Pedagogical positioning in children's imaginative play: A cultural-historical study of learning and development of preschool children from diverse settings

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E-thesis Declaration

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Abstract

The goal of this study is to capture adults' day-to-day pedagogical practices in relation to their roles and positioning inside and outside of imaginative play. Furthermore, the study looks into adult's active positioning inside the imaginative play to support children's learning and development. Using the cultural-historical theoretical lens of Vygotsky, this study considered both preschool and home contexts in Australia to understand positioning, duration of involvement, and the type of roles of parents and teachers in children's imaginative play.

The study adopted an in-depth qualitative case study method following the dialectical–interactive approach (Hedegaard & Fleer, 2008) within the cultural-historical paradigm. Four focus children (4–5 years, two boys and two girls), their families, and eight teachers from two preschools were invited to participate in this study. A total of 86 hours of video and interview data were collected over a period of four months in home and preschool settings. Inspired by a cultural-historical methodological approach, data were collected through digital video observations, semi-structured interviews, photographs, portfolios, and field notes. In order to understand the adults' involvement in support of children's learning and development through imaginative play, data analysis was carried out using three levels of interpretation: common sense interpretation, situated practice interpretation, and thematic interpretation (Hedegaard, 2008c). Vygotsky's (1966, 2004) concept of play as "imagination and reality", Kravtosov and Kravtsova's (2010) concept of "dual subjectivity", Hedegaard's (2012b) concept of "motives and demands", and Fleer's (2010) pedagogical approach of "collective and individual imagining" were used in the thematic analysis to answer the research questions.

The thesis is presented in the format of a thesis including publications. The study results are reported through the four publications presented in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 9, and one data analysis Chapter 8. Figure 1 shows how the findings chapters are interrelated and how the subsidiary questions answer the main research questions.

The findings of this research show that adults spend a minimal amount of time being involved in children's imaginative play and mostly they stay outside of the play. They believe their role is to primarily set up an activity, provide materials, and give instructions to support children's learning and development (see Chapters 5, 6, 7, & 8). The results also show that while adults are outside of the play, they miss the opportunity to create a learning space inside the play

situation (see Chapters 7 & 8). However, adults' active participation when moving between inside and outside of the imaginative play gives them the opportunity to develop play complexity, promote the children's learning, and understand the play themes from the children's perspectives (see Chapters 6, 8, & 9). In the concluding chapter, the study proposed a pedagogical strategy model (see Figure 10.1) that shows if the play participants (parent and teacher) take an active **role**, use pedagogical **techniques** when involved in collective imagining (Fleer, 2010), and pedagogically **position** themselves between the real and imaginary situations together with other play partners (children), then they could foster a positive learning outcomes through play.

The central argument of this study is that to understand the process of children's learning and development in play, one should consider studying the child in collectively constructed everyday social situations. I argue that as a cultural-historical researcher, I should not only focus on studying the individual child's learning through play while keeping the adult and the societal context (diverse settings) outside of the play, but also consider the perspectives of the play participants (adult and children) and the contribution of societal settings to create a learning environment. To understand children's perspectives and to support children's learning and development inside the play, the adults' pedagogical positioning is an important dimension for conceptualising the intentional teaching practice in Australia.

This research contributes to the early childhood community, for example, policy makers, teachers, parents, and other care-givers, by providing some insights into the present pedagogical practices of the preschool and home settings in Australia. The research finding is framed by two models in the conclusion chapter (see Figures 10.1 & 10.2) that could be useful tools for researchers and practitioners to use to think about how parents and teachers could pedagogically position themselves in children's imaginative play (being inside and outside of the play) and what type of strategy they could use in supporting children's learning and development in diverse settings.

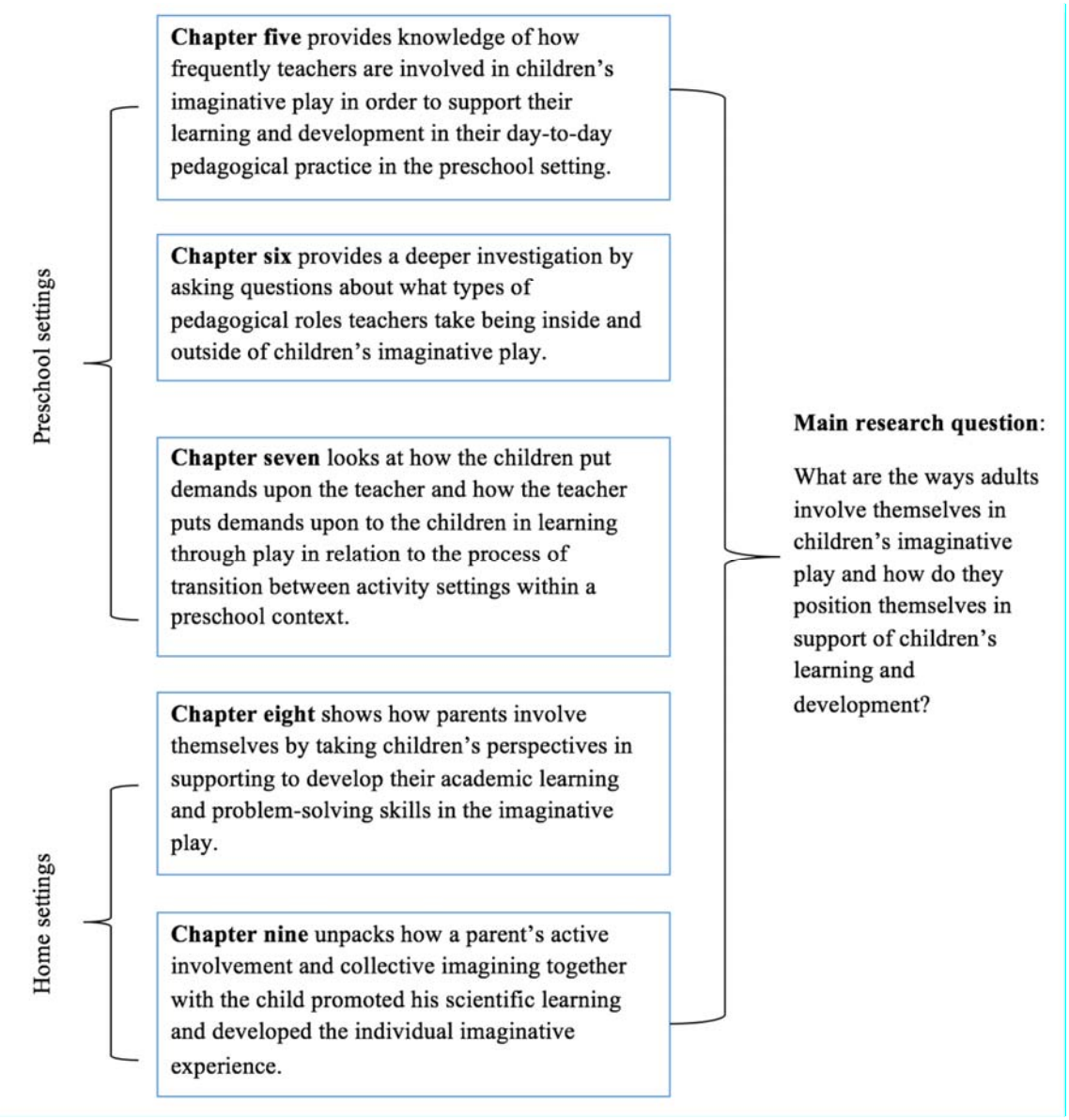

Figure 0.1: ***Overview of interrelations among five chapters to answer the main research questions***

Thesis including published works declaration

In accordance with Monash University Doctorate Regulation 17.2 Doctor of Philosophy and Research Master's regulations, the following declarations are made:

I hereby declare that this thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

This thesis includes two published papers, one book chapter that is currently accepted with minor revision in a book, one journal manuscript that is under review with positive feedback in a peer reviewed journal.

The core theme of the thesis is adults' pedagogical positioning in children's imaginative play for supporting their learning and development in everyday preschool and family settings, drawing upon a cultural-historical perspective. The ideas, development, and writing up of all the papers in the thesis were the principal responsibility of myself, the candidate, working within Monash University Faculty of Education under the supervision of Professor Marilyn Fleer and Dr Liang Li.

In the case of Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 9 (papers 1–4), my contribution to the work is shown in Table 0.1 below

Table 0.1: The candidate's contribution to publications presented in Chapters 5, 6, 7 & 9

Thesis chapter	Publication title	Publication status*	Nature and extent of candidate's contribution	Co-author names, nature and co-authors' contribution	Co-authors Monash Student Y/N
Chapter 5 (paper 1)	"We set up a small world": preschool teachers'	Published	Conception, key ideas, research investigation and	1) Marilyn Fleer, input into manuscript 15%	No, co-authors are supervisors

	involvement in children's imaginative play		development, and write-up (75%)	2) Liang Li, input into manuscript 10%	of the student
Chapter 6 (paper 2)	Preschool teachers' pedagogical positioning in relation to children's imaginative play	Under review	Conception, key ideas, research investigation and development, and write-up (70%)	1) Marilyn Fleer, input into manuscript 15% 2) Liang Li, input into manuscript 15%	No, co-authors are supervisors of the student
Chapter 7 (paper 3, book chapter)	Transition between child-initiated imaginative play and teacher-initiated activity: An analysis of children's motives and teachers' pedagogical demands in a preschool context	Accepted	Conception, key ideas, research investigation and development, and write-up (70%)	1) Marilyn Fleer, input into manuscript 20% 2) Liang Li, input into manuscript 10%	No, co-authors are supervisors of the student
Chapter 9 (paper 4, conference paper)	Mother-child collective play in home context: An analysis from a cultural-historical theoretical perspective	Published	Conception, key ideas, research investigation and development, and write-up (94%)	1) Marilyn Fleer, input into manuscript 3% 2) Liang Li, input into manuscript 3%	No, co-authors are supervisors of the student

[* means for example, published/ in press/ accepted/ under review/ in the process of submission/ submitted]

Sections of the submitted or published papers have not renumbered in order to generate a consistent presentation within the thesis.

Student Signature: [redacted]

Date: 7/04/2018

The undersigned hereby certify that the above declaration correctly reflects the nature and extent of the student's and co-authors' contributions to this work. In instances where we are not the responsible author we have consulted with the responsible author to agree on the respective contributions of the authors.

Main Supervisor signature: [redacted]

Date: 07/04/2018

Associate supervisor signature: [redacted]

Date: 07/04/2018

List of publications included in the thesis

Devi, A., Fleer, M., & Li, L. (2018). “We set up a small world": Preschool teachers' involvement in children's imaginative play. *International Journal of Early Years Education*. doi: 10.1080/09669760.2018.1452720. https://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/VZ62ECT6NyZBDGjpbU3p/full

Devi, A., Fleer, M., & Li, L. (2017). Preschool teachers’ pedagogical positioning in relation to children’s imaginative play. Submitted to *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood* (under review).

Devi, A., Fleer, M., & Li, L. (2018). Transition between child-initiated imaginative play and teacher-initiated activity: An analysis of children’s motives and teachers’ pedagogical demands in a preschool context. In M. Hedegaard, & M. Fleer (Eds.), *Children’s transition in everyday life and across institutions.* Place: Bloomsbury Publisher. *(accepted).*

Devi, A., Fleer, M., & Li, L. (2016). Mother-child collective play at home context: An analysis from a cultural-historical theoretical perspective. Published in Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) conference proceeding. Retrieved from http://www.aare.edu.au/publications-database.php/10777/

List of other publications

Irvine, S., Davidson, C., Veresov, N., Adams, M., & Devi, A. (2015). Lenses and Lessons: Using three different research perspectives in early childhood education research. *Cultural-Historical Psychology*, 11(3) 75–85. doi: 10.17759/chp.2015110307

Ray, B., & Devi, A. (2015). Academic debate on using social networking media: Teachers' and students' perceptions from two tertiary institutes. *International Journal of Learning and Teaching*, 1(2), 168–173.

International and National Conference papers:

Devi, A. (2017). Parents' pedagogical roles in children's imaginative play: A cultural historical analysis across diverse cultural contexts. Paper is presented at 5th International Society for Culture and Activity Research Congress (ISCAR), Quebec, Canada.

Devi, A. (2016). Mother-child collective play at home context: An analysis from a cultural-historical theoretical perspective. Paper presented at Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) Conference, Melbourne, Australia.

Devi, A., & Fleer, M. (2015). Research trends in young children's conceptual development: A systematic analysis of the literature, the paper is presented at 16th PECERA International Conference, 25th July, Sydney, Australia.

Devi, A. (2015, July). Young children's conceptual development. Paper presented at Monash Education Research Community (MERC) Annual Conference, Monash University, Australia.

Devi, A., & Ray, B. (2015, July). Academic debate on using social networking media: Teachers' and students' perceptions from two tertiary institutions. Paper presented at International Conference on Frontiers Educational Technologies (ICFET), Shanghai, China.

Devi, A. (2014, September). *Concept formation in early childhood settings: A cross-cultural study of preschool children*. Poster presented at International Society for Culture and Activity Research Congress (ISCAR), Sydney, Australia.

Devi, A. (2014, July). *Concept formation in early childhood settings: A cross-cultural study of preschool children*. Paper presented at Monash Education Research Community (MERC) Annual Conference, Monash University, Australia.

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Ethics

The research for this thesis received the ethics approval of the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) (Approval number: CF14/2673-2014001452) and the Department for Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) (Approval number: 2014_002482).

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Part 1: Framing the research

Chapter 1 : Introduction

Introduction:

This thesis presents an investigation of the outcomes of a study on adults' pedagogical practice that supports children's learning and development in play. To begin this introductory chapter, I will provide a brief overview of my personal motivation for the study, followed by a description of the research context and the research problem. The use of a cultural-historical theoretical lens is also explored, followed by the purpose and key research questions of the study. Finally, this chapter concludes with an outline of the thesis.

Personal motivation as a researcher:

I finished my Bachelor and Masters in "Early Childhood Development" in Bangladesh in 2007, where my bachelor course was embedded with a traditional view of developmental theories (e.g., Piaget, Erickson, Freud, and Gesell). The unit on child psychology was more focused on the developmental trajectory and the assignments were all based on laboratory work. At that time, I became aware for the first time of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale (WISC), which is used to measure children's cognitive development, and I also used a 'developmental milestone chart' to record children's development individually. Later in my master's degree, I was introduced to Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory and had an opportunity to write some papers as part of my course requirement, which helped me to learn how to conduct qualitative and quantitative research. I was an assistant teacher in my department's (Child Development and Family Relations) play-group in Bangladesh. During that work, I found children had very little opportunity to experience play with their teachers' support, and the only interaction between teacher and child was in group time to teach literacy and numeracy. I also found children had minimal opportunity to play with their parents, especially if the parents work full time. Moreover, most of the parents were expecting that their children would be starting academic formal learning from at the play-group.

In 2010, I moved to Australia and started work in various early learning centres as a casual educator while completing my "Diploma of Early Childhood Education" in Victoria. While studying, I realised the course units were grounded in developmental theory. I also found that

the Australian national framework, *Belonging being and becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF)* (DEEWR, 2009), is more focused on five outcomes (DEEWR, 2009), observing children, and to setting up the pedagogical practices in early learning centres. My personal motivation became more focused when I started working in an integrated children's service as a full-time educator. I observed many educators who struggled to make sense of the EYLF when implementing it in their practices, particularly in diverse cultural contexts. The educators had a good understanding of the intentional teaching approach and adult-led and child-directed play; however, they were confused about how to implement play-based learning and how to be involved in play to support children's learning and development. Their dilemma was how to balance free play and adult-guided play in their settings. However, there is no clear concept about how much to be involved in children's learning through play, and what their role would be in relation to play-based learning. I met many parents at that centre who were unsure about their role in children's play. Additionally, during my role in early childhood centres, I found children's imaginative play was a major play activity. This experience encouraged me to find out more about the links between children's learning through imaginative play and adults' support in this play-based learning. My personal curiosity had a chance to flourish when I started my research journey at Monash University.

My educational and professional experiences have motivated me to investigate how pedagogical practices of adults' support children's learning and development in diverse early childhood settings (preschool and home).

Research context:

Children's academic learning through play has become an important issue in contemporary early childhood research. According to the reports of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2006, 2012), play is viewed as a pedagogical tool for supporting children's learning. In the 2006 OECD report, play received very little attention, whereas seven years later, play had been identified as an important variable for supporting the cognitive, social, and emotional development of children (OECD, 2012). Many studies have shown the importance of play for children's learning and development, whereas very little research has given attention to how play can be utilised for supporting learning and development of pre-school children. To understand the implication of play for learning, it is necessary to understand the notion of the adults' role in children's play in diverse institutional contexts. Traditionally, play is valued as a child-initiated pleasurable free activity and there is

restriction on adults' contribution to play (Burghardt, 2011; Chien et al., 2010; Honomichl & Chen, 2012; Lillard et al., 2013; Smith, 1994). In contrast, the recent literature has established that the children's conceptual development is greater if adults interact with children during their play (Bodrova & Leong, 2006; Fleer, 2011a; Li, 2012). Consideration of the balance between the two approaches of child-initiated play and adult-guided activities is creating contradictions in early childhood education (Devi, Fleer & Li, 2018; Wood & Hedges, 2016).

Evidence of maintaining balance between these two approaches can be seen from recent early childhood educational curricula all over the world. For example, in Australia, the national framework, "Early Years Learning Framework" (EYLF) (DEEWR, 2009), considers "intentional teaching" as an important pedagogical practice of teachers to support children's learning and development through play. It encourages teachers to engage in sustained shared conversations (Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford & Taggart, 2004) and use different strategies such as modelling, demonstrating, open questioning, speculating, explaining, engaging in shared thinking, and problem-solving to extend children's thinking and learning. In addition, the frameworks suggest that teachers maintain a balancing act between child-initiated play and teacher-supported learning. According to the Australian framework (DEEWR, 2009), interactions and conversations are vitally important for children's learning. In the UK, early childhood frameworks suggest that adults should take the initiative to plan for "purposeful play" and, like the Australian framework, maintain a balance between "adult-led and child-initiated activity" (Department for Education, UK, 2014, p. 9). Adults' support in children's learning and development has been receiving increasing attention in early childhood education recently; however, the way teachers or parents should be involved in children's play has not received attention in early childhood frameworks around the world. Therefore, it is important to gain a complete understanding regarding the involvement of parents and teachers in children's play that supports their learning and development in both home and preschool contexts.

The research reported in this thesis is an exploratory study of the pedagogical practices of teachers and parents. To investigate pedagogical practices in preschool settings, I invited teachers from two multicultural preschools in Victoria, Australia to participate in the study. Additionally, to study pedagogical practices in home settings, I also invited four focus children and their families to participate in the study. This study makes a significant contribution to early childhood education, where the results not only show the everyday pedagogical practices of adults in different settings that support children's learning and development in imaginative

play, but also reveal an enormous possibility for how to involve themselves in children's imaginative play to support their learning and development.

Research problem:

Over the last few decades, a plethora of literature has examined the importance of adults' support in children's play for developing early mathematics, numeracy, art, literacy, writing, and cognitive skills (Björklund 2010; Degotardi 2010; Hallam, Gupta, & Lee 2011; Robson 2010; Robson & Rowe 2012). It is interesting to notice that a majority of researchers have focused on key practices such as collaboration, conversation, interaction, support, guidance, and involvement of adults in their research (see Chapter 2 for details). Teacher–child collaboration and conversational patterns appear to be key terms used in most of the research for naming the support given for children's learning and development in preschool settings. For example, Western early childhood education research has been focusing more on the importance of teacher–child interactions to promote children's mathematics and science learning in the preschool context (Andersson & Gullberg, 2014; Blake & Howitt, 2012; Howitt, 2011; Howitt, Lewis & Upson, 2011). The researchers claim that different teaching techniques, such as teachers' interacting through "sustained shared thinking" to engage children in meaningful group discussions (Sylva et al., 2004, p. 5), providing different resources, implementing technology and digital play (Edwards, 2013; Fleer, 2014a; Lindahl & Folkesson, 2012; Verenikina et al., 2016), and creating rich play indoor and outdoor environments (Canning, 2010; Klaar & Öhman, 2014; Waters & Maynard, 2010), could support children's learning and development in the early childhood settings. Additionally, a group of researchers found that children could develop their conceptual understanding when parents actively support them in play-based learning activity in home contexts (Hao & Fleer, 2016; Li, 2012; Sikder & Fleer, 2015; Wong & Fleer, 2012). Therefore, adults' contributions to children's learning and development in play have been addressed by a number of researchers; however, the above literature has not shown in what way teachers and parents could be involved in play and what type of strategy could be used in children's play to support their learning and development in home and preschool contexts. The aim of this research is to fill this gap.

Hedges (2014, p.198) argues that teachers focus on "smuggling in" content knowledge to play-based settings instead of being actively involved in children's play-based education and positioning themselves alongside children as co-enquirers. Hedges (2014) states that a skilful adult could create a playful learning environment for children to learn content knowledge.

Hedges and Cooper (2016, 2018) state that teachers' proactive thoughtful pedagogical interactions in the play might deepen children's thinking and understanding in relation to their own interests. They proposed that teachers need to consider a participatory and relational pedagogical practice "to position a sophisticated blending of play, learning and teaching" (2018, p.1) in early childhood education. Fleer (2015) suggests that the teachers need to go inside the play. In her empirical study, she showed that "when the teacher is inside of the play, she/he is more in tune with the storyline evolving or being acted out and can better establish intersubjectivity inside of the imaginary play" (Fleer, 2015, p.12). Fleer (2015) and Hedges (2014) suggest that to establish pedagogical practice in relation to play-based teaching and learning, more research is needed to be done into pedagogical practices of adults inside the imaginative play. The aim of this research is to gain a comprehensive understanding of adults' contributions inside children's imaginative play for supporting children's learning and development in everyday diverse settings (preschool and home) in Australia.

Theoretical framework:

To study adults' involvement in children's play that supports their learning and development in diverse settings, cultural-historical theory was drawn upon as an appropriate framework upon which to conduct this research. The research aim is not just to observe an individual child's development quantitatively. Rather the research aim is to observe the child's developmental process qualitatively in a naturalistic condition. As Vygotsky (1997a) argued, "What must interest us is not the finished result, not the sum or product of development, but the very process of genesis (origin) or establishment of the higher form caught in a living aspect" (p.71). This exemplifies the movement from the view of linearity of traditional modes of studying children's development, which only focuses on the individual child. Vygotsky argued that the human's mental system is developed in a complex process where we cannot ignore the dynamic and dialectical relations between the individual and their surrounding environment. Rather than focusing on a single dimension, there is a reciprocal relationship between the subject and the environment (i.e., either the subject or the environment). The cultural-historical methodological approach offers a lens for overcoming the limitations of the traditional psychology, which sees development as a quantitative change of individual capacity (Fleer, 2010, 2011a).

Vygotsky's methodological approach allows the study to be oriented to observe and investigate children's development and learning qualitatively in their everyday activity settings

(Hedegaard, 2012). This theoretical approach shows the path-way for taking a holistic view for the study of children's development, by bringing together the natural and the cultural positions (Kravtsova, 2014).

Purpose of the study:

After doing an in-depth literature review, it was found that very little work has been done on researching the pedagogical practices associated with supporting young children's learning and development in preschool and home settings. In fact, the issue of 'what types of roles adults take when involving themselves in children's play' and 'what is the adults' understanding of how to engage in children's play to support their learning' is not so well understood. Therefore, the aim of the study is to reveal the pedagogical practices of adults who support children's learning and development through imaginative play, how adults position themselves, and what roles they take when being actively involved in imaginative play in diverse activity settings. The research also investigates how children's learning takes place in children's imaginative play when adults are actively involved in children's play. The main and subsidiary research questions are mentioned below in relation to the gaps in the literature.

Research questions:

Main research question: What are the ways adults involve themselves in children's imaginative play and how do they position themselves in support of children's learning and development?

Subsidiary research questions*:* The study's subsidiary questions are directed towards the findings chapters and are linked to the main research question. The subsidiary questions are presented in order of the publications and chapters in which they are situated

Chapter 5– Publication 1

Q1: Do teachers enter into children's imaginative play?

Q2: What are teachers' views of their role in children's imaginative play?

Chapter 6– Publication 2

Q3: Do early childhood teachers involve themselves in children's imaginative play, and if they do, what role do they take?

Chapter 7– Publication 3

Q4: How do children transition between activity settings within a preschool?

Q5: What happens to the children's motive orientation when teachers make learning demands upon children in play-based settings?

Q6: What demands do children make upon teachers when their motive orientation is to play rather than to learn?

Chapter 8– Ordinary chapter

Q7: How do Indian-Australian immigrant parents involve themselves by taking on their children's perspectives in imaginative play? By doing so, are they supporting the development of their children's academic learning and problem-solving skills in the imaginative play?

Chapter 9– Publication 4

Q8: How does a mother enter into a child's play when supporting learning and development?

Q9: What happens to the child's imaginative play during mother–child collective engagement?

Structure of the thesis:

The thesis is divided into three parts. Part 1 contains the introduction, literature review, theoretical framework and methodology (Chapters 1, 2, 3 & 4). Part 2 discusses the findings through the presentation of the publications (Chapters 5, 6, 7, & 9) and data analysis in Chapter 8. Part 3 is the concluding chapter (Chapter 10), which finalises the thesis.

Part 1: Framing the research

The thesis comprises ten consecutive chapters starting with this introductory **Chapter 1**, which contains my personal motivation for the study, the research context, the research problem, the rationale for drawing upon cultural-historical theory for framing the research, and the research questions. **Chapter 2** provides a literature review regarding theoretical, conceptual, and empirical studies of the field of adults' support of children's learning and development through play. The four published papers and one data analysis chapter presented in this thesis contain empirical and theoretical literature reviews that are mainly focused on those studies that used cultural-historical theory to frame the research. In order to avoid unnecessary repetition,

Chapter 2 only sketches the brief history of play, and a larger picture of what has happened in the field of adults' support of children's learning and development through play. **Chapter 3** is a theoretical chapter that gives a brief discussion of some important concepts from cultural-historical theory and the concepts that have been used in this study to form a system of concepts that support the analysis of the five published/unpublished papers in this thesis. **Chapter 4** is a methodology chapter that discusses a cultural-historical research paradigm and the rationale for the study. The chapter also includes discussion of dialectical–interactive methodology, the qualitative case study approach, research design, ethical issues, and the validity and trustworthiness of this research.

Part 2: Findings of the study

All the subsidiary questions are answered in **Chapters 5 to 9** in Part 2 of the thesis. These chapters are interlinked with each other and this presentation helps draw a final picture of the study findings (see Figure 0.1). Each of the chapters are presented as four publications (one book chapter, two journal papers, and one conference paper) and one data analysis chapter.

Chapter 5 answers subsidiary research questions 1 and 2. It reports that despite the general importance of play, teachers' involvement in developing children's imaginative play appears to be minimal. It also reveals teachers' beliefs about their role in children's imaginative play.

Chapter 6 answers subsidiary research question 3. It identifies six different pedagogical roles of teachers in children's imaginative play for supporting their learning and development.

Chapter 7 answers subsidiary research questions 4, 5, and 6. It shows children's motive orientation to play and a teacher's pedagogical demands of learning as shown through a collective transitional process between two activity settings in preschool. It also appears from the data that the teacher's pedagogical demands hold back the children's play motives.

Chapter 8 answers the subsidiary research question 7. It shows that the parent's simultaneous movement between being inside and outside of the imaginative play situation, as an active play partner, provided the opportunity to create a learning environment and understand the child's perspectives. On the other hand, only being outside of the play as a resource supplier and observer, the parent could not understand the child's perspective and keeps herself on the boundary of the play, thus restricting her from entering into the child's imaginary world and not allowing her to work along with the child to solve the problems that arose inside the play.

Chapter 9 answers the subsidiary research questions 8 and 9. It presents another finding that the mother's interactive approach as an active play partner in the child's play promotes his

learning and development. This approach also extended the play complexity and gave the platform for the mother to enter into collective imaginary play with the child.

Part 3: Finalising the research

Chapter 10 concludes the thesis. The last chapter brings together all the findings as presented in all the chapters to answer the main research question, which is "what are the ways adults involve themselves in children's imaginative play and how do they position themselves in support of children's learning and development?"

This final chapter presents two theoretical models (Figures 10.1 & 10.2) and discusses the contributions of the thesis to scholarship and the broader literature. It also discusses the implications and limitations of the study and suggests directions for future research in the field of the pedagogical positioning of adults in relation to being inside and outside of imaginative play to support children's learning and development in the context of two settings.

Conclusion:

Overall, this chapter depicted how the thesis is framed (with publications) and the purpose of the research. The next chapter reviews the relevant literature to identify the research gap. The literature reviewed is on the topic of play and adults' involvement in children's play from cultural-historical theoretical perspectives.

Chapter 2 : Literature review

Introduction:

This chapter details the literature review that resulted in identifying the gaps and formulating the research questions presented in Chapter 1. To identify the research direction for this project, the detailed and systematic review of the literature is presented in this chapter and the five chapters, which not only contributes to the development of the research questions and present findings, but also reveals the trends of the research culture in play-based learning in the field of early childhood education. The systematic literature review helps the researcher to identify the research gaps and to focus on the research aim. A systematic analysis is a technique used for combining the previous research and literature in order to better understand the specific areas of research, and this analysis helps to identify potential gaps in the given area in order to propose a future research agenda (Kremenak, 2010; Torgerson, 2003).

I undertook a systematic, explicit, thorough and rigorous literature search to identify the research gaps in the phenomenon of adults' involvement in children's imaginative play for supporting their development and learning. In this systematic analysis of the literature, first, I identified the main topic or idea, and, second, I decided to use some key words or terms, such as play, pedagogy, adults' role, imaginative play, pedagogical positioning, cultural-historical, home setting and preschool setting, to search the articles. Third, I searched those articles in library databases and Google Scholar in the field of early childhood education, play and learning (Timmins & McCabe, 2005). Fourth, in examining the articles on adults' support in play-based pedagogy noted within and across the early childhood journals, I included categorisation articles that were (1) empirical scholarly articles based on quantitative, qualitative or mixed method approaches, (2) theoretical papers where new theoretical frameworks were being proposed, (3) articles that offered a position statement or a specific reflection or opinion on an issue related to research on play, and (4) unpublished doctoral thesis and papers, government reports and policy statements. Finally, I developed the research questions from the literature gaps. The flow chart below (Figure 2.1) shows the process involved in the systematic literature review.

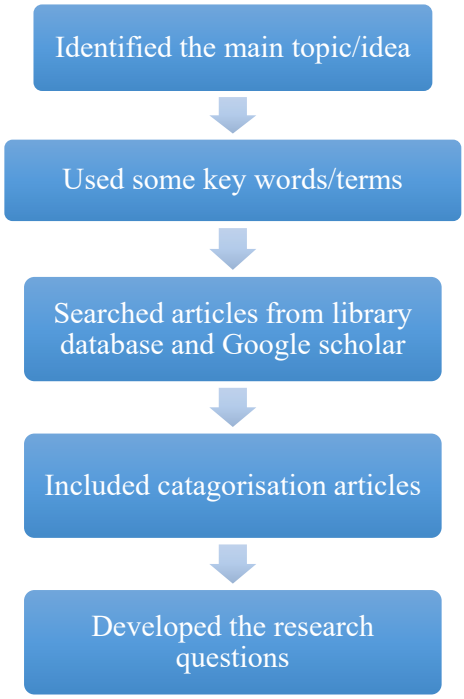


Figure 2.1*: Literature review process*

Due to the nature of a thesis with publications, this chapter tries to avoid repetition and provides a comprehensive research review. In this thesis, each of the publication chapters (5, 6, 7 & 9) contains individual literature reviews that are focused on the research reported in the paper. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to present overall research gaps in the general field of play, pedagogy and adults' support of children's play-based learning and development.

The review begins with a brief history of play from diverse theoretical perspectives, a cultural-historical theoretical view on play, the definition of play from different cultural contexts, including contemporary debate in play-based learning, recent research trends in children's learning and development through play, and how adults' support has been conceptualised in children's play-based leaning. The conclusion of this chapter is presented at the end.

A brief history of play:

Over the past decades, a number of studies have been carried out on the topic of play (Burghardt, 2011), and play has been defined variously from different psychological and sociological points of view (Elkonin, 2005; Fleer, 2013a). As stated by Helen Schwartzman (1979), a number of biologists, psychologists, anthropologists and sociologists have defined play from their particular theoretical standpoint. The early theories for defining play tended to focus on global evolutionary perspectives by placing importance on the physical features of

play (Hyder & Anna, 2005). In the nineteenth century, play was conceptualised by evolutionary theory, where it was developed from animal play to human play and examined in the laboratory setting (Pellegrini 2007; Smith, 2007). Evolutionary theory emphasises physical activity, such as rough-tumble play, rhythmic play, exercise play, chasing play, and so on.

In the early nineteenth century, the theories tended to define play with a focus on the physical, internal, and emotional functions of play (Schwartzman, 1979). For example, Freud and Erikson's psychoanalytic theories emphasise the social and emotional development of children in play (Schwartzman, 1979). The behaviourist theorist, Skinner (1938), saw play as a set of problem-solving behaviours because of its investigative features.

In the mid-twentieth century, the relationship between play and cognitive development was addressed by a number of psychological studies on play (Nicolopoulou, 1993). In 1962, Jean Piaget first shifted the focus on play away from emotional development towards cognitive development (Schwartzman, 1979). He argued that play contributed to children's cognitive development through the process of 'accommodation' and 'assimilation'. Similar to Piaget, other psychologists like Gesell, Hurlock, Erikson, and Lowenfeld focused on stages of play (Schwartzman, 1979). All these researchers claimed that children's play is universal and all children can be expected to pass through this developmental process of play in the same way (Schwartzman, 1979). Their claim was critiqued because they neglected to acknowledge the importance of the sociocultural context in children's play (Nicolopoulou, 1993). At the same time, in cultural-historical theory, Vygotsky (1978) stressed that the play is a leading activity of children that supports all aspects of children's development (e.g., social, emotional, and physical), including cognitive development. However, Vygotsky's concept of play is linked with social competence as well as the cognitive development of children.

Both Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories played a predominant role in highlighting the importance of play in children's cognitive development. As we can be seen from the discussion above, Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories are similar in relation to their view of play being a primary activity for cognitive development. However, they differed significantly with regard to the issue of adults' interaction in children's play. For example, Piaget believed children learn from their own engagement with their environment without adults' interaction and intervention (Piaget, 1970, as cited in Leggett & Newman, 2017), while Vygotsky believed that adults and more capable peers were an essential component of children's learning and development (Vygotsky, 1976).

Due to the impact created by Piaget's and Vygotsky's views of play on contemporary research in the field of early childhood education (ECE) globally, this chapter further critically compares and contrasts their views.

Table 2.1 classifies how early childhood scholars define play through the two different theoretical lenses.

Table 2.1: Cultural-historical and developmental view of play *(Fleer, 2013a)*

Developmental view of play	**Cultural-historical view of play**
Piaget (1962) defined play as assimilation of reality to the ego. Play is placed in the context of cognitive process and cognitive development. ↓ • **Fein** (1981) – Play has been viewed as a cognitive skill (cited in Nicolopoulou, 1993) • **Sutton-Smith** (1994) – Play has been viewed as novel adaptation corresponding to the evolutionary process with its variables rooted in the biological process. • **Dockett** (1999) – Play is internally motivated, internally controlled, and a form of internal reality (as cited in Fleer, 2013a, p. 22) • **Wood and Attfield** (2005) – Play is child-chosen, child-invented, and totally free from adult intervention. • **Bornstein** (2007) categories play in two dimensional ways such as explanatory	**Vygotsky** (1966) defined play as a new relationship between semantic and visible fields, where a real situation is foregrounded and the child creates an imaginary situation. ↓ • **Leontev** (1981) – Play promotes the development of imagination, personality, and abstract thought for children at preschool age. • **Lindqvist** (1995) developed an aesthetic form of play where a child's internal and external activity is dialectically related to each other. • **El'konin** (2005a, 2005c) pointed out that play depends on the historical conception of the position of the child in the society, and it is not biologically innate. • **Göncü and Gaskins** (2007) – Children's play is a cultural activity. • **Kravtsov and Kravtsova** (2010) define children as taking "dual positioning" in

play and symbolic play in terms of developmental ability. • **Kennedy and Barblett** (2010) – Play is identified through some common characteristics such as being voluntary, pleasurable, symbolic (includes different kinds of make-believe), meaningful, active, process oriented, and intrinsically motivating.	play where real and imaginary situations are interrelated. • **Fleer** (2011a) has approached a model of 'conceptual play' where play is seen in imagination within a cultural community. • **Bredikyte** (2010) – Children's play is a creative activity of their cultural expression.

In developmental theory, play is identified as internally driven and is something that the child wishes to do independently (Kennedy & Barblett, 2010; Wood & Attfield, 2005). Commenting on the Piagetian view, Vygotsky (1966) noted that children are not free in whatever way they wish to play, rather "this is an illusory freedom" (p. 17). Piaget discussed three types of play sensorimotor play, symbolic play, and games with rules, whereas Vygotsky mainly focused on imaginative play (Lillard, 2014). Piaget viewed imaginary thinking as unconscious, childish thought, egocentric, and spontaneous, whereas Vygotsky considered imagination to be active, associated with active thought, conscious, and a cultural psychological function (Gajdamaschko, 2005).

According to Piaget (1962), play is deficient in structure and children do play without any logic or conflict; however, it is gradually replaced by adult's logical and realistic thought. Piaget emphasised the schema (framework of the understanding) instead of the reality. He mentioned that when children meet something new that does not fit with their previous schema, a new schema arises to explain the world (Nicolopoulou, 1993). The existing research from the developmental conception of play has focused mainly on stages of play (Parten, 1932, 1933; Smilansky,1968) and emphasised the biological view of play in terms of child development (Bretherton, 1984; Brock, 2009). Parten's (1932) longitudinal study on play explored and utilised various activities, games, and the child's choice of toys to explore the child's age-related social development. According to the developmental theoretical perspective, play is defined as the free, pleasurable, intrinsically motivating, spontaneous, and voluntary activity of young children in which adults have minimal contribution (Burghardt, 2011; Smith, 2007). If we ask the question "what is play?", it is difficult to provide a single definition, as this term has been used broadly in various contexts. One of the basic features of play is "pleasure" but

the pleasure disappears if the player perceives it to be an activity for a purpose other than play. For example, piano playing is not always pleasurable for a person, as it could be hard work (Wittgenstein, 1953, as cited in van Oers, 2013), depending on their intention. Vygotsky (1978) mentioned that sucking a pacifier is a pleasurable free activity for young babies, but this activity may not be acknowledged as play.

Unlike Piaget, Vygotsky (1987) stated that imagination and reality are dialectically related. He suggests that imagination and reality together develop children's early learning. Imagination itself develops from social reality and it is part of the children's cultural experiences (Gajdamaschko, 2005). For example, children gain the experince of the role of the mother from reality and pretend to feed a baby in their imaginary situation. The adult has a great contribution in influencing the development of imagination by providing children with cultural tools that become the content of the children's imaginative activities (Gajdamaschko, 2005). Forgrounding Vygotsky's theoretical perspectives, teachers can confidently use their knowledge, expertise, and technique of engagement to implement play-based pedgaogy "for gradual recontextualising of everyday knowledge into scientific concepts" (Hedges & Cooper, 2018, p. 13). As this study draws upon Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory, the next section presents Vygotsky's cultural-historical view on play.

Cultural-historical view on play:

This section begins with a cultural-historical conception of play, followed by a review of the relevant literature. Vygotsky's conception of play is discussed briefly in this section and then discussed broadly in the theoretical underpinning chapter (Chapter 3).

Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky was the founder of non-classical psychology and establised cultural-historical theory (Kravtsov & Kravtsova, 2010; Robbins, 2010; Veresov, 2010). He was the originator of the concept of psychological development of play (Elkonin, 2005; Karvtsova, 2009), where the view is that social and cultural-historical context cannot be separated from the children's play (Lindqvist, 1995, 2001). Vygotsky did not define play from only physical and cognitive developmental perspectives rather he suggests socio-cultural issue has relation in development of children's play. In his point of view, the imaginary situation is the basic property of play, and it cannot be separated from the concept of play. According to Vygotsky (1966), "Imagination is a new psychological process for the child; it is not present in the consciousness of the very young child, is totally absent in animals, and represents a

specifically human form of conscious activity" (p. 9). Imagination is viewed as a social act in cultural-historical theory rather than an individual formation, which is internally driven (Vygotsky, 2004). In an imaginary situation, the child takes the role of other people from the society, performs their actions, and enters into their characteristic which "is the basic unit of play" (Elkonin, 2005b, p. 13). Vygotsky (1966) stated that children take the adult's role in their imaginary situation for whatever desire they cannot fulfil in their real life, because children have a wish to behave like an adult (such as imitating an adult's way of talking, dressing, etc.). "In play a child is always above his average age, above his daily behavior; in play it is as though he were a head teller than himself" (Vygotsky, 1966, p. 16). Vygotsky (1978) argued that children develop social competency and learn cultural norms and values of the society through play.

Influenced by Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory, play has been discussed and developed in different dimensions among Russian scholars (Elkonin, 1999; Kravtsov & Kravtosova, 2010), and culturally structured by a group of scholars (Berk & Winsler, 1995; Bodrova & Leong, 2006; Göncü et al, 1999; Gaskins et al, 2007; Gaskins & Göncü, 1992; Rogoff, 2003). The scholars have provided a holistic framework of children's play in relation to social context. They have mentioned that play enables children to explore their surroundings, to take roles of other people, to create meaning from their experiences and to develop communication skills (Bateson, 1972; Bruce, 1997, Groos, 1901). Most of the anthropologists view children's play as imitation of adult life; for example, Fortes (1993) states that children's play is a simple and mechanical reproduction of adults' activities. A number of researchers (Elkonin, 2005b; Schwartzman, 1976) have mentioned that children have a need to create pretend situations to deal with a difficult task that they cannot complete in reality. They involve in an imaginary situation to act in roles that they do not have the opportunity to occupy in reality (Elkonin, 2005b; Schwartzman, 1976). According to Schwartzman (1976), most of the anthropologists view play as practice of adults' activities. In her opinion, play is culturally specific and has significant value in children's lives. She suggests the researchers need to focus more on the value of the play and what children learn in play, rather than what can be taught by using play (Schwartzman, 1976). Therefore, it is important to find out how an adult can create a playful learning situation in different cultural contexts and how children's desires for play develop in those situations.

According to Vygotsky (1966, p. 72), play is not the predominant feature, rather it is a "purposeful activity" for preschool children. It was later elaborated by Vygotsky's colleagues,

Leont'ev and Elkonin, who considered play to be a "leading activity" for preschool children (Robert & Donato, 2003, p. 272), which accomplished the interaction between the child and the social environment from one period of life to another (Bodrova, 2008). In here, socio-cultural context is important phenomenon in cultural-historical theory. Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory, or "non-classical psychology" (Kravtsov, 2009) emphasises the cultural aspects of human development and the dialectical relationship between *ontogenesis* (the individual psychological development of the child) and *phylogenesis* (the development of the whole society or historical development of childhood). Thereby, children's play should not be viewed just as a biological phenomenon; rather it should be conceptualised as a cultural expression (Vygotsky, 1998). To elaborate play from the non–classical psychological point of view, Kravtsova (2009) focuses on a child's positioning within the play. She argues that classical psychology does not answer four questions in relation to play that require further attention. These are:

- how to play or use play to prepare children for school education,
- how to use play as an auxiliary tool,
- how to turn play from leading activity to learning activity, and
- what is the difference between play and non-play (Kravtsova, 2014, pp. 21–22)

Through these above questions, Kravtosva (2014) wanted to focus mainly on how play can be used as a cultural tool to establish a learning activity. Adult mediate the play to support children's learning and development (Karpov, 2005). To define play from the cultural-historical perspective, one should consider the adult's involvement in the play rather than just a child's individual creative approach (Elkonin, 1978). By setting up the play activity, choosing toys and props, and encouraging children to be involved in play, adults are indirectly involved in the play. On the other hand, taking an active play partner role and developing the play together with the children is direct involvement of adults in the play (Bodrova, 2008). Cultural-historical researchers' believe that adults' direct involvement in play as a play partner increases the maturity and complexity of the play (Bodrova, 2008). Bodrova (2008) states that:

> In the Vygotskian paradigm, play has a unique place in a child's development. Play is not something that all children develop spontaneously. It is learned through interactions with others in a social context. For play to promote the development of cognitive abilities and self-regulation, adults must plan for interactions that are most beneficial and relevant to the child's age and level of play. (p. 172)

Adopting Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory, many researchers argue that it is important not only to focus on the relationship between the individual child's conceptual development and social interaction in play, but also to consider the socio-cultural contexts (Kim, 2014; Zacharos, Antonopoulos & Ravanis, 2011). They argue that children's early conceptual learning can occur with adult assistance through play (Kravtsov & Kravtsova, 2010), but the way of learning can be different from culture to culture (Kudryavtsev, 2011). From a Vygotskian perspective, the child is able to develop his or her conscious understanding about the adult's role through imaginative play situations, for example, taking care of patients as a doctor or feeding a baby as a mother. According to Karpov (2005), being a social person, a child brings social roles and relations that are culturally determined into his/her imaginative play from the real world. Cultural-historical theory discusses the origin and the trajectory of the development of play with consideration of the children's relations to their cultural-historical environment. The key concepts of Vygotsky's theory will be explained and discussed further in Chapter 3.

In non-classical psychology, a player takes two positions deliberately or consciously. Kravtsov and Kravtsova (2010) suggest that a player can be "in the situation" and "above the situation" at the same time (p. 29). These two situations allow a person to realise the imaginary situation. For example, if a child takes the mother's role and pretends to feed a baby, then he/she is inside the play. At the same time, when a child instructs someone how to cuddle or feed a baby, then he/she is outside of the play. These two positions are the main feature in cultural-historical play. Children borrow the object from the real world and change the meaning to support their play, for example, they use an ordinary water bottle as a milk bottle for the baby. However, initially they need an adult's help to change the meaning of the object, and later they will be able to change the meaning of the object by themselves (Kravtsov & Kravtsova, 2010). "The meaning of things and actions with them begins to depend not on real perception, but form the intent that is initially suggested by an adult and after that is constructed by the child independently" (Kravtsov & Kravtsova, 2010, p. 24). In play, the player takes an active role as a player and represent the subject as a non player. To illustrate play from the non-classical psychology viewpoint, they proposed a concept of "dual- subjectivity" which is discussed in detail in Chapter 3 and in other publication chapters presented in this thesis.

Overall, the above literature shows how play has been defined and viewed from the diverse theoretical perspective, especially developmental and cultural-historical theoretical perspectives. Researchers have used a number of diverse methodologies, such as naturalistic and laboratory-based studies, to research the nature of play and the structure of play (Fleer,

2013a). At the same time, some researchers consider culture in their methodological approach to studying play in everyday settings (Göncü & Gaskins, 2007). The researchers who adopt the cultural-historical theoretical perspective define play as a culturally determined phenomenon and extrinsically motivating activity for young children (van Oers, 2013), where adults have a key contribution to make in progressing children's learning and development through play. Therefore, it is important to understand play in diverse cultural contexts.

Understanding play in diverse cultural contexts:

Play has been conceptualised with various societal values from different cultural perspectives (Göncü, Jain & Tuermer, 2007). Children's immediate culture and institutions can influence the children's cognitive development through play (Elkonin, 1999). Children develop their cognitive skills through engaging in social communication or being a partner in social play (Göncü et al., 2007). Play is an expression of different cultural norms and values, such as family values, socioeconomic status, and community beliefs (Göncü et al., 2007). Therefore, children's play is a diverse and dynamic process rather than a linear progression of biological development. Göncü, Tuermer, Jain, and Johnson (1999) argued that children's play needs to be seen through socio-cultural contexts instead of considering play as a universal construct. This is in line with the cultural-historical view on play, where children's play is not considered an internally built activity, but rather a culturally and historically formed activity.

According to Bornstein (2007), play is a common childhood activity that is exists in all cultures. Children's play is structured from a cultural perspective, where play pattern, variability of toys, parents' beliefs, and adults' involvement are specific for the particular culture (Göncü et al., 2007; Gaskins et al., 2007). The researchers have demonstrated that using empirical studies on different societies, such as Euro-American society, Kpelle society and 'Yucatec Mayan' society, it was observed that play is valued in different ways. Based on the different cultural contexts, play can be presented in the three dimensions described below (Gaskins et al., 2007):

- Cultivated play (Euro-American society) - play is expected and parents are involved in the play,
- Accepted play (Kpelle society) – play is expected but parents are not involved in the play, and
- Curtailed play (Yucatec Mayan society) - play is not totally expected.

Bronstein (2007) also found that play is the central activity of children's development in many cultures (e.g. Argentine, Chinese, European–American, and Turkish parents). On the other hand, some cultures give less value to children's play and do not see any relation between children's play and learning (e.g. Guatemalan, Indian, Indonesian, Italian, Kenyan, Korean, Mayan, and Mexican caregivers). According to Gaskins et al. (2007, pp. 198-199), some societies consider play is less important because parents believe:

- every day household activities are more important than play,
- children do not need to learn through play because learning through play is not needed or valued in their own culture,
- play might be dangerous for children or others or property,
- children are not allowed to cope with the high demands of play.

Researchers have found that the role of culture is very important for understanding imaginative play, as expression and construction of imaginative play varies across cultures (Farver & Shin, 1997). Imaginative play has been characterised in different cultures using different terms and dimensions, such as pretend play, fantasy play, symbolic play, teasing play, and role play (Burghardt, 2011; Göncü, et al., 2007; Roopnarine, 2011). Göncü et al., (2007) have coined a new form of imaginative play name of "teasing", in which "the behaviors are expected to be interpreted for what they present rather than what they actually denote" (p. 173). A number of empirical studies in Indonesian, Chinese and Irish-American families found engagement in children's imaginative play is determined by the play partner/s (Farver & Wimbarti, 1995; Haight et al., 1999), whereas Japanese and Argentine families' value imaginative play based on interaction patterns (Cote & Bornstein, 2005; Fleer, 2013). Furthermore, researchers have shown caregivers' initiations change the structure of imaginative play and it becomes more complex (Haight et al., 1999). Adult intervention in children's imaginative play is not relatively new in the history of Indian families.

The Indus Valley civilization (3300–1300Bc) exhibit at the national museum in New Delhi displays materials showing how adults made objects for their children to play with and objects children made with adults in their daily life (Chaudhary & Shukla, 2015). Indians adhere closely to social rules and norms and children are expected to follow those rules, in particular, they must respect their elders in their society (Chaudhary, 2004). Children from Indian society adopted those social rules and norms through their play. Older children are encouraged to take care of younger children in their daily activities, where they are expected to take a mentor role

during play. Younger children are also encouraged to respect the older children (Chaudhary & Shukla, 2015). Children learn social relationships, rules, and consequences by expressing themselves freely through play (Klein et al., 2004). The word for play in Hindi is *Khel*. Gupta (2014, p. 61) mentions:

> The word *Khel* encompasses a range of activities, including fun and frolic; games and sports; gambling; participation in fairs and celebrations; dramatization of stories; dance, music, and rhythm; fierce competition of skills and abilities; and so forth-activities that are structured or unstructured, player centered or externally controlled.

To sum up, the above literature shows how different societies value and define play in different ways in relation to adults' involvement. The research also illustrates that parents from diverse cultures have different beliefs in relation to the role of play in children's learning and development. **However, the existing studies do not address how play can be used as a pedagogical tool and what type of strategies adults could use to be involved in play to support children's learning and development**.

Often play is considered to be a universal activity in early childhood education that has contextual limitations as each cultural society has specific play practices (Goncu & Vadeboncieur, 2015). The literature discussed above helped us to understand how play is demonstrated in different cultural contexts. Each culture has different values in relation to play, so play needs to be researched from cultural perspectives rather than considering it only from a universal perspective. Taking the cultural-historical theoretical lens, children's play is not internally built as a universal formation, rather it is a culturally and historically formed activity. To understand children's play practice in the family home context, it is important to understand how children's play is valued, introduced, and structured in individual families and in individual communities. Due to global economic and political issues, every year a large numbers of people migrate to different countries for work and study. The literature shows that a large number of studies have observed children from Western countries and immigrant parents in Western societies; however, **fewer studies have considered participants from non-Western communities (Goncu & Vadeboncieur, 2015; Schwartzman, 1976).** This issue will be elaborated further in the section "Parental support in children's learning and development through play in the home context" in this chapter.

Extensive interest on children's play has been appeared not only by educational researchers but also policy makers and a range of practitioners. One of the fundamental requirements in early

childhood education policy and practices is to encourage inclined play for children's learning and development (Wood, 2009) through their everyday participation in different settings (Hedegaard & Fleer, 2013). The policy makers and researchers from diverse countries have focused more on establishing a play-based learning approach in early childhood education. The next section presents how the play-based learning approach has been framed in policy and practice across different countries.

Policy and practices on play-based learning: A global perspective

In Western pedagogy, play is considered to be central to children's learning (Fein, 1999). Many of the Western early childhood pedagogies advocate setting a play-based approach, and child-centred beliefs for supporting children's learning and development (Wood & Hedges, 2016). A school of scholars, such as Plato, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Comenius, and Forebel, viewed play as a natural form of children's healthy development and as a freely chosen child-initiated activity where adults have less intervention (Grieshaber, 2016). They argued that children are able to initiate their own ideas and adults should give them the freedom to make their own decisions without intervention (Cleverley & Phillip, 1987). They suggested adults need to integrate learning into children's play without any active participation (Cleverley & Phillip, 1987). Influenced by developmental psychologists, in the twentieth century, a number of scholars advocated that play is children's self-activity and can stimulate children's learning without adult contribution (DeLoache & Brown, 1987; Dewey, 1938; Hutt, Tyler, Hutt & Christopherson, 1989; Sylva, Bruner & Genova, 1976 as cited in Hedges, 2014).

According to the developmental theoretical view, children's development takes a universal path, with children's development happening at specific ages. Schwartzman (1979) critiqued that most of the ethnographic studies viewed an innate desire to play as a universal characteristic of children. In the original version of Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP), which was published by Bredekamp and Copple in 1997, they state that play is a free pleasurable child-centered activity where adults have a non-directive and facilitative role. This early version of DAP was criticised for ignoring the cultural value of play for children's learning and development (Krogh & Slentz, 2001; Waisk, Bond & Hindman, 2002, as cited in Wood, 2009). Fleer (2011a) critiques that if play is defined as a child-centred activity and is internally driven, it is difficult to discuss play in relation to collective construction and role of adults. The revised version of Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) positions play as a highly valuable developmental activity for children's

learning. The DAP (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) also incorporated socio-cultural influences on children's learning and development, and a focus on combining children's self-initiated play and adult-directed activities in the pedagogical practice of early childhood education. The new version also emphasises that adults should take a pro-active role, such as curriculum planning, resourcing, listening, observing, and documenting the children's learning journey to accommodate play-based pedagogy in early childhood settings (Wood, 2009). **Wood (2009) points out some significant questions that need to addressed in ECE research when she asks "what roles (if any) teachers, and other adults should take in children's play; whether play can (should) be used for educational purposes; whose purpose and intentions are paramount; and what are the modes, intentions and outcomes of adult intervention?" (pp. 166–167).**

More recent anthropological work suggests that play needs to be considered to be a culturally constructed activity (Gaskins et al., 2007; Schwartzman, 1979). Cultural-historical research states that children's development depends on their own cultural and historical contexts. Instead of measuring children's development in a universal way, the cultural-historical researcher considers it from socio-cultural aspects (Fleer, 2010). For example, Kpelle parents, an ethnic group from the African country Liberia, place less value on play as a medium for learning and development of children (Gaskin, Haight & Lancy, 2007). These parents believe that play is a free pleasurable activity that keeps children healthy and play should not be mixed with learning. On the other hand, parents of European heritage consider play to be a primary component of learning (Lancy, 2007); for example, Dutch mothers believe play has great value for children's social and cognitive development (Van der Kooij & Slaats-van den Hurk, 1991). Asian parents (Parmar, Harkness, & Super, 2004) and teachers (Adams & Fleer, 2016) try to establish a more academic structural learning environment at home and preschool.

There is an educational debate about the goal of play, whether play is "inventive self-expression" of the needs and interest of children or an "interpretive internalization of cultural meaning" (Gaskins, 2014, p. 36). Different societies have different structures in relation to play. In some societies, children live in a nuclear family and parents often send children to long daycare and preschool, while in other societies, children spend the majority of their time in larger and more complex extended families. There is a significant difference between cultures in terms of playmates, play materials, supervision and integrated play in work (Gaskins, 2014). For example, there is a norm in Euro–American society that children needed to be supervised in outside play, whereas Turkish children are free to play outside without any supervision

(Göncü et al., 2007). Therefore, to understand how play supports children's development and learning, researchers need to consider the various cultural influences on play. Therefore, further research needs to focus on the cultural implications of play, and understand pedagogical practice of adults in homes, community, and educational settings.

A number of play scholars from Western societies have indicated some concern that play is becoming less valued in children's lives because of an increasing focus on the implementation of structured learning activities for young children (Elkind, 2007; Gray, 2013). They have argued that children's play is in decline and structural learning is pushing children to spend less time enjoying unstructured play. For example, Adams and Fleer (2016) found in their empirical study that teachers from a Malaysian international school, which is based on the UK curriculum, placed importance on academic-structured learning, and parents were encouraged by teachers to support their children to participate in more structured learning at home. The results showed how parents changed their beliefs and practices from "push down curriculum" to "push up curriculum" for aligning home and school practices (Adams & Fleer, 2016). I argue that, as different countries have different philosophies and cultural beliefs in relation to play, these two perspectives ("push down curriculum" and "push up curriculum") are causing confusion as to how to integrate play into children's learning and development in early childhood education.

By the 1930s and 1940s, children's academic learning through play had become an important issue in contemporary early childhood education (Bennett, Wood & Roger, 1997). Play-based learning has been conceptualised differently across countries, as reported by researchers from Chile, Hong Kong, China, Japan, New Zealand, Australia, Sweden and the USA (Pramling-Samuelsson & Fleer, 2009). A global announcement from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (adopted 1989, as cited in Grieshaber, 2016) resulted in changes in the curriculum documents of many countries and encouraged policy makers to give rights to children to be involved in play and participate actively in any matters affecting their lives (Grieshaber, 2016). The changing social, political, economic, and cultural contexts of many countries are emphasising a change in government policy to place play in children's early learning, give children free space to take initiatives and suggest that teachers deliberately include learning in children's play. In some countries, learning is viewed as something planned and initiated by teachers, but elsewhere, such as France and the USA, play is considered an activity initiated by children. In the curriculum of Scandinavian countries, such as Norway, Sweden and Denmark, play is foregrounded in children's learning (Ødegaard, 2016). These

countries have different frameworks but they share much common view on holistic pedagogical approach to play and learning (Ødegaard, 2016). Teachers are expected to consciously use play to promote children's learning and development (Fleer, 2013a, p. 194). The framework emphasize that learning could be better through play and through teachers' scaffolding. Teachers need to know how to maintain balance between instruction and child initiated activities (Ødegaard, 2016).

France and the USA have adopted a more structured approach to learning, where discipline areas feature topics such as nature and environment, emergent literacy and numeracy, general knowledge, science concepts, and reasoning. Generally speaking, the debate centres on whether curricula should contain only academic learning of discipline knowledge or should include children's autonomy and natural learning strategies, for example, play-based learning. In some curricula, both an "academic approach" and a "comprehensive approach" have been formulated and implemented, causing some confusion (OECD, 2012).

According to Hakkarainen (2008), there exists a dichotomous view about play and learning in early childhood education. For instance, in Finland, on the one hand, local curriculum guidelines acknowledge that play contributes to developing children's imagination and social skills, but on the other hand, play is completely ignored in official Finnish documents of early education (Hakkarainen, 2008). In Sub–Saharan African countries and Arabian countries, it is also challenging for early childhood professionals and educators to distinguish play pedagogy from formal education (Baker, 2014; Garcia, Pence & Evans, 2008). Whereas, the South African National Curriculum Statement focuses on children's rights and opportunities to learn through play in a nurturing environment (Garcia et al., 2008). However, in practice, the scenario is very different. A more formal learning program features, but with approaches adopted from Western ideologies (Ng'asike, 2014).

Most of the researchers theorised play on the basis of studies of Western children and few studies have been done on non-Western children's play (Schwartzman, 1976). The researchers in non-Western countries have discussed different types of play in Indian, Thai and Vietnamese societal contexts (Brewster, 1951; Haas, 1957; Mistry, 1959); however, less research has focused on how play is acknowledged in Asian countries, how Asian pedagogy draws upon Western pedagogy, and how play is addressed in their curriculum documents. Asian early childhood pedagogical reforms have included Western pedagogical ideology such as child-initiated activities, learning through play, and enquiry–based learning features (Government of

China, Ministry of Education, 2001; Grieshaber, 2016); for example, play is considered to be an important tool for facilitating children's learning in Singapore, India, Japan, Korea, and the People's Republic of China. However, these countries have their own heritage and traditional philosophy for early childhood education. For example, the Ministry of Education (2012) in Singapore identifies six principles to guide teachers in teaching learning in preschool and emphasises that teachers should engage children in learning through purposeful play (as cited in Grieshaber, 2016).

The national curriculum of most of the Asian countries highlights the importance of play for children's early learning (see Grieshaber, 2016). While these countries' education systems were established by the British education system (Grieshaber, 2016), at the same time, they are heavily influenced by local cultural-historical traditions of Confucian philosophy. Confucian philosophy separates play from learning and believes that play can disturb children's formal learning (Ho, 2015). Therefore, traditionally, the value of play in children's learning and development is neglected in Asian societies (Grieshaber, 2016). For example, parents and teachers from Taiwan believe good grades come from hard work, while play is useless to them (Chang, 2015). They do not believe that play could be a vehicle for children's academic learning, rather they tend to believe that only goal-oriented activities can be counted as learning. In traditional Taiwanese society, imaginative or pretend play is never considered to be a medium of learning (Kim, 2007). However, influenced by the Western pedagogical approach of play-based learning, a new curriculum was announced by the Ministry of Education in Taiwan in 2012, where play is valued as a way for children to learn, and educators are encouraged to work with children within a play-based curriculum. In empirical research, Chang (2015) found that only a few Taiwanese training centres listed a course on play as a required part of the curriculum, whereas the value of play in children's learning is accepted globally. Teachers are in tension between setting up a play-oriented learning as emphasised by the recent curriculum and fulfilling the demands of parents to teach academic learning. Similar to Chang (2015), Chaudhary and Shukla (2015) found in their study that Indian parents place less value on play than children's academic learning. Indian parents believe play is a pleasurable, universal, ongoing everyday activity for children and formal education can only be achieved from academic learning in school. In Hong Kong, parents and teachers traditionally believe that play is not helpful for children's learning and it creates an obstacle to academic achievement (Ho, 2015).

In contrast, integrating play into children's early learning and development is highly valued in Japanese society and the education system. Japanese teachers and parents intentionally promote children's social skills through play (Izumi-Tylor & Ito, 2015). They believe children learn empathy while developing social skills through playing with others. The picture of Japanese societal values in relation to play is different to that of Taiwan, Hong Kong, and India. Apart from the study of Japan, there are only three other studies that clearly show even though the curriculum of these countries emphasis to include play in learning; parents, teachers and the society is holding their traditional view that play is useless for children's learning. Therefore, the idea of placing play in the curriculum created a tension in many Asian countries.

According to Gupta (2014), the teachers do not have a clear vision about how to implement a play-based pedagogy in the Asian early childhood education system. It is challenging for practitioners in India, China, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and Maldives to maintain a balance between children–centred pedagogy and adult–centred pedagogy in relation to play in their formal settings, where the education system of those countries traditionally used a teacher-directed approach (Gupta, 2014). Gupta (2014) undertook empirical research in Goa, which is a small state on the western coast of central India. She visited a small play school where the program was in line with play-based pedagogy, in which the teacher needs to set up play activities in the traditional classroom. Gupta (2014) found that teachers were facing challenges in promoting a play-based learning approach, which has been encouraged due to the influence of globalisation. In India, the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) policy has focused attention on the provision of care, nourishment, health, and play for children between birth and six years (Chaudhary & Shukla, 2015). A country with a large population of young children, it is challenging for the government in India to implement play-based learning by facilitating access to resources. The government is investing more money in establishing a healthy environment for children (Centre for Early Childhood Education and Development, CECED, 2013), which means a lot more work is needed to establish play-based learning in India (Chaudhary & Shukla, 2015). Gupta (2011, 2013) noted a series of challenges involved with implementing a play-based pedagogy in an Indian preschool. Such challenges included inadequate space, inadequate classroom resources, and inadequately trained teachers. Therefore, skillful, knowledgeable teachers are needed to create playful learning environments (Hedges, 2014).

In other parts of the world, countries like Australia and New Zealand value play as the most important vehicle for early learning (Pramling-Samuelsson & Fleer, 2009). For example, in

Australia and New Zealand, play-based pedagogy is the most common recommended approach (DEEWR, 2009; Ministry of Education NZ, 1996), even though it is challenging for educators to place play centrally because of the complexity and diversity of early childhood practices. In the UK, early childhood frameworks position play as "essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems, and relate to others" (Department for Education, UK, 2014, p. 9). It is suggested that adults should take the initiative to plan for "purposeful play" and maintain a balance between "adult-led and child-initiated activity" (Department for Education, UK, 2014, p 9). The framework in England states the role of teachers is as below:

- planning and resourcing to create learning environments through play,
- supporting children's learning through planned play activity,
- extending and supporting children's spontaneous play,
- extending and developing children's language and communication in play,
- assessing children's learning through play,
- ensuring continuity and progression,
- combining adult-directed and child-initiated activities (Department for Education, UK, 2014)

The Early Childhood Education (ECE) policy frameworks in Australia, England, and in many other countries embed play-based pedagogy without articulating the links among play, learning, and teaching, which has been subject to critique (Wood & Hedges, 2016). The approaches of 'free play' and 'educational play' are both situated parallel in these frameworks, which creates many tensions around the concepts of play-based learning, curriculum, and pedagogy (Wood, 2013). **However, the frameworks of both Australia and England do not specifically address what type of role teachers should take in children's play for supporting their learning and development.**

This study has been conducted in Australian preschool and home contexts, so it is important to understand how play, pedagogy, children's perspectives, and the teacher's role have been addressed in the national curriculum of Australia. According to the framework, children are unique in terms of culture, languages, traditions, histories, child-rearing practices and lifestyle choices of families (DEEWR, 2009). The curriculum of Australia emphasises that teachers need to "respect and work with each child's unique qualities and abilities" (DEEWR, 2009, p. 10). It is required in the framework is that the teachers need to supervise children at all times

to maintain their safety and wellbeing and should not be distracted by involvement in children's play (DEEWR, 2009). Also, to maintain the teacher–children ratio, teachers are always in movement between supervision and participation of children's play. It clearly limits their role to being one of a passive onlooker with no effective engagement (Ridgway & Quinones, 2012). Teachers are in tension between understanding the process of being involved in play-based learning and maintaining the safety of the children (Leggett & Newman, 2017). The framework emphasises observation and facilitation of children's play, which reflects the strong influence of Piagetian ideas of children initiating their own play (Leggett & Newman, 2017). The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) (DEEWR, 2009) emphasises maintaining a combination of child-initiated play, adult-directed play and intentional teaching. For example, in the framework (DEEWR, 2009), play and intentional teaching are both listed as pedagogical practices employed by early childhood teachers to "promote children's learning" (p. 4) (as cited in Thomas, Warren, & de Vries, 2011). The framework signals to promote a program in relation to children's interests, while at the same time introducing outcomes to frame teaching practice (DEEWR, 2009). Fleer (2010) also identifies this contradiction in early childhood education between the natural context of play and the structural context in teaching. Because of this contradiction, teachers may feel pressure to plan play-based pedagogy to develop children's conceptual understanding for later school success (Fleer, 2011a).

Some researchers have highlighted the tensions that arise when the policy includes play in the structural learning and state the importance of its educative role in different countries, such as the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong and China (Fleer, 2011a; Fung & Cheng, 2012; Hedges, 2014; Vong, 2012; Wood, 2013). Van Oers (2013) states that:

> A play based curriculum is not to be conceived as a curriculum that allows children to play now and then, but as a curriculum that basically takes playfully formatted cultural activities as contexts for learning. (p. 24)

The researchers have argued there is a tension for early childhood teachers because they are unsure about how to intentionally introduce academic content into play (Grieshaber, 2017; Hedges, 2014; Leggett & Newman, 2017; Rogers, 2011; Wood, 2013), how to move fluidly between child-initiated and teacher-initiated play (Grieshaber, 2017), and how much to be involved in children's play to facilitate learning. Information on the reports, policies, and curricula of various countries have been presented in this section, and it is evident that there is a diversity of views about the place and approach of play in early childhood education globally.

The polices emphasise that teachers need to balance free play and adult-directed play in early childhood settings. However, none of the existing policies elaborate on the issue of how to involve and in what ways teachers should be involved in children's play for supporting their learning and development. In this study, I aim to address this gap in the study to help adults to contribute more effectively to play-based learning.

The literature review shows that Asian countries have developed their play-based curriculum based on the Western curriculum but blended with their traditional teaching practices, values and local contexts. Teachers from different countries work conceptually and contextually to establish a local curriculum by following guidelines of the national framework that take into consideration cultural and local contexts. For example, in Australia, the framework guides teachers as to how they can implement play-based learning through consideration of local contexts and own traditional values (DEEWR, 2009). The image of the child in the Australian framework is a competent and confident active participant and decision maker in his/her own learning and play environment (DEEWR, 2009). Teachers deliver the play-based curriculum by considering the children's perspectives. On the other hand, immigrant parents establish their pedagogical practice at home, which is influenced by their cultural values and their children's choices and interests (Li, 2012). The influence of children's perspectives on adults' involvement in play for supporting their learning and development is a less-explored area. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate:

- the ways preschool teachers and Indian immigrant parents in Australia involve themselves in Indian-Australian children's play, and
- the values of these teachers and parents in terms of involvement in play to support children's learning and development in their local contexts (preschool and home).

The next section presents literature on how children's learning and development through play have been investigated by early childhood education researchers across different countries.

Research trends in children's learning and development through play:

A plethora of early childhood researchers around the globe have focused on adult–child collaboration, conversation, interaction, involvement, adult support, and adult guidance when studying children's learning and development through play. Most of the researchers (Alcock, 2010; Björklund, 2010; Degotardi, 2010; Gjems, 2010; Gjems, 2011; Hakkarainen, Bredikyte, Jakkula & Munter, 2013; Hallam, Gupta & Lee, 2011; Robson, 2010; Robson & Rowe, 2012)

state in their work that children's early mathematics, numeracy, art, literacy, writing skills, and cognitive development depends on learning through play, where interaction is an important phenomenon. They mainly emphasise collaboration, interaction, and conversational patterns for promoting children's learning and development through play.

According to Degotardi's (2010) investigation, interaction between teacher and children happens during play more often than during everyday conversations in the early learning setting. To develop logical and mathematical understandings, the research suggests that communication and dialogical interactional patterns are essential in the preschool context (Hallam, Gupta & Lee, 2011; Robson, 2010). However, Hallam et al. (2011) suggest that it is important to maintain a balance between a teaching position and giving children free space in play to develop their own skills. Adding to the debate, Robson and Rowe (2012) highlight that children are more interested in interacting with peers than adults to support high levels of thinking. In their study, they found that creative thinking took place more often during child-initiated play compared with adult-initiated activity (Robson & Rowe, 2012). Gjems (2010, 2011) found that, traditionally, teachers are more comfortable with observing children in free play settings, or in setting up programs where free play means that children have the freedom to play without any intervention or interactions with adults. In contrast, some researchers found that children's learning and development depend upon adult–child interactions and adult participation through guided play (Pramling Samuelsson, 2004; Pramling Samuelsson & Carlsson, 2008). The researchers have found teacher–children interaction in both spontaneous and planned activities are very low level in Norwegian Kindergartens (Ødegaard, 2016). The teachers offer time and space to children for self-organised play and seldom intervene inside the play (Grindheim & Ødegaard, 2013). In Norwegian kindergarten, carrying out the everyday routines is the most important responsibility of the teachers. Ødegaard (2016) proposed teachers should have knowledge about the global ideas and the local traditions to implement effective learning opportunities through play. Grindheim and Ødegaard (2013, p. 6) argue the "play opportunities must be planned for through interactions with children by well-informed and sensitive adults" in Scandinavia. Extensive literature mainly focused on interactions pattern of teachers for supporting children's learning and development, **however, none of the researchers investigated adults' role or position in play for promoting children's early learning and development.**

A large number of articles that have been published on the topic of curriculum, pedagogy, and program planning for supporting children's learning and development through play showed

that teachers are conscious about their pedagogical goals and program planning and give importance to interaction in play to improve children's conceptual understanding (Ghirotto & Mazzoni, 2013; Howard, Miles & Rees-Davies, 2012; Wood, 2009). Howard et al. (2012) argue that teachers in their study were more likely to dedicate their time to structured learning activities and spend less time involved in children's free play. They suggest that there should be a balance between teachers' role as a play partner and the successful co-construction of the play-based curriculum. Teachers need to have a clear understanding about their role to facilitate children's learning and development through a play-based curriculum (Ghirotto & Mazzoni, 2013). Overall, the existing studies emphasise the balancing act between teachers' involvement in children's play and providing freedom to children to experience their own directed play. **However, these studies do not show what type of strategies teachers could use and the most effective ways for teachers to maintain a successful balancing act between children's free play and teacher–initiated play in a preschool setting.**

Developing understanding about discipline-based concepts through play is another key area that emerged in early childhood research. Björklund and Pramling (2014) argue that young children's early conceptual development in mathematics through play at preschool has a great impact on their future school success. Understanding different concepts such as science, numbers, letters, and spatial concepts (in, out, under, up, and down) in children's early years through play can provide a solid base for advanced mathematics, literacy, numeracy, reading skills, thinking skills, and writing skills for later school success (Bulunuz, 2013; Neumann, Hood, Ford & Neumann, 2013). Bulunuz (2013) found that those children who are taught science through play at preschool have a greater understanding of science concepts compared with those children who are taught science through direct instruction. In another article in relation to scientific learning through play, Mclnnes, Howard, Crowley and Miles (2013a) show different perspectives, and argue that, traditionally, early childhood teachers define play in their teaching practice and think young children are unable to learn science during the preschool period. Teachers have limited knowledge about what content to teach and how frequently to teach science concepts in preschool settings. On the other hand, Fleer (2010, p. 49) found in her empirical study that if the teacher has an understanding about "contextual intersubjectivity" she/he can conceptually engage preschoolers in play in order to explore scientific concepts. Instead of establishing content-based activities and providing resources in play without considering children's interests, teachers need to conceptually engage in children's play before children generate their own imaginary situation (Devi, Fleer & Li, 2018;

Fleer, 2010). Fleer (2010, 2011a) proposed a "conceptual play" model to explain how the teacher could conceptually and contextually engage in play to introduce new concepts to children. This model is discussed in detail in the following chapter.

Recent research supports the view that "play can provide a valuable medium for children to learn content knowledge, particularly when knowledgeable and skilful adults create and utilise opportunities to interweave play and content learning" (Hedges, 2014, p. 192). To resolve pedagogical tensions to integrate play and content knowledge, Hedges (2014) has developed a pedagogical strategy drawing upon three concepts, which are presented below, and which teachers could utilise in their pedagogical practice.

i) Funds of knowledge and links to content knowledge. Originally this concept came from Moll's (2000) study that was designed to explore the literacy practices of Bilingual Mexican-Latino communities in their everyday household activities (as cited in Hedges, 2014). Hedges (2014) utilised this concept to explain how children gather funds of knowledge from family and community from their everyday activities. If teachers are familiar with the children's cultural knowledge, they could set up the activities and provide resources that reflect the children's home context, and teachers will be able to include content knowledge in children's play. To do that, teachers could mediate between home and centre settings and invite families to share culturally relevant knowledge that includes content knowledge.

ii) Pedagogical content knowledge. Originally this concept came from Shulman's (1987) study that was used to understand the teachers' interactions to recognise the complexity of play-based learning (as cited in Hedges, 2014). Hedges (2014) argued that teachers have subject knowledge but how and what are the ways to use this knowledge that young children can understand need special skill. A skillful teacher need to first understand the children's prior knowledge and experiences to utilise his/her own subject knowledge in play-based curricula. Hedages (2014) explained that a skillful teacher will develop a range of pedagogical techniques to maximise children's knowledge building that is pedagogically appropriate.

iii) Playful and integrated pedagogy. Originally this concept came from the studies of Wood (2010), and Brodhead and Burt (2012), who indicated that teachers should be actively involved in children's play to mediate content learning rather than teach didactically. Later, Hedges (2014) utilised this concept to argue that content

learning can only be achieved if teachers deeply engage to prepare the environment with the curricular resources, and pedagogically mediate child-initiated play.

Hedges (2014) argued that these three concepts (funds of knowledge; pedagogical content knowledge; and playful, integrated pedagogies) together could enable teachers to take an active role in children's content learning through play. For an example, a child learns the process of gardening through observation and participation in his/her everyday family activity (funds of knowledge) and reflects this experience through imaginative play. A skillful teacher might not only provide appropriate tools for gardening but also develop the child's subject knowledge (pedagogical content knowledge) of mathematics and science through weighting and measuring items and providing scientific information about how a plant grows. To do that, a teacher might need to mediate in children's imaginative play as an active player (playful and integrated pedagogy).

Furthermore, some studies (Edwards, 2013; Fleer, 2014a; Lindahl & Folkesson, 2012; Verenikina & Kervin, 2011) have emphasised the importance of technology in children's play-based learning. They argue that a bridge between pedagogical understanding of play and young children's experience with digital technologies would support teachers in engaging children in a range of critical thinking for conceptual understanding (Edwards, 2013; Fleer, 2014a; Lindahl & Folkesson, 2012). Verenikina, Herrington, Peterson, and Mantei (2010) have argue that there is a strong commercial push in educational software to enhance children' literacy and numeracy skills that often equates play with fun only but dismisses the possibility of developing children's imagination and cognitive skills. They suggest that games where children have the facility to explore the environment in imaginative ways should be introduced. According to Stephen and Plowman (2014), digital play can provide opportunities for entertainment, fun, and learning experiences for children, but it depends on how adults provide support in the play episode**. However, there is little literature that shows less literature has shown how adults should support digital play and what types of roles adults should take to enhance children's learning through digital play.**

A group of researchers also found outdoor spaces are rich with a variety of elements and learning spaces (Canning, 2010; Klaar & Öhman, 2014; Waters & Maynard, 2010). Outdoor environments provide a great play-based platform for children to develop conceptual understanding through imagination, creativity, interaction, and building relationships with peers and teachers (Canning, 2010; Klaar & Öhman, 2014; Waters & Maynard, 2010). The

studies mentioned above mainly focus on the importance of adults' interaction with children and how to structure different learning activities to support children's learning and development during play. **However, they do not focus on how teachers could be involved and take pedagogical roles in children's play to support their learning and development in diverse activity settings (indoors or outdoors)**.

According to cultural-historical methodology, children's play-based learning and development are highly integrated with their everyday practices across home and preschool settings. It is very important to study adults' support and their perspectives to understand the pedagogical practices of these two institutions. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to study parents' and teachers' support in children's learning and development through play in two settings (home and preschool), which is a contemporary research focus of psychological and pedagogical researchers in early childhood education.

The following sections present information on research into parents' and teachers' support in play-based learning in two settings (home and preschool).

Parental support in children's learning and development through play in the home context

Western early childhood education research has been focusing more on pedagogy, teacher-child interaction, and children's mathematics and science learning in the preschool context (Andersson & Gullberg, 2014; Blake & Howitt, 2012; Howitt, 2011; Howitt, Lewis & Upson, 2011) and less in the family context. I have found very few studies have been done on non-Western family context in the topic of play and pedagogy. According to Brooker (2010), "research on the pedagogy of play, since the 1970s, has moved from the laboratory into the classroom, and from the classroom into the family and community" (p. 52). Research from the cultural-historical perspective has taken steps to study children in the home context. The researchers argue that play emerged because of changing societal needs and is considered a highly culturally situated activity from the cultural-historical theoretical perspective (Elkonin, 2005; Göncü et al., 2007; Roopnarine, 2015). Hedegaard and Fleer (2008) strongly advocate that a child's development needs to be understood across different institutional practices, norms, and values, where society and culture are not separate entities from these institutes. According to Bugental and Johnston (2000), the parent has the primary role in shaping children's cognition where parents' beliefs and values with regard to engaging in children's

play depends on their cultures. Cote and Bronstein's (2005) empirical study found that parents have diverse specific parenting beliefs that originate from their own culture. Play is a type of activity where parents can socialise their children in order to realise their cultural values and norms through play (Cote & Bornstein, 2009; Tamis-LeMonda, Shannon, Cabrera, & Lamb, 2004). Their study observes pedagogical practices of parents in order to understand their perspectives and roles in children's imaginative play in the home context.

Despite the existing work, research into play and learning in families appears to be less understood across cultures. It is evident, based on the literature survey, that researchers have argued for more emphasis to be placed on understanding home and formal school learning contexts, where society and culture are important phenomena for amplifying conceptual development (Fleer & Hardy, 1993; Fleer & Raban, 2006; Hedegaard, 2002; Robbins, 2005; Vygotsky, 1987). Existing research has established the advantages of family involvement in children's play for supporting holistic development (Bornstein, 1995; Johnson, 2006). Hedegaard and Fleer (2013) found that the family has a significant role to play in children's learning. In-depth research was undertaken by Hedegaard and Fleer (2013) that shows the play practices of Australian and Danish families in the context of everyday life. The researchers found that each family has diverse practices in relation to play, even though they all have a playful attitude. For example, families are different in how the families played with children and how the play is initiated by the parents.

Parmar, Harkness and Super (2004, 2008) conducted research on parents from diverse cultures with regard to the importance of play, learning, and the parental role in early development through interviews with Asian (Korean, Chinese, East Indian, and Pakistani) and European–American families from the United States. Parmar, Harkness, and Super (2004) found that Asian immigrant parents place emphasis on the teaching of academic skills to children and spend more time on pre-academic activities. They buy toys that have some academic value (e.g., toys with letter and numbers). In contrast, Euro–American parents consider play to be a vehicle for children's early development. The researchers have found Asian parents do not support pretend play but they try to engage more in constructive play, and Asian parents take the teacher role instead of taking a playmate role inside the play (Parmar, Harkness, & Super, 2008). Another study undertaken by Fraver, Kim, and Lee (1995) found Korean–American families believe play is pleasurable activity for the relief of boredom and learning happens only through intellectual tasks during the preschool years. The views of the Asian immigrant parents may be a result of migrating from societies where members of the society traditionally value

in early schooling, so they expect their children should be competent in early academic learning rather than spending time in play (Farver et al., 1995; Hao & Fleer, 2016; Parmar et al., 2004). A number of studies have shown the way Australian immigrants from Hong Kong, China, Bangladesh, and Indian support children's learning and development through play (Devi, Fleer & Li, 2016; Hao & Fleer, 2016; Li, 2012; Sikder & Fleer, 2015; Wong & Fleer, 2012). Furthermore, these studies (Devi, Fleer & Li, 2016; Hao & Fleer, 2016; Sikder & Fleer, 2015) show that parents' active involvement in children's play support their everyday learning of science concepts in Bangladeshi, Indian, and Chinese family contexts. The researchers found Hong Kong and Chinese immigrant families in Australia support children's learning and heritage language development in playful family practices (Li, 2012a; Wong & Fleer, 2012).

Some researchers have also studied adults' views on the role of play in children's learning and development. They found that some communities value play for children's learning and development (Colliver, 2016), but some communities do not consider play in the context of academic learning or preparation for school transition (Chang, 2015; Roopnarine, 2015). For example, in non-Western rural communities, parents are less involved in children's play because they think they should not be involved in children's play when children begin to develop peer relationships (Goncu et al., 2007). On the other hand, in Western communities, parents are involved in children's play because they consider play to be an important educational medium (Goncu et al., 2007). For example, Western parents value and participate in children's play, but parents from non-Western countries do not participate in children's play due to their everyday work-load (Bornstein et al., 1999; Bornstein, 2007; Cote & Bornstein, 2005; Gaskin et al., 2007; Goncu et al. 2007). The parents from European and European heritage cultural groups strongly believe that play makes a significant contribution to children's learning and development (Haight, Parke, & Black, 1997; Johnson, 1986; van der Kooij & Slatts–vanden Hurk, 1991, as cited in Roopnarine, 2015). For example, Dutch, Midwestern, European, American, and European-American mothers saw that play activities contributed to children's creativity and intellectual, social, and cognitive development (Haight et al., 1997; Johnson, 1986; van der Kooi & Slaats–van den Hurk, 1991, as cited in Roopnarine, 2015). In contrast, mothers from low–income, Latina, Boston-area low–income and East Indian families viewed play as a pleasurable activity and an incidental to childhood development that has no relation with learning.

The above discussion clearly shows that many researchers have been working in the field of play and its relational aspect with learning in home contexts and have identified the importance

of parents' involvement in children's play-based learning. **The above-mentioned literature also generalises on the issue of parental views about play and the importance of their involvement in the play for developing children's early learning. However, what is missing is a clarification of what views parents hold in relation how to be involved in children's play to support their learning and development.**

This study particularly observes children from Australian-Indian immigrant families, therefore it is important to understand how play is valued and structured in Indian early childhood education system. There is an immense diversity among the large population in Indian in every aspect of life, including religion, language, clothing, food, and family practices (Saraswathi & Dutta, 2010). Children's play during childhood in India is primarily unstructured and informal in childhood, where they use easily available play materials (Chaudhary & Shukla, 2015). The purchase of a variety of play material depends on the socioeconomic situation of families in India. In rural India and most urban low-income families, children have less opportunity to play with commercial toys and equipment; rather, they use natural objects like tree branches, leaves, animals, wood, and sand, etc. Children change the meaning of those objects in their imagination (Chaudhary, 2013). Several researchers (Bhargava, 2010; Chaudhary, 2013; Subhash, 2010) found children's choice of play and play materials depends on the gender of the child, and is influenced by families' values and norms; for example, girls play with dolls, doll houses, cooking utensils, and soft toys, and boys play with cars, guns, blocks, or more mechanical things. Interestingly, whatever children observe in real life they implement in their imagination, which is gender specific. In India, the purpose of parents being involved in children's play is not to extend the play, but rather to feed the child and distracted them with play, teach the child numbers and the alphabet, and encourage the child to engage in social interaction, which is motivated by families' individual everyday practices (Chaudhary, 2013). It was found in number of studies (Sharma, 2000; Tuli & Chaudhary, 2010) that grandparents in India engage in children's play more than parents.

The literature above shows that many studies observed how diverse family values and norms impact on children's play-based learning. This existing literature considers an understanding of the value of play, the role of play, and the resources of play in relation to children's learning and development in the home context. Some studies talk about parents' play participation and interactions with their children; **however, very little research has focused on the parental role in relation to pedagogical positioning inside the play in the home context.**

A number of child development researchers have shifted their focus from observing play modes to examining the nature and quality of interactions between parent and child during the play (Roopnarine & Davidson, 2015). They have found that there is a unique difference in the interactions of mothers and fathers. For example, mothers from European–American families prefer more sedentary activities while fathers engage in more active play (Lamb, 2013). In India, mothers engage more in pee-a-boo-play than fathers (Roopnarine, Talukder, Jain, Joshi & Srivastav, 1990). Parent–child play interaction also varies from one culture to another. For example, mothers from India expressed more socialisation goals in children's play where German mothers involved their children in more autonomous play (Keller, Broke, Chaudhary, Lamm & Kleis, 2010). However, both German and Indian mothers were on the same page in terms of proximal parenting (e.g., face-to-face contact, play with objects) (Keller et al., 2010).

A number of studies focus on examining parenting interaction styles during parent–child play in different cultures. They have found significant differences in the nature and quality of the interactions between parent and children during play. **However, these studies did not address what type of roles and positions parents take while being involved in children's play.**

Teachers' support of children's learning and development through play in the preschool context

A growing consensus in the research on the importance of adults' involvement in children's learning and development through play in formal settings is receiving high attention in the international research community (Andersson & Gullberg, 2014; Blake & Howitt, 2012; Fleer, 2011; Fleer & Peers, 2012; Fleer & Kamaralli, 2017; Hakkarainen et al., 2013; Hedges & Cullen, 2012; Howitt, 2011; Howitt et al., 2011; Leggett & Ford, 2013; Pramling-Samuelsson & Johansson, 2009; Robson & Rowe, 2012; Wood, 2009). Researchers argue that teachers should give support, inspiration, and encouragement to children through interaction and communication to promote the processes children use to make sense of the world (Andersson & Gullberg, 2014; Blake & Howitt, 2012; Hedges & Cooper, 2018, Pramling Samuelsson & Carlsson, 2008; Pramling Samuelsson & Johansson, 2009). Adults need to position themselves alongside children as co-enquirers (Krieg, 2011) to draw a "playful pedagogy" (Broadhead & Burt, 2012; Hedges & Cooper, 2018).

A growing body of researchers who view play from the cultural-historical perspective also argue that teachers need to take an active role (Edwards & Cutter-Mackenzie, 2011; Fleer,

2010; Hedges & Cullen, 2012; Hedges, 2014; Wood, 2013) inside the children's play in order to facilitate their learning and development instead of acting as an observer or supporter from outside of the children's play (Bredikyte, 2011; Devi et al., 2018; Ferholt & Lecusay, 2005; Fleer, 2015; Lindqvist, 1995). A recent shift towards cultural-historical theoretical perspectives has motivated researchers (Fleer, 2010; Fleer & Peers, 2012, Hedges & Cullen, 2012, Hedges & Cooper, 2018, Verenikina, 2008) to think about teachers' mediational approach in play. Fleer and Kamaralli (2017) argue that teachers' active involvement in narrative role play not only develops children's play, but also culturally develops children's learning. **The researchers note the need for further investigation on the pedagogical practice of adults' engagement as a play partner in children's imaginative play.**

In the early twenty-first century, the common focus of researchers and the policy makers are to develop a play-based learning approach (Hedges, 2014). Hedges and Cullen (2005) suggest teachers should have knowledge and skills on how to implement a play-based pedagogy in their practice. Fleer and Peers (2012) argue that educators need to be more active in play, which is the key factor for supporting children's cognitive development for later school success. Siraj-Blatchford (2007) states that the approach of the early childhood teacher is to take a more active teaching role in developing children's cognition, and that this has been missing in early childhood pedagogical practice. Although it is not an easy task for teachers to take an active position in children's play, it is not impossible. Hedges and Cooper (2018) argue that teachers should have professional knowledge of participating with conceptual ideas in children's play to establish play-based pedagogy in their setting. Many current researchers have worked on teacher's engagement in children's play and suggest that the educators need to be an active partner in children's play, but how they will work conceptually remains open for further research (Ridgway & Quinones, 2012). Hedges and Cullen (2005) argue that researchers mainly focus on children's learning and experiences rather than answering the questions of "what kind of conceptual knowledge is appropriate for young children, how to teach it and what knowledge teachers need themselves to support children's learning" (p. 67). Overall, a number of researchers point out that teachers need to engage in children's play using active participatory approaches, and researchers have highlighted the importance of teachers' involvement and interaction in play-based learning. **However, how they should be involved and position themselves in play to support children's learning and development requires further attention.**

The teachers' support and interaction associated with children's learning and development has received extensive attention from early childhood education research over the past few years. The researchers state that early childhood education is currently in theoretical flux and looking for new perspectives and conceptual tools to support teachers' pedagogical practices (Edwards, 2003; Fleer & Richardson, 2004, as cited in Fleer, 2010, p. 40). The researchers are taking steps to introduce pedagogical models to help teachers work conceptually to facilitate children's learning and development through play. For example, Lindqivist's (1995) "Playworld" approach, Siraj-Blatchford's (2007) "sustained shared thinking" approach, Fleer's (2010) "conceptual play" pedagogical model, and Kraavtsov and Kravtsova's (2010) concept of "subject positioning" suggest that teachers take an interactive and active role in play within play-based curriculum and pedagogy to realize the learning potential of children.

According to Lindqvist (2001), adults' engagement in children's play is an important factor. Lindqvist (1995) first introduced the idea of "Playworld" in Swedish preschool classrooms, where the teachers take a role in the play with the children. Lindqvist and her students worked together with 3 to 8-year-old children to create the Playworld. A Playworld is a form of guided pretense where children are supported by adults (Baumer, Ferholt, & Lecusay, 2005). Children understand the complexity of the play structure when adults dramatise roles, and actions and invite the children into the Play world (Lindqvist, 2001). Lindqvist (1995) argues that play is a significant source of development and gives children conscious understanding about everyday contexts. Teachers have a significant role in giving this conscious awareness to children. Grounded by Lindqivist's (1995) "Playworld concept", contemporary research shows the fundamental importance of adults' active involvement in supporting role play (Fleer & Kamaralli, 2017; Hakkarainen et al., 2013).

Inspired by Lindqvist's idea of "Playworld" the Finnish scholar Pentti Hakkarainen (2006, p. 194) designed an educational intervention and terms "narrative learning". To define the narrative in play, the players need to develop shared ideas and create a plot (storyline) together inside the play (Hakkarainen et al., 2014). Hakkarainen et al.'s (2014) empirical experiment shows that the adult was able to develop the play complexity when the adult was within the flow of children's play and took an active position by supporting the children's intentions. On the other hand, the adult missed the opportunity to develop the play's complexity when they were engaged in a questioning approach with a child instead of following the child's intentions and trying to move the child into her/his idea of play. They argue that the adult–child co-construction of joint play moves the child's level of performance forward and develops the

play at a more advanced level. They suggest that the adult needs to take an active role in children's play and be emotionally involved in the play. Therefore, adult's involvement in children's play does not mean only asking questions or taking an authentic position from the children, but rather creating the play-based learning environment together with children by following their intentions. The researchers argue that it is very important to study the perspectives of both adults and children in play-based learning (Pramling Samuelsson & Pramling, 2014; van Oers, 2013).

Fleer (2010, 2011a) proposed a pedagogical model of "conceptual play" (2011a, p. 232) to show the possibility of the teacher taking an active conceptual role by moving in and out of the reality and the imagination. Fleer and Peers (2012) state that teachers' collective movement between visual and imaginary fields together with the children help the children to learn abstract concepts. Fleer and Peers (2012) argue that:

> The teacher should take a more active role in creating and maintaining imaginary situations, and in becoming an active observer children own initiated play in order to encourage children to consciously consider the new meanings they are giving to the objects and actions in their play. (p. 428)

Another study by Singer et al. (2013) emphasises the close physical proximity of Dutch teachers in young children's play. They show that the physical proximity of the teacher has a much stronger impact on play engagement and the quality of interaction with young children. Although sitting close to the children's activity is not an easy task for teachers at all times, they suggest that if the teachers change the pedagogical model from an "individualistic caring-controlling" to a "group dynamic-facilitating" model (Singer et al., 2013, p. 1247), it will be easier for teachers to create a high level of play engagement. They found that when the teacher was involved in small group activities with two-sided interactions rather than giving instructions to young children, the possibility of a high level of play engagement increased. Overall, the study shows that a higher level of play engagement of teachers in children's play is pleasurable for the children and satisfies the teachers' desire to care for and educate young children.

Kravtsov and Kravtsova (2010) also suggest that adults work in a small group of children, apart from the individual work with children in the "Golden Key" program in Russia. Kravtsov and Kravtsova (2010) introduced the concept of "subject positioning" in pair pedagogy where two teachers should work together in the context of children's imaginative play. They established

a program to create a special kind of communication between the teachers, the families, and the children. This special kind of communication is called *Obshchenie* (Kravtsova, 2008, as cited in Fleer, 2010) in Russia. In this kind of communication, two teachers position themselves quite deliberately to be equal with the children when they discuss the play theme together, move above in the play when directing the children, move below the play when receiving direction from the children, and take an independent position when the children and teachers act independently. Both teachers position themselves differently in relation to a particular context (Kravtsova, 2008, as cited in Fleer, 2010). One teacher may play equally with children, and other teacher may play in the under position and receive direction from the children. Kravtsova (2008, as cited in Fleer, 2010) argues this "pair pedagogy" approach broadens the children's zone of proximal development, develops children's learning, and develops the play itself.

Fleer (2015) adopted this concept as the central dimension of play pedagogy in the Australian preschool context. She shows in her paper that teachers are mostly outside of children's play. She found that teachers do not act as play partners in children's play, rather they focus more on learning outcomes. She argues that adults' active involvement in children's play helps to achieve a high level of thinking and development of children. The theoretical research of Kravtsov and Kravtsova (2010) and the empirical research of Fleer (2015) have shown the importance of the teachers' positions in terms of being inside and outside of children's imaginative play. Fleer (2015) has shown that teachers were involved in the imaginative play with children in traditional play-based settings; however, they were mostly outside of the play. The result shows teachers did not take an active play partner role as is suggested in Lindqvist's (1995) "Playworld" settings. The above researchers discussed teachers' positioning, but only considered one setting of the selected focus children. For example, Fleer's (2015) study focused on the teachers' positions in children's play in preschool settings; whereas, Li (2012) focused on home settings to investigate if Chinese immigrant parents' interactive support helped develop preschoolers' bilingual heritage language skills using the concept called "subject positioning".

After undertaking an extensive literature review on the topic of play and pedagogy from Western and non-Western countries, and examining recent trends of research on play-based learning in home and preschool contexts, some significant gaps in the play-based pedagogy were identified,

First, the place of play in the early childhood curriculum in many countries has created significant debate in ECE research. The above literature review shows that the concept of play and its relationship with learning is valued differently depending on local tradition, heritage and culture. Most of the research in relation to play and pedagogy has been conducted in Western countries, with little research examining how play is grounded and accepted in early childhood education in Asian countries. Much less research has been conducted on Asian immigrant families' pedagogical practice in home contexts.

Second, there has been a global tension created in ECE, to integrate play into children's early learning where different cultures have diverse norms, believes, and customs for including play in children's learning or including learning in children's play. For example, the early childhood education curriculum in different countries highlights that teachers need to follow intentional teaching practice to support children's development by creating a play-based learning approach (DEEWR, 2009; Department for Education, UK, 2014); **however, the curriculum does not address the issue of how much and in what ways teachers should involve themselves intentionally in children's play to support their learning and development**. A specific strategy in relation to their local context might help both teachers and parents to contribute more effectively.

Third, a large number of studies examined children's play and its educational value in formal preschool context, but fewer studies examined play in home settings. Also, very few studies observed children's play in both contexts simultaneously, whereas preschool and home both make a significant contribution to children's everyday life. Therefore, as suggested by other researchers (Hedegaard & Fleer, 2013; Hedegaard, 2008; Roopnarine, 2015), **to understand the adults' contribution in the children's early learning through play, the study should consider the diverse pedagogical settings like preschool and home simultaneously.**

Forth, some studies explored adults' beliefs about the importance of play in children's learning and development (Chang, 2015; Cote & Bornstein, 2009; Edwards, 2000; Roopnarine, 2015; Tamis-LeMonda, Katz, & Bornstein, 2002), but **they did not address adults' views in terms of their involvement in children's play.**

Fifth, a large number of studies have been carried out on adults' interaction styles and their level of investment in play-based learning in home and preschool contexts; however, more needs to be known **about positions and roles that adults should take in children's play to support learning and development. More importantly, very little research has been**

conducted to understand the children's perspectives that may influence adults' positions and roles in the play.

As mentioned earlier, the existing research has missed the opportunity to observe teachers' and parents' physical and psychological positioning patterns in two settings (preschool and home) for Indian-Australian focus children. Furthermore, there has been less research focus on Indian immigrant families in Australia.

Therefore, the investigation of this study is unique as it looks into adults' positioning, beliefs and values in the imaginative play carried out in two settings (Australian preschools and Australian-Indian immigrant family homes) simultaneously for same-focus children.

The focus children of this study were selected from Indian immigrant families, which gave us a unique opportunity to observe the impact of Indian immigrant culture in parents' positioning in Australian homes.

Furthermore, in addition to adults' perspectives, the study has taken into consideration children's perspectives in analysing data based on theoretical concepts of "imaginative play" (Vygotsky, 1966), "imagination and reality" (Vygotsky, 2004), Kravtsov's and Kravtsova's (2010) concept of "dual subjectivity", and Hedegaard's (2012) concept of "motives and demands".

Observing Indian-Australian focus children in both settings gave us scope to understand and critically analyse children's perspectives on adults' positioning in a comparative manner. This is especially critical for immigrant families, as immigrant children are significantly influenced by their family's culture in home settings.

Conclusion:

The chapter reviewed the literature on adults' support of children's learning and development through play from diverse settings. Recent research trends, general information, and a brief history of play-based learning was discussed. Most importantly, theoretical and empirical research gaps were identified that indicate a need to investigate the institutional practice of adult support in children's learning and development through play from a cultural-historical theoretical perspective. A cultural-historical theoretical view on play and relevant concepts used in this study are briefly discussed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3 : Theoretical underpinnings

Introduction

As introduced in Chapter 1, this thesis draws upon Vygotsky's cultural-historical theoretical lens to investigate children's learning and development through play in everyday practices. This chapter discusses the theoretical contribution of Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory and theoretical view on play in support of children's learning and development. The cultural-historical theory can be conceptualised as a system of concepts that can be used as a new way to explain children's development. Grounded in cultural-historical theory, this chapter explains the relevant concepts of imagination, reality, object-meaning relationship in imagination, cognition, collaboration, mediation, subject positioning (Kravtsov & Kravtsova, 2010), and collective and individual imagining (Fleer, 2010) in relation to the study reported in this thesis.

Vygotsky's cultural-historical theoretical contribution to the study of child development:

More than seventy years ago in Russia, the Soviet Psychologist, Lev S. Vygotsky (1896–1934), created a robust theory (cultural-historical theory) that is grounded on cultural phenomena. With regard to cognitive development, Vygotsky particularly focused on the interrelationship between the individual and the environment. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries soviet psychology was wrapped up by the ideology of biological development of children rather than children's holistic developmental thinking. Vygotsky (1998) emphasised that child development is not "a single process of self-development" (p. 189). He articulates a theory that focuses on a holistic model of development where psychological, biological, and cultural dimensions are considered for cognitive development (Levykh, 2008). In traditional theory, the child's development is defined as a single process, similar for example, to the development of a single fruit or leaf, but cultural-historical theory considers the development as a whole process of transition from seeds to fruits (Veresov, 2010). Vygotsky critiqued the age–specific maturational view of children's development. He suggests that age can be a marker of children's development (Fleer, 2015); however, he also says "it is not enough to divide a child's development into periods scientifically. We must also consider its dynamics and the dynamics of transitions from one age level to another" (Vygotsky, 1998, p.190).

Vygotsky argued that child development must be viewed as a unity of the material world and the individual's internal mental aspect; that is, a unity of the social and personal aspects (Fleer, 2015). This unity must be experienced in everyday life settings such as the home, preschool, school, and community of children where they take part in day–to–day activities (Hedegaard & Fleer, 2013). According to Vygotsky (1987), the development of the child is a complex dialectical process that begins as a social form of relation through interaction with others and later transfers to the internal and intrapsychological functions. To elaborate on adult–child interaction, Vygotsky introduced the concepts of ZPD, human mediation, and collaboration in cultural-historical theory, which are interlaced with each other and frame the modern pedagogical system for children's learning and development (Fleer, 2010). Cultural-historical theory supports an important non-classical experimental methodology to investigate the development of higher mental functions (Veresov, 2010). According to Veresov (2010), cultural-historical theory should be viewed as an organic system of interrelated concepts, where all the branches, leaves, and flowers of a tree are connected by the roots. The key cultural-historical concepts used in this research are detailed in the following sub-sections.

Higher mental functions:

Cultural-historical theory explains the origins of higher mental functions (Veresov, 2010). According to the cultural-historical theoretical point of view, all higher mental functions are the essence of individual social relationships with others, rather than the history of pure phylogenesis. Vygotsky (1981) argued that many studies mainly focused on the inner aspect and natural process of higher mental functions, whereas he (1981) emphasises the importance of cultural forms of behavior that result from an individual's social interaction with other people. He further argued that there is a fundamental difference between human beings and animals, where the dynamic developmental process of psychological functions results from the individual's interactions in the social and cultural contexts (Minick, 1987). As previously introduced, higher mental functions are a special characteristic of human beings and are absent in animals (Vygotsky, 1997a). The lower mental functions and higher mental functions are different in origin. The lower mental functions are biologically determined, while higher mental functions are socially constructed (Veresov, 2010).

Vygotsky (1997a) determined the specific features of human psychology, especially higher mental functions, in two ways, the first is cultural development for formation of social relationship and the second is maturation of the physiological basis for every psychological

process. Vygotsky (1997a, p. 104) stated, "the history of the individual is especially instructive in the transition from external to internal, from social to individual function". According to Vygotsky's (1981) "general genetic law of genetic development":

> Any function in the child's cultural development appears twice, or on two planes. First it appears on the social plane, and then, on the psychological plane; first it appears between people as an interpsychological category, and then within the child as an intrapsychological category. (p. 163)

The interpsychological category refers to social relations that relate to oneself with others. The development of higher mental functions takes place in the social sphere, and then these higher mental functions become internalised in the child's individual logical sphere.

The earlier naturalistic theories of development described child development as a single biological trait and separated the child from society. Vygotsky (1997a) saw children's development of higher mental functions in a dialectical way, where it has dynamic relations between the external and the internal level instead of a linear and dual developmental style. The essence here lies in Vygotsky's (1997a) comments:

> Every higher mental function was external because it was social before it became an internal, strictly mental function; it was formerly a social relation of two people. (p. 105)

From his point of view, all higher mental functions, such as voluntary attention, logical memory, the concept formation, and the development of volition, appears first on the societal plane and then on the individual plane (Veresov, 2010) within dramatic developmental events. The transfer of higher mental function is experienced in the social plane first and then second in the individual plane, indicating that the child has social relations with adults in his or her surrounding situation. According to Vygotsky (1987), children's development is dynamic changes of social behaviour that are experienced by social interactions with adults. Adults can create an environment for children's development and engage in play as a mediator. Therefore, in order to understand the development of children's higher mental functions, it is important to explain the concept of mediation.

Human mediation:

A group of cultural-historical scholars have been working on Vygotsky's idea of adult and peer mediation in children's play and have shown that adults and peers can make a significant

contribution to children's play to support the development of children's higher mental functions (Bodrova & Leong, 2006; Elkonin, 1978; Karpov, 2005; Kozulin, 2003; Kravtsov & Kravtsova, 2010). The mediation is an important concept in cultural-historical theory, where higher mental function is viewed as a mediated function (Veresov, 2010). According to Vygotsky (1997), humans use tools and signs to develop higher mental functions through contact with their external environment. Vygotsky (1997) stated that signs serve as "psychological tools" in mediating human mental development. For example, human beings use language to interact and communicate with others; this is a "psychological tool" or "sign" that regulates human behavior. Vygotsky (1987) mentioned that "signs have their natural roots and transitional forms in more primitive modes of behavior, in what is referred to as the illusory significance of objects in play and, still earlier, in the indicative gesture" (p. 95). As I understand, it cannot be concluded that all the tools act as signs to support development. For example, a bucket cannot be a "psychological tool" or sign because it is a device that has a relationship with the external world, so it is a *material tool*. Humans use this material tool to complete work, so this is a device for mastering the processes of nature, which is directed outwards (Kozulin, 1988). On the other hand, a sign helps the individual to apply psychological action on behaviour. For example, a storybook can be a "psychological tool" or sign which helps establish higher mental processes (language development, internalising concepts, memorising vocabulary etc.) of the child. In terms of the current study, I aim to explore how parents and teachers act as mediators using material tools (objects) and psychological tools or signs (interaction and communication) to support preschoolers' learning and development through imaginative play.

Kozulin (2003) states that there are two types of mediation: human mediators and symbolic mediators. In the human mediator approach, interaction between adult and child is a key focus when studying children's learning and development in play. In the symbolic mediator approach, the interaction is mediated by psychological (symbolic) tools (Kozulin, 2003). In mediation, observation of human interaction and the use of symbols in different early childhood settings is expected. Vygotsky (1997, p. 85) first used the term "psychological tool" or "sign", which was extended by Bodrova and Leong (1998) to a "cultural tool", to mean something that helps children in learning literacy, numeracy, and mathematics and developing problem-solving skills. Here the psychological (symbolic) tools are culturally determined and vary from culture to culture. Symbolic mediators using different signs, symbols, writing, formulae, and

graphic organisers, are essential for children's cognitive development. Children learn to use symbols in play in two ways:

- Using props and toys (objective sense),
- Interacting with humans (subjective sense).

As the purpose of this study is to explore the role of adults in play in diverse settings, it is important to understand the concept of mediation in order to examine how parents and teachers mediate the child's learning and development in play. To develop children's higher mental functions, the human mediator plays an important role. As an example, children develop the idea of the mathematical concept of 'area' and 'volume' from formal school learning but they build a fundamental knowledge of this specific concept at home or school with the help of adult mediation. Adults can play a mediator role in children's overall cognitive and problem-solving abilities (Fleer, 2010; Kozulin 2003). By receiving adult assistance and imitating adults' roles in the play, children are able to internalise the psychological actions used as tools to form higher mental behaviours. Karpov (2005) states that the child develops new, higher mental processes and motivations during the mediated process between adults and children in the context of social situations during development. Humans use different "cultural tools" or "signs" (language, codes) to mediate their interaction with each other and their surroundings (Moll, 1990). Mediation is considered an instrumental agent to understand the nature of communication between adult and child within the child's zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Karpov, 2005). Working collaboratively with adults, a qualitative change occurs within a child's ZPD (Moll, 1990; Vygotsky, 2004). The adults' mediation in children's play is dependent on the level of the child's ZPD. For example, if a child with learning problems shows a smaller ZPD, the mediating role and positioning of the adults, or more capable partners, will be beyond the borders of the child's ZPD (Li, 2012). The concept of ZPD will be discussed in detail later in this chapter (see page 65).

According to the cultural-historical theory of Vygotsky, children construct their knowledge through their own ideas and surrounding experiences. Therefore, this means that children are active constructors of their knowledge. Children construct their knowledge through observation and participation through a range of experiences they gather from social contexts via family, peers and community. Through social interactions and co-construction of play between children and adults or peers, children make sense of the world. In the cultural-historical theoretical view, children are competent, capable learners and confident constructors

of their own play; they can mediate each other's thinking through peer interactions. However, the adults' mediation is important for establishing learning inside the play. As it has been mentioned in the Australian curriculum framework (DEEWR, 2009, p. 12), "When the educators establish respectful and caring relationships with children and families, they are able to work together to construct curriculum and learning experiences relevant to children in their local context". So, the aim of the study is to explore how adults' (Australian preschool teachers and Indian-Australian immigrant parents) mediating activities develop Indian-Australian immigrant children's conceptual understanding in play in a local context.

According to Vygotsky (1981), the child is a social being first before she or he is considered an individual person. Children's cognitive developmental process should be considered from the aspect of the interpersonal plane (social) to the aspect of the intrapersonal plane (individual). Inspired by Vygotsky's idea of imaginative play and art, Lindqvist (1995) created her aesthetic pedagogy of "Playworld" (see Chapter 2 for detail). In "Playworld", adults and children interact in dramatic play and adults get the opportunity to facilitate the children's learning and development. Hakkarinen and Bredikyte (2011) used the idea of "Playworld" to analyse adults' successful and unsuccessful interventions in children's play. Bredikyte and Hakkarinen (2011) have argued that teacher–child collaborative co-construction of joint play promotes children's learning and develops the teacher's professional skills. Teachers' intervention in children's play gives them the opportunities to understand children's perspectives, to involve themselves emotionally, to share understanding, to develop quality play, and finally, to develop their professional knowledge. In this sense, we cannot omit the importance of adults' intervention in developing children's behaviour and learning, which can be seen as the social plane of psychological functioning. Kozulin (2003) argues that without the teacher's intervention, symbolic tools will be perceived as a simple item rather than a tool (Kozulin, 2003). For instance, a map cannot be a symbolic tool if the educator is not using it purposely in the learning process (Fleer, 2014). In everyday life activity, parents and teachers take children on field trips, such as visiting a farm, a library or a shopping centre, which help children to understand the everyday activities of the society. According to Johnson (1987):

> Teachers can help clarify children's understanding of themes and roles by providing relevant experiences such as field trips, classroom visitations by people in different occupations, and stories about different jobs. Parents, of course, can provide similar experiences for their children (p. 29, as cited in Karpov, 2005, p. 146)

These everyday experiences help to promote children's ability to reproduce the content of the story in play and to scaffold the pretend scenario (Bodrova, 2008). Therefore, adults influence play indirectly by setting up the environment, providing real experiences, providing appropriate props, and encouraging children to play with others (Bodrova & Leong, 2006). Children imitate and explore adults' roles and social relationships in the course of imaginative play. Therefore, the motive of children is "to act like an adult" (Elkonin, 1978, p.150) by engaging in imaginative play. For example, children from Indian families learn how to make a traditional bread, *chapati* (in Hindi language), through observation and participation in everyday family activities; from everyday experience they often recreate that action of preparing the bread in their imaginative play. Children may also learn subject knowledge through imaginative play in a range of settings. For example, they will learn literacy through knowing what ingredients they need to make the bread with and they will learn numeracy by learning how much of the ingredients they need etc. The adult can take an active role in integrating learning into play and developing the complexity of the play. Through active collaborative, engagement of adults could develop children's conceptual understanding, and they could also understand children's interests and learning preferences inside the play (Hedges & Cullen, 2005). Researchers have also found that the more skilled children share their sources of knowledge with their peers (Hedges & Cullen, 2005). Sometimes, other children could mediate each other's thinking by being involved in collaborative play, and their collective involvement increases the possibility of development of the play itself (Hedges & Cullen, 2005). Wertsch and Stone (1985) state that children can be involved in more complex activities if they interact with adults and peers through collaborative interactions. To answer the research questions of this study, I specifically examine adult mediation to understand how adults' involvement inside the imaginative play support children's learning and development.

To further understand the mediating role of adults and peers in children's imaginative play, it is important to understand how imaginative play is defined in cultural-historical theory.

Imaginative play in cultural-historical perspective:

As it has been mentioned earlier, according to cultural-historical theory, imagination is a core content of play and an indication of abstract thinking of young children (Vygotsky, 1966). Children are able to enrich abstract thinking and generalize about objects' meanings through imagination. Imagination is an essential tool for observing children's learning and

development. Children use their imagination to enter into a creative world through play. They bring experiences from their real world and transform these experiences in creative ways.

Children have various desires in different developmental periods. Younger children want to satisfy their desire immediately but the older children satisfy their unrealisable desire by creating an imaginary situation through play (Vygotsky, 1966). Vygotsky stated that a child develops understanding about concepts when he or she plays in an imaginary situation. Grounded in cultural-historical theory, children's learning and development in imaginative play is explored in this study.

Bodrova (2008) states that Vygotsky's definition of play does not include many other activities, such as movement activities, object manipulations and explorations. However, Vygotsky refered to three components in play (Bodrova, 2008):

- Children create an imaginary situation,
- Children take on and act out roles,
- Children follow a set of rules determined by specefic roles.

Role and rules in imaginative play:

Elkonin (2005b) remarks that children's role play develops in relation to society's evolution. He argues that play techniques cannot be formed from an individual's independent perception, but rather it should be borrowed from societal changes. In a traditional view, imagination is an individual activity where children construct an imaginary situation by themselves (Gajdamaschko, 2005; Vygotsky, 2004). Many researchers dispute this perception and claim that in the cultural-historical point of view, imagination is a conscious and external process where social mediation is important, rather than subconscious and internal (Egan, 2005; Egan & Madoc-Jones, 2005; John-Steiner et al., 2010).

In the cultural-historical approach, children create a role in imaginative play and act out the behaviours associated with social rules (Vygotsky, 1978). The imaginative play may be varied on different socio-cultural conditions and change its meaning by the transition from one stage to a higher stage (Elkonin, 2005b). According to Göncü and Gaskin (2007, p. 113), "play is a common childhood activity across cultures, but at the same time play typically expresses concerns that are cultural specific".

Vygotsky (1966) introduces two essential interrelated components: (a) an imaginary situation and (b) rules constructed in an imaginary situation. If the children pretend to be a 'mother' or 'father', they have to grasp the rules of maternal and paternal behaviour (Nicolopoulou, 1993). Vygotsky (1966, p.10) states that "wherever there is an imaginary situation in play there are rules"; not those rules that are used for games but those that originate from the imaginary situation. Moreover, play is not naturalistic activity, but rather related to the culture and imagination (Elkonin, 2005). In imaginative play, children bring the social role and rules from their everyday life, such as how to act like a mother or how to act like a doctor, which comes from reality. To enrich children's experiences with endless possibilities for imaginative creation, various real–life situations and relationships need to be introduced and provided for them to imitate (Li, 2012). For example, the child who wants to play the role of the mother must follow the rules of motherhood and maternal behaviour. To follow the rules of motherhood, the children need to interact with others, which occurs during imaginative play.

Kravtsov and Kravtsova (2010) further elaborate on the understanding of Vygotsky's context of play, and categories play development according to children's mental development. These categories are:

- Director's play: At an early age, the child creates the play situation and controls the play situation at the same time. In director's play, the child involves different objects (for example different toys, pictures, words, etc.) from reality outside the play and is able to unite them to create a certain plot that allows him/her to take a "real position" (by looking at the object and touching them) and view the "imagined situation" at the same time.
- Image play: The director's play leads to image play, where the child should have a strong emotional attachment to the imagined role. For example, the child who picks a paper box and pretends to drive a car. Here, the child imagines himself/herself as a driver of the car, and he or she needs to be emotionally attached to the role of the driver. In image play, the child moves inside the play and emotionally attaches to the role of the play.
- Plot-role play: Kravtsov and Kravtsova (2010) claim that the plot-role play originates from director's and image play, which create opportunities for the child to communicate with others through collective imagining. At this point, the child is able to play collectively with other partners and create an imagined plot with different roles and contents. For example, "a doctor and a patient", "a teacher and a student", or "a mother and a baby", etc. This type of play allows the preschoolers to focus on their roles in relation to other play partner

through interactive communication instead of focusing on their own movements only (Kravtsov & Kravtsova, 2010). In plot-role play, the child moves inside the play by taking an active role in the play.

- Rules-based game and literature play: Further down the track, the child starts to think socially and enters the rules-based game and literature play through making relationships willingly with others. In games with rules, the child is more involved with the discussion about rules prior to starting any game (Fleer, 2010). Kravtsov and Kravtsova (2010) elaborate that literature play is a higher form of plot role play. In particular, children first develop an imaginative plot by introducing different characters into the literature play. Then they use collaborative dialogues between play characters to develop the play. It helps "the child to understand the relationship with others, from different points of view and different contexts. It can provide the opportunity to consciously empathize, and to analyze one's own personal problems from different positions" (Kravtsov & Kravtsova, 2010, p. 33).
- Theatre performance and I-image: The child slowly starts to get involved in theatre performance and I-image play, which can provide the opportunity to realise his or her own personal position as an individual.

Kravtsov and Kravtsova (2010) mention that how children make sense of the collective imaginary situation in plot-role play and literature play by being involved in play activities in collaboration with adults. A good example of "plot-role" play is as follows:

> One of the most favorite games children love is learning how to read, by using the example of a post office, where the postman reads addresses and brings letters to a particular child, and this child in turn carries out the task written in the letter, or writes a reply to the sender. If children/adults have a poorly developed understanding of the "plot-role" in play, then the actions will be made on an imagined plane. For example, a child who has received a letter and does not read it, but invites a text as if he/she were reading it, fits the example of the the imagined plane. At the same time, when the "plot-role" play becomes integrated into a "life activity", then reading letters, carrying out tasks, answering the letter, and so on all become real" (Kravtsov & Kravtsova, 2010, p. 39).

The adults could engage children in the play as a "life activity" through communication and performance if they have good understanding about the play. With the support of adults,

children may be able to develop their individual imagination ability inside the play by engaging in the collective imaginary situation together with adults.

Collective and individual imagining:

In the cultural-historical perspective, creativity and imagination are the results of a combination of collective and individual imagining (Fleer, 2010). To address the **individual imagining** in play, the child does not imitate the real experience directly in his or her play, but rather recreates those experiences creatively through imagination. He or she combines these real experiences to construct a new reality to fulfil his/her own desire. Based on cultural-historical theory, imagination is viewed as a social act and has traditionally been identified as a psychological function. In psychology, imagination represents a combination of real elements and images that already exist in a person's past experiences (Vygotsky, 2004). The child's past experiences help him or her to construct individual imagining but the child's past experiences are not as rich as those of adults. Therefore, by engaging in children's play, the adults bring their rich experiences to construct an imaginary situation that may enhance the play experience and support the development of the children's imagination and thinking. Fleer (2010) calls this **collective imagining** in play. To give a new meaning to the play, children connect with the collective knowledge that has been generated over time.

As mentioned in Chapter 9, collective imagining enables children to move away from reality and helps to develop consciousness and awareness of the imaginary situation, which is the foundation of developing individual imagining. At the same time, individual imagining allows children to move towards reality, which is the source of collective imagining (Fleer, 2013b). Collective and individual imagining are dialectically related to each other (see Figure 3.1). Therefore, by being involved in children's play, adults help to develop children's imagination, new concepts, and the perceptions of the surrounding environment (Li, 2012). In joint play, children are not only individually performing a role, but also collectively generating the play script through negotiating with adults.

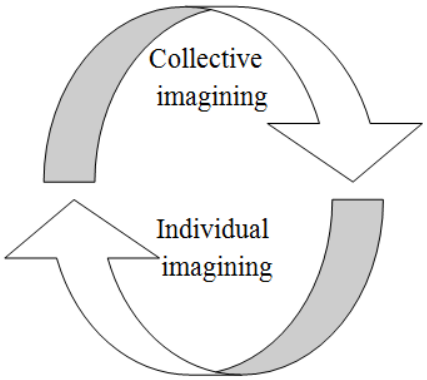


Figure 3.1*: Dialectical relations between collective and individual imagination (Fleer, 2010, p. 140)*

Surprisingly, the teacher places more emphasis on children's individual intellectual development rather than on the development of their collective imagination (Gajdamaschko, 2005). Fleer (2010) states that a teacher should actively consider the nature of collective imagining in the dilectical relationship with individual imagining for children's learning and development. The teacher can work along with children to create a learning situation through collective imagining. Otherwise, it is difficult for the teacher to take an active role in an imaginary situation (Fleer, 2011a, 2011b). According to Vygotsky (1966), imagination is culturally and socially determined where it is related to the real material world. In this sense, imagination is a collective experience through social interaction where children are able to understand the object-meaning relations (Fleer, 2011a).

Object meaning relations in imagination:

According to Vygotsky (1966), children learn how to deal with immediate situations or objects and the meaning of objects in their imaginary situations. Fleer (2011) describes two kinds of simultaneous actions internal and external in imaginative play; where children grasp the object from the external materials world and give new meaning to the object in internal expression through imagination.

A preschool child can perform like an adult in the imaginary situation because they observe adults' actions in the real world. For example, the child observes their mother's or father's actions in the shopping centre and imitates their action in the imaginary situation. At the same time, the child can separate the visual field from the sense field (Elkonin, 2005). Vygotsky (1966) refuted the view of some researchers who separated objects from children's thought and

actions and included only children's inner ideas instead of real objects. Young children over three years have a direct understanding of a concrete object and action rises from direct perception; however, for three-year-old children, action is constructed in an imaginary situation where the object dominates as an invisible but serves a new meaning. For instance, a child can give a new meaning to a piece of paper as a plane. Here the plane is invisible but serves a new meaning of the object. The object-meaning relation is illustrated in Figure 3.2.

$$\frac{\text{Object}}{\text{(meaning)}} \longrightarrow \frac{\text{meaning}}{\text{(Object)}}$$

Figure 3.2: ***Object-meaning relation in play (Vygotsky, 1966, pp. 12–13)***

Vygotsky (1966) debated that the object-meaning relations are an important dimension but also a complex process for preschool children. As an example, when a stick becomes a horse, its meaning as a stick no longer exists and its meaning turns into another new object (horse) in the imaginary situation. Vygotsky (1966) defined this new object a 'pivot' in the imaginary situation, where he mentions that the stick becomes "a pivot for severing the meaning of horse from a real horse" (p. 12). According to Fleer (2011a), the real object stick, no longer seen as an external world object, becomes a 'pivot' as a horse in the internal process of imagination. As illustrated in Figure 3.3, the meaning becomes the determinant and the object moves to a subordinate position (Vygotsky, 1966). In a real situation, the object stick dominates the fraction of object-meaning; however, in an imaginary situation, the stick becomes a horse where meaning dominates the object (Fleer, 2010)

$$\frac{\text{Horse (pivot)}}{\text{Stick}} = \frac{\text{Dominates}}{\text{Dominated/predominate}} = \frac{\text{meaning}}{\text{object}}$$

Figure 3.3: ***Object-meaning relation in imaginary situation (Fleer, 2010)***

However, it has to be mentioned here that Vygotsky believed that not every object can be a pivot in a play vignette. He advocates that "any stick can be a horse but, for example, a postcard can never be a horse for a child" (Vygotsky, 1966, p. 13). The children extract objects from the real world and give new meaning to objects in an imaginary situation. It is difficult for preschool children to separate their thoughts from the real world. In this sense, reality and imagination cannot be separated; they give meaning to each other in a dialectical relation.

Relation between imagination and reality:

To understand the psychological mechanism of imagination and the creative activity, it is best to know about the relations between fantasy and reality in human behaviour. In imaginary play, the child creates an imaginary situation by giving new meaning to the object that is not possible in the real situation (Elkonin, 2005). Vygotsky (2004) illustrated that imagination or fantasy is not actually true in real life; it is a creative process but it exists in children's play. He demonstrates that the imagination is the internalisation of children's play and higher mental function, where it is consciously in contact with collective social interaction in real life. Children's fantastic creations are a combination of elements that have ultimately been extracted from the reality and undergo transformational action in their imagination (Vygotsky, 2004).

Elkonin (2005) elaborates on the relation among imaginative play, imagination, and reality. He mentions that children act out different roles and go inside the reality in imaginative play. Under this circumstance, children continously go into and move out off the reality. Fleer (2011, p. 228) articulates that "when children give new meaning to an object in their play they move away from the reality, but when they test out the rules of society through role play, they move towards the reality". For example, if a child picks up an ordinary stick and gives the stick new meaning as a magic stick, he or she is moving away from the reality. On the other hand, when he or she starts pretending and acting like a fairy, he or she is moving inside the reality. However, the child needs to have an idea of the actual action of a fairy in real life which come from the child's past experiences gathered from the real life. Vygotsky (2004) stressed that the richness of imagination depends on the richness of experience. A child has a less rich imagination than an adult because his or her experience has not been as rich as an adult's (Vygotsky, 2004). The adult can help children to develop their experiences by being actively involved in children's imaginative play. Adults bring their experiences inside the play, which may develop the play itself and support the development of children's imagination and thinking (Li, 2012). Vygotsky (2004) said:

> If we want to build a relatively strong foundation for a child's creativity, what we must do is broaden the experiences we provide him [sic] with. All else being equal, the more a child sees, hears, and experiences, the more he knows and assimilates, the more elements of reality he [sic] will have in his experience, and the more productive will be the operation of his [sic] imagination. (p. 15)

Adults can broaden a child's experiences by being involved in imaginative play to help explore new concepts. Fleer and Kamaralli (2017) argue that the early childhood teacher must not miss the opportunity to develop children's play:

> By engaging with them in an imaginative space, the teacher becomes a resource for expanding the children's palette of situations to place themselves in, as well as means of expressing responses to that situation to one another. (p. 126)

According to Vygotsky's (2004) example of the 'French Revolution' or the 'African desert', previous experiences about different concepts can reform a new creative activity through imagination (artist's artistic picture). Therefore, everyday elements and a large store of experiences can transform all elements into a new look to create these images. In this form, imagination is completely essential for human mental activity.

This chapter illustrate a Figure 3.5 in accordance with Vygotsky's perspective about the whole concept of imagination and reality to show the dialectical relations between imagination and reality.

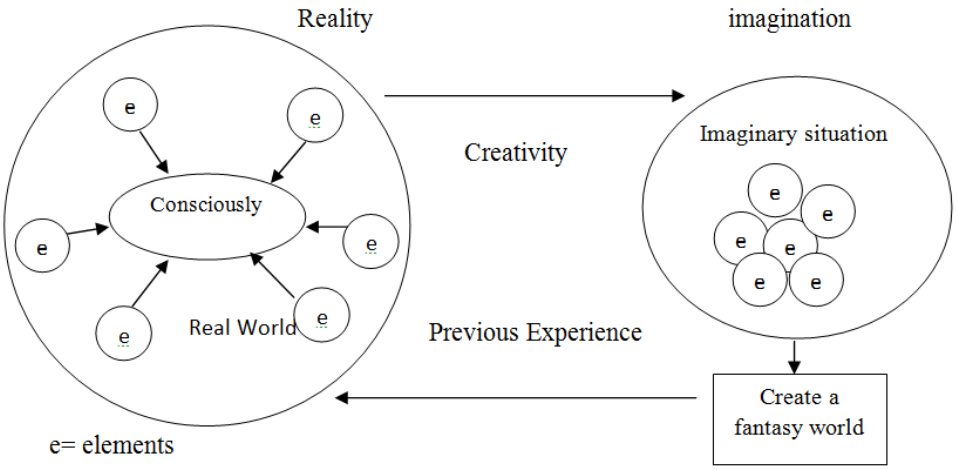


Figure 3.4*: Dialectical relations between imagination and reality*

To illustrate, Vygotsky's perspective of the dialectical relation between reality and imagination, figure 3.4 shows how humans collect separate elements (e=elements) consciously from the real situation (which has been shown inside the circle of real situation sphere) and then combine them in an imaginary situation (inside the imaginary situation sphere) where all the elements act in a cluster. To move from the real situation to the imaginary situation, humans collects these elements in a creative way. Later, he or she creates a fantasy world with the help

of previous experiences to fulfil his or her desire. As an example, if a child pretends to be a doctor, first he or she collects all the concepts (doctor's rules) and elements (injection, medicine) consciously from the real situation and then makes an illusionary world to enhance doctor-hospital imaginary play. In the imaginary situation, when the child starts to think about the doctor's rules, he or she needs to go back to reality. It is a continuous process of moving between two worlds, thereby it is important to consider imagination and reality in a dialectical relation.

To reach a higher form of cognition, the child moves from imagination to reality and collects all the concepts consciously (Fleer, 2010). Vygotsky asserted (2004) that "everything the imagination creates is always based on elements taken from reality" (p. 13). The development of imagination as a higher mental function begins with the "interpsychological" (social) plane and then moves to the "intrapsychological" (individual) plane via social interaction. Under the adult's active support and interaction, young children can develop competency on different skills in play. To achieve competency in different skills, the adult and child need to move between the real and imaginary situation together. The relationship between reality and the imagination supports our research aim, where I am looking into adults' involvement in children's imaginative play for supporting children's learning and development.

Double subjectivity:

To illustrate the concept of play in relation to real and imaginary situations, Vygotsky (1966) stated that children bring real–life experiences into their imagination and creatively recreate those experiences in their imaginative play. Under this condition, children are always in movement between the real world and the imaginary world. Kravtsov and Kravtsova (2010, p. 29) define play in the imaginary situation as "the space between the real (optical) and sense (imaginary) fields". Fleer (2010) mentions, in children's play:

> Two kinds of subjectivities appear in which, initially, the child imbues objects (optical field) with new meaning (sense field) and through this are enabled to consciously know their feeling of happiness while playing out the character who is expressing quite different emotions (p. 127).

Fleer (2010), citing Kravtsova (2008), draws attention in her model to the relation between real and imaginary fields (see Figure 3.5). Vygotsky (1966) provided an example of two sisters who pretend to be sisters in their imaginative play. He argues that the children follow the rules of

sisterhood, such as holding hands (inside the play), saying that they are being sisters and sisters hold hands (outside of the imaginary play). As the sisters move from the imaginary situation to concentrating more on the action of sisterhood, they are positioning themselves further outside of the play.

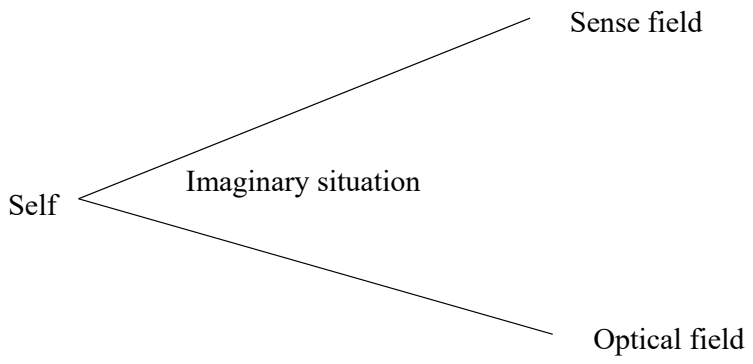


Figure 3.5*: Model of the imaginary situation in play (adapted from Fleer (2010) citing Kravtsova (2008))*

To elaborate the relationship between the real and imaginary world, Kravtsov and Kravtsova (2010) put forward the idea of moving inside and outside of the play and established the notion of two forms of subjectiveness in imaginative play. They state that the player takes two subjective positions in the imaginary situation: a player must be at the same time inside and outside of the play. This is call "dual or double subjectivity" (Kravtsov & Karvtsova, 2010, p. 33). "Double subjectivity" is an important concept for understanding a person's position being *in-situation* and *above-situation* in imaginative play and these two positions allow the person to realise the imaginary situation. The concept of "double subjectivity" allows the player to better understand his or her position (as the player and non-player) in the play and at the same time provides the player with the opportunity to control the play (Kravtsov & Karvtsova, 2010). We can say that the child is at the same time inside the play (acting as a mother feeding her baby) and outside of the play (when the child moves to the real situation from the imagination to correct the role of the mother and baby). These two positions help a child to understand the basis of play and to control the space based on his or her own perceptions (Kravtsova, 2014). According to cultural-historical theory, play can only be conceptualised through the realisation of simultaneous movement between these two positions.

Furthermore, Kravtsov and Kravtsova (2010) first elaborated on the idea of being inside and outside of the play in relation to adults' engagement. At the very beginning of the play a child's intention is to change the meaning of a certain object and act according to the sense given to this object. The child acquires the ability to perceive certain things differently that depends not only on the real world, but also on what type of "sense" is given to it by the adult. Later, this helps the child to develop his or her own perception and to change the "meaning" of the object by himself or herself. To do this, the adult and the child need to work collaboratively and enter into the play together as play partners to understand the general sense of the play (Kravtsov & Kravtsova, 2010). The concept of the "double subjectivity" allows the players to position themselves inside and outside of the play simultaneously. These two positions help them to understand the logic of their own behaviour towards play and, at the same time, allows the players to reveal the features of the characters of the play. In these two positions, the players can control themselves in the process of realising self-cognition and can also develop their consciousness about the surrounding world (Kravtsova, 2014). The concept of "double subjectivity" is also illustrated in the findings chapters 5–9. It is broadly mentioned in this chapter to provide a clear understanding as it is a key concept of this study.

If play is seen as a self-valuable activity in a child's life, then we could not be able to use the play to teach subject–based knowledge. To implement play-based learning, one needs to consider play as a collective by itself and enter into a holistic play setting within a group (Kravtsov & Kravtsova, 2010, p. 40). For instance, an adult can take the initiative to create an imaginary situation of a restaurant through imaginative play and could propose to a child to prepare a shopping list or a menu for the restaurant. Together with the child, an adult could formulate a menu or invite the child to make soup for the restaurant. Under this condition, the adult could introduce the ingredients of soup or encourage the child to count the number of ingredients to develop their conceptual learning and development through imaginative play. To do this, participants (both adult and child) need to move inside the play (such as pretending to be the chef of the restaurant) and simultaneously move outside of the play (gathering materials to support the play). Without taking two positions (being inside and outside of the play), participants would not be able to understand the general sense of the play or the positions of the other play partner. Most of the cultural-historical researchers have focused on exploring how children are involved in the imaginary situation when inside and outside of the play (Schousboe & Winther-Lindqvist, 2013). Little attention has been directed to the adults' position inside and outside of the imaginative play together with children. As a result, the

pedagogical role of the adult being inside the imaginary situation with the children is not well understood in early childhood contemporary research (as stated by Fleer, 2015) which motivates us to investigate- what are the ways adults involve themselves in children's imaginative play and how do they position themselves in support of children's learning and development?

The zone of proximal development and subject positioning:

Furnishing play in relation to the notion of the zone of proximal development (Hakkarainen & Bredikyte, 2008) is challenging because Vygotsky did not write much about play in relation to ZPD. Hedegaard (2002) argues that Vygotsky's concept of zone of proximal development did not extend to provision of pedagogical practices that can guide teachers in understanding social interaction. According to Hakkarainen and Bredikyte (2008), the ZPD has two original definitions, where it focuses on personality development in a play context and psychological development through problem solving in a school context. In traditional pedagogical practice, the child's everyday concept development relies on his or her natural development. Vygotsky did not agree with that view. In Vygotsky's views, the cultural-historical meaning of play is largely dependent on the "degree and quality of adult mediation" (Bodrova, 2008, p. 359). Vygotsky (1987) described the ZPD as the difference "between the child's actual level of development and the level of performance that he achieves in collaboration with the adult" (p. 209).

ZPD is definitely an important concept for maximising the benefits of cooperation between adults and children in terms of children's cognitive development. A teacher provides constructive instruction (through collective conversation) to assist students with their tasks within the zones of proximal development (Hamilton & Ghatala, 1994). Roth and Radford (2010) emphasise the interactive nature of ZPD, where the teachers' and the students' knowledge can be formed in the collective consciousness through cultural and historical processes. The process of teaching must be completed in relation to children's collaborative relations with adults. Chaiklin (2003) mentions:

> Vygotsky often used the term *collaboration* in his discussion about assessing the zone of proximal development. The term 'collaboration' should not be understood as a joint, coordinated effort to move forward, where the more expert partner is always providing support at the moments where maturing functions are inadequate. Rather it appears that this term is being used to refer to any situation in which a child is being offered some

> interaction with another person in relation to a problem to be solved. The main focus for collaborative interventions is to find evidence for maturing psychological functions, with the assumption that the child could only take advantage of these interventions because the maturing function supports an ability to understand the significance of the support being offered. (p. 11)

The amount of help the children need from the adult depends on the size of the children's ZPD, which refers to the extent of the collaboration and the form of communication. If the child has a 'smaller' ZPD, he/she needs a higher stage of communication (Li, 2012).

The development of imagination in unity of cognition through a play-based program has received empirical and theoretical consideration by Russian scholars Elena Kravtsova (2008, as cited by Fleer, 2010) and her colleagues through their work in the Golden Key school. As mentioned earlier in Chapter 2, the concept of "subject positioning" is important for broadening the children's zone of proximal development in the Golden Key program. In Kravtsova's (2009) research, subject positioning has been used in the contexts of pair pedagogy, where two teachers take different positions through active participation in children's play. In the pair pedagogy approach, one teacher always positions herself or himself in relation to the other teacher or a child(ren). Vygotsky's definition of ZPD has been explicated further by Kavtsova (2008, as cited by Li, 2012a) who identifies five positions for adults' involvement in play. These five positions are the 'above position', 'independent position', 'equal position', 'under position,' and 'primordial we' position (Figure 3.6).

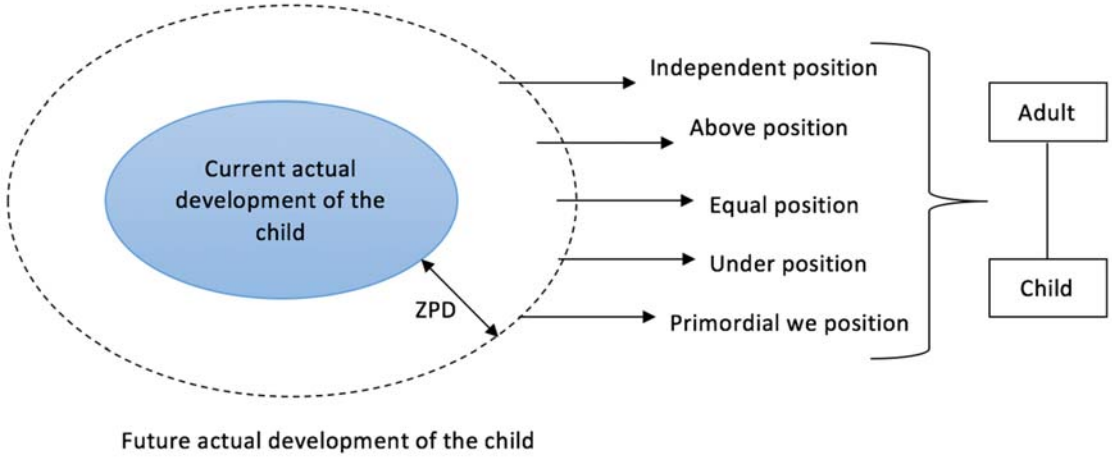


Figure 3.6*: The five positions of zone of proximal development (adapted from Li, 2012a, citing Kravtsova, 2008)*

In the **above position,** the adults lead children and explain and demonstrate the development of play in front of the children where they can imitate adults' actions. In the **equal position**, adults are equal partners of children and work beside them; children imitate the adults' actions or words. Adults move to the **under position** to influence children to lead the play by themselves rather than asking them to imitate the actions. In regard to the **primordial we position,** activity happens within physical contact where, for example, an older child takes his or her younger brother's or sister's hand to place the stethoscope on the patient's chest to monitor the heartbeat and it lies beyond the border of the child's ZPD. This is the lowest level of adults' assistance. The child can do very little with the adults' help in the **independent position,** where the child is acting without the adults, but they are aware of each other's actions from a distance (Fleer, 2010). In pair pedagogy, one adult might act above the children while the other adult is positioned equally with the children. Kravtsova (2009) proposes that by taking these five different positions, the adults can develop the play itself and support children's learning and development.

As discussed earlier in Chapter 2, Fleer has used Kravtova's (2009) "pair pedagogy" approach in a different dimension in the Australian preschool context. She used the concept of "subject positioning" in the context of adult–child interactions where one teacher interacts with one child or a group of children. She mentions in her study that this theoretical positioning of pair pedagogy is unfamiliar to teachers in the Australian preschool context and the pair pedagogy approach could not be used as part of the unit of analysis (Fleer, 2015, p. 6). Fleer (2015) developed a figure (Figure 3.7 below) to illustrate the adult and child positioning in play pedagogy.

Teacher ←→	Child
Above	Below
Below	Above
Equal	Equal
Primordial we (above)	Primordial we (below)
Independent	Independent

Figure 3.7: ***Adult and child positioning in play pedagogy (Fleer, 2015, p.6)***

Many researchers argue that the active support of adults in children's play develops their language, cognitive, social, and emotional skills, and researchers also suggest the need to study the process of adult–child engagement in joint play activities (Bodrova, 2008, Fleer, 2010, 2011, 2015; Karpov, 2005; Kravtsov & Kravtsova, 2010; Wood, 2014). Fleer (2011a) criticises the view presented in most of the Western literature that sees the role of teachers' involvement in children's play as introducing new play materials rather than actively participating in children's play. A significant amount of the literature shows that the current dominant view in early childhood education is setting up play-based learning in the ECEC curriculum (Pramling-Samuelsson & Fleer, 2009); however, other literatures shows that play is a vehicle for learning everyday life chores and goes beyond the pedagogical aim of structured learning (Miller, Cameron, Dalli, & Barbour, 2018). The teachers struggle to understand how to relate the play and learning together in their practice. Fleer (2011a) suggests teachers need to understand the children's intentions in order to understand the development of play in diverse preschool settings.

I have adopted Fleer's idea of using the concept of "subject positioning" in play pedagogy in my study to explore the adults' role inside and outside of children's imaginative play in the Australian preschool and home contexts. The concept of "subject positioning" is also illustrated in the findings chapters (5–9). The concept of "subject positioning" in relation to ZPD is presented broadly in this chapter, as it is a key concept used in the thematic interpretation in this study.

Conclusion:

Overall, this chapter presents the cultural-historical theoretical framework and concepts that orient and guide this study. Vygotsky's concept of play is central to the focus of this study, the aim of which is to determine how adults pedagogically position themselves in imaginative play to support preschoolers' learning and development.

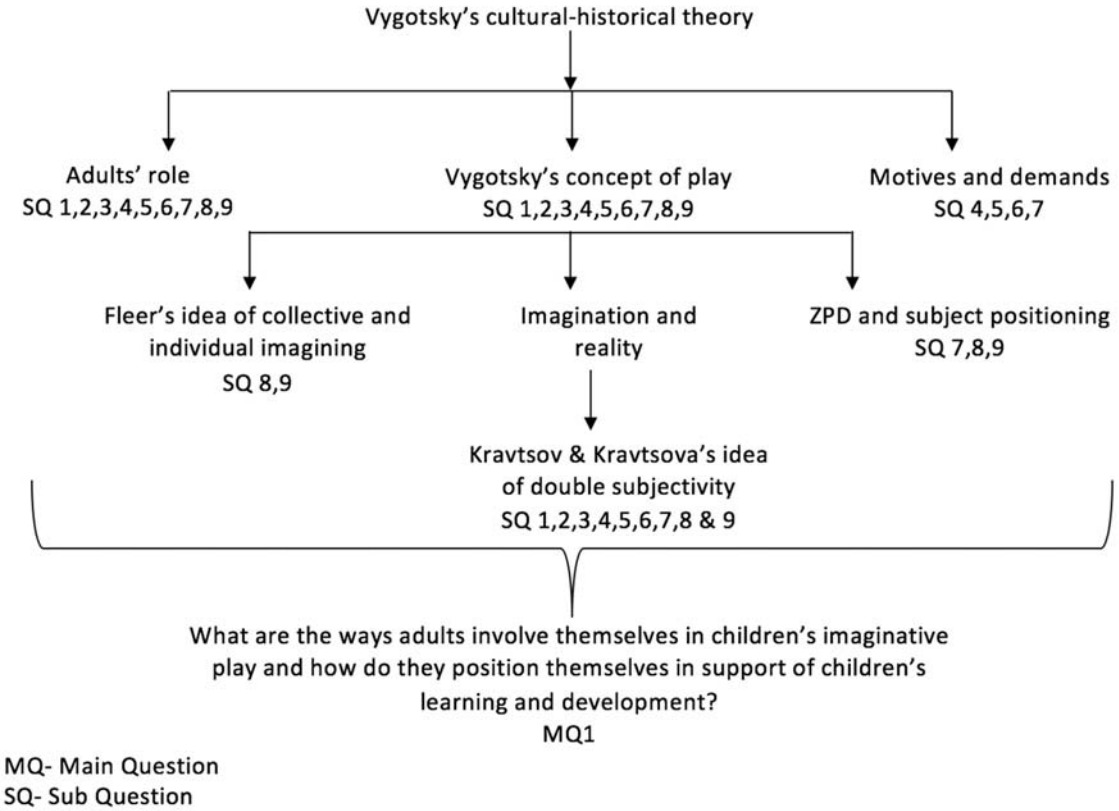


Figure 3.8*: Theoretical framework of the thesis based on Vygotsky's concepts*

As part of this investigation, the adults' role in imaginative play must be taken into account. Vygotsky emphasises that the adults' role in imaginative play is important for showing how they support children's learning and development. Kravtsov and Kravtsova's (2010) concept of "dual subjectivity" and Kravtsova's (2008, as cited in Fleer, 2010) concept of "subject positioning" have been considered for thematic analysis of the data (see methodology).

A brief discussion about Hedegaard's (2012) concept of motives and demands is also used to investigate how children's and adults' motive orientations and institutional demand influence their positions inside the play for supporting learning and development (this concept is presented in Chapter 4, the methodology chapter). Fleer's (2010) idea about "individual and collective imagining" is also presented. Figure 3.8 illustrates the overall theoretical framework and different concepts from cultural-historical theory used to guide this study. The next chapter introduces the methodological framing and methods used in the study.

Chapter 4 : Methodology

Introduction:

This chapter details the research methodology, which is grounded in the cultural-historical theoretical paradigm. This chapter explains the research design for studying children's learning and development through play in everyday settings. The tools and techniques used to gather data in this study are also outlined. The analytical concepts used for understanding are introduced in this chapter. The key here is the analysis of data collected for investigating the institutional pedagogical practices of adults in relation to their involvement in imaginative play when supporting preschool children's learning and development.

Philosophical paradigms and assumptions:

This section elaborates on the philosophical paradigms and assumptions of the study. A number of scholars define the term paradigm differently. According to Wills (2007), "A paradigm is thus a comprehensive belief system, world view, or framework that guides research and practice in a field" (p. 8). Creswell (2003) refers to the paradigm as epistemology or ontology or even research methodology. For educational researchers, there are several major paradigms that carry related theories of teaching and learning. In social research, positivism and post-positivism are two basic categories of paradigms (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). The positivists perceive the social world as natural phenomena that are "hard, real and external to the individual" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 8); the positivism paradigm is particularly useful in natural science and physical science research. This paradigm mostly involves quantitative methodology and uses a large number of samples. In contrast, post-positivists understand the social world as soft reality created by human beings. Post-positivism involves a qualitative or a mixed method research for data collection and uses small number of samples. Another paradigm, the interpretive paradigm is a relatively new paradigm that appeared in educational research during the late 1970s (Taylor & Medina, 2013). To understand other cultures, the interpretive researcher establishes a rapport with the research participants and tries to understand their experiences by standing in their shoes. Interpretive research is more subjective than objective.

However, this current research followed the cultural-historical research paradigm, which is elaborated more in the next section. As a cultural-historical researcher, I analysed multiple viewpoints of teachers, parents and children. I was part of the research and interacted with the research participants to understand the circumstances and their intentions. Multiple cases (for example, different case examples from the four focus children's involvement in imaginative play at home and preschool settings) were studied to gain a deeper understanding of one topic: how adults' positioning in children's play supports their learning and development. For examples, see the findings in chapters 5 to 9. Before conducting the research, I had an understanding of cultural-historical theory. In this study, I tried to build a strong rapport with parents, teachers, and children to understand their pedagogical practice of being involved in children's imaginative play by using multiple research methods. I used a qualitative method in this study, the nature of which is explained in more details below.

The qualitative approach is an appropriate way to observe children and their naturalistic surroundings intensively. Qualitative data are generally subjective, interpretive, process oriented, and holistic (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2004). Qualitative research differs from quantitative research in two additional ways: the data can be collected simultaneously in a naturalistic way and visual data can be gathered over an extended period of time (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009). Qualitative research collects large amounts of data from a small number of participants and analyses data in a subjective way (Creswell, 2008). The qualitative researcher avoids making pre-assumptions and decisions about the study and focuses on discovering patterns in common themes in the data (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009).

A good qualitative research project requires making assumptions, using paradigms, and building a theoretical framework to shape the research project, and relies on participants' perspectives (Creswell, 2007). The research paradigm is a holistic view of the investigation that guides the researcher to investigate from a theoretical stance and seek answers to research questions (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2004). Creswell (2003) states that good research should consider three elements:

- philosophical assumptions about what constitutes knowledge claims,
- general procedures of research, called strategies of inquiry,
- methods, which takes into consideration detailed procedures of data collection, analysis, and writing.

Philosophical assumptions are driven by ontology, epistemology, and methodology. In regard to the **ontological assumptions**, the dialectical–interactive approach focuses on social reality, which is not fixed and changeable by every-day social activity. This research will study human activity to explain social reality (Hedegaard, 2008b) on the basis of ontological assumptions. The **epistemological issue** requires identification of the interrelatedness of a person's perspectives, social origins of knowledge, and social distributions of knowledge in order to research the individual's social activity (Hedegaard, 2008b). In this research, the researcher closely observed the adults and children at preschool and in home settings to understand their perspectives in relation to the explicit research goal. The dialectical relationship between practices of two settings and basic objects on which we have to focus in **epistemological aspect.** With regard to the **methodological** aspect, field research towards the explanation of the social reality, institutional practices and social conditions are considered. To understand the adults' involvement in children's play this research was conducted using multiple **methods** (video observations, field notes, interviews, and photographs), where data were collected from the natural settings instead of laboratory settings. The current study is based on non-classical methodology and directed by Vygotsky's cultural-historical research paradigm to address the research questions.

Cultural-historical research paradigm:

In studying children's learning and development in the society in which they live, it is necessary to consider the everyday settings of families and other institutions. The institutional environment and interactions with social people must be observed. Therefore, observation of social interaction is an important focus when studying children's learning and development in play in their everyday settings. Why does this study draw upon Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory as a research paradigm? According to Vygotsky (1997a), "everything cultural is social" (p. 105) and "historical development is development of human society" (p. 12). He mentions that:

> To study something historically means to study it in motion. Precisely this is the basic requirement of the dialectical method. To encompass in research, the process of development of something in all its phases and changes-from the moment of its appearance to its death-means to reveal its nature, to know its essence, for only in movement does the body exhibit that it is. Thus, historical study of behaviour is not

> supplementary or auxiliary to theoretical study, but is a basis of the latter. (Vygotsky, 1997a, p. 43)

Cultural-historical research provides a lens for the researcher to look at a child's development in its movement (Veresov, 2014b; Vygotsky, 1997a). This movement refers to all changes and processes of human development from the beginning to the end of the life (Vygotsky, 1997a). As previously discussed, Vygotsky (1978) used the metaphor of "buds', "flowers", and "fruits" (p. 86) to describe the process of development and the maturing and matured process. He did not see human development in the product and static sense, rather he saw human development as a whole dynamic process. By using cultural-historical methodology, the researcher analyses the process through which development takes place from the buds to the fruits and from the very beginning to the end. As Vygotsky (1997c) argued, "What must interest us is not the finished result, not the sum or product of development, but the very process of genesis (origin) or establishment of the higher form caught in a living aspect" (p. 71).

While formulating the research questions, it was necessary to keep in mind two types of research questions that need to be answered in the concrete experimental study in cultural-historical research. These are "What to study?" and "How to study?" (Veresov, 2014a, pp.136–137). The "what" question is not simply referring to the fact that the study is about referencing plain statement that I am studying adults' support in children's learning and development. Rather, it includes two aspects:

- First, what exact psychological function of the participants is being studied by the researcher in the course of the experiment?
- Second, which aspect/s of the psychological function of the participants is going to be analysed by the researcher?

Based on the "what question", the "how" question/s explains the researcher's selection of theoretical concepts that reflect the selected aspects of development. This creates the theoretical framework of the study.

In the current study, the process of adults' involvement in imaginative play for supporting children's learning and development through play in different institutional settings has been given attention. The main research question, "what are the ways adults involve themselves in children's imaginative play and how do they position themselves in support of children's learning and development?" is formulated to understand the pedagogical practices of parents and teachers in two institutions (home and preschool settings). The main research question is

supported by the nine subsidiary questions stated in Chapter 1. The five findings chapters (see Chapters 5–9) have been presented to answer these nine subsidiary research questions.

Cultural-historical research offers a new approach to gaining new understandings of children's development as a socio-cultural process, where every child's "higher mental function was social before it became an internal strictly mental function; it was formerly a social relation" (Vygotsky, 1997, p. 105). Vygotsky (1997) mentioned that social interactions between the adult and the child are important for studying the higher mental functions (abstract thinking, logical memory, voluntary attention, and concept formation) of the child. As a cultural-historical researcher, it is important to keep in mind to research *with* children rather than research *on* children, which helps in being part of the research process and keeping the focus on the developmental process (Veresov, 2014b).

According to Veresov (2014b), cultural-historical theory provides a new insight for researchers to conduct research by considering children's development as a socio-cultural process, which is different to conduct research using maturational theories (see Table 4.1)

Table 4.1: Difference between foci of developmental and cultural-historical theories (Veresov, 2014b)

The Foci of Developmental Theory	**The Foci of Cultural-historical Theory**
To formulate research questions from the perspective of stages of development	To formulate research questions from the perspective of process of development
Research strategies to investigate an individual child's behaviour	Research strategies that analysis socio-cultural contexts and institutions
Investigation of results ("fruits")	Investigate the processes of transformation from "buds" into "fruits"
"Classical observation"	Existing or specially created experimental conditions

In this research, the focus is on the process of children's learning and development where institutional pedagogical practice has been analysed closely in existing or specially created experimental conditions. Cultural-historical research is contrasted from developmental research as explained in Table 4.1 which shows developmental research considers that the

linearity of traditional modes of child development and observation occur in relation to the child's chronological age. On the other hand, cultural-historical research mainly focuses on explanatory rather than descriptive analysis. The aim of the cultural-historical theory is to investigate the very process of development of the human being (Veresov, 2010). Research based on cultural-historical theory acknowledges that the "development is always a very complex and contradictory process but, first of all, it is a dialectical process of qualitative changes" (Veresov, 2014a, p. 132), which is related to the cultural development of the child.

Researching children's development in a dialectic way is to examine the social settings in which they belong. Children are involved in different institutions like home, preschool, school, playground, and after school care in their everyday activities. Cultural-historical research emphasises studying the society, culture, and history of children to understand their holistic development. The cultural-historical research approach provides a new direction for studying children's learning and development within their socio-cultural contexts (see Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9). Cultural-historical methodology is a general framework that helps to study the dialectical process of children's developmental pathway and its relationship with the social and material world. Fleer (2014) states that "child development is a dialectical process between the child and their social and material world as a form of cultural development" (p.19). Therefore, "A methodology for studying children's development in everyday settings has to use methods, where the methodology focuses on children's motives, projects, intentional actions and interpretation" (Hedegaard et al., 2008, p. 5).

In the literature review, it was found that few researchers have focused on the way in which adult interactions and involvements contribute to children's learning and development in imaginative play in both institutional settings (home and preschool). Cultural-historical theory provides valuable research tools to investigate the socio-cultural environments of children in a new dimension: that is "from the point of view of the relationship which exists between the child and its environment at a given stage of his development" (Vygotsky, 1994, p. 338). A child participates in different social institutions in his/her everyday life. Development can take place when a child moves between two institutions (like preschool and home) or moves between two particular activities (like reading a story book and imaginative play) within an institution (see Chapter 7). Therefore, "cultural and social relationships are understood not only as backgrounds, environments or ecological systems where the child is located and where the child's development takes place, they are investigated as integral components of social situations of development" (Veresov, 2014b, p. 219). Cultural-historical theory provides a

powerful conceptual framework to investigate socially and culturally constructed pathways and allows the study of an individual child's developmental trajectory within socio-cultural contexts (Veresov, 2014b).

A dialectical–interactive methodology: A wholeness approach

Drawing upon the cultural-historical research paradigm, Hedegaard (2009) reports that several anthropologists and sociologists (James, Jenks, Prout, Crossaro, Qvortrup, and others) have criticised the 'grand development' theories, and believe that development should be enacted in everyday practices. Hedegaard (2009) mentions that those anthropologists and sociologists advocate that research on early childhood should focus on children within different societal settings. The children's development needs to be understood along with the consideration of society, culture, and historical tradition. The child is a social being and he/she develops social relations with other members of the society. Developmental psychology overlooked the importance of social situations, norms, and values when studying children's learning and development in play (Hedegaard et al., 2008). The social researchers have recommended addressing children's development as a whole developmental process that occurs through interacting with others in different institutions (Hedegaard, 2008a).

In order to achieve the research aims, a complex and dynamic research methodology is necessary to investigate adults' contributions to children's learning and development in imaginative play in the home and the preschool contexts. Grounded by cultural-historical theory, Hedegaard (2008a) developed a dialectical–interactive research methodology where it that captures a "wholeness" and "dynamic" approach to research. In the cultural-historical wholeness approach, the researcher can study different aspects of children's development but these aspects should be considered in relation to the whole child within the different institutional settings (Hedegaard, 2012). In everyday life, children participate in different institutions that put demands upon them (Hedegaard, 2012). Therefore, the research process observes children's learning and development through play in the home and the preschool context. A wholeness approach encompasses daily activity settings of institutions and participants' perspectives. Therefore, it is necessary to include three planes in the analyses of children's social situations to understand the developmental process of children in early childhood (Hedegaard, 2012b). A wholeness approach is used in this study to frame a study design in such a way that all the participants' perspectives are captured and analysed. This

study captured the perspectives of teachers, parents, children, and even the researcher to examine how adults support children's learning and development in imaginative play.

In order to conceptualise the child's development as a whole, the cultural-historical researcher studies the conditions as well as how the child participates in activities and interacts with other people in the community (Fleer, 2008a; Hedegaard, 2008b). As a dialectical–interactive research, this study captured the institutional pedagogical practices as a whole to understand adults' contributions to children's learning and development in play. To observe the children's interaction closely with families and teachers, the dialectical–interactive research approach requires the researchers to be a partner with the research participants by participating in relevant social settings (Hedegaard, 2008b). This way, the researcher can observe all the participants' perspectives, for example, what type of strategies the adults employ in play pedagogy to support children's learning and development. In this research, the naturalistic setting creates conditions for the researcher to observe children's learning and development through play, which are the focus of the analysis. This research employed Hedegaard's (2008b) dialectical–interactive methodology under the umbrella of cultural-historical research, which is different to the traditional experimental research methodology. Hedegaard (2008b) differentiates between dialectical–interactive research and traditional experimental descriptive research methods as shown in Table 4.2

Table 4.2: Main difference between a descriptive approach and a dialectical–interactive research approach (Hedegaard, 2008b, p. 35)

Research method	**Research principles**	**Knowledge form**	**Knowledge content**
Descriptive methods			
Laboratory experiment	Control groups Blind test design	Empirical	General laws of children's psychic functioning
Observation	'Fly on the wall' One-way screen	Empirical/narrative	Description of children in actual, local situations

Interview	Non-leading questions/clinical interview	Narrative	Description of children's perspectives
Dialectical–interactive methods			
Experimental as intervention into everyday practice	Theoretical planned interventions into local practice	Dialectical-theoretical	General conditions for children's activity in local situations
Interaction-based observation	Participation in shared activities Activity partners	Dialectical-theoretical	Diversity in conditions for children's activity in local situations
Interview as experiment	Leading and provoking questions Communication partners	Dialectical-theoretical	Relations between conditions and children's perspectives

In order to frame the cultural-historical research, Hedegaard (2008b) introduced a model of children's learning and development where the researcher has the opportunity to systematically investigate children's participation in institutional practices and examine different people's perspectives, including the researcher's perspectives. This model is also significant for identifying societal, institutional, and individual perspectives, which is the main approach in cultural-historical methodology. Hedegaard (2008a, p. 10) first proposed the model in the *Studying children: A cultural-historical approach* book, and later she advanced this model by adding another layer "activity settings" inside the model (Hedegaard, 2012b, p. 130).

In her model, the **societal plane** depicts the cultural traditions and value positions of the society. The model also plots the relation between the societal perspective and the **institutional plane,** which shows that this institutional level has been grounded by family, preschool, and school practices. The practices at the institutional level are dependent on societal procedures, values, and traditions. The bottom layer of the model illustrates the **individual (personal) plane,** which reflects in a child's motives in relation to different institutional demands (see the model in Hedegaard, 2012b, p. 130). These three planes are interlinked (Hedegaard, 2009) in

a *zigzag* transition (Hedegaard, 2014). It is impossible to studying children's learning and development properly in play without considering these three perspectives (Hedegaard & Chaiklin, 2005). Hedegaard (2008a) strongly suggests that a child's development needs to be understood across the institutional norms and values where diverse cultures are not separate entities from the child's activity.

Inspired by Hedegaard (2008b), the model in Figure 4.1 is designed to guide data analysis for this study in relation to adults' support of children's learning and development in play across different institutions. Hedegaard's (2012b) model demonstrates a wholeness approach that encompasses both the daily activity settings of institutions and participants' perspectives. Hedegaard's model is an appropriate tool for analysing children's social situations to understand the developmental process of children in early childhood (Hedegaard, 2012b).

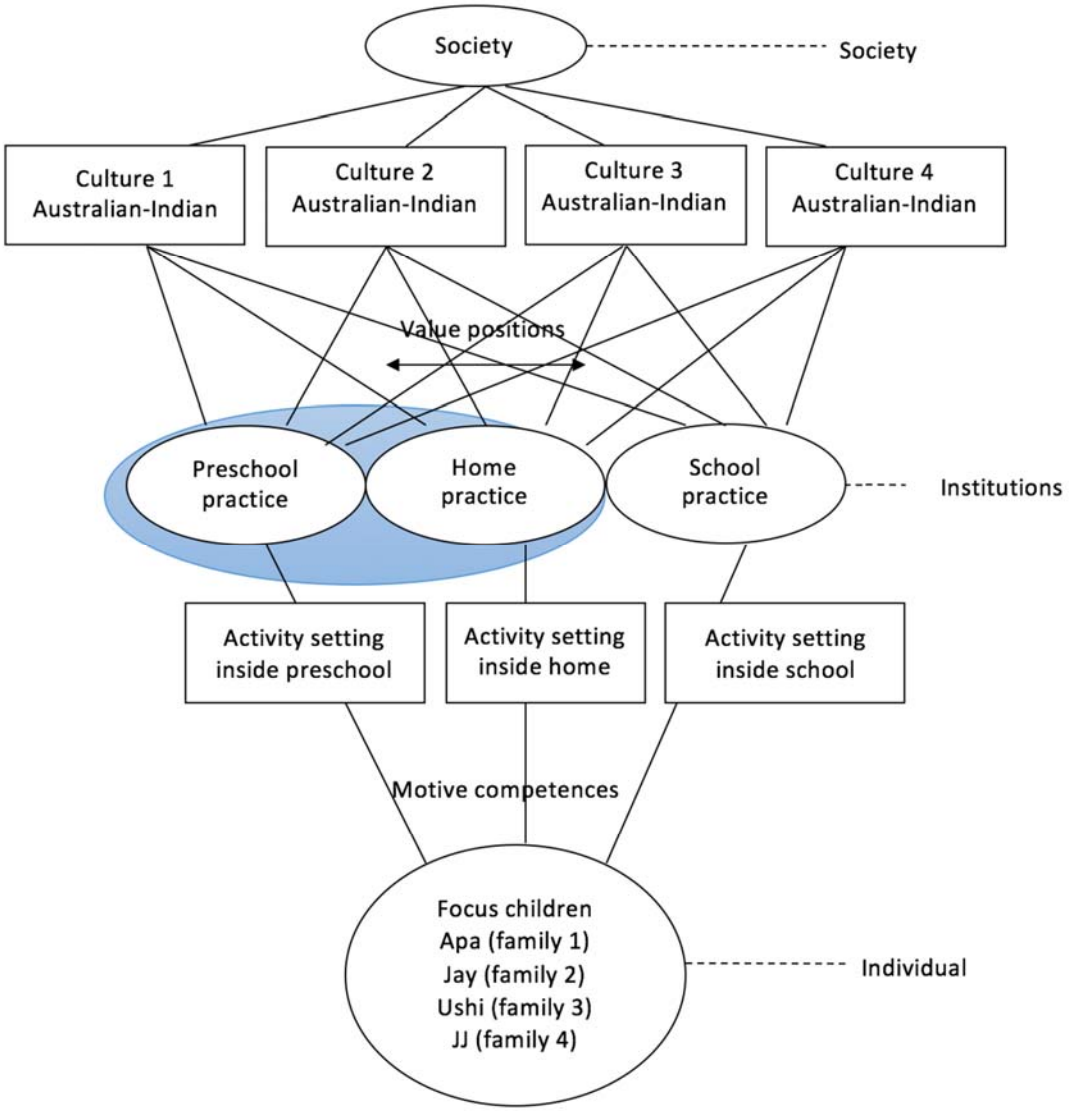


Figure 4.1: Adapted version of Hedegaard's (2012, p.130) model of children's learning and development through participating in different institutional activity settings

Each plane of the model in Figure 4.1 is discussed below

Societal plane:

A society is defined as being a large group of people who are functionally interdependent on each other through their birth, ethnicity, customs, and geography. Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory classifies societies as social organisations (Adams, 2015). Different institutions (like school, home, preschool, library, community hall, and so on) are

representative of the larger society, and individual persons belong to this society. According to Hedegaard (2012b), historically, society formalised laws and regulations for people that are implemented in institutions as customs. Therefore, individual interests are wrapped up by institutional demands and societal constitutions. In Western societies, children participate in different institutions in their everyday life through transitions, and institutions provide "developmental pathways" for them (Hedegaard, 2008a, p. 11). Society make laws for institutions and institutions put demands upon individual people to follow the laws. Families' and preschools' norms, values, everyday practices, and conditions created for children's activity are influenced by the traditions of the society (Hedegaard, 2008b).

Institutional plane:

This study aimed to observe children in everyday institutional settings. In order to understand pedagogical strategies that parents and teachers use to support children's learning and development through imaginative play, children were observed in play settings in home and preschool contexts (These two institutions are circled in Figure 4.1). A motive can be seen "as something which exists in institutional practices that a person confronts through the activity settings in his/her everyday life" (Hedegaard, 2012b, p.15). By giving importance to the institutional practice, Winther-Lindqvist (2012, p. 129) also states that "motives are developed in the course of the person's interaction in social institutional practices". Therefore, to study children's motive orientation, the importance of institutional practices in their everyday life cannot be dismissed (Hedegaard, 2012b). Children's individual practices in imaginative play and how they get support from adults were observed.

An institution's demands are shaped by societal demands (Hedegaard, 2012a). To meet these demands, institutions again put demands on individual people. To meet the curriculum goals, children's motive orientation to play is changed by institutional demands when they transit from preschool settings to school settings (Hedegaard, 2012a). In preschool settings, teachers put demands upon preschool children to engage more in learning activities than play for successful transition to school. However, the children also put demands upon teachers to create a play-based learning environment in the educational setting (Hedegaard, 2012a). Therefore, children's demands and motives are influenced by the activity settings of the institutions. The activity settings and the way members interact are different in different institutions (Hedegaard, 2012b). For example, it was found in the research dataset for this study that the families'

activity settings and the way they are involved in their children's play are different from the preschools' pedagogical practices.

To illustrate the concept of activity settings, Hedegaard (2012b) states "Activity settings are not the single person's settings, but an activity setting is conceptualized as societal traditions realized within an institutional practice as concrete historical events" (p. 132). Each person has various motives and interests that influence that person's choice of activities. Children's learning can happen through participating in everyday activities in activity settings in different institutions (Hedegaard, 2012b). The participants' engagement in activity settings in preschool and home contexts were closely observed in this study. The dataset revealed that the focus children transitioned from one activity to another activity on a number of occasions and invited teachers and parents to be involved in their play in the preschool and home contexts.

The institutions are not static, and also institutional practices change in relation to the demands from the children in the concrete activity setting (Hedegaard, 2012b). Sometimes it creates crises for preschool children's development when they are required to adjust to these new demands in new institutional conditions (Hedegaard, 2014). Development takes place through crises, so crises can be seen as something necessary in a child's life. However, crises can become harmful if adults do not understand children's motive orientation and their relation to the practice and people in their everyday activity settings. Instead of teaching discipline-based knowledge in a direct way, teachers could support children to move forward to new motives and competences by implementing play-based learning (Hedegaard, 2012b). Children's pretending play is not a spontaneous and self-motivated activity (Karpov, 2005). Rather, adults should introduce activities to children to support the development of their new motives in an educational setting (Hedegaard, 2012b). Hedegaard (2012b) found adults' support of children's new motives creates new possibilities for children's interactions, learning, and development.

Individual plane:

Every child is unique, therefore the way they become involved in activity setting is unique. A child has his/her own motives or interests connected to the activities. In order to understand the children's perspectives in relation to involvement in imaginative play, data were collected in their everyday life setting. Figure 4.1 shows that four focus children's engagement in activities was explored in the individual plane. The participants' (teachers, parents, and children) individual perspectives, including the researcher's perspectives, were also considered in this study. The child's individual perspectives on engaging in imaginative play can be seen as

personal interest, whereby he/she indicates their motives through actions. The "interest the children brings to the situation has to be the starting point for the development of motivation" (Hedegaard, 2002, p. 21) and the adult creates the conditions for developing a new motive orientation towards structural learning (Hedegaard, 2002).

Play is leading activity for preschool children (Leont'ev, 1981), so preschool children's motive orientation is to engage more in play than learning. Thus, play is only motivating for a child if the play setting is linked with the child's already developed motives (Fleer, 2015a, p. 55). The study shows that the children's motive orientation was to engage in imaginative play, and their concentration was focused on creating an imaginary situation in the teacher-initiated activity. On the other hand, the teachers' individual motive orientation was to engage children in literacy and numeracy learning in the same activity setting to meet the demands of the institution. The adults should not underestimate children's actual motive for play, rather they should encourage them to engage more in learning activities that are supported by play (Hedegaard, 2002).

According to cultural-historical theory, children's motives are determined by cultural practices and these are not internally driven. For example, according to parents' interview comments in this study, due to parents' work commitments, they do not get much time to be involved in children's play; therefore, the cultural practices and institutional demands motivated children to either play with siblings or play alone (see the section "Backgrounds of four focus children's families"). Parents' motive orientation is to engage children in structural learning through play. Parents need to provide activities that can motivate children to acquire a new motive orientation through participating in the dominant institutional practices.

Hedegaard (2008) mentions that "practice and activity are related concepts: we will use *practice* when the institutional perspective is taken and *activity* when the person's perspective is taken" (p. 16). The children are social agents of the society and they put demands on other people. The individual plane highlights the unique practice of the child within the family and other institutions. With regard to parents' involvement in children's imaginative play to support learning and development, the four focus families in this study have different positions and beliefs at the individual level, which are influenced by their different pedagogical practices at the institutional level.

Overall, the model in Figure 4.1 was used for framing the study design holistically and analysing the data in relation to how these three planes are interrelated with each other to support children's learning and development through play. Children participate in different

institutions in their everyday life and their development occurs in these institutions, therefore, institutional practice must be researched in order to understand the individual child's learning and development. This study investigates individual children's play activity in home and preschool settings to understand the pedagogical practices of institutions. The adults' support of children's learning and development through interactions and actions is shaped by institutional values and people's beliefs, which are regulated by socio-cultural traditions. To show the integration of the three planes, Hedegaard (2012) states that:

> A child's everyday activities in different settings in an institutional practice, seen from the child's perspectives, are the child's different social situations. In these social situations the child's personal motives and competences are realized when his or her activities meet cultural traditions and values (p. 130).

The following sections discusses the qualitative case study approach and study design of this research sequentially.

Qualitative case study approach:

Yin (2009) states that "a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in-depth and within its real-life context" (p. 18). In a case study, the case can only be studied or understood in context (Gillham, 2000). A qualitative case study approach was adopted in this study to examine participants' interactions and actions in natural contexts (Lichtman, 2014). I observed participants in two different contextual situations (preschool and home) over a period of three months. This empirical study undertook a deeper investigation to understand adults' engagement in play to support children's learning and development in everyday natural contexts like family home and preschool. This approach allowed me to develop a more intimate and informal relationship with the research participants.

Gay et al. (2009) state that the case study is an appropriate research strategy when the researcher wants to answer a descriptive question (e.g. what happened?) or explanatory question (e.g. how/ why did something happen?) (p. 427). As previously mentioned, the research questions of this study are framed as "what questions" and "how questions", therefore, the case study approach has been used. The case study ensures the topic of interest is not explored through one lens, but rather a variety of lenses (video observation, adults' interviews, still images, and children's portfolio, etc.), which allow us to reveal the research questions in different imaginative play situations (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

The multiple case study (Yin, 2003) approach was used to explore the differences within and between cases. This approach helped me to replicate the findings across cases. To do comparisons, it is imperative that the cases be chosen carefully to predict similar results across cases, or predict contrasting results based on a theory (Yin, 2003). Having multiple cases (see the finding chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9) allowed me to explore the phenomenon of adults' involvement in children's play within preschool and home contexts. In the short timeframe available for PhD research, it was necessary to restrict the cases through time and places (Creswell, 2003), which ensured that the study remained reasonable in scope. By binding the specific cases and placing boundaries, it was possible to undertaken an in-depth analysis to answer the research questions. By using the case study approach, I had the opportunity to investigate and analyse results across cases based on a theory (Yin, 2003). Therefore, using the case study approach is appropriate for this research.

Research Design:

The methodological understanding provided me the direction to identify what theoretical tools (concepts and principles) and experimental tools (methods, settings, and procedures) were needed to create a research strategy to answer the research question/s? Grounded by the cultural-historical methodology and Hedegaard's (2008a) dialectical–interactive research approach, the model in Figure 4.2 shows that the research aims can be achieved by considering the situational explanation, intentional orientation, and methodological tools. As illustrated in Figure 4.2, each element is dialectically interlinked with each other, where:

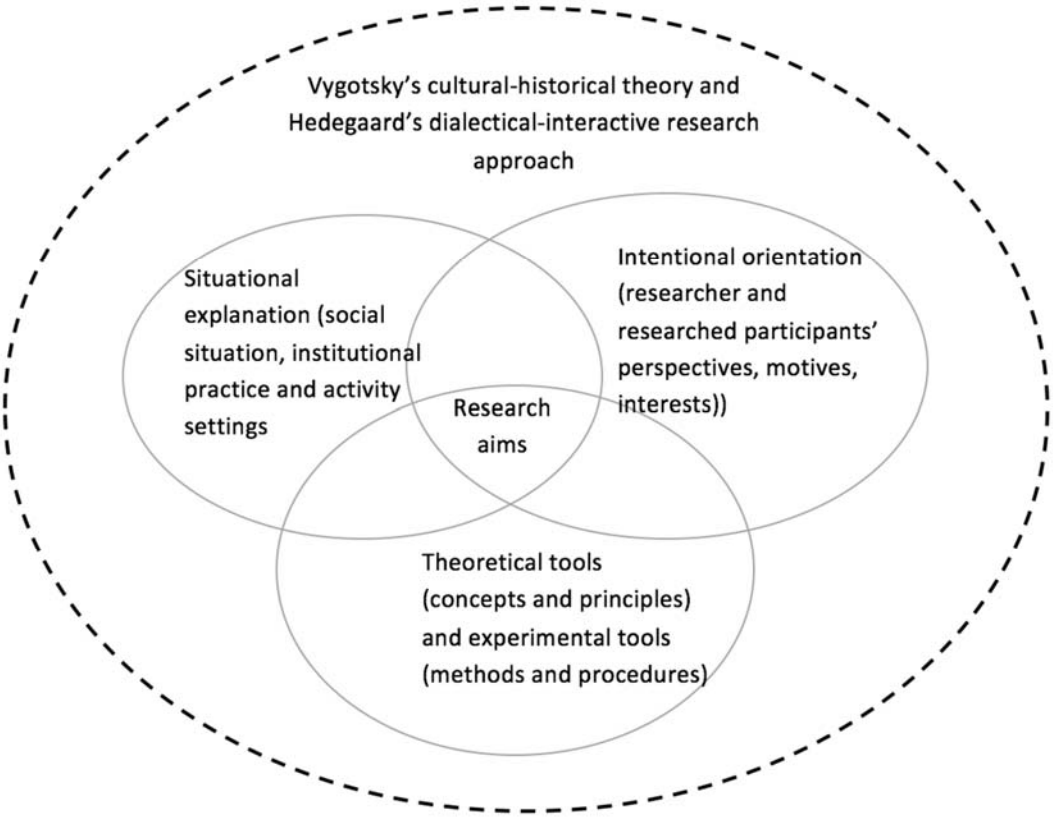


Figure 4.2: Relation between theory and methods in my research study

- the situational explanation refers to participants' social situations, their institutional practices and how they create the activity settings in their everyday life,
- the intentional orientation represents the research participants' perspectives and motives, which are important to the researcher to meet the research aim,
- the researcher also uses theoretical tools (for example, concepts and principles) and experimental tools (for example, methods and procedures) to answer the research questions.

My position as a researcher:

As previously mentioned in the case study section (pages 81-82), as a cultural-historical researcher, I was able to build a good rapport with the research participants. To understand the phenomenon of the particular context, it was important for me to be an active researcher in the research site. This type of active role benefits the researcher when constructing meaning in

activities (Hedegaard, 2008b), which is very important in a cultural-historical study, as it takes a holistic view of all participants' perspectives, including those of the researcher.

Before conducting the research, I increased my knowledge on how to take the researcher position as a cultural-historical researcher. Cultural-historical research requires the researcher to be an active partner in examining children's learning and development in different institutions. Grounded by cultural-historical theory, Hedegaard (2008c, 2008d) explained that the researcher has a dual role, where the researcher enters into the activity settings with the research participants to understand the everyday practices and also constructs the protocol writing through interpreting activities. This approach is different to traditional research. In traditional research, the researcher mainly positions himself/herself as a "fly on the wall", and is therefore situated outside the research context rather than interacting with the research participants and relating to the research participants.

As an active researcher in the research field, I tried to maintain the balancing act by positioning myself mainly as an observer taking video observations in the family home and preschool settings. However, I occasionally involved myself in the activity when necessary. For example, I was active in helping parents and teachers or supporting children's interest when needed. I kept in mind that I should not take the authority of the other participants or direct the play situation, but rather engaged with participants as a member of the community by letting them know of my role as a researcher. It is challenging for the cultural-historical researcher to maintain passive role while being a part of the research activity settings and simultaneously researching the concrete settings. I overcame this challenge by using various strategies. For example, I mentioned my intention to the participants before conducting the research so the parents and teachers had a clear understanding about my aim and my responsibility. Having acquired knowledge about the role from peers and from the literature, I had a clear understanding of what I should do when there is a conflict between being a researcher and a participant. For example, in some cases, my focus children asked for help from me when I was video recording any interesting play situation. I did not make him/her upset by not responding to him/her, but neither did I stop my recording. Rather, I used a small table tripod to continue the filming and tried to maintain the roles as both researcher and participant in the activity. I did not dismiss my position but rather participated in the situation in such a way that gave me the scope to understand the participant's intentions through social interactions.

Background of research settings and participants:

In qualitative research, the samples are small and the researcher selects the sample purposefully and intentionally (Creswell, 2008). Qualitative research requires more in-depth data collection where the researcher obtains descriptive information from a small number of participants using a long period of observation (Gay et al., 2009). This study used purposeful sampling because of the conceptualisation of the research aim.

According to cultural-historical theory, to study children's developmental process, one needs to observe children holistically in their surrounding environment instead of observing their individual development (Vygotsky, 1997). Therefore, it is important for a researcher to understand children's cultural background to observe them holistically in diverse settings (for example home and preschool). To study pedagogical practices of adults in diverse settings, I decided to observe children's imaginative play in preschools and home settings. I contacted two multicultural preschools (Leafy and Possum preschools, pseudonym used) located in the South Eastern suburbs of Victoria, Australia. This region is highly multicultural because of its location to nearby universities. Upon the preschools' acceptance of their participation, I invited four Indian-Australian migrant families and focus children from those two preschools to participate in this research and they accepted the invitation.

The next section presents the rationale behind choosing the research participants. Furthermore, the background of the research settings and participants are detailed.

The rationale for choosing research participants:

Australia is a culturally diverse country, where a significant proportion of the population have migrated from different countries. According to recent Australian census data, Indian-Australian is one of the largest migrant populations and is a rapidly increasing community in Australia (SBS News, 2017). Therefore, it is important to understand the child-rearing practices of Indian-Australian families, which is one of the largest communities in Australia.

Many migrant families speak their heritage language at home in Australia. The main languages spoken at home by Indian-born people in Australia are English (62,862), Hindi (59,055) and Punjabi (57,144) (Community Relations Section of DIAC, 2014). I understand both spoken languages (Hindi and English) of the focus parents and children, which was of considerable

help when interacting with parents and children in their home and preschool settings during data collection.

This study intends to gain an in-depth understanding of how parents are involved in children's imaginative play to support their learning and development. Therefore, it was expected that the four Indian-Australian immigrant families would have similar family profiles, such as similar socioeconomic status and similar socio-cultural background, but that they may have common or different pedagogical practices and values in relation to children's learning and play (see the sub-section "Background of home settings and participants" in this section). Some relevant images of the settings and participants are provided in this section. Permission was received to use the photographs of the participants and settings in the consent forms (see the ethics section in this chapter and signed consent forms of participants in Appendix D).

Additionally, as this study requires data collection in home settings as well as preschools, understanding the families' cultural sensitivities is very important. The families participating in this study have similar cultural practices to my own, which made it easier for me to understand their practices and their perspectives in relation to play.

The rationale of choosing preschools:

The philosophy of both Leafy and Possum preschools (hardcopy and also mentioned on the website) state that they are culturally diverse and they respect individual children diversity. Later, many of the participating teachers also mentioned in their interview comments that Leafy and Possum preschools have cultural diversity and celebrate diverse cultural activities (see Figures 4.3 and 4.4).

The diverse cultural contexts of these two preschools helped a great deal with locating the focus immigrant families and children from an Indian-Australian background.

Background of preschool settings and participants:

Background of Leafy preschool's settings and pedagogical practices:

Leafy Preschool is integrated with a long day care centre that is situated in South East Victoria and is funded by state and federal governments. The integrated service means that the preschool classroom and other rooms of the long daycare centre are located in the same building. The preschool program is separated from the long daycare program but all the children from the

preschool and long daycare centre play in a common playground. Teachers always try to maintain the adult–child ratio (1:11) in keeping with the Australian National Quality Standard (NQS). They arrange two group times in their everyday routine: one is before lunch and one is before afternoon tea. While the mentor teacher supports the group time, one assistant teachers joined the children and positions herself/himself at the children's level so she/he can help the children to follow the rules of group time. Another assistant teacher prepares the meal table for children to make sure the children can start their meal after group time. This scenario shows that teachers maintain the ratio and group responsibility in a collaborative way to ensure the smooth operation of the centre. Children at preschool enjoy the indoor and outdoor play areas that are designed and equipped with colourful furniture and toys.

The teachers in Leafy Preschool are from various cultural backgrounds (as mentioned in the Table 4.3). It is a multicultural centre that is situated in a small suburb with people from diverse cultural backgrounds: European, Asian, African, South-Asian and Australian. During the data collection, six teachers (four full-time and two part-time teachers) from the kindergarten room participated in this study. Leafy Preschool has 42 children (4.1–5.1 years; mean age of 4.5 years) in total, but not all the children come every day. The room is occupied with only 30 children, with three teachers allocated to the room (so one staff member with 11 children, according to the National Quality Standard of Australia). Sometimes, based on need, one more teacher is commissioned to support a child with additional needs. Most of the teachers have bachelor and diploma degree in early childhood education (as detailed in Table 4.3). They all have a minimum of four years' teaching experience.

To establish a play-based pedagogical practice in their centre, all of the teachers follow the Australian national framework Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) (DEEWR, 2009) to establish a play-based pedagogical practice in their centre. They intentionally provide resources for setting up the activities and they evaluate the children's learning. They also value children's interests and choices by asking questions during group time or the free play time. They prepare learning journals for individual children to share learning stories with parents (see Figure 4.3) and also to visualise the children's learning stories for planning and evaluating the plan.

The centre celebrates different cultural festivals, for example, Chinese New Year, Christmas, Diwali, Australian Day, and Harmony Day. Teachers follow the Reggio Emilia approach but their main focus is play-based learning. They invite many visitors to share their activities with

the children. For example, they invite local library visitors to share their books with children or a dental doctor to share information about cleaning teeth appropriately.

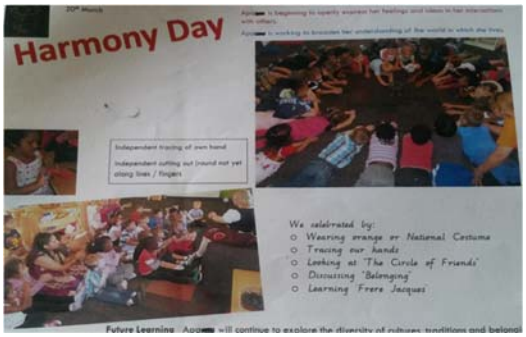


Figure 4.3: Celebration of Harmony Day at Leafy preschool (picture from focus child's portfolio)

Background of Possum preschool's settings and pedagogical practices:

Possum Preschool is privately owned and managed by a private owner. The parents play a volunteer role as a member of the committee. All the families of the centre elect the president and other committee members from nominated families. These elected members participate in the general staff meeting of the centre. The owner of the centre, the manager and the elected president make the final decisions regarding any issues, for example, planning for a program or performing any maintenance of the centre.

The preschool is integrated with a long daycare centre. The children are enrolled between six months to five years old and allocated to their respective room. The centre is committed to providing high-quality care and strong foundation-level learning for every child through a range of programs. Most of the educators and children are from families from a range of cultural backgrounds: European, Asian, African, South-Asian and Australian. Two teachers from the 4–5 years kindergarten room were invited to participate in this research. The teachers are from diverse cultural backgrounds (see Table 4.3) and have successfully completed bachelor or diploma degrees. They all have a minimum of four years' teaching experience (see Table 4.3 for details). In total, there are 20 children (3.9–4.9 years; mean age of 4.4 years) with two teachers are allocated to the room (so one staff member per 11 children, according to the National Quality Framework of Australia).

Teachers in Possum Preschool always maintain the teacher–child ratio for both in indoor and outdoor activities. They set up table top activities for children inside the room and sometimes sit with children to support them to complete the activities. Children are free to choose their play activity based on their interest, and children share their interests and ideas with teachers during the group time. The teachers include an inquiry-based project in their program planning and sometimes invite guest teachers from different centres to support the project and share information with the children. They plan their program according to the children's needs, interests, and choices. During the data collection, there was one full-time and one part-time teacher in the room who set up sustained shared activities and involved children in diverse cultural programs. For example, they taught children how to say "hello" in different languages.

At the beginning of each term, parents set up a goal, and they mainly want to see their children confident and social at the end of each term. The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) (DEEWR, 2009) is incorporated within the program to ensure that children experience quality teaching and learning. Teachers specifically emphasise play-based learning and recognise the importance of communication, language skills, early literacy and numeracy, and social and emotional development. They celebrate different multicultural events in their centre (see Figure 4.4). Balance between indoor and outdoor activities is highly encouraged in their pedagogical program plan.

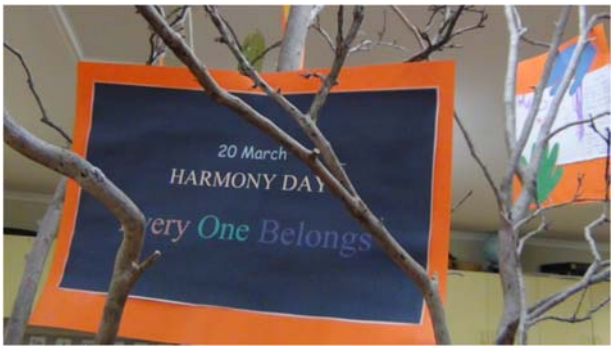


Figure 4.4: Celebration of Harmony Day at Possum preschool

Overview of the teachers from two preschools are provided in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: The details of teachers from Leafy and Possum preschools

Preschool	Name (pseudonym used)	Educational background	Cultural background	Work experiences
Leafy	Bree (female)	Bachelor in Early Childhood Education	European-Australian heritage	10 years
Leafy	Eric (male)	Diploma in Early Childhood Education	American-Australian heritage	4 years
Leafy	Sam (female)	Bachelor in Early Childhood Education	Indian-Australian heritage	4 years
Leafy	Scully (female)	Diploma in Early Childhood Education	European-Australian heritage	5 years
Leafy	Ana (female)	Diploma in Early Childhood Education	Chinese-Australian heritage	4 years
Leafy	Ruba (female)	Cert III in Early Childhood Education	Indian-Australian heritage	4 years
Possum	Ling (female)	Bachelor in Early Childhood Education	Chinese-Australian heritage	4 years
Possum	Cath (female)	Bachelor in Early Childhood Education	American-Australian heritage	4 years

Background of home settings and participants:

The children are from an Indian heritage background, as their parents migrated to Australia nearly five/six years ago. Two children (a boy and a girl) were from Leafy preschool and two children (a boy and a girl) were from Possum preschool. All focus children participated four days a week in both preschools.

The details of the focus children and their families are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: The details of the focus children and their families

Preschool	**Name (pseudonym used)**	**Age (during data collection)**	**Siblings**	**Cultural background**	**Parents' professional background**
Leafy	Jay (boy)	5 years	One younger sister (2 years)	Indian-Australian heritage	Both parents work
Leafy	Apa (girl)	4 years & 4 months	One elder sister (13 years)	Indian-Australian heritage	Both parents work
Possum	JJ (boy)	4 years & 9 months	-	Indian-Australian heritage	Both parents work
Possum	Ushi (girl)	4 years & 10 months	-	Indian-Australian heritage	Mother only works

Background of Apa's family and their everyday practices in relation to play:

Apa lives with her parents and elder sister. She attends a preschool from Tuesday to Friday between 8 am and 5 pm as her parents both work full time. She was born in Australia and her parents migrated from India to Australia more than five years ago (time duration calculated during data collection). Her parents completed their higher education back in India. Her elder sister goes to a higher secondary school. As well as English, they speak Gujrati (is an Indo-Aryan-language-native to the Indian state of Gujarat) at home. Neither parent could speak English very well. According to her parents, Apa's grandparents live in India and they have some family members in Australia. Every Sunday they go to temple and attend *sasanamo* (chanting). They think Apa is very creative and likes to talk with everyone. Her favourite activities at home are to playing with the Barbie doll and imaginative role play. She brings her family's cultural activity into her imaginary play, for example, she pretends pretends that she takes her Barbie doll to temple and asks her to keep quite during *sasanamo*. Most of the time, she plays with her sister or watches TV, as Apa's parents have very little time to play with Apa.

Apa's favourite show is Peppa pig (a cartoon on the ABC channel in Australia) and she likes to create her own story. She combines her imagination and everyday activities to construct a story. Her parents believe that Apa learns many activities from preschool and implements those at home. For example, she learns different games from preschool and takes the initiative to teach them to her sister. She invites her parents to play with her but, due to their work load, they can rarely participate in joint play.

Figure 4.5: Family picture of Apa

Background of Jay's family and their everyday practices in relation to play:

Jay has a younger sister and he goes to preschool four days a week. His mother is a part-time child care educator and his father is a full-time worker in a restaurant. As well as English, they speak Gujrati (an Indo-Aryan-language-native to the Indian state of Gujarat) at home. According to Jay's mother, Jay speaks little and is very introverted. Together with his teachers, Jay's parents are trying to improve his language proficiency. Jay does not like to play with his sister. Jay's favourite activities at home are drawing and pasting. According to his parents and teachers, he loves any kind of construction play and can make various structures with Lego, blocks, and connectors. His favourite play is to making an imaginary skating park, road, and slide for racing cars. His mother borrows book from the library and reads books every night. Jay's mother helps him to learn the alphabet through play. His mother wants Jay to learn the alphabet and numbers before starting school; therefore, she takes the initiative to teach the alphabet and numbers through different activities. For example, she encourages Jay to write his name after making any crafts. According to his mother, Jay uses various recycled items to make toys and different structures. For example, he made a pretend CD player using a paper box. He loves to watch TV. His favourite shows are *Mister Maker* and *Play School* (TV show on the ABC channel in Australia). Jay's mother thinks there is no connection between the

family's cultural activities (celebrating religious events or attending any cultural functions) and his play.

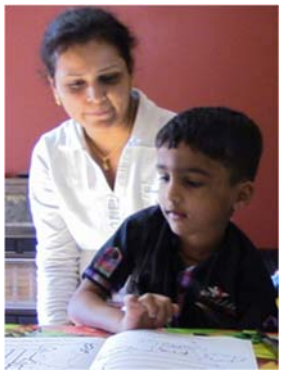


Figure 4.6: Family picture of Jay

Background of Ushi's family and their everyday practices in relation to play:

Ushi does not have any siblings. As well as English they speak Punjabi (an Indo-Aryan-language-spoken by people of the Punjab region of India and Pakistan) beside English at home. Ushi's mother did not participate in a formal semi-structured interview and was not agreeable to sharing any personal information. However, she was happy to share Ushi's everyday routine and everyday activities in relation to play. Ushi loves to play with play dough and Lego. She spends a long time drawing and pasting. Her mother encourages Ushi to write her name and learn the alphabet before engaging in any activities. According to Ushi's mother, she gets little time to play with Ushi due to her work commitments, but she tries to play with her on weekends. She believes play makes an important contribution in children's learning and development.

Figure 4.7: Family picture of Ushi

Background of JJ's family and their everyday practices in relation to play:

JJ does not have any siblings. He goes to preschool five days a week. JJ has some family members who live in Australia. His family migrated to Australia more than eight years ago (time duration calculated during data collection). As well as English they speak Punjabi (an Indo-Aryan-language-spoken by people of the Punjab region of India and Pakistan) at home. JJ's mother believes JJ learns many activities from preschool that influence his play activities at home. For example, he learnt about '000' (emergency dial) in preschool and uses the number in his fire fighter imaginative role play at home. According to his mother, imaginative play is an "easy learning way". She thinks JJ likes to engage in imaginative and constructive play most of the time at home and preschool. He likes to pretend to be a superhero (see Figure 4.8) or a police officer. His mother believes that the family's individual cultural practices reflect through child's play. For example, JJ's favourite TV show is *CID* (a drama on the Indian channel). He borrows ideas from that TV show and pretends to be a police officer in his imaginative play. According to JJ's mother, they get very little time to play with JJ due to both parents working five days and due to her pregnancy. JJ has a fixed routine in relation to learning the alphabet. JJ's mother wants JJ to be competent with learning the alphabet and numbers before entering school. According to his mother, JJ loves to play by himself without any interruption.

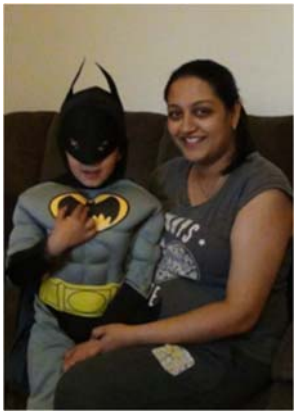


Figure 4.8: Family picture of JJ

The four focus children of this research participated come from four Indian-Australian families. As all of their parents are from an Indian cultural background, they have some common cultural traditions and beliefs that influence their day–to–day practices (see the section "Backgrounds of four focus children's families"). For example, they speak two languages at home. At the same time, the four families have many differences in their cultural practices, traditions, customs, and history, which affect their beliefs and pedagogical practices in relation to play.

For example, Apa's motive orientation to play with the Barbie doll and bring cultural practice of 'chanting' into her imaginative play is not biologically driven but rather is culturally constructed by the family, which illustrates the possibilities of both an individual and a collective motive orientation (Chaiklin, 2012, p. 212). The parents from the four families put demands on the children to learn the alphabet and numbers for smooth transition from preschool to school. To meet other institutional demands, the parents motivate the children to engage explicitly in academic content learning, which is driven by the cultural tradition of the society.

In addition, data were collected from two preschools in Victoria. Even though both schools follow the same national curriculum (EYLF) (DEEWR, 2009), which formalises laws and regulations for institutions and requires teachers to follow the policy, they have different pedagogical practices and setups in their individual care and education (see details in the section "Background of two preschools") due to relative interpretation of the policy.

In the institutional practices of the four families (Apa, Jay, Ushi, & JJ), parents are observed to put demands upon children to participate in academic learning activities (learning the alphabet and numbers) in the home context (Hedegaard, 2002), which is common in the four families' everyday pedagogical practices (see the section "Backgrounds of four focus children's families"). For example, Jay's mother takes the initiative to teach the alphabet and numbers through play, therefore she creates the conditions of using play as a pedagogical tool to help to develop Jay's new motive orientation for learning through play (Hedegaard, 2002).

Data collection:

After selecting participants and gaining ethics permission (which will be discussed in a later section), it is a challenge for a researcher to study samples while maintaining cultural norms and sensitivity (Gay et al., 2009). According to Yin (2009), one of the key principles of data collection in case studies is the use of multiple methods to obtain more accurate and reliable findings. The current study conducted multiple qualitative research methods to identify institutional (families' and preschools') support for children's learning and development in play. The qualitative research data were collected through interview, video observation, photographing, and documentation methods as detailed in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Type of data collection in this research (adapted from Creswell, 2008)

Forms of data collection	Type of data	Definition of type of data
Video observations and field notes	Field notes of observation and video recordings during the observation	Unstructured text data and filming during observations by researcher
Interviews	Transcriptions of open-ended interviews	Unstructured text data will be obtained from participants through transcribing audiotapes
Documents	Focus children's individual portfolios and centre's policy	Children's individual portfolio contains their everyday activities and centre's policy is rich with written and visual sources of data that help to understand the practice of the specific centre.
Visual materials	Pictures, photographs, and children's art work	Visual materials consisting of images, artwork, or any other materials of participants taken by the researcher.

Video observation:

Most of the research aims to investigate the hidden principles in the reality of everyday life. There is a need to have an effective methodological tool to uncover these hidden principles (Li, 2014). Video observation is one of the most important methods for observing all the research participants in naturalistic settings. In a dialectical–interactive approach, using digital video and computer technology provides a useful framework for the researcher to capture everyday traditional practices and activities (Fleer, 2008b). The video observation can be analysed later and viewed repeatedly for evaluation and interpretation (Freankel & Wallen, 2006) as many times as required. It can also be used in the interview session later to get the participant's perspective and deeper insights from them.

A cultural-historical conception of digital visual technologies gives the researcher the possibility of studying children's development as a process and helps him/her to transcend the linearity of children's progression (Fleer, 2014c). The digital observation method gives the researcher the opportunity to focus on a child's holistic development, where psychological, biological, and cultural dimensions are considered in a dialectical relationship (Vygotsky, 1997a), as Vygotsky agreed that the child's relations to their social situation cannot be ignored if one wants to study a child's developmental process. The child's social situation is a central source of development. Therefore, Fleer (2014c) articulates that "Video observation can capture the complexity of the dynamics that surround the material conditions and social expectations that make up the cultural nature of a child's development" (p. 29).

This method is perfectly suitable for the data collection to capture interaction, collaboration, transition, and institutional everyday practices among children, teachers, and parents in different settings in order to achieve the research aims. The digital video observation was used as the main research method of this study to capture the dynamic and dialectical relations of children within their social situation in different settings. This method could be used to capture the entire situation and the relational aspect of children with the institutions to which they belong. The digital observations not only allowed capture of the pedagogical practices of different institutions but also assisted in capturing the personal intentions, interactions, and facial expressions of the participants and the societal expectations through video record.

The digital tools (video camera, still camera, and voice recorder) and techniques helped with analysing the pedagogical practice of adults from different institutions that support the children's process of learning through imaginative play. Two video cameras were used to capture the holistic view of the child's engagement in imaginative play, including his/her interactive interactions with teachers, parents and peers. One camera was placed on a tripod in the corner of the room to capture the entire play settings and the transitional process of the participants. The second camera was held by the researcher (or sometimes by the research assistant) with the purpose of looking at the participants' intentions, interactions, and facial expressions.

***Field notes**:*

In a qualitative research, field notes are a strong supportive tool for documenting the participants' experiences in the research settings. Field notes are unstructured text (word)

documents written by the researcher during an observation (Creswell, 2008). Gay et al. (2009) explains that field notes offer a record of the researcher's understanding of the daily activities without the input of personal assumptions. In qualitative case study, taking notes often happens during data collection. It can be conducted during data collection in the field or maybe after data collection at the desk. It helps the researcher to keep a record of the information that is not possible to be collected by video camera or voice recorder. The researcher's personal thoughts, understanding, and comments or the researched participants' discourse can also be collected through field notes.

In this research, field notes were taken during data collection when it was necessary. For example, one of the teachers in Leafy preschool was not happy to be video-taped or have her interview recorded; therefore, notes were taken of her interview comments in a notebook. Similarly, one of the focus child's mothers did not agree to participate in a video or audio interview, and in this situation written notes helped to get information from her interview. Again, sometimes parents and teachers passed on some important information about the focus children when it was not possible to make a video or audio recording of that instant situation. In those cases, an iPad was used to write up the information during or after each field visit. Taking field notes in the research field or after each field visit helped me to obtain data that were not able to be captured by other methods.

Interview data:

The interview is a purposeful method where interaction happens between two people and one gathers information from the other (Gay et al., 2009). It allows the researcher to obtain non-observable information about the participants' views (Patton, 2002). Video observations have some limitations as they can only capture a certain radius of the context, but an interview can explore the interviewee's thoughts, intentions, values, and perspectives etc. (Fleer, 2008b; Li, 2012a; Patton, 2002). It is a purposeful interaction with the researched participants. Interviewing helps the researcher to get in-depth information about what the participants think and how they feel in relation to the research topic. In an interview, the researcher can ask open-ended questions to get open–ended responses from the participant. It is important to remember that interviews should not be seen as a simple process of asking questions and receiving answers from the participants, rather the researcher should form a relationship where dialogue can be constructed through sharing and interpretation of knowledge between the researcher and the researched participants (Hviid, 2008; Li, 2012a). According to Liamputtong (2010), there

is a need to "use methods that empower the participants and avoid hierarchies that can occur in a research-researched relationship" (p. 232). As a cultural-historical researcher, it was important to avoid hierarchies and build relationships with participants to gain all the participants' (educators, parents, and children) perspectives in relation to the research aim.

Three different types of interviews were conducted in this study: informal dialogue-based conversations, semi-structured interviews, and group interviews. **Informal dialogue-based conversations** occurred in the first visit of each family and preschool to try to build a rapport with the participants. Some conversations also happened naturally during the observation of the children's play. These simple informal conversations helped me to understand the participants' everyday routines and play practices. To build a rapport with parents in the home environment, I showed a small video clip of the focus children's play practice from preschool. This technique helped me to start an informal conversation with parents in relation to the child's everyday routine, interests, choices and play practices. The aim of this type of informal conversation was to become familiar with the families, understand their daily practices and to make them comfortable before starting to observe their play practices. The formal interviews with the four focus families were video-recorded, which helped me to recall the interviews and interpret them in my later analysis step; however, informal conversations were not video-recorded but collected through field notes.

Another significant strand of collecting data were the **semi-structured interview**. It contains some basic questions in relation to the research topic as illustrated below.

Example of some interview questions for the teachers:

1. What is your belief in terms of the best type of pedagogical practice?
2. What is your understanding about play supporting children's learning?
3. What is your understanding about imaginative play?
4. What role do you think (if any) an adult takes in children's play? Can you give an example of play that illustrates the role you commonly adopt?

Example of some interview questions for parents:

1. What is your understanding about play supporting children's learning? Do you think that your child is learning through play?
2. What are your child's favourite activities or play at home?
3. What is your understanding about imaginative play?

4. How do you involve yourself in his/her play?

The parents from the focus families and the preschool teachers participated in the interviews, which lasted approximately 35–40 minutes. The fathers of the focus families were busy due to work commitments except for one family. Prior to interview, the aim of the interview was explained and the participants were assured that they could withdraw from the interview at any time if they didn't want to answer any question/s. This approach provided the scope to ask some important questions that emerged from the conversation during the interview. Apart from one teacher from Leafy Preschool, the other teachers agreed to participate in an individual interview. The teacher who did not participate in an individual interview mentioned that she is not comfortable in any formal interview session, but happy to answer any question during the observation of the children's play (through informal dialogue-based conversation).

Conducting a **group interview** provided the opportunity to show some video clips of the focus children to the focus families. Due to the need to maintain the teacher-children ratio, the directors of the preschools did not consent to arrange a group interview of teachers during their working hours. Also as a PhD student, it was not possible for me to allocate a budget to arrange a PD session or a group interview after hours. In future research, it may be possible to allocate a budget for a group interview or PD session for teachers after they finish work. However, three families participated in individual group interview. During the interview at the family home, parents, siblings, and children had the opportunity to watch the video together and they came up with some interesting information that contributed to answering the research questions. Most of the interviews were video and audio recorded, except one preschool teacher and one mother who did not want to participate in a formal video-recorded interview. Their interview comments were collected using field notes. The amount of interview data is presented in Table 4.6.

Still images:

Visual materials such as photographs are a helpful method for providing non-verbal perceptions of participants' interactions and actions in relation to the research questions. A number of researchers from the cultural-historical research field have used still images in their research projects (Fleer, 2008b, 2014; Pennay, 2014; Quinones, 2014; Ridgway, 2014). They used photographs as a methodological tool to capture the dynamic nature of the participants and their perspectives through non-verbal expressions. This methodological tool was very

helpful for those researchers who have studied emotion regulation of very young children (Adams & Fleer, 2015; Chen, 2015).

Still images were collected with Sony digital video recorder. These images were used to analyse data. A number of still images were printed and analysed along with the field notes and video records. These images helped to understand the participants' non-verbal expressions and actions. However, it is important to note that images were selected cautiously, as these are an interpretation of the researcher. Using photographs for the thesis supports the validity of the research, as they were directly collected from the research contexts (home and preschool).

Artefacts:

The research can be enriched by obtaining information from the researched person's personal documents, such as a portfolio, diary, or individual journal, and so on (Creswell, 2008). Many of these data sources are naturally occurring in educational settings and need to be located within the research settings (Gay et al., 2009).

Artefacts such the focus children's artwork, crafts, and portfolio and the preschool policies were collected to understand the program plan of that specific institution. These data also provided the scope to analyse the individual children's non-verbal emotional expressions. With appropriate permission from the preschools and parents, the focus child's learning portfolio or journal was copied. It helped with identifying how the teachers work and plan for the children's learning under the umbrella of the play-based curriculum, and how children are learning literacy, numeracy, and science supported by teachers. The children's portfolio and the centre's policy were supportive documents for analysing the data to achieve the research aims.

A brief of the overall data:

A total of 86 hours of video data were collected through digital video observation and semi-structured interviewing over a period of four months. In total, four hours (from home and preschool) of interview data were collected from teachers and parents. The brief of the data collection is illustrated in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: Brief of data collection

Two preschools (pseudonyms used)	**Focus children (pseudonyms used)**	**Video data**	**Images**	**Interviews**		**Portfolios**
Possum preschool	JJ (boy)	Home - 6 hours	76	Parent - 1 hour	2 teachers- 1 hour (individual interview)	Yes
		Preschool- 22 hours				
	Ushi (girl)	Home - 4 hours	132	Parent - No permission for formal interview but mother was happy to pass on the information about Ushi's daily routine through informal conversation		Yes
		Preschool- 17 hours				
Leafy preschool	Jay (boy)	Home - 5 hours	125	Parent - 30 minutes	3 teachers - 1 hour (individual interview)	Yes
		Preschool- 14 hours				
	Apa (girl)	Home - 2 hours	70	Parent - 30 minutes		Yes
		Preschool- 12 hours				
Total	4	82 hours	403	4 hours		4

Data analysis:

To do systematic research, qualitative researchers are responsible for understanding and managing data in an organised way. Due to the large quantity and variety of the data collected,

this study followed three steps in the data analysis process: organising data, protocol writing, and interpretation. Some of the data analysis processes started during the period of data collection. It is a simultaneous process and the researcher develops a deeper understanding when analysing data at each iteration (Creswell, 2008). An attempt was made during this process to find the answer to questions such as "Why do participants focus in a specific manner?" "What does this focus mean?" "How can I get more information about the participant's attitude?" and so on. In an interactive research approach, only selected clips are transcribed and included in the protocols for answering the research questions of the project. To analyse the adults' pedagogical positioning and their role in children's imaginative play, a two-meter radius was marked to see the teachers' physical proximity, which allowed them to hear the play narrative, see the play actions, and join in the play if they wished (see details in Chapters 5, 6, & 8).

***Organising data**:*

At the beginning of data analysis, the data were organised and managed during the process of data collection. The data collected in this research were stored in individually tagged folders. The video and audio data, as well as photographs and the copy of portfolios of the focus children, were uploaded to the computer and classified into different folders according to the dates they were generated (see Figure 4.9). The handwritten field notes were also transformed into an electronic document. The audio and video interview data were organised into different folders by date and child's name. Down the track, the next step in the data analysis is protocol writing, which is the written results of the research process.

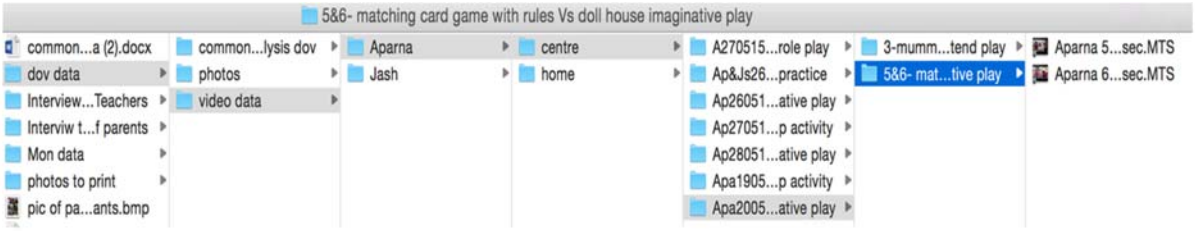


Figure 4.9: Managing data

Developing research protocols:

According to Hedegaard (2008d), the research protocol is the written format of the outcomes of the research process. In this process, the organised data were transcribed to the research protocols. In protocol writing, the relevant activities were transcribed from the video clips and

the researcher's point of interest was sought in terms of research questions, themes, and theoretical concepts. The next step was to include the video observations of preschool and home activity settings, interactions between researchers and participants through interviews, basic information about the data file (e.g clip number), and context, photos and portfolios of each focus child. In relation to the research aim, the meaningful activities of different institutional pedagogical practices and the specific categories were included into the protocol writing process (Hedegaard, 2008c). These protocols were the foundation texts for the later step of interpretation.

Interpreting data:

Analysing data from societal and institutional perspectives, it is important to keep interacting with the participants because the social process can change over time (Hedegaard, 2008d). Institutional practices reflect the interactions among the children, parents, and educators in order to address the research questions, "What are the family's and educator's pedagogical practices for supporting children's learning and development?" and "What are the ways adults involve themselves in children's imaginative play for supporting children's learning and development?" To some extent, the conceptualised everyday activity settings vary from institutional traditional practice. Therefore, it is important to code the data in terms of three planes (societal, institutional and individual, described earlier in Figure 4.1). At the beginning of the data analysis, the collected data of the four focus children, the families' everyday play activities, and the preschool play activities (a large number of raw videos, interviews, and photographs) were logged in separate folders. A standard video software program (iMovie) was used to open the videos and a Word document or Excel file was also opened beside the video to log parent–child involvement in imaginative play (see Figure 4.10).

Figure 4.10: Data from iMovie

Interpreting data is the final and most important step of analysis. In dialectical–interactive research, protocols are required to interpret the data systematically by using the three levels of interpretation proposed by Hedegaard (2008c), as listed below.

- common sense interpretation,
- situated practice interpretation,
- thematic interpretation.

Common sense interpretation:

The common sense interpretation is the first level of interpretation and incorporates the researcher's comments on her or his understanding in relation to "what seems meaningful in an observation sequence" (Hedegaard, 2008c, p. 49). Common sense interpretation is an effective way of interpreting that 'objectifies' the interaction between the child and his or her surrounding environments, where the researcher is not part of the shared activity settings (Hedegaard, 2008c). Using the common sense interpretation, understanding about the interactions of the adults and the children of the activity setting were commented on. This kind of interpretation does not explicitly use theoretical concepts, but it does explain the child's everyday practice in different institutional settings. All the participants' perspectives are included in the analysis.

Situated practice interpretation:

Grounded in the common sense interpretation, the situated practice interpretation involves a deeper analysis of a series of activities of the specific institution to find the identical events (observed in the common sense level) of the pedagogical practice of adults in terms of involvement in children's imaginative play. This allows identification of the patterns across the activity settings. Finally, the merging themes and the outcomes of this level are examined. The video data were revised to confirm these themes, such as duration of adults' involvement in imaginative play, roles of adults inside the imaginative play, and positions of adults in imaginative play. Theoretical pre-conceptual understanding is required in order to define the themes. Therefore, these themes are oriented towards theoretical concepts. After confirming the themes from the multiple evidence of the data set, the analysis moves to the next level, which is thematic interpretation.

Thematic interpretation:

The last type of interpretation in Hedegaard's three levels is interpretation on a thematic level, where the researcher uses theoretical concepts to find the meaningful patterns of institutional practice associated with the research aim (Hedegaard, 2008c). This level allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding to formulate new conceptual relations within a problem area. The process of thematic level allows the development of new theoretical conceptual relations between the adults' involvement in the imaginative play and the children's conceptual learning in activity settings. The implication of this research shows Vygotsky's conception of imaginative play (1966) and Kravtosov and Kravtsova's (2010) concept of "dual subjectivity", Hedegaard's (2012) concept of "motives and demands" and the pedagogical approach of "collective and individual imagining" (Fleer, 2010) were the central theoretical conceptual tools for analysing the data. These theoretical concepts were discussed in the theoretical chapter and in this chapter. This section on data interpretation is brief, as more detail about how the three levels of interpretation were used is provided in Chapters 5 to 9 of this thesis.

Validity and trustworthiness:

According to Hedegaard (2008b), validity is an important criterion in qualitative research. In a dialectical–interactive research approach, valid research should have clear theoretical preconceptions and should provide a conceptual model to address participants' practices, activity settings, and activities. Hedegaard (2008b) mentions that reliable research should have

the ability to distinguish between the researcher's perspectives and the researched person's perspectives. According to Hedegaard (2008b, p. 35), to signify valid and reliable research from a dialectical interactive approach, we have to consider:

- The research should have relations in **theoretical preconcepts.**
- These conceptual relations should be viewed as **models.**
- The **activities** should be considered as the object of the study.
- The perspectives of specific **participants** should be outlined in the field research.
- There should be **two perspectives** between the researched participants and the researchers.
- The **institutional practices** (such as home and preschool) should be considered in research.

Cultural-historical theory suggests investigating the different perspectives of the researched participants and researchers to understand the practice of the institutions. In this current research, all the participants' perspectives were considered including those of the researcher, to explore how different pedagogical practices of home and preschool support children's learning and development through play (see Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, & 9). The research participants' perspectives were documented through video, audio, still images, and field notes. Vygotsky's particular concepts for analysing the data were used to understand the adults' support of preschool children's learning and development in play in different institutions. A model was developed (see Figure 3.9) to show the conceptual relations of the theoretical concepts. Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 show how the theoretical concepts have provided a new insight into studying children's learning and development in play differently and helped to answer the research question/s. These chapters show that children's learning and development is grounded by the pedagogical practice of institutions, which is enacted by socio-cultural contexts.

The researcher can establish the trustworthiness by addressing descriptive validity, interpretive validity, theoretical validity, and evaluative validity (Gay et al., 2009). To maintain descriptive validity, there was no misrepresentation based on assumption and the participant's own voice was used within quotations, especially the participant's interview comments. Also, as discussed earlier, multiple sources of evidence were used (e.g., digital video observation, interviewing, filed notes, photographs, and portfolios), which helped to maintain the validity and trustworthiness of the research. With regard to interpretive validity, the participants' views or words were interpreted accurately. The interpreted data were checked with participants to achieve credibility. Some of the key interpretations have been presented at different

symposiums, conferences, workshops, and a PhD day (organised by PhD students of my supervisor) and discussed with supervisors in our research community. To maintain theoretical and evaluative validity, I discussed the report was discussed within broader theoretical aspects and the report was evaluated in an unbiased, nonjudgmental way (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009). This research is done on a small sample of the population, consisting of only two preschools and four Indian–Australian immigrant families. Therefore, this research may be applicable to other samples that have a similar cultural heritage, that is, Indian–Australian immigrant, and contextual condition, that is, a similar preschool setting. To make this result externally valid or able to be generalised to the full extent, further study with larger similar sample groups is required.

Ethical issues:

In qualitative social research, ethical permission is an important criterion before starting data collection, because the researcher needs access to the research field and the participants to observe their everyday life. The permission is also important for keeping the participant's personal life from unwanted publicity (Gay et al., 2009). According to Creswell (2008), there are some guidelines for conduct in regard to ethical issues, such as informing the participants of the purpose of the study, maintaining confidentiality, refraining from deceptive practices, sharing information with participants, being respectful of the research site, and maintaining collaboration with participants. Before conducting the data collection, ethical approval was secured from the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval – CF14/2673 – 2014001452) and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (application number 2014_002482).

To maintain ethical and privacy issues, participants were recruited through the director or manager of the preschools. Non direct contact was made with the children and their families. First, an explanatory letter and research flyer were provided to the director for recruiting participants. After receiving their permission, consent forms were supplied to the director. The consent forms were accompanied by an explanatory letter, highlighting the research purpose, the participant's involvement, the outcomes, and the possible contribution of the study, along with the researcher's contact details. The director of the centre was the person authorised to distribute the form to the parents and staffs. Their participation was entirely voluntary and free. Detailed explanation about the purpose and questions of the study were provided in the explanatory letter. The data collection procedures were also transparent in the explanatory letter

and consent form. They were assured that they were free to withdraw themselves from the study at any time. It was also confirmed that participants understood the aim of the study and would be comfortable with all the processes of data collection. Permission was secured through consent forms to visit the family and for their children to be photographed or videotaped for research purposes at home and at the centre. Participants gave permission to use their photographs in the thesis and in relevant publications (see the signed consent forms of participants in Appendix D). An important step was ensuring that every participant had signed a consent form for voluntary participation and confidentiality. The study looked closely at the positioning of adults in relation to children during free play time. In order to achieve the goals of the research and to increase the trustworthiness of the study (plus give the reader clear understanding of the cases), I have included photos in the study. This has meant that participants' images are visible. To successfully illustrate the research data to establish the identified facts, there is tension between the participants' confidentiality and presenting data in the thesis with clarity. Therefore, the researchers took various measures to ensure confidentiality of the participants' data. For example, sensitive questions were avoided in the study design. Furthermore, in the data analysis, interpretation, publications, thesis, and presentation, confidentiality of the participants and schools were adhered to by using pseudonyms instead of real names.

The researchers obtained full consent from participants to use their photos and comments for the research purposes. The participants agreed to publish their images in the journal articles and conference presentation. Therefore, the photos of the participants were used in the publications and thesis to increase the trustworthiness and to provide a clear understanding of the cases to the readers. However, the researchers ensured that the data used to present the research findings was not sensitive and not vulnerable in nature. For example, images of the participants were presented carefully in publications. Therefore, it is important for the researcher to acknowledge that in qualitative case study research, confidentiality can only be offered but not guaranteed.

Research limitations and challenges:

To conduct research in a naturalistic environment, it is challenging for the researcher to become familiar with the new environment and maintain appropriate privacy according to guidelines. To do this, it was necessary to visit the research sites several times, and scheduling these visits to suit the participants was challenging. Furthermore, as an interactive researcher using the

cultural-historical research approach, it is important to develop a good relationship with the participants at the research site, which was another challenge.

As shown in the methodology chapter, the data were collected from four focus families and two preschools. It was challenging to find four/three children (Indian cultural background) from one preschool. As a result, after discussion with my supervisors, we decided to focus on only two children from one preschool. I invited two preschools to participate in this study. Four focus children from two different preschools and their families agreed to participate in this study. However, it took two months to get the preschools' written permission to start the data collection. Data were collected from two sites to maximise the possibility of recruiting children from the required cultural background (Indian) in line with the original study design. In addition, one of the focus children had to withdraw from the study because their family suddenly need to return transition to India. Therefore, it was necessary to recruit another focus child from the same preschool, which was another challenge.

The study also had some limitations. First, as previously mentioned in the methodology chapter, approximately 86 hours of video recording of activities in two preschool and four home settings were collected in this research. However, all the data could not be presented in the thesis due to the mode of thesis including publication. In order to fulfil the individual journal's requirements with regard to word length, structure, and theme of the paper, only relevant data have been presented in each publication. However, a brief of the four different families' and two preschools' institutional practices have been included in this chapter. It is expected that more data will be presented through future publications.

Second, the findings of the study may not be generalised due to its sample size. Only four focus children, their families, and two preschools participated in this study due to the timeframe of PhD research.

Third, in cultural-historical methodology it is important to conduct a longitudinal study to understand the developmental changes of children and adults' contribution to these changes. However, it is difficult for the researcher to observe children over a long period of time due to the time constraints of doctoral research, which does not allow a researcher to draw a conclusion about the developmental changes of children and how adults contribute to these changes.

Fourth, this thesis only collected and considered the cultural background of the focus children. Due to privacy concerns from parents and the risk of overwhelming them with many questions in the consent form, we did not collect centre-based children's cultural background.

Fifth, due to the need to maintain the teacher-child ratio, the directors of the two preschools did not consent to arrange a group interview. Moreover, as a PhD student, it was not possible for me to allocate a budget for arranging a group interview after teachers' working hours.

Sixth, the data only provide knowledge of Indian-Australian family culture and did not provide the scope to observe children who live in India. It was not possible to generalise the findings in diverse cultural contexts such as Western, American, African, and other Asian countries. These limitations can be overcome by the suggestions provided in the "Future research direction" section in the concluding chapter (Chapter 10).

Conclusion:

A cultural-historical methodology was discussed in this chapter, and this framing informed the design of the study and how the study was undertaken to find the institutional pedagogical practices of adults in relation to their involvement in imaginative play to support preschool children's learning and development. This chapter provided an overview of how methodological tools were used in this study to meet the research aims. Part 2 briefly describes the overview of the Chapters and report the findings of the study.

Part 2: Findings of the study

Overview of thesis including publications:

Part 2 of this thesis present the principal findings of the study. It contains five chapters (from Chapter 5 to chapter 9). A thesis including publications presents all publications as a cohesive whole. Each chapter presents one or more associated research questions of this study, which are all in line with the main research question. At the end of the thesis, all finding chapters together show a whole story about how adults position themselves in children's imaginative play to support their learning and development.

As discussed in the methodology chapter, Vygotsky's (1966) conception of imaginative play, Kravtosov and Kravtsova's (2010) concept of "dual subjectivity", Hedegaard's (2012) concept of "motives and demands", and Fleer's (2010) pedagogical approach of "collective and individual imagining" were used in the publications within this thesis.

The preschool data is presented in the first three chapters where the papers show that teachers are involved in children's imaginative play for a minimal amount of time and mostly take on an outsider role. Chapters 8 and 9 focus on the pedagogical practices in the family home context. According to cultural-historical theory, one needs to study a child's development as a whole and collectively, as all the institutions contribute significantly to the child's development and learning process. The data from the home settings are presented in the last two chapters, and show what happens to the play when an adult is actively involved in collective imagining with the child. As mentioned previously, to study a child's development and learning process using the cultural-historical research methodology, it is important to consider everyday practices of the different institutional settings. The interview data and case examples have been used in the five chapters to understand the adults' and children's perspectives in relation to their role and positions in imaginative play. These chapters are interrelated and provided knowledge for early childhood researchers, teachers, policy makers, and parents of young children on adults' pedagogical positioning in children's imaginative play for supporting their learning and development.

Chapter 5 : Teachers' involvement in children's imaginative play

Declaration for thesis chapter:

In the case of Chapter 5, the nature and extent of my contribution to the chapter are shown in Table 5.1. The co-authors' contributions to this chapter are presented in Table 5.2.

Table 5.1: The candidate's contribution to the chapter

Nature of contribution	Extent of contribution (%)
Conception, key ideas, research investigation and development, and write-up	75%

Table 5.2: The co-authors' contribution to the chapter

Name	Nature of contribution	Extent of contribution (%)
Marilyn Fleer	Conceptual, analytical, and editorial	15%
Liang Li	Conceptual, analytical, and editorial	10%

The undersigned hereby certify that the above declaration correctly reflects the nature and extent of the candidate's and co-authors' contributions to the chapter.

Candidate's Signature: [redacted] Date: 07-04-18

Co-author's Signature: [redacted] Date: 07-04-18

Co-author's Signature: [redacted] Date: 07-04-18

Background of paper one:

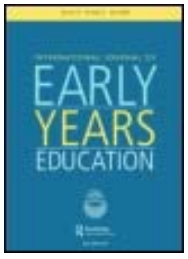
Paper One on teachers' involvement in children's imaginative play is the first findings chapter of this thesis. The paper was co-authored with my two supervisors as mentioned in the previous section. The paper was published in the *International Journal of Early Years Education (IJEYE*) on 21 March 2018. The link to the journal is https://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/VZ62ECT6NyZBDGjpbU3p/full

Below is information about the journal from its website.

> *International Journal of Early Years Education* (IJEYE) is one of the most prestigious early childhood journals in the world. IJEYE is a forum for researchers and practitioners to debate the theories, research, policy and practice which sustain effective early years education world-wide. IJEYE is an international journal publishing and promoting scholarly early childhood education research of interest to a wide group of people. All research articles in this journal have undergone rigorous peer review, based on initial editor screening and anonymized refereeing by at least two anonymous referees. The journal is issued four times annually and published by Taylor & Francis (Source: IJEYE website).

In the first paper, it is revealed how often teachers are involved in children's imaginative play and what their beliefs are about their role in supporting children's imaginative play. The data (65 hours' video and 2.5 hours of interview data) collected from the two preschools were reviewed and a number of tables developed (see Table 1, 2, 3, & 4 in Paper 1) that highlighted the amount of time children and teachers were involved in imaginative play. Hedegaard's (2008c) three levels of interpretation helped to analyse the data. Vygotsky's (1966) conception of play, imagination, and reality (2004) and Kravtsov's and Kravtsova's (2010) concept of "dual subjectivity" were applied in the thematic analysis. The results of this study show that despite the general importance of play, teachers' involvement in developing children's imaginative play appears to be minimal. The interviews showed that teachers' beliefs about their role in children's imaginative play are directly related to their physical proximity and understanding of the play narrative being enacted. This paper argues that focusing on teachers' involvement in children's play is an important but under-researched dimension of play-based pedagogies in early childhood education.

The following section presents the full paper.



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'We set up a small world': preschool teachers' involvement in children's imaginative play

Anamika Devi, Marilyn Fleer & Liang Li

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ABSTRACT
Grounded in Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory, this paper examines how often teachers are involved in children's imaginative play and discusses their beliefs about their role in supporting children's imaginative play. To investigate this problem, video (65 hours of digital observations) and interview data (two hours and 30 minutes) of 60 children with 7 teachers from two preschools in Australia were analysed. Using Vygotsky's [1966. "Play and Its Role in the Mental Development of the Child." *Voprosy Psikhologii* 12 (6): 62–76] cultural-historical concept of play, and Kravtsov and Kravtsova's [2010. "Play in the L.S. Vygotsky's Nonclassical Psychology." *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology* 48 (4): 25–41] conception of 'subject positioning' (being inside and outside of the play), it was found that despite the general importance of play, teachers' involvement in developing children's imaginative play appears to be minimal. The interviews showed that teachers' beliefs about their role in children's imaginative play are directly related to the distance of their physical proximity and understanding of the play narrative being enacted. This paper argues that focusing on teachers' involvement in children's play is an important but under-researched dimension of play-based pedagogies in early childhood education.

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Introduction

A plethora of literature examines the importance of adult roles in children's play for developing early mathematics, numeracy, art, literacy, writing, and cognitive skills (Björklund 2010; Degotardi 2010; Robson 2010; Hallam, Gupta, and Lee 2011; Robson and Rowe 2012). It has been argued by a number of researchers that adult–child interaction not only develops subject-based knowledge, but is also important for adults to co-construct the play with children for developing play-based learning (Fleer 2010; Kravtsov and Kravtsova 2010). Drawing upon cultural-historical theory, a number of studies have shown the importance of an adult's involvement in children's imaginative play for developing the quality of play (Lindqvist 1995; Bodrova 2008; Hakkarainen 2010; Hakkarainen and Bredikyte 2010) and its contribution to children's development and learning (Bodrova and Leong 2007; Fleer 2010; Fleer and Peers 2012; Hakkarainen, Bredikyte, Jakkula, and

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Munter 2013). These studies show that the adult's involvement in play is not just about interacting with children, but rather the adult needs to take the initiative to go inside of children's play or take an active role in their play (Lindqvist 1995; Hakkarainen 2010). The research also suggests that the adult can develop children's abstract thinking (Fleer 2010; Robson and Rowe 2012); support language development, scientific concepts (Sikder and Fleer 2015; Hao and Fleer 2016), and support cognitive, social, and emotional skills development (Bodrova 2008; Li 2012; Chen 2015). Further, it has been found that the adult can motivate children to become involved in the co-construction of storylines (Bredikyte 2011). These findings into the active role of the adult in children's play are seen as important in recent curriculum documentation in some countries, such as Australia and the United Kingdom, where the concept of intentional teaching is becoming increasingly common in teacher discourse. In this study, the data were collected in free play context from two Australian preschools. The national curriculum of Australia as a guide for the teachers emphasises that teachers need to 'be deliberate, thoughtful and purposeful to implement play-based learning to foster children's high-level thinking skills' (DEEWR 2009, 15). The curriculum also advices that educators should keep a balance between free play and teacher intervention in play to deliver academic content to children. However, what is not known, is how involved or not, teachers are in children's play. Therefore, the dual aim of this paper is to investigate how often teachers become involved in children's imaginative play and what might be their view of their role in children's imaginative play.

To achieve these aims, the paper begins by drawing upon Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory to discuss the concept of play in relation to imagination and creativity (Vygotsky 1966, 2004). The theoretical section is followed by details of the study design, the findings, and the conclusion.

Cultural-historical theoretical view on the play

The play is defined as the creation of an imaginary situation, in which children take the real experiences from reality and creatively develop playful narratives, changing the meaning of objects and actions in their play. In cultural-historical theory, imagination is the core content of children's play and play has been shown to make an important contribution to children's learning and development (Vygotsky 1966). Vygotsky (2004) rejects the view that imagination is egocentric, individually constructed, and disassociated from reality but suggested that imagination is collectively constructed and directly associated with reality. It is argued by Vygotsky (2004) that a child brings their real-life experiences into their play and creatively reconstruct their experiences. Therefore, the richer the children's past experiences, the richer the imagination to emerge in their play (Vygotsky 2004). Collective play by adults and children supports the co-construction of the imaginary situation. Research by Hakkarainen (2010) has shown that problems can be posed and solved inside of imaginative play. Adult–child collective engagement in imaginative play provides a platform for developing children's imagination and thinking (Fleer 2010; Li 2012; Devi, Fleer, and Li 2016).

Children act in different roles in imaginative play. Throughout their play, children creatively explore the rules of the society that govern these roles. Under these conditions, children move closer to reality (Elkonin 2005). In Vygotsky's (1966) example of two sisters

who pretend to be sisters in their imaginative play, he argues that the children followed the rules of sisterhood, such as holding hands (inside the play), saying that they are being sisters and sisters hold hands (outside of the imaginary play). As the sisters move from the imaginary situation to concentrating more on the action of sisterhood, they are positioning themselves further outside of the play. To understand the notion of the imaginative play, one needs to know the relations between being inside and being outside of the play. Vygotsky and contemporary scholars influenced by his work, particularly Kravtsov and Kravtsova (2010), have put forward the idea of moving inside and outside of an imaginative play situation.

Moving inside and outside of the imaginative play

In a cultural-historical conception of play, the participants of the imaginative play can take two positions or two forms of subjectiveness (Fleer 2010). For example, in doctor and patient role play, a child is inside of the play showing sadness as a crying patient whilst enjoying the play (outside of the play frame) whilst simultaneously in reality. Therefore, being inside and outside of the play allows the participants to better understand their roles as subjects of the play and at the same time, it allows the participants to control their play (Kravtsov and Kravtsova 2010; Kravtsova 2014). Development of internalised representation and development of abstract thinking becomes possible when children engage in two types of actions simultaneously – external and internal. Kravtsova (2014) argues that play complexity can only develop when children practise positioning themselves inside and outside of the play. Vygotsky (1966) states that children position themselves inside and outside of the play simultaneously, and through this, they develop understanding, and a differentiation between the object field (what can be seen) and the sense field (what they are imagining). However, Hakkarainen et al. (2013) argue that Vygotsky 'did not speculate about the role of adults in this differentiation' (216–217).

Kravtsov and Kravtsova (2010) elaborated on the idea of being inside and outside of the play in relation to adults' engagement. They suggested that the children can change their 'sense' perception about the object with the help of adults but it is only possible when the child and the adult are connected with 'special situational forms of communication' in play (31). Initially, a child changes the meaning of the object in imaginative play and he or she acquires the ability to perceive certain things differently depending on what type of 'sense' is given by the adult. Later, this helps the child to develop his or her perception and to change the 'meaning' of the object by himself or herself. To do this, the adult and the child need to enter collectively into the play as play partners to understand the general sense of the play or the positions of the other play partners in the play, or the 'logic and features of his or her own play behaviour' (Kravtsova 2014, 29). The questions that this poses, are how do the adults involve themselves in children's play, how often do they involve themselves in children's play or position themselves in children's play, and what are their beliefs about their roles? Whilst we know that a large number of studies have shown the importance of adults' involvement in children's play, little is known theoretically and empirically about how often teachers enter into children's imaginative play and what their beliefs about their roles in the play. Thus, the aim of this paper is to fill this gap.

Study design

Data gathering approach

According to a cultural-historical methodology that uses a digital data gathering approach, it is important to collect data in everyday settings. In this study, a visual digital methodology was adopted to collect data in preschool settings, where interview data were also used to build trustworthiness of the interpretations and iterative analysis process (Fleer and Ridgway 2014). Visual digital methodology gives the scope to the researchers to revisit the data as many times as required in order to deepen the analysis and to build trustworthiness of the data gathered and analysed (see Hedegaard and Fleer 2008). This was achieved through being able to re-play the data, and iteratively form categories, and determine findings as a result of multiple viewings by the three researchers. Visual data can capture the everyday traditional practices, transitions, and participants' perspectives. The data were collected through video camera, still camera, audio recorder, and field notes. There were two video cameras used in the research sites to capture the play settings. One roaming camera followed four focus children's 'free play' in order to capture teachers and children's joint play when it occurred. Another camera was positioned in the corner of the room on a tripod to shoot the play settings. The ethics approval was obtained from the relevant authorities before conducting the research. Teachers, families, and children were invited into the study through the manager of two preschools. We provided an explanatory letter to prospective participants which included information about the project aim and the process of conducting research. We mentioned to the participants that being in this study is voluntary and they are no under obligation to consent to participate. We also informed participants in the explanatory letter that some of the photographic images of the children and adults would be used for publications in journals.

In the overall study, a total of 65 hours (over eight weeks) of video observations were made in the two preschools. To achieve this, 30 visits (at least 4 visits of eight hours per week) were made to two preschools – Leafy preschool and Possum Preschool (pseudonym used). Both of the preschools are located in South Eastern Victoria, Australia and are multi-cultural in composition. The children are from families of European, Asian, Australian, and African heritage. Teachers were also informally interviewed and these sessions were video recorded. Approximately two to three hours of video data were captured. Due to the word limitations of the journal paper, only three focus children and their seven teachers have been analysed and discussed. This in-depth study followed three children across two preschools to gain insights into how play-based pedagogy was being experienced by the focus children in relation to the teachers' pedagogical practices. This is both a strength and a limitation of the study design. A detailed account from the perspective of the child gives a richness of data into children's play, but a discussion of a broader sample would give even further insights into the problem being examined in this paper. However, due to limitations, our research focused on three children only and did not represent all the children in the class.

Participants

The children discussed in this paper were born in Australia but the cultural background of their parents is Indian. During the data collection period, Jay was five years, Apa was four

years and four months, and JJ was four years and nine months. Pseudonyms have been used. All of the teachers in this study have an early childhood qualification and a minimum of four years teaching experience. Three teachers have a four-year university Bachelor degree and four teachers have a Diploma in Early Childhood Education from a technical college. The teachers are of European and Asian heritage background. Four teachers with 41 children were in the Leafy preschool (including 1 teacher who supported a child with additional needs) and 2 teachers with 19 children were in the Possum preschool during the data collection period. These teachers use the early years learning framework, which is an Australian curriculum that focuses on pedagogical practice and curriculum content. The practice of free play and intentional teaching to support children's learning is also used by these teachers. The curriculum describes intentional teaching as using particular strategies to teach concepts, such as, modelling, demonstrating, open questioning, speculating, explaining, engaging in shared thinking, and problem-solving to extend children's thinking and learning (DEEWR 2009, 15).

Data analysis

Data were analysed using Hedegaard's (2008) three levels of interpretation. The initial level is the *common sense interpretation* where the researchers looked at a single video clip and plotted the duration of the imaginative play (either adult-initiated or child-initiated), the duration of teacher–child involvement if any, the teachers' positions in that play, and their beliefs in terms of their roles in the imaginative play. The raw data were categorised and placed into folders as video clips. The second level of analysis is known as *situated practice interpretation*, where the researchers analysed a series of video clips in terms of patterns in activities that incorporated teacher and children's involvement in imaginative play. This was done to confirm the involvement patterns that emerged in the analysis and to build confidence in the findings that were emerging. This level helped the researcher to develop three tables (Tables 1–3), and to confirm the involvement patterns of teachers in the three focus children's imaginative play. Finally, the third level of analysis involved a *thematic and conceptual interpretation*. Vygotsky's (1966) theoretical concept of play, and Kravtsov and Kravtsova's (2010) concept of subject positioning (being inside and outside of the play) were used for answering the research questions. For instance, the researchers examined what was the type and duration of teacher–children collective involvement in imaginative play in day-to-day pedagogical practice, and then used these theoretical concepts to support conceptualising the noted patterns. This qualitative study observes the frequency of teachers' engagement in children's play to analyse the scope of interactions and play practices for learning. As such, the numerical scores are also considered in this qualitative study. The marker of a two-metre radius around the child was used as a measure of teacher proximity to children's play. It was determined that two metres would allow teachers to be close enough to children's play to allow them to hear the play narrative, see the play actions, and to be able to sensitively join the children's play if they wished.

Findings and discussion

There are two major outcomes of this study. The first finding shows that the frequency of teachers' involvement in children's imaginative play is minimal. Moreover, when teachers

Table 1. Teachers' and Jay's involvement in imaginative play from Leafy preschool.

Date	Imaginative play	Duration of the play	Teachers' involvement in the play	Characteristics of teachers' involvement in imaginative play		Duration of teachers' involvement in imaginative play	
				Being outside of the play	Being inside of the play	Being outside of the play	Being inside of the play
21-04-15	Building rainbow snake by connectors	50 minutes 5 seconds	T, AT1 and AT2 involved in the play	T – being as an **instructor** of the play. The teacher gave instructions to create a collective environment with peers		11 minutes 5 seconds	
				AT1 – being as an **instructor** of the play. The teacher gave instructions to continue the play		2 minutes	
				AT2 – being as a **material provider** of the play. The teacher provided materials to extend the play		3 minutes	
21-04-15	Building skate park by blocks	15 minutes	T involved in the play	T – being an **inquirer** of the play. She asked questions and took some photos		2 minutes	
23-04-15	Building juice maker with wooden blocks and connectors	11 minutes	There was no teacher involvement				
28-04-15	Building marble run by wooden blocks	27 minutes	AT1 and T involved in the play	AT1 – being a **material provider** of the play		1 min	
				T – being as an **adviser** of the play. The play was interrupted by the teacher to run another activity		3 minutes 30 seconds	
30-04-15	Building a car track with water pipes	21 minutes	AT3 involved in the play to provide materials	AT3 – being a **material provider**		1 min	
01-5-15	Using a paper box to make a CD player	27 minutes	T was asked by Jay to be involved in the play	T – being an **inquirer** of the play. T only asked questions and took photos		1 min	
08-05-15	Building a car track with bamboo sticks	22 minutes	AT1 was asked by Jay to be involved in the play	AT1 – being an **inquirer** of the play. AT1 only asked questions and took photos		1 min 20 seconds	
26-05-15	Making own imaginary story book	15 minutes	T was asked by Jay to involved in the play	T – being a **supporter** of the activity and helped Jay to write some texts		1 min 48 seconds	
28-05-15	Making cup cakes with sand	10 minutes	PT was actively involved with Jay as a play partner		PT – being an **active play partner**		10 minutes
		Total = 3 hours 18 minutes				Total = 27 minutes 43 seconds	Total = 10 minutes

Note: AT1 = Assistant Teacher 1; AT2 = Assistant Teacher 2; AT3 = Assistant Teacher 3; PT = Part time Teacher; T = Teacher.

Table 2. Teachers' and Apa's involvement in imaginative play from Leafy preschool.

				Characteristics of teachers' involvement in imaginative play		Duration of teachers' involvement in imaginative play	
Date	Imaginative play	Duration of the play	Teachers' involvement in the play	Being outside of the play	Being inside of the play	Being outside of the play	Being inside of the play
19-05-15	Mummy baby role play	10 minutes 5 seconds	There was no teacher involvement				
19-05-15	Mummy baby role play	16 minutes 32 seconds	There was no teacher involvement				
20-05-15	Mummy baby and superhero role play	21 minutes	PT involved in the play	PT – being an **observer and interrupter** of the play. PT stopped the play that was boisterous		2 min	
26-05-15	Doctor and vet owner role play	28 minutes	There was no teacher involvement				
25-05-15	Pretend to play in the doll house	16 minutes	There was no teacher involvement				
28-05-15	Doctor and vet owner role play	9 minutes 20 seconds	There was no teacher involvement				
28-05-15	Mummy baby role play inside the tent	14 minutes	There was no teacher involvement				
		Total = 1 hour 55 minutes				Total = 2 minutes	

involve themselves in imaginative play, they appear to primarily position themselves outside of children's play. The second finding shows that the teachers' involvement in children's imaginative play is directly connected to their beliefs about the role of teachers in children's play. These findings are discussed in this section.

Teachers–child[ren] collective involvement within imaginative play

The first result is summarised across three tables (Tables 1–3) and is conceptualised as a collective form of involvement in play. The collective play of three focus children and their teachers is shown as, Jay's (Table 1), Apa's (Table 2), and JJ's (Table 3) and their teachers' interactions over the period of data collection. The tables show the duration of children's and teachers' involvement in imaginative play. It also details how the teachers positioned themselves in relation to the children's play (i.e. being inside and outside of the play). The data entries are framed in relation to each imaginative play activity on each data collection day for a particular focus child. In most of the play scenarios, Jay, Apa and JJ were engaged in collective imaginative play with their peers.

We found that Jay's involvement in imaginative play totalled three hours and 18 minutes, whereas the teacher and assistant teachers' involvement in his play were 27 minutes and 43 seconds in the position of being outside of the play, and 10 minutes when inside of the play. In Table 1, a number of play events show Jay involved in

Table 3. Teachers' involvement in JJ's imaginative play from Possum preschool.

				Characteristics of teachers' involvement in imaginative play		Duration of teachers' involvement in imaginative play	
Date	Imaginative play	Length of the play	Teachers' involvement in the play	Being outside of the play	Being inside of the play	Being outside of the play	Being inside of the play
25-03-15	Fisherman role play	15 minutes	There was no teacher involvement				
31-03-15	Making spaceship with connectors	12 minutes	There was no teacher involvement				
02-04-15	Using recycled items to make TV and light	42 minutes	There was no teacher involvement				
07-04-15	Making road and car parking with wooden blocks	21 minutes	T complimented JJ's imaginative construction and provided some materials to extend the play	T – being as a **material provider**		2 minutes	
09-04-15	Making road and car parking with wooden blocks	10 minutes	T interrupted the play to engage JJ in practising hand writing	T – being as an **interrupter** of the play		1 min	
09-04-15	Making cookies with play dough	19 minutes	There was no teacher involvement				
10-04-15	Building a police station with connectors	52 minutes	There was no teacher involvement				
		Total = 2 hours 51 minutes				Total = 3 minutes	

Note: AT = Assistant Teacher; T = Teacher.

construction play for quite a long period of time within a peer group and sometimes he was involved twice a day (see date – 21/04/15) in one single theme. The data show that the part-time (PT) teacher was an active play partner in Jay's imaginative play for a short period of time on 28-05-15. However, most of the time the teachers and assistant teachers from Leafy preschool were involved in Jay's play only for one or two minutes, and usually from the position of an outsider to his play. The teachers did not go into Jay's imaginative play as a play partner, despite being invited by him to do so (see data from the dates – 01-05-15; 08-05-15; 26-05-15, in Table 1). We have found in one example (Reference 08-05-15) that Jay called AT1 to show the car track that he was building and where AT1 was seated within two metres from Jay's play. Being invited by Jay, the teacher repeatedly quizzed him, 'What is this? *(pointing at the car track)*, Which way the cars will go? Is the track wide enough for cars to go or they may fall down? How many cars can go through this track?' (J2 080515 H1, see Figure 1). The quizzing appeared to be done to understand Jay's intentions in the play and to extend Jay's learning. This echoes what he believes in children's play, saying that 'Children use their imagination through play. I think that is probably the best form of learning.' When considering the role of teachers in children's play, we have found in our data that the teachers positioned themselves as an inquirer (this example), and as is shown further below, as a supporter (e.g. 'I prefer to support children and help children in their imaginative play'), material provider (e.g. passes a child a block), and advisor (e.g. 'It can be a bridge').

Figure 1. Jay initiated constructive play with his friends.

In the same preschool (Leafy) the researchers also examined another child Apa and the same teachers' (Table 2) involvement in imaginative play. We found that the teachers were not physically near (within two metres) from Apa's imaginative play (see Table 2) where it was possible for them to hear and see the play. The duration of Apa's involvement in imaginative play is one hour and 55 minutes, but the teachers' involvement in the imaginative play was only for two minutes (date- 20/05/15, Mummy baby role play, see Table 2).

Interestingly, Apa was involved in the same play theme as Jay, of 'mummy baby role play' on four separate occasions when she developed the play collectively with her peers. However, the teachers were not involved in her play (date – 19-05-15; 20-05-15; 28-05-15). We found during our data collection that the duration of Apa's involvement in imaginative play was high compared to teachers' involvement in her play. It is shown in Table 2 that the teacher was involved momentarily in Apa's mummy baby role play (date- 20/05/15) (two minutes). However, the play was interrupted by the PT teacher. Due to the noise level of the children at play being high, the teacher asked the children to continue their play outdoors. She said 'Apa, please do not run inside the room. Use your inside voice, otherwise, you need to continue your superhero play outside.' Apa said 'ok, I am going outside to be a flying superhero' (A3 200515 H1) (see Figure 2).

Even though the PT teacher was physically available to see and hear Apa's play, she was not able to understand the idea of the play. Additionally, she did not notice how Apa was developing the play theme with the other play partners. This was because the PT positioned herself outside of the play and only observed the play for a period of two minutes. There appeared to be even less involvement in imaginative play between Apa and the teachers than was found between Jay and the same teachers in the same preschool.

Table 3 shows the duration and characteristics (inside or outside of the play) of teachers' involvement in JJ's imaginative play from a different preschool (Possum). The duration of JJ's involvement in imaginative play was two hours and 51 minutes, whereas the teachers' involvement in JJ's play was only three minutes in total. In one play vignette (date – 07/04/15, see Table 3) JJ and his friends were collectively involved in an imaginative play. The teacher was roaming around the room to set up the tabletop activity, close enough to see JJ's construction play, and able to hear the conversations. JJ and his friends decided to make a bridge on the road. They were looking for an object that could represent the bridge.

Figure 2. Apa initiated imaginative superhero role play with his friends.

The teacher said to them 'It can be your bridge' (giving a half circle wooden frame) before she withdrew herself from the spot (JJ2&3 070415 H1) (see Figure 3). The teacher's physical proximity was within two metres of JJ's play and provided her with the opportunity to read and extend the play through the provision of materials. However, the teacher did not take an active role or take the initiative to move closer to JJ's play so as to open the door to join in the play.

In another play scenario, JJ was developing an imaginative play with his peers but it was interrupted by the teacher as she wanted to implement a new agenda of handwriting practice for JJ. The teacher asked JJ, 'Could you please come with me for a moment? Your mother wants you to practice writing your name in here' (JJ3 90415 H1,2). Instead of creating a learning environment by moving inside of JJ's imaginative play, and expanding the play by creating the conditions for writing inside of his imaginary play, the teacher took him out of his play and directed his involvement in writing practice. These two examples show that her pedagogical practices are focused on setting up learning activities and providing different materials in children's play which has been reflected through her comments,

Figure 3. JJ initiated imaginative constructive play with his friend.

Table 4. Duration of teachers' involvement in children's imaginative play from both preschools.

Preschool	Duration of focus children's involvement in imaginative play	Duration of teachers' physical proximity to children's imaginative play	Duration of teachers' involvement in children's imaginative play	
			Being outside of the play	Being inside of the play
Leafy preschool	Jay = 3 hours 18 minutes	Jay = 2 hours 40 minutes	(Focus child Jay) *T* = 19 minutes AT1 = 4 minutes AT2 = 3 minutes AT3 = 1 min PT = 0	(Focus child Jay) *T* = 0 AT1 = 0 AT2 = 0 AT3 = 0 PT = 10 minutes
	Apa = 1 hour 55 minutes	Apa = 1 hour 53 minutes	(Focus child Apa) *T* = 0 AT1 = 0 AT2 = 0 AT3 = 0 PT = 2 minutes	(Focus child Apa) T = 0 AT1 = 0 AT2 = 0 AT3 = 0 PT = 0
Possum preschool	JJ = 2 hours 51 minutes	JJ = 2 hours 48 minutes	(Focus child JJ) *T* = 3 minutes AT = 0	(Focus child JJ) *T* = 0 AT = 0
Two preschools	Total = 8 hours 4 minutes	Total = 7 hours 21 minutes	Total = 32 minutes	Total = 10 minutes

> We setup the imaginative activity for children. For example, we have been talking about seasons for a couple of weeks so we setup some activities on the tables like some twigs, leafs and colourful shapes to let children imagine what autumn looks like. I prefer to support children and help children in their imaginative play.

Table 4 illustrates the total involvement of Jay, Apa, and JJ who are the three focus children involved in imaginative play. In total, the duration of the three focus children's involvement in imaginative play across a period of eight weeks of observations was eight hours and four minutes. In contrast, the duration of the teachers' physical proximity to children's play from two preschools was about seven hours and 21 minutes. The teachers' involvement in the imaginative play was only for 42 minutes.

In summary, our study found that the teachers primarily positioned themselves as being outside of the children's play (32 minutes). We have found in the data set the teachers were in various roles, such as observer, inquirer, instructor, and material provider. There was only one play event in which the teacher from Leafy preschool was actively involved in Jay's imaginative play and the duration was only for 10 minutes. The study has shown that despite the frequency of the children's involvement in imaginative play being extremely high in play-based settings, the frequency of teachers' involvement in children's imaginative play is limited. When we examined what teachers did during the times they were not in proximity to children's play, it appeared that the teachers from both preschools were usually setting up the educational activities, supporting table top activities such as cutting and pasting or doing craft work associated with number concepts and writing, and documenting these activities as observations of children's learning and development.

The teacher and assistant teachers from Leafy preschool were involved in Jay's imaginative play more than they were for Apa's imaginative play (see Tables 1 and 2). Similarly, the teacher and assistant teacher were involved in JJ's imaginative play from Possum preschool less than Jay's imaginative play (see Tables 1 and 3) from Leafy preschool. Also, the teacher from Leafy school mentioned 'Children bring their experiences from their surroundings. For example, this is what people say and what people do around them and what is repeated in their games and how they develop ideas.' The teacher from Possum preschool believes 'Children link everything in their play to what they know around them or from their families.' Therefore, the teachers from both preschools have considered children's everyday practices whilst they designed the play space. Despite the teachers' beliefs from both preschools that the adults make a significant contribution to children's imaginative play (for example teacher from Possum preschool said 'I prefer to *support* children and *helping* children with their imaginative play' (emphasis in the original); assistant teacher 1 from Leafy preschool emphasised physical positioning and involvement of adult in children's play, he mentioned 'I do believe *position* yourself in such a way that *they can invite you to their play*. I think put your upfront position and *ask questions* and *talk* with them. Be *involved* as much as possible' (emphasis in the original)), their involvement in the three focus children's imaginative play was limited compared with the children's own involvement in their imaginative play. The evidence from Table 4 shows PT from Leafy preschool went inside Jay's imaginative play only once and no other teachers took the initiative to join the children's imaginative play as play partner during the eight weeks of observations. It is important to consider that it may not be possible for a single group of teachers to always be available in children imaginative play when they have 41 or 19 children in their care. But at the same time it is important to study what teacher involvement in children's play in the new context of intentional teaching actually means in practice for an individual child (or three as our study has shown).

It has been shown that teachers, assistant teachers, and PT teachers involve themselves in children's imaginative play. Interestingly though, whenever they were in physical proximity to the play, they positioned themselves at the boundary, as outsiders to the play, as noted through their role as observers, inquirers, or material providers – possibly reflecting their belief that adults do not become directly involved in children's play (for example, the teacher from Leafy preschool said 'We *provide* children with a large area which may be a home corner or hospital corner or whatever the children's ideas are. We *set up* a small world giving a tray with might be insects or might be dinosaurs park or animal safari' (emphasis in the original)). Therefore, limiting their role, and not giving the possibility of joining the play as play partners to introduce curriculum content or to expand the play, as suggested by Kravtsov and Kravtsova (2010).

Teachers' perspectives about their role in children's imaginative play

The evidence shows that most of the teachers have a good understanding about the importance of imaginative play for children's learning, as well as acknowledging the importance of the adults' role in children's imaginative play. For instance, when we asked teachers about their understanding about imaginative play, their verbatim comments, were supportive:

Assistant teacher 3 from Leafy preschool:

> Children use their *imagination in most of their activities*. Even in a simple puzzle game, they bring their imagination and pretend a dinosaur is moving on it. (emphasis in the original)

Assistant teacher from Possum preschool:

> *Imagination is always part of children's play*, I think. They learn some experiences from home and surroundings like- mum cooking food or the shop-keeper selling groceries. So, definitely they use their experiences in their imaginative situation. (emphasis in the original)

Assistant teachers from both preschools stated that imagination is the best form of learning and children used their imagination in most of their activities. In line with Vygotsky's (2004) concept of imagination and creativity, the analysis of the interview data has shown that teachers believe that children bring their real-life experiences from the surrounding environment and recreate these in imaginative play. For example, the assistant teacher from Possum preschool mentioned that children gather all their own experiences from their home and bring them into their imaginative play. The teachers understand and values the importance of imaginative play (AT3 mentioned 'Children use their *imagination in most of their activities*' (emphasis in the original)). However, they have yet seen the importance of adults' being inside of children's play as play partners (Fleer 2015). The duration of teachers' involvement being outside of children's play was significantly high (only for 32 minutes) compared to being inside of children's play (only for 10 minutes) (see Table 4).

The researcher again asked all the teachers from the two preschools how they define the role of adults' in children's imaginative play, their verbatim comments follow:

Teacher from Leafy preschool:

> We *provide* children with a large area which may be a home corner or hospital corner or whatever the children's ideas are. We *set up* a small world giving a tray with might be insects or might be dinosaurs park or animal safari. So, children play out all kinds of different things that way or it can also be through children's ideas like a role play of the five little ducks song. Children are the ducks and pretend to go over the hill and far away and we *sing the song* but they go around behind the cupboard and then back into the position. (emphasis in the original)

Assistant teacher 1 from Leafy preschool:

> I do believe, *position* yourself in such a way that *they can invite you to their play*. I think, put yourself in upfront position and *ask questions* and *talk* with them. Be involved as much as possible. (emphasis in the original)

Assistant teacher 3 from Leafy preschool:

> It is good to be involved in their imaginative play so you will be able to know their thinking about the world. I *do ask questions before entering the play and get their permission*. I would prefer constantly *talking to them* and they like that. (emphasis in the original)

Assistant teacher from Possum preschool:

> I am involved in their play. First, I *ask* them if I can *join* in their play, and by involving myself, I can understand *what ideas are coming from their mind*. Sometimes I *draw* an imaginative play or sometimes I just *setup* the activity and *observe* how they play by using their experiences. (emphasis in the original)

Consistent with what was observed in this study, the teachers discussed their role as narrator, observer, material provider, and inquirer. For example, the teacher from Leafy preschool mentioned 'children are the ducks and pretend to go over the hill and far away and we sing the song but they go around behind the cupboard and then back into the position' which suggests her idea of involvement in children's imaginative role play is as a narrator. The claim that the teacher from Leafy preschool that 'we set-up a small world giving a tray with might be insects or might be dinosaurs park or animal safari' and the teacher's statement from Possum preschool that 'we have been talking about seasons for a couple of weeks so we set up some activities on the tables like some twigs, some leafs, and colourful leaves' foregrounds the role of the adult in play as one who sets up the activities for children.

Three other assistant teachers from two preschools talked about their pedagogical position in children's play as being inquirer by asking question/s. Interestingly, the assistant teachers from Leafy preschool and the assistant teacher from Possum preschool explicitly discussed entering children's play. In doing so, these assistant teachers nicely showed their respect for children's authority for their own play, preferring to obtain permission before entering their play. This was reflected by assistant teacher 3's comment that 'I do ask questions before entering the play and get their permission.' After gaining permission from children, the teachers take on the role of asking questions and being inquirers of ideas and interests. In summary, the findings of the research show that teachers view their role in children's play as observers, narrators, setting up the activity by providing materials, and asking questions and being inquirers of ideas and interests which has aligned with their pedagogical practices discussed previously (see Tables 1–3).

Two teachers and most of the assistant teachers from the two preschools mentioned that they try to be involved as much as possible in children's play. Interestingly though, their ideas about involvement in children's imaginative play is to position themselves outside of the play. Teachers believe that involvement in children's imaginative play is through setting up the activity, allowing time for play in their programme, asking questions, narrating the dramatic play, interacting with children, and observing children's play experience. For example, teachers from both preschools emphasised setting up the activity for children. The teachers believe that the main agenda for their pedagogical practice is to know about children's thinking, ideas, and interests. Our analysis of teachers' beliefs about imaginative play reveals that the preferred role of a teacher in imaginative play is to position themselves at the boundary of the imaginary situation as an observer, supporter, or active planner. If we bring together the concept of teacher 'positioning' to the reported beliefs of the observed teacher practices (Tables 1–3), it is evident that the teachers from both preschools rarely involved themselves in children's imaginative play. However, when they engaged, they preferred to be outside of the play (see Table 4). Overall, our analysis of the data shows teachers and assistant teachers believe in minimal involvement in children's play, but rather take on the role of a narrator, inquirer and active planner. The question now is how do teachers develop children's play as suggested by contemporary researchers (Lindqvist 1995; Fleer 2010; Hakkarainen et al. 2013) if they are not taking an active role in their play?

Conclusion

Taking into account all the outcomes of the study reported in this paper, there are two key findings that emerge. First, it was found that teachers spend a minimal amount of time involved in children's play. Despite teachers' beliefs about the importance of play in finding out about children's thinking, ideas, interests, and developing their imagination, they were only in close proximity to children's play. The second finding centred on the role teachers take when involved in children's play, which appears to be asking questions, observing children at play, acting as narrators of the play observed, and setting up play activities by providing materials. This is consistent with the traditional practice observed in many early childhood settings in Australia and New Zealand (Wood 2014; Fleer 2015). An adult's active involvement in play through the co-construction of the play with children is a new line of inquiry. Limited research exists on how teachers' actively join children's play by being inside of the imaginary situation with children. Adults' active engagement as was first introduced by Lindqvist (1995), when she introduced the key role that adults have in dramatisation through drama pedagogy, does not appear to be known by the teachers of this study. Other researchers, such as Hakkarainen (2010), Fleer (2010) have discussed the importance of teachers' involvement but have not specifically shown what is actually happening during the day-to-day pedagogical practice of preschools teachers' involvement in children's imaginative play. Consequently, the findings of the present study expand this important work by demonstrating empirically the amount of time that teachers are involved in children's imaginative play. This finding has not been reported in the previous literature.

The first finding is directly connected to the second finding of the study. Beliefs about the teachers' role in children's play focused on them acting as an observer, narrator, inquirer, and resource supplier. A traditional view can be conceptualised as the teacher being external to the play and not interfering in children's play, which is different from the image of play from a cultural-historical view. As researchers, we argue that this kind of traditional belief and practice positions the teachers at the boundary of the children's play and does not allow them to obtain a general sense of children's play. This belief about the teacher's role in play makes it more difficult for teachers to see their place inside of children's play or to have a key role inside of their play (Bodrova 2008; Fleer 2010; Hakkarainen 2010). However, this does not mean teachers should take over children's play. Rather, teachers may develop the play with children and sensitively expand the play themes. We suggest that the traditional view of teachers' role in children's play as not interfering only leaves them with the role of acting as an observer, narrator, inquirer, and resource supplier. Thus, many opportunities to support children with developing their play may be lost.

A large number of researchers have commented on the importance of the adults' active involvement in children's play. However, less is known about the duration and frequency of teachers' involvement in children's imaginative play during their actual day-to-day pedagogical practices in early childhood education settings. Therefore, we recommend more research to be undertaken to look at the teachers' pedagogical positioning in relation to being inside or outside of children's play. Research of this kind could add a new dimension to play-based pedagogy for early childhood settings.

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Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Chapter 6 : Teachers' pedagogical positioning in children's imaginative play

Declaration for thesis chapter:

In the case of Chapter 6, the nature and extent of my contribution to the chapter are shown in Table 6.1. The co-authors' contributions to this chapter are presented in Table 6.2.

Table 6.1: The candidate's contribution to the chapter

Nature of contribution	Extent of contribution (%)
Conception, key ideas, research investigation and development, and write-up	70%

Table 6.2: The co-Authors' contribution to the chapter

Name	Nature of contribution	Extent of contribution (%)
Marilyn Fleer	Conceptual, analytical, and editorial	15%
Liang Li	Conceptual, analytical, and editorial	15%

The undersigned hereby certify that the above declaration correctly reflects the nature and extent of the candidate's and co-authors' contributions to the chapter.

Candidate's Signature: [redacted] Date: 07-04-18

Co-author's Signature: [redacted] Date: 07-04-18

Co-author's Signature: [redacted] Date: 07-04-18

Background of paper two:

Paper one only reveals the teachers' pedagogical practice in relation to involvement in children's play and whether they were inside or outside of the play. However, the research aim required knowing more about teachers' roles in imaginative play, which is a contemporary topic in early childhood education. The previous paper (Paper 1) did not provide a deeper understanding about what type of roles teachers take in their everyday practice; that is, whether they are inside (act as a play partner) or outside (help children to gather materials) of the imaginative play. The second paper is aimed to fill this gap. This paper also fulfils the research aim. I developed the paper with my co-authors and submitted it to the Australasian Journal of Early Childhood (AJEC). The paper is currently under peer review. Below is the information about the journal from its website.

> The *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood* (AJEC) is Australasia's foremost scholarly journal and the world's longest-running major journal within the early childhood field. The journal presents new research and debate in the early childhood field, and is a great source of information for students, academics, and professionals with an interest in the future directions of early childhood education. The *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood* is published four times a year and features up-to-date articles designed to impart new information and encourage the critical exchange of ideas among practitioners, academics and students in the early childhood field.

Vygotsky's (2004) notion of imaginative play and Kravtsov and Kravtsova's (2010) conception of "double subjectivity" were used to identify six different pedagogical roles of teachers in children's imaginative play. The second paper provides an in-depth understanding in relation to teachers' involvement in children's play. This paper argues that a focus on teachers' pedagogical positioning from inside and outside of the imaginative play is an important approach that can be considered a new way to support intentional teaching practices of early childhood education in Australia.

The following section presents the full paper.

Preschool teachers' pedagogical positioning in relation to children's imaginative play

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Abstract

More recently in Western contexts, the pedagogical practices of early childhood education have tended to emphasise teachers' intentional involvement in play-based learning through sustained shared conversations to extend children's thinking (Meade et al., 2013). In this study, video data were gathered of eight teachers interacting with four focus children during imaginative play. In addition, teachers from two preschools were interviewed. Both Vygotsky's (2004) concept of imaginative play and Kravtsov and Kravtsova's (2010) conception of "double subjectivity" were used to identify six different pedagogical positions taken by teachers in children's imaginative play. The teachers studied drew primarily upon these six different types of pedagogical positioning in play to intentionally teach children, was in line with their interview comments. Our analysis also sought to determine whether the teachers' were imagining concepts with the children or they were outside of the play. This paper argues that the teachers' pedagogical positioning is important in supporting learning, which is a new way of conceptualising teaching practice in Australia.

Keywords: imaginative play, pedagogical positioning, outside and inside of the play, intentional teaching.

Introduction

A great deal of research has focused on adult's support of children's play in relation to adult–child interaction and the conversational patterns between them (McInnes, Howard, Miles, & Crowley, 2013; Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, & Taggart, 2004). A longitudinal study, Effective Provision of Preschool Education (EPPE), showed that teachers praise, encourage, ask questions and interact verbally with children and use appropriate language, values and practice to create an effective pedagogy (Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva, Muttock, Gilden, & Bell, 2002). According to Siraj-Blatchford et al. (2002), to implement the

most effective pedagogical progression, teachers should stimulate children's activity and maintain a balance between adult-led and child-initiated play. These authors mostly focused on the pedagogical technique of teachers' interactions of 'sustained shared thinking' to engage children in meaningful group discussions for developing better cognitive achievement and problem-solving skills (Sylva et al., 2004, p. 5). However, very little research has systematically examined the role of the teachers (Citation removed) in relation to pedagogical positioning in children's play, particularly in imaginative play. Singer, Nederend, Penninx, Tajik, and Boom (2014) found that close physical proximity of teachers in young children's play has a strong impact on play engagement. However, (citation removed) found in her empirical study that although teachers physically positioned themselves close to children's imaginative play, they were mostly outside of the children's play instead of being inside the children's play as a play partner. Therefore, although there has been research that has examined adult–child interaction to identify adults' support of children's play-based learning, very little research has focused on teachers' positions in children's play (citation reviewed). The aim of the study reported in this paper is to fill this gap by researching teachers' pedagogical practices in relation to their involvement, roles and positioning in children's imaginative play.

To achieve the goal of this paper, the topic of the adults' roles in children's imaginative play is discussed from a cultural-historical perspective, followed by presentation of the research design, findings and discussion, and conclusion.

A cultural-historical conception of the adults' role in children's play

According to Vygotsky (2004), children bring their real-life experiences into their play and creatively reconstruct their experiences in imaginary situations. They are always in movement between reality and an imaginary situation. Kravtsov and Kravtsova (2010) put forward the idea of simultaneously moving inside and outside of the play to elaborate the relationship between the real and the imaginary world and established the notion of two forms of subjectiveness in an imaginative play. They state that the players take two subjective positions in an imaginary situation. Children take a role as a player inside the imaginary situation but they can also stay outside of the play, to direct an aspect of the play; for example, by making statements such as "We need to find the right doll". Play creates the possibilities for children to consciously move in and out of an imaginary situation. They can perceive themselves in these two positions, and this gives a different point of view. This is called "dual or double subjectivity" (Kravtsov & Kravtsova, 2010, p. 33). Vygotsky's concept of play is further

extended by Kravtsov and Kravtsova (2010), who first elaborated the idea of being inside and outside of the imaginative play in relation to adults' engagement. Much of the literature on the active role of the adult in children's play has drawn upon Vygotsky's theory of imaginative play. By engaging in children's play actively, the adult gives 'sense' to children about how to change the 'meaning' of the object and work collaboratively to understand the general sense of the play (Kravtsov & Kravtsova, 2010).

The literature shows empirically and theoretically that adults' active involvement not only develops the quality of play (Bodrova 2008; Hakkarainen & Bredikite, 2014; Lindqvist, 1995) but also contributes to children's development and learning (citation removed). An adult's active involvement in children's imaginative play not only supports a child to become a skilful player, but it also helps to both enrich their social experiences and motivates the child to further engage in play (Karpov, 2005). The argument for an adult's active involvement in children's play has its beginning in the seminal work of Lindqvist (1995), who first introduced the idea of Playworld in Swedish preschool classrooms, where the teachers take a role in the play together with the children. The approach of Playworld is different to the present pedagogical practice of teachers who do not interfere in children's play in play-based settings (McInnes et al., 2013).

According to (citation removed), teachers spend a limited amount of time being involved (in close proximity) in children's play, and whenever they are involved, they mostly spend their time outside of children's play. In this paper, we go further and examine what types of roles teachers take when children are engaged in imaginative play. Traditionally, teachers have been advised not to interfere in children's play and to let children be freely involved in their own choice of play (Chien et al., 2010; Honomichl & Chen, 2012; Lillard et al., 2013). In recent research, teachers' involvement in children's play has been receiving attention; however, the quality of this involvement is questionable, as the teachers are more engaged in observing, guiding and supporting children's play (Weisberg, Hirsh-Pasek, & Golinkoff, 2013) rather than actively playing with children to support their learning and development (Fleer & Kamaralli, 2017; Wood, 2009). To understand the play theme, (citation removed) and Hakkarinen, Brėdikytė, Jakkula and Munter (2013) suggest that the adults need to position themselves inside (acting as a play partner) the imaginative play rather than following the traditional norm of acting as an observer or supporter and being outside of children's play. These studies suggest that more needs to be known about the roles of adults in children's play. Consequently, this

study examines when teachers join children's play as play partners inside of their imaginary play, and what role teachers take to support the development of children's play and learning.

Study design:

The data were collected from two preschools (Leafy Preschool and Possum Preschool; pseudonyms used) in Melbourne, Australia. The aim was to capture teachers-children play activity during imaginative play moments in their everyday settings. Ethics approval was obtained from the relevant authorities before conducting the research.

Sample

A total of 60 children, including four focus children (four to five years old), from a total of two preschools participated in this study. The four focus children attended the class four days in a week. At the time of data collection, Jay was 5 years old, Apa was 4.4 years old, Ushi was 4.10 years old and JJ was 4.9 years old. Pseudonyms have been used. Eight teachers (six teachers from Leafy Preschool – Bree, Scully, Eric, Ana, Ruba, and Sam; two teachers from Possum Preschool – Ling and Cath; pseudonyms used) participated in this study. Three of the teachers have a four-year university bachelor degree, four teachers have a diploma and one teacher has a Certificate III in Early Childhood Education from a technical college. They all have a minimum of four years' teaching experience. They are guided by the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF; DEEWR, 2009). The practice of free play and adult-guided teaching to support children's learning is used by the teachers in their everyday pedagogical practices.

Data gathering approach:

Inspired by a cultural-historical visual methodology, we decided to collect data using visual tools like a video camera, still camera, audio recorder, and photographs (citation removed). Video data provided the opportunity to capture everyday practices, and participants' perspectives, roles, and positions, and we revisited the data as many times as required for deep analysis (citation removed). In the course of the research, we used two video cameras (one was roaming to capture the focus children's practices and the other was placed on a tripod to capture play settings) to record the free play practices inside and outside of the preschools settings. The term 'free play' has been used here to mean that children have the freedom to choose and be involved in a range of play activities in the context of the preschool settings. A total of 65 hours of video data and 300 still photographs were collected over a period of eight weeks, with

supporting field notes. Teachers also participated in semi-structured interviews (2.5 hours in total) to determine their understanding about their involvement and role in children's play. The video data, photographic images, field notes and teachers' interviews enabled us to analyse the pedagogical practices of teachers in terms of their positioning in children's imaginative play. Pedagogical positioning explains the play participants' involvement inside (imaginary situation) and outside (real situation) of the imaginative play (see details in previous section).

Data analysis:

The videos were transcribed, clips were generated and the photos were printed in preparation for the analysis of the teachers' pedagogical positioning in children's imaginative play. Teachers' interview transcripts were also analysed in order to gain a better understanding of teachers' professional views about their roles and pedagogical positioning in children's play. A two meter radius marker around the child(ren) was used to measure the teachers' physical proximity to the children's play. This distance allowed teachers to be close enough to the children's play to hear the play narrative, see the play actions and sensitively join the children's play if they wished (see citation removed).

At the beginning of the data analysis, the collected data of the four focus children and preschool play activities (a large number of raw videos, interviews and photographs) were logged in separate folders. The video data of children's play and teachers' interviews were analysed using Hedegaard's (2008) three levels of interpretation: common sense, situated practice and thematic interpretation. Using these three levels of interpretation made it possible to systematically interpret the everyday activity settings in order to answer the research questions. The common sense interpretation involved looking closely looked at all the raw data and logging moments of teacher-child involvement in the imaginative play and when teachers were physically positioned close to children's play. Video clips of these play moments were then made and placed into folders in relation to how the teacher physically positioned herself/himself during play interactions, supported children's play and acted in children's play. Detail interview data were organised in written transcripts, with explicit comment on understanding how teachers' pedagogical practices related to their involvement in imaginative play. At the level of situated practice interpretation, a number of video clips of play moments were analysed to find the conceptual pattern of teachers' pedagogical roles inside the children's play. The physical positioning patterns of teachers and their interactions with children on a number of occasions allowed for a further categorisation to emerge in relation to the ways that

teachers positioned themselves in children's play. Eight teachers' pedagogical practice in relation to their role in imaginative play also helped to draw conceptual patterns of their involvement in play. For thematic interpretation, the empirical data of play moments and teachers' interviews were connected with the research aim. Vygotsky's notion of play and Kravtsov and Kravtsova's (2010) conception of "double subjectivity" were the central theoretical conceptual tools used to analyse the data. These two theoretical conceptual tools helped to identify the categories of teachers' pedagogical positions in imaginative play. To find teachers' pedagogical positions being inside and outside of the imaginative play, Vygotsky's cultural-historical theoretical view on play made it possible to see teachers' positions in these two situations (imaginary and real).

Findings and discussion:

The overall findings of this study showed that the teachers appeared to pedagogically position themselves in six different categories in the play context. These six categories were identified from a number of video clips of children's imaginative play moments and teachers' interview comments about their role in children's play:

1. The teacher supports the play through guided participation.
2. The teacher supports the play by providing materials.
3. The teacher is in a position to set up the activity and the teacher's intention is in parallel with the children's intention in the play activity.
4. The teacher asks children question/s to verbalise their thinking.
5. The teacher documents the play activity.
6. The teacher is inside the children's imaginative play.

For the first five categories, the teachers' pedagogical positioning was primarily outside of the children's imaginative play. In the last category, the teacher acted as an active player along with children and went inside the play. We have also found that teachers' interview comments regarding the adult's involvement in an imaginative play were directly related to their everyday pedagogical practice in preschool settings.

Each of the six categories of teachers' pedagogical roles are now discussed using a series of illustrative examples from the data set.

The teacher supports the play through guided participation:

In this category, the common pedagogical practices of teachers were to guide children to create the play theme and then allow the children to explore with maximum freedom. This category means that teachers guided children's play by providing advice and directing them in the development of the play. They preferred to take an outsider role, which was reflected a teacher's interview excerpt below:

> Children are given lots of choices in what they are doing and how they are doing with the support of the adult. I give suggestions or advice for developing their ideas. It is little bit *directed by the teacher* but again it also *self-directed*. It is a *combination* of their *choice* and *adult guidance*. (Bree, Leafy Preschool)

It can be seen that Bree respects the children's choice in their play, but also considers her their role as being a supporter to direct/guide children's play by giving the suggestions as an outsider, not as a play partner. The Australian EYLF states:

> In response to children's evolving ideas and interests, educators assess, anticipate and extend children's learning via open ended questioning, providing feedback, challenging their thinking and guiding their learning. They provide a balance between child led, child initiated and educator supported learning" (DEEWR, 2009, p. 5).

These statements support Bree's understanding of maintaining a blending act between adult guidance and children's free choices. According to her, the role of the adult in children's play is giving authority (given lots of choices) to children to choose their learning experiences.

This view is clearly interlinked with her pedagogical practice. For example, Bree created a playful learning condition when she found Jay and his friends are throwing the small connectors to each other near the construction play corner. Bree's close physical proximity gave her the opportunity to intentionally involve herself to create the constructive play setting for Jay (as she was walking around the room and was within two metres of the construction play corner, (J2&3 210415 H1). Bree involved herself in connecting the connectors and proposed to other children, "Jay is making a long tower, would you all like to join your connectors together with Jay?" (J2&3 210415 H1). She guided children through instructions, conversations, and suggestions. To facilitate guided participation, she took an initiative to connect the connectors, which the children might not have thought to do (Rogoff, 2003). The data showed that Bree withdrew herself from the play twice and joined in the activity of another

group of children (J2&3 210415 H1). Bree was moving effectively between the groups of children, and appeared to be ensuring play continued and that there was a combination of child-initiated and teacher-initiated play. Her interview comments, which stated that - "Children are given lots of choices in what they are doing and how they are doing with the support of the adult", shows that Bree provided the children with a number of choices and the freedom to choose their own activity. It shows her understanding about children having the right to choose and construct their own play with the support of adults. Video data J2&3 210415 H1 of an imaginative play moment supports the claim that Bree wanted to guide/support Jay and his friends to engage in constructive play while being outside of the play, therefore she was in a flickering movement. The data showed that she withdrew herself twice after making sure the children had free space to extend the play themselves. However, what was interesting in the example was that by withdrawing herself from Jay's play, she could not see how Jay changed the meaning of the tower into a "rainbow snake" and started to talk about the reptiles with friends (J2&3 210415 H1).

Bree was successful in intentionally engaging the children in the constructive play and was respectfully following the EYLF regarding the involvement of the teacher (maintain combination between child-led and adult-guided play) in children's play. She expected to develop the children's social skills through her involvement in the play and simultaneously promoted a range of play themes that were initiated by the children. However, the data appeared to show that Bree could not read the children's perspectives about the imaginary situation when they were changing the meaning of the objects (a long tower turned into a rainbow snake) because of her early withdrawal from the play. Had she remained involved in the play, she could have extended the children's understanding about the reptiles. Based on Bree's interview comments ("It is little bit directed by the teacher but again it also self-directed. It is a combination of their choice and adult guidance") and the video data (J2&3 210415 H1), we might say that her early withdrawal from the play was possibly triggered by her understanding of maintaining a concurrent combination of child-initiated play and teacher-initiated play to support her intentional teaching practice. We acknowledge that she might be restrained by multiple demands arising from the children, policy, and parents, which created a dilemma and hence required her to move effectively from one play situation to another play situation.

The teacher supports children's play by providing materials

The data showed that many teachers used their resourcing time for resourcing to set up the activities in their settings. One of the teachers (Ling) from Possum Preschool stated her understanding about the adult's role in the play as below.

> We have been talking about seasons from a couple of weeks so we set up activities on the table by *providing* some twigs, some leafs, and colourful shapes to let children imagine what autumn look like. I prefer to *support* children and *helping* children to their imaginative play.

Ling's understanding about her role is that she should support children in their imaginative play by resourcing the play. Her interview above reflects through her actual pedagogical practice. For example, when JJ and his friend, Malu (pseudonym was used), were making a long road and a police station with the wooden blocks, Ling was setting up different play activities on the tables within two metres of JJ's construction play (JJ2&3 070415 H1). Her close physical proximity allowed her to see the play and hear the children's conversation closely. She took an intentional step by providing a half-circle shaped wooden frame for their play when JJ and Malu decide to make a bridge on the road and were looking for an object to represent the bridge. Ling said to them, "*it can be your bridge*" (giving them the half-circle wooden frame) and then withdrew herself from the location (JJ2&3 070415 H1). However, her quick withdrawal from the play prevented her from seeing how the children amplified their conversation with each other and introduced a train track near the road.

Her interview comments and case example support the claim that Ling wants to extend the children's play by providing play materials. Therefore, she provided a wooden frame for JJ's constructive play (JJ2&3 070415 H1); however, her position as a material provider meant she stayed at the boundary of the play only, which prevented her from developing the play theme together with the children as one creative endeavour (Hakkarainen et al., 2013). The data showed that Ling was supporting the children by resourcing the play; however, she missed the opportunity to understand the children's perspectives when she withdrew herself while the children were expanding their imaginary experience by introducing an idea of a train track.

The teacher is in a position to set up the activity and teacher's intention is in parallel with the children's intention in the play activity

This category means teachers take the position of setting up different activities and trying to bring an educational agenda into play-based learning. In our study, this category appeared in a number of video clips. In the teachers' pedagogical practice, setting up the activity is an indication of involvement in children's play and support children for learning. It was reflected in Bree's comments:

> Most of the day we encourage children to join in some table top activities. We use different techniques to set play-based learning to develop social, numeracy and pre-literacy skills.

The above comments foreground the role of the teacher in play as one who sets up the activities for children. It shows her agenda is to teach social, literacy and numeracy skills through the tabletop activities. She used different techniques to combine play with learning goals, which reflects in her teaching practices. This practice was I found in one example in which, Bree set up a caterpillar activity by providing various resources like leaves, a punching machine, a caterpillar prop and papers to evaluate the children's counting ability. She tried to link the activity with the story of a very hungry caterpillar and invited children to make holes in a leaf using the punching machine. Bree also asked the children to write down beside each leaf how many holes they made in the leaf. She asked the children to pretend that the caterpillar had eaten some leaves by providing the answer to Apa's question, "how is the caterpillar going to eat the leaf?" Vima held the caterpillar and pretended that the caterpillar was eating a leaf. She moved the caterpillar prop around the leaf, saying "yum..yum". Bree smiled at Vima and said, "is it eating? yum..yum". Then she concentrated on Apa and praised her for writing numbers (A2&3 190515 H2). Bree only commented on Vima's imaginative action being outside the imaginary situation and quickly moved to Apa's writing activity. Rather she could have entered inside the imaginary situation together with Vima.

At the end of this activity, Bree mentioned to the researcher that the parents ask the teachers to teach academic concepts. When the researcher asked, "Why did you set up the caterpillar activity for children?" Bree said:

> We will display these crafts on the wall to show parents. Parents always think children should learn academic concepts through the direct way of teaching. However, we always try to let them know, children are learning through play and we are trying to establish this approach in our care.

Her comments and pedagogical practice help to substantiate that Bree's intention with the caterpillar activity was to establish an educational agenda to evaluate the children's literacy and numeracy ability. She wanted to set up a play-based learning activity where she could combine the learning agenda and imaginative play.

The common pedagogical practice of smuggling content knowledge into play that was undertaken by Bree in our study did not give her the opportunity to see the children's perspectives (Hedges, 2014). This situation appeared in a number of data sets. Bree responded to Apa's question by proposing to pretend that the caterpillar had eaten some leaves. However, she was at the boundary of the imaginary situation that was created by Apa through her question. She did not put herself in the imaginary situation where she could develop the play experience from Apa's perspective. In this example, the children wanted to develop an imaginary situation (through their action of pretending the caterpillar was eating the leaf and their verbalisation of the question about how the caterpillar is going to eat the leaf), and the teacher's pedagogical position outside of the imaginary situation (introducing a new technique of using a punching machine for counting numbers) was in a parallel world. This example illustrates how the teacher's pedagogical practice was to set up an educational agenda by providing materials to support play-based learning while the children were drawing on the materials to develop an imaginative play. In line with the argument of Singer et al. (2014) and (citation removed), the data from our study showed that the predominant mode of teacher involvement is setting up and resourcing children's play. In the previous category, it was found that Ling provided the materials but the play situation was created by JJ and his friend. This category showed that Bree introduced some play materials to set up her caterpillar activity, which supports our claim that setting up the activity and resourcing are common pedagogical roles of the teachers in the two preschools studied.

The teacher asks children question/s to verbalise their thinking:

Research has shown that teachers ask questions to promote good teacher-child relationships (Singer et al., 2014) and to invite children to verbalise their thinking (citation removed). This category means teachers ask children questions in order to understand their play experience and let them explain their ideas regarding play. In our investigation, we identified that teachers physically positioned themselves close to children's play to ask questions. In line with the dominance of asking questions, the teachers from both preschools were in the position of

inquirer by engaging in conversations with the children. The teacher (Eric) from Leafy Preschool elaborated on his position as below:

> I do believe to *position* yourself in such a way that children can invite you to their play. I think to put yourself in the upfront position and *ask questions* and *talk* with them. The best way to know their interests is probably to *ask them questions* and let them *explain*.

The above interview excerpt shows that Eric takes the role of an outsider in the children's play and lets children make the decisions that inform his teaching strategy. His pedagogical practice is not to interrupt the children's decision making, which shows his understanding about children's freedom in the play. From his point of view, positioning himself in a close proximity to children's play may provide an opportunity to be invited by the children into their play.

His understanding of being involved in children's play is to use different strategies, such as asking questions, welcoming children to explain and letting children make the decisions, which are reflected in his everyday pedagogical practices. One example is where Jay called Eric to show him the car track he was building. Eric was sitting within two metres of Jay's play. Being invited by Jay, Eric repeatedly quizzed him with question like "What is this? (pointing at the car track) Which way the cars will go? Is the track wide enough for cars to go or will they fall down? How many cars can go through this track?" (J2 080515 H1) to understand Jay's intentions and plan about the play. He asked Jay, "Are you sure? That is lots of cars" when Jay said that 10 cars will go through this narrow track. He also praised Jay, saying "Well done" when Jay was able to answer his questions (J2 080515 H1). He did not restrict his role by only asking questions, rather he went beyond by motivating Jay to think critically and become a problem solver. His intention was to let Jay elaborate and verbalise his thinking. Initially, Eric gave feedback to Jay by praising his work but he did not take initiative to extend the play theme and to understand the play from Jay's perspectives of involving Eric in his play. Eric was intentionally supporting Jay by asking questions to encourage him to evolve his ideas and interests. Even though Eric was close enough to Jay's imaginative play, he positioned himself at the boundary of the play and only invited Jay to verbalise his thinking.

The teacher documents the play activity

Documenting, organising, synthesising and interpreting the information that teachers gather from children's activities are the pedagogical practice of teachers in early childhood education (Leggett & Ford, 2013). This category was created as there were many instances in our study

where it was noted that teachers have appeared to be active planners who documented the play through field notes, photographs, asking questions and undertaking collective conversations to implement a program plan in relation to children's interests. One of the teachers (Cath) from Possum Preschool mentioned:

> I do prefer in incidental teaching. I take the opportunity to get children's instant ideas through asking questions and my observation of their free play. Then I plan something which is coming from their *interest*. Sometimes I *take notes* to discuss it in group time.

According to the EYLF, educators should "plan opportunities for intentional teaching and knowledge-building. They document and monitor children's learning" (DEEWR, 2009, p. 5). The above interview excerpt shows that Cath follows the EYLF where it emphasises that teachers should intentionally undertake planning and assessment by documenting and photographing the setting up of child-oriented play-based learning. She referred to her teaching practice as "incidental teaching", where she prefers to be involved in children's play through an instant approach of asking questions, inviting children into conversations and taking notes. In our study, a number of teachers appeared to be continuously documenting the children's conversation that elaborated on and verbalised their understanding of the materials. Therefore, in spite of the close physical proximity of the teachers in this study, they preferred to document children's ideas and interest and remain outside of the play.

The teacher is inside the children's imaginative play

In the cultural-historical point of view, the play partners in imaginative play move into imagination (inside the play) and reality (outside the play) collectively. The last category in our study represents the teacher's position as an active play partner. As shown in the example below, Sam (the assistant teacher) from Leafy Preschool actively joined in the collective play with focus child Apa and her friend Nellie (pseudonym used). At the beginning of the play, Apa asked Sam to play with her near the doll house. They picked up two dolls and pretended to be sisters. Apa said to Sam, "Sister, you have to go to school". Sam said "School!! But I am not ready yet. I was sleeping and I am late. I need your help to dress up". Apa said "Ok. I am helping you". She said to Sam "Come on sister quick. We will be late". Sam followed Apa. While pointing to a wooden box near the doll house, Apa said "This is your school. Daddy will come to pick you up".

At that time, another child, Nellie, joined in the play and took the doll from Sam. Apa said "Nellie, that is teacher's doll, not yours". Sam said, "It is ok Apa, we will play with another doll which can be the brother". Apa proposed to introduce a new role of grandmother instead of brother. They all agreed to continue the play with the new character of grandmother. After a while, Sam withdrew herself from the play.

In this example, Sam and the children were distributing the roles in the play as they developed the play theme together by moving backward and forward between reality and the imaginary situation in their collective conversations (Vygotsky, 2004). Sam was emotionally and intellectually involved in the play as a play partner. She was simultaneously moving inside and outside of the play, which supported her dual positions in the imaginative play. Her dual positioning of being inside and outside of the play gave her the opportunity to better understand Apa's perspectives of the play. Furthermore, it helped her to identify the ways in which she could support Apa's learning and development within the teaching-learning nexus.

Sam was able to support the children's understanding of the social relationships, developing the rules of the society, and creating the play theme. After Nellie became involved in the play, they had to negotiate with each other about how to distribute the roles among themselves, which supported the development of Apa's understanding about role distribution. Sam collectively developed the play narrative through a shared understanding with Apa which supported Apa in becoming a skilful player (Karpov, 2005). Apa and Sam were co-constructed the scene (Sam said, "School!! But I am not ready yet. I was sleeping and I am late. I need your help to dress up". Apa said "Ok. I am helping you"), changing the meaning of the object (wooden box as a school) and negotiating for distribution of the roles in the context of the play plot (Lindqvist, 1995). Being an active play partner, Apa was able to extend their imaginative play together by introducing the new role of grandma. Being inside of the play Sam had an opportunity to build a playmate relationship with Apa. This playmate relationship allowed her to use the same language as Apa instead of using instructional language. Being both inside and outside of the play simultaneously allowed Sam to understand the children's perspectives and create a play-based learning situation.

By analysing the case examples and the teachers' interview data across the study's data sets, we found that teachers' pedagogical practices are in line with their interview comments about their understanding of adults' involvement in play. In the first category, Bree tried to establish a blending act between guiding the play and providing sufficient freedom for the children to

play independently, which reflected in her comment that "it is little bit directed by the teacher but again it also self-directed. It is a combination of their choice and adult guidance". Teachers being positioned outside of the play, did not allow them to get the holistic view of the play context, but rather influenced them to focus on learning outcomes in the context of their play (citation removed). Being outside of the play, teachers interacted with children by asking questions to understand the play theme but their dialogues were not aligned with the actual play context, which may have restricted their opportunity to extend the play itself. The teachers' dialogues with the children were initiated to understand the children's interest, which would assist them to set up the activities to match these interests. Also, the focus of some teachers on creating intentional teaching practice to teach subject-based knowledge potentially took children away from the imaginary situation, as explained in category 3. In the first five categories, teachers tried to establish their teaching agenda; however, as they were outside of the play, they could not understand the children's perspectives. Our last category showed that the teacher's active participation helped Apa to develop her understanding about role distribution, provided a platform to make the play more academic goal-oriented, gave the teacher an opportunity to understand Apa's perspectives and developed the play itself. By entering into the play, the teacher developed an understanding of the general sense of the play or the position of the other play partners collectively (Kravtsov & Kravtsova, 2010). Sam had an opportunity to improvise and extend the narratives of the play when she co-constructed the play together with Apa. However, the data are only based on two preschools in Melbourne; therefore, the finding must be considered in the context of the limitations of the sample size.

Conclusion:

In this investigation, we studied children's imaginative play to identify the position teachers take in supporting play-based learning. We have identified six different pedagogical roles of teachers during their involvement in children's play. Our study showed that the teachers' pedagogical practice and their understanding in relation to their involvement in play are oriented by the EYLF. The EYLF (DEEWR, 2009, pp. 4-6) emphasises that educators take on many roles in play with children and use a range of strategies to support learning. Teachers value collaborative learning (category 6), and they assess, anticipate and extend children's learning via open-ended questioning, providing feedback, challenging their thinking and guiding their learning (see categories 1, 4 & 5). They provide materials to create learning environments that encourage children to explore, solve problems, create and construct (see categories 2 & 3). They maintained combination between child-led, child-initiated and

educator-supported learning, the teachers in our study were at the boundary of the play. They appeared to be smuggling in content (Hedges, 2014) into the children's play by setting up activities, resourcing the play (see categories 2 & 3), documenting the play (see category 5) and guiding the play as a guided participant (see category 1).

The first five categories showed that the teachers could not gain the children's perspectives because of their early withdrawal from the play. The teachers were physically close enough (within two metres) to see the play moments and hear the children's conversations; however, their pedagogical practice of staying at the boundary of the play did not allow them to understand the play moments created by the children (see categories 1, 2 & 4). They tried to understand the play theme through the roles of supporter, material providers, inquirer and active planner. However, except for the last category, the teachers were mostly busy focusing on learning outcomes rather than positioning themselves physically and psychologically inside the children's play as a play partner to understand their perspectives. In the last category, the teacher, Sam, was physically and psychologically inside the play as an active play partner. She extended the play of the children, developed the children's understanding about role distribution and enriched the imaginary experience of the children. Sam was in her teaching role but at the same time she was in a play partner role, which opened the door for her to support learning through play in ways that were sensitive to the child's perspective.

The result shows that when the teachers take the role of observer, enquirer, resource provider, and active planner, they are outside of the children's play and less in tune with the child's perspective. However, it was also found that when the teacher is more in tune with the children's imagining, the teacher has the opportunity to better understand the play themes from the children's perspectives.

This study makes a contribution to early childhood scholarship and practice by showing a range of categories of teachers' pedagogical roles in the context of being inside and outside of children's play. The results also show the impact of those roles on the learning outcomes of children's imaginative play. Considering teachers' pedagogical positioning in terms of being inside and outside of the play is a new conceptualisation of teacher practices in early childhood education, which can give policy makers and researchers an alternative way of thinking about the development of intentional teaching practices. We argue that the pedagogical practice of being inside the play can provide the opportunity to understand the children's perspectives while still meeting teachers' educational agenda of delivering a teaching program that supports

children's learning. The findings of the study reported in this paper suggest further research is still needed to understand teachers' pedagogical positioning both inside and outside of the imaginative play in the context of teaching practice in early childhood education in Australia.

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Chapter 7 : Children's motive orientation to play and adults' pedagogical demand of learning draw transitional process across activity settings

Declaration for thesis chapter:

In the case of Chapter 7, the nature and extent of my contribution to the chapter is showed in Table 7.1. The co-authors' contribution to this chapter are also presented in Table 7.2.

Table 7.1: The candidate's contribution to the chapter

Nature of Contribution	Extent of contribution (%)
Conception, key ideas, research investigation and development, and write-up	70%

Table 7.2: The co-authors' contribution to the chapter

Name	Nature of contribution	Extent of contribution (%)
Marilyn Fleer	Conceptual, analytical, write-up and editorial	20%
Liang Li	Conceptual, analytical, and editorial	10%

The undersigned hereby certify that the above declaration correctly reflects the nature and extent of the candidate's and co-authors' contributions to the chapter.

Candidate's Signature: [redacted] Date: 07-04-18

Co-author's Signature: [redacted] Date: 07-04-18

Co-author's Signature: [redacted] Date: 07-04-18

Background of paper three:

The first and second papers provide an understanding about how often teachers and children are involved in imaginative play in their everyday free play moments and what types of roles teachers take inside and outside of the play. However, what is still not known are the teachers' and children demands on each other while they engage in the learning process through imaginative play. It is not known how the teachers create the conditions and pedagogically position themselves to motivate children to engage in their initiated activity. This book chapter (Chapter 7) discusses the motive orientation of children and the pedagogical demands of teachers through the process of transition between two activities in a preschool setting. Data from 65 hours of video and 2.5 hours of semi structured interviews were used to answer the research questions of this paper. Vygotsky's (1998) cultural-historical theoretical lens and Hedegaard's (2012b) theoretical concept of motives and demands were used for the data analysis. The children's motive orientation and how this creates demands upon the teacher is examined at the same time as examining the teacher's practices and how they make demands upon the children during the transitional process. Paper Three was submitted as a chapter in the book *Children's transition in everyday life and across institutions* (Bloomsbury Publisher). The chapter has been accepted. The editor gave positive feedback on the chapter and asked for a minor revision of the chapter. Below is the information about the book that was received from the book editors.

> This edited book is about transitions in educational settings. It is suitable for postgraduates, academics, researchers and policy makers. Transition is conceptualized holistically so that the chapters will not only focus on the person transitioning, but also the institutions in which the person is transitioning from and to. Researchers from range of countries contributing to the book, this giving the book international perspective. It is expected that the book will be 100,00 words in length and will include up to 20 figures or photographs.

The result of this chapter shows that teachers' motive orientation to teach subject-based knowledge holds back children's play motive. The study also found that the teacher did not understand the children's perspectives or consider how to make learning more motivating for children by being involved in the imaginative play that was developing between the children.

The following section presents the full book chapter.

Transition between child-initiated imaginative play and teacher-initiated activity: An analysis of children's motives and teacher's pedagogical demands in a preschool context

Abstract:

Children's learning and development depends upon their participation in different institutional practices where transition is an ongoing process of their everyday life (Hedegaard, 2014). However, we know little about children's motives and teachers' pedagogical demands on learning through play in relation to the process of transition between activity settings within a preschool. Therefore, we follow how children transition from child-initiated play to a teacher-initiated activity, and in so doing examine the children's motive orientation and how this creates demands upon the teacher (Hedegaard 2012b, Vygotsky,1998). We also investigate the teacher's practices and pay attention to how the activity setting created by the teacher makes demands upon the children. The study collected digital video observations, and audio taped semi-structured interviews from one preschool in Australia with 42 children (median age 4.5 years) and six teachers. The results reveal that children's motive orientation to play in the preschool and the teacher's pedagogical demands on children to learn maths concepts created a dynamic tension between activity settings. It is thought that transitions between activity settings create new conditions for children's development. The findings suggest that some pedagogical practices place academic demands on children that are not sensitive to children's play motive, and teachers did not read the play activities of the children or consider how to make learning more motivating. This chapter argues that adults need to be attuned to children's play motive in the transitional process of moving between activity settings, where academic demands are increasingly made on children as part of new institutional practices for teaching concepts to preschool aged children.

Keywords: demands, motives, child-initiated play, teacher-initiated activity, transition.

Introduction:

In recent educational psychology research, inspired by Vygotskian cultural-historical theory, children's learning and development have been conceptualized in relation to their participation in different institutional settings such as family, preschool, school, community and play groups (Hedegaard & Edwards, 2014). Children are always in a transitional process, meeting social

and institutional demands in their everyday life. Transitional processes across different educational settings and across different countries have been examined by a growing number of researchers from the perspective of cultural-historical theory (Adams & Fleer, 2014; Bøttcher, 2014; Hedegaard, 2014; Sánchez-Medina, Macías-Gómez-Stern, Martínez-Lozano, 2014). However, transitional processes between two activity settings in one preschool setting has received less attention. Grounded in Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory, this chapter examines the demands that teachers' pedagogical practices make upon children as they transition from a child-initiated play activity to a learning activity in an Australian preschool. The aim of this chapter is to understand the transitional demands experienced by children who move between two activity settings (child-initiated play and adult-initiated activity) in a preschool context.

Wood (2014) states that child-initiated play has its own qualities and a child can choose his or her own activities, play partners, and themes. But child-initiated play is always under the control of the early childhood teacher who organizes the space, time and resources for play. That is, child-initiated free play is shaped by institutional practices that are governed by policy frameworks, teachers' beliefs and values, parents' expectations and the pushdown effects from the primary curriculum that is becoming increasingly of concern in some Western heritage communities (Wood, 2014). In this sense, a child has the freedom to choose their play theme, play partner, and play materials, however, the teachers prepare the play settings according to their own educational agenda (Wood, 2014). What is known is that adult-initiated activity is usually planned in accordance with curriculum goals, often structured, and resourced and managed by the adult to promote specific outcomes (Saracho, 2012). Importantly, the national frameworks for early childhood education in many countries, such as the UK and Australia, suggest that teachers should maintain a balance between child-initiated play and adult-guided activities through taking the role of an organizer, supporter, and director in play-based learning (DEEWR, 2009; Department of Education, 2014).

According to Wood (2014), this means that the teacher should focus on organising a learning activity that retains elements of play or playfulness, and where the pedagogical 'recipe' seeks to foreground a balance between child-initiated play and adult-initiated activity. Other approaches take into account children's perspectives in play-based learning, such as a dialectical model of conceptual play (Fleer 2010, 2011), which focuses on the child's motive for play and where the adult can take an active position to teach academic concepts to children

in a playful manner, instead of giving direct instructions. The practical situation of pedagogical practice in preschools is different because “pedagogic progression in play is framed as a transition from child-initiated play to formal, adult-initiated activities, which reinforces the point that play is valued not for what it is but for what it leads to in educational terms” as mentioned by Wood (2014, p. 153). This is an emerging tension in early childhood education, especially at the preschool level where children are in a transitional process from informal child-initiated play to formal educational activity initiated by teachers. This raises the dialectical problem of how teachers change playful activity settings to be about learning academic concepts, and how children change activity settings that support learning to make them more playful.

There are a number of cultural-historical studies that draw attention to the transition between activity settings. These studies focus on children’s learning and development through researching the transition between different practice settings; for example, from home to school or from preschool to school (Hedegaard & Fleer, 2013; Corsaro & Molinari, 2000). However, the process of transition between activities and their relationship to learning are rarely studied and conceptualized (Hedegaard & Edwards, 2014). The national early childhood framework in Australia, within which the present study is located, focuses on children's transition from one institutional setting to another, for example, "moving between home and childhood setting, between a range of different early childhood settings, or from childhood setting to full-time school" (DEEWR, 2009, p.46). The framework emphasizes to educators that they should plan an effective transition between settings (home to preschool or preschool to school). However, this document does not address the need for successful transitions between activities within a preschool where academic learning is increasingly becoming an everyday practice for children. In addition, very few studies have looked at how a transition is experienced between two activity settings within a preschool (exception is Fleer, 2014). As such, we were interested to know “How do children transition between activity settings within a preschool?”; “What happens to the children's motive orientation when teachers make learning demands upon children in play-based settings?”; and “What demands do children make upon teachers when their motive orientation is to play rather than to learning?”

The aim of this chapter is to address these questions. To achieve this aim, the chapter begins with a discussion of the conceptualization of transition and the concept of motives and demands from a cultural-historical perspective. This is followed by the presentation of the study, the

findings which are based on one case study and interview data of a teacher from one preschool, and concludes with a discussion of the results of this study.

The cultural-historical conceptualization of transitions

Elkonin (1999) showed how children's leading motive of play changes to the new leading motive of learning through the process of transition during different age periods, and as Hedegaard (2014) has elaborated in her research, as they move from kindergarten to school. They both point out that children's transition from one practice to another may create a crisis in a stable period of their age. Each stage of a crisis may change in relation to the dynamic changes in the developmental process of children, which in turn is related to social reality. According to Hedegaard (2014), when children move across different institutions their motive orientation may be changed by the demands and conditions that are constructed by different institutions in society. From the perspective of cultural-historical theory, these changing motives and demands can create a crisis in children's life which are constructed by changeable social situations.

Vygotsky (1998) and Elkonin (1999) saw the transition as horizontal, where a child's entrance to a new practice is prescribed at the societal level. Inspired by cultural-historical theory, Hedegaard (2014) puts forward a view of transition in a vertical movement; as a zigzag transition where children move between different institutions (from school to after school care or from home to school) in everyday life. Hedegaard also mentions that a child has social relations with his or her surroundings and a child enters into different activities in different institutional practices through multiple interactions with members of the society. To understand how children learn and develop, Hedegaard (2014) stresses the need to conceptualise children and their environment as a unity and examine the changes of children's development in that unity where learning takes place.

In summary, studies have given attention to transition in relation to children's early learning and development from a cultural-historical perspective (Fleer, 2014; Hedegaard, 2014; Winter-Lindqvist, 2012; Zittoun, 2006). They have focused on young children's learning experiences in the context of moving between different practice settings from home to preschool or from preschool to school (Hedegaard & Fleer, 2013). Some studies have shown how children's emotional experiences are affected by the process of transitions as they move from one country to another (Adams & Fleer, 2014; Moore & Barker, 2012), and how children's learning can

take place through '*microgenetic movement*s' within one concrete activity setting (Fleer, 2014). Some studies focus on age-specific nature of transitions (Hviid, 2008; Märtsin, 2010; Zittoun, 2006) and some studies pay attention to children's experiences while starting school in a new country (Ebbeck & Reus, 2005). However, these studies have not given attention to the transition between activity settings within a single preschool institution where the relations between children's motives and teacher demands upon children are the focus. Therefore, through a cultural-historical conception of transition, we can more holistically study the motives and demands made on children/teachers as they engage in learning activities within play-based settings.

Understanding motives and demands from a cultural-historical perspective

If we look at defining 'motive', we can see that, unlike other concepts in cultural-historical theory, there is no single standard definition of 'motive' in this theory. However, some key scholars have taken a step to define motives and demands through their empirical research. For example, Chaiklin (2012, p. 223) says, "Motives should be defined and limited more rigorously in relation to societal needs". Further, Fleer (2012, 2014) mentions that motive is not something that is internally driven but culturally developed and generated through observing or participating in an everyday activity. Further, it is pointed out by Hedegaard (2012b) that a motive captures a child's intentional actions and interactions with other members of the society in an activity setting. Motives are related to the practices and values in a society which are collectively structured rather than individually constructed (Hedegaard, 2012a). According to Hedegaard (2014), when children move from one institution to another, sometimes their transition can be smoother or sometimes not because different institutional demands can create different institutional conditions. The motive orientation of a person is shaped by both the societal values and the institutional practices which are created through societal traditions (Hedegaard, 2012a).

To study a person's development and learning, we must also consider the institutional practices that a child experiences. In cultural-historical theory, the relation between the person's motives and the demands of an institution is seen as a mediated relationship (Hedgaard, 2014). Hedegaard (2014) also mentions that development takes place when a child's motive orientation meets new institutional demands. For example, when a child enters into a school from a preschool, the child's motive orientation for play can be changed through a transitional process in order to deal with the new institutional demands of learning (such as reading,

writing, and counting). According to Hedegaard (2012b), a "child's motives are related to what is meaningful and important for them" (p. 134) and "an activity is only motivating for a child if the activity setting is linked with the child's already developed motives" (Fleer, 2014, p. 206). Preschool practices generally have foregrounded play-based practices, but in recent times this had started to change, and there is an expectation in some countries, such as Australia for teachers to set-up learning in line with new preschool curriculum demands. This means it has become increasingly important to study the motive orientation for play of preschool children in the new context of learning instruction (Fleer, 2010; 2012). Hedegaard (2012b) has argued that in an educational setting a teacher needs to be aware of the "child's motive orientation as well as directing the introduced activities towards supporting new motive" (p. 135). However, the dominant leading activity of learning in a school curriculum can sometimes create a difficult transitional process for preschool children due to different demands (to play or to learn) in an educational setting.

Researchers, teachers, and policymakers in early childhood education have focused on the broader transitional process from preschool to school. But, less attention has been directed to how young children meet the new learning conditions that teachers create during free play time where both children's initiated play is featured and learning activities are set up by the teacher. In these situations, children in small groups are called over to the tables to participate in the learning activity prepared by the teacher. Therefore, it becomes important is to examine the transitional process between these two different activity settings.

Research design

To understand children's perspectives in a play setting through the lens of cultural-historical theory, we have to consider children's social relations to their environment and the surrounding circumstances. That means societal, institutional and activity settings cannot be ignored. According to Hedegaard (2008a), a researcher must consider three different perspectives when examining an individual child's development and learning within an activity setting – the societal, the institutional, and the individual perspective. Hedegaard (2012a, p.18) states that "These planes are interrelated: society creates the conditions for institutions with its activity settings and persons do so with their specific biological conditions". We have used Hedegaard's proposed perspectives during our data analysis and framed our research design in relation to her model.

The context of the preschool:

In our research, the data were collected from a preschool (Leafy preschool, pseudonym used) which is integrated with an early learning centre in Melbourne, Australia. State and Federal government funding supported the establishment of this early learning centre. The Leafy preschool is situated in a small suburb in Melbourne where people are from European, Asian, African, South-Asian and Australian heritage backgrounds. Children at preschool enjoy the spacious colorful room and outdoor play area designed and equipped to provide an engaging learning environment for them.

Participants:

Children:

A total of 42 children including two focus children participated in the study. Both of the focus children are from Australian-Indian cultural background and their parents migrated from India nearly five years ago. They both attend the preschool four days a week. In this chapter we present material related to one of the focus children, Apa (a pseudonym used) a four-year-old girl who has an older sister.

Teachers:

Four full-time and two part-time teachers were in the room during the data collection periods. Most of the teachers in this preschool have a Bachelor and diploma degree in Early Childhood Education and have at least four years of work experience in the early childhood sector. They follow the Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR, 2009), the Australian national curriculum, to implement a play-based learning approach into their practice. They set up the activities and evaluate children's learning using the Early Years Learning Framework.

For this particular chapter, we have used only one video example as illustrations of the transition between two activity settings. The teacher Bree (a pseudonym used) was interviewed using semi-structured interview techniques, and the results are also presented in this chapter.

Data gathering approach:

To focus on the motive orientation of children and the pedagogical demands of teachers in relation to the ongoing and dynamic aspects of social interaction, it is essential to study the

children and adults' verbal and nonverbal interaction. In this study, the visual digital methodological approach was adopted to collect the data in children's free play settings (Fleer & Ridgway, 2014). The data have been collected through a video camera, still camera, audio recorder, and field notes. Teachers' individual semi-structured interviews were captured by video camera and audio recorder. We used two cameras to capture the free play settings and transitional process between activities. One roaming camera was used by the first named researcher to capture the focus children's interactions with teachers and peers, and another camera was placed on a tripod to capture the play settings and children's transitional process from one activity to another. A total of 65 hours' video data were collected over the period of eight weeks. In addition, two and a half hours of semi-structured teacher interviews were collected in order to understand their perspectives regarding the pedagogical practice of the centre.

Data analysis:

We have analysed video data, photographs, teachers' interview transcripts, and children's portfolios in order to gain a better understanding of the pedagogical practices of teachers and the transitional process of children from one activity setting to another. We used Hedegaard's (2008b) three levels of interpretations: common-sense, situated practice and thematic interpretations to gain a broad understanding of the whole data set. This allowed for an analysis of the dynamic relationship between children's motives for play and teacher's motive for learning noted during transitions between activity settings.

In the context of visual methodology, a common sense interpretation of the raw data allows for a holistic examination of data set in order to compile moments of transition between child-initiated play and teacher-initiated activities. In our study the video clips were explicitly described for understanding interactional patterns of teachers and children during the transitional process. The first named researcher then separated those video clips according to how transition took place in the two activity settings, and what the teachers' and children's perspectives were in each setting. For situated practice interpretation, we have linked a series of video clips related to the two activity settings (child-initiated play and instructional teaching), and looked closely at the children's transitional process. The multiple examples of the frequency of the transitional process between two activities and participants' individual perspectives from preschool helped the researcher to identify the patterns of transition at this level. In the thematic interpretation, Vygotsky's (1998) cultural-historical theoretical lens and

Hedegaard's (2012b) theoretical concepts of motives and demands were used to answer the research questions with regard to how transition occurs between two activity settings, and what happens to the motives and demands of children and teachers during the transitional process as they move between activity settings.

Findings

There are two main findings from studying children's transitions between activity settings. First, the teacher's demand on children to learn subject-based knowledge was at odds with the children's motive orientation to play. Second, the teacher's pedagogical demands appeared to put on hold the children's imaginary play because the children had to follow the teacher initiated activity only, and no room was made for the children to continue their imaginary play in the instructional activity setting. These findings are discussed through the presentation of three episodes taken from the broader data set.

In the first episode, the children are followed during free play time where they initiate their own play activity. The second episode follows the children as they move from the free play setting to a mathematics activity at one of the tables in the preschool. The third episode follows both the children and the teacher as they negotiate the new practices for learning mathematics, where the teacher seeks to make the mathematical experience more motivating by using a caterpillar puppet and paper leaves for the puppet to eat. We examine both the teacher's demands for learning mathematics, and the children's demands upon the teacher to continue their imaginary play.

Activity Setting 1: Free play in the home corner

In the case example from Leafy preschool, the focus child Apa created an imaginative play with two other friends Pippa and Vima (pseudonyms were used) in the dramatic play corner.

Episode 1: *Child-initiated mummy-baby role play*

> *Apa (pretending to be a mummy) says "night time…night time…nighting time" and her friends are pretending to be babies and lay down on the floor. Then Apa says again "Cock-a-doodle-doo" (pretending to be a rooster). Her friends jump up from the floor and look for food on the shelf. Apa says "Shh..she is sleeping"(by pointing to a plastic*

doll that she is holding). Pippa says to Apa "No, you should say the baby is sleeping". Apa says again "Yes, the baby is sleeping".

In the first episode, the children were oriented towards setting up an imaginative play situation. They appeared to be bringing their everyday life experiences into their imaginative play and creating the role of mother and baby through the imaginary situation (Vygotsky, 2004; Nicolopoulou, 1993). They followed the 'rules' of the role of mother and babies, which are reflected in their actions and interactions in the play (Vygotsky, 1966). Apa was changing her role from mother to a rooster when it was necessary to extend the play. In their play, they also used imaginative dialogue like "Cock-a-doodle-doo" (pretending to be a roster) or "Shh..she is sleeping"(pretending to be a concerned mother). According to Vygotsky (2004), the main aspect of imaginative play is the participant's need to simultaneously move between an imaginary situation and reality. In this play scenario, children were moving between an imaginary situation and reality through their interactions and actions to create the conditions of an imaginative mummy-baby role play, which supports Vygotsky's (2004) notion of imaginative play. For example, they collectively moved from the imaginary situation to reality while Pippa paused in the play to correct Apa's imaginative dialogue by saying "No, you should say baby is sleeping". Apa quickly agreed with Pippa and moved from reality to the imaginary situation again by saying "Yes, baby is sleeping". This play example simply shows how children were engaged and could extend the imaginative play by introducing everyday life experiences through their imaginary dialogues, shared conversations, and actions. Although the play setting was prepared by the teacher, the children chose the play theme, play partners, and materials by themselves.

Episode 2: *Transitional moment*

Episode 2 is extracted from the same case example where Apa notices that Bree (their teacher) is putting some papers and a caterpillar soft toy on a small table. Apa walks toward the activity table from the dramatic play corner. Bree says to Apa "I am going to set up a special game on the table. You should sit down to play. I am going to get something else" (Bree went to bring other resources to set up the activity). Apa runs to the dramatic play corner and announces loudly to her peers "I am going to play a special game with Bree on that small table". Then she runs back to the activity table and her friends follow her.

In the second episode, it appears from the data that there were three movements drawn by Apa between the mummy-baby imaginative play and the teacher-initiated special game. In the first phase, Apa found Bree setting up an activity on the table. Bree's activity motivated Apa to move from the dramatic play corner to the activity table. After asking Bree about the activity, she came to know that Bree was setting up a special game for children, which stimulated her interest. In the second phase, Apa went back to the dramatic play corner from the activity table to let her friends know that she would join in Bree's special game. Her positive excitement (her facial and verbal expression "I am going to play a special game with Bree on that small table") to join in the special game has been captured by the video camera and still photographs. Bree missed the opportunity to notice Apa's positive excitement of joining in special game because she was focused on gathering all the resources in anticipation of teaching mathematical concepts. In the final phase, Apa came back to the teacher-initiated activity. All other play partners followed her. Her motive orientation to join in a special game also motivated her peers to leave the mummy-baby imaginative play and join in Bree's activity. It appears from the data that Apa's individual motive orientation of engaging in a special game motivated other children and created a collective transition from child-initiated play to a teacher-initiated activity.

In presenting the mathematical activity as a special game, Bree motivated the children to leave their imaginative play and be drawn into the new activity as a collective transitional process (she said to Apa "I am going to set up a special game on the table. You should sit down to play"). Bree asked Apa to sit down to play. She used the word "should" instead of inviting her to join in the new activity, which reflects the teacher's demands on Apa. However, Apa's interest and curiosity are not driven by internal instincts; rather, Bree's specially-created game and Apa's motive orientation to play motivated her to join in the activity, which was externally constructed by the situation (Fleer, 2012). Apa's interaction with her teacher and peers, her interest in the caterpillar activity and her dynamic relationship with her external environment indicates the process of collective transition from the mummy-baby imaginative play to the special game created by the teacher (Hedegaard, 2012a, Fleer, 2012). If we analyse Apa's perspectives in these two episodes (1 & 2), it is easy to determine that Apa was emotionally and physically engaged in the imaginary play and her motive orientation was to join the playful environment. If we analyse Bree's perspectives, her pedagogical motive was to set up a learning activity and then to have the children do the activity ("You should sit down to play"). Bree did not know what Apa and her friends had previously been playing and so could not transition the children into the new activity by drawing on the mummy-baby narrative.

Additionally, Bree's intention was to create an interesting learning environment for children, naming the activity as a special game, which increased the children's interest in joining in her learning activity.

Activity Setting 2: Mathematics task set up on a table

Episode 3: *Teacher-initiated caterpillar activity:*

> *Apa, Pippa, and Vima are now seated around a table. They are holding some soft toys that they bring from their role play. Bree asks them to move those toys from the activity table. Bree provides some leaves, papers, a punching machine and a soft caterpillar toy on the table to evaluate children's counting ability. Bree links the activity with the story of a very hungry caterpillar. She invites the children to consider how to use a punching machine to make a hole in the leaf. Bree said to children that they could make many holes if they want to. Afterward they need to stick that leaf on the paper. Bree also asks children to count the number of holes and write the numbers beside each of the leaf. Apa ask Bree "How is the caterpillar going to eat the leaf?" She said to Apa: "We will only pretend that the caterpillar has eaten some leaves". Vima is holding the caterpillar and pretending that the caterpillar is eating a leaf. She is moving the caterpillar prop around the leaf and saying "Yum..yum". Bree smiles at Vima and says, "Is it eating? Yum..yum". Apa is calling to Bree and trying to get her attention. Then Bree focuses on Apa and praises her for writing numbers.*

At the end of this activity, Bree mentioned to the researcher that the parents put demands upon the teachers to teach academic concepts. When the researcher asked, "Why did you set up the caterpillar activity for children?" Bree said:

> *We will display these crafts on the wall to show parents. Parents always think children should learn academic concepts through the direct way of teaching. However, we always try to let them know, children are learning through play and we are trying to establish this approach in our care.*

Episode 3 shows Bree's intention was to establish an educational agenda to evaluate children's literacy and numeracy ability through the caterpillar activity. She wanted to set up a play-based learning activity so she tried to create an imaginary situation by using the caterpillar prop and the story of "The Very Hungry Caterpillar" to make the learning motivating. Her teaching

technique and innovative idea of trying to create an imaginary situation based on "The Very Hungry Caterpillar" story, using the punching machine and caterpillar prop motivated children to engage in her self-initiated activity. She tried to create a play-based learning situation by bringing the caterpillar prop and asked children to imagine that the caterpillar has eaten some leaves. The data shows that she was successful in motivating children to join in her own activity by making the activity a special game. It appears from the data that the children brought their soft toys from the imaginary play to the teacher's activity while they transited collectively from their own play to the teacher-initiated activity. It, therefore, appears that they were in a collective imaginary situation during the transitional process. However, Bree asked them to move those toys from the activity table and could not notice the children's motivation was also linked to their soft toys which could have afforded the opportunity for expanding their imaginary play into the new activity setting.

Bree's pedagogical demands in evaluating the children's literacy and numeracy abilities prevented her from understanding the children's play motive. She was successful in moving children from their imaginary thinking to concentrate on her instructional learning approach (Fleer, 2014). The children were already in an imaginary world which appeared through Apa's imaginative question ("How is the caterpillar going to eat the leaf?") and Pippa's imaginative action (She is moving the caterpillar prop around the leaf and saying "Yum..yum"). Bree smiled at Vima and did interact with her by saying "is it eating?". However, her pedagogical demands to create learning conditions did not give her scope to understand the children's perspectives in wanting to create an imaginary situation with the soft toys; rather, she prompted them to follow her instruction. Bree proposed to the children to pretend that the caterpillar has eaten some leaves but could not develop the children's imaginary experiences in one creative endeavor (as suggested by Hakkarainen et al., 2014). She was not in line with the children's imaginary world where she could develop their learning experience through imaginative play because of her wish to engage the children in her own teacher-initiated, separate learning activity.

The instructional activity itself did not relate to the children's imaginative thinking at that moment; rather, it was simply a teacher-directed instructional activity where the teacher evaluated the children's counting and writing abilities. If we analyse this activity setting from Bree's perspective, her intention was simply to provide materials for supporting play-based learning; therefore, she tried to bring the concept of the caterpillar story and other resources

deliberately to engage the children in her activity. If we analyse the entire situation from the children's perspective, they wanted to draw upon the materials for developing their imaginary situation through their imaginative question and action. In this case, Bree was successful in motivating the children to engage in the caterpillar activity, but her pedagogical practice could not bring together the children's interest with the teaching activity (Fleer, 2012).

In this example, the children's intentions were to bring to the new activity setting their own imaginary situation (through their action- pretending the caterpillar is eating a leaf and verbalisation- How is the caterpillar going to eat the leaf?) and the teacher's intention was to set up a play-based activity (introducing a new technique for using the punching machine for counting numbers) that focused on learning. This meant the teacher and the children appeared to be in parallel worlds. This episode shows that the teacher changed the playful activity setting to be about learning academic concepts, whilst the children wanted to create an imaginary world. The data shows that the teacher did not capture the moment when children put demands on her (through their action and interaction) to go inside of the collective imaginary world together with them.

In episodes 1 and 2, we have found that the children's motive orientation to play and the teacher's pedagogical demands to set up learning conditions creates a transitional process between activity settings. In episode 3, children's motive orientation of engaging in imaginative play was disrupted by the teacher's pedagogical demand for learning. Her focus was to insist on the individual child's learning and development rather than connecting with the established collective imaginary situation or the emerging imaginary play situation that could have developed. She was more concerned about meeting the pedagogical demands for learning, influenced by parental demands for a more educational program, and as reflected through her interview comments "We will display these crafts on the wall to show parents".

Bree's interview comment shows that parents are more interested in their children being involved in academic learning than being involved in child-initiated play (as she mentioned "Parents always think children should learn academic concepts through the direct way of teaching"). The parents are putting demands on teachers to set up an educational agenda. On the other hand, early childhood pedagogical practice in Australia puts demands on teachers to set up play-based learning opportunities for children, which is reflected in Bree's comment "We always try to let parents know children are learning through play and we are trying to establish this approach in our care". We have found in the data set that the institutional and

societal demands for educational programs, mostly motivated the teacher to plan goal-oriented play-based teaching practice, but did so without considering the children's perspectives.

Discussion:

Children's transition between child-initiated play and teacher-initiated activity

In preschools in Australia, the dominant practice tradition is play-based learning where the play is the leading activity for children. The teachers are responsible for creating learning activities that support children's play motive (Fleer, 2014). The teacher from Leafy preschool was aware of implementing a play-based learning approach, therefore she created a separate caterpillar activity to teach writing and counting to children. As the first finding shows, the children's motive orientation to play and the teacher's pedagogical demand of teaching subject based knowledge creates a transitional process between the child-initiated play to the teacher-initiated activity. Apa's personal motivation for joining in the special game and the teacher's pedagogical demand requiring Apa to sit down at the activity table motivated Apa and her friends to make a transition from their self-initiated imaginative play to the teacher-initiated activity. As a result, their transition was not internally driven; rather, it was promoted by their play motive and the teacher's demands for learning, which is promoted by the external situation. However, we suggest that the children put new demands upon the teacher to create a learning activity that was more playful for children.

It appears from the data that the children's motive for engaging in play makes the transition from play setting into a play-based learning activity setting possible. The new demands of literacy and numeracy in the preschool setting create new conditions for children's development. Bree was successful in establishing a teaching-learning nexus through introducing the caterpillar activity. She tried to create an imaginary situation though without involving herself in the children's imaginary play. She put the demands on children to engage in a learning activity, but could not follow children's perspectives in their approach to create an imaginary world inside the instructional activity setting (see episode 3). We have found that the children were engaged in the imaginary world during their transition (they brought their soft toys with them) but the teacher did not take the initiative to get involved in the children's imaginative play and to use their play narrative to create a collective learning environment through play (Fleer, 2010). For instance, she could have drawn upon the mummy-baby narrative by positioning the caterpillar as a mummy caterpillar wanting to feed her babies, thus

allowing the soft toys to join the imaginary play and to extend the play by suggesting they were visitors joining the caterpillar for dinner. The punching and counting of holes could have been used to support this expanded play narrative. However, Bree created a learning activity setting where the imaginary play was not related to the children's play narrative, even though she drew upon their play motive to make the learning more motivating.

Teacher's demands through teaching academic content holds back children's play motive

The case demonstrated that Bree was successful in motivating children to meet her pedagogical demands, but was unsuccessful in noticing the children's demands of creating a collective imaginary situation. The teacher focuses more on achieving the academic learning goal rather than developing the child motivated play-based learning. Bree's pedagogical demand was giving instructions to the children in a playful manner, therefore she introduced a caterpillar storyline in her self-initiated activity. Bree was successful in implementing an educational agenda to teach subject-based knowledge; for example, evaluating children's writing and counting skills. However, the teacher did not consider how to fit the educational agenda into the children's existing imaginary play. In episode three it appears that Bree was busy implementing her program, by noticing children's writing and counting skills through her instructional approaches (*how to use a punching machine to make a hole or write numbers of the holes beside each of the leaf)* and motivated children to engage in her instructions. Therefore, she could not tune into the children's imaginative thinking and missed the moment where Apa and Pippa showed their intentions to create an imaginary condition through their imaginative action and interaction. Instead the teacher should have followed up on the child´s question- *How is the caterpillar going eat the leaf*? It does not mean that what the teacher did is wrong. Teachers need to teach something in order that children can learn the content of the curriculum, however, the teachers need to consider the child's perspectives. The example shows that she lost the opportunity to build her understanding of that critical moment when children were in the imaginary situation. Rather, the teacher's pedagogical demands move the children from their imaginative thinking to the teacher's instructional approach which actually did not help to develop children's learning motive. Her pedagogical demands of giving instructions to achieve her learning goal kept her away from the children's collective imaginary play.

The teacher's pedagogical demand was to establish an academic agenda for individual children, which was in turn framed by the parents' demands for academic learning. What the case

demonstrated was that the demands from parents motivated the teacher to set up separate teacher-initiated learning activities for children, which sometimes put demands on children to be involved in the learning activity, and which ignores children's motive orientation to engage in play. Bree's interview comments show how parents evaluate teaching practice in a preschool setting which actually frames a teacher's pedagogical demands in implementing their own separate learning activity. In adhering to the national curriculum, the teacher implements a play-based curriculum without considering children's play motive.

According to Hedegaard (2012a), society creates the conditions for the institution and this is evident in the activity settings that children enter into when in preschool. The data show that the teacher's pedagogical demands were motivated by societal demands, and that she was busy focusing on preparing children to be competent in subject-based knowledge (demand from parents) and at the same time was trying to develop a play based learning in preschool (demand from the national curriculum). These demands actually motivated the teacher to create activity settings in such a way that it holds back children's play.

Conclusion:

There are a number of scholarly articles showing how a person's motive orientation impels different types of transition in children's everyday life (Fleer, 2014; Hedegaard, 2014; Winter-Lindqvist, 2012; Zittoun, 2006). However, they are mostly focused on a broader view where the transition takes place from one institution to other institutions. This study gives new insight into transition, children's motive orientation to play and teacher's pedagogical demands on children to learn mathematical concepts, from one activity setting to another activity setting in a preschool. We have found in our data set, teachers created activities to fulfil the institutional and the pedagogical demands which appeared to hold back the children's play in number of cases. Furthermore, the teacher could not follow the children's perspective, therefore the teacher missed the opportunities for developing a learning motive. Additionally, the study shows how teacher's pedagogical demands, motivate her to set up a learning activity separately and which moved children from their imaginative play to the teacher's instructional activity setting.

A teacher tries to set up a balance between child-initiated play and teacher-initiated activity in their pedagogical practice, at the same time, the teacher tries to respect parental demands to teach literacy and numeracy in preparation for entrance into school (Crozier & Davies, 2007).

Similar with Crozier and Davies's (2007) findings, our data demonstrated that the teacher created separate learning activity motivated by parental demands and tried to bring imaginary situation in her activity. Furthermore, teacher's intention to set up teacher directed activity did not allow her to notice children's motive orientation and motivational relationship with their environment as evident in our dataset. There were a number of ongoing learning possibilities that emerged in the children's imaginative play but the teacher could not follow up or perhaps did not try to understand the complexity of play involved in the children's play. Fleer's (2010) model of 'conceptual play' indicate that a teacher could implement in a learning environment by considering children's perspectives if they take an active position in a playful manner. Our study shows that instead of creating a collective learning environment together with children, as proposed by Fleer (2010), teachers engage children in their own directed activities as part of evaluating children's literacy and numeracy competency, which dismisses the development of children's learning motives through play.

Hedegaard's (2012b) argues that a teacher needs to be aware of the child's motive orientation while introducing activities that support a new motive. In line with Hedegaard's argument, this study is also arguing for thinking about how teachers could consider children's motive orientation to play when planning to teach academic learning in teacher-initiated activity. We also argue that a close look at the transitional process of moving between two activity settings is needed for understanding how a teacher can become attuned to children's play motive, where academic demands are increasingly made on children by a teacher for teaching concepts. This chapter suggests that researchers need to consider studying transitional process not only in institutional settings but also across activity settings (for example, child-initiated play to teacher-initiated activity or vice versa).

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Chapter 8 : "Do not break my building": Parent's everyday pedagogical practices in supporting children's learning and development through imaginative play

Introduction:

In order to answer the main research questions, the previous three chapters focused on the pedagogical practices of preschool teachers in relation to their involvement in children's imaginative play. The findings of previous chapters show that teachers spend a minimal amount of time being involved in children's imaginative play (Chapter 5) and that they mostly take on various roles such as active planner, materials provider, instructor, inquirer, and observer, staying outside of the play (Chapter 5 and 6). The findings in Chapter 7 further show that being outside of the play, teachers miss the opportunity to create a learning space inside the play situation. This chapter and the next chapter will focus on the pedagogical practices of Indian-Australian immigrant parents in home contexts. This chapter is going to examine:

- How do Indian-Australian immigrant parents involve themselves by taking on their children's perspectives in imaginative play? By doing so, are they supporting the development of their children's academic learning and problem-solving skills in the imaginative play?

In order to determine parental involvement in children's play, this chapter analysed parents' interview and video data of play examples of focus child Ushi and her mother, Neha, in their home setting. During the data collection period, Ushi was four years and ten months old. Ushi did not have any siblings. Four visits were made to the Ushi's family, with each visit lasting around two hours. All the interviews and observations were video-recorded. During my visit to Ushi's family, Ushi took the initiative to create the play situations and proactively involved her mother in the play. As the interview and video data of play shows, Ushi's mother engaged with Ushi in play in her free time, which is a common everyday practice at Ushi's home. Through parent interviews, it was possible to obtain insights into their values, beliefs, concerns and everyday practices with regard to their involvement in children's play and how they supported children's learning and development. Furthermore, two case examples were formulated from collected data and are detailed in this chapter to present everyday pedagogical practices and beliefs of focus child Ushi's family.

The data were analysed using Hedegaard's (2008) three levels of interpretation: common sense, situated practice, and thematic interpretation. I have explained these interpretations in the methodology chapter (Chapter 4). A two-metre radius marker was placed around the child to measure the parent's physical proximity to the child's play (Devi et al., 2018). Vygotsky's (2004) concept of play, 'imagination and reality'; Fleer's (2015) idea about "subject positioning" in relation to adult-child interaction (conceptualised from the original work of Kravtsova, 2009); and Hedegaard's (2012b) theoretical concepts of "motives and demands" were used to analyse the full dataset to answer the research question. To avoid any repetition, the theoretical concepts are not explained in this chapter as the concepts have already been explained in Chapter 3.

Data analysis:

The findings of this chapter are discussed using two case examples from Ushi's family, which show how Ushi's mother, Neha, is involved in constructive imaginative play to support Ushi's learning and development. In these two play vignettes, Ushi used two different play materials, Legos and wooden blocks, to initiate imaginative constructive play. As Neha mentioned in the interview, Ushi is very interested in role play and imaginative constructive play. Neha believes these play activities would help Ushi to develop her imagination, problem-solving and mathematical skills. During the play observation, the researcher asked Neha, "What types of toys do you buy for Ushi?" She replied:

> *Buying toys totally depend on Ushi. But I personally prefer to buy Legos because this kind of toy helps to develop children's* ***problem-solving skills****.* (Interview excerpt 1, N1110415)

When the researcher asked again, "What is the play routine of Ushi at home?", Neha responded:

> *I try to introduce some academic learning through play. For example, I let Ushi to play game in the iPad. But first she has to do some* ***educational activity*** *for 30 minutes and then next 30 minutes she is allowed to watch whatever she wants to…like her favourite cartoon or play any game.* (Interview excerpt 2, N1110415)

The above two interview comments show that Neha's believes in the pedagogical practice of her role in relation to Ushi's play at home. Now, the chapter is going to present and analyse two case examples of Ushi's imaginative play in her home context.

Case example 1: Ushi's imaginative constructive play in her home setting (U1050515 H1, Duration: 15 mins)

While visiting Ushi's family on the second observation day, it was found that Ushi and Neha created a play situation in their living room which was initiated by Ushi. To give clear understanding to the readers, this play vignette is separated into two episodes. In episode 1, at the beginning of the play, Ushi brought her new Legos and started to join them to make a fruit shop. She invited Neha to help her to separate the Lego pieces from each other. Neha gave instructions and helped Ushi to find the correct Lego pieces to make the fruit shop. She was in close physical proximity (within two metres) to Ushi's play (see Figure 8.1), which allowed her to observe the play, ask various questions, and give advice to Ushi.

Episode 1:

Ushi: Mum, help me.

Neha: No, I don't know how to do it. You teach me first, please. Then I will do.

Ushi: It is really hard. Mum, what are you doing?

Neha: Nothing, I am just watching you.

Ushi: Am I doing right?

Neha: Yes, you are doing right.

Ushi: I need a red Lego. I cannot find it

Neha: There are some Lego pieces missing, Ushi. It is ok, you use different colour.

Sometimes Neha helped Ushi find the Lego pieces and gave instructions as to where exactly Ushi should put the Lego pieces.

Figure 8.1: ***Neha's inquirer and observer roles being outside the play allowed her only to maintain limited interaction with Ushi***

After making the fruit shop Ushi turned the play theme into a customer-shopkeeper role play, which has been explained in episode 2. As Neha did not show any interest in taking her role inside the play, Ushi took double roles as shopkeeper and customer, using two props (Dolly and Doggy). Ushi was developing narrative dialogues by herself to extend the play script (see Figure 8.2). Neha did not withdraw herself from the play; rather, her close physical proximity allowed Neha to listen to Ushi's self-initiated conversations and observe the interaction of Ushi's double roles.

Episode 2:

Neha: Is it a fruit shop? Who is the shopkeeper?

Ushi: Yes, it has honey, bananas, strawberries, also some chocolate milk, pink milk and yogurt. And Dolly is the shopkeeper. Doggy is the customer and wants to buy some apples, strawberries.

Neha: Ok, if Dolly is the shopkeeper, she needs to stand inside the shop not outside the shop (as Ushi positioned Dolly outside the shop).

Ushi: Woof..woof (pretending to be the dog). I want to buy some apples, some strawberries.

Ushi: Now Dolly will pay for it.

Neha: But Dolly is the shopkeeper. Does shop keeper pay the bill?

Ushi: Yes.

Then Ushi is talking to herself for quite a long time pretending to be Doggy and Dolly at the same time. Neha is observing her.

Ushi (pretending to be Doggy): I want to buy something else.

Ushi (pretending to be Dolly again): What do you want to buy, Doggy? But the shop is almost close.

Ushi: Mum, Dog need to buy something else.

Mum: But you said the shop is close now.

Ushi: No, not yet. It still open for two more minutes.

Neha: Ok.

Ushi: Mum, the doggy wants to buy plain milk. I need pink milk too. And also chocolate milk, bananas, oranges, apples.

Neha did not say anything. Neha gave a small Lego house to Ushi to pretend it is Doggy's house and said, 'Here is Doggy's house.'

Ushi: 'But where is Dolly's house?'

Neha: 'She does not have one.'

Ushi: 'Ok, they are going home now.' She finished her play.

Figure 8.2: ***Ushi took on dual roles (pretending to be Dolly and Doggy at the same time)***

Analytical interpretation of case example 1:

In the first episode, Ushi wanted to involve her mother to build the fruit shop. However, Neha wanted to just observe Ushi's construction and let her make the shop by herself. From the child's perspectives, we can see that Ushi used different techniques to engage her mother in the activity. For example, she was validating her achievement by asking a question, "Am I doing right?", or trying to convince her mother to help her by saying, "It is really hard", or inquiring of her mother, "What are you doing?", or demanding that her mother find a red Lego

piece by saying, “I need a red Lego. I cannot find it”. Each time, Neha was supporting Ushi through verbal interaction. For example, she validated Ushi’s project by saying, “Yes, you are doing right”, and fulfilled her demand by saying, “It is ok, you use different colour”. There was a critical moment when Ushi took the dual roles to develop the customer-shopkeeper role play. She was fluidly moving from one role to the other through her self-initiated imaginative dialogues. Neha wanted to let Ushi develop her imagination skills of creating a role play scenario. The data showed that Ushi’s demand of involving her mother as a play partner motivated her to interact with her mother, making sure that her mother was listening to her. For example, she said, “Mum, Dog need to buy something else”. She again said, “Mum, the doggy wants to buy plain milk. I need pink milk too. And also chocolate milk, bananas, oranges, apples”. In each step of extending the play, Ushi was validating her imaginative conversation with her mother and was trying to motivate Neha to play along with her. Instead of interacting and acting with Ushi, Neha was quiet and only provided Doggy’s house, which actually inspired Ushi to send Doggy and Dolly at home and finish the customer-shopkeeper role play quickly.

If I analyse the above case from the adult’s perspective, we can see that although Neha gave instructions and helped Ushi to find the Lego pieces in some instances, Neha did not want to actively involve herself in Ushi’s fruit shop-making project. For example, Neha told Ushi, “No, I don’t know how to do it. You teach me first, please. Then I will do”; this shows her intention to let Ushi take the initiative to solve the problem herself by keeping herself outside of the play. Neha was partially helping Ushi through interaction and observation. Her position as an observer allowed Neha to validate Ushi’s achievement; for aexample, when Ushi asked, “Am I doing right?” Neha replied, “Yes, you are doing right”.

Being the outsider of the play, Neha took various roles such as an **inquirer** (by asking questions such as Is it a fruit shop? Who is the shop keeper?) and an **instructor** (by suggesting to Ushi where she could put the Lego pieces to make the fruit shop). The evidence shows that Neha provided Doggy’s house and Lego pieces as a **material provider**. These roles were discussed in Chapter 6 (second paper) while analysing teachers’ positions in children’s imaginative play in a preschool context. As a **validator** of the play, Neha supported Ushi’s initiative by saying, “Yes, you are doing right”. Neha developed the storyline of the play as a **narrator** rather than as an actor in the play (Devi et al., 2018). Her close physical proximity gave her the opportunity to be involved in Ushi’s imaginative play. This meant Neha could sensitively support and extend the play’s complexity as an active play partner; however, she did not take charge of the

play, but rather played the role of an **observer** to maintain the quality of interaction with Ushi (Devi et al., 2018). Neha's demand that Ushi should use her problem-solving skills may be culturally motivated, which may have influenced her to stay outside of the play. However, Neha missed some critical moments, for example when Ushi used the word 'almost' when they were having a conversation about the shop closing, Neha did not follow Ushi's conversation as she was outside the play. Also, the data shows that Neha asked Ushi, "But Dolly is the shopkeeper. Does shop keeper pay the bill?" and Ushi said "Yes". Neha did not take the initiative to correct Ushi. Neha could have explained how a shopkeeper transacts with a customer. Furthermore, an academic concept of counting money could have been introduced to extend the play in relation to learning.

In line with Neha's interview comments about her pedagogical play practice at home, we can see that Neha's demand of involving Ushi in Lego activity to develop her ***problem-solving skill*** (see case example 1) has a strong relationship with her beliefs and values (see interview excerpt 1). The demands of Neha might have motivated her to stay outside the boundary of the play. For example, instead of creating a collective learning environment (counting money to pay the bill to the shopkeeper) inside the imaginary situation with Ushi, Neha did not involve herself in the imaginary situation, which did not give her scope to develop Ushi's understanding about the role of the shopkeeper or the customer. Neha's position did not allow her to bring any learning concepts inside the play through ***educational activity*** (see interview excerpt 2) which was her demand of Ushi.

It is argued in this chapter that Neha could have created an educational learning activity and enhanced the play from Ushi's perspective if she had taken one of the roles (either shopkeeper or customer) to be inside the play. Despite being invited by Ushi, Neha was outside of the play, which did not give her the opportunity to understand Ushi's intention of developing the play script collectively. Rather, Ushi turned the theme of constructive imaginative play to an imaginative role play by herself. Being outside of the play Neha took various roles, but could not be involved emotionally in the play. Even though Neha was in close physical proximity (see Figure 8.1) to Ushi's play, she did not take a play partner role in this scenario. Without collectively engaging in the play, Neha could not develop Ushi's individual imaginative thinking related to buying or selling groceries as a buyer or as a shopkeeper. Taking different roles, and being outside the play actually stopped the play very quickly. For example, we can see at end of the play that Neha provided the dolly's house which might have motivated Ushi to say, "Ok, they are going home now", and finish the play. Neha's pedagogical demand of

involving Ushi in problem-solving tasks prevented her from understanding Ushi's play motive. Neha's motivation may be related to her personal values and beliefs (see the interview excerpts 1 & 2 in this chapter), which are culturally constructed and associated (Fleer, 2012; Hedegaard, 2012a). This was a common pedagogical practice of the four focus families involved in the data sets of this study.

Case Example 2: Neha's and Ushi's collective imaginative play at home setting (U5070415 H1, Duration: 24 mins)

Ushi's and Neha's collective engagement in a constructive imaginative play was initiated by Ushi. They were carrying out negotiating and interactive conversations while making the buildings with wooden blocks. Two cameras captured their verbal and non-verbal interactions, physical actions, and emotional expressions during the play situation. They started to make their construction independently, but later it turned into a collective imaginative play.

Neha: Ushi, do you know how to make a strong building? I will copy you (Mum is thinking how to start).

Ushi: Wait, I will do it for you.

Neha: No..no, you finish yours. I'll do mine. I know I have to learn from you how to make a building. Please help me making a very good building. I will make a very tall and strong building. Don't break my building, ok? (Neha put her hands around the building, see Figure 8.3).

Ushi: No, I will take care of it. How about you put a line around it? So no one can touch it. (While Ushi was trying to show how to put blocks around the building, some blocks from the building fell on the floor.)

Neha: Oh no!! You have broken my building.

Ushi: Sorry.

Neha: It's all right. So, you mean, I should put a construction fence around the construction area so nobody will be able to enter because construction is progressing? But how can I make a line around the building? Can you come and help me?

Ushi: Ok (she came near Neha and put some flat blocks in a horizontal line. Neha did not keep any spaces between each block).

Ushi: You should keep a free space between two blocks to pretend that it is a gate, so people can come through the gate. You also need a cover for top of the building.

Neha: Do you mean I need a roof for the building? Ok, what are you making?

Ushi: I am making a swimming pool.

Neha: What about this is a house and people will come out from the house and go inside the swimming pool area that you have made? I am going to make some seating place near the swimming pool.

Ushi: Ok. Mermaids will swim in this swimming pool?

Neha: But mermaids do not swim in the swimming pool. Did you see any swimming pools where mermaids swim with people?

Ushi: Oh, no! You don't understand. It is a big seaside swimming pool. Mermaids live in deep deep water in the sea and they will come from the sea to swim in swimming pool. People and mermaids will swim together. The mermaids will tickle the people and the people will say ouch!! (they are giggling and laughing).

Figure 8.3: ***Neha's active position inside the play motivated Ushi to extend the play***

Analytical interpretation of case example 2:

In case example 2, if we think about the play from the child's perspective, Ushi's intention was to extend the play by negotiating with her mother. At a point during the play, Ushi wanted to lead the play by extending her help to build a construction fence around the building, or making a roof to create a strong building. The idea of using a fence or a roof for the building first came

from Ushi, so she was able to utilise her real experience of progressing a construction into her imagination. Her desire to extend the play with mother motivated Neha to move inside and outside of the play. There was a dramatic collision happening when Ushi introduced mermaids into the swimming pool. But Neha moved from imagination into reality (Vygotsky, 2004) to correct Ushi by saying, "but mermaids do not swim in the swimming pool. Did you see any swimming pools where mermaids swim?". This interaction from Neha gave scope to Ushi to think and to go back into a real situation from an imaginary situation (Vygotsky, 2004), which actually developed Ushi's individual imaginative idea of introducing "a seaside swimming pool" (Fleer, 2010). Additionally, her motive of introducing a role of "mermaid" and then establishing the idea of "seaside swimming pool" to keep the mermaid character in the play, shows her deep engagement in the play. To establish her demand of keeping the "mermaid" in the play, Ushi motivated her mother to follow her idea of linking the "seaside swimming pool" to her imaginative thinking. Ushi has built logic by linking two pieces of knowledge together: mermaids live in sea, so she had to link the sea and swimming pool in her play. By doing so, Ushi was able to keep the mermaids in her play.

In this play scenario, Neha was not only physically positioned within two metres of Ushi's play, but she was psychologically involved inside the play. Neha took double subjective positions in the play. She was associating her everyday experiences by being outside of the play and at the same time supporting Ushi's individual imagining development by being inside the play. Like Ushi, being inside the play, Neha had an actual role as a constructor or a builder. At the same time, being an outsider of the play, Neha advised and introduced new ideas. They were collectively engaged and created an imaginary situation that helped them develop the narration of the play. Simultaneously moving between these two situations and taking dual positions (Devi et al., 2018; Fleer, 2015), Neha was supporting Ushi to change her 'sense' perception about the real object (blocks) into an imaginative meaning of 'building or a castle' in example 2. Ushi was able to separate the meaning of a building or a swimming pool from the object (blocks) that signifies it (Vygotsky, 1966). But it was only possible because of their collective involvement in the play (Kravtsov & Kravtsova, 2010). In addition, this example particularly demonstrated that Neha ("Oh no!! You have broken my building") and Ushi ("Oh, no! You don't understand. It is a big seaside swimming pool") were both emotionally involved inside the play. They were consciously developing the play script collectively without giving any direct instructions to each other. Being inside the play, Neha was able to understand Ushi's emotional expression and also was able to express her excitement through interaction.

Ushi's motive orientation to develop the play together with her mother motivated Neha to take various positions (over, under, equal and independent) inside the play (see Fleer, 2015 paper, which is conceptualised from Kravtsova, 2009). If we analyse the data from the adult's perspective, we can see that Neha took the **under** position inside the play by asking help from Ushi through a couple of conversational dialogues ("Ushi, do you know how to make a strong building? I will copy you"/ "I have to learn from you how to make a building. Please help me making a very good building"/ "But how can I make a line around the building? Can you come and help me?"). This position actually allowed Neha to provide Ushi with an opportunity to expand her imagination and at the same time expand her critical thinking about real construction.

Neha's **under** position also motivated Ushi to lead the play and share her ideas. I would conclude that Neha's emotional involvement in the play ("Oh no!! You have broken my building"), motivated Ushi to help her fix the building and let her critically think of introducing a line around the building and suggesting to add a cover to make a strong building. Neha took that opportunity to introduce new words such as "construction fence" and "roof". In this sense, Neha was successful in teaching the abstract idea of how a construction can progress through imaginative play.

In some instances, Neha was in the **above** position by proposing to make the building individually, and in so doing, extending the play narratives ("What about this is a house and people will come out of the house and go inside the swimming pool area that you have made?"). Ushi accepted her mother's proposals and extended the play narrative by saying "Ok". By positioning herself inside the play, Neha helped Ushi to develop her engineering concepts and language skills; for example, she used "big", "tall", "strong", "roof", "a construction area", "a construction fence" and "a roof to cover the building".

Interestingly, the evidence shows that Neha verbalised Ushi's thinking and tried to support her abstract understanding by saying, "You mean, I should put a construction fence around the construction area so nobody will be able to enter because construction is progressing?". Again, Neha went to the **equal** position when she discussed with Ushi how to make a strong building so it would not collapse. For example, she asked Ushi not to break her building. This position also allowed Ushi to expend her imaginative thinking into individual endeavour. Neha did not give any direct instructions to Ushi; rather, she gave Ushi the opportunity to play along with

her equally through her supportive actions (Neha put her hands next to the building) and emotional expression ("Oh no, you have broken my building") (see Figure 8.3).

Neha and Ushi also **independently** developed their own construction without interrupting each other. Neha's supportive role encouraged Ushi to think independently, finding a way to solve the problem and expand her knowledge of new concepts (Kravtsov & Kravtsova, 2010). Taking various positions inside the play, Neha was not only able to understand Ushi's perspective, but she also had an opportunity to develop Ushi's problem-solving and academic concepts.

Case example 2 shows that Neha, being inside and outside the play, not only had an opportunity to fulfil her own demands of developing Ushi's ***problem-solving skill*** (how to make a building) and introducing new concepts (such as a construction fence, a roof, a construction gate in relation to abstract knowledge of 'construction') through ***educational activity***, but she also had an opportunity to fulfil Ushi's demands of her mother's involvement as a play partner inside the play and extending the play through collective shared knowledge.

I conclude that Neha and Ushi's shared imaginings and collective engagement in the play developed the play into a more complex and richer experience. Being an active play partner in the play allowed Neha to develop Ushi's individual imagining and problem-solving skills by negotiating and discussing with Ushi play theme details such as what to make and how to make a building. Their natural conversation, imagination and action extended the play and developed Ushi's individual imaginative skills (Fleer, 2010).

Discussion:

The discussion of the findings in this chapter reveal that considering the child's perspectives, the parent took various pedagogical roles in the child's imaginative play which also related to their beliefs and cultural practices in their home context. Additionally, the data shows that moving between inside and outside of the play, the parent was able to develop the play complexity and understand the play theme from the child's perspective. For example, Neha's simultaneous movement between the inside and outside of the play as an active play partner gave her the opportunity to develop the play script and to create a learning environment with Ushi in example 2.

In example 1, as an outsider of the play, the mother missed the opportunity to understand the child's perspectives. The result of this study shows that Neha, being outside of the play, took various positions like observer, narrator, inquirer, resource provider and active planner.

However, Neha could not share or develop the theme of the play and its complexity due to her participation only being outside of the play. In analysing both case examples, I have attempted to understand both play partners' (mother and child) perspectives; therefore, it is important to discuss their motives and demands from a theoretical standpoint. The theoretical concepts of motives and demands have already been discussed in the methodology chapter (Chapter 4) and in paper 3 (Chapter 7).

Motives and demands of Ushi and Neha:

In both case examples, it has been revealed that Ushi used different techniques to make demands of her mother to try and involve her in the imaginative play (Hedegaard, 2012a). In case example 1, Ushi took dual roles as a shopkeeper and a customer to develop the play even though her desire was to involve her mother inside the play. Overall, Ushi's demand of involving her mother in her imaginative play was fulfilled in example 2, but her demand was not fulfilled in example 1 as Ushi's mother did not understand Ushi's motive as she was outside the play.

Chapter 8 has shown that the mother valued the play for her child's learning and development. There were two case examples that explicitly illustrated the mother's demand to bring structural learning inside the play, which motivated her to take different positions inside and outside the play. As previously mentioned, being outside the play in example 1, Neha's motive orientation of letting Ushi solve the problem of building shop did not fulfil the mother's demand of creating educational activity inside the play (see interview excerpts 1 and 2). Even in some situations, Neha needed to interact with Ushi to fulfil Ushi's demand of helping her to make the shop function properly. So, Neha was involved in Ushi's play, but could not establish her demand because of her positioning at the boundary of the play. For example, if Neha had taken the role of a shopkeeper or a customer in a shared collective imaginary situation, she could have implemented a learning activity of counting money to pay the bill as a customer or collect money as a shopkeeper.

These demands of Ushi and Neha are not internally driven, instead, they are externally constructed by the situation and culturally developed (Devi et al, 2018; Fleer, 2012). Being inside and outside of the play in example 2, Neha's motive orientations of letting Ushi solve the problem by herself and teaching academic concepts (for example, the abstract idea of construction) inside the play were successful. For example, Neha's active play partner role motivated and influenced Ushi to critically think how she could solve the problem by proposing

to use a construction fence for protecting the building from collapse and to make a roof to cover the building.

Mother's demand of letting Ushi solve the problem of being a shopkeeper herself was influenced by her own values, beliefs and everyday practices in their home context (see interview excerpt 1) (Hedegaard, 2008b). There is a new insight revealed in this chapter that a person's pedagogical positioning inside the play has a direct relationship with fulfilling individual demands and motives of the person. Ushi's play motive and her mother's motive orientation of including structural learning into play are not internally driven; instead, they are culturally constructed and developed by participating in their everyday play practices (Fleer, 2012; Hedegaard, 2012a). The interview comments reveal that the everyday pedagogical practice of Ushi's family is to let Ushi choose her own toys and play with the iPad. At the same time, Neha's comment in interview excerpt 1 ("But I personally prefer to buy Legos because this kind of toy helps to develop children's **problem-solving skills"**) and being an instructor in case example 1, reflects her demand of involving Ushi in Lego construction play, which is influenced by her own personal values and cultural practices (Fleer, 2012; Hedegaard, 2012a).

***Only being outside of the play**:*

In example 1, Ushi took the leadership role and developed the event by herself. She was playing the role of two characters at the same time. She pretended to be Dolly and Doggy to develop the play script and was moving fluidly between scenarios while maintaining several ideas in her head. Despite an invitation from Ushi, Neha did not take an active role by engaging in the fruit shop imaginative role play. In addition, Neha was not emotionally involved in the play but instead she produced a dialogue in relation to giving instructions or asking questions. However, the interaction was not about roles or play events to develop Ushi's conceptual understanding. Neha took the observer role in the play and she did not follow or support the child's idea by developing the play theme.

After analysing a number of datasets from the four families, it was clear that the adults took various roles outside of the play such as observer, material provider, instructor, inquirer and active planner. In this chapter, example 1 shows Ushi playing customer and shopkeeper roles concurrently to develop the play script and to fulfil her desire of becoming part of the reality. However, Neha's intention was to remain on the boundary of the play and to let Ushi develop her problem-solving skills and extend her imaginative ideas by herself. Example 1 illustrates that Neha's intention was to motivate Ushi to follow her instructions rather than going along

with the child's preference of creating a collective imagination situation together in the play. Ushi invited Neha several times to be involved and take a role inside the play; however, Neha remained on the boundary of the play as instructor, inquirer and observer.

Neha's position of only being outside of the imaginative play restricted her movement between the imaginary and real situation. Her intention of staying outside the play created a disjunction between the two situations (real and imaginary). The evidence shows that by staying on the boundary of the imaginative play, Neha did not develop the scope to understand Ushi's perspective of creating collective imaginative play and could not extend the play to teach academic concepts. Being outside of the play, Neha missed the opportunity to better understand the play themes from the individual's perspective and to enter the child's play to extend it collectively. In this chapter I argue that if parents actively position themselves in children's imaginative play, then they could support their children's learning and development.

Being inside and outside of the play:

Neha had an opportunity to explore and develop the play theme with Ushi. Neha co-constructed a coherent storyline through emotional expressions and interactions with Ushi, which motivated them to develop their own individual imagination and expand the play script (see example 2, where Ushi was able to introduce another imaginary character, the 'mermaids', to expand the play). Moreover, Neha did not take control of the play from Ushi to teach academic concepts and to develop problem-solving skills; rather, in some instances, Neha took the under position to allow Ushi to lead (Kravtsova, 2009). Both Neha and Ushi were in a role-playing relationship where they elaborated the play theme or plot, constructed scenes and enacted specific roles together to create live experiences in an imaginary situation (Hakkarainen, 2006).

According to cultural-historical theory, the participants do not imitate the real experiences directly in their imaginative play; rather, they recreate those experiences creatively through imagination (see more detail in Chapter 3). In this process, the play participant simultaneously moves from a real situation (outside of the play) to an imaginary situation (inside the play) (Vygotsky, 2004). In example 2, being inside and outside the play, Neha was able to extend Ushi's understanding about a mermaid's living place. However, in example 1, only being outside the play, Neha could not teach Ushi how a transaction occurs between a shopkeeper and a customer. Fleer (2013b) states that adults bring their rich experiences to help construct an imaginary situation collectively, which enables Ushi to move away from reality and develop individual imagining. At the same time, individual imagining allows Ushi to move towards

reality, which is the source of collective imagining. Fleer (2013b) has illustrated a model to show the dialectical relationship between individual and collective imagining (see more detail in Chapter 3). This chapter shows that by taking an active position and simultaneously moving between two situations (inside and outside the play) Neha developed collective play complexity and provided the opportunity to better understand the play themes from the child's perspective (Kravtsov & Kravtsova, 2010).

Overall, the above two case examples show that when the mother is outside of the play, she could not share the theme of the play with the child, understand the child's perspectives or develop the play complexity. When the mother moved herself between the inside and outside of the imaginative play, she was able to develop the play complexity with the child and understand the play theme from the individual's perspective.

After undertaking close analysis of the entire dataset, the study revealed nine pedagogical techniques that play participants employed when involved in imaginative play, which is set out in Table 8.1. These nine pedagogical techniques helped the researcher to compare the child's responses while the mother took two different positions (either being inside and outside of the play or only being outside of the play) in imaginative play to support the child's learning and development. The researcher argues that it is very important to study the perspectives of both adults and children in play-based learning (Pramling Samuelsson & Pramling, 2014; van Oers, 2013). Therefore, the results of this study are important because they analyse both play participants' perspectives in relation to their involvement in imaginative play.

Table 8.1: Pedagogical techniques of play participants' involvement in the imaginative play

Pedagogical techniques of play participants	**Pedagogical positioning**	**The mother's engagement**	**The child's responses**
Position of the adult in the play	Being inside and outside of the play	The mother took an active play partner role and entered into the play with the child.	The child collectively shared her ideas with her mother and developed the play together with Neha.

	Only being outside of the play	The mother took an outsider role and kept herself at the boundary of the play.	The child's intention was to involve her mother in her initiated play to get active support.
Changing meaning of the objects inside the play	Being inside and outside of the play	The mother brought the object from the real situation and changed the meaning of the object together with the child. For example, Neha used the blocks to make a building.	The mother's idea of using blocks to make a building motivated the child to change the meaning of the object in an imaginary situation. For example, Neha's idea of making a building using wooden blocks motivated Ushi to make a swimming pool which developed her individual imagining.
	Only being outside of the play	The mother provided objects as a material provider being outside of the play and did not take steps to go inside the play to change the meaning of the object together with the child. In example 1, Nehaonly provided the Doggy's house and did not take the initiative to make Dolly's house. It may have been her intention to let Ushi extend her own play scenario without her intervention.	The child did not take the initiative to change the meaning of Lego to Dolly's house; rather, she dismissed the play quickly. For example, Ushi's question to her mother, "But where is Dolly's house?" shows she might expecting her mother to help her making Dolly's house.

Understanding the play theme from the other play partner's perspective.	Being inside and outside of the play	The mother's active positioning being inside the play gave her an opportunity to understand the play theme from the child's perspective. For example, Neha was able to teach new words such as "roof" and "construction fence" while Ushi introduced a new idea of using a cover for the building and putting a fence around the building.	The mother's active position motivated Ushi to understand the play theme from Neha's perspective. Therefore, she proposed to make a swimming pool which extended Neha's imaginative thinking of linking her construction of building with Ushi's swimming pool.
	Only being outside of the play	The mother's positioning on the boundary of the play, did not give her an opportunity to understand the play theme from the child's perspective. Neha was unable to understand Ushi's intention of sharing the role relationship with her. She was in the position of an instructor and an observer, which only allowed her to instruct Ushi how to make the shop and only observe Ushi's role play. Therefore, when Ushi said "What do you want to buy Doggy? But the shop is almost close", being outside of the play, Neha did not catch the word "almost", so she replied, "But you said the shop is close now".	The child also did not understand her mother's intention of keeping herself outside the play. Rather, the child used different techniques such as validating, inquiring, convincing and demanding to engage her mother in her play.

Imaginative conversation	Being inside and outside of the play	The mother intentionally interacted with the child and they co-constructed a play event through imaginative conversation. For example, when Ushi proposed to make a swimming pool, Neha linked her imaginative thinking ("What about this is a house and people will come out from the house and go inside the swimming pool area?") with Ushi's imagination through co-construction of the scenario.	The mother's imaginative thinking and conversation motivated Ushi to develop her individual imagination. For example, Ushi proposed to introduce the mermaid character and the idea of a seaside swimming pool to extend the play. It has been found in the data that Ushi was not only following her mother's instructions but also motivating Neha to follow her instructions in example 2.
	Only being outside of the play	The mother produced many dialogues in relation to giving instructions or asking questions, but she did not produce a collective imaginative conversation by taking a role of the play. In example 1, Neha suggested putting Dolly outside the shop, but she could have taken Dolly's role as a shopkeeper to develop the play.	The child only followed her mother's instructions to create the play situation so the play could not develop collectively. In example 1, Ushi acted upon Neha's advice and put Dolly outside the shop, but Ushi might not have understood the consequences of this interaction.

Emotional involvement of play participants	Being inside and outside of the play	The mother was emotionally involved in play events. In example 2, Neha's emotional engagement in the play created a dramatic interactive moment, "Oh no!! you have broken my building", (represents her sadness).	The mother's emotionally charged interaction motivated Ushi (showed empathy for her mother) to think critically how to prevent the building from collapsing again. She came up with the idea of putting a fence around the building. In addition, she dramatically expressed her idea of introducing a seaside swimming pool in the play ("Oh, no! You don't understand. It is a big seaside swimming pool") because she was emotionally engaged in the play.
	Only being outside of the play	No emotional involvement of the mother was evident in example 1; instead, Neha only gave advice and instructions.	The play was monotonous. The child did not express any emotional dialogue in relation to her role in the play.
Introducing new ideas to enrich the play narratives and develop a fascinating script	Being inside and outside of the play	The mother took steps together with the child to introduce new ideas to enrich the play narratives and develop a fascinating script. In joint play, Ushi and Neha were both in a leading position and developed new ideas of adding a "construction fence" and "a roof".	The mother's active position being inside the play motivated Ushi to think critically and develop her imagination (introducing a "swimming pool", and a "mermaid") to enrich the play script. Their collective motivation to solve the problem together inside the play actually developed the play itself.

	Only being outside of the play	Neha proposed to put Dolly outside the shop as the shopkeeper and provided Doggy's house only. She did not develop the play script with Ushi; therefore, the play was not enriched or extended (see the example 1).	The child followed her mother's instructions without understanding the consequences. There were no collective ideas developed through their negotiation and discussion.
Mother's demand of developing child's problem-solving skill and teaching conceptual learning through imaginative play	Being inside and outside of the play	Being an active participant of the play, the mother was able to fulfil her demand of developing the child's problem-solving skills and teaching educational concepts through imaginative play. By taking various positions such as under, above, equal, and independent, the mother was able to be on the same level as the child as a play partner, which allowed her to understand the child's motives.	The child did not stop or withdraw from the play; instead, she responded to her mother's demands and was able to put her own demands of play upon her mother. For example, Neha asked Ushi not to break her building (putting her hands around the building), which motivated Ushi to think critically about how she could solve the created problem.
	Only being outside of the play	Being on the boundary of the play, the mother was not able to fulfil her demands of developing the child's problem-solving skills and implement structural learning events through imaginative play. Instead of creating a collective learning environment (counting money to pay the bill to the shopkeeper) with Ushi, Neha only observed and instructed	The child only followed her mother's instructions but did not understand the reason behind these or the consequences. For example, Ushi said "Yes" when Neha asked, "Does shop keeper pay the bill?"

		Ushi to put Dolly inside the shop.	
The child's motives of engaging her mother through extending the play	Being inside and outside of the play	As Ushi's mother was physically and psychologically so close to the child's play that she was able to understand the child's motives and help her solve the problem. To do this Neha was in the same play position as Ushi. For example, even though it was not difficult for Neha to make a building, she pretended that she did not know how to make a strong building. She wanted to give the leading authority to Ushi rather taking the authority from her. It was only possible because of the mother's positioning inside the play.	The child's motive orientation was to lead the play, therefore in example 2, Ushi said to her mother, "Wait, I will do it for you", as she thought it was difficult for her mother to make a building. Neha's active interactions and actions fulfilled Ushi's motive orientation of creating a collective imaginary situation.
	Only being outside of the play	The mother did not understand the child's motive of involving her in the shopkeeper and customer role play. Her position only allowed her to see the overview of the play. Therefore, the mother's instruction was in relation to a real experience of a fruit shop, and did not go inside the imaginary situation with the child.	The child used different techniques to actively involve her mother in the play; however, the mother did not understand the motives of the child because Neha was on the boundary of the play. Therefore, the child only followed her instructions and created the play situation. The play did not develop collectively.

Shared collective knowledge for developing the play complexity	Being inside and outside of the play	The mother's collective engagement with the child helped explore and develop the theme of the play. In example 2, Ushi and Neha collectively progressed the play by proposing to make a "construction fence" or a "roof" and by introducing a "swimming pool" and "a mermaid".	The mother's shared collective knowledge developed the child's individual understanding about academic concepts and developed her problem-solving skill. For example, Neha's idea of linking her imagination (her constructed building) with Ushi's imagination (swimming pool) developed Ushi's individual imaginative thinking (bringing a new character – a mermaid - into the play).
	Only being outside of the play	The mother's position of only being outside the play permitted her to give instructions from her real experiences, but did not allow her to build knowledge with Ushi collectively.	The child followed the mother's instructions but could not develop her individual imagining, which ended the play quickly.

Conclusion:

A Vygotskian cultural-historical standpoint challenges the notion of "free play" (Leggett & Newman, 2017), and advocates that the adult should take an active part in the children's play as a play partner instead of staying at the boundary of the play (Devi et al., 2016; Fleer, 2015; Hakkarinen et al., 2013). Some researchers have argued that if the adult takes an active role in children's play, the adult may take on an authoritative role or take over the play from the children (McInnes, Howard, Crowley & Miles, 2013, see the literature review Chapter 2 for details). Based on the data evidence and analysis, the finding of this chapter rejects the traditional pedagogical view that adults only need to stay at the boundary of the play in the context of the quality of interactions with the children. The result found that when the adult observed the play and instructed the child from the boundary of the play, the adult tried to persuade the child to follow her demands in the play instead of following the child's intention

(see example 1). On the other hand, a parent's active position sensitively supports, without taking the authority from the child, the development of the child's problem-solving skills and helps the child to learn academic concepts instead of interrupting and dismissing the play (see the above case example 2). The mother's active position as a play partner (being inside and outside the play) opened the door to understanding the child's perspectives, which was not possible for her only being outside the play (see case example 1). Being inside the play, the adult not only had an opportunity to fulfil her own demand of supporting the child's learning and development through play, but also was able to fulfil the child's demand of developing the play through active involvement. I argue, to understand other play partners' perspectives and fulfilling demands and motives of play participants inside the play, "pedagogical positioning" is an important concept to consider.

The result of the study is based on one Australian-Indian family, so characteristics of parents' involvement might not be common for families from other cultural backgrounds. Therefore, it is important to research the play pedagogy of more culturally diverse samples in the future. In addition, it is important to mention here that the data collected in this research was only based on four Indian-Australian focus families in Victoria. Therefore, the findings must be considered in the context of the limitations of the sample size. I suggest that future research should concentrate on studying the pedagogical practice of parents in relation to the concept of positioning with a larger sample of Indian-Australian immigrant families in their home context.

Taken together, the significance of this study is that it shows the pedagogical practice and positioning of an Indian-Australian immigrant mother by considering demands and motives of both play participants in imaginative play. Nine different pedagogical techniques of play participants' involvement in imaginative play were revealed in this study and listed in Table 8.1. These pedagogical techniques might be beneficial for early childhood researchers, policy makers, teachers and parents to understand how and what are the ways adults should participate in children's play in supporting their learning and development. It is suggested through this chapter that adults' active engagement needs to be considered for further study if researchers and policy makers want to use play as the medium, context and source for a child's learning and development.

Chapter 9 : The adult as an active play partner in children's imaginative play

Declaration for thesis chapter:

In the case of Chapter 9, the nature and extent of my contribution to the chapter is shown in Table 9.1. The co-authors' contributions to this chapter are presented in Table 9.2.

Table 9.1: The candidate's contribution to the chapter

Nature of contribution	Extent of contribution (%)
Conception, key ideas, research investigation and development, and write-up	94%

Table 9.2: The co-authors' contribution to the chapter

Name	Nature of contribution	Extent of contribution (%)
Marilyn Fleer	Editorial	3%
Liang Li	Editorial	3%

The undersigned hereby certify that the above declaration correctly reflects the nature and extent of the candidate's and co-authors' contributions to the chapter.

Candidate's Signature: [redacted] Date: 07-04-18

Co-author's Signature: [redacted] Date: 07-04-18

Co-author's Signature: [redacted] Date: 07-04-18

Background of paper four:

The literature review chapter of this thesis showed that very few studies have focused on parental support for children's play-based conceptual development in a home setting. The previous chapters discussed adults' pedagogical positioning and their everyday pedagogical practice in both the home and preschool contexts. However, except chapter 6 and chapter 8, other chapters did not focus on what happened to children's imaginative play when the adult actively goes inside the play with the children and how learning take place during collective engagement. This paper fills this gap and shows that the mother and the child collectively constructed an imaginary situation and learning took place in their interactive approach. Vygotsky's (2004) concept of imagination and creativity, Fleer's (2010, p. 140) pedagogical model of "collective and individual play" and Kravtsova's (2009, pp. 22-23) concept of "subject positioning" are used for thematic analysis. The paper analyses the play experience of a five–year–old boy, Jay (pseudonym used), and his mother's co-construction of play in the home context. The findings of the analysis show that the mother's interactive approach as an active play partner in Jay's play promoted his learning and development.

The paper was published in the AARE conference proceedings (following peer review). The paper received very positive feedback from the reviewers. The paper below is reproduced with a few editorial changes. Below is the information about the AARE conference proceedings from the website.

> Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) is the national association for fostering educational research in Australia. AARE facilitates contact between educational researchers and supports the development of high quality educational research. The "Refereed Paper" status indicates that the full written paper is double-blind refereed by peers and revised to take into account the referees' recommendations. The paper is the full version of the conference paper (not the abstract or extended abstract) that was presented at the relevant AARE conference. (Source: AARE website).

The following section presents the full paper.

MOTHER–CHILD COLLECTIVE PLAY IN HOME CONTEXT: AN ANALYSIS FROM A CULTURAL- HISTORICAL THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Abstract

Very few studies have given attention to parental support for children's play-based conceptual development in a home setting. The key aspect of this paper is to investigate how parental support aids development of children's mathematical and science concepts in collective play in the home context and what happens to the play during parent–child collective engagement. The data have been collected through video, audio and semi-structured interviews from four Indian families and their children (four to five years old and median age 4.5 years). For data analysis, Hedegaard's (2008a) three levels of interpretation – common sense, situated practice and thematic interpretations were employed. Vygotsky's (2004) concept of imagination and creativity, Fleer's (2010, p. 140) pedagogical model of "collective and individual play" and Kravtsova's (2009, pp. 22–23) concept of "subject positioning" are used for thematic analysis. The paper analyses the play experience of a five-year-old boy, Jay (pseudonym used), and his mother's co-construction of play in the home context. The findings of the analysis show that the mother's interactive approach as an active play partner in Jay's play promoted his learning and development. The paper argues that parents' active involvement in children's play is not only important for developing the play itself, but also important for providing better learning opportunities for children.

Introduction:

A plethora of literature discusses the importance of adults' support in children's learning and development (Alcock, 2010; Björklund, 2010; Degotardi, 2010; Elia & Evangelou, 2014; Gjems, 2010; Gjems, 2011; Hakkarainen, Bredikyte, Jakkula & Munter, 2013; Robson, 2010; van Oers, 2013), especially in formal educational settings. Teachers' collective engagement was first illustrated in Lindqvist's (1995, p. 215) concept of "Playworld", in which the adults take an active role in children's imaginative play, and are emotionally involved in children's play by sharing play themes and being a mediator of the play. Hakkarainen et al. (2013) put forward the concept of "Playworld" and argued that adult–child joint activity through dialogic interactions moved the play to a more advanced level. Collaborative co-construction of joint play not only promotes child's self-development, but also increases the ability of teachers to

perform in a more professional way (Bredikyte, 2011). Hakkarainen et al. (2013) show in their empirical research that novice student teachers' active participation in children's play develops their competency in planning and organising play activities independently. Researchers have also found student teachers learnt how to develop their educational plan in terms of individual children's needs and interests. They suggest the following steps to intervene in children's play

- Observe and try to catch the child's play idea.
- Step into the children's play.
- Get involved in joint play.
- Reach togetherness with a flow of mutual experience.

Very little research has been done in home settings in relation to parental support in children's play-based learning (Devi & Fleer, 2015). Researchers have found parental support in children's play develops children's science concepts, mathematical concepts and numeracy competency (Hao & Fleer, 2016; Sikder & Fleer, 2015; Vandermaas-Peeler, Boomgarden, Finn & Pittard, 2012). A parent's active involvement as a play partner in their child's imaginative play not only supports the child's bilingual language development (Li, 2012) and emotion regulation (Chen, 2015), but also gives a platform for internalising cultural knowledge (Li, 2012). A number of studies also found (Vandermaas-Peeler et al., 2012; Zellman, Perlman & Karam, 2014) that a large number of parents do not know how to support children's play and they have a very narrow view about their role in joining in children's play to promote children's conceptual development. After carrying out an extensive literature review it was found that very few studies have focused on how parents position themselves in children's play and what happens to the children's play after adults' active engagement in the play. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to investigate:

Q1. What happens to the child's imaginative play during parent–child collective engagement?

Q2. How do parents join in children's play in order to support children's development and learning?

To answer these research questions, the Vygotskian cultural-historical approach was applied to this study. It begins with discussion of related theoretical concepts, followed by the study design, the findings and the conclusion.

Cultural historical theoretical framework:

The dialectical relation between collective and individual imagining:

From the Vygotskian perspective, imagination is the internalisation of children's play and is connected with collective social interaction in real life. Vygotsky (2004) argued that the imagination is associated with reality and "everything the imagination creates is always based on elements taken from reality" (p. 13). Vygotsky argued that "a child's play is not simply a reproduction of what he (sic) has experienced, but a creative reworking of the impressions he (sic) has acquired. He (sic) combines them and uses them to construct a new reality, one that conforms to his (sic) own needs and desires" (pp. 11-12). Children bring real-life experiences into their imagination, so the richer the experiences, the richer their imagination in the play. Adults' experience is much richer than children's, therefore by engaging in children's play, adults can advance the play complexity and develop children's imagination and thinking (Vygotsky, 2004, as cited in Li, 2012). Fleer (2010) calls this collective imagining in the play. By creating a collective imaginary situation, adults support the children to connect with the collective knowledge and enable children to move away from the reality. Consequently, individual imagining allows children to move towards the reality (Fleer, 2010). Collective and individual imagining are dialectically related to each other (see the Figure 1). Therefore, together with children, adults help children to develop their imagination by introducing new concepts and developing the perceptions of the surrounding environment (Li, 2012).

Fleer (2014) argues that researchers have mostly focused on the value of play in terms of individual biological development; however, she found in her empirical research (Fleer, 2011b) that children give meaning to objects collectively, they communicate collectively and develop individual imaginaries collectively in play-based settings. Fleer (2010) developed her argument by mentioning that a child is an individual person in the play but, at the same time, he or she follows the rules and roles of the society in her or his play. In group play, children are not only individually performing a role, but are also collectively generating the play script through negotiating with each other. Children continously move towards the reality and move away from the reality when they are engaged in collective imagining and individual imagining. Furthermore, Fleer (2010) argues that teacher support, interaction and intervention develops children's higher mental functions, such as logical memory, voluntary attention and concept formation through a dynamic process of collective and individual imagining. Fleer's approach reflects Vygotsky's (1997) statement that "every higher mental function was external because it was social before it became an internal, strictly mental function; it was formerly a social

relation of two people" (p. 105). However, very little work has concentrated on the collective nature of imaginative play where children and adults work together for learning and development (Fleer, 2013; Li, 2013; Quinones, 2013).

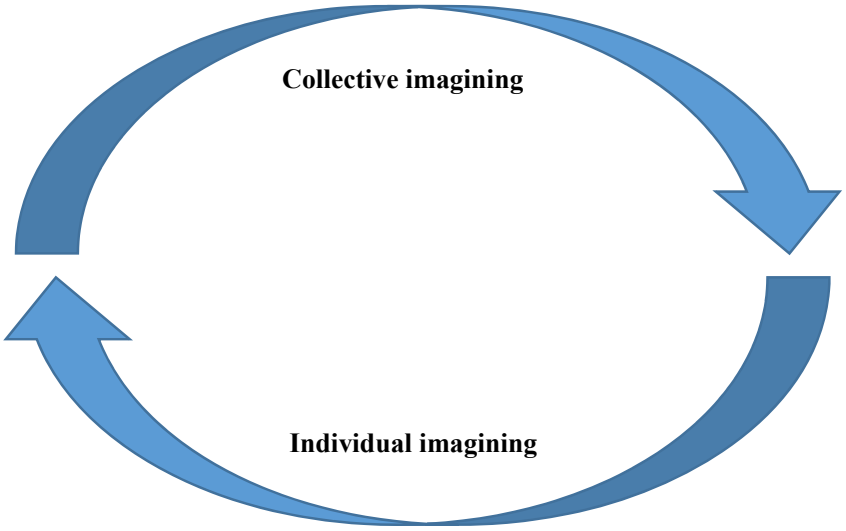

***Figure 1*: Collective and individual imagining (Fleer, 2010, p. 140)**

Kravtsova's (2009) idea of subject positioning:

To understand the idea of adult–child collaboration from a cultural-historical perspective, it is important to understand Vygotsky's (1987) concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) where he says, "what the child is able to do in collaboration (with adults or more able others) today he (sic) will be able to do independently tomorrow" (p. 211). Therefore, adults or more able others can help children to complete the task if they are unable to do it independently. Kravtsova (2009) elaborated on the concept of ZPD by identifying the importance of subject positioning in the play. She used the word "subject positioning" to draw attention to the concept of being inside the play (such as pretending to be a crying patient) and being outside of the play (gathering materials to support the play). She proposed dividing adults' level of participation into different positions while they move inside the play, such as the equal position, under position, above position, children in an independent position from adults, and a 'greater we' position. In joint play, adults make a suggestion by staying in the above position, while adults take the lead and instruction from children when they go in the under position. Furthermore, when adults and children contribute equally and negotiate with each other to extend the play, then adults are in the equal position. In the 'primordial we' position, adults show themselves as models to allow children to follow them with the flow of the play, but it is

not necessary for young children to understand the storyline of the play. In the independent position, adults allow children to actively engage in the play independently but they do not withdraw themselves from the play; rather, they are physically present inside the play. The position of adults in Kravtsova's (2009) research is considered in a pair pedagogy context. The concept of "subject positioning" is used in the context of adult–child interactions in imaginary play situations instead of the pair pedagogy (adult–adult–child) approach in teaching–learning situation. Kravtsova's (2009, pp. 22-23) theoretical concept of "subject positioning" in relation to adults' position in children's play and Fleer's (2010, p. 140) idea of "collective and individually imagining" are used in the analysis undertaken to answer the research questions of this paper.

Study design:

This paper particularly focuses on how parents position themselves inside the children's imaginative play to develop children's theoretical understanding and to support the development of the play complexity itself. Drawing upon cultural-historical theory, Hedegaard's (2008b) dialectical–interactive methodology is employed, where the first author researcher positioned herself as a partner with the participants of the activity to carry out a deeper examination of the entire situation. In this way, it was possible for her to take dual positions as a researcher and as a research participant. Additionally, she kept in mind not to take the authority of the other participants or direct the play situation, but rather engage with participants as a member of the community (Hedegaard, 2008b) by letting them know of her role as researcher. In this study, she did not dismiss her position but rather participated in the situation as a researcher to understand the participants' intentions and social interactions.

Sample:

The data were gathered from four focus children and their familes in Victoria, Australia. In total, 17 hours of data were collected from four focus children (two boys and two girls), and their family members in an everyday family environment. Three visits were made to each family. This paper has a particular focus on Jay (pseudonym, age five years old during the data collection) and his mother's collective engagement in the play in a home setting. He has a sister, Joya (pseudonym), two years his junior. The parents did their higher study in India and they migrated to Australia nearly six years ago. Jay attends a preschool between 9am and 4pm four days a week. According to his mother Dipa (pseudonym), Jay talks little and loves to play

by himself. As both parents work they do not get much time to involve themselves in Jay's play at home. Sometimes he plays with his younger sister Joya, but this is very rare.

Data generation:

Influenced by a cultural-historical methodology, the data were generated through a visual digital methodological approach in everyday family life settings (Fleer, 2014). Data were collected through video camera, still camera, audio recorder and field notes. The data were collected during Jay's free play situation in the home setting. There were two video cameras used in the research sites: one camera placed on a tripod to capture the entire situation of mother–child joint play, and another roaming camera to capture the participants' facial expressions, interactions and engagement with the play situation. Video data and field notes were collected for Jay over three weeks (one day per week) and later all the raw data were categorised and transferred on-to a secured hard disk drive for analysis.

Data analysis:

At the beginning of the data analysis, a large number of videos were transcribed and generated into video clips according to research questions and themes. Hedegaard's (2008a) three levels of interpretation were employed for the data analysis: common sense, situated practice and thematic interpretation. For the common sense interpretation, a single video clip was analysed in written form to extract Jay and his mother's collective interaction and intervention in a play-based setting. Then in the situated practice interpretation, a series of video clips that linked with a similar pattern of play-based settings of Jay and his mother were analysed to confirm Jay and his mother's collective engagement in the play. Finally, the third level helps to bridge the theory and the practice to answer the research questions. For example, on the thematic level, Kravtsova's (2009) theoretical concept of "subject positioning" and Fleer's (2010) idea of "collective and individually imagining" helps to conceptualise the idea of how these theoretical concepts (theory) will be used to analyse Jay and his mother collectively engaging in the play (practice).

Findings: an example of Jay and his mother's collective play in a home setting

Jay is trying to make a slide for cars. First he joined some blocks together and put a slide on top of the blocks. He was trying to put a sloped plastic frame to create a slide that would start from the end of the slide. He needed support to lift the sloped frame and was struggling to solve

the problem but did not ask for any help from his mother. His mother was sitting next to him. According to his mother, Jay loves this type of construction play and he uses Lego or blocks to make a car slide. He plays by himself but is happy to get help from his parents, although he does not like any intervention from his younger sister during his play. The play scenario is provided along with a few images to help visualise the entire situation of the play.

Dipa (mother): What are you making?

Jay: I want my cars to slide down. *(Shows a sloped frame to put at the end of the slide)*

Dipa: Ok, but your slide is too high from the ground. Put it down a bit.

Jay: No.

Dipa: Then you have to put some more blocks at the end of the slide to lift the sloped frame. It needs to be at the same height. *(Dipa helps him to put the blocks together to lift the frame up)*

Figure 2: **Dipa is showing Jay that the sloped frame needs a straight support to touch the slide**

Dipa: See Jay, the slide is too high so the sloped frame can't touch its edge. We have to put more blocks underneath the frame. Is it ok now? *(Places the frame near the slide, but the sloped frame did not touch the slide properly and there was a gap between them)*

Jay: No, it is not ok. The car cannot go, it will get stuck here. *(Points to the gap)*

Dipa: Ok *(Smiling)*, then we have to adjust the level of the blocks to remove the gap.

Figure 3: **Jay has identified a gap between the slide and the sloped frame**

They were collectively placing some blocks and taking out some blocks from under the slide to make the adjustment. After a couple of attempts, the sloped frame and the slide touched each other without any gaps.

Dipa: Now what?

Jay: I want to put something in here *pointing to the end of the sloped frame)* to make a slide and the car will go.

Researcher: What do you want to make?

Jay: Car track. I got an idea. *(Brings some connectors to make a slide)*

They made a slide structure by joining connectors and were working together to put that at the end of the sloped frame. But it was not working and was falling down. Dipa proposed putting a straight support under the connectors. Jay added a teapot to support it, but this did not work.

Dipa: No, Jay. It is not working.

Jay was becoming frustrated when it was not working. His younger sister Joya was putting some connectors in and trying to help them but Jay became angry. Dipa put Joya on her lap and Joya watched their collective construction.

Dipa: What about you bring your plastic ladder and put that at the end of the sloped frame.

(Jay accepts Dipa's proposal. He brings the ladder and his dominoes box from their room)

Figure 4: **Jay and Dipa collectively extending the play by implementing the idea to using ladder and dominoes**

Dipa: See, now it will work. *(Puts the ladder at the end of the frame)* Now you can put a car on the slide.

Jay: No, wait. I want to put dominoes on the ladder.

Dipa: If you put dominoes on top of the ladder then how will the car go through the ladder?

Jay: No, the cars will hit the back of the dominoes and they will fall all together. *(Pointing to one of the dominoes. Puts a plastic bridge at the top of the ladder and starts to place the dominoes one by one)*

Dipa: But the car won't be able to go to the top of the bridge.

Jay: No, the car will stop here. *(Pointing to the end of the ladder)*

Dipa: Ok, I got it. The car will stop at the end of the bridge and will hit the dominoes of the bridge.

Jay: Yes.

The dominoes were falling again and again. Jay became frustrated but Dipa proposed to help him and they finished placing all the dominoes successfully. At the end of their play, Jay put the cars on the slide and the cars slowly hit the dominoes of the ladder and the ladder's dominoes hit the dominoes of the bridge. Jay and Dipa smiled and gave each other a 'high five'.

Figure 5: **Their collective engagement in imaginative construction play promoted a play-based learning environment**

Analysis and discussion:

Collective engagement of Jay and his mother (Dipa) in imaginative constructive play:
At the beginning of the play, Jay was struggling to place the sloped frame and could not solve the problem by himself. Dipa took the initiative to join in his play, which motivated Jay to continue the play (even though he did not ask for any help from Dipa, he was happy to welcome his mother into his play). Jay was not able to work out how to put the sloped frame next to the slide, and his unsuccessful attempt gave Dipa the opportunity to respond to his actions and take an active role in his play. The data showed that Dipa's instruction and interaction in Jay's play motivated her to engage as an active player in the flow of the play. Dipa's interactive support, close physical and psychological proximity within Jay's ZPD created a learning opportunity for him through development of the play itself. She did not underestimate Jay's ideas, but rather gave advice and negotiated ideas with Jay that created a collaborative learning space in the joint play.

To solve the problem, Dipa's different proposals (put the slide down or put some blocks under the frame to lift it up) extended their imaginative space and developed the play itself (Bodrova 2008; Hakkarainen & Bredikite, 2010; Hakkarainen, 2010; Lindqvist, 1995). Dipa's continous interaction ("We have to put more blocks underneath the sloped frame") and asking questions ("Is it ok now?") created the opportunity for Jay to brainstorm to solve the problem. Their collective experiences and actions were associated with how to make a slide without any gap between the slide and the sloped frame. Dipa's interaction and actions were helping Jay to

develop his individual imagination and allow him to think more deeply about the technical-constructive or building activity that he experienced in the real world (Fleer, 2010). Moreover, collective imagination (putting some blocks to lift the frame up and trying to reduce the gap between the slide and frame) was extending the play, while Jay proposed to add the dominoes in his play or use a bridge to extend the slide from the end of the sloped frame (Fleer, 2010).

Dipa was actively helping Jay to develop his mathematical understanding by showing the measurement of the height between the slide and the sloped frame. She used some words such as 'lift', 'high', 'underneath' and 'level' to support Jay's conceptual development. At the same time, she gave Jay the opportunity to see how to reduce the gap between the slide and the frame using the blocks. Jay was supported by Dipa to pay attention to what type of support they needed to make a big slide.

Collectively they were moving away from reality and developing their imagination in making a big slide, at the same time as they were moving towards reality by exploring different ideas (for example using a ladder to make the slide or using a mathematical measurement to reduce the gap between the slide and the sloped frame), which is in fact associated with technical-constructive knowledge. As a result, their play became more complex and constructive through their collective imagining, which was developing Jay's individual imagining (Fleer, 2010). As this above example clearly shows, Dipa's and Jay's negotiation and discussion about what to use to make the slide and how to use the objects to extend the slide are based on their shared thinking, which not only enhanced the ability of Jay's individual imagination (using dominoes), but also generated the understanding of new scientific concepts such as a '**cause and effect relationship'** ("Car will hit the back of the dominoes and will stop behind the dominoes"). Dipa gave Jay the opportunity to think about a cause–effect relationship when she asked the question "If you put dominoes on the top of the ladder then how will the car go through the ladder?" The scientific reasoning of the cause–effect relationship became evident through Jay's answer: "No, the cars will hit the back of the dominoes *(one event - the **cause**)* and they will fall all together" *(makes another event happen - the **effect**)* of their shared imaginations. Through their collective imagining, Dipa was developing Jay's individual imagining, developing the complexity of the play, developing the understanding of abstract thinking (spatial concepts; cause-effect relationships) and developing the perception of the surrounding world. This is presented in Figure 6 below.

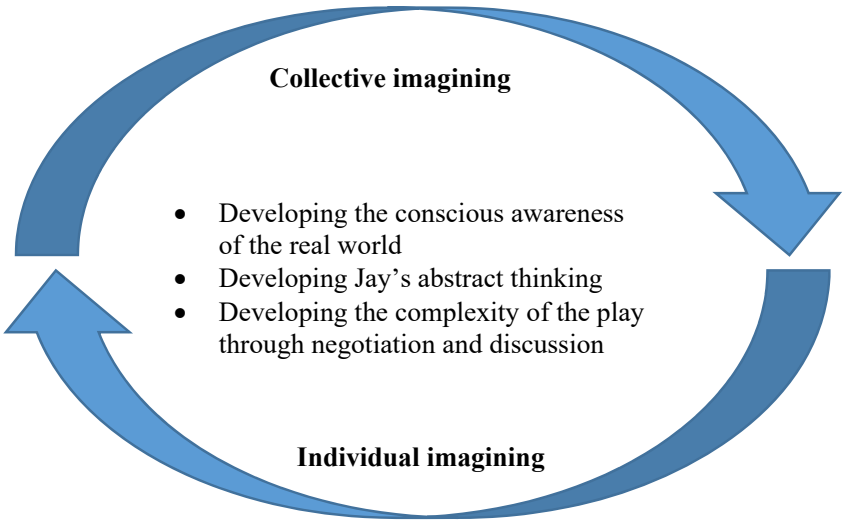

***Figure 6*: Jay and his mother's collective play supports Jay's development and learning (Fleer, 2010, p. 140)**

Dipa's active participation and interactive support in Jay's imaginative constructive play:

The data showed that Dipa positioned herself inside Jay's imaginative construction play from the very beginning of the play. She took the opportunity to go inside the play as a play partner. Her role was not limited by asking questions, providing materials or giving suggestions, rather she actively supported Jay by building the slide together and by discussing her understanding with Jay. Dipa took dual positions in the play: she was associating her previous experiences by being outside of the play and at the same time developing Jay's individual imagining by being inside the play. By moving inside the play, Dipa was able to understand Jay's play theme and was able to develop the complexity of the play. Based on Kravtsova's (2009) concept of "subject positioning" in the adult–child interactive approach, it was observed Dipa positioned herself from various angles to extend the play. At first, Dipa placed herself in the position of 'above' to Jay by proposing to put the slide down or lift the sloped frame to bring them to the same level. This expanded Jay's thinking and give him the opportunity to express his thinking. She also proposed bringing a ladder to replace the connectors by being in the above position. By positioning herself in the 'above' position, Dipa mentioned the different mathematical words 'high', 'low', 'level', 'under', 'remove' and 'lift' to develop Jay's theoretical understanding of 'measurement'.

Dipa was trying to establish her understanding through negotiation with Jay and positioned

herself in the 'equal' position. This position allowed her to negotiate with Jay; for example, she was developing Jay's imaginative thinking by asking questions about how the car would go if dominoes were placed on the ladder and by rejecting the idea of using connectors to make the slide. In this sense, Dipa did not give any direct instructions to Jay; rather, she gave Jay the opportunity to work along with her equally through her actions (listening, responding and enquiring) and interactions.

Furthermore, Dipa went in the 'under' position when she asked Jay "Is it ok now?" (by putting the frame near the slide) or "Now what?" She provided Jay with a chance to expand his imagination, to lead the play and to share his idea to make the slide. This moment gave Jay the opportunity to make the decision to extend the next step of the play. Jay attempted to bring new ideas; for example, bringing dominoes and a bridge into his play enhanced the possibility of development of his problem–solving skills and innovative skills. Dipa also provided a situation that allowed Jay to think independently, find the problem independently and expand the play independently. Dipa did not withdraw herself from the play; rather, she was physically present inside the play (Kravtsova, 2009). Finally, Jay's younger sister Joya was also involved in the middle part of the play. She imitated her mother's actions and placed some connectors to make the slide. Jay, however, was not happy about her involvement and could not engage Joya in such complicated constructive play because her developmental level was insufficient to join in this play. Dipa provided a situation that allowed Joya to go in the 'primordial we' position. Instead of withdrawing Joya from the play Dipa let Joya sit on her lap and allowed her to observe the play.

To summarise, in this example of Jay's play with his mother, it is evident that they collectively and imaginatively explored the technique of constructing a slide and, at the same time, Dipa supported development of Jay's problem–solving skills and abstract knowledge. Dipa consciously created different positions inside the play that allowed her to develop the play maturity through the dynamic process of the dialectical relationship of collective and individual imagining. She took an 'above position' to develop Jay's scientific and mathematical concepts (cause-effect relationship and measurement), an 'equal' position to negotiate how to build the slide and an 'under' position to allow Jay to lead the play independently. The paper shows the ways in which Dipa communicated with Jay made a difference to Jay's development and learning, which is different to the traditional pedagogical practice of early childhood education; that is, not to be involved in children's play and to let them explore the world freely. This paper shows that Dipa's active involvement in the play and taking different positions inside the play

(above, equal, under, let children play independently and primordial we positions) supported Jay's development and learning. Dipa's actions and interactions increased the possibility of Jay developing a theoretical understanding of the cause–effect relationship and also gave the scope of developing his problem-solving ability. According to cultural-historical theory, children's learning and development is prompted over time through multiple episodes; the result of this paper shows Dipa's active position increased the possibility of Jay's learning and development through play. Moreover, this paper also shows that as a consequence of Jay and his mother's collective imagination, there was development of the imaginative play itself, which laid the foundations of Jay's individual imagining.

Conclusion:

There are two major outcomes of this study. The first finding shows that the mother–child's collective engagement develops the complexity of the play itself and promotes children's development and learning. Inspired by Vygotsky's (2004) idea of dialectical relations between imagination and reality, Fleer's (2010) concept of "collective and individual imagining" provides a new dimension to researching parent–child joint play in an imaginary situation. A large number of studies have shown why adults' interactive approach is important and how adults support children's development and learning. However, this study goes further and shows what happens to the play when adults and children are collectively engaged in the play. Dipa's support in Jay's constructive imaginative play not only developed the play itself, but also provided the platform for Jay to develop his individual imagining. Collectively moving in and out of an imaginary situation allowed Jay and his mother to engage in collective discussion, for example, how to reduce the gap between the slide and the sloped frame and what to include to extend the slide, and this provided the foundation for supporting Jay's conceptual development, which helped him to make sense of the world (Fleer, 2013).

The second finding shows that in order to support Jay's learning and development, Dipa was active in the play, and she was moving outside of the play while using her existing knowledge and simultaneously moving inside the play while engaging in the constructive play along with Jay. By applying Kravtsov's (2009) conception of subject positioning in this study, it was possible to analyse Dipa's different positions in the play. As an active participant in the jointly constructed play, Dipa was able to apply different strategies, such as negotiating, questioning and letting Jay lead the play, which encouraged Jay to explore the concepts and expand the play. This finding brings new insights into how parents can position themselves in children's

play to support their development and learning in a home context.

This study makes a contribution to early childhood education because it shows how Kravtsova's (2009) "subject positioning'" concept and Fleer's (2010) idea of "collective and individual imagining" have been used to analyse adult support in family play pedagogical practice. This study dismisses the traditional view of adults' engagement in children's play, where children's play has been regarded as a pleasurable free activity into which adults have little input. It is argued that Dipa's active involvement inside the play as a play partner created the possibility for her to develop Jay's abstract thinking and, at the same time, develop the play itself. It is recommended that further study needs to be conducted in order to understand parental support in children's play in relation to the concept of being inside and outside of the play.

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Part 3: Finalising the research

Chapter 10: Conclusion

Introduction:

The aim of this chapter is to draw the entire thesis together and provide a holistic picture of the study. In this study, everyday play practices of adults and children were investigated and presented to formulate a pedagogical strategy in relation to adults' positioning in the play in preschool and home contexts. Chapters 5 to 9 of this thesis discussed the findings that answer the subsidiary questions introduced in Chapter 1, which collectively answer the main research question: "What are the ways adults' involve themselves in children's imaginative play and how do they position themselves in support of children's learning and development?" This last chapter integrates all five findings chapters (Chapters 5 to 9) and provides a whole picture of the study design and the contributions the study makes to academic knowledge regarding adults' support in children's play-based learning. There are two research models (Figure 10.1 and 10.2) proposed in this chapter that provide a theoretical and a methodological understanding about pedagogical positions of play participants and establish a pedagogical strategy for parents, teachers, and researchers. These models helped to frame the main contributions of this research project. Furthermore, this chapter presents recommendations and directions for future research in order to extend knowledge about adults' involvement in imaginative play for supporting children's learning and development. The final section presented is the concluding remarks.

Adults' pedagogical positioning (inside and outside) in children's imaginative play:

To understand pedagogical practices of institutions in relation to children's learning and development through play in early childhood, it is necessary to observe the children in their external and internal environments, as the environment is seen as "a source of development" (Vygotsky, 1994, p. 341). At the beginning of the study, an extensive literature review helped to finalise the main and subsidiary research questions. A theoretical framework was adopted to answer the research question. The study was framed by the system of concepts of Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory. Vygotsky's (1966, 2004) idea about imaginative play, the concept of

"imagination and reality" (Vygotsky, 2004), the cultural-historical theoretical view of Kravtsov and Kravtsova's (2010) concept of "dual subjectivity", Hedegaard's (2012) concept of "motives and demands" and Fleer's (2010) idea of "collective and individual imagining" were used as analytical tools to answer the research questions. Hedegaard's (2012) model of children's learning and development in different institutional activity settings was considered to undertake a systematic investigation of participants' interaction across societal, institutional, and individual levels in this thesis.

The overarching findings shows that adults spend a minimal amount of time inside the imaginative play. When they are involved in children's play, they often take outsider positions, such as enquirer, observer, material provider, narrator, and active planner to support the play, instead of being inside the play as an active play partner. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 illustrate the patterns of adults' involvement in children's imaginative play in their everyday pedagogical practices. The second finding shows that when adults are in outsider positions, they do not read the play practices of the children or consider how to make learning more motivating by becoming in tune with the play narrative (Chapter 7). Their pedagogical position outside of the play misses the opportunity to create a learning space inside the play and to develop the play complexity with the children. By taking an active role (moving between inside and outside of the imaginative play), adults have the opportunity to develop the play complexity, promote the children's development and learning, and understand the play theme from the individual's perspectives (Chapters 6, 8, and 9).

Overall, this study provides new insight by investigating day–to–day pedagogical practices of parents and teachers in relation to their involvement in children's imaginative play in home and preschool settings, respectively (Chapters 5, 6, 7, & 8). Furthermore, the study investigates an adult's positioning inside and outside of the imaginative play by taking into account children's perspectives to support children's learning and development (Chapters 6, 8, and 9).

The findings and arguments of all the publications are presented in Table 10.1.

Table 10.1: Overview of findings and arguments of five chapters

Chapters	Subsidiary question/s, findings and arguments	Theoretical concepts
Chapter 5	**Q1:** Do teachers enter into children's imaginative play? **Q2:** What are teachers' views of their role in children's imaginative play? **Findings:** Despite the general importance of play, teachers' involvement in developing children's imaginative play appears to be minimal. It also reveals that teachers' beliefs about their role in children's imaginative play is directly related to their everyday practice of being involved in children's play. **Arguments:** It is argued that the traditional beliefs and practice of keeping teachers outside of the children's play positions the teachers on the boundary of the children's play and does not allow them to obtain a general sense of the children's perspective about the play.	Vygotsky's (1966) cultural-historical concept of play and Kravtsov and Kravtsova's (2010) conception of "dual subjectivity" (being inside and outside of the play) were used as analytical tools
Chapter 6	**Q3:** Do early childhood teachers involve themselves in children's imaginative play, and if they do, what role do they take? **Findings:** The study identified six different pedagogical roles of teachers inside and outside of children's imaginative play for supporting their learning and development. In the first five categories, when teachers take the role of observer, enquirer, resource provider, and active planner they are outside of children's play and less in tune with the child's perspective. However, in last category it was found, that when the teacher was an active player, she had the opportunity to better understand the play themes from the children's perspectives. **Arguments:** It is argued that the pedagogical practice of being inside the play can provide the possibility of taking the children's perspectives,	Vygotsky's (1966) cultural-historical concept of play and Kravtsov and Kravtsova's (2010) conception of "dual subjectivity" (being inside and outside of the play) were used as analytical tools

	while meeting the teachers' educational agenda of delivering an intentional teaching program in support of children's learning.	
Chapter 7	**Q4:** How do children transition between activity settings within a preschool? **Q5:** What happens to the children's motive orientation when teachers make learning demands upon children in play-based settings? and **Q6:** What demands do children make upon teachers when their motive orientation is to play rather than learning? **Findings**: The result of the paper shows that, first, the children's motive orientation to play and the teacher's pedagogical demands on children to learn maths concepts creates a transition from one activity setting to another activity setting. Second, the teacher did not read the play practices of the children or consider making learning more motivating by being in tune with the play narrative that was developing between the children. Third, the teacher did not capture the moment when children put demands on her to go inside the collective imaginary world with them. The teacher could not notice the children's perspectives, which missed the possibility of children's engagement in the learning activity. **Arguments:** It is argued in the paper that understanding the motive orientation of children could help the teachers to support their learning and development. It is also argued that to create a learning environment for children, one needs to consider children's motive orientation and their relational aspects with society, where play is an ongoing learning activity for preschool children.	Vygotsky's (1998) cultural-historical theoretical lens and Hedegaard's (2012b) theoretical concepts of "motives and demands" were used as analytical tools

Chapter 8	**Q7:** How do Indian-Australian immigrant parents involve themselves by taking on their children's perspectives in imaginative play? By doing so, are they supporting the development of their children's academic learning and problem-solving skills in the imaginative play? **Findings**: Nine significant pedagogical techniques of play participants' involvement in imaginative play were revealed in Chapter 8. The findings of this chapter show that the parent developed the play complexity and understood the play theme from the individual's perspectives by moving between the inside and outside of the imaginative play. On the other hand, being the outsider of the play, the parent could only be on the boundary of the play which restricted her from entering into the child's imaginary world. As a result, the parent missed the opportunity to work alongside the child to help her solve the problems arising inside the play. **Arguments:** It is argued in the chapter that to understand other play partners' perspectives and fulfil demands and motives of play participants inside the play, "pedagogical positioning" is an important concept to consider.	Vygotsky's (1966) cultural-historical concept of play, Kravtsov and Kravtsova's (2010) conception of "dual subjectivity" (being inside and outside of the play) and Hedegaard's (2012b) theoretical concepts of "motives and demands" were used as analytical tools.
Chapter 9	**Q8:** How does the mother enter into a child's play when supporting learning and development? **Q9:** What happens to the child's imaginative play during mother–child collective engagement? **Findings**: The findings of this paper show that the mother's interactive approach as an active play partner in Jay's imaginative play promoted his scientific understanding of the 'cause–effect relationship' and also developed Jay's individual imaginative experiences. **Argument**s: It is argued in the paper that the parents' active involvement in children's play is not	Vygotsky's (2004) notion of imagination and reality, Fleer's (2010) pedagogical model of "collective and individual imagining" and Kravtsov and Kravtsova's (2010) concept of "subject positioning" were

	only important for developing the play itself, but also important for providing better learning opportunities for children.	used as analytical tools.

Based on the research results, the study provides two theoretical models, Figure 10.1 and 10.2, which illustrate the pedagogical strategy in relation to play participants' positioning either being only outside or both inside and outside of the imaginative play. Figure 10.1 illustrates that if the play participants (parent and teacher) take an active **role**, use pedagogical **techniques** to be involved in collective imagining, construct shared imaginative conversations, are involved emotionally, and **position** themselves pedagogically between the real and imaginary situations with other play partners then they could foster a positive learning environment through play. Being involved in imaginative play, parents and teachers could develop children's individual imagining, extend the play complexity, develop children's conscious awareness about scientific/academic concepts deliberately, accommodate children to develop their problem–solving skills, and understand children's play perspectives (see examples in Chapters 6, 8, and 9).

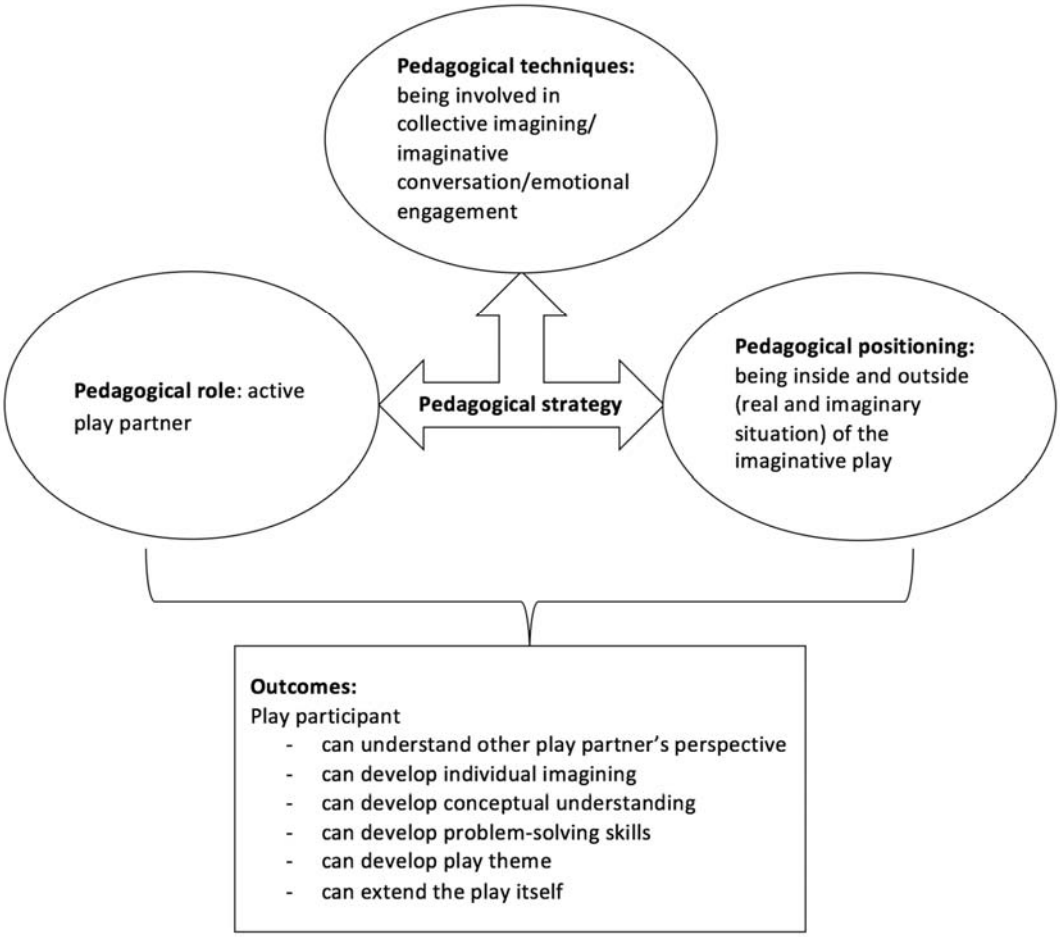

Figure 10.1: A model of pedagogical strategy: play participants' position inside and outside of the imaginative play

Figure 10.2 illustrates that by taking observer, enquirer, instructor, and material provider **roles**, the play participants (parents and teachers) only **position** themselves outside of the play, which restricts them to establishing the pedagogical **techniques** of collective imagining and emotional and shared imaginative conversation in the play. They do not get the opportunity to develop individual imagining, extend the play, deliberately develop the children's conscious awareness about scientific/academic concepts, accommodate children to develop their problem-solving skills, and understand children's play perspective (see examples in Chapters 5, 6, 7, & 8).

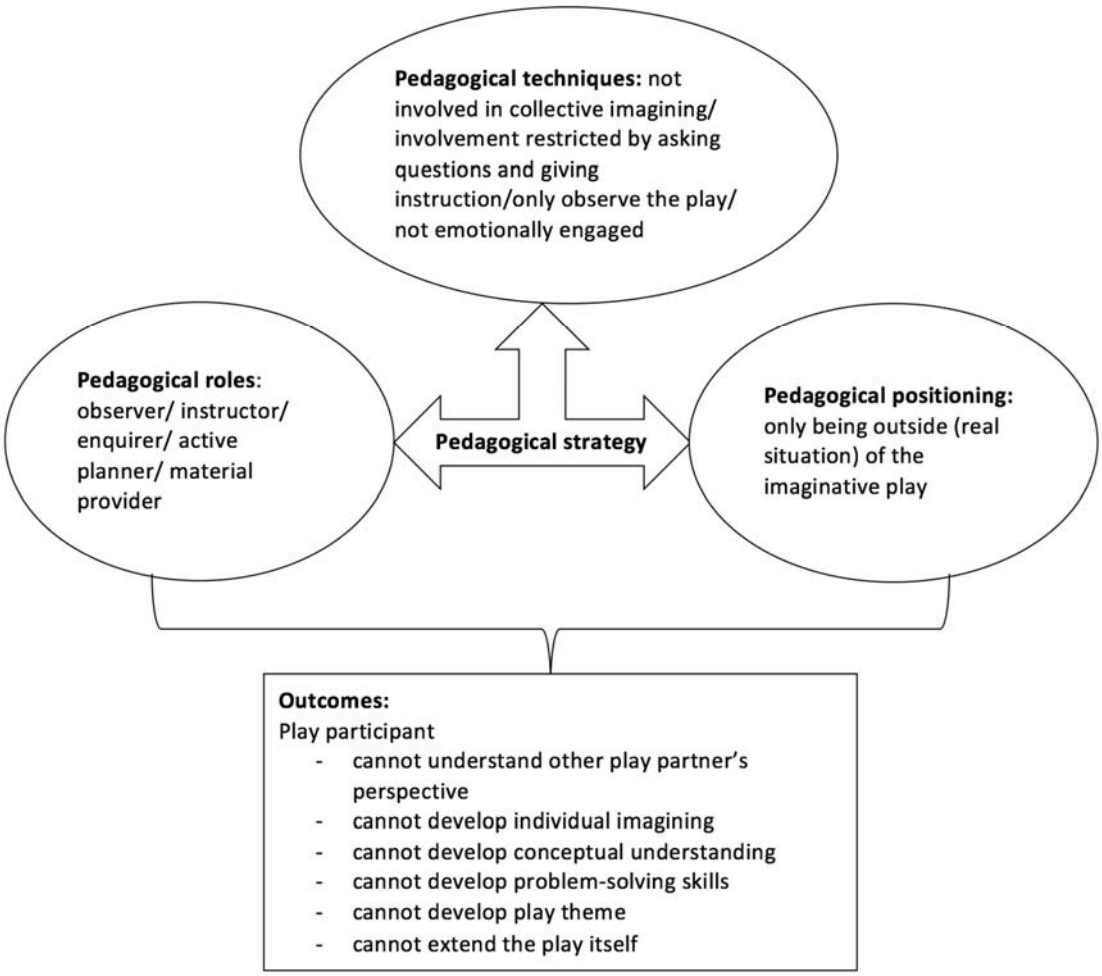

Figure 10.2: A model of pedagogical strategy: play participants' position only being outside of the imaginative play

Traditionally, play is conceptualised as children's free activity where adults make a minimum contribution (Burghardt, 2011; Kennedy & Barblett, 2010; Moyles, 2005; Piaget, 1962; Smith, 2007; Wood & Attfield, 2005). However, this research shows how adults' active participation in children's imaginative play develops children's learning and development (see the Chapters 6, 8, & 9). This study also shows that when adults take observer, enquirer, or material provider roles, they are only on the boundary of the play and cannot develop the play and the children's conceptual understanding and problem–solving skills (see Chapters 6, 7, & 8). As previously mentioned in Chapter 2, the national framework in Australia highlights that teachers need to follow intentional teaching practice to support children's development by creating a play-based learning approach (DEEWR, 2009); however, the framework does not address the issue of how to be involved and in what ways teachers should be involved intentionally in children's play to support their learning and development. A specific guideline can help both teachers and parents

to contribute more effectively. Interestingly, most of the teachers in the study are knowledgeable about Australia's national curriculum (EYLF) (DEEWR, 2009) and have a clear understanding about taking part in children's play as an observer, material provider, and enquirer to set up intentional teaching practice. Their beliefs about being involved in children's play are directly related to their pedagogical practice (Chapter 6). They try to keep a balance between free play and adults' involvement in children's play, therefore they take the outsider position most of the time. However, their focus on creating intentional teaching practice to teach subject–based knowledge potentially takes children away from the imaginary situation, as was found in the collected data-set and presented in Chapters 6 and 7 in this study. In both Chapter 6 and Chapter 7, it was found that the teachers' pedagogical demands of teaching academic concepts motivated them to set up a learning activity separately and moved children from their imaginative thinking to the teachers' instructional approach. Chapter 7 also shows that the teacher could not understand the children's perspective, and therefore the teacher missed the opportunities for developing a learning motive with the children. Similarly, in Chapter 8, it was found that the parent's cultural demands of developing the problem-solving skills of the child motivated the mother to stay outside the boundary of the play which did not allow her to bring academic concepts inside the play. In contrast, it was also found in Chapter 8 that without taking the authority from the child, a parent's active position (being inside and outside the play) sensitively supported the development of the child's problem-solving skills and helped the child to learn academic concepts instead of interrupting and dismissing the play. The mother's active position as a play partner opened the door to understand the child's perspectives which was not possible for her only being outside the play (Chapter 8 and 9). The models (10.1 and 10.2) of pedagogical strategy in relation to play partners' positioning in imaginative play could be a supportive tool for teachers and parents to implement a play-based learning environment in their institutional settings. These models could provide scope to teachers to consider an alternative way of thinking about the development of intentional teaching practice in Australia.

A number of studies show that adults' active involvement develops the quality of the play and further develops children's learning (Fleer, 2011; Fleer & Peers, 2012; Hakkarainen & Bredikyte, 2010; Hao & Fleer, 2016; Li, 2012a; Sikder & Fleer, 2015), but these studies did not address the ways in which adults involve themselves and how much time adults spend in children's play in their day–to–day pedagogical practice. Chapter 5 illustrates that teachers' involvement in children's imaginative play is much less compared to the frequency of the

children's involvement in play. As was identified in the literature review, more needs to be known about the type of roles adults can take in children's imaginative play (Fleer, 2015; Hakkarainen et al., 2014; Kravtosov & Kravtsova, 2010). In Chapter 6, six different categories of teacher positioning were revealed that illustrate the way teachers' can be involved in imaginative play in their day–to–day pedagogical practice of preschool settings. There were a number of video clips and teachers' interview comments used in Chapter 6 to explore their roles in the imaginative play.

Some studies have explored adults' beliefs about the importance of play in children's learning and development in home contexts (Chang, 2015; Cote & Bornstein, 2009; Edwards, 2000; Roopnarine, 2015; Tamis-LeMonda, Katz, & Bornstein, 2002), but these studies did not look at the topic of adults' views in terms of their involvement in children's play. The teachers' interview comments in this study also showed that teachers' beliefs about their role in children's imaginative play are directly related to their practice of being involved in children's play (Chapter 5).

Fleer (2015) showed in her empirical study that teachers were involved in the imaginative play with children in traditional play-based settings; however, they were mostly outside of the play. The result of Fleer's (2015) study show that teachers did not take an active play partner role as suggested in Lindqvist's (1955) "Playworld" settings. Similar to Fleer's (2015) study, this investigation found that the adults were mostly outside of the play in their involvement in children's imaginative play. The adults took instructor and active planner roles outside of the play in many cases in this study, as presented in Chapters 6, 7 and 8, which did not allow them to understand the children's perspectives. Despite being in close physical proximity, the adults set up various activities separately and gave instructions to teach academic concepts to children outside of the imaginative play. Instead of moving into the children's initiated imaginative play and creating a learning space inside the play with the children, the adults preferred to support the children's learning and development by staying on the boundary of the play, as presented in Chapters 6, 7 and 8. A number of datasets in this study showed that the adults were unsuccessful in extending the play and facilitating learning outside of the play.

Fleer's (2015) study considers only the teachers' perspectives in the preschool settings; however, this study considers both teachers' and parents' beliefs and their pedagogical practices by taking into account children's perspectives in preschool and home contexts. This study also shows ways in which teachers from Australian preschools and parents from Indian-

Australian immigrant families can be involved in children's imaginative play in their everyday play practice and what happens with children's learning and development when adults are actively involved in children's play. These are issues that have not been addressed by previous research. Chapter 8 shows how taking an active play partnering role with the child allows the adult to move between real and imaginary situations and understand the play participants' perspectives inside the play, in contrast to only taking on observer, narrator, inquirer and resource provider roles, which keeps the adult on the boundary of the play and restricts spontaneous movement between real and imaginary situations. As discussed in Chapters 6, 8, and 9, when the adult was in an active position inside and outside of the children's imaginative play she had an opportunity to teach scientific concepts to enhance children's problem-solving skills in a collective imaginary situation. Being involved in collective imaginative play, the adults developed the children's individual imagining skills and problem–solving skills, and helped them understand the children's perspectives as detailed in Chapters 8 and 9 in this thesis. Being inside the play, the adult not only had an opportunity to fulfil her own demand of supporting the child's learning and development through play, but also to fulfil the child's demand of developing the play through active involvement (Chapter 8).

The central argument of this study is that to understand the progress of children's learning and development through play (Wood, 2009), one should consider studying the child in collectively constructed everyday social situations rather than concentrate only on an individual practice. A number of researchers have found teachers' active positioning in children's play not only enhances the learning opportunities for children, but also develops the play itself (Fleer, 2015; Fleer & Kamaralli, 2017; Hakkarainen et al., 2013; Singer et al., 2014). Similar to their findings, the findings of this study presented in Chapter 6, 8, and 9 show that adults' and children's collective engagement create a learning space, and that the adults' active position enhances the play and progresses children's learning and development through imaginative play.

Furthermore, previous research did not focus on what type of pedagogical strategy teachers and parents could adopt to promote children's learning and development through play. A number of researchers argue the importance of adults' roles in children's play in the interaction and instructional approach, but it is suggested in this research to consider adults' physical and psychological positioning in children's play to support their learning and development. This study developed two models in this chapter (see Figures 10.1 and 10.2) that show that in order to get positive learning outcomes, one needs to think about implementing the type of

pedagogical strategy that integrates participants' pedagogical roles, positions, and techniques in play-based learning.

Overall, it is argued in this study to implement a learning approach that encourages adults to be inside the children's imaginative play, as to understand children's perspectives, the adults need be active participants both inside and outside of the play with the children. Therefore, it is necessary to modify the central focus from the traditional beliefs and practices of studying the individual child and keeping adults outside of the children's play to an approach that creates a collective learning environment inside the play by considering children's perspectives instead of only taking outsider roles in the play.

Contributions:

Theoretical contributions:

Vygotsky's (1966) concept of play, the concept of "imagination and reality" (Vygotsky, 2004), and Kravtsov's and Kravtsova's, (2010) concept of "dual subjectivity" were the central theoretical concepts used in the analyses undertaken for the entire study. The aim of the study required an understanding of Vygotsky's view on play and his conception of "imagination and reality" in detail. This research project puts forward a cultural-historical understanding of imaginative play and its relations to children's learning and development in everyday family and preschool contexts.

Vygotsky's (1966) concept of play may be extended when play is depicted within a social context, whereby the parents' and teachers' roles and their positioning in the child's imaginative play are taken into account. The study has provided a theoretical understanding about the link between "imaginative play" and "dual subjectivity" which show facilitation of these two concepts from cultural-historical theory for children's learning and development. In Chapter 7 and 8, Vygotsky's (2004) concept of "imagination and reality" and Kravtsov's and Kravtsova's (2010) "dual subjectivity" and Hedegaard's (2012) concept of "motives and demands" used as analytical tools to analyse everyday pedagogical practice of play participants (adults and children) in different contexts (preschool and home).

Many cultural-historical researchers (Hao & Fleer, 2016; Li, 2012; Sikder & Fleer, 2015) have focused on social interactions of subjects and have used various theoretical concepts such as mediation, ideal and real forms, and ZPD to explain the developmental process of children in various contexts. However, less research has focused on using the concept of "subject

positioning" to discuss children's learning and developmental process in imaginative play (Fleer, 2015). Fleer's (2015) idea of using "subject positioning" in relation to the *adult–child interactions* approach in the Australian preschool context was the tool used to analyse parents' and teachers' involvement in imaginative play in preschool and home settings. This is a new insight of using the "subject positioning" and "imagination and reality" theoretical concepts as analytical tools to understand the progress of children's learning and development and frame a pedagogical strategy (see Figures 10.1 and 10.2), which have not been considered before in early childhood research.

In Kravtsov and Kravtsova's (2010) research, they elaborated on adults' participation in children's play by using the concept of "subject positioning" in the context of pair pedagogy at the Golden Key School in Russia. In this pair pedagogy approach, two adults need to be involved in a child's imaginative play at the same time. However, this theoretical positioning of pair pedagogy is unfamiliar to teachers and policy makers of different countries like the UK, USA and Australia (Fleer, 2015). As mentioned earlier in Chapters 2 and 3, Fleer (2015) first used this concept of "subject positioning" in the context of *adult–child interactions* instead of the *pair-pedagogy* approach in preschool settings in Australia. However, in her research, Fleer (2015) did not stated the teachers' interview comments about their role in imaginative play. To extend further and understand adults' contribution by taking children's perspectives more deeply, this research collected adults' understanding about imaginative play and their role in imaginative play through interview comments. Furthermore, Fleer's (2015) research investigated teachers' positioning in imaginative play only in preschool settings. This study has considered teachers' and Indian-Australian immigrant parents' both positioning in imaginative play in home and preschool settings. The study reveals how this cultural-historical theoretical concept of "subject positioning" could be a new dimension for analysing adults' positioning in the context of being inside or outside of the imaginary situation in different settings.

Finally, the research results contributed to the two theoretical and pedagogical models developed in this study. The models (Figures 10.1 and 10.2) of pedagogical strategy in relation to participants' positioning inside the imaginative play present how concepts of "dual subjectivity" (**position** inside and outside of the play), "adults' **role** (mediation)" and the "collective and individual imagining" **technique** are linked to each other through an inner dynamic process and included in the children's trajectory of competency learning and development through play. What is important in Figure 10.1 is that the adult's active position

in sharing the process of the imaginary situation collectively with the children develops the children's conscious awareness about concepts and develops individual imagining. Also, the pedagogical technique of adults' collective engagement with children in a shared imaginary situation provides positive outcomes for children's learning and development (see Figure 10.1). On the other hand, the pedagogical technique of adults only staying outside of the play without creating a shared imaginary situation results in negative outcomes of children's learning and development (see Figure 10.2). To study adults' involvement in supporting children's learning and development through play, theoretical understanding of these concepts contributes to theoretical knowledge in early childhood research.

Methodological contributions:

A cultural-historical research methodology recommends studying the children's learning and developmental process in their everyday life settings where they participate in activities and interact with other people in the community. This study adopted a cultural-historical methodological approach and applied a dialectical–interactive research framework in each phase of the research design. This study observed adults' involvement in naturalistic settings, which maintained the genuineness and richness of the data (see Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9).

Using the cultural-historical paradigm, dialectical–interactive methodology, and visual methods to try to understand adults' involvement in children's imaginative play and its relations to children's learning and development in diverse settings is a new way of investigating participants' everyday life. The visual methodology made it possible to revisit the data as many times as required. Also, using video observations to capture a large amount of digital data increased the trustworthiness and validity of the research. A number of video clips, interview comments of adults, and relevant images were used in the thesis to increase the trustworthiness and credibility of the research.

A marker of a two-metre radius around the child(ren) was used to measure the teachers' physical proximity to children's play. This marker helped to analyse the adults' physical positioning near the children's play (for details see Chapters 5 and 6). To understand adults' psychological engagement in children's play, it is important to observe their physical proximity to the play, which helped with finding their pedagogical roles inside the play. This is a new way of analysing participants' positioning in imaginative play in cultural-historical methodology. As an active researcher in the research site, it was possible to build a close

relationship with the focus participants and gain their perspectives, which is an essential criterion to research under the domain of cultural-historical research.

Drawing upon cultural-historical methodology, it was possible to collect participants' comments through three types of interviews, informal dialogue–based conversations, semi-structured interviews, and group interviews which contributed to an understanding of participants' perspectives in a deeper sense. The adults' interview comments helped to understand their beliefs in relation to their role in imaginative play.

The dialectical–interactive researcher approach required using multiple methods for investigating a child in his or her everyday social situation in preschool and home contexts. The participants' cultural background, values, traditions, and customs were considered as a whole when studying their everyday play practices (see Chapter 4 in this thesis). Multiple methods helped to capture the whole picture of the research contexts of families and preschools, and the participants' (children, teachers, and parents) patterns of involvement in imaginative play. The multiple case examples of preschool and home settings were used in each findings chapter to show the way adults pedagogical position themselves in imaginative play to support children's learning and development, and how children develop new concepts and problem–solving skills by engaging in everyday play practices.

Taking pedagogical positions inside the play does not mean only the physical involvement of the players, rather it indicates participants need to be psychologically engaged in the play. Under the cultural-historical methodology, Figures 10.1 and 10.2 provide an insight into how play participants, both adults and children, should be involved in imaginative play in their everyday play practice in diverse settings. These models also introduce a pedagogical strategy by integrating new conceptual elements such as pedagogical roles, positions, and techniques so that these can be focused on in the process of further investigation in diverse settings. Therefore, these methodological tools could be useful in cultural-historical studies while investigating pedagogical positioning of play participants in everyday play pedagogy.

Empirical contributions:

The literature chapter of this thesis revealed that most studies consider adult involvement in children's play in an interaction and instructional approach in early childhood education (Björklund, 2010; Degotardi, 2010; Hallam, Gupta & Lee, 2011; Robson, 2010; Robson & Rowe, 2012) whereas fewer studies have investigated the adults' role in the context of

positioning “outside” and “inside” the play. As detailed in Chapter 2, different theoretical studies have addressed the importance of adults’ involvement and positioning in children’s imaginative play to support their learning and development (Elkonin, 1978; Karpov, 2005; Kravtsova, 2009). However, except for Fleer’s (2015) empirical study on pedagogical positioning of early childhood educators, few other empirical studies have concentrated on the pedagogical positioning of adults. The main aim of this study is to investigate adults’ pedagogical positioning in children’s imaginative play from different settings. This research not only empirically shows how teachers take positions in children’s imaginative play, but also considers parents’ positioning in imaginative play which, to my knowledge, has not previously been undertaken by other researchers. By observing four focus children in home and preschool contexts during their everyday play activities, the study has endeavoured to find in-depth possibilities of adults’ support in the progression of children’s learning and development through play.

A large amount of data was collected which helped to prepare four publications to present the findings. The frequency of teachers’ and focus children’s involvement in imaginative play is presented in three tables (Tables 1, 2, and 3) of Chapter 5, which shows the evidence from the large amount of data collected in this project. Finally, Table 4 in Chapter 5 provides details and in-depth empirical findings about adults’ positioning in children’s imaginative play in their everyday pedagogical practices. A number of play activities (for example construction play, role play, family play, collective play, and play with parents and teachers) and adults’ semi–structured interviews were used in most of the publications, which empirically enrich understanding of the research community about adults’ involvement in children’s imaginative play to support their learning and development.

The proposed models in this thesis have been established based on empirical understanding of adults’ and children’s joint involvement in imaginative play in their everyday practices. It is hoped that the models presented in the thesis could have significant theoretical and practical contributions to early childhood research. Additionally, presented models could be useful tools for teachers to think about how they could consider pedagogical roles, positions, and techniques altogether to implement a play-based learning approach in their setting (see Figures10.1 and 10.2 in this chapter). This study was empirically enriched to understand the way adults (teachers and parents) from different settings (preschool and home) may take positions in imaginative play to support children’s learning and development in their everyday play practice.

This research makes a significant contribution to the early childhood community, for example, researchers, policy makers, teachers, parents, and other care givers, because it reveals the present pedagogical practice of adults in different early childhood settings. The results also show that the adults should support children's learning and development as an active partner in their imaginative play. It is argued that to understand children's perspectives and to support children's learning and development process inside the play, the adults' pedagogical positioning is an important dimension for conceptualising intentional teaching practice in Australia.

Recommendations:

Recommendations for teachers and parents:

The finding of this study were significant in showing that adults were in various positions to teach academic subject–based knowledge to children in imaginative play. It also shows that taking various roles, for example, observer, enquirer, material provider, narrator, and active planner provided the scope to the teachers and parents to be involved in children's play but kept them outside of the play. Taking only an outsider role, the adults did not get the opportunity to understand the children's perspectives and their intentions of developing collective imaginary situation. It is suggested in this thesis that in order to maintain quality early childhood education at preschool or at home, the adults need to know how to create conditions or solve any problem together with children while inside the play.

In addition, it is evident from the teachers' interview comments and video data that the demands of parents' educational goals and the EYLF (DEEWR, 2009) (see Chapter 7) motivated teachers to implement separate learning activities instead of creating learning opportunities together with the children while being inside the imaginative play (see Chapter 7). Due to the demands from two different (parents and the national framework of Australia), but equally influential sources, the teachers are in a dilemma when determining their course of action to fulfil the demands. In Chapter 6, the teachers took various roles when involved in the play, where their focus was to establish subject–based knowledge without considering the children's perspectives. To do this, the teachers concentrated on creating a different learning table top activity without understanding the children's motive orientation to move in a collective imaginary situation as presented in Chapter 7. Therefore, this study recommends that adults first need to understand the development of play from the children's perspectives

(Chapter 8) while implementing a play-based learning approach in different settings (either at home or preschool), which is only possible by being involving actively in children's play.

Recommendations for policy:

In Chapters 5, 6, and 7, the results show that when teachers take the role of observer, enquirer, resource provider, or active planner, they are outside of children's play and less in tune with the child's perspectives. However, it was also found in Chapters 6, 8, and 9 that when the adults took an active position and were more in tune with the children's imagining, the teacher had the opportunity to better understand the play themes from the children's perspectives (see the table 8.1 in Chapter 8). Therefore, understanding adults' pedagogical positioning in terms of being inside and outside of the play is an important conceptualisation in early childhood education that can give policy makers an alternative way of thinking about the development of intentional teaching practices in Australia and other countries.

In many countries, practitioners are motivated by government policy to maintain a balance between free play and intentional teaching practice by implementing play-based learning. The policy guide curriculum development and emphasise that the practitioners should create a play-based learning environment that intentionally and deliberately invites the children to be involved in that play setting. Guided by current policy, the curriculum document does not articulate how adults should be involved with children in the play to create a learning environment inside the play. This needs to be rectified with consideration of an understanding of the pedagogical positioning of adults in terms of being inside and outside of the play. Therefore, it is argued in the thesis that adults could understand the child's perspectives and create a playful collective learning environment if they pedagogically position themselves inside and outside of the imaginative play (see Chapters 6, 8, & 9). Finally, the policy makers of various countries, including Australia, need to understand that the pedagogical practice of being inside the play can provide the possibility of taking the children's perspectives, while teachers are still able to meet the educational agenda of delivering an intentional teaching program to support children's learning (see Chapter 6). The findings of this research will inform the policy-makers of the importance of providing continuous professional development training and guidance to teachers to enable them to deliver knowledge-based learning through play. It also informs to rethink about the adult–child ratios, as the availability of more adults in the preschool setting could help the teachers to take a more active pedagogical positioning in children's play.

Professional development/ training is recommended in this area for teachers to acquire more knowledge about how to take active pedagogical positioning in play to support children's learning and development. The study argues that if teachers understand the process of collective involvement in imaginative play between the children and the adults, then they would be able to conceptualise the strategies for taking "dual positions" of imaginative play in their setting. By taking "dual positions" in imaginative play, the adult would be able to support children's learning and development by considering children's perspectives, which has been shown in Chapters 6, 8, and 9 in this thesis.

Future research directions:

This research provides a significant contribution to early childhood education. It not only shows the ways adults can be involved in children's play in their everyday pedagogical practice, but also shows how adults can pedagogically position themselves to support children's learning and development through play. The following are some suggestions on the possibilities for further research using cultural-historical theory in this same area.

First, adults' pattern of involvement in children's imaginative play could vary from one family to another or one preschool to another. Therefore, a large number of samples are needed to observe the diversity of adults' pedagogical practices in terms of their positioning in play in different settings. A long–term study could allow the researcher to capture a large amount of data from a large number of samples. Future research could concentrate on a longitudinal process to understand the contribution of adults in children's learning and development through play in diverse settings, for example, school, after school care, community play group, etc.

Second, this study found that parents' patterns of involvement in children's play depend on parents' work commitments. Parents stated through interview data that they have little leisure time to engage in children's play because of their everyday work pressures. Financial status may also matter in the pedagogical practice of parents in the family home context. It is recommended that future research should consider in their investigations the different financial status and education levels of parents, along with parents' work status, particularly from cultural-historical perspectives. Future research may need to explain culture-specific features in the process of children's learning and development in the preschool stage. Participants in this study are from families with medium or high incomes in Australian economical context. They are also well educated (holding at least a bachelor or above degree) and full-time workers.

Therefore, future research needs to investigate parents' involvement in children's play for supporting their learning and development in low-income families, with a consideration of parents' education levels as well.

Third, this study observed only preschoolers in home and preschool settings, so it is recommended to observe younger children's learning and developmental processes in relation to adults' support in imaginative play from diverse settings.

Finally, future studies need to bring cultural diversity into consideration by involving participants from various ethnic backgrounds and conducting studies in different cultural contexts, as people from diverse cultures have different beliefs, understandings, cultural values, and pedagogical practices in relation to involvement in children's play. This research was undertaken in the context of Indian-Australian families and Australian preschools, which only provides a sense of knowledge about a certain number of adults' cultural practices in terms of engagement in children's imaginative play. However, further research is needed to investigate the phenomena in other cultures, such as American, African, European, and other Asian countries in broader contexts.

A recommendation for future research is that the figures and tables provided in the findings chapters need to be tested in early childhood education research, particularly in the context of the cultural-historical research paradigm. Finally, it is recommended that future research needs a deep understanding of adults' pedagogical positioning from inside and outside of the imaginative play, which could be an alternative way of thinking about the development of intentional teaching practices in early childhood education.

Concluding remarks:

Adults' involvement in children's learning and development through play is an issue with a history of longstanding debate in the field of early childhood education. This study was conducted based on the literature gaps in relation to the topics of adults' involvement in children's imaginative play and children's learning and development in two institutional settings. The findings of the five chapters in relation to research questions developed two models (Figures 10.1 and 10.2) that show what type of pedagogical strategies teachers and parents could use in their everyday play practices to be involved in children's imaginative play. It is expected that the proposed models could be useful tools for teachers and parents to support children's learning and development through imaginative play. This study provides evidence

that cultural-historical theoretical concepts can be helpful analytical tools for researchers to better examine the dynamic process of children's learning and development through play in diverse institutional settings.

This chapter is the end of the thesis but not the end of my investigation. My curiosity and passion to understand more about the pedagogical positioning of adults in children's imaginative play remain high. This promising field is motivating me to keep working in this field to fulfil my research interest.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics approval letters

MONASH University

Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)
Research Office

Human Ethics Certificate of Approval

This is to certify that the project below was considered by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee. The Committee was satisfied that the proposal meets the requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* and has granted approval.

Project Number:	**CF14/2673 - 2014001452**	
Project Title:	**Concept formation in early childhood settings: A dialectical view of imagination and cognition of preschool children in diverse cultural contexts**	
Chief Investigator:	**Prof Marilyn Fleer**	
Approved:	**From: 21 November 2014**	**To: 21 November 2019**

Terms of approval - ***Failure to comply with the terms below is in breach of your approval and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.***

1. The Chief investigator is responsible for ensuring that permission letters are obtained, if relevant, before any data collection can occur at the specified organisation.
2. Approval is only valid whilst you hold a position at Monash University.
3. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure the project is conducted as approved by MUHREC.
4. You should notify MUHREC immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.
5. The Explanatory Statement must be on Monash University letterhead and the Monash University complaints clause must include your project number.
6. **Amendments to the approved project (including changes in personnel):** Require the submission of a Request for Amendment form to MUHREC and must not begin without written approval from MUHREC. Substantial variations may require a new application.
7. **Future correspondence:** Please quote the project number and project title above in any further correspondence.
8. **Annual reports:** Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an Annual Report. This is determined by the date of your letter of approval.
9. **Final report:** A Final Report should be provided at the conclusion of the project. MUHREC should be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.
10. **Monitoring:** Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by MUHREC at any time.
11. **Retention and storage of data:** The Chief Investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.

[redacted]

Professor Nip Thomson
Chair, MUHREC

cc: Dr Liang Li, Mrs Anamika Devi

[redacted]

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Strategy and Review Group

[redacted]

2014_002482

Mrs Anamika Devi
88 Fitzgerald Road
HALLAM 3803

Dear Mrs Devi

Thank you for your application of 3 September 2014 in which you request permission to conduct research in Victorian government schools and/or early childhood settings titled *Concept formation in early childhood settings: A dialectical view of imagination and cognition of preschool children in diverse cultural contexts.*

I am pleased to advise that on the basis of the information you have provided your research proposal is approved in principle subject to the conditions detailed below.

1. The research is conducted in accordance with the final documentation you provided to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

2. Separate approval for the research needs to be sought from school principals and/or centre directors. This is to be supported by the DEECD approved documentation and, if applicable, the letter of approval from a relevant and formally constituted Human Research Ethics Committee.

3. The project is commenced within 12 months of this approval letter and any extensions or variations to your study, including those requested by an ethics committee must be submitted to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development for its consideration before you proceed.

4. As a matter of courtesy, you advise the relevant Regional Director of the schools or governing body of the early childhood settings that you intend to approach. An outline of your research and a copy of this letter should be provided to the Regional Director or governing body.

5. You acknowledge the support of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development in any publications arising from the research.

6. The Research Agreement conditions, which include the reporting requirements at the conclusion of your study, are upheld. A reminder will be sent for reports not submitted by the study's indicative completion date.

7. If DEECD has commissioned you to undertake this research, the responsible Branch/Division will need to approve any material you provide for publication on the Department's Research Register.

State Government Victoria

I wish you well with your research study. Should you have further enquiries on this matter, please contact Youla Michaels, Project Support Officer, Research, Evaluation and Analytics Branch, by telephone on [redacted] or by email at [redacted]

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

Susan Thomas
Director
Research, Evaluation and Analytics Branch

22/12/2014

enc

Appendix B: Change the thesis title confirmation email

Anamika Devi <anamika.devi@monash.edu>

RE: Change of thesis title_Anamika Devi _23024348

mgro-candidature@f.e.monash.edu <mgro-candidature@f.e.monash.edu> 3 May 2018 at 14:24
To: "anamika.devi@monash.edu" <anamika.devi@monash.edu>

Hi Anamika,

The title has been changed.

Regards

David Sok

---------- Original Message ----------
From: Anamika Devi [anamika.devi@monash.edu]
Sent: 3/05/2018 1:08 PM
To: [redacted]
Subject: Change of thesis title_Anamika Devi _23024348

G'day MIGR team members

This Anamika Devi. My student id is 23024348. The title of the project (CF14/2673–2014001452– *Concept formation in early childhood settings: A dialectical view of imagination and cognition of preschool children in diverse cultural contexts)* has been changed.

The new title is "*Pedagogical positioning in children's imaginative play: A cultural-historical study of learning and development of preschool children from diverse settings*".

Could you please change the title in your system? That would be great.

Please let me know if you need any further information regarding the same.

Thank you very much for your support.

Regards
Anamika
--
Anamika Devi

Ph.D. candidate
Faculty of Education
Monash University, Victoria
Australia.
Email: [redacted]

Devi, A., Fleer, M., & Li, L. (2018). "We set up a small world": preschool teachers' involvement in children's imaginative play. *International Journal of Early Years Education*. https://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/VZ62ECT6NyZBDGjpbU3p/full

ref:_00D2816GQ6._5000I18I7z2:ref

Anamika Devi <anamika.devi@monash.edu>

2014_002482 – submission of completed report

Anamika Devi [redacted] 2 March 2018 at 10:51
To: "Michaels, Youla Y" [redacted]

G'day Youla

I hope you are doing well.

The title of the project (2014_002482 – *Concept formation in early childhood settings: A dialectical view of imagination and cognition of preschool children in diverse cultural contexts)* has been changed. The new title is "*Pedagogical positioning in children's imaginative play: A cultural-historical study of learning and development of preschool children from diverse settings*".

Could you please change the title in your system? That would be great.

Please let me know if you need any further information regarding the same.

Thank you very much for your support.

Regards
Anamika
[Quoted text hidden]
--
Anamika Devi

Ph.D candidate
Faculty of Education
Monash University, Peninsula Campus
[redacted]
Australia.
Email: [redacted]

Devi, A., Fleer, M. & Li, L. (2016). Mother-child collective play at home context: An analysis from a cultural-historical theoretical perspective. Conference paper. Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE), At http://www.aare.edu.au/publications-database.php/10777/

Anamika Devi <anamika.devi@monash.edu>

2014_002482 – submission of completed report

Michaels, Youla Y [redacted] 7 March 2018 at 10:38
To: Anamika Devi [redacted]

Dear Anamika

I have changed the title.

Kind regards

Youla

Youla Michaels

Executive Assistant to Dr Connie Spinoso, Director, School Reporting & Regional Evidence

Executive Assistant to Fayyaz Khan, Senior Manager, Insights and Evidence

Project Support Officer, Performance and Evaluation Division

Strategy and Performance Group

Department of Education and Training

[redacted]

From: Anamika Devi [mailto: [redacted]
Sent: Friday, 2 March 2018 11:52 AM
To: Michaels, Youla Y [redacted]

Appendix C: Permission letter from two preschools

[redacted]

PERMISSION LETTER

Project: 'Concept formation in early childhood settings: A dialectical view of imagination and cognition of preschool children in diverse cultural contexts'

April 2015

Professor Marilyn Fleer, Dr. Liang Li and Anamika Devi
Building A
Faculty of Education
Monash University, Peninsula campus,
McMahons Road,
Frankston, VIC 3199

Dear Anamika,

Thank you for your request to recruit participants from [redacted] for the above-named research.

I have read and understood the Explanatory Statement regarding the research project **'Concept formation in early childhood settings: A dialectical view of imagination and cognition of preschool children in diverse cultural contexts'**, and hereby give permission for this research to be conducted.

We will ensure that all parents and educators have a copy of the project Explanatory Statement and have given their signed permission on the Consent Form for their child to be involved prior to commencement of the research.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

[redacted]

Project: 'Concept formation in early childhood settings: A dialectical view of imagination and cognition of preschool children in diverse cultural contexts'

24 February 2015

Professor Marilyn Fleer, Dr. Liang Li and Anamika Devi
Building A
Faculty of Education
Monash University, Peninsula campus,
McMahons Road,
Frankston, VIC 3199

Dear Marilyn, Liang and Anamika,

Thank you for your request to recruit participants from [redacted] for the above-named research.

I have read and understood the Explanatory Statement regarding the research project **'Concept formation in early childhood settings: A dialectical view of imagination and cognition of preschool children in diverse cultural contexts'**, and hereby give permission for this research to be conducted.

We will ensure that all parents and educators have a copy of the project Explanatory Statement and have given their signed permission on the Consent Form for their child to be involved prior to commencement of the research.

Yours sincerely.

[redacted]

[redacted]
24 February 2015

A new way to live, a new way to learn.

[redacted]

Appendix D: Explanatory letters and consent forms

MONASH University
Education

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

(Explanatory letter for parents/guardians of centre based children who wish to participate in the project)

Project: 'Concept formation in early childhood settings: A dialectical view of imagination and cognition of preschool children in diverse cultural contexts'

Chief Investigator's name: Marilyn Fleer
Faculty of Education
Phone: [redacted]
email: [redacted]

Co-investigator's name: Liang Li
Faculty of Education
Phone: [redacted]
email: [redacted]

Student's name: Anamika Devi
Phone : [redacted]
email: [redacted]

You are invited to take part in this study. Being in this study is voluntary and you are no under obligation to consent to participate. Please read this Explanatory Statement in full before deciding whether or not to participate in this research. If you would like further information regarding any aspect of this project, you are encouraged to contact the researchers via the phone numbers or email addresses listed above.

Dear Parent/Guardian,

We are writing to you regarding a research project which contributes towards the student researcher's (Anamika Devi) PhD study, under the supervision of chief investigator Professor Marilyn Fleer from faculty of education, Monash University and co-investigator Dr. Liang Li a lecturer in the same faculty. The student researcher will be writing a thesis which is the equivalent of a 300 page book. The research will be carried out with children aged between 3 and 5 years attending a preschool. Your centre director has kindly passed on this letter.

Our project aim is to investigate young children's engagement in imaginary play at centre and home in association of their learning of academic concepts (e.g literacy, numeracy, science). Specifically, it is to find out how educators and parents engage young children in imaginary play and create the conditions for children's concept formation when they play alone or play with others (peers and adults). This study is important for learning more about how children's concept formation occurs through imaginary play. We are interested to

explore the nature of play across cultures that could lead to children's concept formation from an early age. We anticipate that the findings of the research will enrich the knowledge of links between diverse cultural children's engagement in imaginary play and their development of concepts.

For this project we are seeking diverse cultural families (focus children and parents) who live in Australia. There will be three groups in this study. They are

Group 1: Focus children and their families (age range from birth to adult).
Group 2: Centre based children (age range from birth to 5 years)
Group 3: Educators (adult)

We are seeking your permission to observe your child in the Centre only:

- Participating in a unit of work that the teacher prepares (up to 2-3 weeks, three times per week for two hours each visit).

The student researcher will be making observational notes of the children's activities, some video recording and photographing of the children as they interact with educators and peers when they are playing. We expect to be in the centre for two hours per day for three visits per week for 2 to 3 weeks observing the children's play and learning. During these visits, the student researcher will be supported by a colleague (to be determined).

It is possible that some of the photographic images (not video) may be selected for publication in a journal article or a book or as teaching materials for teachers and other professionals involved in education who are interested in research findings about young children's concept formation through imaginary play. It may also be possible for short video clips (e.g., of up to a minute) taken from the video material to be selected for sharing at conference or to be used to support student teachers who are studying early childhood education. The showing of images will be in the form of video sequences, still photographs, descriptive reports and scholarly discussion limited to the field of early childhood education research or relevant debate among early childhood professionals who may be interested in research about young children's learning through play.

We will seek your consent through your close attention and signature on the attached form should you be willing to give consent on behalf of your child to participate in this important study. Consent forms will be collected via a box in the centre.

You can withdraw your child at any time from the study without any penalty.

We will ensure that all the data that we gather is stored safely and securely in line with the University Code of Conduct for the Responsible practice of Research in relation to Data Storage and Retention. This states that all data (including electronic data) must be kept on University premises in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet for 10 years. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

If you have any queries or would like to be informed of the aggregate research findings please contact either chief investigator by email at [redacted] or co-investigator by email at [redacted] or student researcher over phone [redacted] or by email at [redacted]

If you have any concerns about the study, you are welcome to contact the Executive Officer, Monash University Human Research Ethics (MUHREC):

Executive Officer
Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)
[redacted]
Research Office
Monash University VIC 3800

Tel: +[redacted] Email:[redacted] Fax: [redacted]

If you agree to participate, please keep this letter for your records and complete and return the consent form to the box located at the entrance to the centre.

Thank you so much for your time and for considering involvement in this study of child development.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]
.....

Chief investigator
Prof. Marilyn Fleer

[redacted].....

Co-investigator
Dr. Liang Li

[redacted]
.....

Student investigator
Anamika Devi

MONASH University
Education

CONSENT FORM

(Informed consent form for Parents/ Guardians of centre based children)

Project: 'Concept formation in early childhood settings: A dialectical view of imagination and cognition of preschool children in diverse cultural contexts'

Chief Investigator: Professor Marilyn Fleer
Co-investigator: Dr. Liang Li
Student researcher: Anamika Devi

I agree that my child may take part in the above named research project. The project has been explained to me and I have read the Explanatory Statement, which I have shared with my child.

I understand that participation is voluntary and that, in agreeing to take part in this project, I am willing:

For my child to be

☐ observed at preschool/childcare (as relevant)
☐ observed through video/audio taped and photographed

Please tick all those you consent to:

☐I do understand that the purpose of the project is to learn more about how children play and develop their concepts at the centre. Specifically, the project is to find out children's engagement in an imaginary play in association of their learning of academic concepts (e.g literacy, numeracy, science); and how educators create the conditions for young children from diverse cultural background for the development of concepts.

☐I understand that only the student researcher and supervisors will have access to the data.

I understand that the data will be used for different purposes. I give permission for it to be used in (please tick):

☐a doctoral thesis

☐a scholarly journal articles or book chapters

☐conference presentations

☐poster presentations

☐ researcher's teaching practice at a university, specifically in undergraduate coursework programs regarding children's play and/or concept formation

☐ selected images/words stored/shown electronically (e.g. form of digital doctoral thesis; teaching materials)

I also understand (please tick) that:

☐my child may be identifiable.

☐images will be in the form of video sequences, still photographs, descriptive reports and scholarly discussion limited to the field of early childhood education or relevant debate among educational professionals who may be interested in new research about play, learning and development.

☐the video data and other photographic recordings will be stored by the university researchers in a secure place on the university's premises, for a period of ten years after the conclusion to the research, with the proviso that access to this recorded data will only be provided in the context of scholarly presentations or university study. There will not be a provision for open public access to this recorded data and I am providing consent only to the researchers' use of this material for the sake of enhancing knowledge within the field of early childhood education.

Child's name: …….

Child's date of birth ……..

Parents'/Guardians' names ……

Signature of Parents/ Guardians:……

Phone and/or email: …….

Date:……

MONASH University
Education

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

(Explanatory letter for parents/guardians of focus children who wish to participate in the project)

Project: 'Concept formation in early childhood settings: A dialectical view of imagination and cognition of preschool children in diverse cultural contexts'

Chief Investigator's name: Marilyn Fleer
Faculty of Education
Phone: [redacted]
email: [redacted]

Co-investigator's name: Liang Li
Faculty of Education
Phone: [redacted]
email: [redacted]

Student's name: Anamika Devi
Phone : [redacted]
email: [redacted]

You are invited to take part in this study. Being in this study is voluntary and you are no under obligation to consent to participate. Please read this Explanatory Statement in full before deciding whether or not to participate in this research. If you would like further information regarding any aspect of this project, you are encouraged to contact the researchers via the phone numbers or email addresses listed above.

Dear Parent/Guardian,

We are writing to you regarding a research project which contributes towards the student researcher's (Anamika Devi) PhD study, under the supervision of chief investigator Professor Marilyn Fleer from faculty of education, Monash University and co-investigator Dr. Liang Li a lecturer in the same faculty. The student researcher will be writing a thesis which is the equivalent of a 300 page book. The research will be carried out with children aged between 3 and 5 years attending a preschool. Your centre director has kindly passed on this letter.

Our project aim is to investigate young children's engagement in imaginary play at centre and home in association of their learning of academic concepts (e.g literacy, numeracy, science). Specifically, it is to find out how educators and parents engage young children in imaginary play and create the conditions for children's concept formation when they play alone or play with others (peers and adults). This study is important for learning more about how children's concept formation occurs through imaginary play. We are interested to explore the nature of play across cultures that could lead to children's concept formation from an early age. We anticipate that the findings of the research will enrich the knowledge

of links between diverse cultural children's engagement in imaginary play and their development of concepts.

For this project we are seeking diverse cultural families (focus children and parents) who live in Australia. There will be three groups in this study. They are

Group 1: Focus children and their families (age range from birth to adult).
Group 2: Centre based children (age range from birth to 5 years)
Group 3: Educators (adult)

We are seeking your permission to observe your child:

In the Centre:

- Participating in a unit of work that the educator prepares (up to 2-3 weeks, three times per week for two hours each visit).

In your home:

- Participating in their regular play especially imaginary play or everyday activities (up to 5 visits lasting each 2 hours),
- A possible follow up visit after 6 months to observe your child's play and informally interview you about your child's play.

The student researcher will be making observational notes of the children's activities, some video recording and photographing of the children as they interact with you and when they are playing. We would also like to invite you to an informal face to face interview (it will take approximately 1 hour, in total 2 hours) before and after video observation about your understanding in regards to children's learning through imaginary play, so that we can learn more about your beliefs in relation to imagination, children's learning and play. We have provided our contact details above, so you will be able to let us know about your convenient time for video observation and interview. During the visits, the student researcher will be supported by a colleague (to be determined). The portfolio written by the teacher of your child's journey in the centre will also be read in relation to play and learning and some relevant segments may be copied.

It is possible that some of the photographic images (not video) may be selected for publication in a journal article or a book or as teaching materials for teachers and other professionals involved in education who are interested in research findings about young children's concept formation through imaginary play. It may also be possible for short video clips (e.g., of up to a minute) taken from the video material to be selected for sharing at conference or to be used to support student teachers who are studying early childhood education. The showing of images will be in the form of video sequences, still photographs, descriptive reports and scholarly discussion limited to the field of early childhood education research or relevant debate among early childhood professionals who may be interested in research about young children's learning through play.

We will seek your consent through your close attention and signature on the attached form should you be willing to participate yourself and give consent on behalf of your child to participate in this important study. Consent forms will be collected via a box in the centre.

You can withdraw at any time from the study without any penalty.

We will ensure that all the data that we gather is stored safely and securely in line with the University Code of Conduct for the Responsible practice of Research in relation to Data Storage and Retention. This states that all data (including electronic data) must be kept on University premises in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet for 10 years. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

If you have any queries or would like to be informed of the aggregate research findings please contact either chief investigator by email at [redacted] or co-investigator by email at [redacted] or student researcher over phone [redacted] or by email at [redacted]

If you have any concerns about the study, you are welcome to contact the Executive Officer, Monash University Human Research Ethics (MUHREC):

Executive Officer
Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)
[redacted]
Research Office
Monash University VIC 3800

Tel: +[redacted] Email: [redacted] Fax: [redacted]

If you agree to participate, please keep this letter for your records and complete and return the consent form to the box located at the entrance to the centre.

Thank you so much for your time and for considering involvement in this study of child development.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

…….

Chief investigator
Prof. Marilyn Fleer
August, 2014

[redacted]

.....

Co-investigator
Dr. Liang Li
August, 2014

[redacted]

.....

Student investigator

Anamika Devi
August, 2014

MONASH University
Education

CONSENT FORM

(Informed consent form for Parents/ Guardians of Focus children)

Project: 'Concept formation in early childhood settings: A dialectical view of imagination and cognition of preschool children in diverse cultural contexts'

Chief Investigator: Professor Marilyn Fleer
Co-investigator: Dr. Liang Li
Student researcher: Anamika Devi

I agree to participate and for my family to take part in the above named research project. The project has been explained to me and I have read the Explanatory Statement, which I have shared with my child and other family members.

I understand that participation is voluntary and that, in agreeing to take part in this project, I am willing (please tick):

For my child to be

☐Observed through video/audio recording and photographed in everyday family life.

☐ Observed through video/audio recording and photographed at preschool/childcare (as relevant).

For myself to

☐ Be observed through video recording during my interaction with children in everyday family life.

☐Be interviewed to video/audio tapped and photographed both individually and with my family members.

Please tick all those you consent to:

☐I give permission for the researchers to access and copy some relevant information of my child's observational portfolio written by the teacher.

☐I also give permission to receive a follow up visit after 6 months, to observe my child at home and to interview myself by video/audio tapped and photographed.

☐I do understand that the purpose of the project is to learn more about how children play and develop their understanding about concepts at home. Specifically, the project is to find out

children's engagement in an imaginary play in association of their learning of academic concepts (e.g literacy, numeracy, science); and how parents and family members create the conditions for young children for the development of their knowledge about concepts.

☐I understand that only the student researcher and supervisors will have access to the data.

I understand that the data will be used for different purposes. I give permission for it to be used in (please tick):

☐a doctoral thesis

☐a scholarly journal articles or book chapters

☐conference presentations

☐poster presentations

☐ researcher's teaching practice at a university, specifically in undergraduate coursework programs regarding children's play and/or concept formation

☐ selected images/words stored/shown electronically (e.g. form of digital doctoral thesis; teaching materials)

☐ I also understand that by filming the interactions of parent-child that this will allow the researchers to more rigorously analyse culture-specific parent-child interaction in imaginary play associated with my child's learning about concepts.

I also understand that (please tick):

☐my family will be identifiable.

☐ images will be in the form of video sequences, still photographs, descriptive reports and scholarly discussion limited to the field of early childhood education or relevant debate among educational professionals who may be interested in new research about young children's development of concepts through imaginary play.

☐the video data and other photographic recordings will be stored by the university researchers in a secure place on the university's premises, for a period of ten years after the conclusion to the research, with the proviso that access to this recorded data will only be provided in the context of scholarly presentations or university study. There will not be a provision for open public access to this recorded data and I am providing consent only to the researchers' use of this material for the sake of enhancing knowledge within the field of early childhood education.

Child's name and date of birth (focus child):

...……..……
...……..…….

Parents' / Guardians' names and signatures:

...……..……
...……..……..

...……..……
...……..……..

Other family members' names and signatures:

...……..……
...……..…….

...……..……
...……..…….

Phone and/or email:

...……..……
...……..…….

Address:

……

Date: ...……..……

MONASH University
Education

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

(Explanatory letter for Staff)

Project: 'Concept formation in early childhood settings: A dialectical view of imagination and cognition of preschool children in diverse cultural contexts'

Chief Investigator's name: Marilyn Fleer
Faculty of Education
Phone: [redacted]
email: [redacted]

Co-investigator's name: Liang Li
Faculty of Education
Phone: [redacted]
email: [redacted]

Student's name: Anamika Devi
Phone : [redacted]
email: [redacted]

You are invited to take part in this study. Being in this study is voluntary and you are no under obligation to consent to participate. Please read this Explanatory Statement in full before deciding whether or not to participate in this research. If you would like further information regarding any aspect of this project, you are encouraged to contact the researchers via the phone numbers or email addresses listed above.

Dear Colleagues,

We are writing to you regarding a research project which contributes towards the student researcher's (Anamika Devi) PhD study, under the supervision of chief investigator Professor Marilyn Fleer from faculty of education, Monash University and co-investigator Dr. Liang Li a lecturer in the same faculty. The student researcher will be writing a thesis which is the equivalent of a 300 page book. The research will be carried out with children aged between 3 and 5 years attending a preschool. Your centre director has kindly passed on this letter.

Our project aim is to investigate young children's engagement in imaginary play at centre and home in association of their learning of academic concepts (e.g literacy, numeracy, science). Specifically, it is to find out how educators and parents engage young children in imaginary play and create the conditions for children's concept formation when they play alone or play with others (peers and adults). This study is important for learning more about how children's concept formation occurs through imaginary play. We are interested to explore the nature of play across cultures that could lead to children's concept formation from an early age. We anticipate that the findings of the research will enrich the knowledge of links between diverse cultural children's engagement in imaginary play and their development of concepts.

For this project we are seeking diverse cultural families (focus children and parents) who live in Australia. There will be three groups in this study. They are

Group 1: Focus children and their families (age range from birth to adult).
Group 2: Centre based children (age range from birth to 5 years)
Group 3: Educators (adult)
We are seeking your permission to include in our observations of children's interactions they may have with you during the implementation of the program of teaching. The student researcher will be making observational notes of the children's activities, some video recording and photographing of the children as they interact with you and when they are playing. We would also like to invite you to an informal face to face interview (it will take approximately 1 hour, in total 2 hours) before and after video observation about the program plan you implement in your centre, so that we can learn more about your beliefs in relation to imagination, concept formation and teaching. We have provided our contact details above, so you will be able to let us know about your convenient time for video observation and interview. We expect to be in your centre for two hours per day for three visits per week for 2 to 3 weeks observing the children's play and learning. During these visits, the student researcher will be supported by a colleague (to be determined). We would also like access to the focus children's portfolio (with family consent only) and the centre program plan during the observation period in order to give more contexts for the learning being observed.

It is possible that some of the photographic images (not video) may be selected for publication in a journal article or a book or as teaching materials for teachers and other professionals involved in education who are interested in research findings about young children's concept formation through imaginary play. It may also be possible for short video clips (e.g., of up to a minute) taken from the video material to be selected for sharing at conference or to be used to support student teachers who are studying early childhood education. The showing of images will be in the form of video sequences, still photographs, descriptive reports and scholarly discussion limited to the field of early childhood education research or relevant debate among early childhood professionals who may be interested in research about young children's learning through play.

We will seek your consent through your close attention and signature on the attached form should you be willing to participate in this important study. Consent forms will be collected via a box in the centre.

You can withdraw at any time from the study without any penalty.

We will ensure that all the data that we gather is stored safely and securely in line with the University Code of Conduct for the Responsible practice of Research in relation to Data Storage and Retention. This states that all data (including electronic data) must be kept on University premises in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet for 10 years. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

If you have any queries or would like to be informed of the aggregate research findings please contact either chief investigator by email at [redacted] or co-investigator by email at liang.li@monash.edu or student researcher over phone [redacted] or by email at [redacted]

If you have any concerns about the study, you are welcome to contact the Executive Officer, Monash University Human Research Ethics (MUHREC):

Executive Officer
Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)
[redacted]
Research Office
Monash University VIC 3800

Tel: [redacted] Email: [redacted] Fax: [redacted]

If you agree to participate, please keep this letter for your records and complete and return the consent form to the box located at the entrance to the centre.

Thank you so much for your time and for considering involvement in this study of child development.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

Chief investigator
Prof. Marilyn Fleer
August, 2014

[redacted]

Co-investigator
Dr. Liang Li
August, 2014

[redacted]

Student investigator

Anamika Devi
August, 2014

MONASH University
Education

CONSENT FORM

(Informed consent form for Staff)

Project: 'Concept formation in early childhood settings: A dialectical view of imagination and cognition of preschool children in diverse cultural contexts'

Chief Investigator: Professor Marilyn Fleer
Co-investigator: Dr. Liang Li
Student researcher: Anamika Devi

I agree to participate in the above named research project. The project has been explained to me and I have read the Explanatory Statement.

I understand that participation is voluntary and that, in agreeing to take part in this project, I am willing (please tick):

☐ To be observed at preschool/childcare (as relevant)
☐ To be interviewed through video/audio-taped and photographed
☐ To give permission access to the focus children's portfolio (with family consent only) and the centre program plan

Please tick all those you consent to:

☐I do understand that the purpose of the project is to learn more about how children play and develop their concepts at the centre. Specifically, the project is to find out children's engagement in an imaginary play in association of their learning of academic concepts (e.g literacy, numeracy, science); and how educators create the conditions for young children from diverse cultural background for the development of concepts.

☐I understand that only the student researcher and supervisors will have access to the data.

Upon completion of this project, the researcher would like to use the words, and images collected from this project for different purposes. I give permission for my images and words to be used in (please tick):

☐a doctoral thesis

☐a scholarly journal articles or book chapters

☐conference presentations

☐poster presentations

☐researcher's teaching practice at a university, specifically for undergraduate and postgraduate coursework programs about learning concept formation through play

☐selected images/words stored/shown electronically (e.g. form of digital doctoral thesis; teaching materials)

I also understand (please tick) that:

☐I may be identifiable

☐images will be in the form of video sequences, still photographs, descriptive reports and scholarly discussion limited to the field of early childhood education or relevant debate among educational professionals who may be interested in new research about young children's concept formation through imaginary play.

☐the video data and other photographic recordings will be stored by the university researchers in a secure place on the university's premises, for a period of 10 years after the conclusion to the research, with the proviso that access to this recorded data will only be provided in the context of scholarly presentations or university study. There will not be a provision for open public access to this recorded data and I am providing consent only to the researchers' use of this material for the sake of enhancing knowledge within the field of early childhood education.

My name: ……..……

Signature: ……

Date: ……..

Email and/or phone: …….

Appendix E: Semi-structured interview questions

Sample of interview questions for educators:

Please tell me about your qualification.

1) How long have you been teaching?
2) Can you please tell me about your regular teaching practice with the children?
3) How do children learn through play?
4) What do you think about children's play and imagination?
5) What is your understanding about concept formation?
6) Do you have any role during children's imaginary play?
7) How do you engage young children in imaginary play to achieve learning of concepts? Can you give example?
8) How do you support children at centre with their learning of concepts?
9) Do you see differences in children's play in your centre if some children come from different culture and families? If yes, can you give some examples? If yes, how do you draw upon these experiences and practices for supporting learning?
10) Do you belief imaginary play can facilitate concept formation, especially in relation to diverse cultural contexts?

Interview after the video observation (with video clips):

1) What is your understanding about the photos or video clips?
2) What are the imaginary acts in this video clips? What is your understanding about this specific play shown here?
3) What was your role in that specific imaginary play?
4) Can you give examples of other imaginary play or situation that happen in the centre?
5) What concepts were you seeking to teach the children in this video?
6) What kind of interactive strategies did you use in this imaginary play to support children's development of concepts? What kind of interactions do you believe are important for children's learning of concepts?

Sample of interview questions for focus children's parents:

1) Please tell me about your child's play. Can you tell me about the daily activities your child does?
2) Which kind of play does your child usually interested in?
3) Do you play any role in your child's play? If yes, how often do you play with your child?
4) Do you think children learn through play? How?
5) What do you think about children's play and imagination?
6) What do you think about children's imaginary play and how it is related with learning in their everyday life?
7) Do you play any role during your child's imaginary play?
8) Can you talk about how your child learns new things?
9) How do you support your child at home with their learning of concepts, such as maths, letters or other literacy concepts, science, etc?
10) Does your child bring home from the centre learning tasks? Is it helpful for everyday learning in your own cultural context?
11) Do you believe imaginary play can help your child's learning? If yes, how? If no, why not?

Interview after the video observation (with video clips):

1) Can you tell me about this photos or video clips?
2) What is your understanding about this specific play shown here?
3) What was your role in that specific imaginary play?
4) Can you give examples of other imaginary play or situation that happen at home?
5) Do you participate in your child's play? If yes, how? If not, why not?
6) What kind of interactions do you believe are important for children's learning?
7) What kind of family play practices do you believe are important for children's learning?

Appendix F: Approval letters from journal and book editors

Taylor & Francis
Taylor & Francis Group

Our Ref: JB/CIEY/P18/0931

02 October 2018

Dear Anamika Devi

Material requested: 'We set up a small world': preschool teachers' involvement in children's imaginative play' by Anamika Devi, Marilyn Fleer & Liang Li *International Journal of Early Years Education* (2018).

Thank you for your correspondence requesting permission to reproduce the above mentioned material from our Journal in your printed thesis to be posted in the university's repository - Monash University.

We will be pleased to grant permission on the sole condition that you acknowledge the original source of publication and insert a reference to the article on the Journals website: http://www.tandfonline.com

This is the authors accepted manuscript of an article published as the version of record in International Journal of Early Years Education © Taylor & Francis https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760.2018.1452720

This permission does not cover any third party copyrighted work which may appear in the material requested.

Please note that this license does not allow you to post our content on any third party websites or repositories.

Thank you for your interest in our Journal.

Yours sincerely

Jo Bateman – Permissions Administrator, Journals
Taylor & Francis Group
[redacted]

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Anamika Devi <anamika.devi@monash.edu>

Request to get permission for adding my article (Manuscript ID AJEC027-17: Preschool teachers' pedagogical positioning in relation to children's imaginative play) into my thesis

Christopher Jones [redacted] 23 February 2018 at 09:29
To: ECA Editors [redacted] Anamika Devi <[redacted]

Hi Anamika,

I apologise for the delay in me providing you an answer to your question. Early Childhood Australia give you permission to include your manuscript in you Thesis.

If you could please include the following disclaimer within your thesis:

This paper has been submitted for blind review to the Australasian Journal of Early Childhood, and is currently going through the review process. The outcome of whether it will get published or not is solely at the discretion of the editor. It has been included in this thesis as a 'document under review' with permission from Early Childhood Australia.

I hope this helps. Thank you for your patience.

Christopher Jones
ECA Studio and Publishing Manager

Early Childhood Australia
[redacted]

From: ECA Editors
Sent: Friday, 23 February 2018 9:27 AM
To: Anamika Devi
Cc: Christopher Jones
Subject: RE: Request to get permission for adding my article (Manuscript ID AJEC027-17: Preschool teachers' pedagogical positioning in relation to children's imaginative play) into my thesis

Anamika Devi <anamika.devi@monash.edu>

SV: Request to get permission for adding our book chapter (Manuscript name: Transition between child-initiated imaginative play and teacher-initiated activity: An analysis of children's motives and teacher's pedagogical demands in a preschool context) int

2 messages

Mariane Hedegaard <m[redacted] 20 April 2018 at 00:50
To: Anamika Devi [redacted] Fleer [redacted]

To Anamika Devi

I hereby give my accept to include in thesis Anamika Devi's chapter" Transition between child-initiated imaginative play and teacher-initiated activity: An analysis of children's motives and teacher's pedagogical demands in a preschool context", that will be published in M. Hedegaard & M. Fleer (Eds., *Children's transitions in everyday life and across institutions*, Bloomsbury publishers, UK.

Mariane Hedegaard

Professor Emerita

Fra: Anamika Devi [mailto:[redacted]
Sendt: 19. april 2018 03:04
Til: Marilyn Fleer; Mariane Hedegaard
Emne: Request to get permission for adding our book chapter (Manuscript name: Transition between child-initiated imaginative play and teacher-initiated activity: An analysis of children's motives and teacher's pedagogical demands in a preschool context) into...

Dear Mariane and Marilyn

Editors of Bloomsbury book

I hope you are doing well.

The book chapter (Transition between child-initiated imaginative play and teacher-initiated activity: An analysis of children's motives and teacher's pedagogical demands in a preschool context) has been accepted to publish in your book.

Since I am submitting my thesis as thesis including published work mode as part of my Ph.D., I would like to add this book chapter to my thesis. Could you please give me permission to include the chapter in the thesis? That would be great.

Anamika Devi <anamika.devi@monash.edu>

Request to get permission for adding the conference paper (Referred paper: Mother-child collective play at home context: an analysis from cultural-historical theoretical perspective) into my thesis

Margaret Baguley [redacted]u> 8 February 2018 at 08:57
To: Anamika Devi <[redacted]

Dear Anamika,

Good morning.

Thank you for your email regarding your refereed paper in the 2016 AARE Conference Proceedings.

I am very happy to provide this support for the paper to be included in your upcoming thesis submission and wish you all the very best for this final stage of your writing.

Thank you also for sharing your research during the 2016 AARE conference.

Kind regards,

Margaret

Margaret Baguley (PhD)

Associate Professor (Arts Education, Curriculum and Pedagogy) |

School of Linguistics, Adult and Specialist Education |

Faculty of Business, Education, Law and Arts |

Springfield Campus | University of Southern Queensland |

[redacted] | QLD 4300 |

AUSTRALIA |

Ph: [redacted] | Fax: [redacted]

Email: [redacted]