Caution Children Playing: Exploring the Attitudes and Perceptions of Head-Teachers relating to Physical Risky-Play in Four to Eight Year-olds in Three State Primary Schools in Northern England

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Abstract.

This study explores the attitudes of primary school Head-teachers with regard to physical risky play in four to eight-year-olds. Perceptions of the barriers to facilitating risky play within school were examined. Potential barriers to facilitating risky play within school were examined; particularly the relationship and balance between attitudes to risk-taking – including its benefits, and wider influences on school policy, culture and practice on risky play. A purposive sample of three state primary school Head-teachers, based in Northern England, contributed to the research. Data was collated via semi-structured qualitative interviews enhanced by photo-elicitation techniques. The findings indicate that the Head-teachers embrace risky play as a means of enriching learning as well as establishing positive learning dispositions and risk negotiating skills. In addition to scholastic benefits, the head-teachers regard risky play as a means of ensuring children's personal, social and emotional development and wellbeing. Barriers to risky play are numerous and include wider cultural influences and risk aversion. However, increased curriculum demands and fear of Ofsted judgement appear to affect teaching practices and to limit time available for risky play within the school day. Familiarity with the benefits of play and an enabling approach when assessing risk appear to be significant in influencing risky play practices. Risky play is regarded positively by the participants, which prompts its inclusion in their school practice and ethos. Consequently, the influence of barriers to risky play was diminished. This study's exploration of Head-teachers' perceptions of risky play adds to the shared understanding of how risky play is perceived and how those insights affect primary school policy and decision making, with the intention of informing practice.

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Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

BHF	British Heart Foundation
Blame Culture	Blame culture is a set of attitudes that are characterized by an unwillingness to take risks or to accept responsibility for mistakes due to a fear of criticism or prosecution (Business Dictionary, n.d.).
BMA	British Medical Association
BSI	British Standards Institution
CEN	Comité Européen de Normalisation
DfE	Department for Education
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DfH	Department for Health
DfT	Department for Transport
Hazard	A hazard is an item or substance that might cause loss or harm, such as water, electricity, working at height, a slippery floor (Hughes, & Ferrett, 2005).
Helicopter parenting	Helicopter parenting is a parenting approach that incorporates constant child supervision, in order to protect children from experiencing: failure, disappointment or harm (Mercogliano, 2008).
HSC	Health and Safety Commission
HSE	Health and Safety Executive
Hyper parenting	Hyper parenting is an approach to childcare that heavily depends on adult-led activities which often prevents children from pursuing self-directed free play activities (Elkind, 2001).
Independent Mobility	Independent mobility refers to an area around the child's home where they can roam freely (Hillman, Adams, & Whitelegg, 1990).
Precautionary Principle	A precautionary principle denotes an attitude that if an action is suspected of causing harm it will be prevented, regardless of the benefits it might bestow (Lindon, 2011).

Responsible Person	A responsible person is one who controls a premise, as occupier or otherwise, in connection with the carrying out of an undertaking. Specifically, a person in charge of and responsible for the Health and Safety policy (Hughes, & Ferrett, 2005).
Risk	Risk refers to the feasibility of an adverse outcome arising from a hazard. In risk management contexts the word tends to include a measure of the seriousness of an adverse occurrence as well as its probability (Hughes, & Ferrett, 2005).
Risk Assessment	Risk Assessment is a qualitative or quantitative process of evaluating potential hazards that may be involved in a projected activity or undertaking and determining the likelihood of an event (HSE, 2016).
Risk Averse / Risk Aversion	Risk averse is the reluctance to accept risk taking or allow others to risk take or describes a low risk tolerance threshold.
RoSPA	Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents
Spatial Mobility	See Independent Mobility
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

1.0 - Introduction

1.1 - Research Background and Rationale

Play in childhood is common to all cultures and societies, past and present, and risk taking is intrinsic to play (Mitchell, Crawshaw, Bunton & Green, 2001; Sandseter & Kennair, 2011; Tovey, 2007). The researcher definition of children's play correlates with the classification used in the Hughes (1996:16), as a range of self-directed, spontaneous activities and behaviours that are 'intrinsically motivated' often performed in the pursuit of relaxation or pleasure but may also enhance personal, social and emotional learning and development (Welsh Government, 2008). Contemporary definitions of play are very similar to Hughes' classification (Brown, & Patte; 2012). Risky play provides a means of enabling child development, ensuring wellbeing and preventing phobias (Gill, 2007; Gleave & Cole-Hamilton, 2012; Guldberg, 2009; Sandseter & Kennair, 2011). Furthermore, play presents opportunities to practice and extend social skills and risk assessment abilities as well as being a pleasant way of spending time (Beunderman, 2010; Brockman, Jago & Fox, 2011; Lester & Russell, 2008; Lindon, 2011; Tovey, 2007).

This research focused on Head-teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward physical risky play. For the purpose of the research, the researcher's definition of risky play adheres to Sandseter's (2007) explanation of risky play as a self-directed, stimulating

physical activity that, while being exhilarating and amusing it holds the potential for physical harm. Interview questions and the subsequent analysis of data was informed by Sandseter and Kennair's (2011) precept that if the difficulties presented by risky play were not supplanted by its value, it would not be extant. Skenazy (2010:5) suggested "…*the greatest risk of all just might be trying to raise a child who never encountered any risks.*" Nevertheless, risk and risky play are often regarded as detrimental or engender negative connotations (Lupton & Tulloch, 2002; Tovey, 2007).

As a British child of the 1970s I enjoyed greater spatial freedom and opportunities for self-directed playful activities than the current generation (Almon, 2013; Lindon, 2011). Climbing trees, running wildly, exploring the neighbourhood and building dens, while risky, seemed to be common pastimes for me and my peers. Grazed elbows and bruised knees were common injuries and, although painful, did not prevent me returning to enjoyable and thrilling risky play pursuits as soon as the tears were dried. In addition to interesting scars, risky play provided me with a sense of adventure, resilience and self-reliance that has endured into middle age. Decades later many British children no longer enjoy the same freedoms of mobility, and additional out of school childcare and digital leisure pursuits limit the time available for active, outdoor, risky play (Future Foundation, 2006; Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2002; Play England, 2006; Tovey, 2007).

For many children growing up in the UK school may be one of the few places where they have the opportunity to experience regular, physical, risky play (Gill, 2007; Wright

2015). Risky play may provide latent and immediate fitness and thus enhance children's health (Brussoni, Olsen, Pike & Sleet, 2012). As a means of ensuring regular exercise, risky play often entails periods of frenetic movement, which increases cardiovascular activity and aids in preventing obesity and associated diseases (Brussoni et al., 2012; Gleave & Cole-Hamilton, 2012; Poulson & Ziviani, 2004). Additionally, physical risky play may provide a means of processing and reducing emotional stress (Blakemore & Firth, 2005). Recent changes to children's play habits are believed to be associated with increased paediatric mental illness (BMA, 2006; MHF, 2006).

Although the benefits of risky play in childhood are numerous and many British children's regular physical play opportunities are limited to the school environment, there has been a reduction in primary school playtimes (Blatchford & Baines, 2006; Pellegrini & Blatchford, 2003). As opposed to being environments that enable physical risky play and experiential learning, some primary schools considerably limit children's self-directed risky play (Gill, 2007; Guldberg, 2009; Playlink, 1999; Tovey, 2007). Furthermore, some academics have suggested that a teaching professional's desire to prevent accidents or their fear of blame and litigation, coupled with risk aversion tendencies, may be restricting children's risky play opportunities (Gill, 2007; Lindon, 2011; Play Safety Forum, 2002).

Tovey (2007) proposed that a consequence of the “as safe as possible” (ROSPA, 2012:4) agenda on child safety results in unchallenging and tedious educational settings where low expectations of children’s abilities are routine. Risky play may be a means of encouraging children to confront risks as challenges that can to be mastered rather than events to be feared (Sandseter & Kennair, 2011; Tovey, 2014). The ability to manage risks and the accompanying fear or adrenaline is an essential survival trait (Sandseter & Kennair, 2011). The ability to recognise and negotiate risks in childhood serves to protect children into maturity (Apter, 2007; Jones, 2007).

The inclusion of physical risky play in state primary schools may be subject to a wider blame and safety fixated culture and remains a controversial subject (Almon, 2013; Gill, 2007; Play England, 2011; Play Safety Forum, 2002; Tovey, 2007). My research interest was generated by the precept, supported by a plethora of literature, that risky play is an intrinsic aspect of childhood play, which aids children’s personal, social and emotional development and wellbeing (British Heart Foundation, 2009; Gill, 2007; Pretty et al, 2007; Towner, Dowswell, Mackereth & Jarvis, 2001). Furthermore, a quantitative investigation that I have previously conducted, deepened my interest in risky play and generated additional questions, which indicated the need for more qualitative research in this field (Wright, 2015). Chief among those questions was with regard to Head-teacher’s perceptions of risky play and how they may influence school practice and policy.

Recent academic publications and news articles indicate that interest in children's risky play opportunities is mounting (Almon, 2013; Ball, Gill & Spiegal, 2012; BBC, 2016; Brussoni et al., 2012; Lindon, 2011; Woolcock, 2016). While there is an abundance of academic opinions on risky play in the early years or primary school provision and the attitudes of teaching professionals toward risk taking, there is very little published research to endorse those opinions (Wright, 2015). The rationale of this research is to inform practice and contribute to the shared understanding of the barriers to risky play and Head-teachers' perceptions and practices in relation to it.

1.2 – Aims of the Research

The principal aims of this research were:

1. To determine what the potential barriers are to facilitating risky play for four to eight year-olds attending state primary school provision.
2. To advance an understanding of how risky play is perceived by the primary school Head-teachers involved in the study and how this might influence practices, ethos and culture within the school environment.
3. To establish what the relationship is between perceived risk benefits, risk inclusion and fear of accident and blame in play within primary schools and how this could impact on policy and decision making within schools.

1.3 - Research Methodology

Adopting an interpretive constructionist paradigm, an interview strategy was selected as an appropriate method for providing the rich and detailed data necessary to answer Research Aims One, Two and Three (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). A principle of the interpretivist paradigm is that enables the research to discern Head-teachers' perceptions regarding risky play though the cultural lens of the participant (Buckingham, 2009; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). A semi structured interview approach, enhanced by photo-elicitation techniques, was selected as a method of extrapolating the participants' perceptions and collating appropriate data from three state primary school teachers (Edwards & Holland, 2013; Peeters & Lievens, 2006; Rose, 2012; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The research adopted the photo-elicitation technique of providing risky play images throughout the qualitative interview to promote participant recall and to enable them to disclose rich detailed and affective perceptions (Edwards & Holland, 2013; Harper, 2002; Rose, 2012; Van House, 2006).

Owing to the specific focus of the research a purposive sample was selected as the preferred means of addressing the research aims. Interview data was analysed using qualitative NVIVO software to expose themes pertaining to three Head-teachers' attitudes to and perceptions of physical risky play.

1.4 - Structure of the Research

The literature review, Chapter 2, outlines available research and a range of academic and professional perspectives from educationalists, safety practitioners, medical professionals and psychologists regarding risky play and the potential barriers to risky play. Chapter 2 considers factors that influence the enablement of risky play in school and factors beyond school that shape a primary school's culture and practice. Literature considering issues such as health and safety demands, litigation, fear culture and children's leisure pursuits and freedoms is also considered. Furthermore, the chapter considers the benefits of risky play with regard to children's health, wellbeing, development and scholastic endeavours.

The methodology chapter, Chapter 3, critically evaluates this study's research methods and identifies limitations associated with qualitative interviews.

Chapter 4 presents the findings, analysis and a critical discussion of this empirical research. Chapter 4 explores the perceptions of the Head-teachers involved in the research with regard to risky play in relation to children aged four to eight years attending state primary schools. Additionally, Chapter 4 presents themes that emerged from the qualitative analysis regarding barriers to risky play and factors that affect its inclusion in the schools' practice and ethos. The researcher's interpretation and definitions of play, informed by Hughes definition of playful activities (1996), and risky

play, which adheres to Sandseter's (2007) clarification of play, have informed the approach to data analysis and data interpretation.

Finally, the concluding chapter, Chapter 5 summarises the results of the empirical data and analysis with regard to the three research aims. Furthermore, Chapter 5 considers the limitations of the research and offers suggestions for additional complementary studies.

2.0 – Literature Review

2.1 – Chapter Introduction

A comprehensive evaluation of risky play literature indicates that while there is an abundance of opinion from many notable academics, from disciplines including medicine, education and sociology, there is a paucity of robust empirical research. Most literature included in this review does not exclusively focus on physical risky play in the UK's state primary school provision and is not confined by this research's participants' age range of four to eight years.

Article 31 of the United Nations Convention Rights of the Child (UNCRC) affirms that children have the right to age appropriate play opportunities (UNCRC, 1989). Nevertheless, Lindon suggested the main purpose of childhood is, "*that children are enabled to move towards being competent and confident adults*" (Lindon, 2011:1). Teaching professionals, amongst other adults, carry the responsibility of ensuring that children acquire those skills and capabilities (Lester & Russell, 2008; Sandseter, 2012). Many British policies and pieces of legislation for children were created to ensure children's rights and adults' responsibilities are entrenched in current practice (Voce, 2008).

2.2 – What is Risky Play?

Play is universal to both current and historical cultures and is an innate part of children's life (Gill, 2007; Sawyer, 1994; Sandseter, 2012). Adult organised activities are occasionally mistaken for play (Almon, 2013). However, the Welsh Government (2008) defined play as naturally occurring, self-directed, spontaneous behaviours. Tovey (2007) asserted that risky play is commonly deemed as deleterious. However, in play children experience joy, develop skills and explore the world they inhabit (Lester & Russell, 2008). Physical risky play augments learning and positively contributes to a child's current and future physical and mental health (Bjorklund & Brown, 1998; BMA, 2006; Hyun, 1998; Madsen, Hicks & Thompson, 2011; Marmot et al., 2011; Pellegrini, 2009; Smith, 2005). This research focuses on physical risky play, as defined by Sandseter (2007), as an exhilarating form of play that has the potential for physical injury. Risky play can serve to enhance children's wellbeing (Tovey, 2007).

Hughes (1996:16) definition of play describes "freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated" behaviours. Furthermore, Brown (2002) suggested that when a child is free to enjoy experiential play, their self-assurance and self-awareness are enhanced, which in turn augments children's risk taking and problem solving skills. Furthermore, Hughes (2001) coined the phrase 'play-bias' to portray the practise of others precluding one form of play in favour of another type of play. Hughes (2002) suggested that a consequence of play-bias is that it prevents children from experiencing

a diverse or holistic play experience of environment, which may prove harmful on the child's developing sense of self as well as restricting their personal, social and emotional development (Hughes, 1996). Brown (2002) echoed this premise when he suggested that restricted play choices may be detrimental to a child's development.

Brown (2003) proposed that play is the means children use to reach their developmental capability and begin to comprehend their world and that as a consequence a responsible has an obligation to ensure a play environments are suitable for enabling a children personal, social and emotional growth. In the 1980s Brown devised the acronym 'SPICE and the 3 Fs', it described the ideal developmental focus of play with included, social interaction, physical activity, intellectual stimulation, creative achievement and emotional stability. The addendum of the three Fs to SPICE represented the requirement for play to involve, fun, freedom or flexibility (Brown, 2003). SPICE initially provided guidance to play workers but was later rejected by Brown as misunderstood (Brown 2003). Brown (2003) suggested that some play workers have adopted a superficial version of 'SPICE' and largely ignore the need to provide a flexible play environment to promote adaptability in a child.

2.3 – Play, What Is It Good for?

Hännikainen, Singer & Van Oers (2013) suggest the benefits of play are without question. However, to understand Head-teachers' perceptions of risky play it is

important to explore some of its benefits. A plausible argument supporting the advantages of risky play is made by Sandseter and Kennair (2011) who argued that if its detriments were not superseded by its benefits, risky play would no longer exist in every culture. Play may function as a means of encouraging children to view risk as a challenge to be mastered rather than an event to be feared (Sandseter and Kennair, 2011; Tovey, 2014).

In Sutton-Smith's (2001) influential work 'The Ambiguity of Play, he suggests the term 'play' represents an abundance of diverse actions, imaginings and activities. Sutton Smith argued that all play belongs to one of seven culturally derived narrative referred to as 'rhetorics'. Sutton-Smith (2001) divides play rhetorics into two groups, those that stem from ancient philosophes of fate, identity, power and frivolity. The remaining three rhetorics are based on more recent origins of play are, imaginary, as self, or play as progress. In some childhood play and educational texts the dominant rhetoric appears to be play as progress, implying play is a valuable means of developing skills and learning necessary for adulthood. Furthermore, Sutton-Smith (2001:156) suggested that play was the means children use to "come to terms with" and make sense of their external reality while embraced in a safer inner world of play and imagination (Sutton-Smith, 2001:156).

Sutton-Smith (2001) acknowledges that although there are numerous forms of play rhetorics he also suggests that any one form of play is rarely distinct from other types of

play. For example, an observer sees a child climbing a tree and deems this a form of risky play. However, the child may be imagining she is a hero is looking for dragon eggs, which makes this a form of risky and imaginary play. Furthermore, if the child's motivation to pursue this play for the purpose of relaxation, the same tree climbing may also indicate the rhetoric as play as self (Sutton-Smith, 2001). Indicating that play maybe a combination of actions, behaviours, imagination or cognition. However, the interpretation of the playful act stems for a cultural narrative and therefore remains inherently ambiguous.

2.4 - Personal, Social, Emotional Benefits of Risky Play

Risky play, such as climbing, moving fast or tool manipulation, aids children in refining sensory perceptions such as depth, motion, coordination and physical conditioning, which enhance the ability to assess risk and thus prevent harm (Bjorklund & Pellegrini, 2002; Pellegrini & Smith, 1998; Rakison, 2005; Sandseter & Kennair, 2011). Poulton and Menzies (2002) suggested that risky play at height may engender antiphobic desensitisation to acrophobia. Furthermore, Peterson, Gillies, Cook, Schick & Little's (1994) research indicates that children become hardier and less apprehensive toward injury when accustomed to it.

A fundamental advantage of risky play is that it facilities children in honing skills and gaining self-reliance and self-esteem through self-directed interests and pursuits that

help them to develop into capable adults (Gill, 2007; Gilligan, 2000; Guldberg, 2009). Furthermore, playful skill development facilitates children in determining and extending their capabilities (Leong & Bodrova, 2001). Additionally, risky play engages children in performing quick evaluations and thus increases mental acuity (Bjorklund & Pellegrini, 2000; Lindon, 2011; Sandseter, 2007; Tovey, 2007). Wadsworth (2004) stressed the pivotal role play performs in aiding children to accommodate new information, practice skills and comprehend social interactions. Fjørtoft's (2001) research indicates that natural play environments enhance young children's motor skills. Almon (2013) suggested that when adults impede risky play, children's development is inhibited (Gill, 2007).

Apter (2007) suggests that children's experience of risky play may aid survival (Sandseter & Kennair, 2011). Daily life is full of hazards and although the ability to discern risks for many is innate, risky play provides children with a means of learning to mitigate harm (Almon, 2013; Ball et al., 2012; HSE, 2012; Sorce, Emde, Campos & Klinnert, 1985). Children desire not only to experience risk but also to be permitted to judge risk and determine risk management strategies (Brussoni et al., 2012; Gill, 2007; Mitchell et al., 2001). In addition to risky play providing a desired thrill, studies indicate that children become increasingly proficient at assessing risk and personal abilities through this form of activity (Adams, 2001; Jones, 2007; Play Safety Forum, 2002; Plumert & Schwebel, 1997). DiLillo, Potts and Himes (1998) argued that increased mental acuity and experience of risky play are associated with reduced injury rates and injury severity (Apter, 2007; Ball, 2002). Research conducted by Sandseter (2012)

proposed that children pursuing risky play commonly deliberate risk reduction measures.

Risky play is a method children use as a stress reducing strategy (Almon, 2013; Gleave & Cole-Hamilton, 2012; Sandseter & Kennair, 2011). Gladwin and Collins (2008) stress the advantages of risk taking in play but also note that over cautiousness in adult role models may generate anxiety in children. Additionally, the Mental Health Foundation's (MHF) (1999) research indicated that the dearth of risky play prevented children from gaining self-assurance and developing resilience and ultimately increased paediatric mental health rates. Siviy and Panksepp's (2011) research suggested that play endows the ability to adapt to social, emotional and physical discombobulations. Tovey (2014) suggested that childhood experience of risky play may mitigate against the harmful effects of failures later in life. Fear management is an import aspect of mental health; if children are prevented from experiencing risky play they may not develop the aptitude to overcome fear, which may develop into anxiety syndromes in perpetuity (Gleave, 2008; Gleave & Cole-Hamilton, 2012; Sandseter & Kennair, 2011). Mental and physical health are intrinsically interlinked (BMA, 2006). However, an individual's health is subject to environmental, economic and social factors (Dahlgren & Whitehead, 1991).

2.5 - Physical Health Benefits of Risky Play

Risky play is a pleasurable and therefore motivational form of exercise, which involves intervals of cardiovascular activity which stimulate a healthy method of processing and learning to manage moderate stress (Poulson & Ziviani, 2004). Active play associated with physical risky play bestows numerous physical health benefits and enhances life chances (Marmot et al, 2011; Pretty et al., 2007). Active risky play is an efficacious form of exercise (Poulson & Ziviani 2004). Blakemore and Firth's (2005) research suggested cardiovascular exercise, such as physical play, improves concentration, erudition and learning dispositions. A regular regimen of active play alleviates depression and aids in the prevention of chronic diseases (Garcia & Baltodano, 2005). Furthermore, facilitating opportunities for physical risky play may serve as remedy for a growing paediatric obesity epidemic, decrease rates of drug, alcohol or nicotine dependency in later life and establish healthy lifestyle habits (Butland et al, 2007; BHF, 2009; Dietz, 2001; Pretty et al., 2009). Active physical play may also augment cognitive function and improve scholastic attainment (Gleave & Cole-Hamilton, 2012).

2.6 - Educational Advantages of Risky Play

A Play Safety Forum (2002) report proposed that experience of real playground risks affords children valuable experiential learning opportunities (Axford, 2008). Dweck

(2000) and Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Guidance (EYFS) state that an important learning characteristic is the willingness to take risks (DfE, 2012). These attitudes are not only inherent but are learned through role-modelling and with experience (Dweck, 2000). Additionally, the National Curriculum for Primary Schools advocates the need for children to learn how to take risks associating the characteristic with ingenuity (DfE, 2014b). However, Ouvry (2003) suggested that a common misconception is that children's learning needs a quiet didactic environment with a teacher on hand to guide learning.

Risky play provides children with beneficial experiential learning opportunities. Rather than condemned, minor injuries should be valued as an element of children's learning from experience (Ball et al., 2012; CEN, 2006). Tovey (2007) suggests that risky play provides children the freedom to augment comprehension and enhance abilities and provides a platform for teachers to observe and extend what children almost have mastery of (Bruner, 1983; Vygotsky, 1978). Gill (2007) advocated that risky play should be embraced to complement curriculum based learning.

2.7 - Primary School and Its Effect on Children's Play

School plays an important role in children's access to play spaces and socialising with contemporaries (Zigler & Bishop-Josef, 2009). Playlink (1999) suggested that many UK parents perceived school as one of the last environments where they can be assured of their child's safety. Furthermore, Spilbury (2005) suggested that, for some British

children, there is a paucity of safe play spaces, free from crime or automobiles (Armitage, 2004; Elsley, 2004; Mackett, 2004). As a consequence of compulsory education beginning at five years old and many children attending Early-Years care prior to schooling, Tovey (2007) asserted that children's lives are becoming progressively more formalised (Wright, 2015). Children welcome time to play as a hiatus from school rules and directives (Blatchford & Baines, 2006; Brockman et al., 2001). Nevertheless, research indicates that although the school day has been lengthened, playtime has been substantially reduced (Blatchford & Baines, 2006; Pellegrini & Blatchford, 2003).

The reduction of school playtime may be damaging the health and wellbeing of children. Children participate in a good deal of their physical exercise during school playtimes, with shorter break-times providing the most activity (Fairclough, Butchers & Stratton, 2008; Lindon, 2007). Additionally, Gleave and Cole-Hamilton (2012) argue that playtime provides children with the space to rid themselves of excess energy and process stress, which means classroom learning is often calmer and productive. Playtime also furnishes children with the chance to process and accommodate new ideas as well as to practice developmental and social skills (Hubbuck, 2009). Pellegrini and Holmes (2006) proposed that teaching professionals consider playtime as wasted time that could be devoted to curriculum subjects (Armitage, 2005; Gleave & Cole-Hamilton, 2012; Playlink, 1999). Children need active play within the school environment. The obstruction of independent mobility, together with poor social

networks and the potential for home pressures, exacerbates the preclusion of play opportunities outside of the school day (Evans, 2004).

Naturally, Head-teachers must consider the health, safety and wellbeing of children in their care but risk aversion, curriculum pressures and fears stemming from a potential accident may possibly cause them to misapprehend the true scale of the risks. Primary school playground management is often reflective of the individual's approach to physical risky play and knowledge of the benefits of risky play (Jones, 2007; Tovey, 2014). Averting children's physical risky play or obtrusive supervision reduces children's natural activity levels (Parrish, Russell, Yeatman & Iverson, 2009). Additionally, adult micromanagement of play elicits children's desire for risky play, which is often interpreted as poor behaviour (Gill, 2007; Playlink, 1999; Tovey, 2014). Gill (2007) suggests that current approaches to risk taking in play are too cautious and conflict with previous generations' practices. Jones (2007) suggested the school playground, once a venue for children taking risks, is now subject to prohibition and censure. Ball et al. (2012) suggest that some schools prohibit risky play due to parental anxiety but also argue that majority of parents are fully conscious of the benefits of risky play situations. Schools need to determine the level of risky play they provide based on their knowledge of risky play benefits, risk assessment process and the needs and abilities of each child (HSE, 2012). A school is in an ideal position to ease parental fears and help them to understand that risky play aids children in maximising their capabilities (Knight, 2011).

2.8 - The Role of the Playground Supervisor

Adults who supervise children's play need to be able to distinguish between significant and moderate risk (Almon, 2013). A primary school's playground supervisor, whether a member of the teaching or the support staff, plays an important role in shaping the nature of children's play. Naturally, the supervisor's first duty is to ensure children are safe. However, Playlink (1999) suggests that adequate training to ensure play supervisors fully understand the benefits of physical risky play to a child's wellbeing will influence their risk assessment strategies and induce them to be less disposed towards impeding children's self-directed play. In some school's playtime supervisors are isolated from the broader school community and command little authority, reflected in terms of training and pay rates (Playlink, 1999).

School staff are role models for pupils to emulate or rebel against their attitudes and ethos (Gill, 2007; McGee & Fraser, 2008). School staff who appreciate the outdoors and are physically active and knowledgeable about play theory act as positive role models and are inclined to facilitate physical risky play (Stephenson, 2003; Tovey, 2007). Conversely, those who convey anxiety or disapprobation of risky play, either in body language or disproving idioms, may thwart development opportunities and negatively influence children's perception of risk (Beunderman, 2010; Tovey, 2007; 2014).

2.9 - The Impact of Curriculum and Inspection Concerns on Risky Play

Play facilitates experiential learning (Playlink, 1999). However, according to Gleave and Cole-Hamilton (2012), the decline of playtime is a consequence of curriculum pressures and behaviour concerns (Tovey, 2007). Furthermore, Jenkinson (2001) uses the term 'wrap around play' to describe the practice of usurping self-directed play in favour of the teacher's agenda of meeting curriculum objectives. Elkind (2007) suggests that the mental and physical health advantages of self-determined playtime are largely ignored by some teaching professionals and it is consequently appropriated as an additional teaching opportunity (Gleave & Cole-Hamilton, 2012; Playlink, 1999; Wright, 2015).

Gill (2007:66) stated that "*Schools are now under increasing pressure to show that they are measurably improving children's learning, principally through their performance in standardised tests and public examinations"*. Furthermore, the perceived dominance of Ofsted has led to teaching professionals rejecting a range of teaching methods in favour of practices that can be facilely justified (Ball, 2003; Earley, 1998; Gill, 2007; Perryman, 2007). Perryman (2007) suggests that teachers feel anxiety and pressure in the event of Ofsted inspections, regardless of positive outcomes, and that these fears influence long-term teaching methods and engender a narrow curriculum focus.

Outdoor education has been steadily deteriorating with regard to opportunities and quality (Guldberg, 2009). The magnitude of the issue prompted a House of Commons

Education and Skills Committee (HOCESC) (2005) review. The review suggested that outdoor, experiential learning provides a forum for curricular enrichment and its absence diminishes erudition (HOCESC, 2005).

Primary schools are multifaceted communities comprising children, parents, teaching and support staff. Primary schools have the challenging task of ensuring each child's wellbeing whilst delivering a very demanding national curriculum (Gairín & Castro, 2011). Glendon and Stanton (2000) suggested that to be perceived as safe a school must adhere to a precautionary principle culture (Lindon, 2011). However, in light of the numerous risky play benefits to a child's development, learning and wellbeing, a greater danger may be in overprotecting children from even minor hazards (Hackett, 2008; Skenazy, 2010). A school-wide ethos and policy apropos self -directed, physical risky play is crucial to ensuring children are stimulated and preventing children from feeling stifled during the long school day (Blatchford & Baines, 2006; Safety Forum, 2002; Tovey, 2007; Wright; 2015).

2.10 – Beyond the School Environment

Christensen's (2002) study indicates that the adult inclination to structure children's free time has been intensified in recent decades due to child safety concerns. Conversely, Elkind (2007) used the term 'hyper parenting' to describe the proclivity of some parents to over-schedule children's free time, which ultimately stems from their anxiety

regarding their offspring's future success. Professionally run out-of-school clubs and childcare diminish children's freedom of choice of play type and location (Rasmussen, 2004). Adult initiated activities such as sports, dance classes, or childcare, outside of the school day, suggest children have less opportunity for self-directed play (Lindon, 2011; Rasmussen, & Smidt, 2004).

Play England (2006) reported that, together with the decline in children's play spaces, there has been a considerable increase in childcare outside of school hours (Lester & Russell, 2008). Numerous studies indicate that children can and will play anywhere but with the aim of supporting children's play, health and wellbeing and maximising learning and development, an array of play environments, including access to risky play spaces in school, are required (Armitage, 2004; Chawla, 2002; Elsley, 2004; Percy-Smith, 2002; Rasmussen, 2004; Rasmussen and Smidt, 2003; Roe, 2006; Thompson & Philo, 2004).

Children greatly appreciate playtime and space as an opportunity to socialise, explore, be active and gain enjoyment or as a break from the rules and regulations of adult-led activities (Chawla, 2002; Lester & Russell, 2008; Rasmussen & Smidt, 2003; Thompson & Philo, 2004). A consequence of limiting children's access to self-directed play in their local neighbourhood is that it prevents the accrual of social capital by denying them the opportunity to strengthen friendships and social networks, foster a sense of community and enhance wellbeing (Halpern, 2005; Lester & Russell, 2008; Morrow, 2004; Prezza

& Pacilli, 2007). As well as the immediate benefits of playing out, Prezza and Pacilli (2007) indicate that familiarity with the local community and a sense of belonging reduces adolescent isolation and loneliness and mitigates fear of victimisation (Ditton & Farrall, 2000).

Changes to how and where children play are impacting on their fitness, stamina and innovation (Pretty et al, 2009; Sandseter & Kennair, 2011; Smith, 2005). The effect of the decline in available time children have for self -directed play is further intensified by the declivity of independent mobility (Hillman, Adams & Whitelegg, 1990; Merrimen, Pooley, Turnbull & Adams, 2007; Pooley, Turnbull & Adams, 2005).

2.11 - Reduced Spatial Freedom

Research denotes that children's independent mobility has been considerably abridged (DfT, 2011; Hillman, 2006; Hillman et al., 1990; Pooley et al., 2005; Shaw et al., 2013; Spilbury, 2005). Previous generations of children enjoyed greater freedom to play outside of the home, seldom with close adult scrutiny (Hillman, 2006). Shaw et al.'s (2013) research indicated that between 1971 and 2010 the number of children permitted to travel to and from school unaccompanied by an adult fell by 61%, whereas DfT (2011) research suggested that children's unaccompanied school journeys had fallen to 5% by 2006. Hillman et al.'s (1990), albeit dated, research indicated that children's independent mobility for play had diminished to 11% of that of their 1970 counterparts.

Rasmussen's (2004) research described child - adult conflict stemming from how they use both adult designated play environments and child commandeered play spaces (Armitage, 2004; Elsley, 2004). Palmer (2008) suggested that a consequence of the increasing trend for reduced freedom is a generation of children being reared in captivity (Guldberg, 2009).

2.12 - The Influence of Parents with Regard to Risky Play Freedom

Anxiety over child safety, whether from fear of car accidents, crime, abduction or trepidation of being judged poorly against cultural norms, has precipitated a curtailment in children's spatial freedom and, with it, opportunities for self-directed play (Blakely, 1994; Gill 2007; Lindon, 2011). The majority of adults have positive recollections of risky play experiences and readily acknowledge the benefits of this form of play (Almon, 2013; Clements, 2004; Guldberg, 2009). However, Clements (2004), in her research on the perceptions of mothers, coined the term 'parental paradox' to describe the dilemma faced when an adult considers outdoor play to be fundamental to children's development and wellbeing, coupled with their own positive childhood experiences, yet continues to limit children's spatial mobility due to fear of harm (Jenkinson, 2006).

A Future Foundation (2006) report indicated that parents in 2000 spent seventy-four minutes more in active childcare and supervision per day than their 1975 counterparts (Gill, 2007). Children's lives have become increasingly more circumscribed than those

of their parents or grandparents (Gill, 2007; Hillman, 2006; Karsten, 2005; Lester & Russell, 2008). Gill (2007) advocates that parental overprotective behaviours are a symptom of a risk-averse culture. Mercogliano (2008) coined the phrase 'helicopter parents' to describe adults whose inclination is to hover protectively and protect their child from failure. Marano (2004) suggested that these actions, which are a consequence of parental anxiety, actually prevent children learning self-reliance or developing resilience or self-esteem (Gill, 2007; Mercogliano, 2008; MHF, 1999; Millstein & Helpern-Felsher, 2002; Thom, Sales & Pearce, 2007).

2.13 - Home, Bedrooms and Digital

The reduction of children's spatial independence has proliferated the importance of the home as a play environment (Hillman; 2006; Karsten & Van Vilet, 2006; Valentine, 2004). Manzo (2003) points out that time within the home may engender fear or stress. However, many children view home as a haven of safety from fears of abduction or harm (Gill, 2006). Lester and Russell (2008) advocate the importance of the child's bedroom as a particularly significant area where they feel able to self-determine activity and play. Mitchell and Reid-Walsh (2002) described the transformation of bedrooms into areas dominated by cyber gaming or televisual leisure as opposed to traditional games or imaginary play (Crowe & Bradford, 2006). The widespread availability of televisions and home computers has exacerbated and contributed to the loss of physical outdoor play (Brussoni et al., 2012; Tovey, 2007).

The use of a digitally equipped bedroom creates a parental paradox as although parents are assured their offspring are safe indoors, there is increasing concern about the dangers associated with unsupervised internet use, gaming and reliance on television as a pastime (Clements, 2004; Crowe & Bradford, 2006; Gentile, Lynch, Linder & Walsh, 2004; Jordan, Hersey, McDivitt & Heitzler, 2006).

2.14 - Risky Play and Media Influence

The media are partially accountable for creating cultural anxiety regarding children's safety, due to the over-reporting and sensationalization of childhood abduction, death and school related accident news stories (Altheide, 2002; Wardle, 2006). Since the 1990s news media have tended to report such stories by focusing on their more disturbing aspects (Wardle, 2006; Wilson, 2014). Accidents are reported as negligent or blame seeking and child abductions as a symptom of a degenerative society (BBC, 2002; Corke, 2012; Fearn, 2015; Sapsted, 2000). Gill (2006) states that children also fear being abducted or murdered in relation to playing in their neighbourhoods (Guldberg, 2009).

The decline in spatial freedom correlates with the prevalence of a culture of fear particularly with regard to child safety (Furedi 2006; Tovey, 2007). Conversely, there is also a proclivity in the media to blame parents and schools for being too protective by wrapping children in cotton wool (Brussoni et al., 2012; Lindon, 2011; Sims, 2009;

Wilson, 2014) limiting their right to childhood and play freedoms (BBC, 2016; Moss, 2012). A consequence of heightened fears regarding children's safety is that many children are excluded from playing outside in their local neighbourhoods (Children's Society, 2006). Furedi (2001) proposed that the regular diet of media articles on childhood threats predisposes parents to anxiety and over-caution and causes them to doubt their abilities as parents (Wright, 2015).

2.15 - The Influence of Contemporary Culture and Societal Norms on Risky Play

All human interactions and activity, including play, are affected by culture (Furedi, 2006; Valentine, 2004). Furedi (2007) suggested that, in contemporary culture, the terms 'risk' and 'fear' have become synonymous with one another. Similarly, risk taking usually conjures up negative connotations associated with insecurity or anxiety (Cohen, 2011; Lupton & Tulloch, 2002). Furedi (2006; 2007) has argued that fear defines the cultural disposition of modern society, a consequence of which is that, as a society, we allow fear of risk to dictate decision making, actions and policies. However, the majority of people manage and mitigate risk without excessive fear (Adams, 1995; Apter, 2007; Sandseter & Kennair, 2011).

Altheide (2002) suggested that fear associated with risk is socially constructed and that it permeates, as an underlying presence, all aspects of interaction (Hubbard, 2003;

Massumi, 1993). Therefore, fear and what is an acceptable risk are subject to a changing landscape of societal influences (Furedi, 2006; 2007). Risks are adjudicated through a contemporary cultural lens and the pervasiveness of a culture preoccupied by fear teaches its children that risk adversity is an appropriate response to risk (Furedi, 2007; Gairín & Castro, 2011; Hubbard, 2003). Palmer (2009) argued that anxiety over children's safety has blurred into the misconstrued safety culture that impinges on risky play. Conversely, Sawyers (1994) advocated that a child's predilection for risky play is found all in cultures across historical and current societies (Mitchell et al., 2001; Sandseter & Kennair, 2011). As recorded by Almon (2013), risky play behaviours were readily condoned by preceding generations and children were at greater liberty to elect for self-directed play (Sandseter, 2007).

Young children's daily endeavours are inundated with risk and risk taking (Gill, 2007; Laverty & Reay, 2014; Lindon, 2011; Mitchell et al., 2001; Thom et al., 2007; Tovey, 2007). Furthermore, the nature of adolescence and its increased mobility freedoms and independence provides additional risks and vulnerabilities that must be negotiated using skills and methods acquired in early childhood (Coleman, 2011; Farthing, 2005; Millstein & Halpern-Felsher, 2002; Prezza & Pacilli, 2007; Thom et al., 2007). A consequence of the absence of risk or risky play is that it creates a vacuum for children to demonstrate skills and competence, reinforcing a culture of risk aversion (Adams, 1995; Tovey, 2007; Wyver et al., 2010). In attempting to separate risk from children's play we create dreary spaces that rebuff a child's capacity for exploration and adventure (Gill, 2006; 2007; Guldberg, 2009; Knight, 2011; Tovey, 2007).

Contemporary society has not only witnessed an intensification of the culture of fear but also a reduction in expectation of children's competence to negotiate risks and their ability to recover from harm (Brussoni et al., 2012; Hoffman, 2010). Rather than being allowed to succeed and gain valuable dispositions associated with experiential learning, children are denied play freedoms and experiences and sheltered from failure (Valentine, 1997; 2000).

Play is a fundamental medium for cultural learning and acts as a 'developmental niche' in which environmental factors, cultural customs and practices are introduced and reinforced to a child (Super & Harkness, 2002). An individual's disposition toward risk, which is informed by cultural perceptions of risk, affects one's pedagogical relationship with children (Smith, 1998; Tovey, 2007). For example, when physical risky play is welcomed by adults or peers for the benefits and pleasures it confers, children learn to assess and enjoy risky play. However, when play is dominated by risk aversion or cultural fear, play opportunities, including risky play, are restricted and subsequently children's physical health, welfare and learning are negatively affected (Gill, 2007; Tovey, 2007).

Sibert (2011) suggested that children's desire for risky play and greater freedom on mobility and play self-determination and the cultural desire to ensure child safety are too often regarded as contradictory (Children's Society, 2006; Cole-Hamilton, Harrop & Street, 2002). Nonetheless, the HSE suggested that children's safety and their risky play can be attained and may complement children's ability to protect themselves

(Hackett, 2008; HSE, 2014). Supporters of physical risky play are frustrated by the UK preoccupation with play safety (Play England, 2011). In addition, the Play Safety Forum (2002) urged the adoption of an 'as safe and necessary, not as safe as possible' culture, especially with regard to play providers and schools (HSE, 2012; ROSPA, 2012). The current risk-averse culture informs risk judgment and consequently school practice and may give rise to fixation with low level or ambient fears (Altheide, 2002; Hubbard, 2003). Lindon (2011) suggested that a safe play space should not eliminate stimulating environments, resources or activities but that the risks arising from them should be managed in light of the benefits they bestow.

Ball et al. (2012) called for a society that is more tolerant of risk and is not so preoccupied with petty safety concerns that it loses perspective in assessing risk. Gill (2007) argued that elsewhere in the world attitudes to play and childcare varied and that these might offer an alternative to British perspectives and practices. According to Moss and Petrie (2002), in other nations such as New Zealand and Scandinavian countries there is more opportunity for children to self-determine and be accountable for their play. The significance of outdoor play environments to children's development and wellbeing, where children have the opportunity to pursue risky play, is well established in Scandinavian counties. Guldberg's (2009:59) recollection of her childhood gives insight into the significance of cultural attitudes toward risk and risky play: "*When I was a child in Norway, outdoor activities were encouraged from an early age. The childhood with no broken bones was said to be a no-good childhood*". Gill (2007) suggested this Scandinavian cultural attitude towards free outdoor play is reflected by their name 'free-

time clubs'. In contrast, Britain's out-of-school care is often viewed as an appendage to the school day or as close adult supervision (Tovey, 2007).

The UNCRC (1989) described childhood as a separate space distinct from adulthood, which acknowledges that what may be apposite for an adult may not be so for a child. However, as Jenks (2005) argued, the concept of childhood is socially constructed. The meaning of childhood and children's practices varies according one's culture and society. Giddens (2009) suggested that childhood is a phase of life when children are nurtured and protected as they are considered unable to safeguard themselves. Lindon (2011) described childhood as a transitionary period for acquiring the necessary skills of becoming a capable adult. However, Pilcher (1995) endorsed the notion of the separateness of childhood as a life stage, sheltered from the adult world of dangers.

Brussoni et al. (2012) report that a consequence of societal and cultural perceptions regarding risk, play and children's ability to assume responsibility for their safety, has resulted in a reduction in play spaces (Gill, 2007). Guldberg (2009) argued that some blame should be attributed to governmental representatives and legislators for creating an environment of risk-aversion. Conversely, Furedi (2007) proposed that the actions of policymakers and politicians are reflective of cultural assumptions toward risk and fear. Regardless of origin, schools too are reflecting risk-averse tendencies (Guldberg, 2009).

Early in 2016 the BBC reported that Christ the King Primary School near Leeds had banned games of chase on health and safety grounds (BBC, 2016). The school is only the latest in a list of other schools banning children's play and activities due to safety concerns. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) which, in conjunction with local government, is accountable for maintaining and applying safety standards and legislature is troubled by the misleading use of health and safety as a reason to prevent physical risky play (HSE, 2012; 2014).

Due to a cultural preoccupation with fear some schools have banned various items and activities including school ties, footballs, running, gardening and conkers (HSE, n.d.). In response to the increased prevalence of ambient fear expressing itself in terms of health and safety in contemporary society, the HSE has established a Myth of the Month website to address these concerns and allay fears (HSE, n.d.; Hubbard, 2003). Lindon (2011) eschews knee-jerk reactions to risk and safety. Adams (1995) applied the phrase 'bottom loopism' to express the often knee-jerk response of removing risk or applying a blanket ban of activities without first evaluating the advantages that the activity imparts. Furthermore, the HSE urged schools to apply a sensible, enabling approach to risk taking and risky play (HSE, 2014; Scuffham & Langley, 1997). Naturally, risks that are too great or hazards that are indiscernible to a child must be removed from a child's environment (Laverty & Reay, 2014). However, Towner et al. (2001) cautioned that no environment can be wholly free of risks.

Schools can play a significant part in facilitating children's risky play and withstanding cultural pressures toward risk aversion (Gill, 2007). Ensuring that a Head-teacher endorses and teaching staff fully embrace a school ethos and philosophy that reflect a culture of embracing risky play and experiential learning to complement children's learning and development, is fundamental in enabling children to explore, play and 'have a go' (DfE, 2012; McGee & Fraser, 2008; Tovey, 2014). McGee and Fraser (2008) advocated that teachers' behaviours are frequently regarded by children as a means of determining their perceptions and philosophies therefore it is imperative that a teacher's everyday practices reflect the school philosophy of enabling children to be risk takers.

2.16 - The Effect of Risk Aversion on the Inclusion of Risky Play

Risk aversion influences decision making largely from the desire to mitigate all potential losses, which may result in a reduction of the potential gain (Kahneman & Tversky, 1984). The rise and spread of child-associated risk aversion in contemporary British culture are incongruous with accident trends. Injuries arising from play that result in fatalities or invalidity are, mercifully, exceptionally rare (Ball, 2002; Bienfeld, Pickett & Carr, 1996; Chalmers et al., 1996; Mack, Hudson & Thompson, 1997; Sandseter & Kennair, 2011; Swartz, 1992). Nevertheless, there remains an uneasiness stemming from a preoccupation with what could happen (Lindon, 2011). Waiton (2007) argued that risk aversion and the safety of children overwhelm other factors, such as the value of play. A disadvantage of risk aversion is that even low probabilities of harm outweigh

the considerable and numerous benefits bestowed by play (Gill, 2007; Kahneman & Tversky, 1984; Lindon, 2011).

In School a Head-teacher's, teacher's or play supervisor's tolerance toward risk affects children's risky play opportunities (Stephenson, 2003; Tovey, 2007). Risk aversion influences not only the adult's conscious decision making regarding permitting children to experience physical risky play but may also convey anxiety, affecting a child's willingness to continue their play activity (Stephenson, 2003). It is argued that "*All too often the key phrases of adult talk which dominate an outdoor play area can be negative phrases" (*Tovey, 2007:124). Expressions such as "Go careful. Slow down. Get down, you will fall", although well-meaning, discourage children from risky play and the developmental opportunities it provides (Beunderman, 2010; Lindon, 2011; Tovey, 2007).

2.17 - The Influence of Accidents on Risky Play

To the risk-averse adult absolute safety would be a worthy goal. However, this is impossible to achieve as no environment can guarantee absolute safety (HSE, 2001; Lindon, 2011). Accidents will occur regardless of safety measures but the severity of accidents can be reduced (HSE, 2014; 2016). Ball's (2002) research indicated that the accidents involving children that predominate in school spaces are slips, trips and falls or inter-person collisions. Khambalia et al.'s (2006) meta-analysis of fall injuries in children indicated that deaths due to fall injuries are extremely rare. However,

approximately 5% of children's fall injuries result in a hospital visit (Ball, 2007; Khambalia et al., 2006). Risky play is accountable for considerably fewer injuries than the majority of traditional sports that children enjoy (Ball, 2007).

Lindon (2011) suggested that while a responsible adult should prevent severe accidents, a zero accident policy is unwise, unachievable and potentially damaging to children (Gill, 2007; Guldberg, 2009; Play Safety Forum, 2002). Gill (2007) suggested that, in recent times, perceptions toward risky play have shifted to acceptance that risk-taking in play is an essential part of childhood (Knight, 2011). Furthermore, an indication of this change in attitude is the recent positive reporting of risky activities and play in primary schools in mainstream and educational media (Learner, 2015; Woolcock, 2016).

2.18 – Fear of Blame

Blame culture is the adoption of risk adversity to the unwillingness to assume responsibility as a result of fear of censure, disciplinary or legal action; a set of attitudes that are characterized by an unwillingness to take risks or to accept responsibility for mistakes or a fear of prosecution (Business Dictionary, 2016). Lindon (2011) used the term 'precautionary principle' to describe the effect of risk aversion arising from blame culture affecting the practice of those working with children (Gill, 2007). Tovey (2007) suggested that, in many schools, fear of blame causes some staff members to find it challenging to uphold a proportionate perception and practice towards risky play (Tovey, 2007; Wright, 2015).

Colker (2008) described a teacher's ability and readiness to take risks and implement innovative approaches as a fundamental attribute of a successful educator of young children. However, Whitebook, Bellm and Schaack (2013) suggested that in order to embolden teachers to take or facilitate risk taking, they must feel supported by school leadership and the wider teaching community (Tovey, 2014). Furthermore, when teachers believe they are less supported by senior staff they are more liable to prevent risky play owing to fear of blame (Buijs, 2009; Tovey, 2014).

2.19 - Litigation and Risky Play in School

Fear of litigation has been offered as a reason for increased risk anxiety and a reduction in risky play in schools (Almon, 2013; Ball, 2004; Gill, 2007; Lindon, 2011). However, Williams' (2005) review of compensation in Britain indicated that, in spite of the growth of the 'no-win no-fee' industry, the perception that Britain has a litigious, compensation culture is largely fictitious (Better Regulation Task Force, 2004; Gill, 2007; Hand, 2010). The Better Regulation Task Force (2004) reported that personal injury claims had not risen in the twenty years preceding the report. The HSE (2012) stipulated that fear of litigation and lawsuits is a gross distortion of the probability or their occurrence and that providing appropriate measures are followed, it is very doubtful that an indictment on health and safety grounds would be considered.

Case law and statutory law support the inclusion of risky play in a primary school setting. The first was a House of Lords' Judgment on Tomlinson v Congleton Borough Council (2003), which directed that the advantages of a play activity must be considered when evaluating risk management processes. The second is the Compensation Act 2006 which directs courts to allow for the benefits an activity bestows when deliberating on the duty of care. It appears that fear of litigation is largely exaggerated but very reflective of a culture of fear (Furedi, 2007). In order to enhance risky play opportunities and play freedoms we must recognise that play involves the occasional injury, due in part to the joie de vivre of children at play, and this is not reflective of neglecting safeguarding responsibilities (HOCESC 2005; Wright, 2015). Nevertheless, to ensure their validity, risk assessments to protect children from serious harm must be regularly reviewed to ensure they are appropriate and balanced to ensure children's development and wellbeing is maintained (Almon, 2013; HSE 2012; 2014; Play Safety Forum, 2002).

2.20 – Risk Assessment and Risky Play

Risk assessment is the qualitative and quantitative approach to recognising conditions that may cause harm and then identifying practical strategies to control the risk (HSE, 2016). Risk assessments are not intended to eliminate all risk (HSE, 2012). Safety is a matter of common sense but play provision in schools also carries the burden of liability (Bilton, 2010, DfE, 2012). Comprehensive risk assessments are a means of mitigating harm and demonstrating that appropriate measures are in place to protect the provider in the event of an accident (Ball 2007b; HSE 2006; 2012; Hughes & Ferrett, 2005;

Laverty & Ray, 2014). The UNCRC (1989) addresses the safety and health of children specifically in relation to the concepts and practices of 'safe enough' and 'reasonableness' (Knight, 2011; UNCRC, 1989: Article 3, 19).

Ball and Ball-King (2011) argued that a formal workplace risk assessment approach is impractical when evaluating children's play as the perceived benefits of an activity must also be considered (Ball et al., 2012; HASWA, 1974; Lindon, 2011; Playlink, 2006). For example, one cannot expect an adult to roll down a hill as part of their occupation, however, a child may do so for adventure or out of curiosity (HASWA 1974). Consequently, as opposed to establishing an entirely safe play space, one should instead concentrate on developing a safe-enough environment (Lindon, 2011). Ball et al. (2012) used the term 'good risks' to describe risky play activities that appeal to children and support their personal, social and emotional growth. Risk assessments of children's activities that do not balance the benefits of an action are incomplete (Almon, 2013; Ball et al., 2012; Laverty & Reay, 2014; Lindon, 2011; Play Safety Forum, 2002).

The HSE (2012) advocated that risk assessments are an enabling process intended to allow children to experience play benefits whilst protecting them from serious risks. Little, Wyver and Gibson (2011) call for responsible adults to assume a sensible approach to children's safety, removing risks that may cause major injury or have no apparent value whilst maintaining risks that promote children's development (Ball et al., 2012; Sandseter & Kennair, 2011). A school Head-teacher has a professional duty as the responsible person to ensure the safety of the children in their care and part of this

duty involves adopting a thoughtful, problem solving approach when reviewing play practices (Lindon, 2011; Scuffham & Langley, 1997).

2.21 - Training Needs

Tovey (2007) suggested that although it is convenient to shift accountability for the dearth of risky play in schools onto health and safety or overprotective parents, the true responsibility lies with child educators. To ensure risky play is enabled in primary schools it is imperative that those working with children are fully trained to understand the risk assessment process that incorporates the perceived benefits of risky play and that Health and Safety legislation does not expect all risks to be eradicated, only that practicable measures are in place to mitigate them (Lester & Russell, 2010; Tovey, 2014). Training to ensure school staff who supervise play have adequate knowledge of how risky play aids children's development and supports learning will help give staff the conviction to support risky play (Almon, 2013; Lindon, 2011; Tovey, 2007).

2.22 - Chapter Summary

This literature review has examined the available research and a range of academic and professional perspectives from educationalists, safety practitioners, medical professionals and psychologists regarding risky play and the potential barriers to risky play. This research was influenced by existing literature and the research aims have

been narrowed to consider a field requiring further empirical research. This research is intended to augment understanding and provide a fragment of that crucial empirical research. The methodology chapter considers and critically evaluates this study's research method and seeks to identify and minimise limitations associated with qualitative interviews. Adopting an interpretive constructionist paradigm, an interview strategy was selected as it is an appropriate method for providing the rich and detailed data necessary to answer Research Aims One, Two and Three (Cohen et al., 2007; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

3.0 – Methodology

3.1 - Research Aims

This chapter will consider, critically evaluate and justify this study's research method. In so doing the methodology will examine the use of a purposive sample, semi-structured interview approach, photo-elicitation techniques and transcription coding aided by NVIVO software.

The methodology sought to identify and minimise limitations associated with qualitative interviews. Adopting an interpretivist paradigm, an interview strategy was selected as it is an appropriate method for providing the rich and detailed data necessary to answer Research Aims One, Two and Three (Cohen et al., 2007; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

The research focus on the attitudes and perceptions of primary school Head-teachers regarding physical risky play was informed by the tenet that as Head-teachers accept similar responsibilities, concerns and a duty of care, they also share perceptions and develop a cultural accord regarding risky play (Agee, 2009; Gubrium & Holstein 1997). The research identified the barriers to risky play in four to eight year olds when attending state primary schools in Northern England. The research examined how physical risky play is perceived by primary school Head-teachers and how those

insights influence school play policy (Aims 1 & 2). The research explored the correlation between the prevalence of risk aversion and discernment of the benefits that risky play bestowed on children's development and wellbeing and how this impacts on decision making and school practice (Aims 1 & 3).

The aims of the research were:

1. To determine what the potential barriers are to facilitating risky play for four to eight year-olds attending state primary school provision.
2. To advance an understanding of how risky play is perceived by the primary school Head-teachers involved in the study and how this might influence practices, ethos and culture within the school environment.
3. To establish what the relationship is between perceived risk benefits, risk inclusion and fear of accident and blame in play within primary schools and how this could impact on policy and decision making within schools.

As the research proposed to explore the attitudes and perceptions of primary school Head-teachers with regard to risky play and the potential barriers to risky play, an interpretive constructionist paradigm approach to qualitative research was assumed (Agee, 2009; Bernard, 2011; Silver & Reavey 2010; Silverman, 2005). The amount of rich and detailed data required to answer the research aims suggested an interview approach enriched by photo-elicitation techniques would be the most appropriate method (McNely, 2013; Reavey, 2011; Rose, 2012; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Wengraf, 2011; Willig, 2013).

3.2 – Purposive Sample as a Data Source

A purposive sample of three state primary school Head-teachers was selected to focus the research, to gain insight into this specific group's perceptions of risky play and to enhance the relevance of the research (Bernard et al., 1984; Denscombe, 2014; Homburg, Klarmann, Reimann & Schilke, 2012; Maxwell, 2013). A disadvantage of purposive sampling is that due to the non-probability nature of the sample there is an increased possibility of researcher bias (Richie, 2014; Rolfe, 2006). However, in mitigation, twenty Head-teachers based in and around Yorkshire were invited to contribute to the research and four agreed to the research commitment. One Head-teacher provided data for a pilot study that ensured the relevance of the interview questions and methods (Basit, 2010; Gorard, 2003). Three Head-teachers were selected for the actual research as this number would provide the breadth and depth of data required to address the research aims and to allow the application of data triangulation (Denscombe, 2014; May, 2011).

Pseudonyms were assigned to provide participant anonymity. Theo, was a female, in her early sixties with over twenty years' experience as a Head-teacher. Theo's primary school was the largest with a pupil population of 150. Johanna, a female in her late fifties, with an excess of eighteen years' experience as a primary school head-teacher. Johanna's school had a pupil population of 110 students. Finley, was a male in his forties with more than six years' experience as a Head-teacher. Finley's primary school

was the smallest, with a pupil population in the region of 100 students. All three research participants are head-teachers of primary schools located in suburban and out of town locations in Yorkshire. Each school benefited from a range of active outdoor play provision including, grassed areas, hard surface and impact absorbing surface, playgrounds as well as gardening areas. In the last three years, all three of the schools invested in the outdoor play environment, which included the addition or structures and materials conducive to risky play such as rope bridges, climbing walls and den building materials.

3.3 - Research Methods

The research aimed to explore the perceptions of primary school Head-teachers with regard to risky play and the potential barriers to risky play, using a qualitative research approach. Although securing interviews with this group of individuals was in no way uncomplicated, relationships were cultivated with several participants over a four-year period to ensure the feasibility of the research (Denscombe, 2014). The research involved examining Head-teachers' potential fear of blame and their discernment of the benefits of risky play to children's personal, social and emotional development and wellbeing. Experience of previous quantitative research regarding risky play, which assumed a positivist paradigm and incorporated survey methods, although valid, was deemed unsuitable to provide the detailed and rich data necessary to fully address Research Aims One, Two and Three (Denscombe, 2014; Edwards & Holland, 2013;

Fielding & Thomas, 2008; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Wengraf, 2001; Wright, 2015). A key principle of the interpretivist paradigm, and therefore this research, was that it provided a means of understanding how the Head-teachers perceived and interpreted their society and culture and how those perceptions influenced their approach to risky play within the primary school environment (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). A key advantage of assuming an interpretivist paradigm is that it permitted the research to seek a reality or truth that could not be immediately perceived but was discerned through the subjective cultural lens of the participants and, to an extent, the researcher (Buckingham, 2009; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

A semi-structured interview approach was selected as interviews are a well-established method of delivering data which provide insight into the opinions and experiences of research participants (Aubrey, Godfrey & Harris, 2013; Denscombe, 2014; May, 2011). An advantage of the semi-structured interview approach was that it provided ample opportunity to adopt a reflexive approach and avert confusion and errors, consequently enhancing validity as well as being a relatively economical method of data collection (Edwards & Holland 2003; May, 2011; Silverman, 2005). In addition to interview questions participants were asked to consider and comment on photographic images of children experiencing physical risky play (Appendix 7). Petersen and Østergaard (2003) described photo-elicitation as the technique of using images as an artefact for analysis or a focus for evoking new data. The research used the method of inserting an image of children performing risky play activities into a qualitative interview to stimulate participants' memories and prompt them to divulge their rich, detailed and affective

perceptions (Edwards & Holland, 2013; Harper, 2002; Rose, 2012; Van House, 2006). The semi-structured interviews with photo-elicitation provided a medium to aid the researcher in understanding how the position and culture Head-teachers shared affected their perceptions of risky play and how this influenced the barriers to risky play within three state primary schools based in Northern England (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997; Hunter, Phoenix, Griffin & Croghan, 2008; May, 2011).

Research encompassing qualitative interview approaches is a well-established method in the field of education studies (Rubin & Rubin 2012; Silverman, 2014). The semi-structured interview method allowed the researcher to ascertain clarification of interviewee responses via visual, verbal and non-verbal prompts for elaboration (Bernard, 2011; Wengraf, 2001). Semi-structured qualitative interviews examining the perceptions of physical risky play would not generally be regarded as a sensitive subject matter. However, they may be regarded as emotive as they touched on the Head-teachers' duty of care and insight into the benefits of risk taking on a child's personal, social and emotional development. Consequently, the interviewer assumed a responsive interaction technique, which required flexibility of approach to encourage a depth of rich and detailed data (Knapik, 2008; Rubin & Rubin, 2011).

To refine the interviewer's responsive interview skills and enhance verbal and nonverbal probes, it was necessary to conduct a pilot interview and conduct reflexive analysis (Knapik, 2008). A limitation of the social researcher as interviewer is that they may,

unintentionally, influence the responses of interviewees (Feldman, Bell & Berger, 2004). As a social researcher it was important to examine and form awareness of one's own cultural interpretations. Self-awareness aided in the suspension of the researcher's cultural assumptions but ultimately they influenced the researcher's interpretation of data and are therefore acknowledged (Bryman, 2001; Burgess & Bryman, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). During interviews caution was exercised to strive to disguise the researcher's cultural assumptions in order to avoid leading the interviewee and to gain better insight into the participants' perceptions (Feldman et al., 2004; Richie, 2014; Rubin & Rubin, 2011).

Probability sampling was applied to thirty-six, freely available photographic representations of children, aged between four and eight years, experiencing risky play (Babbie, 2013; Denscombe, 2014; Patton, 2002). Images were collated from freely available internet sources (CPDA, 1988; JISC, 2014). Five images were randomly selected and utilised to promote interviewee reflection, enhanced candour and depth of responses to questions (Denscombe, 2014; Reavey, 2011) (Appendix 7).

Semi-structured interviews, supported by photo-elicitation techniques, expedited the researcher in directing interviewee responses towards providing data relevant to the research questions in a format that they were comfortable with, which resulted in greater candour and richer data (Bernard, 2011; Creswell, 2013; May, 2011; Reavey, 2011; Silverman, 2005).

Although interviews are an effective method of exploring perceptions, which can deliver an abundance of detailed data, they are susceptible to providing data the interviewee wishes to portray rather than an accurate reflection of insights or events (Aubrey et al., 2013; Silverman, 2014). During interviews the photographs served to assuage awkwardness by facilitating opportunities for reflective pauses (Banks, 2011). An additional advantage was that photographs appeared to relax the participants, possibly because the images acted as space to rest from direct eye contact (Banks, 2001; Collier, 1986; Edwards, & Holland, 2013). Photo-elicitation methods created a shared comprehension, as the images created a language conduit and facilitated interview participants in verbalising complex and layered accounts of perceptions and events which allowed cross-cultural comprehension and thus provided detailed data for analysis (Darbyshire, MacDougall & Schiller, 2005; Fleron & Pedersen, 2010; Petersen & Østergaard, 2003; 2005; Pink, 2006; Rose, 2012).

The use of photo-elicitation is an established technique for promoting reflections or recollections and, when combined with interviews, provided a multimodal stimulus to embolden participants to speak not only of factual events but also to discuss thoughts and feelings associated with the imagery and consider their approach to risky play (Collier, 1986; Rose, 2012; Van House, 2006; Willig, 2013).

3.4 – Validity, Transparency & Generalizability

Cohen et al. (2007) described research without validity as worthless. The value of qualitative research is occasionally dismissed by positivists, possibly because the quantitative measures to achieve validity, reliability and generalizability cannot be applied to qualitative paradigms and methods (Shenton, 2004). Reliability in this form of research enquiry is unlikely to be achieved as participant perceptions, owing to the depth of the data, are unlikely to be absolutely replicated. Nevertheless, to ensure the value and worthiness of the research, various strategies were employed to achieve transparency of the research analysis process (Denscombe, 2014; Long, & Johnson, 2000; Silverman, 2005). Interview and analysis strategies were employed to ensure the findings were dependable, trustworthy and appropriately reflective of the data participants shared (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Research conducted by Conway, Jako and Goodman (1995) indicated that reliability is directly proportional to interview structure. Therefore, to augment methodological rigour, a semi-structured interview approach supported by photo-elicitation techniques was selected (Conway et al., 1995, Silverman, 2005). NVIVO analysis was applied to transcriptions. To ensure the rigour or continuity of the findings the process was repeated following a four-week interval (Davies & Dodd, 2002).

Semi-structured interviews conducted by a sole researcher enhanced participant anonymity. The names Theo, Finley and Johanna were assigned as pseudonyms to protect participant anonymity. Consequently, the engendered sense of confidentially encouraged openness and honesty and subsequently enhanced validity (Cohen et al., 2007). The additional photo-elicitation techniques disrupted discourse and sought to prevent participants from delivering misleading or practiced narratives and enhanced candour and accordingly validity (Reavey, 2011; Reavey & Johnson, 2012; Silver and Reavey, 2010). However, it is acknowledged that the depth and detail of the truths imparted by participants is likely to alter with variants such as time, interviewer and recent experience. Nevertheless, a benefit of incorporating multiple key informants into the research design was that it facilitated informant triangulation and increased methodological rigour (Denscombe, 2014; Golafshani, 2003; Mathison, 1988).

To enhance validity interviews were audio recorded; transcripts of interviews were sent to participants to ensure accuracy of the data and heighten dependability (Barriball & While, 1994; Cohen et al., 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Silverman, 2005; 2014). Furthermore, questions were prepared in advance and tested in a pilot interview (Agee, 2009; Fielding & Thomas, 2008). Questions found too leading or indicative of research bias, as far as possible, were removed (Denscombe, 2014; Van House, 2006).

Generalizability is deeply rooted in quantitative methodologies and subject to statistical probability, which is not conducive to small scale qualitative research (Basit, 2010;

Denscombe, 2014; Gorard, 2003; Oppenheim, 2000; Shenton, 2004). As the research adhered to a qualitative, interpretivist paradigm it is important to recognise that the research methods provided a platform to gather rich and comprehensive data which represented the truth as seen by the participants and are unlikely to be generalizable. Nevertheless, rigorous measures have been applied to enhance both validity and transparency and some limited transferability may be applied (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3.5 – Triangulation

Bernard, Killworth, Kronenfeld and Sailer (1984) described the difficulties of securing participants who are able to accurately recall feelings and events. Naturally, such limitations affect the validity of research (Robert-Holmes, 2011). To address the issue of participant accuracy, informant triangulation was incorporated into the research design and implemented to enhance validity (Denscombe, 2014; Robert-Holmes, 2011). The interview data from three state primary school Head-teachers based in the North of England were evaluated and compared (Creswell, 2010; Edwards & Holland, 2013).

Homburg et al (2012) suggested that triangulation is ever more commonly used but does not enhance validity when the purposive participant is accurate. As the research questions focused on the feelings and attitudes of primary school Head-teachers to risky play, it was considered imprudent to pursue multiple methods to determine a carefully selected participant's insights (Bernard et al., 1984; Homburg et al., 2012).

3.6 – Research Schedule

Many issues that can affect the quality of research are provoked by organizational and time management issues (Congdon & Dunham, 1999; Creswell, 2013). To avoid such problems a full research schedule was compiled prior to commencement to ensure that the research was both achievable and manageable (Appendix 6). With regard to the research methodology, key considerations included research design, conducting a pilot interview with informative analysis and ensuring sufficient time to gather and analyse detailed interviews from three purposive participants.

3.7 – Pilot study

In the interest of limiting the influence of research bias on interview participants and to capitalise on the limited interview access, it was necessary to conduct a pilot interview with a participant consistent with the research population (Cohen et al., 2007, Denscombe, 2014; May, 2011). The pilot interview ensured interviewer techniques, demeanour and verbal and nonverbal prompts were practiced and modified to guarantee the interviews gathered the necessary quality of research data (Bernard, 2011; Fleron & Pedersen, 2010; Rose, 2012; Van House, 2006) (Appendix 1).

3.8 – Sample

The research population was entirely comprised of three state primary school Head-teachers to improve relatability (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013; Biggam, 2015; Cohen et al., 2007). Although unknown to one another the Head-teachers shared a professional duty of care and similar pastoral responsibilities for school children aged four to eight years (Coleman, 1996). The selected sample size was both accessible and achievable and allowed informant triangulation, which augmented validity (Denscombe, 2014). Interviews were conducted and transcribed in January 2016 and data analysis commenced and continued over a two-month period.

3.9 - Ethics

The research adhered to the British Educational Research Association (BERA) *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (2011) and the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (CPDA)**.** Research interview techniques encompassed photo-elicitation practices therefore the principles of 'Fair Dealings' were observed under the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) Legal Information Guidelines (2014). Consistent with JISC guidance, only low resolution version of images were gathered from freely available web sources and access to images was restricted to research participants and relevant academic staff (JISC, 2014). Some photographic images were subject to copyright restrictions. Nonetheless, as all images were fully referenced and

their use was exclusively for illustrative purposes pertaining to an academic pursuit, no copyright infringement occurred (CDPA, s.32).

The nature of the research focus did not involve issues or methods that might cause emotional harm and no detriment was anticipated (BERA, 2011). The research did not engage with children or vulnerable adults and all research participants were experienced primary school Head-teachers who were able to provide written informed consent before the interviews commenced (BERA, 2011; Biggam, 2015). The nature and purpose of the research and the research participant's right to withdraw was fully explained (BERA, 2011) (Appendix 5).

Research involving a purposive sample of key informants cannot be wholly anonymous to the researcher (Denscombe, 2014). However, identifying details were removed from the research data and participant pseudonyms were allocated to ensure anonymity (BERA, 2011, Cohen et al., 2007). Furthermore, participant information has been stored remotely to maintain anonymity (BERA, 2011, Data Protection Act 1998). Full participant interview transcripts have been restricted to relevant research and academic persons (BERA, 2011). However, had the researcher been made aware of a safeguarding issue, the researcher would have a duty of care to report the matter to relevant authorities. Additionally, the participant would have been removed from the research.

3.10 – Conduct of the Research

Interviews, although an effective and well-established method of qualitative data collection, are subject to researcher bias. To manage and constrain the effect of interviewer bias numerous interview questions were drafted prior to the pilot study (Bernard, 2011; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Silverman, 2005) (Appendix 2).

Bernard (2011) criticised the precision of recording interviewee responses by hand during interviews. Consequently, to enhance validity of research and improve accuracy of the data, interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder and transcribed prior to analysis (Barriball & While, 1994; Silverman, 2014). As is accepted practice and as the research did not involve conversational analysis, minor editing of speech disfluencies, hiatuses and syntax were corrected (Stouten, Duchateau, Martens & Wambacq, 2006). However, to ensure transcription reflected the participants' opinions each interviewee was asked to verify their transcript prior to analysis (Denscombe, 2014). Audio recording proved beneficial in not only reducing researcher error but also in aiding analysis of the interview, permitting the researcher to reflect on not only the interviewees' responses but also their verbal inflections and hiatuses (Barriball & While, 1994).

3.11 – Data Analysis Methods

Familiarity with academic literature, from numerous fields including health and safety, education, health and wellbeing, and having previously conducted quantitative research pertaining to risk play, dictated that analysis would be partially deductive (Burgess & Bryman, 2002; Robert-Homes, 2011; Silverman, 2005, 2014).

Coffey and Atkinson (1996) described the use of computer software to apply codes as contrary to the principles of qualitative research (Silverman, 2005; 2014). Nonetheless, NVIVO software facilitated the analysis process by aiding the organisation, coding and retrieval of data (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013; Thompson & Barrett, 1997).

The transcription and coding process ensured the researcher became very familiar with the data, which assisted in the identification of emergent themes (Denscombe, 2014; Robert-Holmes, 2011). Coding was applied to words, phrases and sentences and aided the researcher in avoiding “data overload” (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Coding was eventually abandoned when fresh themes could no longer be engendered (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013; Cohen et al., 2007).

Careful coding and acquaintance with data aided the identification of themes and building of theories (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013; Welsh, 2002). Themes were examined throughout the data set and compared with participant transcriptions (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013; Silverman, 2005; 2014). A thematic approach to analysis facilitated the emergence of findings through the identification of data-patterns that corresponded to the research aims (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data retrieval aided the substantiation or rejection of theories (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013; Bryman & Burgess, 2002).

3.12 - Chapter Summary

This methodology chapter has considered the application of an interpretivist approach to qualitative semi-structured interview and photo-elicitation methods to generate data on the attitudes and perceptions of three state primary school Head-teachers with regard to risky play in four to eight year olds. This chapter has explored the methods of data collection and analysis, specified the limitations of the research approaches and detailed the strategies to reduce their influence. The following chapter, 'Findings, Analysis and Critical Discussion' will examine, analyse and discuss the results of the Head-teachers' photo-elicitation enhanced interviews in relation to relevant literature.

4.0 - Findings, Analysis and Critical Discussion

4.1 - Chapter Introduction

The purpose of this research was to explore the perceptions of three state primary school Head-teachers, Theo, Johanna and Finley, with regard to physical risky play and to investigate how those perceptions inform practice and ethos as well as barriers to play.

Semi-structured interviews enabled the use of questions and photo-elicitation techniques to extrapolate the participants' perceptions of and attitude regarding risky play, blame culture and fear (Banks, 2001; Edwards & Holland, 2013; Peeters & Lievens, 2006; Rose, 2012; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Wengraf, 2001). Head-teacher interviews provided data which addressed the following three research aims:

1. To determine what the potential barriers are to facilitating risky play for four to eight year-olds attending state primary school provision.
2. To advance an understanding of how risky play is perceived by the primary school Head-teachers involved in the study and how this might influence practices, ethos and culture within the school environment.
3. To establish what the relationship is between perceived risk benefits, risk inclusion and fear of accident and blame in play within primary schools and how this could impact on policy and decision making within schools.

Patton (2002) categorised analysis as either inductive or deductive in nature (Denscombe, 2014). In this research inductive approach was adopted to determine findings. Inductive analysis allowed the researcher to discern trends and themes within the data which aided in uncovering research findings (Patton, 2002). Moreover, familiarity with academic literature pertaining to risky play dictated that analysis would be in part deductive (Burgess & Bryman, 2002; Silverman, 2005; 2014).

Qualitative interviews facilitated by photo-elicitation techniques engendered rich data for analysis. Assiduous data analysis was conducted to augment the validity of the data (Denscombe, 2014). As the research was a small scale qualitative study it is important not to ascribe broad generalizations. Nevertheless, some findings may be transferable to the risky play perceptions of other Head-teachers working in similar primary schools (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013; Burgess & Bryman, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

This chapter comprehensively explores key themes that emerged from the findings following detailed interviews aided by photo-elicitation techniques. Codes were collated under three broad themes:

1. Perceptions of risky play.
2. Barriers to risky play.
3. Impact on school ethos and practice.

Within each of these broad themes subcategories evolved (Appendix 3).

4.2 - Perceptions of Risky Play

No negative effects on children aged four to eight years were mentioned with regard to risky play by any of the respondents. Johanna's comment is very illustrative of the general consensus: "*I would not say anybody loses.*" When defining risky play all respondents described it positively in terms of the benefits it bestows on the children in their charge. Johanna and Finley categorised risky play as challenging children to stretch their abilities but ultimately unlikely to cause serious harm, as Finley illuminates: "*Risky play is getting a little bit out of your comfort zone but not giving them something which is... it has got to be something that is achievable.*" Theo did, however, struggle to define risky play as separate from other physical play, regarding it as being an innate part of children's activities, as he explains: "*I struggle with the term 'risky play'. What do we mean by risky?*"

Pellegrini and Holmes (2006) suggest that physical, active risky play is held in low regard among teaching professionals, who assume that children need a quiet environment and teaching supervision to learn (Armitage, 2005; Gill, 2007; Gleave & Cole-Hamilton, 2012; Ouvry, 2003). Conversely, the research participants appear to refute this assumption by acknowledging and embracing the personal, social and emotional benefits of risky play as well as the educational advantages (Blakemore & Firth, 2005; Fairclough, Butchers & Stratton, 2008; Hubbuck, 2009; Lindon, 2007). Playlink (1999) proposed that teaching professionals considered school playtime with negativity and as

a suspension of valuable learning opportunities, which is not supported by the research data provided in this particular study (Armitage, 2005; Gill, 2007; Gleave & Cole-Hamilton, 2012).

Primary schools are multifaceted institutes that deliver a range of services to both children and families (Watkinson, 2007). As complex organisations comprising of teaching professionals, support staff, pupils and families, there are manifold demands to ensure the school fulfils its educational and pastoral responsibilities (Gairín & Castro, 2011). In recent years primary schools have been increasingly subject to curriculum mandates and Ofsted pressures, which has resulted in the forfeit of playtime, outdoor pursuits and therefore risky play (Earley, 1998; Gill, 2007; Gleave & Cole-Hamilton, 2012; Jenkinson, 2001; Lindon, 2007; Perryman, 2007; Tovey, 2007).

All three Head-teachers alluded to the pressures of delivering a very full national curriculum, which may result in risky play opportunities being sacrificed in some primary schools. Theo proposed that many Head-teachers feel that they have to choose between providing risky play or meeting curriculum needs, but that the two complement each other and enrich learning. Johanna and Finley reaffirmed this sentiment. The Head-teachers in this research suggested that a 'too cautious' approach is unfair to both children and staff and the many benefits of risky play in primary school surpass the detriments, as Johanna explained: "*Generally speaking, I would say the advantages way outweigh the disadvantages."*

The expectation that risky, active, physical play is lost in some primary schools is supported by Pellegrini and Blatchford's (2003) research between 1990 and 1996, which indicated that playtime has been reduced by 26% at lunchtime and 40% during the afternoon recess in English primary schools. Gill (2007) suggested that pressure to demonstrate learning and therefore teaching accomplishment through standardised testing has exacerbated the loss of physical play opportunities in British primary schools (Ouvry, 2003; Perryman, 2007). Lindon (2011) proposes that a recent focus on results and school readiness has, in early years, resulted in the relegation of once esteemed outdoor, physical play.

4.2.1 – Personal, Social and Emotional Development and Wellbeing

Considerable awareness of the personal, social and emotional benefits to children of risky play was evident amongst all participants. Theo's comment, when asked about the benefits or detriments of risky play, best expressed a conviction shared by them all that valuable learning dispositions and social skills were nurtured though risky play:

> *Resilience, perseverance, motivation and self-esteem. Active play and learning is also about social skills, working independently or working as part of a team. Selecting roles within that team. All of these are very vital, also adult things, that they will need to be able to do but now, primary school, is the very early stages but all learning has to have foundations*.
>
> (Theo)

Theo's perception that risk-taking in play supports the development of advantageous learning dispositions is supported by Dweck's (2000) research into child development, which suggests that risk-taking is a vital and enduring trait of the effective learner. Risk-taking is believed to foster confidence and resourcefulness, which are powerful learning dispositions (Dweck, 2000; Lewis, Ross & Mirowsky, 1999; Tovey, 2007). Furthermore, Tovey (2014) suggested that denying risky play opportunities may also prevent the development of innovation or creativity of thought. Additionally, an MHF (1999) report suggested that the dearth of risky play was negating children's resilience and welfare and might be a cause for increased numbers of paediatric mental health patients.

It was noted that all three Head-teachers subscribed to the philosophy that exposure to risky play is necessary to aid children in safeguarding themselves, as explained by Johanna: "*Life is a risk and this is a skill they need to come across and learn to deal with in their own ways. If they do not have the opportunity, how are they ever going to deal with that adrenalin?"* In addition, Johanna also considered risky play as a valuable approach to managing challenging behaviour and that its absence may negatively impact on children's behaviour: "*you really do rely on a dynamic, forward thinking adult to recognise that actually that poor behaviour needs a curriculum of risk*".

The philosophy that life involves risk-taking and children need to learn to deal with it is echoed in the Early Years Foundation Stage guidance 'Development Matters' (DfE, 2012). Development Matters described the characteristics of an effective learner as

those who are willing to take a risk, engage in new experiences and learn through trial and error as well as 'willing to have a go' and 'can do' attitudes necessary to personal growth (DfE, 2012). Perceptions of childhood and appropriate child rearing practices vary according to one's culture and society (Jenks, 2005). Lindon (2011) suggested that childhood is an apprenticeship to becoming a self-assured and capable adult member of society. However, the UNCRC (1989) acknowledges childhood as a space separate and distinct from adulthood.

Johanna's assertion that risky play and a curriculum of risk are required to remediate undesirable behaviour is based on her professional experience but firmly contradicts Playlink's (1999) assertion that risky play will be regarded negatively by educational and childcare professionals in terms of producing poor behaviour. On the contrary, Johanna embraces risky play as a means of resolving behavioural or learning issues and aligns herself with the Play Safety Forum's (2002) assertion that risky play provides children with exhilaration and constructive learning experiences.

A conviction all three Head-teachers commonly shared was that the personal, social and emotional benefits of risky play are vital to a child's wellbeing and ability to develop into a capable adult. This conviction is supported by Tovey (2014) who suggests that physical risky play prompts children to explore their environment and extend their skills; these are also considered attributes of an effective learner (Almon, 2013; Colker, 2008; DfE, 2012, Gill, 2007; Guldberg, 2009; HSE, 2012; Lindon, 2011). All respondents alluded to life as presenting risks. A fundamental element of gaining the knowledge and

skills to protect oneself from harm is the ability to identify hazards and manage risks (HSE, 2012). Risky play in primary school allows young children to learn, with peers and supported by teaching professionals, to deal with hazards and mitigate risks, establishing risky play and challenge as an opportunity for gratification as opposed to inciting anxiety Ball et al., 2012; Gill, 2012; Tovey, 2014).

4.2.2 - Educational Impact of Risky Play

Theo and Johanna referred to the heuristic learning aspect of risky play, as Theo explained: "*I think that kind of practical first-hand experience is so much better than just sitting inside at a desk doing a mundane worksheet or exercise with the teacher. That is real experiential, discovery learning.*" All three Head-teachers gave examples of risky play augmenting curriculum subjects. Theo further explained this point when stating: "*The excitement, the planning that is going on in that classroom and the skill, math and engineering, to build an igloo*." Finley described the pleasure and focus children experience through risky play as "*unconscious learning*". Expressed views not only illustrated a desire to ensure learning within their primary schools was not only limited to a classroom environment but also that risky play was considered a valuable method of teaching.

Gill (2007), although critical of some schools, acknowledged that some educators would welcome more free play and the opportunity to combine play with various curriculum

subjects. An advantage discerned by the Head-teachers was that risky play enhances children's learning (Gill, 2007; Tovey, 2007). This perception is strongly supported by Hubbuck (2009) who proposed play as bestowing a means for children to experiment with emerging skills and to assimilate and accommodate new information (Kolb, 1984; Tovey, 2007; Wadsworth, 2004). Hännikainen et al. (2013) argued that the learning benefits of play are fully recognised, which is borne out by the interview data.

All three Head-teachers described assuming a facilitative approach to risky play in not only providing suitable resources and space but also ensuring time was available for physical risky play. They promoted it as a means of augmenting curriculum based learning. Johanna and Theo described their role as empowering teachers to embrace risky play to facilitate curriculum subjects, as illuminated by Johanna: "*I would categorise risky play as inspirational play or the inspirational aspect of the curriculum*".

Attitudes toward the scholastic advantages of risky play and the Head-teachers' desire to maintain active learning and risky play opportunities support Farthing's (2005) suggestion that once education benefits in relation to risky active play are discerned, school staff are disposed to facilitate children's access to it (Beunderman, 2010). Pellegrini and Holmes's (2006) suggestion that to teaching professionals playtime is a wasted opportunity to maximise classroom learning is unsubstantiated by the research subjects, who expressed a desire to maximize the child's learning experience during risky play. Notwithstanding, a House of Commons Education and Skills Committee

(2005) found that there has been a deterioration in the quality and amount of outdoor educational experiences, including play, which indicates opportunities to augment curriculum subjects are unrealized (Gill, 2007; Jones, 2007).

4.3 - Barriers to Risky Play

During the interview many varied barriers or impediments to risky play were mentioned by the three primary school Head-teachers. They have been presented in the following sections. Interestingly, a resolution common to all three participants was that if one wanted to provide risky play opportunities in school, one would find a means to do so. Theo's comment perhaps best summarises the shared desire to support risky play in school:

> *I have got to believe in risky, active play. You have got to have a total commitment as to why you want to do it, what you believe are the benefits for the children. If you are not committed to it, then I do not really see it working.*
>
> (Theo)

4.3.1 - Curriculum Demands as a Barrier to Risky Play

There are many obstacles when facilitating or allowing risky play within state school provision. Chief among them appears to be curriculum demands, which are described as limiting time available for free play and outdoor learning (DfE, 2014b). Finley

suggested time is a barrier to risky play: "*It is using timetable time when you have every other aspect of the curriculum to cover as well; it is finding time in the timetable to do it*". Theo highlighted the fears of outside agencies, such as Ofsted, on school staff teaching abilities, which precludes risky play and outdoor pursuits:

> *It is the fear factor and often what I hear is, "and what would they say, when they came in?" Who are they? They are afraid of someone coming in and saying, "That is a waste of time". I know it takes a big leap of faith and a big belief to able to keep outdoor and indoor learning going.*
>
> (Theo)

Finley's response that playtime or active outdoor learning is supplanted by curriculum needs is well supported by numerous studies and academics. Pellegrini and Blatchford's (2003) research reported a considerable reduction in playtime over a six-year period. Blatchford and Baines's (2006) follow-up study further noted the play reduction along with an increase in the school day. Tovey (2007) also argued that play time is sacrificed in favour of curriculum needs.

Theo's comment that classroom teachers are loathe to surrender classroom teaching due to judgement anxiety is widely addressed. Gill (2007) suggested anxiety to augment children's performance in standardised tests and the ability to defend their teaching performance in the event of an Ofsted inspection are the causes of reducing outdoor learning and playtime (Ball, 2003; Earley, 1998). Perryman (2007) proposed that although an Ofsted inspection might prove positive, the fear of a negative report resulted in teaching professionals experiencing fear, stress and insecurity. Ofsted is

regarded by many teachers as an all-seeing, all-knowing organisation, which has resulted in their assuming teaching practices that they feel can be readily accounted for (Ball, 2002; 2007b; Chapman, 2002; Earley, 1998; Perryman, 2007).

4.3.2 - Parental and Child Leisure Influences Toward Risky Play in Primary School

Cultural norms and how UK children spend their time away from school can act as a barrier to physical risky play within school (Blakely, 1994; Gill, 2007; Hubbard, 2003; Lindon, 2011; Lupton, & Tulloch, 2002; Valentine, 2004). All three Head-teachers discussed the need to explain to parents the school's ethos of supporting risky play and adventurous activities to promote children's development and wellbeing. Although out-of-school play was not subject to the research, all three participants discussed the influence of out-of-school play and activities as impacting on the expectations and norms within school time. Theo suggested risky play in school challenges children's view of leisure, as Finley explains: "*It is to take them away from that, at home sitting on their iPads, sitting on their computers and giving them more of a rounded view of life*". Head-teachers describe children's out of school free time as being very directed by adults as a result of parental fears, as illustrated by Theo:

> *I suppose the play environment outside of school, in its widest sense, is more directed now. Parents feel safe if they take the children to a dance class or a sports club rather than just letting them outside to play, free time.*
>
> (Theo)

Head-teachers perceived that much of the time spent outside of school is spent indoors (Guldberg, 2009; Lindon, 2011; Moss, 2012). This is supported by Blakey (1994) who suggested parental fears for children's safety outside of school have reduced the scope of children's free-play in terms of time and distance from the home. Finley and Theo point out that children are more reliant on digital media for amusement, supporting Karsten and Van Vilet's (2006) assertion that the expansion of virtual access is a tempting alternative to outdoor play for both children and anxious parent.

Although all three Head-teachers deliberated parental fears and discussed the importance of ensuring parents were fully informed and supported risky play in school, none felt their practice was unduly influenced by overprotective parents. For example, Finley explained: "*I do not worry too much about parents, generally the majority are sane and rational*". Mercogliano (2008) proposed that some parents excessively shelter children from harm. Nevertheless, all the Head-teachers referred to overprotective parents as a minority. A consequence of parental and societal fear, acknowledged by the Head-teachers, was their shared determination to ensure the children in their charge experienced active, outdoor, risky play. This conflicts with Gleave and Cole-Hamilton's (2012) submission that teaching professionals felt vulnerable to the parental expectation of absolute safety and this might reduce the availability of risky play in school (Ball, et al., 2012; Playlink, 1999; Tovey, 2007).

Glendon and Stratton (2000) suggested that in order to be considered safe, a school must have a 'preventative safety culture'. Nonetheless, the Head-teachers appear to embrace the positives of risk and convey that message to the parents, which implies they were not entirely motivated in conveying a message of risk-free activity taking primacy or a reputation for 'safety first' (Gairín & Castro, 2011). Gill (2007) asserted that an environment without risks is not only uninteresting to children but discourages child development. The Head-teachers in this study assured parents that children need some risky play to extend learning and development (Guldberg, 2009; Lindon, 2011; Tovey, 2014). Skenazy's (2010) assertion that a childhood without risk is far more dangerous to children's wellbeing appears to be echoed by the Head-teachers in this research. Marano's (2004) assertion that parental anxiety may unduly influence the practices of the primary schools is not supported by the research data in this study.

The three Head-teachers' shared perception that children are denied outdoor physical risky play has resulted in them assuming a moral duty to address this deficit. In the UK outdoor vigorous activity is often limited to the school environment for many primary school aged children. Lindon (2011) indicated that parents worry more about play beyond the school environment that carries associations with fear of strangers or vehicle strikes (Children's Society, 2006; Playlink, 1999).

Shared attitudes of the researched Head-teachers reflect Gill's (2007) suggestion that primary school establishments are an ideal environment to introduce the advantage of risky play and facilitate its acceptance and support with their parental community

(Tovey, 2014). Contrary to Guldberg's (2009) suggestion, the three primary schools included in this research are not becoming more risk averse although all Head-teachers did discuss schools that are too cautious regarding risky play. The research indicated that good parent and school communication is essential in ensuring parents are well informed about risky play as an instrument for scholarship, skill acquisition and wellbeing (BMA, 2006; Marmot, et al., 2011). This study's findings indicate that parental anxiety does not adversely influence Head-teachers' attitudes toward risky play within school (Gill, 2007; Gleave and Cole-Hamilton, 2012).

4.3.3 - Training Needs

Lack of training was identified as a potential barrier to risky play. An impediment to risky play, raised by Johanna, was that lunchtime play-supervisors were believed to limit risky play owing to their misperceiving risky play as behavioural issues. As illustrated by Theo: "*They are not quite sure if the play is moving into an unacceptable level of behaviour or dangerous play or whether it is just high spirits*". Johanna and Theo discussed the need for and lack of additional training to ensure lunchtime supervisors fully understand the nature and benefits of risky play. Johanna and Theo both stated the importance of ensuring school staff did not allow a risk averse approach to play to negatively impact on children's development or attitude to play. The perceived impact of over caution is captured by Johanna: "*The, "Can you run slower?", aspect of things is just ridiculous. Just to empower them (Lunchtime supervisors) to see things more*

positively about managing groups of people safely without having them (the children) standing as if they are on parade".

This suggests the experience and training discussed by Head-teachers may encourage play supervisors and teaching staff to relinquish more control to children and allow them more freedom in not only self-determining play but developing the risk assessment skills to safeguard themselves (Beunderman, 2010; Gleave, 2008; HSE, 2012; Tovey, 2007).

The training requirement of understanding the nature of risky play and recognition of children's proficiencies was considered crucial by Theo and Johanna and supports Tovey's (2007) suggestion that this skill set is necessary towards allowing children to fully immerse themselves in, and gain development and learning opportunities from, risky play. Playlink (1999) reported that when playtime supervisors appreciate and comprehend the developmental impact of play, they are more accepting of children's actions and less likely to actively restrict children's risky play.

Theo and Johanna both discussed the use of negative language associated with risky play. Additionally, Finley described school staff who "*fret and will hover*" (Mercogliano, 2008). Playlink (1999) argued that these behaviours convey an adult's unease and may serve to obstruct a child's self-directed risky play and with it opportunities for developing skills, self-reliance and self-assurance (Brown, 2003; Mercogliano, 2008; Tovey, 2007). Theo's discussion of the importance of additional training, resources and time to plan

and review work by lunchtime supervisors supported Lester and Russell's (1999) report on means of facilitating risky play. In contrast, Johanna suggested that the "*stand alone*" nature of the lunchtime supervisor's role prompts their risk aversion (Almon, 2013; Gill, 2007; Lindon, 2007; Tovey, 2007). Play supervisors are among the poorest paid school staff (Beunderman, 2010; Gill, 2007; Play England, 2011; Playlink, 1999). Paid time to plan activities and liaise with other school staff and familiarise themselves with class based learning may provide a strategic means of enhancing attitudes to risky play and augmenting children's development (Gill, 2007; Playlink, 1999; Whitebook et al., 2013).

Another group identified by all three participants as requiring additional training, encouragement and experience with regard to risky play were new and trainee teachers. Experience of risky play within school was expressed as essential by all Head-teachers involved in the research. Johanna described trainee teachers as hesitant to use physical education equipment. Furthermore, Finley described an encounter where a student teacher reported him for risk-taking during a PE session. Finley suggested lack of experience and over-caution were important considerations with new teachers. However, Theo made no mention of teachers' reticence toward physical play but gave numerous examples of the need to challenge newer teachers to ensure curriculum teaching also involved physical outdoor elements.

A key message that emerges from the data is that all three Head-teachers were worried about children not experiencing enough physical risky play, which has motivated them

to use their leadership position to inspire teachers to facilitate risky play and learning through physical activities. Stephenson (2003) suggested that satiating children's desire for active play is subject to the adult's philosophy toward active risky play. Theo's reference to playtime supervisors supporting children by acting as role models and taking an interest in encouraging physical play supports Stephenson (2003); in demonstrating enjoyment of being outside and advocating active play, children too perceive risky play positively. Hemming (2007) suggested school playtimes can lack stimulation or challenge due to the staff wishing to control children and prevent accidents (HOCESC, 2005). Play Safety Forum (2002) proposed that risky play creates a medium in which skills are practiced and development extended; many of the attitudes expressed indicate that the Head-teachers shared this conviction (Knight, 2011).

4.3.4 – Risk Aversion

Broadly speaking, none of the participants divulged extensive concerns with regard to general worries associated with risk or risky play. As Finley's example demonstrated: "*That is something we have done, (indicating Image 1) using these crates to stack. I am looking at that and imagining some people are thinking he is going to fall, that it is wobbly.*" The shared acceptance that risk is an everyday occurrence was evident in Theo and Johanna's comment, "*Life is a risk."* Theo's main concern was not that a child might be hurt but that harm may be caused via negligence: "*I would not ever want to cause a child to break a limb through our negligence, because that is serious*." Johanna

echoed this sentiment with numerous mentions of the need for suitable levels of supervision. When risk caution was mentioned it was most often associated with strategies to reduce risk to an acceptable level, as typified by Johanna: "*That one (Image 4) is the only one (photograph) that would make me pause for thought, that I would have to think very carefully about how that was managed*", Finley, on the other hand, did not express concern or suggest poor supervision or fears of neglect, only that a child could be seriously harmed.

Everyday life involves a daily negotiation with risk and learning to manage risks is an important survival skill that children need to acquire (Apter, 2007; Gill, 2007; Play Safety Forum, 2002; Thom et al., 2007). In play, children are able explore their environment and the consequences of their actions (Little et al., 2011; Sandseter & Kennair, 2011). The CEN (2006) suggested, unlike for adults, minor injuries are a normal aspect of a child's learning journey (Ball, et al., 2012). The research data appears to confirm the Head-teachers' philosophy of accepting and dismissing minor injuries as a normal consequence of child's play, which suggests some harm and the risk associated with it are valuable in terms of providing a medium for learning (Ball, 2007b; Wyver et al., 2010).

Theo and Johanna's precaution against major injuries in terms of supervision is indicative of a pragmatic approach to safety with regard to risky play. For example, Johanna explains: "*I like this one as it is hammers and nails (Image 2). We have done this in our school before. We have done it and explained, "You need to be careful,*

because if you whack your thumb it really hurts". The children tend not to." Finley indicated the importance of constant review and assessing of play conditions: "*For example, these (Image 5) get really slippery then it is wet, you probably would not let children get onto a high one of those when it is really wet because they will slip*." The Head-teachers appeared to accept that while injuries should be prevented, some injuries are a consequence of providing sufficient inspiration for children's development (Gill, 2007; Kahneman & Tversky, 1984; Lindon, 2011).

The participants all acknowledged that some school staff are more risk adverse than others. As Theo stated: "*some staff do feel a bit anxious because that is their own nature*." Nonetheless, this trait is not considered by the researched Head-teachers to be detrimental unless it impacts on children's educational or developmental opportunities. Johanna cautions that an over-cautious adult would prefer not to grant risky-play opportunities: "*There is your natural nervous adult, who would rather not take a risk themselves and therefore would not have these opportunities happening at all, which is no good*." Towner et al. (2001) suggest the active avoidance of risks is indicative of fear of accident, which in turn engenders risk aversion in children.

The Head-teachers expressed that some staff are more risk averse than others, which supports Smith's (1998) suggestion that an adult's perceptions of risk influences their pedagogical approach and they subconsciously or unintentionally express their reservations to children (Stephenson, 2003).

All three Head-teachers expressed that, unless otherwise directed, nervous adults' actions and language may unduly influence or prevent risky play in the children in their charge. Theo expressed concern that the fear of accidents and the actions of nervous adults may limit developmental and educational opportunities. Johanna extended the viewpoint further when asserting: "*You are almost trying to deskill youngsters if you are telling them to run slowly, that is ridiculous; but, I have heard it."* The actions and language of school staff, although intended benevolently, can result in children adopting the adults' negative attitude toward risky play (Beunderman, 2010; McGee & Fraser, 2008).

The mentions by the Head-teachers of fearful school staff and potential for limiting development are well established and there are numerous examples of school activities that have been banned due to those schools' safety concerns (HSE, n.d.). Grieshaber and McArdle (2010) suggested the reason risky play is banned is not that it is too dangerous but that a teacher regards it as too risky to allow children to potentially get hurt. Waiton (2007) observed that concerns for child safety could be overwhelming to those of a risk-adverse nature and may limit considerations for health, wellbeing and learning.

Theo indicated that lunchtime supervisors tend to be the most fearful or accidents and suggests this is related to a lack of understanding of the developmental process of play: "*I can understand why some of those adults get a little bit anxious because they do not*

want to be the ones where there is an accident, or something occurred on their watch, as it were." Johanna too echoes the philosophy that "*that group of people (lunchtime supervisors) tend to find it really hard because they are paranoid about something happening*".

All Head-teachers identified an over-cautious approach or risk aversion as intrinsic to some adults' personalities. This was indicative of the shared recognition that some school staff required further training or experience with regard to risky play to ensure their actions and practices reflected the school ethos. McGee and Fraser (2008) suggested that the Head-teacher's role is to ensure school principles and values are instilled in the school staff and their actions as 'constant role models' reflecting the school's ethos and policy were manifest in the practices highlighted by the research participants.

4.3.5 - Fear of Litigation or Prosecution

Finley and Johanna described fear of litigation as a barrier to risky play within some schools. Conversely, Theo did not make any comment regarding litigation or prosecution, his only intimation was that if a child was hurt it would be him who would be accountable. Conversely, Finley described litigation concern as a "*false fear*" or an excuse some Head-teachers use to avoid the effort of providing risky play: "*I think a lot of Head-teachers hide behind the 'Oh we will get sued', I think they become lazy and*

they will not try stuff". Theo and Johanna described their role as the person ultimately responsible in the event of an accident as a means to reassure teaching staff that the risky play they permitted would not reflect detrimentally on them as individuals.

Tovey's (2007) suggestion that litigation anxiety influences children's access to and self-determination in outdoor play environments. All the Head-teachers referred to other schools that inhibit risky play due to over caution (Williams, 2005). Furthermore, Ball et al. (2012) asserted that school and childcare providers may feel open to legal reprimand due to a shared cultural perception that UK society is increasingly a blame culture, which ultimately leads to an unwillingness to take risks or allow risky play, as acknowledged by the Head-teachers. Additionally, Almon (2013) suggested that when providing risky play the 'responsible person' deliberates the possibility of legal action and accountability (DfE, 2014a). Rather than establishing a risk-adverse leadership position or providing a narrowly defined set of play policies to protect themselves from lawsuits as suggested by (Stephenson, 2003), Johanna and Theo discussed using this role to engender teachers to embrace teaching methods that incorporate risky play.

Finley's conviction that litigation is a false fear is supported by the Better Regulation Task-Force (2004) which scorned the notion of a UK compensation culture and highlighted that, notwithstanding the increased availability to claim management companies, claims had fallen in the two decades preceding the report (Gill, 2007; Hand, 2010; Williams, 2005). Additionally, guidance regarding claims against schools and

play providers advises considering the benefit of an activity in mitigation of the duty of care (The Compensation Act 2006). Furthermore, a House of Lords Judgement, Tomlinson v Congleton (2003), acknowledged that children's youthful exuberance makes them prone to accidents and this is not sufficient cause to enforce overcautious safety regimes.

4.3.6 - Risky Play and the Impact of Fear of Blame

Fear of blame, stemming from two very different origins, was considered a barrier to risky play by the three Head-teachers involved in the research. First, there is the fear of censure or condemnation in the event of an accident, as Finley succinctly stated: "*It is a worry about being judged.*" In recent years there have been numerous media stories publicising and potentially embedding in the social consciousness a perception of parents as over-protective (Moss, 2012; Sims, 2009; Wilson, 2014). It would be reasonable to assume that these impressions have increased fear of parental blame in the event of child injury. However, Theo raises the issue of fear of denunciation that teachers and school staff may experience for sacrificing time on curriculum subjects in order to facilitate physical risky play or promoting activities of outdoor learning.

All the Head-teachers discussed fear of blame. Gill (2007) suggested the blame culture prohibited risky play in schools (Lindon, 2011). When the Head-teachers discussed teachers' fear of blame they primarily alluded to that blame originating beyond the

school, possibly from parents or Ofsted. However, Johanna suggested lunchtime supervisors feared blame because of their isolation from other school staff: *"(lunchtime supervisors) fear blame because they have to communicate to other staff and they really are quite stand alone.*" This supports the importance of ensuring part-time school staff feel respected and integral to the school, to ensure they are willing to embrace the school ethos and practice regarding risky play (Tovey, 2007; Whitebook et al., 2013).

As Illingworth et al.'s (1975) influential report on 200 playground accidents concluded, regardless of supervision, children's accidents are due to their natural inclination towards exploration and risk-taking. Hubbard (2003) described the form of preoccupation with minor risks, which Johanna and Theo describe as the lunchtime supervisors' experience, as creating a risk-obsessive environment (Adams, 1995; Cohen, 2011). The fear of blame experienced by the lunchtime supervisors suggests they have lost sight of or are yet to be informed about the benefits of risky play activities (Buijs, 2009; Tovey, 2007; 2014).

4.4.1 – Risk Assessment Stratagems – a Facilitator to Risky Play?

Common to all the researched Head-teachers was the method of considering photo-elicitation images and verbalising a shared approach to risk assessing. As is considered best practice, and contesting Tovey's (2007) suggestion that negative associations with risk negate the benefits of risky play, all respondents highlighted not

only the perceived hazards but also the potential benefits to a child (Lindon, 2011). In this research, Head-teachers recognised numerous personal, social and emotional developments and wellbeing (Axford, 2008; Pretty et al., 2009). The Head-teachers would not be considered as risk adverse, using Gill's (2007) measurement criteria, as not only did they discuss risk positively, they strongly disapproved of schools and practices that removed adventurous activities from children's primary school experience.

Laverty and Reay (2014) proposed that the risk assessment process and the additional work it commands is an obstacle to risky play. However, findings of this research indicated that all participants were not only practiced in conducting risk assessments but also very capable of perceiving benefits and balancing them in association with hazards and the likelihood of an unforeseen event occurring (Almon, 2013; Ball et al., 2012; Hughes & Ferrett, 2005). When hazards were identified the respondents offered strategies to lower the likelihood of a risk occurring as well as scholastic and developmental benefits. This practice of balancing the trifold considerations of risky play in terms of benefits, hazards and probability of harm was not only readily demonstrated but appeared to be established school practice and is very reflective of HSE (2012) guidance regarding children's play (Almon, 2013; Hackett, 2008). Following an accident, a professional's response is to review and determine if procedural measures need to be modified (HSE, 2006). However, as noted by Lindon (2012), schools occasionally react with a prohibition on an activity (BBC, 2016).

Furthermore, Finley discussed his frustration with another primary school banning playing in the snow due to health and safety concerns.

4.4.2 - Impact of Primary School Ethos and Practice with Regard to Risky Play

In addition to barriers to risky play, all three Head-teachers shared thoughts on cultural influences and ethos regarding risky play throughout the interviews. As with barriers, these societal factors and personal and professional values influenced the inclusion of risky play for children aged four to eight years in the Head-teachers' respective primary schools. Theo's comment illustrates the importance of a Head-teacher's philosophy regarding the inclusion of risky play in primary schools: "*I would not look at it (risky play) as a responsibility, it is a philosophy that I believe in, because it is part of learning*".

4.4.3 - Cultural and Societal Influences on Risky Play in Primary School

During the interviews all three Head-teachers volunteered examples of their current and childhood experience of risky play. The passion toward risky play is evident in the Head-teachers' recollections of their own childhood encounters and may have influenced their understanding and expectation of play (Clements, 2004; Guldberg

2009; Super & Harkness, 2002). Johanna's narration of a childhood experience highlights the fondness toward risky play: "*I can remember, aged five walking along a beam which was probably only ten inches off the floor but thinking, "Oh look at me, I am nearly there, wow*". These recent and childhood experiences of risky play appear to make the Head- teachers determined to ensure that risky play is part of their school ethos.

Lupton and Tulloch's (2002) research indicated that the term 'risk' is often used synonymously with 'hazard' (Boyer, 2006, Sandseter & Kennair, 2012). Additionally, Tovey (2007) suggested that when discussing risk most people concentrate on the negative aspects, such as potential harm (Gill, 2007). However, this research data contradicts this assertion with regard to risky play, as the Head-teachers' perceptions were resoundingly positive and risk assessment practices considered the benefits of an activity as well as the potential detriments (HSE, 2012; Lindon, 2011).

Gairín and Castro (2011) suggest a school's safety culture is reflective of societal values. While this is undoubtedly true to an extent, the Head-teachers' affectionate recollections of their own childhood risky play experiences suggest that the era one was raised in and the play freedoms experienced appear to influence their perceptions of and policies toward risk in the school environment (Almon, 2013; Clements, 2004; Guldberg, 2009). Nevertheless, cultural and societal concerns have precipitated a

decline in school play times, possibly owing to curriculum demands as well as fear of harm (Blatchford & Baines, 2006; 2010; Brockman, Jago & Fox, 2011).

All participants discussed wider UK society as being too cautious regarding children's play. Ball et al. (2012) call for a 'more forgiving society' where the preclusion of injuries does not take priority over the wellbeing of children. Johanna echoed this sentiment when she noted the need for parental collaboration in her statement: *"…we need to have the trust and understanding of parents and families.*" Developing a relationship with parents and ensuring they embrace the school ethos toward risky play is crucial (McGee & Fraser, 2008; Safety Forum, 2002; Tovey, 2007). Furthermore, the cultural expectation that parents are loathe to allow risky play is challenged by all the Head-teachers, who reported that most parents have begun to agree with the inclusion of risky play within the school environment. This level of cultural influence was exemplified by Theo:

> *Parents generally, in the last few years, have all sat and nodded in agreement with me. I think we are in danger of breeding a cotton wool society. In current society, we think for our children, we do things for our children, we are not allowing them the space to be children.*
>
> (Theo)

The change in parental practices and attitudes highlighted by the three Head-teachers supports findings of the Future Foundation (2006), which suggested parents in 2000 spend four times more on direct childcare costs than their 1975 counterparts, which partly stems from concerns for child safety relating to play outside of school hours

(Christensen, 2002; Lindon, 2011; Rasmussen & Smidt, 2004). Gill (2007) advocated that parents are partially responsible for excessive caution regarding children's safety but that this is a symptom of society obsessed with safety.

Playlink (1999) described the relationship between play outside of school and the scholastic success and play behaviours in the school environment. Theo commented concerning children's over reliance on technology for leisure and the school's "*moral responsibility to create the balance*", supporting Playlink's (1999) assertion that good and bad play habits are reciprocated in all aspect of children's play and learning whether within or outwith the school environment.

The cultural practice of directing children's free-time and play has resulted in the three Head-teachers making a conscious decision to incorporate risky play within the school environment. Finley and Theo suggested most parents tend to be permissive of risky play within school. However, all referred to overprotective parents as a minority; Johanna expanded on this premise: "*I have worked with some families where they have stopped their child going to something because the parents are so anxious about it, but that is the exception not the norm*". Sociologist Furedi (2001) suggested a cultural obsession with safety promotes parental anxiety, not only about their child's welfare but also leading them to question their ability to adequately protect their child from harm (Furedi, 2006; 2007).

Brussoni et al. (2012) argued that the shift in concepts of childhood and an increasingly prevailing culture of fear have precipitated the decrease in play areas (Furedi, 2006; 2007; Pilcher, 1995). Consequently, children's opportunity for physical risky play has declined in spite of diminished UK child injury rates (Ball, 2007a; Hoffman, 2010; Mack et al., 1997). Naturally, judicious safeguards should be introduced and maintained to protect children. However, risk aversion in other schools, discussed by the respondents, indicated hasty responses to risk have resulted in blanket bans of many forms of physical and risky play and may be harming many children's wellbeing (Bird, 2007; BMA, 2006; Christensen & Mikkelsen, 2008; Fairclough et al., 2008; Health Council of the Netherlands, 2004).

Participants discussed the current dearth of outdoor play when children are at home and suggested that children's play is now much more controlled by adult agendas and there is a reliance on media and computers to provide children's leisure (Lester & Russell, 2008). Karsten's (2005) research comparing Dutch children in the 1950s and 1960s with present day contemporaries confirms the shift from outdoor to indoor play. To the older generation play meant being outside and active, whereas younger generations' play involved being indoors, often in their own bedroom (Karsten, 2005; Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2002).

Finley discussed children's "*default setting*" as gaming. Brussoni et al. (2012) suggested that a lot of physical outdoor play has been usurped by media and virtual play (Gentile et al., 2004; Jordan et al., 2006; Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2002). Lester and

Russell (2008) suggest children's use of 'Information Technology' as a play resource assures adults concerning children's whereabouts as the out of school environment is regarded by many adults as too hazardous (Playlink, 1999). However, Crowe and Bradford (2006) suggest the adult fears of virtual reality dominating children's leisure time. Respondents appear to confirm both proposals. The researched Head-teachers alluded to parental anxieties and acknowledged parents' desire to safeguard children. However, Theo advocated schools banning handheld games in order to promote active play.

Another societal issue that emerged from the data was the expectation that children's free time was wholly directed by an adult agenda to keep them safe. Finley described the loss of children's adventure play due to a parental desire to protect children. Theo noted the detriment of paranoid parenting: "*I think that's part of culture nowadays, parents are doing for the children, they are not letting children be imaginative and think for themselves what they need to do. It is directing the children's free time*". Notwithstanding, Johanna considered parental anxiety as affecting only a small minority of parents and pointed to a lack of awareness of the benefits of risky play as a greater cultural barrier.

All respondents indicated parental concerns for ensuring children are safe during play. Although Gill (2007) suggested teaching professionals are subject to parental belief that schools should be risk free environments, this research data does not support the perception of Head-teachers succumbing to these cultural expectations (Ball et al.,

2012). Nonetheless, both Johanna and Finley gave examples of children's parents excluding them from school-provided adventurous activities due to anxiety. This suggests that, while Head-teachers are aware of parental concerns, they do not allow their policy and practice to be dictated by a small proportion of most-worried parents but use their professional judgment, experience and the support of the majority of school parents (Almon, 2013; Ball et al., 2012; Gill, 2007; Guldberg, 2009; Lindon, 2011). The research participants discussed the importance of informing parents of the inclusion of play and activities involving risk and indicated safety-anxious parents remained a minority (Ball, 2002; 2004). The research data supports Ball et al.'s (2012) assertion that most parents accept and support children's risk taking.

It has been argued that the UK is a safety obsessed culture (Furedi, 2001; Gill, 2007). Interestingly, this is supported by the reported use of language in the school environment. Theo illuminated the common use of negative idioms, such as Johanna's example *"You can't do that"* regarding risk-taking, and the importance of using language to help children aged four to eight years to risk assess and safeguard themselves: "*I hear lots of, "Be careful". I think that trips off our tongue. I think what we need to think about is not directing the children to be careful but, "What do we need to think about?*" Johanna also points out the absurdity of using phrases such as "*Can you run slower?"* These examples of negative language associated with risk aversion support Lindon's (2011) suggestion that risk promotes negativity in some adults, as reflected by the pessimistic language commonly selected to prevent risky play (Cohen, 2011; Lupton & Tulloch, 2002). Theo's assertion that phraseology be adjusted to help children learn

from risky play supports Playlink's (1999) proposal that changes in practice can only be achieved if they reflect the culture and ethos of the school (Almon, 2013; Lindon, 2011; McGee & Fraser, 2008; Stephenson, 2003).

All three Head-teachers discussed the need, as school leaders, to ensure that risky play is enabled through school visits as well as providing suitable facilities in the school grounds. Johanna discussed proactive strategies of empowering school teaching staff to facilitate risky play. The level and forms of encouragement were exemplified by Theo when stating:

> *Some of our young teachers come to me and think I am talking gibberish, when I say, "I want to see children outside learning". They say, "Why? In teaching time? But we have got to do this and we have got to do that". I have to get my newer teachers out of that way of thinking.*
>
> (Theo)

Although all three respondents made reference to curriculum pressures, all participants asserted the importance of educating the whole child (ASCD, 2010). Theo and Finley described risky play within school as essential to ensuring a well-rounded child, as exemplified by Johanna:

> "*We just cannot keep churning out a manufactured curriculum that does not have risk. We just cannot. It is not right for these young people and it is not real. We are not giving them a life skill of thinking, "Have a go". We are not giving them any ambition. It is about providing a curriculum for the whole child*."
>
> (Johanna)

Johanna's view supported Guldberg's (2009) proposal that the current social and political focus is concerned with forcing children to assimilate into an approved model of behaviour, achievement and character, which is harmful to the developing child (Ball et al., 2012; Gill, 2007; Peterson et al., 1994; Siviy & Panksepp, 2011). Almon (2013) argued that play immerses all aspects of a child including their feelings, cognitions and bodies (Guldberg, 2009; Hubbuck, 2009). Finley and Johanna both used the term `whole child` when rationalising the need to provide risky play (Almon, 2013). Theo also embraced this philosophy of meeting the child's needs by using Maslow's Triangle to illustrate her point (Tay & Diener, 2011). The Head-teachers alluded to the principle that to become well rounded people with diverse skills and strengths children need to be provided with opportunities to develop their own interests, learning methods and aspirations (Gleave, 2008; Gleave & Cole-Hamilton, 2012; Guldberg, 2009; Sandseter & Kennair, 2011).

The demanding curriculum and fear engendered by Ofsted have swayed teachers to focus time on classroom-based teaching methods (Chapman, 2002; Earley, 1998; Pennyman, 2007). However, it is important to note that a national curriculum is a political device for ensuring future economic productivity and it is prone to preserve a set of values (Bennan, 2011; Willan, 1995). Recent government changes to the national curriculum have enshrined learning based on literacy, mathematics and sciences as the paragon of academic virtue (DfE 2014b). Curriculum and inspection pressures may be diminishing play and experiential learning opportunities in some state primary schools, as suggested by the researched Head-teachers. However, Theo,

Finley and Johanna also gave every indication of trying to protect time to play, which they believe enhances children's welfare and education (Guldberg, 2009).

All the Head-teachers interviewed regarded the need to embrace risky play opportunities children may be denied at home as a school responsibility. All participants demonstrated a desire to ensure that children aged four to eight years have opportunities to experience and overcome challenges through risky play, especially as there is no guarantee that every child will experience risky play outside of the school environment. All participants regarded risky play as a state primary school responsibility, as expounded by Theo:

> *I would not look at it as a responsibility, it is a philosophy that I believe in, because it is part of learning. I would ensure it, wherever I was. Even if children have good access to play outside of school, I would still want to provide that regardless.*
>
> (Theo)

As indicated by the data, there are many factors that impel schools and teaching professionals to assume a precautionary principle and inhibit children's natural tendency toward risky play (Gill, 2007; Lindon, 2011; Sandseter, 2009). However, the research data supports Gill's (2007) assertion that schools have an important duty in ensuring that risky play is preserved through its inclusion in school culture and routine daily practices.

4.4.4 - Financial Implications and their Impact on Practice

Financial implications seem to have a limited effect on risky play provision. Both Theo and Johanna discussed the requirement for additional training for lunchtime supervisors. In addition, Theo mentioned additional investment in extending a play leader's schedule to ensure preparation for activities and resources over the lunchtime period. It appears that the respondents' belief in the scholarly and development benefits of risky play abrogates concerns for financial costs, although it was observed that all three primary schools had invested in outdoor play environment, which included adventure play facilities. As Theo explains, to make risk play work: "*You have got to have a total commitment as to why you want to do it, what you believe are the benefits for the children*."

4.4.5 - Risk Management Training

During the interviews all the Head-teachers demonstrated apparently competent risk assessment methods when examining the photo-elicitation images. Johanna and Finley endorsed the support and guidance they receive regarding risky play and risk assessment skills from the Local Authority Children and Schools Health, Safety & Wellbeing (HSW) Manager. The participants talked warmly about the empowering role the HSW manager assumed; as Johanna stated: "*He is very much not a barrier, he is very much promoting risky play and activities, an enabler*". The Head-teachers

expressed the need to ensure teaching staff had experience of risky play. Furthermore, Finley suggested all teachers should complete safety training to understand the risk assessment process and comprehend that they are intended to enable risky play and activities. Johanna explained that, in her Local Authority, newly qualified teachers were required to do additional risk assessment training for children and schools. Johanna noted the facilitative approach of this exemplar training:

> *We are taught and our new teachers are taught about filling in and looking at risk in terms of what it really means and what you need to look out for that could become barriers. The form and process is an enabler it is what you just need to be aware of to make it a success not what could go wrong and lead to danger.*"
>
> (Johanna)

Research data indicates that the Head-teachers do not associate safety in terms of expensive safety processes, equipment or modification but rather in relation to the risk assessment and management process advocated by Ball (2007) (Thom et al., 2007). The additional training received from Local Authority HSW managers appeared to play a major role in embracing the positive attributes of risky play. This apparent shift in Head-teacher initiated primary school practice is reflective of the HSE (2006) campaign 'Get a Life', which disparaged petty safety concerns and urged the inclusion of risky play through a common sense approach to health and safety.

All the researched Head-teachers mutually shared a method of considering photo-elicitation images and verbalising their thought processes. There was a good portion of statements made by all three Head-teachers relating directly to the photo-elicitation

images. Finley's response to the tools image (Image 2) provides an example of the how photo-elicitation augmented interview data collection: "*I think they learn some really good things there. I think that is a really good activity, it is something we do here in school as well*". Photo-elicitation provided insight into how the head-teachers perceived risky play activities. Theo's response to the images indicated the passion and enthusiasm he expressed toward risky play:

> *If I am being honest, every picture captures me because they have different qualities and there are different things happening within every picture. You would see a different purpose and from what I can see children being allowed to discover and learn, but they are all totally interested*.
>
> (Theo)

Additionally, photographic images aided the Head-teachers to explain how they consider and practise the risk-assessing of children's play. Johanna provided an example of how she balances and mitigates risk while maintaining potential benefits of the activity to a child:

> *This boy on the crates (Image 1), would he put the next one on there and climb up higher? He might do. Are you going say no, you cannot? You are going to keep watching and make sure he is fine; you are going to see if he can. He might not be able to because how is he going the manage that? Are you going to finish that off and say, "No you can't", no you are not! You are going to let him find out he cannot. It is about giving opportunities without putting a ceiling on it.*
>
> (Johanna)

4.5 - Chapter Summary

This chapter has analysed the research findings and critically discussed the attitudes and perceptions of the Head-teachers relating to physical risky play for children aged four to eight years when attending state primary school. Furthermore, the chapter has considered an expansive spectrum of elements that influence the facilitation of risky play. The research data suggests that risky play was embraced as an important and powerful tool to enhance children's wellbeing, development and education.

The importance of risky play to a child's wellbeing and their development of learning dispositions was raised by all the Head-teachers involved in the research. A philosophy of embracing and expediting risky play in school through leadership is manifest among all three Head-teachers. This research indicates the fundamental importance of recognising the merits of risky play in order to be inspired to overcome the potential obstacles or barriers to its acceptance as a normal feature of the primary school day. A significant influence toward enabling risky play in school practice and its adoption in the school ethos is the positivity and willingness to embrace risky play expressed by the Head-teachers.

Chapter 5.0 - Conclusion

5.1 Chapter Introduction

Play is universal to all cultures and a characteristic part of childhood (Gill, 2007; Sandseter, 2012). Play is regarded as a fundamental right of children (UNCRC, 1989). When playing, children find joy, adventure and extend their skills (Lester & Russell, 2008). Risky play provides children with experiential learning opportunities that can support learning, development, physical and emotional health (BMA, 2006; Dietz, 2001; Hyun, 1998; Play Safety Forum, 2002; Smith, 2005; Tovey, 2007). However, in recent years a cultural preoccupation with safety has created a culture of risk aversion and engendered a decline in children's self-directed play opportunities and risky play (Blakely, 1994; Gill, 2007; Guldberg, 2009; Hillman et al., 1990; Lindon, 2011; Rasmussen, 2004; Spilbury, 2005).

There is increasing interest regarding risky play opportunities and the influence of risky play on children's wellbeing (Almon, 2013; Ball et al., 2012; Brussoni et al., 2012; Gill, 2007; Lindon, 2011; Thom et al., 2007; Tovey, 2007). Some academics have argued that schools and teaching professionals are partially accountable for a deficit of risky play opportunities (Beunderman, 2010; Gleave & Cole-Hamilton, 2012; Tovey, 2007). While school days are getting longer (Blatchford & Baines, 2006), children are entering formal schooling at a younger age (Tovey, 2007). Nonetheless, there has been a marked reduction in the time schools allocate for children's play (Blatchford & Baines,

2006; Pellegrini & Blatchford, 2003), although this form of physical activity is believed to enhance educational accomplishment (DfE, 2014b; Gill, 2007; Gleave & Cole-Hamilton, 2012). It has been suggested that the risk-averse approach of school staff prevents children from experiencing risky play (Ball et al., 2012; Beunderman, 2010; Jones, 2007; Parrish et al., 2009;).

While there is an abundance of opinions regarding teaching professionals' perceptions of risky play there is a scarcity of empirical research. This study has explored the attitudes and perceptions of Head-teachers relating to physical risky play in four to eight year-olds in three UK state primary schools. This research deepens understanding of how Head-teachers perceive play and the barriers to it in the primary school environment. Head-teachers within this study appear to welcome risky play and learning opportunities associated with it, which is contrary to some of the dominate literature in this field (Gill, 2007; Guldberg, 2009; HSE, 2014; Jones, 2007; Tovey, 2007). This research may disrupt the dominate narrative with regard to risky play literature.

The three research aims were:

1. To determine what are the potential barriers to facilitating risky-play for four to eight year-olds attending state primary school provision?
2. To advance an understanding of how risky-play is perceived by primary school Head-Teachers involved in the study and how might this influence practices, ethos and culture within the school environment
3. To establish what is the relationship between perceived risk benefits, risk inclusion and fear of accident and blame in play within primary schools and how could this impact on policy and decision making within schools?

5.2 – What are the Potential Barriers to facilitating Risky Play for Four to Eight Year-olds Attending State Primary School

The barriers to physical risky play are diverse and carry varying degrees of influence. A fundamental influence on risky play opportunities is the way in which children's play and leisure is directed beyond the school environment. Unlike previous generations of UK school children, the current generation has much reduced spatial freedoms; consequently, self-directed play most often occurs within the home, limiting opportunities for physical risky play outside of school hours (Almon, 2013; Future Foundation, 2006; Hillman et al., 1990; Lester & Russell, 2008; Rasmussen & Smidt, 2004). Furthermore, the increased reliance on digital and media technology for leisure has created an expectation in some children that play is a sedentary activity (Brussoni et al., 2012; Crowe & Bradford, 2006; Karsten & Van Vilet, 2006; Mitchell and Reid-Walsh, 2002; Valentine, 2004).

Although parental fears are an often cited barrier to physical risky play in schools, this research has indicated they had only marginal influence, possibly due to the Head-teachers' certainty that risky play enhances children's wellbeing (Gill, 2007; Marano, 2004; Mercogliano; 2008). Another substantial barrier to physical risky play in school involves the burden of ensuring all aspects of a very demanding National Curriculum are adhered to and that children perform well in standardised national tests (Ball, 2003; Earley, 1998; Gleave & Cole-Hamilton, 2012; Jenkinson, 2001; Perryman, 2007). Head-teachers described the pressure school staff experience with regard to these tests in

conjunction with the fear of being judged poorly in the event of an Ofsted inspection, which results in shorter playtimes and limits outdoor experiential learning activities (Earley, 1998; Gleave & Cole-Hamilton, 2012; Perryman, 2007).

Although none of the Head-teachers expressed an inflated sense of worry in relation to risky play, they did acknowledge it as a barrier that needed management in staff and other schools. This research data supports the principle that an individual adult's risk-averse disposition can be a barrier to facilitating children's risky play (Almon, 2013; Gill, 2007; Lindon, 2011; Palmer, 2009; Tovey, 2007). A teaching professional or play supervisor's anxiety with even minor risks may provoke them to prohibit some play activities. Additionally, even when risk-averse adults do not intentionally preclude an action, they may unintentionally convey anxiety through language used or unconscious gestures, which is exacerbated by young children's natural disposition to look to and read trusted adults for guidance when exploring and playing physically (Stephenson, 2003).

Fear of blame, litigation and accidents is a barrier to risky play, especially when combined with a risk-averse adult. These fears are intensified when the teaching professional or play practitioner does not feel wholly supported by school leadership or fellow staff or does not fully understand the benefits of risky play. Fear of blame and litigation is often cited as a significant barrier to risky play in school (Almon, 2013; Ball, 2004; Furedi, 2007; Gill, 2007; Lindon, 2011; Tovey, 2007). However, fear of litigation was only suggested as a barrier by two Head-teachers. Of the two, one dismissed

litigation concerns as a real barrier but regarded it as a convenient excuse for preventing risky play and the organisation and curriculum implications associated with it.

Paucity of familiarisation with risk assessment methods and experience of providing physical risky play and utilizing it as a means of extending a child's skills and scholastic development appears to be a barrier to risky play. The Head-teachers who participated in the research gave the impression that they were adept at the risk assessment process and able to measure the benefits of an activity in conjunction with its potential disadvantages. However, the Head-teachers provided numerous examples of less experienced or knowledgeable staff members requiring additional direction or support and experience to enhance their practice.

5.3 - How is Risky Play Perceived by Primary School Head-Teachers and How Might This Influence Practice Ethos and Culture Within the School Environment

This research suggests that the Head-teachers regarded risky play as a valuable method of enriching children's personal, social and emotional wellbeing in addition to using it as a means of supporting curriculum-based learning. The Head-teachers indicated the importance of assuming a whole child approach to primary school teaching and the nurturing of positive learning dispositions (ASCD, 2010). The Head-teachers appeared to be not only positive with regard to risky play but did not allude to

risk as a negative concept. This ethos proved a substantial factor in ensuring that risky play was embraced in school culture and practice. In this research, the Head-teachers' perceptions of the many benefits of risky play ensured that barriers were considered and managed to ensure that risky play was retained.

5.4 - What Is the Relationship Between Perceived Risk Benefits, Inclusion and Barriers and How Does This Impact On Policy and Decision Making Within Schools

The importance and virtue of using their leadership role to support and encourage others to facilitate risky play was expressed by all the Head-teachers. This research suggests that the ability to recognise the merits of risky play as a developmental tool as well as a vehicle for pleasure and wellbeing is an important skill that motivates the subjugation of barriers (Ball et al., 2012; Lindon, 2011; Little et al., 2001; Scuffham & Langley, 1997; Sandseter & Kennair, 2011). The research indicates that, for these Head-teachers, risky play and the philosophy that risk is an everyday occurrence that needs to be accepted and understood played an important part of the school ethos and their pedagogical approach to children aged from four to eight years (Agee, 2009; Almon, 2013; Ball et al., 2012; Gubrium & Holstein 1997; HSE 2012; 2014; Laverty & Reay, 2014; Lindon, 2011; Play Safety Forum, 2002; Sandseter & Kennair, 2011; Smith, 1998; Stevenson, 2003).

To ensure children were able to experience risky play as a means to extend learning and development, the Head-teachers employed various strategies affecting school practice including additional training for school staff, increased supervision numbers, extending play supervisors' hours or teaching children to assume responsibility for and manage their own safety and that of their class-mates. Where the strength of belief in the advantages bestowed by risky play and a pedagogical approach incorporating experiential learning appeared strongest, so too are the determination and innovative means of overcoming its barriers.

5.5 – Limitations of the Research

This study has provided interpretivist qualitative research on the perceptions of three state primary school Head-teachers regarding physical risky play in four to eight year-olds. As a consequence of the selected methodology the study provoked various limitations. Although numerous measures were implemented to prevent bias, as the research interviews and analysis were conducted by a sole researcher it is naturally vulnerable to researcher bias (Cohen et al., 2007, Denscombe, 2014). An additional limitation of the research was the use of a purposive sample of only a relatively small number of Head-teachers contributing to the research (Rolfe, 2006). Furthermore, all participants were based in Yorkshire and Local Authority guidance, permissions and services may alter in other regions. Any generalization or relatability must be done with cautious deliberation (Denscombe, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). A larger study involving a greater range of state primary school Head-teachers might

provide broader and more varied data. Furthermore, a mixed methods approach of quantitative and qualitative methods might enhance understanding of risky play perceptions. Additional empirical research across the field of risky play in and beyond the primary school provision is required.

5.6 – Areas of Further Enquiry

This research has identified that the scale of influences affecting perceptions and barriers to physical risky play is multifaceted and complex. The use of photo-elicitation as an aid to acquiring rich and detailed interview data requires further enquiry in the field of educational research. To further enhance shared understanding of risky play and potentially influence school practices there is a need for additional research. With this in mind, there is an intention to publish this research in both academic and safety journals. The following research fields and strategies might aid that endeavour:

- Research encompassing a detailed review of school policies, qualitative semi-structured interviews and observation of play practice to determine policy effects on risky play.
- Research involving interview and observations regarding how school culture affects the perceptions and actions of teaching professionals with regard to play.
- Research to establish how cultural expectations of the parent body on play and education affect the practice of educational leadership and management.
- Research to ascertain what children feel when experiencing physical risky play.
- Research to determine the effect of regular exercise on scholastic achievement.
- Research involving how the training and preparation of new primary school teachers is perceived by Head-teachers and what further experience or instruction they consider necessary for the role.

- Research regarding how the experience and training of play supervisors affect the quality of play in state primary schools.
- An exploration of how comprehension of play theory and associated benefits of play influences the practice of primary school teachers.
- Evaluative research into the employment of photo-elicitation techniques as a method for teaching and evaluating risk assessment skills and stratagems for teaching professionals and other school staff.

5.7 - Summary

Finally, the semi-structured interviews and photo-elicitation techniques provided a plethora of detailed and rich data in an area worthy of research. Consequently, research findings contribute to understanding how risky play is perceived and may inform the practice and policies of Head-teachers, as well furthering shared understanding of the barriers to physical risky play in state primary schools. This research has examined the perceptions of Head-teachers regarding risky play as well as considering its barriers. This study has further considered the relationship between these factors and how they affect school policy and decision making regarding risky play. The research indicates that without knowledge of the benefits of risky play and a dedication to ensure children have an opportunity to access those benefits, facilitating risky play in primary schools is unlikely to succeed. As illustrated by Theo:

> *I have got to believe in risky, active play. You have got to have a total commitment as to why you want to do it, what you believe are the benefits for the children. If you are not committed to it, then I do not really see it working.*
>
> (Theo)

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Appendix 1 - Interview Schedule

Introduction

Ensure the following points are made and comprehended:

- Introductions
- Explain the purpose of the research and how interview data will be used
- Explain the minimal time the interview will require
- Explain the right to withdraw from the interview at any time
- Ensure the consent form is completed
- Gain permission for digital voice recording of the interview
- Remind participant of the age group to be discussed
- Display photographic convenient to the interviewee

Interview questions and probes

Probe: Is there a picture that catches your eye?

Probe: Tell me what you see in the picture.

Probe: How does that make you feel?

Probe: Would you be comfortable for a child in your school to do this activity?

Probe: Do you think the child is gaining anything from this activity?

Probe: Do you think any adverse outcomes may occur from this activity? If yes, what?

Question: What does risky outdoor play mean to you?

Question: Has there ever been a time when you have observed what you consider risky play; how did it make you feel?

Probe: What did you do about it?

Question: Naturally adults all have different attitudes to risky outdoor play, do you ever feel adults are too safety conscious or too free to allow risk?

Probe: What made you feel that way?

Probe: I have heard some school staff use comments like “you’ll fall and hurt yourself, stop running fast you’ll break your neck”.

Question: Have you heard anything like that?

Probe: How does that make you feel?

Probe: Do you think the adult’s attitude can adversely or positively influence the child’s attitude towards play?

Probe: Can you give me an example or scenario?

Question: Some schools are very cautious regarding risky play, do you think this is reasonable?

Probe: Why?

Question: When accidents happen at school, after the child is patched up and tears dried, do you ever worry about what the parents, staff will think?

Probe: Why

Question: What reasons, do you consider a barrier to allowing children to experience play involving risk in the School provision?

Probe: How does this influence your choices or leadership regarding risky play in school?

Some safety specialists including the HSE suggest risky play is limited due to lack of understanding of the purpose and nature of risk assessments as a document or practice to facilitate risk, where the benefits of an activity and precautionary measures are meant to enable outdoor play activities.

Probe: Do you think there is a need for guidance on play risk assessments?

Probe: How do you think this would best be achieved?

Question: Do you as a primary school head-teachers directly or through leadership try to avoid some risky play scenarios?

Probe: Can you give me some examples

Probe: Of the pictures is there any activity you would be less comfortable with?

Question: Some academics have suggested that risky play benefits are not considered worth the effort especially in light of fears of blame, worry about accidents or additional risk management strategies. How do these considerations impact on your professional decision making or school leadership?

Probe: So have you ever discussed risky judgements with school staff?

Probe: What benefits of risky play do you feel all school staff covering playground duties are aware of?

Question: Lot of UK children attending primary schools don't have access to safe play environments outside of school. Do you think that primary school need to ensure all children get the opportunity to experience risky play or do you feel that it's not the school's responsibility?

Question: What do you think are the potential barriers to facilitating risky-play for four to eight year-olds attending State primary school provision?

Probe: Under your leadership and with your approval does the school allow children experience play activities where they may get moderately hurt, running on wet grass, climbing, jumping of or over obstacles etc.

Question: All children like to play, do you think children gain or lose anything from risky outdoor physical play?

Probe: What?

Probe: Can you expand on that it is an interesting point?

Probe: Why do you think that is?

Probe: Tell me what influences your viewpoint

Conclusion

- Ascertain if the participant has any questions or anything further they would like to add
- Thank participant for their contribution

Appendix 2 – Pilot Interview Questions

Probe: Tell me what you see in this picture
Probe: How does that make you feel?
Probe: Would you be comfortable for a child in your school to do this activity?
Probe: Do you think the child is gaining anything from this activity?
Probe: Do you think any adverse outcomes may occur from this activity? If yes, what?

What does risky outdoor play mean to you?
Prompt: Give definition of risky play if dramatically different response given.

Has there ever been a time when you have observed risky play, how did it make you feel?
Probe: What did you do about it?

Naturally adults all have different attitudes to risky outdoor play, do you ever feel adults are too safety conscious or to free to allow risk?
Prompt: for example, some teachers report that parents are too cautious and may object to some play or school activities.
Probe: What made you feel that way?

I have heard some school staff use comments like you'll fall and hurt yourself, stop running fast you'll break your neck. Have you heard anything like that?
Probe: Do you think these are reasonable comments to children aged between 4-8 years in school.
Probe: Do you think an adult's attitude can adversely or positively influence a child's attitude to risk?
Probe: Can you give me an example or scenario?

Some schools are very cautious regarding risky play, do you think this is reasonable?
Probe: Why?

All children like to play, do you think children gain or lose anything from risky outdoor physical play?
Probe: What?

When accidents happen at school, after the child is patched up and tears dried, do you ever worry about what the parents, staff will think?
Probe: Why: reputation, blame, culpability?

Lots of academics and journalists blame schools for preventing risky play by being too; blame aware, fearful of litigation safety conscious or just not valuing playtime but with your experience why do you think primary schools limit risky play?

What reasons, do you consider a barrier to allowing children to experience play involving risk in the School provision?
Prompt: Parental anxiety, Fear of litigation, Fear of blame, in the event of an accident, from staff or parents, Fear of prosecution, Risk in play is not considered of value by school professionals
Probe: how does this influence your choices or leadership regarding risky play in school?

Some safety specialists including the HSE suggest risky play is limited due to lack of understanding of the purpose and nature of risk assessment as documents and guidance to facilitate risk, where the benefits of an activity and precautionary measures are meant to enable outdoor play activities.
Probe: Do you think there is a need for guidance on play risk assessments?
Probe: How do you think this would best be achieved?

Do you as a primary school head-teachers directly or through leadership try to avoid some risky play scenarios?
Probe: Can you give me some examples
Probe: Of the pictures is there any activity you would be less comfortable with?
Probe: What about the activity makes you uncomfortable

Some academics have suggested that risky play benefits are not considered worth the effort especially in light of fears of blame, worry about accidents or additional risk management strategies.
How does these consideration impact on your professional decision making or school leadership?
Probe: So have you ever discussed risky judgements with school staff?
Probe: What benefits of risky play do you feel all school staff covering playground duties are aware of?
Prompt: PSE
Prompt: Learning opportunities
Prompt: Practice and extension of physical limits
Prompt: Resilience
Prompt: Sense of achievement
Prompt: Understanding of personal limitations
Prompt: Learning to safeguard themselves

Lot of UK children attending primary schools don't have access to safe play environments outside of school.
Do you think that Primary school need to ensure all children get the opportunity to experience risky play?
What do you think are the potential barriers to facilitating risky-play for four to eight year-olds attending state primary school provision?

How is risky-play perceived by primary school Head-Teachers involved in the study and how might this influence practices, ethos and culture within the school environment?

What, if anything, do you consider the benefits or disadvantages of providing play involving risk?
Prompt: Encourages physical health, exercise, improves fine and gross motor skills
Prompt: Active risky play leaves children unsettled or excitable
Prompt: Opportunity to develop skills and reinforce learning
Prompt: Prevents children from pursuing riskier situations later as their appetite is for risk is managed in a monitored environment
Prompt: Risky play is wasting time that would be better served on curriculum subjects
Prompt: Development of risk assessment skills
Prompt: Vigorous outdoor, risky play rids children of excess energy and helps them focus in a classroom environment
Prompt: An enjoyable pass-time
Prompt: Outdoor vigorous risky play cannot supplement learning or skills
Prompt: Children do not learn from the risks they take

Do you agree with the statement?

Schools should make the most of play and learning opportunity in their ground
Probe: What in your opinion does this entail?
Probe: Does this include any aspect of risky play

Learning how to recognise and manage risks is not an important part of childhood learning in school
Probe: how does school endorse learning through play?

Which of these two statements do you most agree with?
Exposing children to risky play in the school provision is neglectful
The occasional childhood injury is a price worth paying for active outdoor play
Probe: Please explain why

I try to avoid risks with regard to child safety.
I am relaxed about children's exposure to some risk

Probe: why do you think that is?

School is not the right environment to experience risky play or learning methods
There is a need for play involving risk in the school provision.
Probe: tell what influences your viewpoint

Practical, hands on learning and play involving risks, should be a regular part of children's school education experience
Probe: Do you ever allow tool use
Are these regular hand tools or toy tools?
Probe: Under your leadership and with your approval does the school allow children experience play activities where they may get moderately hurt, running on wet grass, climbing, jumping of or over obstacles etc.

Thank for your time is there anything you would like to ask me?

Appendix 3 – Interview Analysis - Codes, Name and Description

Code Name	Code Colour	Code Description
Risky Play Perceptions	Black	Any comment where an activity or occurrence perceived to be risky play.
PSE	Black	Any comment expressing a belief that risky play bestows Personal Social or Emotional benefits or aids development.
Educational	Black	Any remark indicating a view that risky play is educational or enhances education.
Risk Assessing	Black	Any remark indicating the weighing of potential hazard or the outcome of an action.
Worry or Caution Regarding Risk	Black	Any comment conveying apprehension or anxiety regarding a verbalised activity.
Risk Reducing Measures	Black	Any comment refereeing to strategies that may limit harm or reduce the probability of a risk.
Effects Decision making, policy or practice	Black	Any remark indicating practices or policies are affected regarding risky play within school.
Cultural Influences Regarding Risky Play	Black	Any comment indicating a cultural stance regarding risky play within the primary school environment which may positively or negatively affect practice, ethos or policy.
Curriculum Demands	White	Any remark referring to fulfilling the National Curriculum demands which may impinge or promote risky play opportunities.

Barriers to Risky Play	Black	Any comment that denotes an impediment of risky play within the primary school environment.
Financial Implications	White	Any comment with regard to the impact of financial resources on risky play inclusion.
Fear of Accident	Black	Any extracts expressing anxiety of accidents or fear of permitting behaving in a manner which may result in an adverse outcome.
Fear of Blame	Black	Any comments conveying an unwillingness to allow risky play due to fear of criticism.
Fear of Prosecution and / or Litigation	Black	Any remarks indicating fear of prosecution or litigation in association with risky play.
Additional Training Requirements	Black	Any extracts where Head-Teachers indicate additional training needs associated with risky play.

Appendix 4 – Interview Coding Excerpts

Interviewer: Do you think any adverse outcome might occur from a photographed activity?

Johanna
Nothing terribly adverse; it depends. Sometimes you get a cohort of children who just do not click. For example, with the logs (Image 5), they need to depend on team or looking and watching out for each other. So carelessness, or the way one person is charging about may have a detrimental effect on whether anybody else wants to have a go on it. That is more about behaviour management rather than risky play. It is about other people's attitudes to different bits of equipment and how it could affect somebody else. I could see that possibly being a problem. If you are on the swing (Image 3) and you end up with someone who is just being totally ridiculous and you end up flying off, that is not going to make it a happy experience for you. Equally in the pond, if you fell in you might think, "Oh dear, I am soaking wet", and they will laugh it off. Equally you might think "I did not like that, that is awful". You are not going to know unless you give it a go. Generally speaking, I would say the advantages way outweigh the disadvantages. If it is in a school setting, it is the ethos and everything within a school that would help the success of the activity. It is about the sharing, collaborative, taking care of each other, that would need to be there.

Interviewer: What does risky outdoor play mean to you?

Johanna
It is the chance to do something a bit daring that might not have a predictable ending. Something that you think.... like the crates (Image 1), that sums it up for me because if he has built that himself or even if he has not, he has got right up there and there is nothing risky about that for an adult looking at it, but for him he is on top of the world. It can go higher. So for the crates (Image 1), I think yes, that should be there. There is a lot of it (risky play) in the early years but here we also do it for the older children. One of the outdoor activities is to go in the different environments, so the school woodland, the open spaces, shelters, climbing walls, big outdoor pencils, things that are taller and higher than the individual is. From the eyes of the child it looks, wow. All of that is in the school learning environment. I would categorise risky play as inspirational play or the inspirational aspect of the curriculum. In the same way that other subjects need to have that inspirational element to them. It enhances risky play is something you cannot pigeon-hole. You do not know the outcome. The success of it is by outcome and that is unique to this way of being. Back to what I said about other parts of the curriculum, as a teacher you give children to opportunity to go on and broaden and do more and discover in any subject. In risky play you still need to do that and not say, "Right, you have done your task, you have pegged all of those things on that line and you got all the way up to twenty, that's it, you have done it". Let the children go on as far as they want to. This boy on the crates (Image 1), would he put the next one on there and climb up higher? He might do. Are you going say no, you cannot? You are going to keep watching and make sure he is fine; you are going to see if he can. He might not be able to because how is he going to manage that? Are you going to finish that off and say, "No you can't", no you are not! You are going to let him find out he cannot. It is about giving opportunities without putting a ceiling on it.

Interviewer
How does it make you feel?

Johanna
Sometimes I have observed older children. An example is our pond; we trust the children to go around it. The risky play could be the challenge of, can you get your fishing rod out to the middle of the pond and dip something? All of that comes with an expectation of being fairly sensible. When I have seen an argy bargy, a tiff, between two boys right on the edge of the pond, nothing to do with the task, I would say that changes from risky play to dangerous play and then I would intervene and say, "No, sorry, if you do this you need to respect this" and stop it. Sometimes silly behaviour is a separate thing. I can picture the two boys now, monkeys. Silly behaviour is a separate thing. It is dangerous play that is going to spoil a risky activity and that needs to be stopped because that

is the type of thing that makes certain groups of people go, "no, we are not doing that". We must deal with the dangerous, silly play separately, not at the expense of allowing risky play to be sacrificed.

Interviewer
Some schools are cautious with regard to risky play, is it reasonable?

Theo
I have got to believe in risky, active play. You have got to have a total commitment as to why you want to do it, what you believe are the benefits for the children. If you are not committed to it, then I do not really see it working. Some of our young teachers come to me and think I am talking gibberish when I say "I want to see children outside learning". They say, "Why? In teaching time? But we have got to do this and we have got to do that". I have to get my newer teachers out of that way of thinking. The outdoors is an additional teaching resource. I have got make sure the outdoors is a quality resource. You cannot just send children out into a void. We develop our grounds so that there are a lot of natural things that can act as a resource. I also have to give them the confidence to do the things like the fire pit. One of my youngest new teachers is now building an igloo out of plastic milk bottles as part of a topic. She asked, "What can I turn it into in spring". I said "It can become a den in spring". The excitement, the planning that is going on in that classroom and the skills, maths and engineering, to build an igloo. She perhaps would not have chosen to do that kind of teaching had she not been inspired or given permission to do so. Some teachers are waiting for permission to do it. They sometimes have got the ideas but wonder “Am I allowed to?” That is where you go back to leadership.

Interviewer
When accidents happen at school, when the child is patched up and tears dried, do you ever feel concerned about what parents, teachers, or staff might think?

Theo
No, because we have a very good system where they take a little note back to the classroom and it goes home to the parents. Actually, there are no more accidents in our accident book than there are in other schools. In fact, there are less because the children have the opportunity to use different spaces, they are not all bombing around the playground. We probably have less accidents. Plus, I have to mention our ‘no timetable school day’, where there is not a set playtime, children go out as and when it is appropriate. The older children are able to elect when to go out to play as a class, or they can choose that some go out and some stay in. That is about keeping it safe. You saw some Year 6s asking for another ten minutes to finish a class-based activity before they go to play. That happens on a regular basis when your children electing to carry on with what would be deemed school work but it interesting and exciting that they are happy to do that, then you know you have got the balance right.

Interviewer
What do you consider a barrier to allowing risky play?

Theo
We go back to the fear of giving time to do those things. I have heard people say, "You can't do that in Year 6, that's a waste of time". It is the fear factor and often what I hear is, "and what would they say, when they came in?" Who are they? They are afraid of someone coming in and saying, "That is a waste of time". I know it takes a big leap of faith and a big belief to able to keep outdoor and indoor learning going. I am in a very unique positon that success breeds success. I introduced this to the school at a time when I did not have those pressures. I could see that it is not either play or classroom, it is one leads into the other. I have developed that over the years and I am in that luxurious position that we have a proven track record that it works. I think for new Head-teachers going in that it must be a bit difficult make the decision that we are going to be working in a very different, because it is very different, way because I believe this will work. I can give you an example, there was a school in ..... , that contacted us about eight years ago and we are still working with that school. I was over there just before Christmas; they are now a federation of three schools and have transformed the curriculum in all of the three schools and they underwent a recent inspection and got ‘Good’ in every school. They are proof that if you are willing to take what you have seen and heard and embrace our philosophy and method, you have got to know your

school, your children, your parents and work with them to develop your own model that suits your children. We have got to treat our children as individuals.

Interviewer
Is there any particular picture that catches your eye?

Finley
That one with the hammers does (Image 2), yes, definitely with the children. I presume they are hammering nails into pieces of wood. That does catch my eye there, not because it jumps at me as being unsafe or anything but yes, I would say that is exactly the sort of thing that children should be doing. That sort of thing we have done outside in our (school) garden area, we have trowels and things. We get the children to hammer nails into the wood to hang tools from. Which is fine. My attitude to that would be generally, well, if we teach and show you how to do it properly and show you the dangers, then if you do it properly and hit your thumb, well you hit your thumb. I would not be too concerned that they hit their thumb like that, I would be more pleased that they learned from it and probably use the technique properly. I certainly think that is something we have to teach, definitely. That is something we have done, using these crates to stack (Image 1). I am looking at that and imagining some people are thinking he is going to fall, that it is wobbly, but you are learning again. You would not stand on the higher one (Image 1) as it would wobble but the lower one, lower centre of gravity, you stand on that; it is on a soft area, I cannot see anything there which would cause harm particularly. I think they learn some really good things there. I think that is a really good activity, it is something we do here in school as well. We get the milk crates and get them built up and we get them putting a plank across to walk across them. Part of that is understanding, that actually at what point does it become risky and the children will work that out. They learn so much from doing these things. They learn about height, maths is in there, one more is too much, one less is not enough. That is great. Looking at that picture there (Image 4) it looks like a really well made piece of play equipment. With these (image 4) this is the one where I have seen some dangers with children. My only concern is, are there children standing too close to it and getting walloped on the head and they are really heavy and they swing back with real force. Again, you have got to teach children those risks and hope they take your advice because you cannot stand around hovering and helicoptering over them, otherwise they will never ever learn for themselves really. I think it is a problem we do have with some children nowadays. Some children are really, really protected by parents. They do not go out and do more adventurous things. They do not go off on walks and balance on logs across streams and that sort of thing and stand in their wellies in streams. I would be aware (Image 4); they are great and really good fun but I have seen a couple of accidents with these. I have not seen much with any other play equipment.

Interviewer
Do you think that primary schools need to ensure all children get the opportunity to experience risky play or do you feel that it's not the school's responsibility?

Finley
Definitely, yes, they have to. If you think about some sort of concrete, urban environment where there is not a lot of outdoor green space, they need to be taken to that sort of space. They need to explore themselves through play. It is part of that sort of educating the whole child is it not? If they are not getting something at home then you (as a teacher) have got to make sure you are doing it. Here, we do a lot of gardening, outdoor work, which we do because not a lot of children do that sort of thing. It is to take them away from that, at home sitting on their iPads, sitting on their computers and giving them more of a rounded view of life. I think that children now have a default setting of, if they are unoccupied, it is straight to gaming. Whereas in fact, we take them out in the garden and they are not going "Oh, I wish I was doing that", they are really happy doing it. That is what should really be their default setting. I think it was, probably, when I was growing up, the default setting was outdoors. You would go out for the day, whereas I do not think children do that anymore. I do not think they have as many freedoms as children used to have. They are not out building dens and fires. We (my generation) certainly learned a lot about risky play then. We did some quite dangerous things then which I do not think children necessarily do so much now. When I grew up in ..... we had a brook at the end of our road and we used to walk from there

Appendix 5 – Participant Information and Consent Form

University of Huddersfield

School of Education and Professional Development

Participant Information Sheet

Research Project Title: Caution Children Playing: Exploring the Attitudes and Perceptions of Head-teachers relating to Physical Risky-Play in Four to Eight Year-olds in Three State Primary School's in Northern England.

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. May I take this opportunity to thank you for taking time to read this?

What is the purpose of the project?

The research project is intended to provide the research focus for my Masters by Research dissertation. It will attempt to explore Head-teacher's attitudes and perceptions regarding risk exposure in 4-8 year olds.

Why have I been chosen?

As State Primary School Head-Teacher with experience of risk assessments for children between four and eight years of age you will have a valuable insight into your professions perceptions of risky-play. Your responses to the interview will be analysed and compared with responses of other professionals to determine the influence of risk in determining suitable play opportunities.

Do I have to take part?

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, so please do not feel obliged to take part. Refusal will involve no penalty whatsoever and you may withdraw from the study at any stage without giving an explanation to the researcher.

What do I have to do?

You will be invited to take part in an interview. This should take no more than 45 minutes of your time.

Are there any disadvantages to taking part?

There should be no foreseeable disadvantages to your participation. If you are unhappy or have further questions at any stage in the process, please address your concerns initially to the researcher if this is appropriate. Alternatively, please contact the research supervisor Ceri Daniels, School of Education & Professional Development, University of Huddersfield.

Will all my details be kept confidential?

All information which is collected will be strictly confidential and anonymised before the data is presented in my Major Study, in compliance with the Data Protection Act and British Educational Research Association (2011) ethical research guidelines and principles.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of this research will be written up in my Master by Research study and presented for assessment in 21st September 2016. If you would like a copy please contact the researcher.

Who has reviewed and approved the study, and who can be contacted for further information?

The research supervisor is Ceri Daniels who can be contacted at the University of Huddersfield.

Email: c.daniels@hud.ac.uk

Tel: 01484 478281

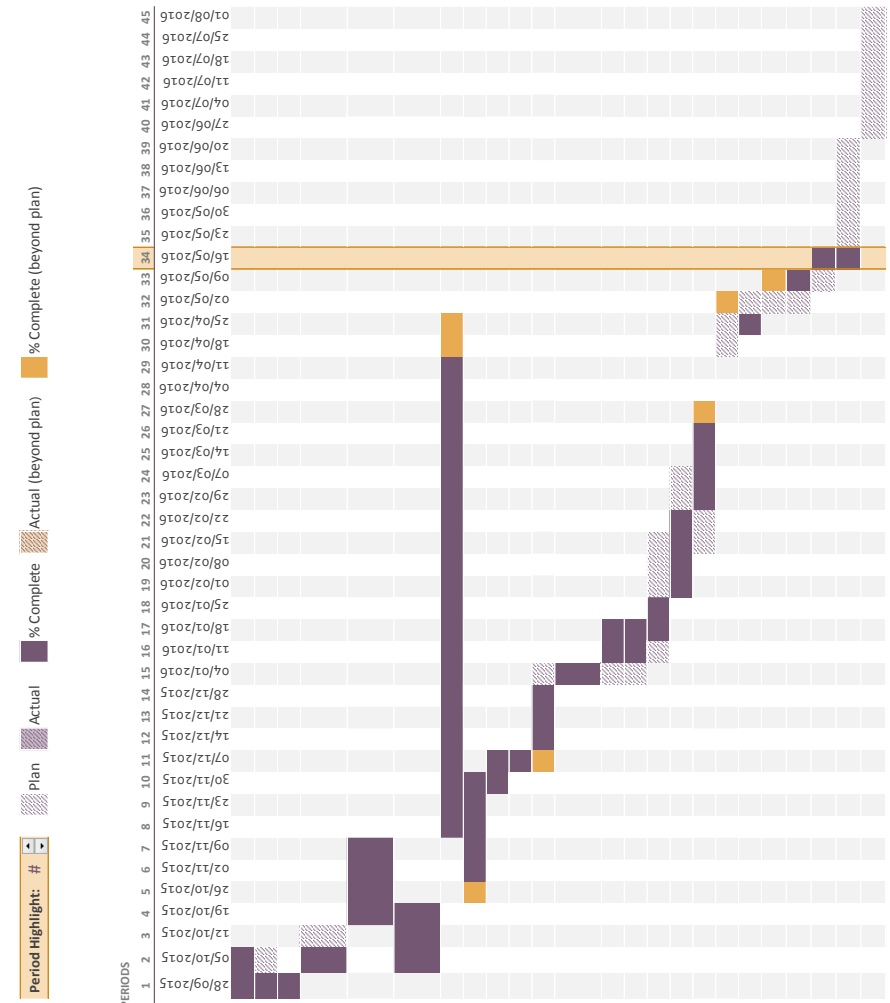
Name & Contact Details of Researcher:

Fiona Marie Wright

Tel: 07454 339354

Email: fionawright0041@googlemail.com

Appendix 6 – Research Schedule



Appendix 7 – Photo-elicitation images

Image 1 - Kable (2010). *When they are justifiably proud of themselves for reaching the top*

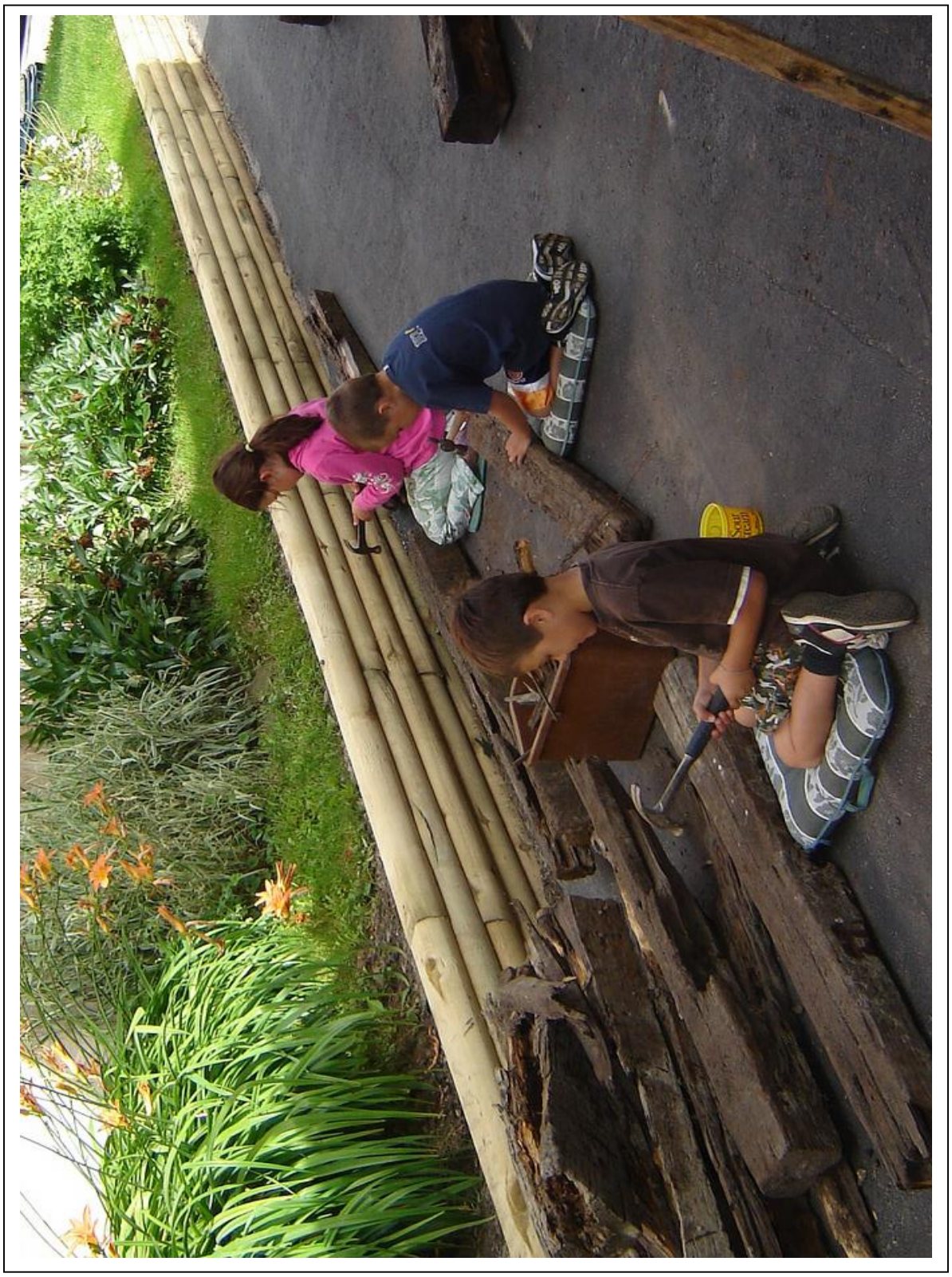


Image 2 - McLean, J. (2010). *Hitting the nail on the head*

Image 3 - Ben (2014). *Fishing for tadpoles*

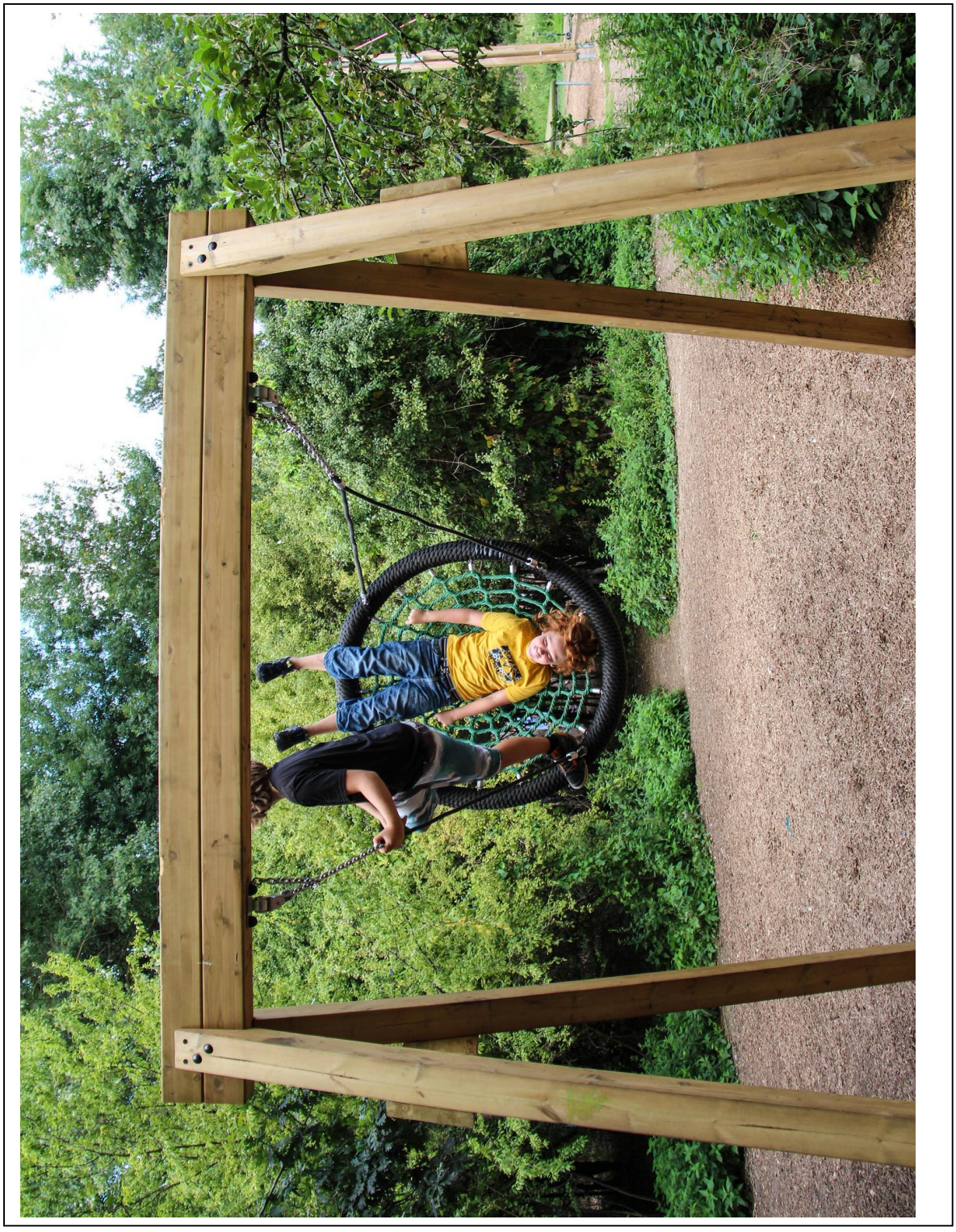


Image 4 -Barlin (2013). *Morden Hall Park Swing*.

Image 5 - Earthwrights (2012). *Children chiming on a log tangle*