

Young Children's Rough and Tumble Play: Observations of Five-Year Olds at Play

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Why This Topic?

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- Minimal research on rough and tumble (R&T) play

- Misunderstanding of R&T play
 - Linked with bullying
 - How it ties in with play

Purpose of the Study

- To gain an understanding of the thoughts of young children (five year olds), parents, and educators on R&T play.
- To identify how rough and tumble play is included or excluded in early childhood settings.

Methodology

- Interviews ($n=48$)
 - Managers ($n=4$)
 - educators ($n=11$)
 - parents ($n=16$) children ($n=17$)

- Observations
 - Field based:
educators and children
 - Educators:
1 male, 10 female
 - Children:
10 male, 7 female

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Interviews

- Interviews of Managers
 - Guiding philosophy
 - Daily program
 - Clientele of their setting (including the degree to which the staff and clientele influence program delivery)

Interviews

□ Interviews of Educators

- Programming guidelines
- Gender differences in R&T play
- Provision for R&T play
- Learning and value of R&T play
- Influence of bullying and aggressive play on their response to rough and tumble play
- How they distinguish aggressive play from R&T
- Professional credentials
- Childhood rough and tumble play experiences



Interviews

□ Interviews of Parents

- Reasons for choosing the childcare setting
- Extent that rough and tumble play is included in their child's daycare
- Educator responses to R&T play
- Gender differences in participation in rough and tumble play
- Location of rough and tumble play
- Value of R&T play
- Their childhood experiences
- Rough and tumble play of their children at home

Interviews

- Interviews of Children
 - Their definition of rough and tumble play
 - Rules for play
 - Consequences of rough and tumble play at daycare
 - Their ideas on teacher and parent thoughts about rough and tumble play

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Observations

- Ten 90 minute observations
 - 30:25 hours of observation in early childhood education settings
 - Daily activities of the children and educators
 - Different times of the day on a variety of days
 - Daily routines
 - Structured activities
 - Transitions
 - Free-play time

Data Analysis

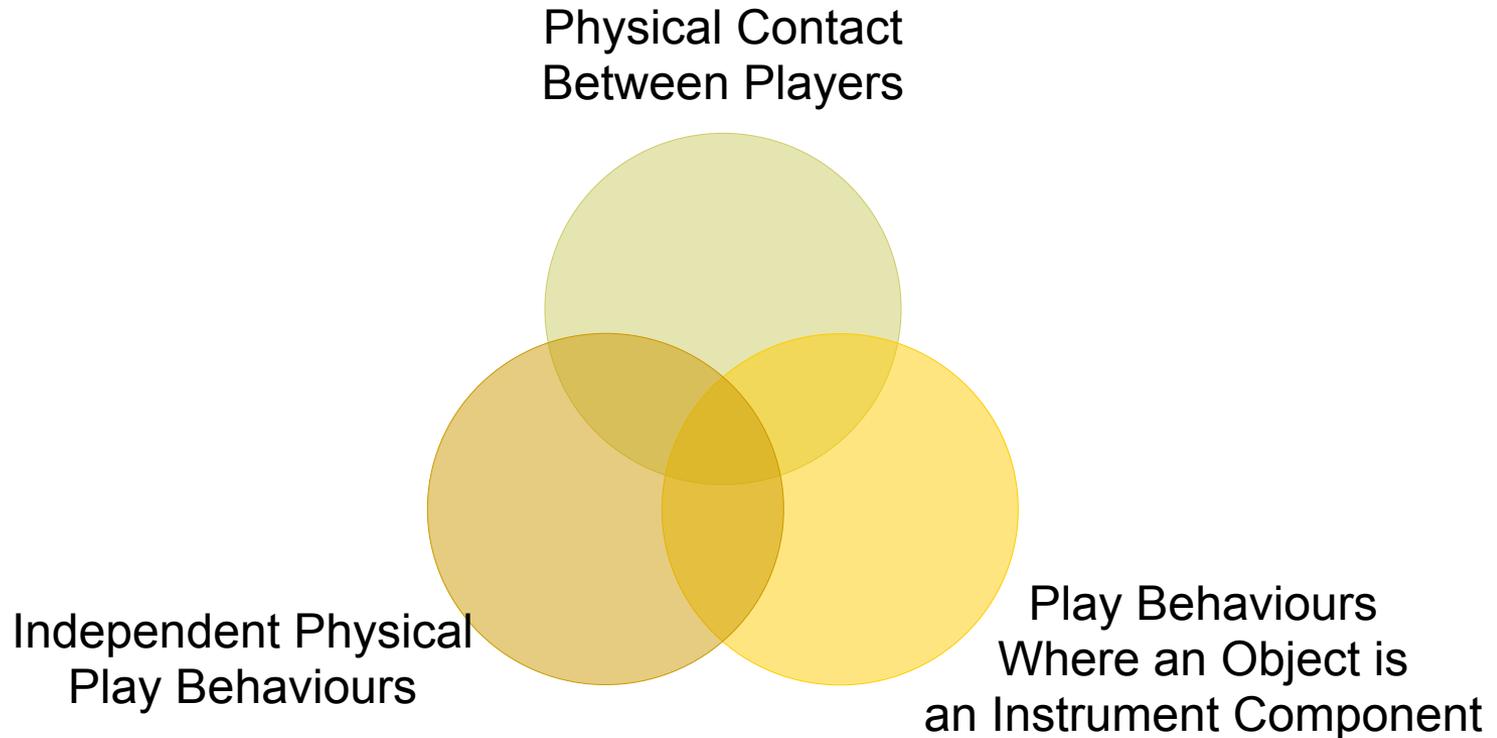
□ Interviews

- Authenticity checks
- Common thoughts grouped together

□ Observations

- Analysis of who, what, where, and when
 - 116 R&T play events recorded
 - Both previously identified elements and 20 elements not previously identified in research
- Analysis of educator responses

Observed R&T Play



Observed R&T Play

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- Physical Contact Between Players
 - 45 recorded incidents (40%)
 - Previously identified R&T play elements
 - Pushing, open handed slaps, wrestling
 - Newly identified R&T play elements
 - Grabbing the body of another player
 - Banging body into body of another player

Observed R&T Play

□ Independent Physical Play Behaviours

- 54 recorded incidents (46%)
- Previously identified R&T play elements
 - Fleeing, running, falling, chasing
- Newly identified R&T play elements
 - Use of a loud or roaring voice
 - Large body motions, hitting and kicking motions

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Observed R&T Play

- Play Behaviours Where an Object is an Instrument Component
 - 17 recorded incidents (14%)
 - No previously identified R&T play elements
 - Newly identified R&T play elements
 - Banging body into fixed object
 - Crashing into object, kicking and throwing objects

Observed Educator Responses

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- Rule reminders
- Redirecting play
- No intervention
- Joining rough and tumble play

Results/Findings

□ Interviews

▪ Adults

- Thought rough and tumble play to be a normal part of childhood
- R&T play aids in the development of social competency
 - Learning to make judgments, self-control, compassion, boundaries, and how to adapt play for other players
- Aggression is viewed as a separate issue from rough and tumble play
- Educators and parents acknowledged a lack of education on R&T play

Results/Findings

- Children
 - Expressed concerns about safety
 - “someone might get hurt”
 - All the children were observed engaging in rough and tumble play
 - 40% stated they **do** R&T play at daycare
 - 60% stated they **do not** R&T play at daycare
 - Rough and tumble play is more acceptable at home
 - Considered a family form of play



Results/Findings

□ Observations

- Rough and tumble play occurs both indoors (38% of observations) and outdoors (62%)
- Both boys and girls engage in R&T play although boys accounted for 80% of observations and girls 20%
- Predominately a peer form of play

Implications

- Need for educator and parent information on rough and tumble play.
 - Parents and educators articulated a lack of knowledge about rough and tumble play.
 - Early childhood education training programs
 - Professional organizations and conferences
 - Parenting books, websites and other resources
 - Programs and schools should be planning for the inclusion of R&T play.
 - Policies and procedures, staff discussions

Implications

- Expansion of understanding of the development of rough and tumble play.
 - Pre-operational elements of rough and tumble play
 - Newly identified categories expanded the definition of rough and tumble play
 - Further research is required to assess the universality of the findings

Future Directions

- Home Environments
- Family Composition
- Cultural Groups
- Experience of Players
- Time of Year
- Preschool Settings
- Influence of curricular design on the manifestation of R&T play
 - Traditional Nursery School
 - Direct-Instructional

