school level:

Rewards and punishment work, contrary to what some people might believe it work...and ahmm...when you tell a child to ensure that the book that I bought for you, you read it after we finish playing and when you finish reading it we are gonna play again, that child will ensure that he or she spends time and read that book. Even...even if ahmm...it's not for a long period but they will ensure that they read the book.

From his account, it was apparent that "she [Radhiya] knew that there was a time and place for everything...as she get older, she would understand that playtime is used to help her release excess energy, to relax, and to help her get exercise." He also believed it would shape her as a person as she learned to be "corporative, understanding, know how to follow rules, and maybe later help her be a leader." He continued,

...she already understands that when she gets to primary school more emphasis is placed on the academics because that is what it is all about. She needs to be alert, and smart, not playing around in class because after primary school is high school and if you don't do well at the primary level 'dog nyam yuh suppa'. I want her to do better than me and her mother, so the best way to do so is through education.

These shared ‘basic fundamentals’ seemed to have been intrinsically and extrinsically imbedded in Radhiya’s understanding of where and when play was done. This may account for the passive play behavior she exhibited while in the classroom and the more extraverted behavior on the playground.

Tie up di link: Radhiya Barbel Dove Summary

I summarized Radhiya’s play by addressing the three exploratory questions. Reviewing the data I have established that the nature of Radhiya’s play ranged from social to solitary play and included pretend and physical play. These play behaviors have been identified with descriptions of children’s play from western developed countries. As I reviewed her videos, read transcripts, field notes, and reflective journal, I observed that her indoor play sessions were very subdued, involved periods of creativity, and often solitary. She displayed empathy for her friends, especially smaller and younger children, was submissive and obeyed rules and regulations. During indoors and outdoors activities she exhibited observational skills, such as keenly watching activities being done by her friends before entering the play area. As I observed her during her outdoor play, I noticed she was animated and engaged in more physical play such as tag and playing with the tires.

Occasionally, she would indulge in a session with the girls as they engaged in various pretend play, but these periods were often short and were interspersed between playing with tires, swings, and tag. She enjoyed playing with boys and, as noted previously, engaged in more R&T play than the other girls in her class. On occasions she demonstrated strong leadership qualities, spontaneity, and autonomy in the activities she participated in. These latter qualities were mostly displayed during her outdoor playtime. She also possessed a calm and quiet

disposition for which her teachers who used her behavior as a benchmark for others to emulate often complimented her on.

Radhiya's perceptions and understanding of play was revealed as she labeled her indoor and outdoor play. Indoor play was labeled with adjectives such as "early playtime," "quiet time," and "playing word game." She understood that play in the classroom was not often accommodated and happens "only if Miss mek we duh it" (informal interview). Although she sometimes spoke of her indoor play as "fun" and "happy being with her tablemates," she assured me that it was not "exactly play" because they were sitting at their table and "running up and down."

Home and school environments were factors that shaped Radhiya's play behaviors. During indoor "free activity" periods it was customary to witness Radhiya entertaining herself as well as being observational; being an only child may have attributed to this behavior. It also appeared that she was keen to comply with adults' rules and regulations and tried to assist her classmates to "listen to Miss, and stop the playing in the classroom,." Play in the classroom was reserved to "special" occasions and only on completion of "work."

My weeks of observations revealed that Radhiya's play was directly and indirectly linked to and guided by her immediate environment. She obeyed rules and regulations of both the classroom and the playground; she was not hesitant to be physical, spontaneous, and in several instances, self-motivated as she played outdoors. She totally enjoyed her outdoor play. She made use of her outdoor playtime as she had limited opportunities to exert the same level of high-spirited activities at home or in the classroom. As aptly explained by Radhiya, "play is when you run up and down outside, you have fun with friends, you get to do what you want anytime and you feel good....when you go in the classroom is time to do real work, it is not time to play."

Nuff Said – Conclusion

As I observed these three five-year-olds' play behavior, there were many similarities and some differences between their indoor and outdoor play behavior. As noted in Chapter One, although there have been numerous studies done trying to understand children's play, the majority of these studies were done with adults as the main contributors to the discourse. In this field of research, children's voices were underrepresented, especially from children from smaller developing countries.

Although more investigations are being done with children as co-researchers, more studies are needed to be done with children outside of western developed countries. This study was done to help fill the gap. The children's voices were the main contribution to the discourse. The three children shared their thoughts and activities and helped me understand the role the sociocultural environment had on their actions and thoughts. I saw the similarities and differences of children's play from developed societies and those of a small diverse country as Jamaica.

The three children's average age was 5 years 10 months; they were registered at the same school, shared the same class, and would attend a primary school in fall 2012. Although they all lived within a five-mile radius of the school, the similarities ended there. There were two females and a male, and their home environments differed significantly. Their play stories were impacted by their individual and shared environments, which indicated to me that there needs to be more investigations done to understand the impact these environments have on children's play. For example, the nature of each child's play differed not based solely on gender, but on other factors such as availability of play space, equipment, and play partners.

When describing their indoor play, the three children used adjectives such as “fun”, “early playtime,” or “free play.” In contrast, their description of their outdoor play used the words “fun”, “free”, “natural”, “feeling good”, and “happy.” However, the children’s definition of play seemed to echo the adults’ interpretation and gave more of a functionality of play; for example, play was a time to be free to be with friends and to “run up and down.” The contextual framework of the time and place in which play was accommodated not only shaped their description and value of play but also their understanding.

In this chapter, I presented the data, described the setting, introduced the participants (the children, the parents, and the teacher), and summarized each child’s play experience in context with descriptive narratives. In Chapter Five, I analyzed the data, highlighted similarities and differences, interpreted the data, and shared implications as they relate to understanding young Jamaican children’s play. I also discussed implications for further research as well as implications for training of early childhood teacher candidates

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

*When we are absorbed in play, we lose ourselves.
When we look closely at play overtime, we find ourselves.
(The Strong Website, 2013)*

*New broom sweep clean, but ole broom know de ca'nas.
(Jamaican Proverb)*

This study was designed to describe and explain the lived experience of play of selected Jamaican children from the viewpoint of the child. In addition, it is hoped the information gained would contribute to the developing literature on the Jamaica's play based curriculum. The overarching question was, "What challenges exist for understanding the role of play in the cultural context of Jamaican schooling?" The following exploratory sub-questions supporting the overarching questions were used to guide the study:

1. What is the nature of young children's play?
2. What perceptions and understandings are derived from young children's play from the child's viewpoint?
3. What factors contribute to these perceptions and understandings?

In this chapter, I present a brief review of the gaps in the literature on Jamaican children's play, the representation of children's voices in research, sociocultural theory, and the types of

play that were observed. These are followed by interpretation of the case, bounded by time (the period participants are being studied), place (Jamaican basic school) and activity (play), noting similarities and differences between each participating child, and implications as they relate to stakeholders of early childhood education, namely teacher training institutions, parents, and other agencies of education – MOE and ECC. I also look at the impact this research has had on me as a researcher, a graduate student, and a teacher educator. Lastly, I offer recommendations for future research and training of early childhood practitioners.

Man nuh hab gourdy, ‘im satisfy wid bottle: Gaps in the Literature

In the Jamaican society there are many instances where people are satisfied with or complacent with events or situations being as they are. The Jamaican proverb presented is similar to “half a loaf is better than none” which indicates being resigned to and accepting evidence presented and not being totally aware that something is missing. Acceptance of and reliance on the “half loaf” may result in being content with not having a better understanding and appreciation of other factors that shape situations.

Research on children’s play is quite abundant and has evolved from research with one’s own children as in the case of Piaget (1962) to include children across cultures and countries. Significant advances have been made in understanding young children’s play, yet a majority of these studies are based on children from western developed countries, from adults’ perspectives, and on young children rather than with children. Additionally, very little research is done on children’s play with active participants from small developing countries (Stamatoglou, 2004; Waller & Bitou, 2011).

In Chapter Two, three types of play that are predominantly seen in Jamaican children's play were highlighted: pretend play, physical play, and social play. Although there has been an abundance of study done in these areas, at the time of this study there was a dearth of research done with young children in Jamaica. There was no empirical evidence in Jamaica that accommodated children's thoughts and voices on their play. Additionally, there was very little documentation that addressed the link between the manifestation of young children's play and the sociocultural environment in which they were immersed.

It is in light of this scarcity, coupled with my personal experiences as an early childhood educator and a graduate student that I embarked on this study. My aim was to understand Jamaican children's play with the emphasis being on young children's play in the school environment, focusing on their thoughts and practices as they expressed their lived play experiences via dialogue and observations.

See mi an' live wid mi is two different t'ings – Data Analysis

Outward appearances can often lead to assumptions and unless time is spent immersed in a particular circumstance a richer understanding of the situation is not revealed or made aware of. The proverb cited above emphasizes this. It also speaks to the fact that one must be committed to understanding the circumstances by seeing the situation from many lenses.

As an "insider," an educator, and a parent, I came to the performance with preconceived notions of what the overall dance would look like based on both the overarching and exploratory questions. However, after I viewed each act, interviewed the performers, and collected data, I now had to grapple with and through the new "stuff" (Piantanida & Garman, 1999) presented to me. I reviewed exploratory questions via play types and, coupled with discussions, presented the

findings. I also expressed my limitations and challenges experienced, the implications based on the overarching question, and finally, my concluding thoughts.

Each observation day began the same – me perched on a child-sized chair with notebook, pencils and/or pen poised and ready for action. Over a six-week period, I collected data via observations, field notes, reflective journal, and video recordings (Janesick, 2011). I manually transcribed each interview, as the Jamaican Patois is a spoken language that is difficult to articulate on paper. This afforded me the opportunity to get intimate with the data as I connected audio clips with video clips.

The data were analyzed over a two-month period (September and October), and with the use of a manual coding method (Saldaña, 2012), I extracted themes and sub-themes. Each child's set of data – videos, interviews and field notes – were looked at separately, coded, then grouped according to common categories identified. With each reading and viewing of video data, I became more attentive to details, which provoked new thoughts, themes, and subthemes to emerge.

The children's stories were recorded and some selected sections were reported via narrative to illustrate their views of play; parents' and teachers' views were also added to the narrative for a more rounded understanding of the sociocultural context. Sociocultural theorist Rogoff (2003) noted that “[i]t does not make sense to study cultural processes without considering the contributions of the people involved” (p.61). Additionally, Yin (2008) stated it is important to gain different aspects of the same situation, thereby allowing the reader to “draw an independent conclusion about the validity of a particular interpretation” (p.189).

Coding the data was a time consuming process, initially chunky, and messy. Each transcript was manually transcribed, then categorized into sub-themes and themes extracted from

the narratives expressed by the participants (see Appendices J & K). The coded information from each transcript was placed on colored 'Post-it' paper and placed under the appropriate labels on the wall. On many occasions the data were re-categorized, recolored, and then reshuffled/replaced under a new theme. As each set of data was introduced through trial and error and with more painstaking reshuffling the themes collapsed into five main ones. The initial themes utilized were derived from the literature read, however, looking through the sociocultural lens, the themes finally employed were organic to the Jamaican environment I was engaged with.

In Chapter Four, each child's story was presented as a case based on the myriad of roles the child performed as s/he played. Their performances, whether indoors or outdoors, were very compelling, and when watched closely revealed complex natures. The stories were delivered through formal and informal conversations. More data were retrieved from the informal conversations as the children often spoke to me during their own time and space. I had the privilege of listening to stories related to their immediate school environment as well to the wider community. These stories included their classmates, their parents, siblings and other relatives and was fashioned by the conversations were shared. I also shared some of my experiences with the children and it was during this informal 'give and take' of information that the children gave more organic stories. I received information from the children at their own pace; I could not rush them and had to rely on them trusting me and being comfortable with me.

To understand the complexities both the children's environment and the roles they assumed as community members were looked at (Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978). I used this premise as a springboard as I sought answers to questions posed, ensuring that as I moved forward with the study, I stayed focused on the phenomenon being studied and each of the children's play experiences.

Mek wi mek de links – Making Connections

In response to the questions posed in this study, I focused on the three play types mentioned earlier and limited my analysis to the Jamaican children observed based on theorists and theories of Western developed countries, such as United States and United Kingdom, coupled with the children's voices. Through the use of a sociocultural lens, I sought to embrace each story as I gave each his/her own time and space. Sociocultural theory is based on the belief that an individual's mental functioning is influenced by the cultural, institutional, and historical context s/he interacts with (Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1977), where the "interpersonal, personal, and cultural-institutional aspects of the event constitute the activity [and] no aspect exists or can be studied in isolation from the others" (Rogoff, 2003, p. 48).

In the beginning of my study, to gain an understanding of children's play within the social context I looked first at the broad picture presented to me – the school environment – then narrowed my view to each child. I extracted pertinent data. Next, I analyzed each set separately and grouped them accordingly, repeated the process on numerous occasions, then wrote a final report. Video clips were used to stimulate discussions held with selected children and with the use of open-ended questions they were asked to comment on their activities captured by the video. Having reviewed information from data, I derived the following five themes – utilizing Jamaican proverbs and terms – and addressed them based on the research question. Table 4 summarizes the themes and related research questions. From constant analysis of the data, five main themes had emerged, 'De chips nevva fly far from de block'; 'Cum wi guh play crocodile'; 'Mek we play sint'ing'; 'Mek mi ears eat grass'; and 'Ben de tree wen it young'. These themes included characteristics of each child's play, and where, when, why and how play was accommodated. Data were peer reviewed by one Jamaican early childhood specialist and an

‘outsider’ – an educator who was not an early childhood specialist or Jamaican. Member checking was also done (Stake, 2006). Here, the participants confirmed children and adults’ transcripts. On one occasion, a parent requested me to read the child’s transcript as he found it difficult to read and time-consuming.

Table 4: Themes and Research Questions

Themes	Research Questions
De chips nevva fall far from de block Cum wi guh play las lick Mek wi play sint’ng	What is the nature of children’s play?
Mek mi ears eat grass	What perceptions and understandings are derived from young children’s play from the child’s viewpoint?
Ben’ de tree wen it young	What factors contribute to these perceptions and understandings?

However, it must be noted that the following findings and discussions were based on three analytical lenses – intrapersonal, cultural, and interpersonal (Rogoff, 2003), and influenced by my own sociocultural perspectives. The analysis was framed by memories of my childhood play, my values, and beliefs. These planes colored and shaped what I saw, heard, and felt and cannot be dismissed from the story. I made connections to the parents as they talked about their childhood play (intrapersonal); my beliefs shaped the ideas I placed value on each child’s

strength and weakness, on the teachers and their roles, and the knowledge gained as I tried to understand and empathize with their history – past, present, and future.

Having identified my assumptions, I was better able to “establish a bridge [with] the community” (Janesick, 2004, p. 107) hence embracing peculiarities and staying true to the data and myself. As I collected and recorded data in my field notes, any conflicts that I felt were noted in my reflective journal and these were revisited and internalized as I moved through the shared space and time.

In this chapter, I present an interpretation of the case based on the three participants’ lived play experiences, both indoors and outdoors. In interviewing the children, their parents, and teacher, I encapsulated the experiences – personal and social – that shaped each child’s manifestation of his/her play behavior. Through this study it is hoped the children’s voices were given credence and ultimately a better understanding of young children’s play experiences as it related to their school environment.

Every Man To ‘Is Own Order – Key Themes

In Chapter Four, each child’s story was told as an individual story via the narrative method. Themes unfolded as I constantly immersed in the transcripts. As I compared these themes, I found commonality among the participants’ data. According to Wolcott (1994), “[t]he essence of comparison lies in calling attention to like features, typically showing how something to be understood is similar to something already familiar” (p. 179). These themes became my main stay as I organized the data into meaningful chunks.

Although there were differences in the children’s backgrounds, there were similarities to their play patterns and their interpretation of play. Their understanding of play – where, when,

why, and how it was done, demonstrated the influence the environment had in shaping their behaviors and heightened my appreciation of how similar my play behavior as a child was equally shaped. A summary of the participants' similarities across the five themes is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Summary of participants' similarities across the common themes

Themes	Indoor Play	Outdoor Play
De chips nevva fall far from de block (Characteristics)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tek time play • Hush • Fallo back a mi 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nevva min', mek mi 'elp • A me dis! • Brukout
Cum wi guh play (Nature/Types of Play)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put i' back whey yuh get i' • Hol' ih dung • Today is Career day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mek wi play crocodile • Leggo mi hand • Mi gwaan • Mi soon cum
Mek wi play sint'ing (Play Context & Materials)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yuh nuh hear whey Miss sey • Mek wi play gig 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police and teif • Mi caan fly • Is what yuh cooking?
Mek mi ears eat grass (Play purpose)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yuh haffe quiet when yuh wid yuh fren • Mi dun mi wuk, mi caan have fun now 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch dem a run up an down • When coco ripe it mus bus • Mek dem play til dem tyard

Table 5 (Continued)

Ben' de tree wen it young (Work/Play Distinctions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is early morning free time • What yuh is? • Siddung an stop di romping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is lunch time! • Everyt'ing dun • You is de winner, me is de winner, mi nuh vex! • Gi mi a chance nuh!
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De More Yuh Live Is De More Yuh Learn – Findings

De chips nevva fly far from de block

This Jamaican proverb means most children exhibit traits of the parents. As I observed these children and interviewed their parents I realized how much of their parents' personalities/characteristics were demonstrated through their actions, as well as their verbal and nonverbal language. Radhiya's lanky body and quiet disposition were noticeable traits of her father. On occasions when he arrived early for Radhiya he would sit quietly by the window and observe, never interfering with the rituals of the end of day preceding. Both Radhiya and her father seemed to contemplate before responding to queries, and her responses to many of the questions asked regarding play, were similar to her father's responses – "when it's play time it's play time, but when it's work time, no playing is allowed."

Azikiwe's father showed confidence and pride in his children and praised them every chance he got. His face always had a smile and he had a response for every question asked. He often lapsed into a quiet spell when asked a question, with a slight frown marring his usually smiling face and as an answer was formulated he would respond with a smile; this was a notable trait of Azikiwe. Also, similar to his dad, on many occasions while being interviewed, answers

were often linked to a religious text or had some religious undertone, for example always being kind to people because that's what God wants us to do. Azikiwe's curiosity, ability to "tun 'im 'and mek fashion"(be creative), and helping others, were facets shared between father and son.

Chiku's mother, was a constant morning visitor to the classroom and when present was a play companion to the children in the class. On several occasions she assisted with various activities before leaving for the day and on more than one occasion she helped with after school activities. Many of her traits, such as hands on her hips as she spoke to the children or teachers, tapping her foot as she talked or moving hands and head in specific ways to make a point, were all visible actions done by Chiku. Her response to describing play was indicative of the way Chiku viewed play. Both had the view that play was an outdoor activity, used to give each other space for themselves. Play done indoors was not really "play" but activities to have fun and to entertain one's self either alone or with others; it usually was quiet and fairly stationary activity.

All three children exhibited very distinct but common characteristics both indoors and outdoors – leadership/mediator, subdued/reserved, empathic and spontaneity. Although they were from different backgrounds and different genders the children brought their special personalities to the classroom and playground each day. Their leadership styles were different and impacted the other children. Chiku's ability to pull a group together to work on a project was not often done 'tactfully' – "she is bossy" (Azikiwe and Radhiya interviews), but they played along with her nonetheless; Radhiya's ability to get the children working together as they played a word game was often very quietly done as she assisted them when they got 'stuck' on a word or phrase. Many of her friends would go to her for support and her willingness was complimented with smiles. Azikiwe's lighthearted smile and laughter eased many conflicts within the classroom and on the playground. He seemed to be the master of turning things

around to appease all the injured parties while never seemingly being bothered by the challenges he faced. He did what had to be done and moved on, never dwelling on the event(s) that forced him to pause his own agenda.

Cultural nuances were displayed during both their indoors and outdoors play. In the Jamaican culture the body speaks as loudly, if not louder than the voice. Nuances such as flicking the head, shaking the body, arms crossed the chest, or ‘kissing the teeth,’ to name a few, are implicitly learned behaviors. Language is also modified to short phrases and have different connotations depending on the body language that accompany the phrase. I noted that some of the body language performed both in the classroom and on the playground were universal and explicitly taught, such as the raising of the hand to answer a question, or bowing the head and clasping the hands to say ‘prayers’; others, such as ‘kissing the teeth’ or frowning while looking intently at particular individual or object, were implicitly taught and were ingrained in the culture. As the children played, there were many of these explicitly and implicitly learned behaviors on display. In many instances, I was fascinated by the advanced degree of the body language being displayed, especially on the playground.

Once again the play was interrupted by Justin’s demand to be the leader. Chiku’s eye rolling, arm crossing, kissing of teeth reaction to his demand was met with more kissing of teeth from Justin. Azikiwe took charge and without a single word called Justin over to him, smiled raised his small index finger pointed to Justin then in the air, then turned pointed to another classmate and raised two fingers.
(Reflective Journal June 7, 2012)

Conflict resolution was practiced both indoors and outdoors. While there may be adult intervention in the classroom conflict resolutions were handled by the children on the

playground. As I reflected on the management of conflicts on some of Florida preschool playgrounds I visited, adults assisted children in making “the right choice” or “saying the right words,” unlike the scene witnessed at UPC Basic. Children were left to their own devices to handle the situation with adult intervention occurring if the situation involves a child being seriously injured.

Their responses to the many factors in the environment were both inherent and learned behavior. The personalities displayed both indoors and outdoors were distinct for each child and were reflections of their parents’ characteristics and possibly the impact of their immediate environments – home, teacher, school and the wider community.

Cum wi guh play crocodile

The “crocodile” game – a tag game – was played every day. It consisted of moving targets – the children, the appointed crocodile (the chaser), and a “base.” Usually this fast paced game was one in which children looked out for him/herself, individuality was of utmost importance. However, on several occasions I observed children holding hands as they ran from the crocodile, or an older and/or bigger child shielding a younger child from the chaser. On several occasions I witnessed Azikiwe or Radhiya distracting the crocodile as they instructed their friends to run to the base – the safety zone. This display of selflessness was often observed on the playground. Irrespective of the game being played or the equipment being utilized, these children had learned from early to be supportive of each other, even when there were occasions of disharmony, as noted earlier when both Radhiya and Azikiwe spoke of Chiku’s “bossiness”, but “wi play wid har, ‘cause shi is mi fren’.” (We play with her because she is my friend.)

Each of the child participants were competitive in their own way, they enjoyed winning or being “right” (correct) however, they never seemed over zealous in being the leader or the winner at all cost. They accepted loss and disappointment fitting with their characteristics. For instance, Radhiya often lost the tire race she did with the boys and she never seemed perplexed by the lost, she continued the game until she or the other participants lost interest and moved on to something else. Chiku, whom most children labeled “bossy” seemed to enjoy having her friends do as she told them, however, during my weeks of observation she never had any “melt downs” because she was not the leader or the winner. She accepted her dilemma and either continued the activity or moved on to something else. On occasions when she became irritable because things were not going her way, she was quickly reminded by one of her friends to “stop gwane like yuh haffe be de leader all de time” (Stop behaving like you have to be the leader all the time). This produced a speedy turn around and once again they were back to normal.

Sharing and caring were attributes displayed as the child participants played with each other. All three participants frequently demonstrated empathy not only for their friends or classmates, but also for other children on the playground. Chiku’s loan of her “flip-phone” to Justin because he did not have a toy to play with; Max being assisted by Azikiwe as they played on the slide; and Radhiya assistance of the four year-old student with a tire are a few examples of the unselfish nature. Being part of the collective “wi” was important and sustained the community spirit shown indoors and outdoors.

Mek wi play sint'ing

“Mek wi play sint'ing” is a Jamaican phrase translated to Jamaican Standard English means, “Come and let us play something.” “Something” here is indicative of the type of activity being done. It involves how the children embraced their world through play (Elkind, 2007; Johnson, 2000); how they make sense of, what Chiku refers to as, “big people things” (Field note, June 19, 2012), through interactions with their immediate environment (Rogoff, 2003), and a world which they may never meet physically but interact with through technology (Elkind, 2004).

Factors from the immediate environment shaped the type of play exhibited by the child participants. In the classroom, their movements were restricted to the explicit cues of the teacher(s), their peers, and available space and time. Their mannerisms were “hushed” and movements were limited, keeping reign on their emotions and activities. On entering the playground, these limitations were removed and the children were energized, their movements became large and they not only charged along the open spaces with wild abandonment, but also shifted roles from leader to group member and back again effortlessly.

There did not seem to be a planned agenda for their outdoor play. It appeared to be a time of free expression. As noted in their interviews, the children expressed being outdoors as a time when they were “free”, “natural”, and could participate in “real play”, whereas in the classroom activities were controlled by the verbal and nonverbal cues of the teacher and the layout of the classroom.

As recorded in my journal the morning of group picture, They returned to the classroom and for the next hour and a half the children resumed their “indoor” behaviour. It’s recess and, like chameleons, the children’s behavior changed from

pale lemon-yellow, like the wall color of the classroom, to a brilliant golden glow like the hot orb overhead. Chasing through open spaces and around swings and monkey bars, laughing loudly, arms flying through the air, and eventually with beads of perspiration running unchecked down their faces, the children embraced their environment totally void of adult supervision. It seemed to be the time they looked forward to the most. This transformation was so natural, and irrespective of the activities performed they seemed to derive unpretentious pleasure from them, whether as an observer (Radhiya), the leader (Chiku), or the negotiator (Azikiwe). They were so alive and happy. What explicitly about this part of the day made the children so joyful, so content? Was it the autonomy the experience afforded them, or was it just being able to be? (Reflective Journal, June 20, 2012)

As noted by Sutton-Smith (2006), as children's play, and are free from adult intervention or close supervision, implicitly develop their own play attributes and therefore empowered.

The three children in this study structured their play through the connections they had with adults, other children, the community and the world beyond their immediate community (Rogoff, 2003). They knew how and what to play but on occasions was hard pressed to explain how they knew what to play; Azikiwe responded to "how do you know what to play?" with body movements pointing to his brain; Chiku responded that she played with everyone and did what they were doing. She also pointed out that they loved doing what she was doing. Radhiya indicated that she played what everyone was playing. There did not seem to be a planned agenda for their outdoor play. It appeared to be a time of free expression. Although they all expressed doing what the others did they still exhibited autonomous/self-regulating behavior; they followed rules set by their peers and they knew how to be responsible and to take ownership of their play

space. Without immediate adult intervention the children's mediating and negotiating skills were honed.

As noted by Sutton-Smith (2006), children's play when free from adult intervention or close supervision their own play attributes are implicitly developed and they are empowered. They used this space and time to create unique peer culture and to address issues and challenges they encountered. These behaviors were evident in the "cake making" episode noted in Chapter Four – Chiku's quiet acceptance of Azikiwe's destruction of the cake, and Azikiwe's repentance by returning to help build another cake. The other players in this scene were instrumental in understanding the play behavior. All the children played important roles in the cake making, although Chiku initiated the activity. Once again the display of working together and understanding each other's role in the scheme of things was evident.

Mek mi ears eat grass

As noted earlier, young children's perceptions and understanding of play are affected by factors such as the connectivity between their world and those of the adults. In many Jamaican households adults use play as an activity to get some 'down time'. Translated to Jamaican Standard English 'Mek mi ears eat grass' means "make my ears eat grass." The phrase is often utilized to signal adults' need for quiet time or for space to accomplish adult work without children being underfoot. As noted by the children they usually played at home with their siblings, friends or other family members when their parents were busy or wanted to rest. In all instances each child's story revealed parents use of play activities as a means to get the children 'out their hair'. Cues such as the phrase mentioned earlier or knowing the movements of adults' activities signaled children that it is time to play.

Recess the nosiest period of the day is the period set aside for the teacher to have much needed “down time”. Although the teacher did not express the phrase to the children, it was not unusual to hear her say “Is my time now” as the children left the classroom during recess. The teacher utilizes the time to eat and prepare activities for the remaining two hours of instructional time left in the day. On occasions during this period there were meetings with other faculty members or parents interviews.

Another function of play, as stated by the adult participants, is to allow children the space to “get rid of extra energy.” Play is linked to outdoor activities and is commonly called “romping”. Teachers and parents in this study considered play a leisure-time activity and think it essential for children’s physical and social development. They believed that play is the best method to keep children engaged in safe activities as they proceeded with their adult activities, whether it was getting some much needed “down time”, or to accomplish major pursuits.

Parents communicated to me that having their children play at school help the children to be more settled when they get home as they have already exhausted some of the energy and can accomplish more serious work such as homework. Although they occasionally enjoyed being a part of the play, the adult participants believed children should control their own play. Children also understood that during this period adults were not to be disturbed unless for extreme emergencies.

Ben’ de tree wen it young

Young children’s holistic development is derived from a combination of experiences learned from their observations and interaction with environment. Children exhibit behaviors from lessons explicitly and implicitly learned very early in the lives. “Ben de tree wen it young”

(start training your child the way you want him/her to grow from early) is utilized by parents, teachers, care providers, and community members to ensure children exhibit and comply with rules and regulations.

From the data analyzed I believed the three children 's perception and understanding of the word play is developed from the sociocultural context in which they are immersed. They have learned from early interactions with factors such as their home and school environments that their world is a dichotomous sphere of work or play, with time and space set aside for each. Although the evidence indicated that the children enjoyed their play they also have accepted and internalized the ideology of play. From their interviews, both the teacher and parents indicated these convictions as noted from these excerpts:

Ms. Lawson: Children must know that there is a time to work and a time to play.

During class time when they are working that's not the time, but if they are finished and there is nothing else to do then they can play. (Field Notes, June 7, 2012)

Radhiya's Father: When it's work time it's work time, and when its play time its play time and Radhiya's knows when to work and when to play. (Field Notes, June 14, 2012)

Chiku's mother: Playing is good for now but once she gets to primary school all that playing she's doing will have to stop. (Field Notes, July 3, 2012)

There are traditional boundaries established with very little space and/or time for overlap. For example, the children very rarely spoke of play in relation to the classroom as most of their 'play' references were to their outdoor play session done during recess. They know the difference between 'playtime' and 'work time' and being in the classroom was a signal for work;

this was best expressed by Azikiwe who explained that playtime is the period after one has finished eating lunch and you are free to go outside and play or if one comes to school early. He also spoke of play as a reward for finishing early morning work.

It appeared to me that on several occasions play was a type of intrinsic reward presented by the teacher during their periods in the classroom, on the other hand, when done on the playground it was ‘fi dem time’ (their time) and the activities were all about the children. Although the children enjoyed the activity, the data indicated that the views of the parents and teacher have been inflicted on the children both explicitly and implicitly, and the children have accepted and internalize this ideology of play.

The parents grew up in different rural communities in Jamaica and Ms. Lawson grew up in the corporate area (Kingston); each had extremely different experiences. Azikiwe’s father came from a large family (eight siblings); however, he said he only played non-active games with them such as kite-flying and never played games such as cricket because he was ‘a loner.’ Chiku’s mother grew up with her aunt and uncle and, although she had six siblings, they never lived together. She played with neighbors and friends from school and was always being punished for ‘getting into trouble.’ Radhiya’s father was the only child for his parents but he grew up with his grandmother. His recollection of his childhood was that he was always being told that he played too much. All expressed the change in children’s games but, on further investigation, what seemed to have changed in most cases were the names of the games.

Each parent and teacher had a specific agenda for the children; the parents wanted their children to be excellent academic students and wonderful community members – the word ‘community’ embraced home, school, and the wider environs. The teacher wanted the children to be an excellent representation of her classroom achievement. The children’s high academic

accomplishment and rounded social skills argued well for her prowess as a teacher – with ‘teacher’ embodying everything from practitioner to friend.

It is evident from the data analysed that children’s perceptions and understanding of their play are influenced by many factors such as their home and school environments. The adults in the immediate environs, namely their parents and teachers, were instrumental in setting the foundations for their response to work and play and although they know how and what to play were hard pressed to explain what play is.

In retrospect I found that there were many more similarities than differences when seeking to make meaning of the Jamaican children’s play. There were inherent differences in variables such as parents’ backgrounds, gender, occupation and socioeconomic status, which seemed to impact the children’s embodiment of play. However, the strong sociocultural influences imbedded in the daily running of schools and home were more than confounding in controlling the children’s play behavior.

Mek Wi Talk – Discussion

Understanding the Essence of the Case

Stake (2006) stated that in doing a case study one had to “carefully examine its functioning and activities, but the first objective ...is to understand the case” (p.2). This case had three embedded units – three five year-old Jamaican children. The case study required gathering in-depth data from the children – their experiences as they played, interview transcripts, observations, getting background information from parents and teachers, understanding my personal influences that may have contributed to the way I perceived the data and may have influenced and shaped the environment and the outcomes. As part of the process, I was aware of

the integral role the sociocultural environment played in shaping thoughts, movements, and patterns of each individual. In understanding the essence of the case, I became aware of some basic elements that linked all three participants and that I believed were shaped by sociocultural rationalities such as history, economics, and demography; these are ground rules and expectations.

The saying ‘the more things change, the more they stay the same’ came to mind as I reviewed the transcripts and videos of the three children’s play episodes and the adults’ conversations. The quotes and activities transported me back to my years as a young child being sent out to play or neglected play as a form of punishment. The experience afforded me the time and space to compare play on many levels and to focus on the intricate layers that comprised this little thing called play.

The case study revealed that children had specific perceptions and understanding of their play. They saw play and work as dichotomous. Work was for the classroom while play was done on the playground. Their perceptions and understanding are constructed from messages received from many factors in their sociocultural environment such as parents, teachers, peers, and the wider community. The study established that these messages were delivered explicitly and implicitly, and that the children could articulate the difference between work and play as seen through their mind’s eyes. They categorized their activities as work or play and identified precise time and space for each.

Play on most accounts was not just a physical activity, which gave release to bounded energy, but may be considered a catalyst. Most children are never taught to play. Play is on most occasions spontaneous; even the games with rules are learned as they interact with their peers. What they played and how they played was part of the culture to which they belonged. The

previous generations steeped in a colonial past coupled with the economical fluctuations and the diverse demography of a nation continually shape the essence of play. As noted by Tobin et al. (2009), “this combination of change and continuity reflects the workings of many factors...demographic and economic shifts; and changing social, bureaucratic, and political contexts” (p.119) are all instruments used to shape the nature of play. These are elements that cannot be ignored. The ones I have labeled as ‘sociocultural rationalities’ include the history of the people, economics, and political structure. They directly and indirectly affect the themes I identified and utilized in the organizational structure of common themes among the participants. See Figure 8.



Figure 8: Sociocultural Rationalities Impact on Themes

When children play, they construct ideas, thoughts, knowledge, and meaning (Elkind, 2006), each with its own brand of significance. As they co-construct shared meanings, they are free to recreate these meanings based on ideas created through the play. From the data collected I have deduced that along with the ‘norms’ exhibited by Western countries’ children at play,

Jamaican children's play was also didactic. They were given the freedom to explore, create, to expand their knowledge, and to be autonomous. They exhibited behaviors that aligned to their parents' moral and religious beliefs and the beliefs instilled by the school environment.

Conversely, in the sociocultural context where children learn about their culture as they interact with the people and the environment the Jamaican child has learned through implicit and explicit lessons that play and work are dichotomous. This is entrenched in the culture and is reiterated via home, school, and the society at large. It is deep-rooted in the culture and its mitigation would mean a change in cultural thinking.

As the past influenced the direction education took many decades ago, so will the present and the future. In the current early childhood scene, the Jamaican MOE and its agency ECC have looked beyond the local avenues in an effort to improve young children's education. The implementation of some tenets of NAEYC's Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP) has been the driving force in the 'new' play-based curriculum. The reshaping of the tools used to teach young children has been left to the political sector, and the teachers who will eventually use these tools have had very little input in the structure of the curriculum. There needs to be more collaborative effort between the teachers and the agents of change.

To accomplish this, I believe that the ground rules established eons ago from the colonial past and that have been imbedded in the culture for centuries could be tweaked to accommodate changes. The changes, which are taking place not only locally but also within the Caribbean diaspora and the rest of the world, need to be implemented gradually and should be adapted cautiously and reshaped to fit the culture of the society. As a Jamaican, I believe that there is a win-win situation.

Jamaican children's play is very entertaining and educational. As I watched the children at UPC Basic enjoy their recess I thought how beneficial it would be for the teacher to observe from the safe haven of her classroom, collect data, and design teaching strategies that would best be suited for her students. Her role as observer would be unobtrusive; the children would still be held accountable for their play but the teacher would possibly learn more about her children during that half-an-hour of play than she had for the week.

Other stakeholders such as parents are critical to the changes that are being pushed by the MOE and ECC. The parents in this study are advocates for play at the very early stages of development. However, like most Jamaicans, life after basic school means serious business and play is done only when work has been completed. Using play as a teaching tool would be difficult to implement if stakeholders have not been properly introduced to its importance in early learning. The colonial history dictates work then play; the use of education as a tool for upward mobility is critical and most Jamaicans, especially the adults in the low socioeconomic communities, think of education as means to an end. Adding play to the mix is not part of the thinking and currently it seems to be a tedious battle, which many are not willing to undertake. The need to have dialogue with all stakeholders is critical if the ECC wishes to successfully implement the play-based curriculum in early childhood institutions. Yet even in the presence of this dialogue, it must be understood that a comprehension of the practice of play, steeped deeply in the cultural practices, cannot be expected to experience change overnight. The didactic nature of Jamaican children's play clearly reflects play shaped by expectations and perceptions of the parents by whom these Jamaican children are socialized. With the introduction of the play-based curriculum, a third level of complexity is added to the equation, one which demands that the

child develops an additional behavioral play code to suit the play-based demands of the academic system.

Children's play behavior conforms to the ground rules set by the environment in which they are a part. They learn the signals and cues of the nonverbal language and the adaptation of the rules as they apply to both home and school. Parents and teachers instill the unspoken rules of generations in the very essence of their language spoken, as well as the statements issued by the government agencies (MOE and ECC) such as 'quality education for all' and 'greater equity' (Jamaica-UNDAF 2007-2011 report). However, the achievement of these elements are being structured through curriculum revision based on Western developed ideologies and directions. The structure of the Jamaican basic school is based on a high student/teacher ratio; little or no intervention on the playground; little or slow intervention in children's disputes; and the need for children to express their views to each other and hence develop empathy. These are unwritten rules and are commonly witnessed on a daily basis in the schools and are passed on from one generation to the next.

As a small nation closely linked – geographically and politically – to a world-leading power such as the United States, the Jamaican society is trying to reshape its culture to embrace global changes. To successfully incorporate the Western doctrines and to conform to new ways these implicit ideologies have to be accepted as part of the process. To borrow tenets from the NAEYC's DAP policies, the infusion of the two ways of thinking is imperative, which is important to "cultural embeddedness of the [Jamaican] approach to early childhood education" (Tobin et al., 2009, p. 240). Many teachers focus on the preservation of Jamaican culture while trying to ensure developmental outcomes. They try to instill in the children from this very early stage of development the importance of high achievement levels. Early childhood teachers are

also held in high regards as they the first point of contact for children in formal education and, in a small neighborhood, they are the gatekeepers and are responsible for the holistic development of the young child.

Although there is the need to embrace and conform to global events, the fusion is not without friction. The everyday challenges faced by EC practitioners as they work within the community (school and home) do not ensure that the collaboration will be successful. Long standing traditions die-hard and because many practices are both implicitly and explicitly learned it may be difficult to change their beliefs. In the informal conversations held with teachers, I was reminded of the cultural value education has for the stakeholders, especially the parents. As related by Ms. Lawson,

I don't like their curriculum they use in the basic school system. This is my opinion. I think...I don't know...if maybe the Minister of Education or whosoever is in charge of education need to restructure the curriculum but I think it is not suitable for the toddlers. Cause they do things like...they have things like bout wedding and...and Arawaks to Africa. I think that it is for primary school. That is my opinion. And it is not structured for basic school. I think basic school...cause...and then you have more teacher focus all their focus on the whole curriculum thing...so yuh lose sight of like the numbers, the letters, and so forth. They lose sight of it. Because...even within the transition class, because these children have to know about like Europe, Africa, what they do in Europe, how they dress in Europe, I think that's not their level. Yuh understand? Maybe they can touch a little on it when you doing like ...yuh know like when yuh talking about Jamaica culture...and then that's what I think lack too...we take up more of

the overseas thing to put in it and left ours out the whole Jamaica concept. (Field Notes June 13, 2012)

The informal conversations I had with other teachers at the school mirrored Ms. Lawson's thoughts. As I reflected on their comments, I noted in my journal the following thoughts:

Many of the teachers are aware of and understand the changes that are taking place globally. However, they reminisce on their time in school and compare them to play today – the changes taking place with children's play today and the lack of person-to-person time they share. This seems very important to the teachers and they think the 'free' time the children get to be themselves when they play outdoors is very essential. It seems the ground rules given by the 'others' and conforming to these rules are not only essential but is responsible for shaping the culture of play and learning in the basic school environment. The rules have remnants of the past and embody the present elements of technology and other global influences. (Reflective Journal, June 17, 2012)

A fi wi sint'ing dis – Implications

Writing this study reminded me of the 'call and answer' actions done in folk dance – a type of storytelling activity. Each movement or sequence of movements done by one dancer requires a response from either one dancer or a group. As I wrote many more questions surfaced, indicating that further studies would have to be done to gain answers to these and many more question that may arise.

To reframe and reeducate the Jamaican society on the role of play in the school curriculum has been a challenge. Because the ideology behind learning in the school setting is

equal to work, the average Jamaican parent is unable to see the terms ‘work’ and ‘play’ as being equally essential for young children’s learning. Hence a change in cultural thinking has to happen. This change has to take place at the root – parents, communities, then other stakeholders – before a play-based curriculum can be implemented successfully.

A play-based curriculum for preschools exists and has been implemented. However, many schools have not adapted it because they do not see the need for it, relying on the old adage “if it ain’t broke, why fix it.” This study has the potential to let stakeholders take a look at the lessons children learn as they play and to utilize these skills in the classrooms as a teaching/learning tool without compromising the ‘freeness’ of the play.

This study speaks to the traditional early childhood teacher training institutions, which are paying homage to the play-based curriculum but have not embraced it as a teaching strategy. These institutions need not only emphasize play as an important teaching/learning tool but must dedicate more time to reshaping the thinking of the teacher candidates. In the four-year undergraduate teacher education program students do 120 credit hours to matriculate; on average, only six credit hours are spent educating the students on play at the early childhood level. Through reading this study, it is hoped that educators will gain more understanding of young children’s play, and as was mentioned earlier, be able to restructure the thinking of teacher candidates by enabling them to understand and relate to the social and cultural realities of the students they will be working with.

The study speaks to the Early Childhood Commission, the MOE, and other stakeholders that are pushing the play-based curriculum for government-aided preschools. For this program to be embraced, there has to be improvements made to existing infrastructure and new ones built; the teacher-to-pupil ratio has to be improved and less top-down management.

It is hoped that this will be one of the goals of many readers after reading this study. This is a starting point for increasing the Jamaican literature on Jamaican children's play. We should be writing our own documents to educate and enhance the teaching and learning of our children, teacher candidates, parents, and other stakeholders. We understand the nuances of the language, the body language, and the attitude of the people. Therefore, doing more studies will serve to inform not only the Jamaican population but also the Caribbean diaspora and beyond on a global field.

A it mek... – Limitations and Challenges

As with any dance there are bounded movements that challenge the dancer ability to move freely. I faced many challenges that limited me in my journey. One of the first limitations was time spent in the field. As an international student and on leave from my teaching post I was on a tight timeline. Therefore, I was unable to spend more than six weeks in the field. This limited the time to be able to do revisits to the school and/or do more data collection and further interactions with the participants.

The second challenge faced was time entered in the field. I entered the field during the end of the third term – summer term – and I worked with five-year-olds. This is not an ideal time to conduct a study with this age group at the basic school level because they are in the transition stage – moving to elementary school after the summer break. There were occasions when students were absent as they had to go to the elementary for registration and entrance tests. Also, during this period I was never privileged to see any guided play. Although it was on the class timetable, the period was always utilized for 'school leaving' practices. Additionally, entering the field at this period did not afford me times to see how play groups or play spaces were

created. By the third term, these were firmly established and children were perplexed when questioned about their creation. To be able to fully appreciate the children's play, both their play space and play groups would need to be observed from the initial stages through to the fully established patterns.

The third challenge faced was my insider position – although I am not totally convinced that this was a limitation. When I first thought of doing this study, I wondered how this would affect the information I gathered, but later thought it would not be problematic because I knew the language, which would have been a one challenge I would not have to face. However, because of my 'Jamaicaness,' responses to queries were often met by Jamaican body language, which led to me making assumptions of responses; also, the children often assumed I should know and understand what they said or implied. Very often when I questioned the children, I was greeted with raised brows, quizzical looks and the body language that asked, "How can you not know this?"

Finally, transcribing the Jamaican Patois proved challenging. Because this is an oral language, it took more hours than anticipated in translating and some words were spelled as I heard them. As I transcribed, I feared some important nuances might be lost in this process and had to compensate by giving narrating very lengthy descriptive reflections so that I could remember the events as they occurred. Because of this, I constantly returned to the video clips to refresh my thoughts as I transcribed the interviews. Although participants agreed with the final transcripts, I personally felt that the true essence of the phenomenon may have been missed as I relayed their conversations on paper.

Easy squeeze mek no riot – Personal Lessons Learned

As I watched the children play, I was transported back to my childhood and the play sessions I had both in and out of school. I compared those times with the periods I was privileged to observe and noted in my reflections the similarities and differences. During these sessions I also had other revelations. For instance, I wondered if it was necessary to change the way teaching is done at the basic school level. Do we have to include play centers in the classrooms? Do we have to lower the teacher/student ratio? Do we have to always watch or impose ourselves in their world as children play? I thought of the different teaching methods I was exposed to as I moved through the years as a graduate student and how each had its positive and negative values to me.

All of these ponderings led me back to the overarching question focusing on the word ‘challenges.’ What were the challenges faced in understanding the role of play in Jamaican schooling? From this study, I felt the following three challenges emerged: (a) the history of the Jamaican people and its influence on the education; (b) the lack of literature addressing early childhood play; and (c) teacher training methodology for prospective early childhood teachers.

As noted several times during this study, Jamaican customs and beliefs are built on and influenced by the rich colonial history. The English’s control of the island for centuries left its mark on the structure of the nation, from its political arrangement to its educational practice. For example, at the early childhood level, irrespective of the socioeconomical background of the family, parents and teachers alike have high expectations of children’s development. This is often achieved through strict disciplinary actions, including knowing when, where, and how to play. The bible (one of the teaching tools of the colonizers) and its religious connotations seeped

into the language of the people and played an essential role in the disciplinary process of young children and is currently an essential tool in the socialization of groups across the island.

Colonization has not only shaped the present postcolonial economy of the nation but also the ‘mind set’ of the average Jamaican adult. The educational legacy left by the English still has a strong hold on the way in which the current early schooling is designed. The basic aim of early schooling is to ensure that children’s education sets a solid foundation for later education and, therefore, children’s work must be serious and controlled by the adults. The dichotomy of work and play is entrenched in the mind from a very early stage in children’s upbringing and, although adults firmly believe in ‘all work and no play make Jack a dull boy’ (English proverb), the play mentioned is one that is done outdoors without supervised adult intervention. This is the period where children are allowed to be ‘themselves.’

Understanding play as seen through children’s eyes reflects the adults’ interpretation of the term and consequently is represented in this manner. The cultural thinking is that work – in this case, classroom/academic work – is the tool that ensures upward mobility in society and must be taken seriously. It is felt that cognitive stimulation is the domain of the adult and therefore directs children’s learning. Play, on the other hand, is the domain of children. This playtime afforded to the children is an opportunity to build social skills, which are necessary for community building, as noted by the parents and the teacher in this study and represented by the teacher’s explanation of the difference between indoor and outdoor activities:

The children learn social skills when they go outside to play...it also help them when they have to work together in the class...but they learn that behavior from playing outside...when they come inside it is time to do academic work and sometimes I remind them of having to work together but most times I don’t have

to. They know that once they come into the classroom it's work time, and I mean time to settle down and do serious work, playtime is over.

Although the teacher in this study was doing her certification in early childhood education and had explained to me that she had learned about the importance of play being a significant aspect of early development, she was not utilizing the teaching strategy set out by the Early Childhood Commission (ECC) within the classroom setting. She emphasised the difficulty in implementing this type of teaching approach. Being accountable to her children's parents who were not aware of the importance of play in the development of the child on the cognitive level was one reason for lack of implementation. The other reason was she was not comfortable in utilizing the method, having been brought up and then teaching where children's work in the classroom is very adult-driven.

In essence, the culture of teacher-led activities are deeply ingrained in the system and the implementation of a play-based curriculum, which is more child-centered, has to be slowly implemented in the system. It is a change of cultural thinking, a change of 'mind-set' that cannot be done overnight nor at the whim and fancy of the top-down management as it is currently being attempted. Hence, easy squeeze mek no riot – a gentle approach averts confrontation. It needs to be a collaborative effort of practitioners, parents, and other stakeholders in conjunction with the ECC. It has to be an ongoing movement that not only seeks to educate the masses of the importance of play to young children's holistic development, but also show the rationale in the change in teaching methodology based on empirical evidence as seen through Jamaican studies.

This brings me to the other lesson learned. In Jamaica, there is a lack of empirical studies understanding children's play done within the early years. On further investigation, there were no documented studies done to understand children's play through the children's lenses. I believe

it is essential to understand the Jamaican child's interpretation of their play in order to successfully implement teaching strategies that embrace play. Currently, the literature being utilized to learn and comprehend play and its value(s) is being supplied by books and theories informed by western developed societies. In many instances, these theories do not address the implications that have influenced a society that is struggling through a postcolonial or neo-colonial era. In this stage of development, the people, once governed by a developed nation – in Jamaica's case, the United Kingdom – is now controlled by the elites of the society and some have argued that this may result in education being used as a means of another type of colonization. The link here is between the use of education to impose 'foreign' doctrine on the masses and the ability of the few to maintain the status quo, especially through economical means.

I believe to further understand and therefore develop a cohesive educational structure more national and regional research must be done. Embracing one's culture as a teaching tool I believe would minimize the resistance to the implementation of new programs in the early childhood program. 'Borrowing' tenets of a foreign curriculum – for example, the United States Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP) – may not fit in with cultural beliefs, causing friction among the managers of the program (ECC) and the practitioners implementing the program. However, I believe that investigating the rudiments of the programs that are successful in western developed countries would broaden the mind of the creators and managers of new programs and would transfer to the approach taken to educating prospective early childhood educators.

In addressing the third issue, I looked at the 12 traditional teachers' colleges in Jamaica. The faculty leans heavily on literature published from western developed societies, which

therefore influences the methods and methodologies utilized in preparing prospective teachers. In relating to both the historical background and the lack of literature pertaining to the Jamaican teaching and learning culture, especially at the early childhood level, teacher educators are subjected to relying on educating the way in which they were educated, which is through the use of information filled with outsiders' knowledge of education. This has led to information being passed on in a religious manner and subjected to rote learning. The application of methods and methodologies that are not conducive to the teaching facilities or teacher/student ratio, according to DAP principles, has resulted in the development of friction or stress (as the principal and faculty members of this study called it) with the end result being the approved curriculum being neglected and the traditional teacher-led class instruction being utilized.

It is my belief that to counteract this situation educators in teachers' colleges will have to be proactive and model the behavior they want the prospective teachers to adopt. They likewise have to be instrumental in the research process so as to get the literature not only current but also nationally- and regionally-based. As members of the community, they are more likely to understand the culture of the people and therefore would be more instrumental in producing relevant work to the teaching/learning cycle.

As a teacher educator, I thought about how I could introduce these methodologies to my prospective teachers and then allow them to choose the best of the best for their students, which might be a combination of ideologies, methods, and methodologies. In trying to keep abreast with the rest of the world, we sometimes try to infuse 'foreign' ideas in a culture without looking at the consequences of leaving the culture behind. It is therefore essential as an educator to weigh the pros and cons and establish a system that will be beneficial for all involved.

In looking at these challenges, it occurred to me that a Jamaican definition of play was not offered. In this study, I encountered children who, expressed and identified the delineating line between work and play, whose outdoor play was spontaneous, flexible, sociable, physical, natural, free, and void of imposing adult supervision. The children also referred to play as an outdoor activity, one that encompasses lots of physicality, freedom, creativity, and autonomy even in the presence of and/or inclusion of adults. They expressed pleasure and positive affects from their play, while work although not undesirable, was an indoor teacher-led activity.

Jamaican play could be defined as an activity where children experience a sense of freedom to express natural behaviors, such big body play, and include a rich blend of community spirit and autonomy. The behaviors are accommodated in natural environments and may/may not include adults but is controlled by the child.

Wat A Gwaan? – What’s Happening Out There?: Revisiting/Restructuring Or Setting New Paradigms?

My study began in trying to understand rough-and-tumble play in the Jamaican preschool environment. As stated in Chapter One and Two, there was no literature that addressed this type of play. My further investigation revealed the lack of documentation pertaining to play as seen through the eyes of the Jamaican children. Through this study I am afforded the time and space to not only give a definition to young Jamaican children’s play (see previous paragraph) but also to have young children’s voices heard. I have empowered my participants by allowing the readers to be involved in their journey and the discourse.

I am using this medium to be more proactive for the recreating the method children are taught. In 2008 the Ministry of Education introduced the play based curriculum. The teachers,

the parents and other stakeholders have been aware of this program for the past five years and most are still struggling to accept or to understand the concepts as they relate to the education of the young child. The teachers of these young children still identify with and understand the dichotomy between work and play and as such continue to teach in that mode. What is needed is a fusion of the two minds/methods.; what is needed is a hybrid early childhood curriculum which will embrace the culture of the people, globalization, and the future of education in a nation closely entwined in the culture of many developed countries, namely United States and Canada.

Although I suggested that the implementation of such a program be timely it is important to set up a consortium of passionate assertive early childhood players – players who want to see the Jamaican play-style stay alive and not watered down to a stagnated program of constructed, teacher directed time. The education of teachers in such a program should not just happen at workshops but should be done with parents, teacher education program, community centers, and other service groups. The corporate world in association with the MOE and ECC needs to be intimately involved with planning and implementation of the program.

The proposal of such a plan will outline the need to embrace the Jamaican culture in the development of the program; it will be a five year project to begin with, which will utilize the play from children's repertoire from a cross section of the country. The aim of the Consortium is to advance the use of Jamaican play culture in the curriculum through demonstration schools, interactive workshops around the island every month and the development of play spaces in allocated 'green' areas.

The program will involve the use of local craftsmen/women to make the equipment for the playground; local horticulturalists to prepare and maintain the grounds; and parents, teachers, and other stakeholders to assist with the play program, which will be developed through

collaboration of the members of the Consortium. Teacher training colleges will utilize the program with their students doing field experiences and infuse the applicable tenets in the early childhood curriculum sanctioned by TCJ.

The members to be elected for the consortium will consist of the Minister of Education; Permanent Secretary of Education; Minister of Youth, Culture and Sports; three Representatives from Early Childhood Board and Physical Education Board from Teachers Colleges of Jamaica (TCJ) – 1 from each county Cornwall, Middlesex, and Surrey; two members of ECC; Dr. Ralph Thompson, and one member from each of the following advocate groups, D.R.B. Grant Resource Centre, Women for Project for the Advancement of Childhood Education (PACE), and Roving Caregivers. “Dat a gwaan pon wat a gwaan”.

Coming To Come – Conclusion

The results of this narrative case study do not suggest that there must be a change in the methodology used to teach young child. Nor do they suggest that the participants must make changes to their perceptions and understanding of play. What the results has done is to heighten the reader’s awareness of the nature of young Jamaican children’s play, their perceptions and understandings of their play and factors that have influenced these perceptions and understandings.

In the beginning of this study, I was looking for ways to understand Jamaican children’s play behavior. I wanted to see it through their eyes – not those of the adults. But what was brought home to me is that I cannot separate the children’s thinking from those of the adults’ as they are intricately wrapped together. As I looked at my own play, I realized that my parents and grandparents shaped my play and I subsequently shaped my children’s play. Doing this study

challenged my understanding of not only the play of the children I studied but also the way I thought of play. I was always amazed and impressed by the constant change in choreography and the flexibility of each dancer as s/he adapted to new roles and moves. On most occasions, it seemed effortless and the learning curve of each participant – the choreographer and the dancers – seemed to take on new dimensions with each movement.

I thought of my new role as a researcher and how this has reshaped my thinking, but also how much I treasure my culture and want to preserve its essence as we move into a new era of education. It is a very capricious balancing act but one worth trying to balance as we move forward with research and writing. The future of the early childhood program is dependent of the acts of the current stakeholders and, although what is happening presently in the field of education the future is still unsure, a solid foundation based on research and relevant literature should help to strengthen the development of the program.

Again as I reflected on my research, I thought how important it is to keep alive the culture of the Jamaican people in the teaching/learning experience. I also thought about the important lesson I learned as I watched the way in which the children embraced the dichotomous model of work and play and used both to the best of their ability in their holistic development. The questions that I alluded to earlier resurfaced and other ones I will now leave each reader to ponder on. Is it necessary to change the way teaching is done at the basic school level? What would be the advantage of a changed view of work and play for the Jamaican early childhood practitioner, parents and children? Do we have to include tenets of the USA's DAP to have good teaching/learning taking place in the Jamaican early childhood model? Do we have to lower the teacher/student ratio? Do we have to watch or impose ourselves in children's world as they play? Are there other ways young Jamaican children play? Will children view play differently if

explicit learning outcomes are linked to the activities? Will the naturalness and freedom associated with play be diminished or removed?

Highlighting the complexity of children's perceptions and understanding of their play should help stakeholders in moving to the next level in creating a curriculum that best addresses the teaching/learning practices. In bringing about a educational reform teacher development, parent education and other stakeholders' involvement are crucial to the success of its modification.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Cover Letter

Dear School Community,

I am Carol Long, a graduate student under the direction of Dr. Jolyn Blank in the Department of Childhood Education and Literacy Studies at the University of South Florida, Tampa Florida. As a graduate student, I am required to conduct a research as part of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D) degree. My research study entitled Embracing Play the Jamaican Way: Case Study of 5-year-olds' Lived Play Experience seeks to explore young Jamaican's children's play as viewed by them. I have received permission and a letter of support from the Board members and the Principal [REDACTED] to conduct my study here.

The purpose of this research study is to understand the thoughts of young Jamaican children of their play in the early childhood basic school setting. Research of this type is important because with increased understanding of young children's views of their play educators of young children may gain increase awareness of the influence play has on their learning.

The study will be conducted over a seven-week period and will involve me observing children at play both during recess time (lunch time) and during free play before and after classes and talking to selected children about their play. I will be video taping these play sessions but will not be sharing them with anyone not immediately involved in the study. The school's name and any person taking part in the study will be changed to protect the identity of everyone. It is not anticipated that any harm will come to any participants taking part in the study.

The potential benefits of doing this research include an increased understanding of young children's play behavior and the relationship between play and learning. You might also find that

the involvement of the school community in this research will provide additional insight into the thoughts on play and, and therefore, serve as a means for further discussion on the topic of young children's play.

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to welcome me into your community and to accommodate me as I conduct this research. If you have any questions I may be contacted at [REDACTED] – Jamaica, [REDACTED] – Florida or through the principal [REDACTED].

Sincerely yours,

Carol Long, M.A.

Graduate Student

University of South Florida

4202 E. Fowler Avenue

Tampa, FL 33620, USA.

Appendix B: Consent Letter

March 23, 2012

Chairman of the Board, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED].

Dear Carol,

On behalf of [REDACTED]'s Board of Management, I would like to indicate our full support of your proposed research project, "Embracing Play the Jamaican Way". This study aims to expand the knowledge base about young Jamaican children's play by applying study methodologies in a novel way.

We agree that the research has the potential to answer important questions regarding specific aspects of children's play at the early childhood level in Jamaica. Furthermore, findings from this study will promote more local study, and to the literature on Jamaican children's play behaviour and should enhance the early childhood play based curriculum currently being implemented in our school and other government-aided early childhood institutions. We look forward to participating in collaborative efforts with Carol to develop information, which will enhance the Early Childhood Commission's goals and objectives of the play base curriculum on a national level.

As a principal partner, members of the [REDACTED] will assist in the study activities such as helping in the selection of participants for the study; providing a private space for interviews to be conducted; allowing Carol to do take videos of children during outdoor and indoor play times; and, being included in the classroom over the seven-week period that the

study will be conducted. In addition, we will be available for any other services, which Carol may require that was not noted or known of at the initial stage of the study, but is critical to the continuation and timely completion of the study.

We believe that this innovative opportunity will assist the [REDACTED] community in enhancing the awareness and understanding of our children's play; by empowering our children as they will be active, vocal participants of this study; and, by making our community members proud as partners of a project which will be far reaching nationally.

On behalf of the Board of Management I want to thank you for selecting our school and community to be partners in your research and we are looking forward to working with you.

Sincerely

[REDACTED], Principal

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED].

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form for Parent

You are being invited to participate in a study entitled Embracing Play the Jamaican Way: Case Study of 5-year-olds Lived Play Experience that is being conducted by Carol Long. Carol Long is a graduate student in the department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of South Florida and you may contact her if you have further questions at [REDACTED] or calong2@usf.edu.

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Jolyn Blank. You may contact my supervisor at [REDACTED] or jblank@usf.edu.

The purpose of this study is to describe and explain the lived experience of play from the viewpoint of selected Jamaican children. Research of this type is important because with the increased understanding of young children's play educators may gain further awareness of the influence of children's play on learning and curriculum for the early childhood genre.

You and your child are being asked to participate in this study because of your involvement in the early childhood community. The design of this research study requires that both the parent and child participate. Parents will not be accepted as participant without the participation of their child and children will not be accepted as participant without the participation of their parents. If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include an interview.

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you including: (i) having the activity of your child during a half hour interview audio recorded then written for you to read and approve; and (ii) participating in an interview that should take approximately one hour of your time. Personal interview will audio-recorded, with your permission, and transcribed. There

are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. The potential benefits of your participation in this research include an increased understanding of young children play in the Jamaican school context as voiced by the children.

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or explanations necessary. If you do withdraw from the study your data will not be used in the analysis. In terms of protecting your anonymity, your name will not appear on any part of the data, the research results, or in any written or oral discussions of the study.

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by being stored in a locked file cabinet and only accessible by the researcher. Upon completion of the study, all data will be shredded and then burned. Children's anonymity cannot be fully protected because the teacher and the principal of the school will know which children participated. In addition, children will talk to each other and they will be aware of their peers participation.

Other planned uses of this data include completion of the research dissertation, articles for publication, and in workshop presentation. Data from this study will be disposed of upon completion of the oral defense and submission of the final version of the dissertation.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following way: (i) a two-page summary of the study will be forwarded to you in a sealed envelope via your participating school in December 2012; (ii) presentation of the results in a dissertation; and, (iii) published articles. In addition to be able to contact the researcher and the supervisor at the above phone numbers, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you

might have, by contacting the Senior Vice President, Research at the University of South Florida (813-974-5570).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher.

_____	_____	_____
<i>Name of Participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>

Your signature below indicates that you give permission for your interview to be audiotaped by the researcher.

_____	_____	_____
<i>Name of Participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and the researcher will take a copy.

Appendix D: Informed Consent Form for Early Childhood Practitioner

You are being invited to participate in a study entitled Embracing Play the Jamaican Way: Case Study of 5-year-old Lived Play Experience that is being conducted by Carol Long. Carol Long is a graduate student in the department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of South Florida and you may contact her if you have further questions at [REDACTED] or calong2@usf.edu.

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Jolyn Blank. You may contact my supervisor at [REDACTED] or jblank@usf.edu.

The purpose of this study is to describe and explain the lived experience of play from the viewpoint of selected Jamaican children. Research of this type is important because with the increased understanding of young children's play educators may gain further awareness of the influence of children's play on learning and curriculum for the early childhood genre.

You are being asked to participate in this study because of your involvement in the early childhood community. If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include an interview.

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you because: (a) activities of the children in your class will be recorded during regular scheduled class time via video and written notes; and (b) participating in an interview that should take approximately one hour of your time. Personal interview will audio-recorded, with your permission, and transcribed. There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. The review of the notes taken by the researcher during the interview will be transcribed and returned to you for

verification within a week of the interview. The interview will be held at a time convenient to you and may be conducted either during your work time or outside of your work hours.

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include an increased understanding of young children play in the Jamaican school context as voiced by the children. You might also find that your participation in this research will provide additional insight into the thoughts on play and therefore, serve as a means for discussion on the topic of play with other stakeholders.

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or explanations necessary. If you do withdraw from the study your data will not be used in the analysis. In terms of protecting your anonymity, your name will not appear on any part of the data, the research results, or in any written or oral discussions of the study.

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by being stored in a locked file cabinet and only accessible by the researcher. However, your complete anonymity is full guaranteed as your principal, and the children's primary caregivers will know you are a participant in the study. Upon completion of the study, all data will be shredded and then burned.

Other planned uses of this data include completion of the research dissertation, articles for publication, and in workshop presentation. Data from this study will be disposed of upon completion of the oral defense and submission of the final version of the dissertation.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following way: (a) a two-page summary of the study will be forwarded to you in a sealed envelope via your

participating school in December 2012; (b) presentation of the results in a dissertation; and, (c) published articles.

In addition to be able to contact the researcher and the supervisor at the above phone numbers, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Senior Vice President, Research at the University of South Florida (813-974-5570).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher.

_____	_____	_____
<i>Name of Participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>

Your signature below indicates that you give permission for your interview to be audiotaped by the researcher.

_____	_____	_____
<i>Name of Participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and the researcher will take a copy.

Appendix E: Informed Assent Form for Children

My name is Carol Long. I am a student at the University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida and I am interested in knowing what young children think about play while at school. It is important to know what you think because it will help me understand more about young children's play.

If you agree, I would really like you to be part of my research on play. Research means that I have questions and I need to find ways to answer my questions. Once I find most of the answers I will tell people about it and write a book about it, just like telling and reading a story.

One of the ways for me to get answers is to watch you at play. If you agree to be part of the research I will watch you play for one day at school. I will video you playing during your free playtime and during lunchtime (recess). I will then show you the video of you playing. Because it may be too long to watch I will show you a short part of the video and ask you to tell me about the things you are doing in the video. I will also record and write down what you are saying so that I will get everything you are talking about. I will also let either your teacher or your parent read back what you said and you can tell me if you agree with I wrote.

It is up to you to decide if you want to be part of this research or not. If you decide to be part of the research, you may stop being part of it at any time without anyone getting upset with you and you don't have to tell anyone why you don't want to be part of the research anymore.

If you agree to be part of this research your name will not be printed on anything that has to do with the research or will it be called during our talks about the research. This is to keep you safe. Any information about you or the things you say or do will be kept safe by being locked in a filing cabinet or stored on a password-protected computer and external hard drive. At the end of the research all information I have about you will be shredded (torn up) and then burned.

Some people will know about you being in the research because about two of your friends from your class will also be taking part in the research. Your teacher and your principal will also know which children who are taking part in the research.

If you agree to be part of this research, your mom or dad will need to sign below to show that you know what you will be doing if you participate and that you have had any questions answered.

Name of Participant

Signature of Parent

Date

Appendix F: Example of Member Check Form

July 8, 2012

Dear Mr. Kafil,

Thank you for an interesting and informative interview. To ensure accuracy of the interview please review the attached copy of the verbatim transcript and the relevant information I have included as it pertains to the transcript. Please feel free to contact me at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]@usf.edu should you have any questions.

Thank you for your time and cooperation in participating in this study.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Carol Long

Appendix G: Peer Review Form

I, Patriann Smith, have served as a peer reviewer for “Play the Jamaican Way: Case Study of Three Jamaican Children Lived Play Experiences” by Carol Long. In this role I have worked with the researcher throughout the study in the capacity such as reviewing data and assisting with emerging themes.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patriann Smith', written over a faint, stylized outline of a person's head and shoulders.

Date: July 30, 2013

Appendix H: Example of Field Notes

Date: Monday, May 28, 2012

Time 7:45 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.

Participants: Chiku, Radhiya, Azikiwe, & other members of the class

Location: Ms. Lawson's Classroom

Observation	Note to Self
Ms. Lawson is having a conversation with two adults; children are moving around between the tables; some are at the back of the room in the open space talking; Chiku and her mom are sitting at her table talking with some of Chiku's friends; Radhiya is standing at the front of the room talking with Azikiwe and Nate.	There seems to be tension between Ms. Lawson and the adults she is taking with – their body language communicates this (arms folded, frowns, one adult shaking her body).
Ms. Fairweather (the assistant teacher) sits talking with the teacher from the five-year-old class next door. Two children enter the classroom and goes towards a pink plastic covered basket. Ms. Fairweather moves towards them, they exchange words and money and the children leave with three small spice buns.	The teacher sells items to children during early mornings and again at recess and end of school. Is this for the class or for personal gain? Informed later that proceeds were for end of year class party.
Chiku's mother rises, straightens her skirt, turns, kisses Chiku, waves goodbye to both teachers and departs. Ms. Lawson waves then returns her attention to the parent that is still talking to her. Chiku turns in her chair and watches her mother as she passes by the aluminum windows to the north of the classroom.	Ms. Lawson is still talking to one of the parents. The other parent leaves at the same time as Chiku's mother. Her countenance is one of displeasure.
Chiku plays with her princess doll. Three other girls are playing with her.	Girls were previously playing with a puzzle. Did Chiku ask them to play with her and her doll?
Radhiya sits at her table playing with a wooden gig,	Radhiya seems content with playing by herself.
Azikiwe writes in his workbook and talks to Max. Both are laughing quietly. They turn and talk with Radhiya who smiles, then they take turns playing with the gig. A second item is introduced in the game – a small plastic "Jell-O" container. The children exchange smiles, and continue playing with both items.	Radhiya seems very accommodating of the boys and the boys seem to enjoy playing with her. How are the rules of the game established?

Appendix I: Sample of Reflective Journal

Journal Entry

June 15, 2012

Each day I am more aware of the differences in the children's nature and this is seen as they worked and played both in the classroom and on the playground. Some days they mirrored each other's actions, while other days they were very individualistic in their mannerism. Nevertheless, they each brought to the table different flares to the same activity. Today was no exception...it's 'Child's Day'. The school's administration organizes each year a 'special day' for the children...it's all about the children. They are given 'free reign of the day with little interjections from the adults. No uniforms, no regimented classroom work and there was a time warp...lunch served later than usual and snack served shortly before dismissal. Special activities are organized – a low riding Ferris wheel and a bound about are brought in along with a large plastic pool. The energy level was higher than normal and as the children played in the classroom, the excited sounds rose above the chatter of adults who tried to talk among themselves. Chiku, Azikiwe, and Radhiya were together in a small circle of seven children, each child talking at the same time as they seemed to restructure a game they were playing earlier. Suddenly, Chiku reached her hands upward, covered her ears made a 360° anticlockwise pivot and shouted, "Mi caan 'ear oonnu." Each child stopped talking and Azikiwe said, "Alright who gwaine guh firs'?" With each child shouting "Me firs'" he continued, "alright, mek a tell yuh who gwaine guh firs'...hmmm...you", pointed to Max. "Dat not fair, 'im is you bes' frien'", stated Jason. "'im is the likklest", stated Azikiwe, to which Chiku pouted while Radhiya agreed, followed by the rest of the group. The debate over they continued their discussion then resumed the game.

I enjoyed moments like this, no adult interference, no melt downs by the children, just a purity and an honesty in the way they accepted each other's opinion and moved to the next phase. There were other incidents on the playground where the solutions were not so easily accomplished. There were numerous pushing and pulling, finger-pointing, kissing of teeth, frowns and occasionally very angry words were exchanged, but again each of the participants in the study were able to regain or maintain order without adult intervention. They all seemed to be able to manage their own negotiations even in what appeared to be difficult circumstances.

This was my 4th week in the school (20 days of observations) and I felt so invested in and a part of the school community. As I watched the children play, two components of their behavior were indelibly imprinted in my mind – the ease in which they transferred from game to game or from one equipment to the next without being advised when to make the change, and the manner in which they negotiated and mediated among themselves without adult intervention. When and how were these behaviors learnt? Was the fact that they lived in fairly close distances to each other a factor for their understanding of their peers?

I reflected on my earlier days and my playmates and recognized similar traits but can't remember when I was taught or even if I was taught any of them. What I recalled and what I see prevalent in the children's play behavior is the use of 'God' as a means of keeping one on the 'straight and narrow'. The children frequently referred to something or someone not being good and "Miss" or a parent saying "God is watching". It is apparent that religion plays a very integral part in these children's upbringing and is explicitly (through daily devotions) and implicitly (common sayings by adults) reinforced.

Images of their play behavior plays like a dance in my head and as I paused sections of specific scenes I see children faces lit up with joy and what appeared to be a sense of freedom

and excitement mirrored in their eyes; next scene showed children working in groups, one child assisting another with a fallen tire, others laying prone on a pile of tires on the graveled playground, faces glistened with perspiration and wide smiles...total abandonment. The share joy of play.

I believe my love of play may cast a romantic shadow over the activities I see the children perform. At this point in the study I am also more aware of my shift in thoughts from my initial ideas of play. Originally, I wanted to find a space to include some tenets of the widely acclaimed DAP play curriculum into the Jamaican EC curriculum, but as I watched and participated in these children's daily schooling I wondered: is it necessary to borrow from 'foreigners' when ours seem to be doing a good job? The joy of the children as they played was so natural and I would hate to see it lost as we ascribe to a goal-oriented play, which the children seemed to associate with adult supervision and classroom activities...in doing so it might mek di cos' tek wey de taste.

Appendix J: Sample of Open Coding of an Interview Transcript

<p>Me: [Begins the video] You are just coming out of the classroom after lunch has been eaten. Tell me about what you are doing...tell me about what is going on there.</p> <p>Chiku: hmmm...[observes activities on the screen].</p> <p>What? We were making a cake.</p> <p>Me: You were making a cake?</p> <p>Chiku: Yes.</p> <p>Me: Why were you making a cake?</p> <p>Chiku: We were playing birthday girl.</p>	<p>Mek wi play sint'ing (Imaginary Play)</p>
<p>Me: You were playing birthday girl? Ok...who made up that game?</p> <p>Chiku: My friend</p> <p>Me: Your friend? Why did you decide to make a cake?</p> <p>Chiku: Cause...I want to</p>	<p>A mi dis! (Autonomy)</p>
<p>Me: Oh, you wanted to. What are you doing there now?</p> <p>Chiku: They are looking at the cake. They always crowding round me. Everyting ah mek dem crowd mi. Si Radhiya beside mi...shi 'elp mi all de time.</p>	<p>Cum mek wi play (Leadership role/Friendship)</p>
<p>Me: So why did you decide to bake the cake?</p> <p>Chiku: Cause...ahmmm...just because I need to make it for the birthday party. A little cake.</p>	<p>Mek wi duh it nuh (Spontaneous action)</p>
<p>Me: So whose birthday party were you planning?</p> <p>Chiku: Ahmm, Anna, Mary, [5 yr old females classroom peers] and Arty [5 yr old male classroom peer] It taste soooo good [smiles and licks her lips]</p>	<p>Mek wi play sint'ing (Imaginary Play)</p>
<p>Me: Ok. What else is happening? What are you telling them to do?</p> <p>Chiku: I was just telling them to go look for sticks...like candles for the cake. [Accent modified to mimic American tone] They are not listening.</p> <p>Me: You like to tell them what to do?</p> <p>Chiku: Yeah...but sometimes they tell me what to do and I just do it; but I tell them what to do and dem not listening.</p>	<p>Fallah me! (Leadership role)</p> <p>Falla yuh? (Reversal of roles)</p>
<p>Me: So what did you do?</p> <p>Chiku: Ah jus'..ah jus' feel like to...to run away, but ah</p>	<p>A wah? (Taking</p>

<p>didn't want to run away. Cause dem still was gonna follow me.</p>	<p>responsibility of actions; learning to deal with disappointment)</p>
<p>Me: So what are you doing there now? Chiku: ahmm...a had a mmm...mi fren shi eated off di jello and give mi di ah...ting dat de jello come in an' ah jus' get it an' carry it outside an' put...mek de cake in it. Me: And that's what you put...made your cake in? Chiku: Yeah...look what they're doing.</p>	<p>Mek wi play sint'ing (Imaginary Play/transferring items from inside to outside play)</p>
<p>Me: Everybody is making their own cake? Chiku: [Shakes her head] No they are just helping. Look. They love to help...I love to help them so they love to help me.</p>	<p>A mi fren' (Cooperation/friendship Community spirit)</p>

Appendix K: Initial Themes and Subthemes

Themes and Subthemes of Research Question 1

What is the nature of children's play?

Theme	Subtheme
Outdoor play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Excited b. Spontaneous c. Allows children to use their imagination – pretend play d. Autonomous e. Unsupervised f. Helpful/sociable-socio-emotional development g. Use items from the environment h. Free space
Indoor Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Intrinsic motivation a. Subdued b. Rule bound by teacher c. Rewards associated d. Limited space e. Use of imagination f. Use of items from the classroom environment

Themes and Subthemes of Research Question 2

What meanings are derived from young children's play from the viewpoint of the child?

Theme	Subtheme
Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Fun b. Feeling free c. Being with friends d. Pretending
Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Making up rules b. Negotiating/mediating c. Leaving and entering play at own will d. Deciding who, where, what, and when to play (outdoor)
Rules of the environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. When and what to play (specific time to play) b. How to play c. What is considered play

Themes and Subthemes cont.

Themes and Subthemes of Research Question 3
What factors contribute to these meanings?

Theme	Subtheme
Adults' Perceptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Physical benefits b. Socialization c. Time spent at recess d. Unsupervised e. Building collaborative culture
- Outdoor play is important	
- Indoor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Quiet time b. Supervised c. Specific type of play
- General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Play is allowed when work is done (work = academic/chore) b. Play used as an extrinsic motivation. Play used to release adults' stress ("go and play and stop bothering me").
Adults memories of childhood play (Contributes to & possibly influences attitude to play)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Being scolded for playing too much b. Rough and tumble c. Not playing enough with siblings d. Being prepared for primary school
Cultural Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Colonial past b. Striving to attain the best c. Competition d. Infrastructure (Lack of and inadequate)

Appendix L: Final Themes

Themes	Subthemes	
	Indoor	Outdoor
De chips nevva fall far from de block (Characteristics)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tek time play • Hush • Fallo back a mi 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nevva min', mek mi 'elp • A me dis! • Brukout
Cum wi guh play crocodile (Nature/Types of Play)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put i' back whey yuh get i' • Hol' ih dung • Today is Career day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mek wi play crocodile • Leggo mi hand • Mi gwaan • Mi soon cum
Mek wi play sint'ing (Play Context and Materials)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yuh nuh hear whey Miss sey • Mek wi play gig 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police and teif • Mi caan fly • Is what yuh cooking?
Mek mi ears eat grass (Play purpose)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yuh haffe quiet when yuh wid yuh fren • Mi dun mi wuk, mi caan have fun now 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch dem a run up an down • When coco ripe it mus bus • Mek dem play til dem tyard
Ben' de tree wen it young (Work/Play Challenges)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is early morning free time • What yuh is? • Siddung an stop di ramping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is lunch time! • Everyt'ing dun • You is de winner, me is de winner, mi nuh vex! • Gi mi a chance nuh!

Appendix M: Example of Child's Interview In Jamaican Patois

Azikiwe's explanation of an activity being done on the swing

Me: What do you call that?

Azikiwe: Yippey yei yeo.

Me: Explain that one to me, please.

Azikiwe: Is a game that you just do it like dat...and den swing side to side.

Me: What is 'like that'?

Azikiwe: Like sit on it [the swing] an' ride it like a donkey.

Me: Ok...and what you call it?

Azikiwe: Yippey yei yeo.

Me: You have rules for that game?

Azikiwe: Naw [shakes his head and smiles]. Yuh jus' get on de swing and sit

sideways on de swing an' swing and pretend yuh riding a donkey. I like...I

like to go in the swing when I play, I like to go side the swing, I like to go up

on de swing when I play.

Me: Why do you like the swing so much?

Azikiwe: 'Cause you get to go back and front, when you swinging on it. It make

me feel happy...and make mi body shake.

Me: What do you mean shake?

Asikiwe: [Sighs, looks at me and shakes his head] Mi body guh... guh up an'

down an' a move fass, fass, and it feel gud.

Appendix N: Excerpts of Parent Interview

Mr. Kofil (Azikiwe's Father)

Azikiwe believes he can do anything his brothers do and then some. He tries to walk on the wall pretending he's Spider Man...you see the color of that chair (pointing to the large sofa in the living room) he (Azikiwe) is the reason for that. He would run from outside, jump on the arm, then on the back then on the floor. Sometimes his mother tries to stop him but I tell her to let him go as long as he's not hurting himself or anyone else...let him be Ninja Turtle or whatever he wants to be.

Because our street is not on the main and very little traffic comes through here I allow him to play on the road with his friends. I teach him what to do and to be very observant...always looking out for the cars. Sometimes if I am not busy I watch them as they play and they play rough, but he (Azikiwe) knows how to handle them...he learns from his brothers. It [play] teaches him how to be smart, how to interact with other people other than his brothers and sister or his mother and he also learns how to behave himself, and to be responsible. It keep everybody happy and active giving me and their mother time to do something else. But sometimes I just sit and watch them because I never played with my brothers and sisters like how I see my children play. That is why I give them time to play. It is interesting to watch them. Sometimes their mother play with them too, but most of the time she has things to do so she's happy when they are playing.

Ms. Naki (Chiku's Mother)

So I think it [play] is an important part of school, it is an important part of the child's development. And then now it has to do...it has to do, ah mean if you don't allow your child to play, I think that child will become antisocial in some form of a way.

Play is...find something fun to do, maybe swing...run tires, whatever facilities that they have that will allow them...to...go out and socialize...outside of the classroom.

I don't expect her to...to now go to the primary school with all this playing. As a said in the former years they are expected to play, but I don't expect she will go there and just keep doing it [play], I don't...cause you know too much playing can be too bad. Yes it can be. Cause they will want to play all the time; they...they...they will want to play all the time, which kind a...maybe they will kind a loose focus on the real thing what school is and all that.

Appendix O: Excerpt from Transcript Jamaican Patois (JP) to Jamaican Standard English (JSE)

Radhiya on things she liked to do and activities allowed in class.

Jamaican Patois (JP)	Jamaican Standard English (JSE)
I like when we 'ave a lot of fun like playing crocodile or on di swing an' den when we finish we get quiet because dey don't disterve anybody.	I like when we have a lot of fun, like playing crocodile or being on the swing and then when we are finished we get quiet, so that we don't disturb anyone.
This quiet period she spoke of was the rest time after recess. She also recounted the things she was allowed to do in class.	
Yuh can't run up and down in the class...yuh haffe be at your table...but I like to read suh ah jus' stay at mi table an' read or draw stuff and color stuff. Miss sey when yuh in di classroom is not time to play is time to wuk.	You are not allowed to run up and down in the class...you have to be at your table...but I like to read so I stay at my table and read or draw stuff and color stuff. Miss said when you are in the classroom it is not time to play it is time to work.

Appendix P: IRB Letter Of Approval



DIVISION OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND COMPLIANCE
 Institutional Review Boards, FWA No. 00001669
 12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MDC035 • Tampa, FL 33612-4799
 (813) 974-5638 • FAX (813) 974-5618

May 11, 2012

Carol Long
 Childhood Education and Literacy Studies

RE: Expedited Approval for Initial Review
 IRB#: Pro00007767

Title: Embracing play the Jamaican way: A case study of 5-year olds' lived play experiences

Dear Carol Long:

On 5/10/2012 the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and APPROVED the above referenced protocol. Please note that your approval for this study will expire on 5/10/12.

Approved Items:
 Protocol Document(s):

[Revised Protocol](#)

5/2/2012 4:30 AM

0.01

Consent/Assent Documents:

Name	Modified	Version
Parent Consent Form.pdf	5/11/2012 8:58 AM	0.01
Teacher Consent Form.pdf	5/11/2012 8:58 AM	0.01

Please note, the informed consent/assent documents are valid during the period indicated by the official, IRB-Approval stamp located on the form - which can be found under the Attachment Tab. Valid consent must be documented on a copy of the most recently IRB-approved consent form.

It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review which includes activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk to human subjects, and (2) involve only procedures listed in one or more of the categories outlined below. The IRB may review research through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45CFR46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110. The research proposed in this study is categorized under the following expedited review category:

(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

As the principal investigator of this study, it is your responsibility to conduct this study in accordance with IRB policies and procedures and as approved by the IRB. Any changes to the approved research must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval by an amendment.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John A. Schinka, Ph.D." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John Schinka, PhD, Chairperson
USF Institutional Review Board

Cc: Various Menzel, CCRP
USF IRB Professional Staff

Appendix Q: CITI VA Certificate of Completion

Office of Research & Innovation : SOURCE



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Carol Ann Long received her Bachelor of Science degree in Public Administration and Psychology from the University of the West Indies – Mona. She earned a Master of Arts in Early Childhood Education from the University of South Florida in collaboration with Shortwood Teachers' College, Jamaica. She spent 17 years as a physical education and biology teacher for grades seven to eleven while simultaneously teaching movement education for prekindergarten through sixth grade. She is currently a lecturer of Physical Education, Movement Education for Early Childhood and Child Development at her alma mater, Shortwood Teachers' College, and has been in that role for the past 15 years.

As a doctoral student, Carol has presented at the National Association for Early Childhood Teacher Education (NAECTE, 2009), Society for Cross Cultural Research (SCCR, 2009), and National Association Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 2009, 2011). Carol is interested in the integration of movement education and play in the Jamaican early childhood curriculum for the holistic development of young children. She is married and has two girls, a son-in-law, and a grandson and a granddaughter.