



University
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

PATRICIA OBEE

BA (University of Washington, 2014)

“Risky Play in Early Childhood Education and Care in Norway”

School of Child and Youth Care

Friday, June 14, 2019

1:00 P.M.

Human and Social Development Building
Room B107

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Nevin Haper, School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria (Supervisor)

Dr. Alison Gerlach, School of Child and Youth Care, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Patti-Jean Naylor, School of Exercise Science, Physical and Health Education, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Rhonda Hackett, School of Social Work, UVic

Abstract

Background: Risky play is defined as thrilling and challenging forms of play that have the potential for physical injury and has been linked to development and health benefits for children in the early years such as risk-assessment skills, increased physical activity (PA) and well-being, and promoting social competencies and resilience. Currently, in a Western context, children's opportunities for risky play is decreasing. At the same time, childhood inactivity and coinciding health concerns, as well as adolescent mental health issues such as anxiety, are on the rise. Risky play may serve as an antidote to some current health problems for children.

Purpose: This research aimed to increase understanding of affordances (environmental factors that intersect with and influence human behaviors) for risky play. Social and physical environmental factors have been found to influence children's affordances for risky play. The study was designed to identify some of the social factors and environmental features that may provide children with greater opportunity for risky play. Alongside researching affordances for children's risky play, this research also inquired into children's emotional and behavioural expressions during risky play, and how children's engagement in risky play impacts PA.

Methodology: Research was conducted with children ages 3 to 4 years, at a kindergarten in Levanger Norway. A mixed-methods approach was employed. Methods of data collection and analysis consisted of coding and statistical analysis of focused-video observations, as well as thematic analysis of field notes and semi-structured interviews.

Findings/conclusions: Findings include the identification of themes pertaining to social factors that may influence children's opportunity for risky play, including childhood assumptions, practitioner and parent attitudes towards risk, and pedagogical practice. This research generated a taxonomy of environmental features affording risky play, as well as findings that suggest risky play is positively correlated with levels of PA and outdoor settings.