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## Another Day without Play: A Qualitative Study Exploring Perceptions of Outdoor Play

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THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES

ANOTHER DAY WITHOUT PLAY: A QUALITATIVE STUDY EXPLORING  
PERCEPTIONS OF OUTDOOR PLAY

By

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A thesis submitted to the  
Department of Family and Child Sciences  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Science

Degree Awarded:  
Spring Semester, 2011

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Dedicated to Angeline

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to acknowledge the families and staff of Miriam's Playhouse and Enrichment Center for welcoming me into their classroom and playground. I would also like to acknowledge Dani Donnelly for her assistance in research and data analysis. In addition, I would like to acknowledge and thank my committee members, Christine Readdick, Ann Mullis, and Juliann Woods for their valued direction, professional opinions, and utmost support. Finally, my family, for supporting me through this process, encouraging, and inspiring me to succeed in my academic pursuits.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The decline of outdoor play in children's lives continues to demand investigation with an explicit goal to reveal and understand the child voice. This study aimed to explore children's engagement in outdoor activity as influenced by the perceptions of outdoor activity of parents and teachers. Children were expected to display similar engagement levels as their parent or teacher. Interviews conducted with six children and six adults revealed that outdoor play is held in high regard. However, observational results discovered that children spent 90% of their time indoors due to teacher perception of weather. The predicted levels of engagement, of each parent and their child, revealed evidence to support parental influence on children's engagement during outdoor play. However, the study revealed that children's outdoor play and potential engagement was influenced by the teacher involved in the study and her perceptions of outdoor play.

# CHAPTER ONE

## EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS OF OUTDOOR PLAY

The role of play in human development, specifically child development, has been studied from many different perspectives. Although there are varying opinions on the definition, purpose, and ultimate role of play, it is widely accepted as an integral part of the child life (Pellegrini, 2009). In his book addressing the role of play in the development of children, Pellegrini calls attention to several different elements in the discussion of play and clearly defends its role in child development. He notes that play influences development by fostering opportunity to form new strategies in novel environments. Frost (2006) lends a similar sentiment in his expectations of play. He affirms that play is beneficial when it is active, creative, social, engaging the body in motor development, and promotes thinking and problem solving skills. The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of outdoor activity of parents and teachers, and to examine the extent of which those perceptions influenced children's active engagement during outdoor play.

According to White and Stoecklin (1998), “Childhood and outdoor play are no longer synonymous.” Pellegrini (2009) sets the scene for where play occurs. He reveals that play happens in safe and familiar environments and in the presence of adequate resources. Although play may occur indoors as well as outdoors, the playground literature has provided a vivid portrait of the child’s world of play. The natural environment of children presents them with the opportunity to challenge different skills essential to their development (Fjørtoft, 2001). A study conducted in Norway evaluated the variation of children’s play in a natural forest environment compared to a traditional playground environment. In an effort to examine the impact of outdoor play activities on children’s motor ability and mastering, Fjørtoft (2001) presented data that supported the idea that physical diversity increases the opportunities for development of these skills. We assume that physical diversity is the element of variation in the outdoor environment, which initiates manipulation by children of their play outdoors and promotes higher levels of development.

Frost (2006) takes his audience through a historical time machine of the development of children’s playgrounds, the decline in time spent outdoors, and the deterioration of the quality of children’s outdoor play. In addition to these points, he calls attention to the overwhelming issue

of childhood obesity as a clear indicator of one of the most relevant consequences of this distress. Fogelholm, Nuutinen, Pasanen, Myohanen, and Saatela (1999) affirm this controversial prevalence of obesity among children. However, since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, children's playgrounds have met an era of disillusionment.

By the turn of the 21st century, children's spontaneous outdoor play in homes and communities was in free fall, and recess and playgrounds were being eliminated in many public schools. This resulted from several interrelated factors: growing concern of parents about possible exposure of their children to criminal elements; rapidly growing popularity of technology play; high stakes testing or "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) in public schools; expanding and inconsistent playground safety standards; lawsuits and threat of lawsuits (Frost, 2006, p. 9).

It is predicted that if children were afforded the maximum amount of time to be outdoors and to engage in free play that they would. This study aimed to confirm that children, when afforded the opportunity to play in a natural and outdoor environment they should be fully engaged. It is also important to recognize that children spending a great deal of time in the childcare and early childhood education facilities. Therefore, as noted by White and Stoecklin (1998) playgrounds of these facilities are often the only outdoor activities that young children experience.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Valentine and McKendrick (1997) noted the change in children's outdoor play and explained that at the time of their study popular press and academic research suggested children were being denied outdoor play opportunities that previous generations took advantage of. Children no longer engage in their outdoor environments due in part to adult care providers, including parents, influence on this aspect of the child's natural world of play. Clements (2004) affirms the trend noted by Valentine and McKendrick (1997) in her study, which surveyed 830 mothers in order to explore the extent to which children were actually playing outdoors. As was expected, 31 percent of children played outdoors every day and about 32 percent played outdoors four to six times a week, as reported by their mothers. Mothers reported themselves playing outdoors almost 40 percent more often than their children during their own childhood and at the same age. Burdette and Whitaker (2005) have also made note of this change in children's free play, and aimed to explain a method of restoring active-outdoor play in children's lives and support the importance of unstructured free play in children's development. The idea conveyed by Burdette and Whitaker (2005) expresses the importance of perceptions of parents to guide the research of active-free play in children.

In addition to perceptions of parents, an important factor in children's decline in outdoor play stands in the childcare facilities in which they spend a majority of their time. Kernan and Devine (2010) conducted a study in Ireland of the experience of the outdoors in early childhood education and care settings. This study revealed a discourse between policy and practices within early childhood education and care facilities. Utilizing qualitative interview methods, Kernan and Devine (2010) discovered an increase in time spent indoors was also reported despite responses of interviewees reflected the importance of outdoor play. In the state of Florida, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) awards an early childhood care and education license. According to a program specialist in the Child Care Program Office of DCF, children must have the opportunity to go outdoors each day, weather permitting, to promote physical growth. This code is outlined in Chapter 65C-22.001(7)(a) of the Florida Administrative Code (2010). According to this code, all age groups or classes in a child care facility or education center are responsible for a written plan of daily activities. This plan must be posted in a location

accessible and visible to parents. This plan must include activities, which meet the developmental needs of the children being served. These activities must promote emotional, social, intellectual and physical growth. They must also provide children the opportunities for quiet and active play, both indoors and outdoors. Therefore, it is acknowledged that parent perceptions of outdoor play, childcare facilities and teacher perceptions of outdoor play and finally outdoor play policy are all integral aspects of the investigation of outdoor play.

A key point vaguely outlined in the Florida Administrative Code is that of inclement weather and temperatures. The Code simply states children must be afforded the opportunity to play outdoors when "...weather permits" (p. 10). However, there are no standards or guidelines for centers to follow in determining what temperatures and weather conditions permit outdoor playtime. Copeland et al. (2011) present data supporting that national accreditation of childcare facilities and early childhood education centers were associated with more physical activity opportunities for the children they served. In a study of weather related outdoor play policies of 162 centers, 32 centers allowed children to go outside in temperatures of 32 °F or below (Copeland et al., 2011). Seventy centers reported allowing children to go outside during light rain. However, they contend that policy changes and education of parents and teachers may be needed to ensure children, regardless of inclement weather or temperatures, have generous opportunity for daily physical activity.

Clements (2004) suggested further investigation of ways parents can encourage and foster opportunities for outdoor play, however, this does not include the child voice, often unheard in the studies of child life. It is important to recognize the child's perspective and their control or influence over their outdoor play activities. King (1979) addressed the role of play in children's lives based on their own early perceptions. Her study aimed to define play in the terms of children and utilize the child perspective to better understand its role. She discovered that whether children defined their activity as work or play depended on the context in which the activity was carried out, and in addition, claims that play is voluntary.

Wing (1995) wanted to discover what messages children were receiving from adults, peers, and other aspects within the classroom context that contributed to their perceptions of play. Consistent with King's (1979) discovery that play is voluntary, Wing (1995) explained that the largest single element that seemed to determine if an activity was considered play was whether the activity was obligatory or not. Child perception should be at the forefront of current

research, in addition to recognizing outside influences, such as parents and teachers. This leads the direction and aim of this study to discover the similarity or lack thereof between children's perceptions of outdoor play and their parents' current perceptions of outdoor activity.

## **2.1 Gaps in the Literature**

Literature concerning outdoor play and children's perceptions of outdoor play is limited. Researchers have confirmed that outdoor play has been and will continue to be on the decline (Burdette & Whitaker, 2005; Clements, 2004; Veitch, Bagley, Ball & Salmon, 2006). The reasons presented to explain this decline are based on the perceptions of parents and the inductions of researchers who have utilized parent and adult reports. Jarrett and Jefferson (2004) conducted in-depth interviews to explore low-income neighborhood effects and strategies used by mothers to support child development. Many of the mothers explained that because of their unsafe neighborhoods, children needed to play indoors rather than outside in the yard. Veitch, Bagley, Ball, and Salmon (2006) present similar findings from studying parents' perceptions of influences on children's active free-play. Concerns about safety were one of the most frequently reported barriers on children's free-play. Overall, the consensus is that children's outdoor play is diminishing because of the aforementioned factors. However, outdoor play has not disappeared. Therefore, it is a relevant issue that should be continuously explored.

Studies have evaluated children's perception of play in the classroom, the negative effects on children's development because of the lack of outdoor play, and parents' perception of safety of outdoor play as a factor in the decrease in outdoor play. It is necessary to discover what children's perceptions are of this childhood activity, and how their perceptions, along with their parents' and teachers, influence their engagement in outdoor play.

## **2.2 Adult Perceptions**

Much of the research concerning the decline of children's outdoor play has investigated the role of parents, but from a stance that parents act as barriers to the play as opposed to role models of the play. Valentine and McKendrick (1997) explained that although parents acknowledge the importance and benefits of outdoor play, their concerns with safety and vulnerability to danger cause them to control their children's play to minimize these dangers. Jarrett and Jefferson (2003) continue this argument that parents are not keeping children from going outdoors for reasons other than as a means to protect them. However, this discussion does

not question the parents of children that have the opportunity to play outdoors in the effort to discover their child's engagement while outside. Parent-child and teacher-child literature presents another area of research that aids in determining influences on children that are going outside.

Damast, Tamis-LeMonda, and Bornstein (1996) investigated these interactions and aimed to investigate if a mother's own knowledge about their children's development related to the mother's actual play patterns. This study evaluated 50 mothers and their play interactions with their children. Damast et al. (1996) discovered that mothers adjusted their own actions to accommodate their children's emerging play abilities, suggesting that children influence parents as parents influence children. Parent influence is also at the forefront of research concerning children's levels of inactivity and its relationship to obesity. Fogelholm et al. (1999) conducted a cross-sectional study assessing parent-child associations of obesity and physical inactivity. They discovered that parent inactivity was a predictor of child inactivity. Burdette and Whitaker (2005) recognized the parent influence in their argument that a different language should be adopted for the campaign to encourage active and exercise play in children. They posit that if parents familiarize themselves with the term play versus the terms physical activity or exercise, they will be more attune to fostering these active opportunities for their children.

### **2.3 Child Perceptions**

In their early review of play and play research, Rubin, Fein, and Vanderberg (1983) discuss the factors influencing the play of children during that time. One of these influences was that of child-rearing. Rubin et al. (1983) discussed that although it would seem a sound argument that parents influence children's play, research on the issue was limited. The literature has not grown much since, but specific areas of the research remain the same. Researchers have taken to investigating fantasy and pretend play as influenced and reported by parents. Rubin et al. (1983) affirm that parents do provide a level of influence on children's role-play. Therefore, we can continue to build upon this assumption and attempt to extend these assertions to outdoor play and consider the child perception of such.

According to Ceglowski (1997), and her review of research on the differences between children's and teacher's perceptions of playtime, teachers alter the environment so that play possesses educational value. However, Ceglowski (1997) explored children's perceptions of play, and how children defined each of their indoor play activities. She grounded her work in the

strategies set forth by King (1979). Based on the research reviewed, Ceglowski (1997) concluded children to have perceptions about playtime in early childhood programs that frequently differ from teacher's views. Veitch et al. (2006) raise a similar issue in the discussion of their qualitative study of parents' perceptions of their children's active free play. They discuss that a limitation of their study was the absence of child reports. This work leaves researchers questioning how differences in children's perceptions of play influence their outdoor play as reported by the child.

It is important to consider the missing elements in the investigation of the role of outdoor play in children's lives and in addition to extending this knowledge to investigate the extent of engagement of children during outdoor playtime. Studies have revealed that parent and teacher influence is important and substantial in children's development of their own perception of play (Ceglowski, 1997; King, 1979; Veitch et al., 2006; Wing, 1995). What this study aimed to address is the influence parent and teacher perceptions have on children's engagement in outdoor activity and play. Therefore, it is imperative to consider the child voice. As Moss (2001) expressed at the Early Childhood Education and Care Conference in Stockholm, Sweden, if we acknowledge that children are experts in their own development and future, then as researchers and adults we need to listen to what children have to say.



# CHAPTER THREE

## METHOD

### 3.1 Research Site

Because this research included child participants, an application was submitted to the Human Subjects Committee of the Institutional Review Board at The Florida State University for review and approval (see Appendix A). Upon approval from the IRB, formal recruitment for this study took place at a local enrichment center chosen based on the center's philosophy, convenience in location, diverse population, overall appeal of the center's staff and parents, and typical setting and structure (see Appendix B). According to the center's website, they aim to "provide an atmosphere in which the child will have the opportunity to learn through play and to explore....motivate children to play, to build, to draw, to construct and to paint" (Philosophy, para. 2-3). The center was conveniently located in a central area which made for easier access and regular data collection. Because this center is located near two major universities, there is a diverse child population including African American, Hispanic, and Caucasian children. This would also indicate a variation in parent socio-economic status as some parents were enrolled as students at those institutions. The director and staff personnel were inviting and willing to participate fully with the researcher and study components. The center ran under a typical pre-school structure and schedule (see Table 3.1). In addition, the outdoor play area was outfitted with developmentally appropriate learning materials and equipment (see Figure 3.1). The center was licensed under the Department of Children and Families, and the center director must renew their license annually.

**Table 3.1**

Children's Reported Daily Center Schedule

<b>Time</b>	<b>Center Activity</b>
7 – 8:45am	Arrival, breakfast, and morning circle time
8:45 – 10:25am	Art activity, story time, and planned center time
10:25 – 11:00am	Morning outdoor play
11am – 12:10pm	Lunch and story time
12:10 – 2pm	Naptime
2 – 2:55pm	Wake-up time, wash and prepare for snack time
2:55 – 3:45pm	Story time and self-directed center time
3:45 – 4:45pm	Afternoon outdoor play
4:45 – 5pm	Clean up, individual free play, and departure



Figure 3.1: Children's outdoor play area outfitted with developmentally appropriate play equipment and tools.

### **3.2 Participants**

Nineteen children were enrolled in the pre-school classroom under the instruction of one teacher and a teacher's aide throughout the course of this study. The primary teacher and aide were both female, African American and between the ages of 45 and 60. Between the primary teacher and teacher's aide there are over 40 years of early childcare experience. The primary teacher was certified with a Child Development Associates certificate through a local agency and has accumulated numerous hours of education through workshops and in-service requirements. Both caregivers must renew first aid and CPR annually. All teachers within the preschool were compensated for their participation in this study with a workshop on the topic of outdoor play, alternatives of active play during inclement weather and seasons, and communicating messages about play (see Appendix C).

Nineteen consent forms and informational fliers were distributed to children and parents eligible for the study (see Appendix D). Exclusion criteria included children that were younger than the age of three or older than five years, children not enrolled at the time of the study, and children who did not receive parental consent or who did not assent to the study. The expected number of participants were 10 parent-child pairs and one lead teacher. Seven consent forms were completed and returned; however, one child left the preschool prior to data collection and therefore she and her parent were not included in the final participant sample.

Data was collected from a participant sample size of six children and six adults. After follow-up with parents to schedule one-on-one interviews, only five parents scheduled interviews. The teacher's aide was not present during several phases of data collection and observation, and therefore was not interviewed. Children's mean age was 4.5 years old. Parents identified child and parent race during the parent interview. Three children and their parent were identified as Black/African American, two children and their parent were identified as White/Caucasian, and one child and their parent's race/ethnicity was not reported. The children involved in the study were given pseudo names. The names used for the purpose of data presentation are Lee, Jessica, Alyssa, Alex, Trevor, and Austin.

Interviews were conducted with one parent for each child. Two fathers and three mothers participated in the one-on-one interview portion of the study. The mean age of the parents

interviewed was 33 years old. The highest level of education reported by parents was a Bachelor's degree. The parents involved in this study were not given pseudo names. They are identified as the parent of their respective child. The lead teacher interviewed for this study identified herself as Black/African American and is 50 years old. She is referred to as Ms. Tonya.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

#### **Semi-structured child interviews.**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with child participants. Five of the six child interviews took place outdoors on the child's preschool playground and outdoor play areas. One child interview was conducted indoors during the child's free playtime. Upon receiving consent from the children, they were asked a series of six questions pertaining to their outdoor play (see Appendix E). Children were asked to show or speak about the areas in which they played during outdoor playtime. They were asked to describe what they did in these areas, and with whom. Children were also asked about the importance of outdoor play and being outside. Children were asked follow-up questions to discover to whom they attributed their reasoning (see Appendix F). Short hand notes were utilized to record responses and then transcribed into word documents.

#### **Semi-structured adult interviews.**

Prior to one-on-one interviews, one parent of each child participant was asked to sign-up for a day that was convenient to participate. Parent interviews were conducted in a small classroom not occupied in the afternoons. Parent interviews were recorded using a digital camera, with permission of the parent being interviewed. Children were permitted be present during the interview since interviews occurred in the afternoon during pick-up times. If children were present, a coloring book and crayons were provided for their entertainment. Questions posed to adults aimed to search for themes regarding the perceptions towards their personal engagement in outdoor activity, the determinants of their own level of physical activity, and their involvement in the outdoor activities of their children (see Appendix H). Audio from the videos was transcribed into word documents in conjunction with short hand notes taken during the actual interview.

### **Observations during outdoor play.**

Finally, children were observed during their scheduled morning outdoor free play period. In this setting, child behaviors would be observed and categorized as engaged or non-engaged activities (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). A time sampling data collection method was utilized (see Appendix I). Children were observed for a period of up to 30 minutes at 5-minute intervals. Within each 5-minute interval, children were classified as engaged or not engaged.

### **3.4 Operational Definitions**

During the observations of children's outdoor play, children's behaviors were categorized as engaged or not engaged. Operational definitions were established utilizing the theoretical framework of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecology of human development. Behaviors categorized as engaged were identified when a child was actively participating in an outdoor area of play or the outdoor play activity, for example, running, jumping, swinging, climbing, etc. Child behaviors categorized as not engaged were when a child was not actively participating in an outdoor area of play or play activity. Walking from area to area, sitting in a single location, or not partaking in an activity that would require intent on behalf of the child would be considered unengaged.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

Qualitative data reveals itself in ways occasionally unpredictable by researchers. Data analysis took place throughout the course of the study in order to maintain awareness of the natural development of trends and themes of the environment. The researcher kept a daily log of observational notes to utilize as a supplemental form of recording themes that emerged prior to formal analysis of the data. Themes, which emerged throughout the review of data, were applied to responses collected during interviews. In addition to themes, different types of play were also identified. Responses may have been categorized under more than one theme.

**Interview Analysis.** During transcription and review of interview responses, it became clear that responses fell into several different categories or themes. In addition to identifying themes and types of play described by participants, a predicted level of engagement was also applied to each interviewee. According to the operational definitions of engagement and

unengagement, responses to interview questions were reviewed in order to make a prediction as to whether or not the participant would be engaged during outdoor play or outdoor activity. Predicted levels of engagement of children, parents, and Ms. Tonya were compared in order to identify a match or no match between predicted engagement of parent-child pairs as well as teacher-child pairs. Data analysis strategies used in adult interviews were the same as in child interviews.

In order to establish a level of reliability, an undergraduate research assistant was tasked to code interview responses into categories representative of the appropriate themes. Inter-rater reliability was calculated for each individual interview. Calculations were done individually because interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format. Therefore, responses to follow-up questions varied as these questions may or may not have been altered as a result of the flow of the interview. Subsequently, a comparison of the primary investigator's coded interviews and the undergraduate research assistant's coded interviews was done. Questions, which elicited responses that fell in the categories of themes, were added together; this number was the number of possible coded responses. This sum was then divided by the number of times the primary researcher and research assistant agreed on categorizing responses with a theme. This method established a percentage of reliability. Of the six child interviews, four were at 100% reliability, one at 85% reliability, and one at 50% reliability. Of the six adult interviews, four were at 100% reliability and one was at 88% reliability.

**Observational data analysis.** The original intent of this study was to analyze time sampling data collected while observing children during their outdoor play period. Children were to be surveyed at five-minute intervals during a 30-minute period. Within each five-minute interval, children were identified as engaged or unengaged according to the operational definitions applied to each term. Children were to be observed according to a random sampling system as to not observe the same child, at similar times, or in the same order. However, during the course of the study the opportunity to collect such data was stifled. The children did not go outdoors on any of the 20 days scheduled for observation. Therefore, a log was kept of observation day. This log is discussed at length in subsequent sections.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## RESULTS

### 4.1 Significant Findings

According to the results of the data collected from children, their parents, and Ms. Tonya, it can be concluded that the adults and children interviewed hold outdoor play and outdoor time in high regard. Five of the six children interviewed agreed that outdoor play and being outside was important. Five of the six adults reported that outdoor time was important or very important. If given the opportunity, parents said they would spend more time outside and participating in active types of play. Children also preferred outdoor play to play that took place indoors. This is supported by the fact that, answers from four of the six children revealed a preference for playing outdoors. Parents feelings about participating in outdoor activities with their children were that the activities were enjoyable, fulfilling, and made them happy.

In the analysis of interview responses, seven themes emerged. Four themes were the weather, rules or safety, adult related responses, and child related responses. Three other themes, which emerged during data analysis, were types of play; active play, games with rules, and pretend play. These three themes will be presented as types of play. Finally, results indicating the participants predicted engagement are also presented.

**Weather.** During interviews children and adults declared concerns or awareness regarding weather. Thirty-six percent of responses referred to the weather. When Lee was asked if he thought it was important to be outside, he responded, “Not if it’s raining!” He explained that when there was thunder or if the outdoor area was wet, it was important to play inside. Parents expressed a greater concern about weather and the influence or impact on outdoor activity. Alex’s father explained that he preferred to be outside “unless it’s extremely hot or extremely cold.” Austin’s mother shared similar sentiments in her interview. When asked to estimate the amount of time she spent outdoors she responded, “three hours a week, when it’s warm.” She also explained that during the winter months it becomes darker more quickly, which limits their time outdoors.

However, in this particular setting it was the teacher that was influenced the most by the weather. In her one-on-one interview, Ms. Tonya explained that weather is the biggest influence

on the amount of time she spends outdoors as an adult and as a teacher. “I’m cold natured,” Ms. Tonya said. She expressed that as a teacher, she does not like to see the children with runny noses during the winter months. Ms. Tonya explained that the decision to go outside during inclement weather is made at her discretion. However, she clarified that the decision is made by taking into consideration parent concerns. Parents express concerns about their child’s health and many times request that children be kept indoors during cold weather. Ms. Tonya explained that if the majority of children are sick with colds, they would not go outdoors for the day.

**Rules or safety.** Rules and safety emerged as a theme for both child and parent responses. Children frequently responded to questions about their outdoor activity with a rule given to them by their teacher or parent. When Lee was asked if it was important to play outside he said, “When somebody’s doing something that might hurt us then we have to go outside to play.” Jessica was asked whom she learned the importance of being outdoors from. She responded, “Ms. Tonya, she says, never go on your belly on the swing.” Alyssa expressed the greatest concern with rules in her response to this same question. She said, “Ms. Tonya, she says don’t play in dirt. We can’t twist the swings. We can’t climb up the slide. We can’t scream too loud.” When Trevor was asked to show or tell about the areas outdoors in which he liked to play, he expressed, “don’t wrestle, just play!” Trevor paused to correct his classmate who was breaking the swinging on stomach rule of their playground.

Parents concerns about rules and safety resonated through their answers to various interview questions. Two mothers shared their hesitations about their children being outdoors or engaged in certain activities. Lee’s mother shared about her enjoyment for climbing trees when she was a child, however she explained, “We’re not really encouraging [Lee] to leave the ground.” She continued, “this child is just reckless...I would love for him to climb trees otherwise.” Alyssa’s mother also expressed concern for her child’s safety when outdoors. She explained that unless her husband was present to monitor the area in which they were playing she finds it difficult to play outside.

**Adult influences.** Four children answered yes when asked if their parent played with them outside. One child responded no and one child responded sometimes. Parents expressed their desires to be outside more often and their personal satisfaction with being outdoors with their children. However, all of the adults interviewed expressed that they spent considerably less time outdoors as adults compared to their childhood. Alex’s father was asked to compare the



time spent outdoors as a child to his time as an adult. He said he spent “less time; between school, work, and family.” Jessica’s father explained that he and his wife are career driven, he responded the reason their outdoor time is less is because of “getting and spending; getting and spending...” Lee’s mother expressed why she does not go outside as often as she would prefer. She said, “just being a grown up.” When Lee’s mother was asked about how she felt about doing outdoor activities with her child she said, “I get mad at myself when I think ‘oh I can take [Lee] out to play, [but] I don’t feel like it.’” She continued, “I want to be there, I want to be making outside fun for him, I don’t want a couch potato baby...”

When children were asked if their teacher played with them during their outdoor playtime, four children stated no, one child responded yes, and one child’s reply was unclear. Alex said, “they play cars.” Lee, his classmate, explained in more detail, “sometimes they play with the girls outside, but not with us.” When Trevor was asked to what extent his teacher participated in his outdoor playtime, he said, “teachers don’t play because teachers grow up and be the smartest people in the world.”

Ms. Tonya explained her influence on her students’ outdoor play within the context of weather. She explained that in warmer months she is an active player during children’s outdoor time. She gave examples of games or activities that she organizes for the children in her class during the warmer months of the year. For example, the parachute game, running games, water play, rice play, and creative fence painting.

**Child influences.** Children influenced each other as well as their parent and teacher. Peer influence on play was evident in a child’s response when other children were present during the interview or if a child was surveying the area during questioning versus continually being attentive to the interviewer. Four children referred to a peer during their interview. Trevor was asked to explain who says it is important to play outside. He paused, then proceeded to say, “Lee!” When Austin was asked about who joins him in play when playing outdoors at home he said, “play with friends... I like to play with Alex (his classmate).” Alyssa also referred to a classmate in her interview response. She said she goes “on the slide with Jessica.” Jessica herself was asked if she played pretend when outdoors and she responded, “with my friends.”

Of the themes applied to parent responses, 54% were coded as influenced by children. Jessica’s father was asked to describe the outdoor activities he engaged in regularly. He responded that he enjoys riding his bicycle. He then proceeded to say, “[Jessica] just got her first

one with training wheels.” Lee’s mother also reverted to discussing her child when asked about the importance of outdoor activity as an adult. She said, “I think it’s very important, we encourage Lee to have a lot of outdoor time...” Finally, when Alyssa’s mother was asked about how participating with her children in outdoor activities made her feel she said, “as long as their happy.”

Ms. Tonya was very explicit in sharing the influence the children in her class have on her perceptions and outdoor play activities. She explained that she watches and learns from the children. She said, “I have the kids help with lesson plans.” Ms. Tonya continued to share how she manages her classroom and the input children have on their daily activities. She explained that at times, the children become enthralled with their indoor activity and it “runs into outdoor play.”

**Types of play.** The adults and children interviewed for this study were asked to describe the different activities they engaged in during their outdoor time. Ms. Tonya, and parents, were asked to think back to when they were children and the outdoor play they engaged in. Of all responses related to outdoor activities, 64% were labeled as active play activities. Twenty-one percent were labeled as games with rules, and the remaining 15% were labeled as pretend play.

Lee incorporated all three types of play in his response to a question about where he enjoyed to play when outside. He said, “Well, first I go run.” Lee then explained a pretend game about ostriches, “If we beat the ostrich we get a point and put it on the tree.” Lee described another imaginative outdoor activity he would engage in regularly. He said, “outside we sometimes hide behind the secret tree...sometimes there’s invisible monsters, so we have to get up here.” Austin also responded with an answer classified as pretend play when asked why he liked to play outside. He said, “I like to play monkeys.”

In addition to pretend play responses overlapping with active play responses, children also spoke specifically concerning active play and games with rules. When Jessica was asked to explain where she enjoyed playing during outdoor playtime she said, “On the swing, on the slide, I dig in the dirt, and I run.” She also described activities she participates in with her family, she said, “we ride bikes.” Alyssa explained her outdoor activities while sitting on a swing, she said, “sometimes I play hide and seek.”

Ms. Tonya and parents had a greater frequency of active play related responses. Parents gave 18 of the 30 responses categorized as active play. When asked to describe the activities in

which they participated in as children, as adults, or with their children, Ms. Tonya and parents described a variety of games and traditional outdoor activities. Ms. Tonya explained that in her early years as a teacher, the children taught her how to skate. She said, “I was a daredevil!” Parents however, had more detailed responses to questions about their outdoor activities as children and as adults that related to active play. Alex’s father explained that as a child he enjoyed kickball, four square, and other “typical games.” As an adult, he still plays kickball, only now with Alex. Jessica’s father also aims to engage his child in play, which he enjoys. He said, “We’re bike folk, we’re trying to get [Jessica] going.” When Lee’s mother was asked to describe her outdoor play when she was a child, she said, “What I mostly remember was we had a swing set in our backyard.” Austin’s mother showed great enthusiasm in her response to questions about her childhood activity outdoors. She listed hide and seek, softball, running, and imagination play as some of the various activities in which she participated in as a child. She said, “Outdoors is where it’s at!”

#### **4.2 Predicted Engagement of Children and Adults**

Because child interviews were conducted during children’s outdoor play period, the researcher was able to evaluate some degree of engagement. In addition to observation of activity during individual interviews, child responses were evaluated for criteria matching operational definitions of engagement or unengagement. Five of the six children interviewed were considered be engaged and one child was predicted to be unengaged by the primary researcher. Two of the five adults interviewed were predicted to be engaged, the remaining three were categorized as unengaged. Parents were asked about the amount of time they spent outdoors as an adult. The mean time spent outdoors for the five parents interviewed was 3.5 hours a week, whether or not this was time spent outdoors with children varied. All adults interviewed expressed that if they had the opportunity to spend more time outdoors they would. Engagement was predicted according to the description of the activities or potential activities the children, parents, and Ms. Tonya shared with the interviewer. Because one mother was unable to schedule a time to conduct a one-on-one interview, we were unable to predict her potential engagement or if a match existed between herself and her child.

**Parent-child matches.** Three of the five parent-child pairs were identified as matches of predicted engagement. Alex and his father were both predicted to be engaged individuals. Alex’s father said, “[Alex] gets very angry when he has to go back inside.” In addition, he shared

that he preferred to play outside with his child. Jessica and her father were also both predicted to be engaged when outdoors. Jessica's father said he loves to be outdoors with his daughters. He said, "They like to be outside...more if we could, we would for sure." The third matching parent-child pair was Alyssa and her mother. However, their engagement was predicted to be unengaged. When Alyssa was asked to show the areas in which she enjoyed playing outdoors she did not physically move to those areas like the other children. She said, "I can sit on the swing and tell you and show you." Alyssa's mother had similar characteristics of unengagement in her descriptions of the outdoor activities she enjoys regularly. She explained that she enjoyed sitting outdoors and that she will often "open the garage door and let in the fresh air."

**Parent-child no matches.** Two of the five parent-child matches were identified as not matching. Lee was predicted to be engaged in outdoor settings according to his responses to questions about his outdoor play and perceptions of play. However, based on her responses to interview questions Lee's mother was predicted to be unengaged in outdoor activities. Outdoor activities Lee's mother described were related to outdoor home maintenance. When activities in which she engages in outdoors she spoke about her family's activity rather than her own. She said, "The boys are always gardening or planting." She also explained that it is "easier to send him out to play while I do my chores..." Austin was also predicted to be engaged during outdoor play periods, while his mother was predicted to be unengaged. When asked to describe the activities she would do, given more time outdoors, she said, "cleaning, yard work, and walk around."

**Teacher-child.** Responses from Ms. Tonya reflected characteristics of an individual who would not be engaged in an outdoor setting. Ms. Tonya said her regular outdoor activities included "reading, making baskets, and helping the homeless." Therefore, Ms. Tonya did not match the predicted engagement of five of the six children interviewed.

### **4.3 Observational Findings**

An observational log was kept throughout the duration of the study. During 20 days of observation children stayed indoors 90 percent of the time, primarily due to inclement weather at the discretion of Ms. Tonya. The high and low temperatures of observation days were recorded (Stillman, 2010.)

**Table 4.1***Observation of Children's Morning Outdoor Play Period.*

<b>Observation Day</b>	<b>Outdoor Play</b>	<b>Temperature</b>	<b>Weather Conditions</b>	<b>Indoor Alternative to Play</b>
Day 1	No	L 34 H66	Sunny, clear	Center Activities
Day 2	No	L36 H64	Some rain	Center Activities
Day 3	No	L29 H51	Some rain, windy	Center Activities
Day 4	Yes	L28 H46	Sunny, clear	----
Day 5	No	L45 H46	Some rain	Center Activities
Day 6	No	L 46 H71	Some rain	Center Activities
Day 7	No	L42 H69	Sunny, clear	Center Activities
Day 8	No	L27 H68	Sunny, clear	Center Activities
Day 9	No	L38 H70	Some rain	Center Activities
Day 10	No	L41 H61	Sunny, clear	Center Activities
Day 11	No	L50 H62	Some rain	Center Activities
Day 12	Yes	---	----	----
Day 13	No	L28 H55	Sunny, clear	Center Activities
Day 14	No	L46 H71	Sunny, clear	Center Activities
Day 15	No	L43 H60	----	Center Activities
Day 16	No	L28 H55	Rain	Center Activities
Day 17	No	L25 H70	Sunny, clear	Center Activities
Day 18	No	L45 H72	----	Center Activities
Day 19	No	L27 H73	Sunny, clear	Center Activities
Day 20	No	L34 H74	Sunny, clear	Center Activities

# CHAPTER FIVE

## DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Influences on Perceptions of Outdoor Play

As posed by the theoretical frame of this study, it is evident that children, as Bronfenbrenner (1979) explains, are influenced directly by their environment. This study affords further support of the ecological systems theory. The system in which children receive the most influence in regards to their opportunity for outdoor play is in the microsystem. As theorized, elements within this system, parents and teachers, are then steadily influenced by other environmental aspects, which in turn develop the children's perceptions of outdoor play. As we have discovered in the review of relevant research, parents' perceptions of outdoor play are influenced by regard to the well-being of their children (Fogelholm et al., 1999; Jarrett & Jefferson, 2003; Veitch et al., 2006; Valentine & McKendrick, 1997). However, in addition to this common factor, this study revealed that adults are also concerned with the matters of weather, an area lacking scientific investigation.

Parent and teacher perceptions unmistakably influenced children in this study. However, it was evident from responses of the children that teacher influence was greater in this particular preschool setting than parent influence. Because teachers maintain the ultimate control of the child's daily schedule while children are in their care, they have the greatest impact on their prospective opportunities to be outdoors. This control of children's ability to play outside initiates a shift in children's perceptions of play. If playing outdoors, or physical activity, is not communicated as imperative, children will not formulate that concept.

As was revealed in comparing child and parent responses, there is an overall match in predicted engagement levels between parents and children. Children possess a degree of influence on adults, which is evident in the literature as well (Damast et al., 1996). This is also consistent with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theoretical framework and raises concern about children developing behaviors that influence their parents to be less active or engaged in outdoor activity.

The diversity of the participant sample is an interesting point when discussing parent perceptions and their influence. Two fathers participated in the interview aspect of the study. Although responses were not extremely different from those of mothers, literature illustrates that

parent interviews are generally conducted with mothers (Clements, 2004; Damast et al., 1996). We acknowledge that gender differences are a recurring theme in the research of children's play. However, future research should evaluate gender differences and perception sharing between same sex and different sex parent-child relationships

## **5.2 Engaged vs. Unengaged**

Children involved in this study were predicted to be engaged and active players in their outdoor environment according to the operational definitions adapted from Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theoretical framework. Responses related to active play were the highest reported form of activity by children and by parents. Within this theoretical frame of child development, the highest levels of learning occur through active interaction with the environment. Therefore, it is predicted that the children involved in this study would be reaching the fullest potential of development during periods in which they are engaged outdoors. However, this is under the assumption that these children are afforded that opportunity. Although adults may have encouraged children to be engaged while outdoors, their perceptions and activities did not always communicate the same message.

Parents shared similar predicted levels of engagement with their children. This evidence supports the original purpose of this study in aiming to discover if a child's engagement level is influenced by their perceptions, which we know to be influenced by their parents or teachers. Unfortunately, children did not go outside enough to establish a true measure of engagement. We can infer, based on these observations, that children, due to being confined indoors for the majority of their time spent at school, would have higher levels of engagement and activity than usual when finally able to be outside. However, we can also predict that as children are kept indoors for such long periods, they would become uninterested in outdoor activities, therefore decreasing engagement when outside. The missing links, as made evident by this study, are the opportunities for children's active interaction with their outdoor environment during colder months. They are potentially missing a crucial element of their development as a whole by not being able to go outdoors. This creates restrictions on not only their motor and physical development, but their social, emotional, and cognitive development as well.

**Weather.** This study took place between the months of January and February in a city in the northern region of Florida. Responses to interview questions revealed that weather had both direct and indirect influences on children's opportunities to go outdoors. The children involved

in this study spent an overwhelming amount of time indoors due to inclement weather. However, informal observations of the children's classroom revealed that children were prepared for the colder temperatures of the winter months. Nineteen cubbies were lined with hooded sweaters and coats, and every child wore socks and shoes on days the researcher was present. Unfortunately, the children's teacher was clear in expressing her inability to withstand colder temperatures. This would indicate the reason children reported their teacher did not play with them when outside. It is clear that weather is a relevant issue in the study of outdoor play and its decline. However, the accountability of teachers is apparently in question. There is certain concern as to the validity of the primary teacher's reason for not enduring the cold weather. The criticism is whether this should be a viable reason for denying children the opportunities to be outdoors. Future researchers should execute a longer study taking into account weather as a potential variable or barrier to children's outdoor play. In addition, the sample should be collected from more than one center in order to discover if this trend develops in other early childhood education facilities in the surrounding area.

Another issue stemming from this study is children's lack of physical activity in general. This study revealed that on the days identified as too cold to be outside by Ms. Tonya, they did not receive an indoor alternative to the outdoor playtime missed for the day. This raises concern for childhood obesity, development of gross motor skills, and overall social development that repeatedly takes place on the playground. Therefore, teachers must be purposefully informed of the indoor alternatives to outdoor play during times of the year that weather prevents children from going outside. Future research should consider taking into account the BMI's of potential participants of the study. This may serve as a better indicator of the relationship between children's lack of outdoor play and the national obesity epidemic.

**Other findings.** Parents continue to acknowledge the importance and need for outdoor play and activity, as an adult as well as a child. However, rules and safety persist to be a theme in the decline of outdoor play. This study revealed that children are aware of the rules surrounding or restraining their play outdoors. The children's awareness of rules pertaining to their playground behavior was higher in older children. Because children are operating at a concrete level of thought, it is possible that their perceptions of the rules during outdoor playtime are exaggerated. This should be a concern for parents and teachers when explaining rules of outdoor



play. Parents and teachers should adopt language that continues to promote safe play, not restrictive language that limits it.

Parents revealed that in addition to concerns with safety, there were personal restrictions on the amount of time they, and subsequently their children, spent outdoors. Economic stressors pose a threat to children's outdoor play when parents explained the need to work overshadowed their desires to be outdoors. Implications of this discovery are critical in early childhood educational facilities. Teachers should be aware that children might not receive adequate time outdoors when they leave their class and return home with their families. Therefore, teachers must adopt rigorous efforts to restore children's outdoor time. Furthermore, because parents discussed work restraints on their time spent outdoors, future research should consider collecting data from families of diverse socio-economic statuses, marital statuses and other demographic information to establish if this is a factor in being able to work less and play more.

### **5.3 Limitations of Study**

First, results of this study are not generalizable to populations extending past the participants of the study. The sample size and nature of data collection limits the relevance of results for populations in other areas. In addition, weather constraints in this region may not pose the same results in a different region of the state, country, or world. Social desirability was also a potential factor of the responses of the adults involved in this study, as is common in research regarding one's personal habits and lifestyle choices. Parents tended to direct their responses to address their children rather than themselves and needed to be redirected to answer the question as it related to them. Child interviews would have been more beneficial if conducted indoors rather than outdoors. Children interviewed in their outdoor play environments were many times distracted, and required reminders of the question originally asked. This may also be due, in part, to children's overall lack of outdoor time. Future research should consider amount of time children spend outdoors prior to initiating interviews. Child interviews were not recorded using a digital recording device. However, the digital recording device utilized in this study was also a limitation. The device was battery operated, and on two occasions died prior to the end of parent interviews. It is likely that valuable information during the interview using short hand notes was missed or lost. Finally, the researcher assistant was not present during interviews. The presence of the researcher's assistant would have allowed for more complete data collection and support.

## **5.4 Conclusions**

This study affirms that children are predicted to be active players in their outdoor environments if afforded the opportunity to do so. Children and parents held the importance of outdoor time in high regard, however true engagement of child participants was not found because children in this study did not go outside. Although parents and teachers influence child perceptions, this study maintains support of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theoretical framework of the influence children have on their environment. This supports the increasing need and importance of the child voice in early childhood education and development research (King, 1979; Moss, 2003; Wing, 1995). Limitations did not restrain the importance and value of this study. This study supports the need for further investigation of weather as a barrier to outdoor play, children's interpretation of messages communicated to them about outdoor play, and improving teacher awareness of alternatives to outdoor play.

# APPENDIX A

## TEACHER WORKSHOP



**“Not if it’s Raining!”**

- **The purpose of the study**
  - The purpose of this study was to investigate perceptions of outdoor play and its influence on engagement during outdoor time.
- **The reasons this is important**
  - Nationally, there is a decline in outdoor play. Because of this decline, childhood obesity is on the rise, and children’s gross motor development and social interactions in natural environments is at risk.
- **Defining Engagement**
  - Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) Ecology of Human Development
- **Results of the study**
  - Children and adults believe outdoor play to important or very important.
  - 5 of 6 child participants were predicted to be “engaged.”
  - Due to inclement weather children spent 90% of their time indoors during the course of the study.
  - Children responded to many questions with “rules of the playground”
- **Implications of the study**
  - It is important to incorporate alternatives to outdoor play when it’s too cold or hot to go outside.
  - It’s not what you say, but how you say it.

The slide has a background illustration of the same building as the title slide, with a grid pattern. The title is in a large, bold, red serif font. The content is organized into bullet points with sub-bullets, using a black serif font.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **IRB APPROVAL**

Office of the Vice President For Research

Human Subjects Committee

Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742

(850) 644-8673 • FAX (850) 644-4392

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 10/25/2010

To: Jazmin Cuencas

Dept.: FAMILY & CHILD SCIENCE

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research

Children's Outdoor Play

The application that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the research proposal referenced above has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Committee at its meeting on 10/13/2010. Your project was approved by the Committee.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be required.

If you submitted a proposed consent form with your application, the approved stamped consent form is attached to this approval notice. Only the stamped version of the consent form may be used in recruiting research subjects.

If the project has not been completed by 10/12/2011 you must request a renewal of approval for continuation of the project. As a courtesy, a renewal notice will be sent to you prior to your expiration date; however, it is your responsibility as the Principal Investigator to timely request renewal of your approval from the Committee.

You are advised that any change in protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee prior to implementation of the proposed change in the protocol. A protocol change/amendment form is required to be submitted for approval by the Committee. In addition, federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report, in writing any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the Chair of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protection. The Assurance Number is IRB00000446. Cc: Christine Readdick, Advisor HSC No. 2010.5051

## **APPENDIX C**

### **FORMAL RECRUITMENT OF CENTER**

**Director  
Tallahassee, Florida  
September 21, 2010**

Dear Miriam,

Thank you for meeting with me on August 16 and agreeing to allow me to conduct my study at your center. As we discussed, it is my intent to conduct a small research study at the Miriam's Play House and Enrichment Center to explore early childhood education and early child development issues.

The purpose of my research is to investigate children's perceptions of outdoor play and their engagement in outdoor play. It is also my aim to interview those children's parents and teachers to investigate their own perceptions of their outdoor activity. I am formally requesting your permission to enter your center, meet with your teachers and observe the children enrolled in your program for up to six weeks. No persons will be involved in the study without written consent.

We also discussed that in order to compensate for your time, as well as the teachers and staff you employ, I will offer to conduct an in-service training and provide all educational materials. I will also provide documentation to your staff confirming their completion of my in-service workshop.

I appreciate your time and look forward to your formal written approval of the use of your center for the purposes of my study. I am able to come and collect your response, it may be mailed to my attention or sent via e-mail to [jmcuencas@gmail.com](mailto:jmcuencas@gmail.com).

Sincerely,

Jazmin Cuencas  
**Graduate Student  
The Florida State University  
Department of Family and Child Sciences**

# APPENDIX D

## CONSENT FORM PACKET

### CONSENT FOR PARENTAL PARTICIPATION

#### In a study of Children's Outdoor Play

I, (Mr., Mrs., Ms.) \_\_\_\_\_, give my consent for my participation in all activities associated with the research study of children's outdoor play conducted by Florida State University graduate student, Jazmin M. Cuencas. I understand that this will include my participation in a 15 – 20 minute interview with the primary investigator in which I will answer questions about my outdoor activity as well as my children. I understand that an interview is the only direct involvement that I will have with this study, but I may be asked to answer follow up questions at any time for up to six weeks. I also know that I may remove myself from the study at anytime. I know that refusal to participate in any part of the study will not result in any kind of penalty. I understand that all information collected for the purposes of this study will remain confidential and that my name will not be used to identify myself. I understand that there are no risks associated with this study and that the purpose of this study is to help understand how children's surroundings influence their outdoor play activity.

I understand the benefits of this study will be reflected in my child's classroom or center. The teachers involved with this study will receive a workshop in-service that will discuss topics based on the results of this research. I may also benefit from this study because I may have a better understanding of how parents are an active part of their children's environments.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Print Name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature in Blue Ink)

Contact Information:

JAZMIN CUENCAS, PRIMARY RESEARCHER

CHRISTINE "COCO" READDICK, MAJOR PROFESSOR

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY, INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
2010 LEVY AVENUE SUITE 276-C TALLAHASSEE, FL 32306  
850-644-7900

# APPENDIX E

## CONSENT FORM PACKET

### PARENTAL CONSENT FOR CHILD PARTICIPATION

#### In a study of Children's Outdoor Play

I, (Mr., Mrs., Ms.) \_\_\_\_\_, the parent or legal guardian, as appropriate, of \_\_\_\_\_, give my consent for him/her to participate in all activities associated with the research study of children's outdoor play conducted by Florida State University graduate student, Jazmin M. Cuencas. I understand that this will include my child's participation in an interview with the primary investigator as well as observations of my child during their outdoor play time at Miriam's Playhouse and Enrichment Center for a period of up to six weeks. By signing this form I understand that my child will be an active participant in this study. He/she will be observed playing outdoor and asked questions about what he/she likes to do outside and what playing outside means to him/her. He/she will also be asked questions about his/her outdoor play experiences with me or another parents. I also understand that my child will be verbally informed of this and may refuse participation at anytime. I understand that all information collected for the purposes of this study will remain confidential and that my child's name will not be used to identify them. I understand that if I feel my child is at risk or at potential for harm that I may remove them from the study at anytime and will not serve any penalties. I understand that there is no risk to my child in participating in this study and that the purpose of this study is to better understand how my child's outdoor play is influenced by their surroundings.

The benefits of this study will be reflected in my child's classroom or center. The teachers involved with this study will receive a workshop in-service that will discuss topics based on the results of this research. I may also benefit from this study because I may have a better understanding of how parents are an active part of their children's environments.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Print Name of Parent or Legal Guardian)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian in Blue Ink)

Contact Information:  
JAZMIN CUENCAS, PRIMARY RESEARCHER

CHRISTINE "COCO" READDICK, MAJOR PROFESSOR

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY, INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
2010 LEVY AVENUE SUITE 276-C TALLAHASSEE, FL 32306  
850-644-7900



## APPENDIX F

### PERCEPTIONS OF OUTDOOR PLAY ASSENT FORM

My name is Jazmin Cuencas. I am trying to learn about what little children do outdoors. I hope you will show me around your playground to show me where you play and who you play with. Also, I hope to watch you and your playmates outdoors and take notes about what you're doing. I will talk to you and take notes when your teacher and other children are outdoors, too.

Other people will not know if you are in my study. When I tell other people about my research, I will not use your name.

Your mommy or daddy, or grandma or grandpa, has said it is OK for you to talk to me. If you don't want to talk with me about playing outside, no one will be mad at you. If you want to change your mind later, that's OK. You can stop at any time.

Do you have any questions for me? Would you like help me learn about what children your age do outside ?

---

Child's Name

---

Signature of Researcher

---

Date

## **APPENDIX G**

### **CHILD INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE: PERCEPTION OF OUTDOOR ACTIVITY**

I am going to ask you some questions about when you play outside--things you do for fun or because they make you feel good.

1. Will you show me where you play when you go outside?
2. What do you do here? (and other subsequent areas)
3. Do you think it is important be outside and play outside? Why do you think it important?  
Who says playing outside is important?
4. Some children like to play inside; some children like to play outside; where do you like to play?
5. When you play outside at school, does your teacher play with you?
6. When you play outside at home, does your mommy/daddy play with you?

## APPENDIX H

### ADULT INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE: PERCEPTION OF OUTDOOR ACTIVITY

I am going to ask you a series of questions about your outdoor activities--things you do for fun or because they make you feel good. Think about your last week (or a more typical week) when answering these questions.

1. As an adult, how important is it to you to be outside and engaged in outdoor activities?
2. Last week, what outdoor activities did you do?
3. About how much time did you spend outdoors doing these activities last week?
4. When you were a child, what outdoor activities did you do?
5. How did you feel when you were doing these outdoor activities?
6. Compared to your childhood, would you say you spend about the same, more, or less time outdoors now as an adult?
7. Can you please tell me what affects the amount of time you spend outdoors now, as an adult?
8. Do you wish you could spend more time outdoors than you currently do? If so, what activities would you like to do outdoors that you currently do not? Or what do you prefer doing indoors instead?
9. What kind of outdoor activities do you regularly (at least once a week or more often) do with your child?
10. How do you feel about doing these activities with your child?

# APPENDIX I

## CHILD'S TIME SAMPLING OF OUTDOOR PLAY ENGAGEMENT

Setting/Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: M F Child Identification Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Time	Engaged	Not Engaged
1 <sup>st</sup> 5 min.		
2 <sup>nd</sup> 5 min.		
3 <sup>rd</sup> 5 min.		
4 <sup>th</sup> 5 min.		
5 <sup>th</sup> 5 min.		
6 <sup>th</sup> 5 min.		
Avg. per. 15 mins.		

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## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

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