ILLUSTRATING ADVENTUROUS PLAY



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Background

What is adventurous play?

Child-led activity where children experience feelings of **excitement**, **thrill** and **fear**; often this occurs in the context of age-appropriate **risk-taking** (Dodd & Lester, 2021), such as climbing a tree or going for a walk in the dark.

Why is adventurous play important?

Theorised to **reduce anxiety** (Dodd & Lester, 2021) through increased **coping**, tolerance of **uncertainty**, understanding of **physiological arousal**. Also found to improve **children's risk competence** (Lavrysen et al., 2017), and provides opportunities for children to learn **motor skills** (Fjørtoft, 2001).

How is adventurous play measured and researched?

Adventurous play is often measured using an adults' perspective, for example, through **parent** or **teacher report** (e.g., Dodd et al., 2022), or through **observational studies** (e.g., Sandseter, 2009). However, adventurous play may look **different for every child,** so this external perspective is problematic. We cannot know how children think and feel about their play unless we **ask them**. Young children's viewpoints are very rare in quantitative research on play, particularly play in school or nursery (FitzGibbon, Oliver, Nesbit, & Dodd, under review).

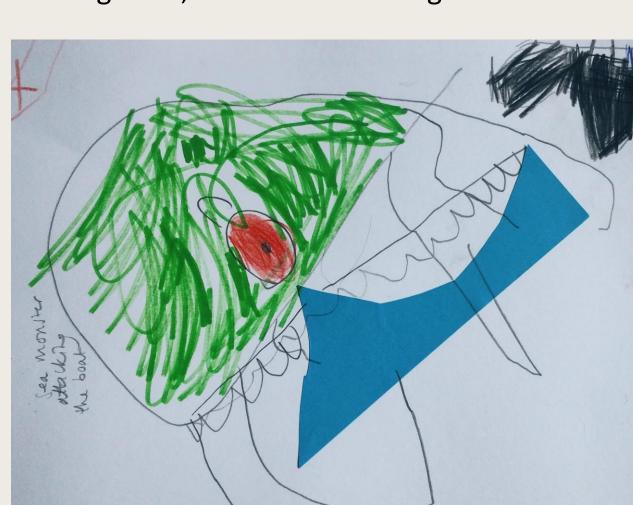
Taking the child's perspective

Some previous research has taken the **child's perspective** using qualitative methods including **multi-method mosaics** (e.g., Hinchion et al., 2021), and creative methods like **drawing a dream playground** (e.g., Ward, 2018). Children's **self report** has not yet been used to study adventurous play but is increasingly being **recognised as a valid** means of collecting quantitative data (Ruzek et al., 2020; Barnett et al., 2022).

Workshop artefacts



Kindergarten; slides and climbing



P2; sea monster attacks ship



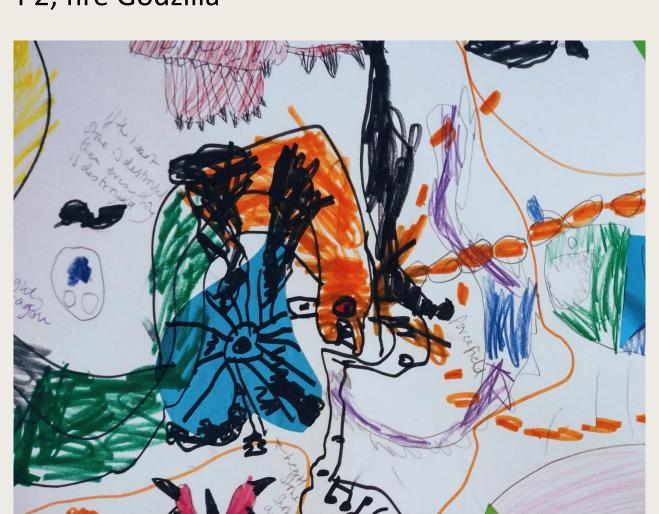
P2; dragon with a beautiful face



Kindergarten; swing, obstacles and lava



P2; fire Godzilla



P2; mighty dragon protects heart stone with forcefield

Project aims and methods

Project overview

In this seed project, I use a participatory approach to develop and validate a new pictorial self-report measure of adventurous play for use with 3- to 7-year-olds.

Phase 1: children participated in workshops (described below) to inform the researcher and illustrator about how they conceive of and engage in adventurous play. Phase 2: video data and drawings from these workshops will be thematically analysed. Phase 3: the illustrator will use the emergent themes to develop a set of illustrations to prompt children's self report. Phase 4: these illustrations will be validated for use as a self-report tool.

Phase 1: Mosaic-method participatory workshops

Participatory workshops were run in one kindergarten and one P2 (Year 1) class in Stirling, Scotland. The workshops were facilitated by Dr FitzGibbon and a children's illustrator Kasia Matyjaskek. The mosaic method (Clark, 2001; 2017) combined several participatory techniques (see below). Video recordings and workshop artefacts will be transcribed and analysed to inform creation of the illustrations.



Workshop reflection

In the playground, children demonstrated many examples of adventurous play, for example, **balancing across planks** of wood precariously placed between tyres, **jumping across large gaps** between benches and stacks of palettes, **chasing each other at high speeds** with wheelbarrows, and **dangling upside-down** off railings. Children were very willing to show off these activities to the researcher.

However, when it came to **talking about** and **drawing** adventurous play, or play at all, the primary-age children in particular quickly moved into **fantasy**, describing and drawing dragons and sea monsters and epic adventures (see examples from the artefacts). This suggests that adventurous play may be **funto do**, it is **less fun to talk about** and draw in realistic terms.

References

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