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Mothers' perspectives on learning through play in the home

Yeshe Colliver

Institute of Early Childhood, Macquarie University, Sydney

Macquarie University, Balaclava Road, North Ryde, NSW 2109. Australia.

E: Yeshe.colliver@mq.edu.au P: +61 (02) 9850 9826

Research in the field of early childhood education and care (ECEC) indicates that if educators can align their perspectives and practices with families' perspectives, children's educational outcomes will improve. Yet the literature reveals educators focus on children's independent learning of various developmental domains, while mothers increasingly focus on adult-guided learning of curricula in preparation for school. To illuminate potential ways for educators to align these divergent perspectives, this paper reports on a qualitative case study of eight mothers' perspectives on their children's learning through play in the home. It revealed emphases on children's independent learning of family practices through play, contrasting starkly with previous accounts of mothers being focused on adults guiding play to cognitive learning (e.g. literacy, numeracy). Thus another perspective divergence emerged: between mothers' perspectives in the home and ECEC settings. However, the similarity between educators' perspectives to those of mothers suggests ways forward.

The field of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in most western-heritage countries refers to education and care provided for children before school. ECEC often distinguishes itself from school education through its focus on holistic, play-based learning (Walsh & Gardner, 2006; Wood, 2013). That is, while school typically focuses on the learning of subject domains (e.g. science, mathematics, geography), ECEC typically emphasises learning about the world holistically, often in the domains of emotional, social, physical and cognitive development (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). The school approach assumes subject learning requires adult guidance to *teach* specific subject content, whereas the dominant ECEC approach assumes holistic learning occurs naturally and independently, without adult guidance (Hedges & Cullen, 2012; Krieg, 2011). As such, ECEC educators consider themselves ‘facilitators’ of children’s learning through play, rather than actively guiding it (Ortlipp, Arthur & Woodrow, 2011, p. 57; Siraj-Blatchford, 2009, p. 147). The following educator’s comment illustrates this perspective well:

I’m having to do a good job of, of observing what their interests are, and then facilitating the play, based on that ... So that’s sort of how I see my role. I’m not, actively, perhaps engaged, in teaching, but I’m sort of setting things up so that they’re learning (Joanna, cited in Fleer, Tonyan, Mantilla & Rivaland, 2009, p. 302).

Multiple studies suggest this educator’s perspective is common to educators across the developed world (e.g. Hunter & Walsh, 2014; Pramling Samuelsson & Fleer, 2008; Stephen, 2012), yet is misaligned with mothers’ perspectives (Bennett, 2005; Brooker, 2010; Fung & Cheng, 2012).

1. Research on mothers’ perspectives on learning through play

In non-‘technologically advanced’ societies, anthropological research suggests mothers do not consider play as a means for learning (Roopnarine, 2011). However, in technologically advanced societies there is more variation, with some mothers valuing play as important for

children's learning, and others not (Fisher, Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff & Gryfe, 2008). It is this variation which is relevant to the perspective misalignment.

In technologically advanced societies, mothers appear to value cognitive over other types of learning (Fung & Cheng, 2012; Laloumi-Vidali, 1998), specifically curriculum content such as literacy and numeracy (Hedges & Cullen, 2012; Pramling Samuelsson & Carlsson, 2008). Surveys (including over 8000 parents) have found mothers value literacy and numeracy six to eight times more than educators (West, Hausken & Collins, 1993, p. 2). Other studies show that mothers rank academic skills as more important than any other skill, while educators rank them second last (Opper, 1994). Consequently, mothers often devalue free play because they doubt it will lead to the learning that will 'get children ready for school' (Kable, 2001, p. 327; O'Gorman & Ailwood, 2012).

The inability to grasp concrete evidence of the children's play-based learning outcomes made parents concerned about their children's academic readiness and how they would handle the upcoming transition from kindergarten to primary school ... This seemed to override their desire for their children to enjoy playful learning experiences (Fung & Cheng, 2012, pp. 23–24).

Conflicting with educators' focus on children's independent learning and holistic outcomes (Fung & Cheng, 2012; Rogers & Evans, 2008), mothers appear to want educators to intervene in and guide children's play experiences towards academic learning (Cooney, 2004; Howard, 2010; O'Gorman & Ailwood, 2012). Research suggests at the heart of this demand is the maternal concern about whether a play-based curriculum can 'prepare their children intellectually for primary school studies' (Christmas, 2005, p. 147; Holloway, Rambaud, Fuller & Eggers-Pierola, 1995; Kable, 2001). For example, a recent Australian study of parents' perspectives (O'Gorman & Ailwood, 2012) suggested that 'play is valued [by parents] as long as it also explicitly focus[es] on worthwhile school-based learning, especially literacy and numeracy' (p. 270).

Research also shows mothers want their children to learn social skills through play (e.g. Cooney, 2004; Haight, Parke & Black, 1997; Lane, Stanton-Chapman, Jamison & Phillips, 2007; Needham & Jackson, 2012). Although mothers would not expect educators to guide children's play towards social skills, their expectation for their children to learn social skills is consistent with the school readiness concern: mothers believe social learning through play will enable their children to get along with peers and staff (Degotardi, Sweller & Pearson, 2013; Lane, Givner & Pierson, 2004).

Therefore, mothers' emphasis on cognitive and social learning through play seems to fit with a general concern for school readiness, something the literature identifies as a key influence on maternal perspectives on play and learning (e.g. Holloway et al., 1995; Kable, 2001; O'Gorman & Ailwood, 2012).

1.1.Perspective misalignment

Mothers' school readiness concerns misalign with the perspective of educators as they maintain 'excessive suspicion of "schoolification" and a reluctance to orient children towards learning goals valued by parents' (Bennett, 2005, pp. 14–15)—goals they see as 'competitive' (Ranz-Smith, 2007, p. 271; Walsh & Gardner, 2006, p. 115). Yet perspective alignment is critical for children's educational outcomes, as shown by large-scale longitudinal research (Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons & Siraj-Blatchford, 2008). Its positive influence on children's outcomes has been shown to be greater than parents' socioeconomic status (SES) (Schaller, Rocha & Barshinger, 2007), education, occupational status and income (Melhuish, 2010, p. 61). Accordingly, educators are continuously advised to align their intentions with family members when interacting with them during drop-off, pick-up and other meeting times (Brooker, 2010; Knopf & Swick, 2007).

Given the imperative to align perspectives, and the apparent rift between them, the study reported in this paper sought to investigate mothers' perspectives in a hitherto rarely researched

context: the home. This was because the home is likely to be less associated with school than the ECEC context, and it was the notion of school readiness and success that appeared to be at the heart of the tensions between educators' and parents' perspectives. Conducting research in a new context was expected to illuminate a different standpoint that may assist in aligning perspectives.

2. Theorising maternal perspectives

The study reported here sought to investigate mothers' perspectives on play in the home context, in contrast to most previous research, which has been in the ECEC context. It was paramount that the influence of context, therefore, was accounted for in the way mothers' perspectives were theorised. Sociocultural theory is known for foregrounding the influence of context (Hedegaard, 2009; Rogoff, 1995), and was thus chosen as the overarching theory for researching perspectives. In Hedegaard's (2008, 2009) sociocultural model of perspectives, stakeholder groups like mothers are considered as the *institution* to which individuals belong. Hedegaard's model (Figure 1) suggests that an analysis of perspectives at the institutional level must consider *practices* and *values*. Practices and values equate to the *activities* and *motives* of the group, respectively (Fleer, 2008a, p. 89; Hedegaard, 2008, p. 17), and activities were for the 'grandfather' of sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1987), the key insight into *why* people do things (their motives) (p. 282). Activities are thus agreed to be the unit of analysis in all sociocultural research (Matusov, 2007, p. 326; Rogoff, 1995, p. 140). Accordingly, this study analysed mothers' perspectives in relation to their collective activities (their *practices*) in order to derive their collective motives (their *values*). Doing so was a fitting way of taking the context into account.

Therefore, perspectives—considered in relation to a group, for the purposes of the current study—are defined as perceptions, beliefs and values generated through group

practices. The analysis of practices is intuitive because what unites individual family members are their practices. Their practices are also what distinguish family members from other relevant stakeholder groups such as policy-makers, educators or children. Thus the deductive (or *a priori*) analysis of mothers' perspectives through their practices and values is justified through their membership of the group, as well as according to a sociocultural model of perspectives.

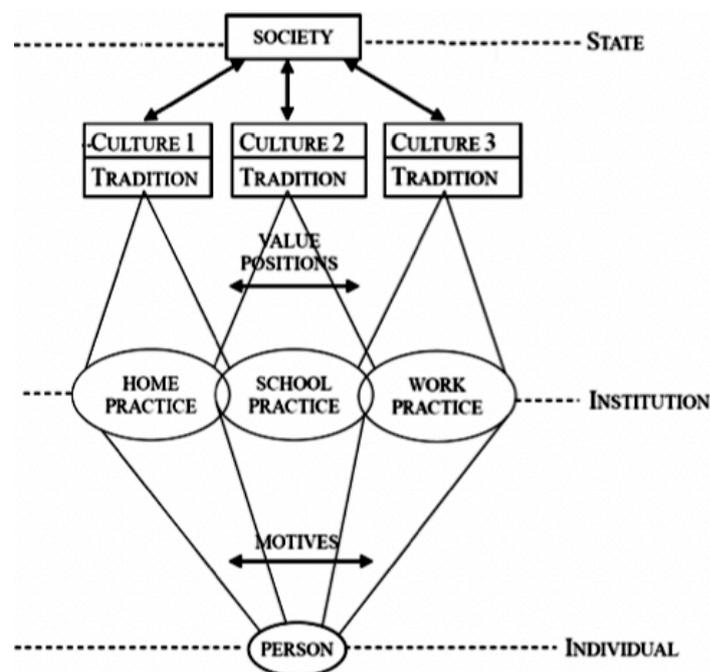


Figure 1. Individual development from different perspectives

3. Methodology

The study presented in this paper formed part of a larger investigation of children's, family members' and educators' perspectives on learning through play. The larger study investigated the perspectives of eight mothers, five educators and 28 children involved with an ECEC centre in an urban part of Melbourne, Australia, over several months. The centre was play-based and focused on children's progression through developmental stages.

The participants relevant to this paper—eight mothers of children aged two to five enrolled in the centre—were of urban, middle-class SES. Ethics clearance was obtained from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the University's Human

Research Ethics Committee, and informed consent was sought from all participants. Pseudonyms were used to protect the privacy of participants.

By valuing how perspectives are expressed, rather than investigating an external, objective reality, the study situated itself in a qualitative, interpretive methodological framework (Denzin, 2001). The research focus on perspectives required the rich, descriptive potential of qualitative methodologies such as case studies (Stake, 2008). To capture the context descriptively, video methods were deemed the most appropriate, particularly for documenting the practices of institutions such as the home or ECEC setting (Fleer, 2008b, p. 104). Specifically, a method known as video-stimulated recall dialogues (VSRD) was chosen because it is considered appropriate for discussions about learning (Morgan, 2007). This method has two phases.

3.1. VSRDs

Phase one of the VSRDs invited mothers to record their children's play episodes that they believed demonstrated learning in the home. *Phase two* invited them to discuss those videos in individual or group VSRDs, commenting on what they saw their children learning (see Table 1).

Table 1. Summary of participant numbers and videos

Participants in the current study	8
Videos of children's play (Phase one)	326
Location of play recordings	Homes
Videos of perspectives (Phase two)	6
Location of VSRD interviews	Staff room
Comments relating to learning	331

After mothers had recorded their child's play and the resultant videos were used to stimulate discussion in VSRDs, the videos of the VSRDs were analysed in two stages (inductive and deductive). Although most qualitative data analysis is open-ended and inductive (Gibson &

Brown, 2009), it is not uncommon to conduct a deductive analysis (Pope, Ziebland & Mays, 2000).

Inductive analysis was conducted first; deriving the types of learning through play mentioned by mothers themselves. For example, when mothers spoke about play developing cognition, or ‘learning a lot of concepts in there’ (Fiona, 9:35), these comments were coded as representing *cognitive* learning through play. Similarly, comments about ‘learning the social side of interacting’ (Hayley, 4:57) or ‘lots of that social learning stuff’ (Leena, 30:32) were coded as *social* learning through play. The inductive analysis was conducted three times to ensure consistency of the process and codes (Pope et al., 2000). These codes were then tabulated according to their frequency to determine their importance, and to remove codes that were not triangulated between two or more mothers.

Deductive analysis was conducted second; determining the *practices* and *values* in mothers’ perspectives at the institutional level (see ‘home practice’ in Figure 1), in keeping with the sociocultural theorisation described previously (Hedegaard, 2008, 2009; Matusov, 2007; Rogoff, 1995). The practices mentioned in each comment and the values implied from them were recorded. Examples are shown in the right side of Table 2.

4. Findings

The eight mothers expressed their perspectives on learning through play in 331 comments in the VSRDs (Table 1). Inductive coding revealed three types triangulated across all mothers: intrapersonal, cognitive and social learning through play (left side of Table 2). Deductive coding of the practices and values (right side of Table 2) gave much more insight into how mothers saw their children learning through play.

Table 2. Mothers' perspectives on learning through play according to inductive and deductive coding

Inductively coded			Deductively coded	
Type	Sub-type	%	Practices	Values
1. Intrapersonal learning (82 references, 25%)	(a) Enjoyment	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Finding personal interests ■ Individuating from other family members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Personality development ■ Participating in family practices
	(b) Independence	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Washing dishes ■ Organising own activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Independent play ■ Personal interests ■ Becoming an individual
2. Cognitive learning (50 references, 15%)	(a) Exploring ideas	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Travelling ■ Food shopping/cooking ■ Allowing children to explore concepts and interests freely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conceptual exploration ■ Independent learning ■ Understanding the world
	(b) Organisation	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Providing for play experiences ■ Drawing ■ Organising ideas from daily life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Resolving conflicting ideas ■ Independent learning
3. Social learning (44 references, 13%)	(a) Different social roles	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Cooking, cleaning ■ Being a mother 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Taking family roles ■ Different social codes
	(b) Cooperation/negotiation	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Resolving conflict ■ Reaching agreements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Family harmony ■ Autonomous resolution ■ Individuating from siblings

4.1. Intrapersonal learning through play

The type of learning through play that mothers most frequently commented on was the learning of internal skills and dispositions that were personally significant for each child, including learning how to enjoy oneself and learning independence. These comments were coded as intrapersonal learning through play because all were internal skills related to becoming an individual member of the family.

For example, Allysha spoke about how her son's play was a way for him to learn to enjoy himself:

... he was really intensely into trains. So he sees the trains and he has that really intense feeling, like 'Wow! I looove it' [eyes light up]! You know, that really kind of 'wow'. So with building this [train in his play] up he wants to get back to that feeling. Maybe it has a lot to do with getting that good feeling back (Allysha, 1:26#2).

Learning how to attain the feeling of curiosity and wonder was, for Allysha, something her son learned independently. Trains were one of the few interests Allysha believed he did not share

with his older sister, with whom he had ‘such an uneven relationship’ (Allysha, 2:28). Deductive analysis revealed the practices of finding one’s own interests (e.g. trains) and individuating (in the sense of distinguishing one’s own personality) from other family members, such as siblings (see right side of Table 2). All these practices were carried out by children independently, and no mothers mentioned intervention or teaching of these aspects of intrapersonal learning through play. Comments such as Allysha’s revealed the values of individuality and personality development, particularly in relation to the family unit.

Another example of intrapersonal learning through play was Pam’s recording of her daughter’s play washing plastic bottles, which were used for her art projects. Pam saw this action of preparation for one’s own art-making in terms of independence, because her daughter had recently learned to climb atop a stool at the kitchen sink and wash dishes by herself.

She’s learning—I think she’s learning independence because she’s getting up and doing it all herself and all that (Pam, 7:16).

As in the previous example, this comment exemplified intrapersonal learning through play because Pam saw her daughter’s play assisting her learning to become independent from other family members. The practices demonstrated were washing dishes and organising her own art activities. These practices, as in other mothers’ comments, suggested the values of independence, carrying out one’s personal interests, and therefore, becoming an individual family member. Again, mothers did not believe they should intervene in play or teach these things in the home.

While limited by the scope of this paper, the above examples of intrapersonal learning served to demonstrate the emotionally significant, internal learning that mothers saw most frequently in their children’s play in the home. Most practices mentioned were those of the family, suggesting the value of individual and autonomous learning to participate in the family unit.

4.2.Cognitive learning through play

The mothers' perspective also frequently included references to cognitive or intellectual learning through play. This type of learning through play mostly referred to the independent exploration and the organisation of ideas.

One example of exploration of ideas was Hayley commenting on the cognitive learning of different concepts in her sons' imaginative play about travelling experiences in which they had participated:

... travelling on the aeroplane, so, role playing where they pack up bags, they get a taxi to the airport. They get on a bus, one of them is the bus driver, they have a name—'bus driver', 'taxi driver' ... they have their own drawer of cooking utensils, so sometimes he's the chef, sometimes he's the barista. They've got a little coffee machine, so they get into that. And so then he'll take it from that to 'Well, what do we need in the fridge to make that sort of stuff?', do shopping lists, and then when we [the parents] are cooking stuff, he'll want to help us to do that too (Hayley, 1:19).

Such comments exemplify the independent processes of exploring concepts that mothers saw their children doing independently through their play. Play was associated with the freedom to 'get into' different ideas independently (Hayley, 1:19), without structure imposed from adults. Deductive analysis revealed that practices that mothers referred to were associated with their family: in Hayley's case, family holidays (group travel, identifying associated jobs) and home practices (cooking, making coffee, writing shopping lists). Hayley saw her sons learning together from these practices without her guidance, reflecting the value of freedom to play and children's independent learning. Mothers' perspectives also seemed to reflect the value of their children competently engaging in family practices through imitating their parents to become successfully participating, mature family members.

Another sub-type of cognitive learning through play was organising ideas. Pam saw imaginary play as a way of 'working out' ideas, and Leena saw her son's play-drawing as a way of organising ideas from his life:

Pam: [Imaginary play is] sort of what we do when we dream: repeating and working out ...

Leena: Yeah! That's true! He does that in his drawing too, when he draws, sometimes he draws characters ... His drawings will most likely be a story, and there's some description or a purpose for that particular presentation. It's just interesting for me to learn sometimes. And sometimes they refer back to a conversation we had maybe like many days ago, and it stays with him, and he'll start drawing it out (Leena & Pam, 30:37).

Leena's perspective indicated that playing is often children's independent search for a 'description' or 'purpose' for what has happened, and both her and Pam's accounts showed the value attributed to children understanding the world holistically. This was emphasised through their practices of facilitating their children's play by providing materials for play. It was also highlighted in the children's practices of playing out ideas from their daily life. The value of mothers facilitating children's uninterrupted, independent learning through play was evident in these practices.

4.3. Learning social skills

Finally, mothers commented on learning social skills such as taking on social roles and cooperating (Table 2). One example of taking on a social role was in Ellie's comment about her daughter's play in the home corner:

Well, she's learning the role of cooking and providing food. She definitely likes role playing. She likes playing the mum (Ellie, 9:51).

Mothers demonstrated that assuming social roles (e.g. of mother, waiter, instructor etc.) was a social skill that children learned independently through play. The practices mothers commented on were all practices that mature family members engaged in to successfully participate in the family (e.g. 'cooking' and 'providing food'¹). This highlighted the value mothers attributed to children independently learning family structure and cohesion through different social codes associated with family members' roles.

Cooperation was the second most mentioned social learning through play (3[b] in Table 2). An example came from Merri seeing her two daughters learning:

... to resolve some of these [personal conflicts in play] without me. You know, although [one daughter] will come to me eventually and complain—but they just got over that [conflict] by themselves (Merri, 15:59).

This comment exemplified learning cooperation. The practices demonstrated were resolving conflict and reaching agreement independently, ‘by themselves’, showing the values of family harmony and autonomous conflict resolution in the family.

Overall, the findings suggested that mothers believed play in the home/family setting afforded intrapersonal, cognitive and social learning. Each of these demonstrated various practices, but the vast majority were practices of the family that children learned without intervention or guidance from adults. The mothers’ perspectives highlighted the value of having the freedom to independently learn how to be an individual family member.

5. Discussion

The current study sought to investigate ways that educators might align different perspectives in the home and ECEC settings because perspective alignment is critical for children’s educational outcomes (e.g. Melhuish, 2010; Schaller et al., 2007).

The current findings suggest that—in the home—mothers most frequently identify intrapersonal, cognitive and social learning through play. The latter two are consistent with mothers’ focus on cognitive and social learning that was found in the existing research literature, suggesting the findings of the current study were not altogether different from previous studies of mothers’ perspectives.

However, what was mentioned *most* by mothers in the current study was intrapersonal learning through play, a finding absent in the existing literature. The mothers’ accounts of this learning stand out as emphasising the personality and character development of their child. In

contrast to standardised academic learning of cognitive content (literacy, numeracy etc.), this learning was idiosyncratic and individual, and—critically—involved emotional, physical, social and cognitive learning about the family and family life. In this sense, the intrapersonal learning through play (which mothers mentioned most frequently) suggested that their perspectives on learning through play in the home valued holistic learning much more than previously found in the ECEC context (e.g. Fung & Cheng, 2012; O’Gorman & Ailwood, 2012). Further, mothers emphasising intrapersonal learning the most, then cognitive and social learning, appears to be aligned with educators’ perspectives. For example, a previous study showed 90 educators rated personal, social and language learning through play as the three most prominent types (McLane, 2003). Another more recent study also confirmed mothers saw learning through play in the home as holistic and independent of adults, similar to educators’ perspectives (Stephen, Stevenson & Adey, 2013).

Yet the use of Hedegaard’s (2008, 2009) model provided this study with a deeper analysis than inductively deriving what kinds of learning mothers saw. Deductive analysis qualitatively described *how* mothers saw that learning occurring: in relation to the practices of the family and to young children learning how to participate in them more fully. For example, Merri (15:59) saw her children independently learning the valued practices of how to resolve family conflicts; and Hayley (1:19) saw her son learning about daily life via family practices such as cooking food, making coffee or taking family holidays. These vignettes are worlds apart from school-like practices or adult guidance of play towards specific, academic learning that appear so prominently in extant research on mothers’ perspectives in the ECEC setting (e.g. Holloway et al., 1995; West et al., 1993).

Analysis of values using Hedegaard’s (2008, 2009) model depicted the importance of individual children’s membership of, and place in, the family unit. Ellie’s (9:51) comments about her daughter learning to cook and provide food for the family are illustrative of the value

placed on family roles and the way that—according to mothers— sociodramatic play affords the learning of those roles. Of particular relevance to the aims of this study is that, for mothers, children’s learning occurred naturally and independently, without adult guidance or intervention.

In summary, the findings provide a qualitative description of the ways that mothers’ perspectives in the home appear to differ from those in the ECEC setting. This appears to be a perspective misalignment *in addition* to that between educators’ and mothers’ perspectives in the ECEC setting. Both misalignments are potential constraints to children’s educational outcomes if alignment of home and ECEC centre perspectives is so important for educational and other life outcomes, as research suggests (e.g. Melhuish, 2010). Another constraining factor to the issue is that the responsibility to align perspectives can only practically lie with ECEC practitioners, not mothers.

However, the current study offers some preliminary directions on how educators might strive to align mothers’ perspectives in the home with their perspectives in the ECEC setting, and in turn with educators’ perspectives.

One suggestion comes from the finding that the ways that mothers spoke about learning through play in the home was similar to educators’ perspectives. The emotional and social aspects of the intrapersonal learning in mothers’ perspectives mirrors educators’ focus on holistic learning in emotional, social, physical and cognitive domains (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Hunter & Walsh, 2014). Another suggestion comes from mothers’ valuing of children’s independent learning processes in the home (see also Stephen et al., 2013), which was similar to educators’ perspectives (e.g. Flear et al., 2009; Ranz-Smith, 2007).

These two perspective alignments suggest that changing the context in which mothers thought about learning through play (as this study did) made them think more about independent learning processes than the ECEC or school context did. Accordingly, in their

interactions with mothers and other family members (e.g. at drop-off, pick-up and formalised meetings), educators may be able to discuss children's learning through play (a) in relation to their learning of family practices, or (b) in relation to intrapersonal learning. Like changing the context (as the current study did), discussing children's learning of family practices or intrapersonal development is likely to make independent learning processes more cognitively accessible to mothers.

If educators could discuss children's holistic learning about (a) family practices such as learning about their passions for cooking and providing food (Ellie, 9:51; Hayley, 1:19)—rather than learning about numeracy and counting plates or food items, for example—mothers may be more inclined to identify holistic learning in the ECEC setting, rather than focusing on academic learning. If educators can frame a child's play in terms of (b) intrapersonal learning in relation to the family—such as a young boy's imaginary play with trains as an expression of his regaining power from sibling relationships (Allysha, 1:26#2)—that may be similar enough to the intrapersonal learning that mothers saw to then appreciate the associated independent learning occurring through play in the ECEC setting.

Inversely, educators may succumb to the parental pressure for school readiness (shown in extant literature) by discussing children's play as academic learning. This study suggests that—perhaps ironically—doing so may widen the perspective misalignment. Instead, a potential remedy is for educators to discuss children's capacities more expansively (e.g. with reference to family practices or intrapersonal learning), outside of the narrow vision of school readiness and academic achievement.

5.1.Limitations

Suggestions such as these are speculative and based only on the in-depth descriptions from a small sample of mothers. Now that this qualitative investigation has suggested potential ways

to align perspectives, future research could verify the transferability of the claims to a wider range of mothers and other family members.

6. Conclusion

Instead of emphasising guided learning processes of cognitive and social learning through play as they appear to do in the ECEC setting, mothers in this in-depth case study described children's independent learning of holistic aspects of family membership and practices. While preliminary in nature, these findings suggest that educators may be able to narrow the gap between mothers' perspectives in the ECEC centre and home, and in turn between mothers' and educators' perspectives. Educators may be able to use their interactions with mothers to contextualise children's learning through ECEC- based play in relation to family roles and practices. This in turn may make the independent and holistic aspects more cognitively available when thinking about their child's learning through play, serving to align their perspectives with educators and reduce their 'competitive' tendencies (Ranz-Smith, 2007, p. 271; Walsh & Gardner, 2006, p. 115). Research suggests that creating greater alignment between the ECEC centre and the home plays a significant role in children's educational outcomes.

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8. Endnote

Boys were seen participating in such family practices (e.g. cooking) as much as girls were by the mothers, suggesting comments such as Ellie's (9:51) were not gender-specific. For example, Hayley's comment on page 8 (1:19) shows how boys were seen to learn similar home and family practices.

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