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The Graduate School
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EXPLORING GENDER ROLES THROUGH CHILDREN'S PLAY EPISODES IN AN
EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTING, AS PART OF PUERTO RICAN CULTURE: A
QUALITATIVE STUDY

A Dissertation in

Curriculum and Instruction

by

Marisel N. Torres-Crespo

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The dissertation of Marisel N. Torres-Crespo was reviewed and approved* by the following:

James E. Johnson
Professor of Education
Dissertation Adviser
Chair of Committee

Gregory J. Kelly
Professor of Education
Curriculum and Instruction Department Head

Stephanie C. Serriere
Assistant Professor of Education

Karen Johnson
Professor of Applied Linguistics

Glendon W. Blume
Professor of Education
Coordinator of Graduate Programs
Department of Curriculum and Instruction

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School.

Abstract

This dissertation presents an exploratory multiple case study conducted in a preschool center in the north-eastern part of Puerto Rico. The study explores in what ways four-year-old children's gender roles become apparent through play episodes, focusing on the following research questions: 1. What expressions of gender roles expectations are reflected in children's play? 2. How does culture influence or impact the gender roles decisions made through play? 3. What are the boys' and girls' preferred activities and toys during play? 4. How do parents perceive the culture (home, Puerto Rican, family, etc.) in their children's play? 5. How does the teacher see the culture (home, Puerto Rican, family, etc.) in her student's play?

Play and gender roles are my basic concerns and interests in the ECE field. Sadly, research in Puerto Rico about gender roles, play, and early childhood is practically non-existent (Canales Guzman, 2008). The rationale behind this study is to contribute to this new field by making an impact on parents, teachers, principals, and others in the education of our children, in relation to create awareness in equity and social justice.

This multiple case study was carried out in one classroom of a preschool center in Carolina, Puerto Rico.

After observing and interacting with the whole group during approximately two months, I chose the two boys and two girls using two different criteria. First, I wanted to have as my cases the boys and girls who represented the rest of the group in most ways. Second, I wanted children that are leaders, those that call your attention immediately when entering the classroom.

Data pertaining to children were obtained by three methods: direct observation of play episodes dynamics, structured task activities, and a focus group. All of these methods were directed toward describing children's behaviors and beliefs regarding gender-norms in the Puerto Rican culture and how their beliefs expressed on the tasks and in the focus groups are related to their social interaction and symbolical and object actions in play episodes.

Secondly, the study focused on the voices of the parents and the teacher. This study investigated the four children's parents' and their teacher's understanding and ideas about gender roles at home and school. These data were compared with the data obtained from children.

Discussion and interpretation of the findings was guided by Rogoff's cultural historical theory, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological

model, and Super and Harkness developmental niche framework.

The study generated evidence helpful in answering the five research questions. Gender role socialization among children in a Puerto Rican preschool center, specially seen in the dramatic play, seems largely determined by traditional stereotyped gender roles. However, there were also some indications in parents and teacher interview of tension, conflict, and change suggesting a culture in transition.

An implication of this study is that it is our responsibility to work with children during the early years and use educational arrangement and play to foster gender equity in society.

The biggest contribution to the ECE field is to explore what is going on in our own Puerto Rican culture to start creating awareness between our educators and parents about how to create opportunities that promote and encourage equity and social justice.

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Dedication

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Chapter I

Introduction

"So they went off together. But wherever they go, and whatever happens to them on the way, in that enchanted place on top of the Forest, a little boy and his Bear will always be playing"

Christopher Milne

Since I was a little girl I loved to play. At home, mom and dad always made sure I had a lot of playtime. One example is how I used to sit under the dinner table with my dolls and pretend that I was the teacher and they were my students. Mom would also let me play with her little bottles of nail polish. She never threw them out so I could play with them. I had about fifteen and each one of them had a name, a history and different characteristics. I played for hours.

Playing outdoors was even more important and fun. I had my own tree that I climbed with my dolls and spent the entire afternoon there. I also created my own three-story house in the bamboo trees nearby. In the first floor I had a living room and the kitchen, then I had to go down through the "stairs" to the bedrooms, and the last floor

was the patio. I had a lot of fun there until my younger brothers were big enough to destroy it!

The interesting part is that, now that I think about it, I can see a reflection of our culture, beliefs and expectations through my play. For example, the experiences that my parents facilitated for me were different from those for my brothers. I, the only girl, was always playing with my dolls; indoors or outdoors, they were always with me. Moreover, playing had always something to do with a house, teaching, or cleaning; the Puerto Rican cultural expectations for a girl. My brothers had different toys and themes. This is consistent with Sutton Smith's hypothesis "that role play allows children, especially girls, to prepare for customary adult roles that they are expected to assume, by imitating the easily observed activities of the people around them" (Pope Edwards, 2005, p. 93).

The central role of the family, another expectation of our culture, was embedded in my play as well. In my "little bottles of nail polish game", there was always a story about family. Each one of the bottles was a member of the family and I still remember the bottles that represented "mom" and "dad", and how the other bottles could not disagree with them and had to be together all the

time.

Based on my own experience I can assert that the early years are the best ones to encourage play moments and see through them the cultural context in which the young child lives. Consequently, I agree with the idea that the child is an active architect of learning and development who needs to be exposed to different experiences that will help him or her develop physically, intellectually and socially (Feldman, 2001).

In the spring of 1992 I decided that I wanted to make a difference in children's life through the field of education and particularly in early childhood education (ECE). We all know that the early stages of development are critical. From a historical perspective, philosophers like Plato and Comenius emphasized the uniqueness and significance of ECE (Wolfe, 2000), which gives us the foundation for development. From a scientific point of view, brain research has demonstrated how the brain itself can be altered in a positive or negative way, depending on how we expose the child to certain experiences (Shore, 1997).

The reason I became a teacher was because I believed that we, as educators, could change the world to be a better place. The irony is that I thought we were doing a

good job, but I was wrong! I did not realize that we were teaching the "knowledge" that would perpetuate the power structure that maintains divisions among people. Francis Bacon once said, "Knowledge is power", but who decides what or which knowledge? Is that knowledge fair to everyone, promoting equal opportunities for everyone in the community? In schools, teachers unwittingly perpetuate one vision, just one reality of the world, that which is natural and standard for the majority group (Banks, 2002).

As part of my education process I am now reflecting on everything related to play, gender roles and early childhood education. That is crucial in order to learn, understand, create awareness, and empower myself and others in the process of social justice and equity, beginning with our little ones in early childhood classrooms. A way to define social justice in relation to equity in gender roles is: guaranteeing ourselves and the educational system that we are providing children with the same opportunities.

Creating awareness is the first step. Trying to explain to my family what I wanted to do in my study created a bit of a fuss. I was talking about something that is unnecessary. They believe that there is no such thing as equity in gender. Boys are boys and girls are girls, and they need to behave accordingly. It was an

interesting discussion that showed me how deep-rooted are our beliefs, values, and attitudes with respect to gender roles.

Significance of the study

Puerto Rico's society has well established expectations for each gender. These are the foundations for stereotyped roles that limit equal opportunities for both men and women. Gender roles set up chores, occupations, and social norms "appropriate" for each one. Those roles are perpetuated and most of the time discriminate and punish attempts to transform traditional gender roles to create equity between genders (Puerto Rico Bureau for the Defense of Women Office).

In addition, in Puerto Rico, we have a serious domestic violence problem. According to the Statistical Office of the Police Department, in 2007 there were 19,222 registered cases of domestic violence and 17,671 in 2008. These are alarming numbers.

In schools, the system perpetuates what is natural and standard for the majority group (Banks, 2002) in the process of molding the adults in our society. Needless to say, this is an urgent problem that we have to address. A preschool setting is an essential part in the formation of

our children because they spend a lot of time there. That space and time frame allows for the transmission of attitudes, knowledge, experiences, and values (Canales Guzmán, 2008). Furthermore, in that time that the children spend in the preschool center they can rehearse different behaviors that let them construct their gender (Rodríguez, Hernández & Peña, 2004). Exploring this gender role construction in the early years setting can give us a glimpse of how we can modify certain behaviors to avoid unfairness and inequity in the future.

Teachers in Puerto Rico's preschools will have to be prepared to change or complement the biased or dated children's books, toys, and films, and to identify persons who can represent positive role models. They will also have to examine school practices and find different ones in areas such as curricular activities or student discipline (Bennett, 2003). To be able to do that, teachers need to have knowledge about cultural diversity (which includes gender roles), history, current events, and also be aware of their own prejudices. Otherwise, inadvertently, they will hinder the personal development and academic success of many students (Bennett, 2003).

Likewise, I believe that this topic is very relevant to the teachers in the mainland (USA). Puerto Ricans were

granted official American citizenship in 1917 as a result of the Jones Act and that citizenship allows Islanders to migrate freely to the mainland (Diaz Soto & Negrón, 1994). Consequently, teachers in the continental USA need to be aware of the differences in gender roles of Puerto Rican children as well as other Latin-Americans.

The Hispanic population in the United States increased by 57.9 percent from 22.4 million in 1990 to 35.3 million in 2000, compared with an increase of 14.2 percent for the total U.S. population. Population growth varied by group and Puerto Ricans increased by 24.9 percent, from 2.7 million to 3.4 million (Guzman, 2001). These projections have serious implications for our educational system because it entails that most teachers will have students from diverse ethnic, racial, and language groups in their classrooms (Gay, 2000), including a good proportion from Puerto Rico.

Therefore, the significance of this study lies in the attempt to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the ways the gender roles operate systematically in early childhood settings, and also the ways in which play can be used to foster equity and social justice.

Children like to play, so by observing, focusing, and reflecting on children play episodes, teachers can use that

as a tool to gain cultural knowledge about their students and create a classroom climate of equity and social justice. But it is important to clarify, that this doesn't occur automatically. The educators need to have an understanding of what needs to be observed, focused on, and reflected upon. That's why it is important to do this exploratory study, to know where we are and in what direction we need to move. If we want to create equity and social justice we need to provide children with the same opportunities in terms of gender roles expectations. In the desire for making equal opportunities, teachers can produce more informal and intentional teaching practices that can lead to a more social equity.

Consequently, the findings of this study will help early childhood educators in Puerto Rico as well in the Mainland to be more reflective about their own beliefs and teaching practices in a preschool setting. The study will also help to validate the use of play as a window of cultural knowledge.

Justification of the study

Play and gender roles are my basic concerns and interests in the ECE field. Sadly, research in Puerto Rico about gender roles, play, and early childhood is

practically non-existent (Canales Guzman, 2008). The rationale behind this study is to contribute to this new field by making an impact on parents, teachers, principals, and others in the education of our children, in relation to creating awareness in equity and social justice.

My general objective is to promote a clear understanding of how crucial and critical are the first eight years in the life of a human being. But my main objective is to establish our responsibility in preparing joyful, constructive, hands on, free, and play based activities that enable children to learn gender equity and justice in a very natural way, that will prepare them to develop successfully through school and life.

Accordingly, this study aims to explore the different ways that gender roles emerge in play episodes and how that information allows teachers to create equity and fairness in early childhood settings.

Research questions

This study focused in two areas: play in ECE and gender roles. The general research question was: In what ways do four year old children's gender roles become apparent through play episodes in a preschool center in Puerto Rico? The following research questions were

addressed as subtopics of the general one:

1. What expressions of gender roles expectations are reflected in children's play?
2. How does culture influence or impact the gender roles decisions made through play?
3. What are the boys and girls preferred activities and toys during play?
4. How do parents perceive the culture (home, Puerto Rican, family, etc.) in their children's play?
5. How does the teacher see the culture (home, Puerto Rican, family, etc.) in her student's play?

Chapter II

Review of the literature

The purpose of this review is to summarize knowledge that is pertinent to this dissertation and familiarize the reader with the state of research in the field. But first, it is important to address the theories or conceptual frameworks that structure this study.

A conceptual framework is an analytic strategy that describes a phenomenon in an organized way to provide a coherent description of what is going to be study, which in this case is related to early childhood, play and gender roles. It is important to find a theory that presents a framework for understanding the interactions among a methodical set of facts or principles occurring in the classroom (Feldman, 2001). That framework represents the “system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that supports and informs the research” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 33). Accordingly, I am going to frame this study within the cultural historical theory, the ecological theory and the developmental niche theory. All three of these theoretical perspectives recognize the significance of

context during the early years and the role of others in children's gender role construction. In addition, the following pages will focus on four major topics that are pertinent to my study: early childhood, play, gender roles, and Puerto Rican culture.

Theoretical frameworks

It is imperative to look more closely at the interconnections among play, culture, gender roles, and behavior in the children's own experiences in the preschool settings, as well as in their relations with others. My main interest is to explore and understand what happens in play in terms of gender roles within a broad range of cultural contexts. As Thorne (1993) clearly describes, children pick up the gender stereotypes that pervade in books, songs, advertisement, television programs, and movies. In addition, peer groups, steeped in cultural ideas about what it is to be a girl or a boy, also perpetuate gender-typed play and interaction. In short, if boys and girls behave differently, it is not because they were born that way but because they were molded that way; or in sociocultural terms appropriated these actions and intentions or patterns of thinking, feeling, and doing

linked to their gender or sex status.

Based on that premise, we need to use theoretical frameworks that recognize the reciprocal influence of individuals and their environments. To be able to seek a clear understanding of the focus of this research I need to frame my research in conceptual frameworks that guide me in contextualizing my study and that helps to interpret my findings. To do this, I will rely on cultural historical theory, Bronfenbrenner's ecological model and Super and Harkness's developmental niche theory.

Cultural Historical theory

When a child is playing in a preschool educational setting this is a different experience than playing at home or at a public playground. It is important to take into consideration the context in which children are playing (Pramling-Samuelsson & Fleer, 2009). In this research I studied how the gender roles in preschool children emerged through their play. I could not research this as a separate entity stripped from the children social context. What a child does in his or her play episode is intricately related to his or her cultural surroundings. Because of this, the Cultural

Historical theory was one of the lenses that I used to study children's play. This theory "assumes that individual development must be understood in, and cannot be separated from, its social and cultural-historical context" (Rogoff, 2003, p. 50).

Rogoff's writing on cultural historical theory encourages researchers to collect data in relation to personal, interpersonal, and institutional or cultural dimensions (Pramling-Samuelsson & Fleer, 2009). Because I considered this a good way to get a holistic view of what I studied, I used the same dimensions. Rogoff (2003) used a series of visual representations to clarify her ideas.

The personal dimension focused on the child, which is foregrounded with information about the child as an individual focus of analysis. But, at the same time, when you focus on the child surroundings, you have available the interpersonal and the cultural-institutional information that you need to analyze and understand what the child is doing (Rogoff, 2003).

If you want to focus, not in what the child is actually doing, but on the relations between the people that are around him, you need to look for the interpersonal focus of analysis. But again, to really

understand what is going on in the interpersonal dimension, you need to have a sense of the individual child and the cultural information (Rogoff, 2003).

The last of the foci of analysis is the cultural institutional dimension. A researcher using this focus of analysis will concentrate in particular people and things or artifacts and processes in the setting that reflect cultural, institutions and customs. For example, the social and educational practices that take place in the educational setting of my research contain symbols and entities. Constitutes and reflect Puerto Rican culture and heritage.

Barbara Rogoff's theory helps me to focus my attention on these three levels in turn instead of trying to analyze everything at the same time. This is a helpful analytic strategy or conceptual approach that she is recommending. Thinking about actions and objects in terms of three dimensions: individual, interpersonal, and institutional.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model

The second lens I used to do my research is the Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model. The preschoolers I did my research with are in constant interaction with

external factors, not only the teacher or the family.

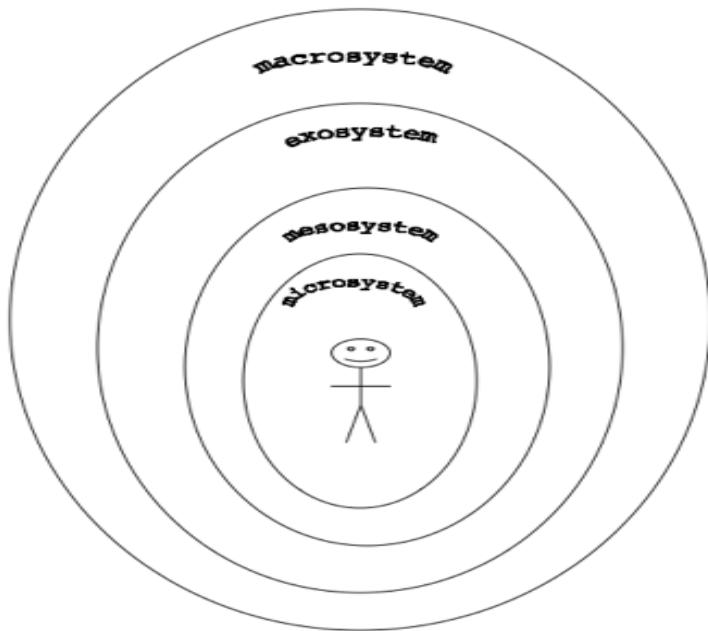
This model discusses the child's development within the context of the system of relationships that organize his or her surroundings. Uriel Bronfenbrenner (1981) defined the ecology of human development as:

"The progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected by relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded" (p. 21).

In the Ecological model, Bronfenbrenner describes a set of circles in which the smaller one is inside a larger one, which in turn is inside another, and so on. That represents four aspects of the milieu in which the child acts. The first one is the microsystem, the smallest circle, which represents the child's immediate experiences such as family, home, community and school. The second circle in the model is the mesosystems, which include the relationships that the child has in his or her microsystem; for example, the relationship between the family and the teachers at school (Lytle, 2003). The next circle representing the third facet of the ecology is the

exosystem. This system represents the settings in which children do not directly participate but are very influential, like parents' work or mass media. The macrosystem is the last layer, the big circle that contains the others. Ideologies and organizations of social institutions of the culture are present here (Rogoff, 2003). Figure 1 illustrates Bronfenbrenner's ecological system.

Figure 1. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological system graphic representation:



Based on that description, in my study the microsystem consists of the participant's family and the preschool center that they attend and in which the study took place.

The mesosystem includes the interactions that the teacher and the center personnel have with the parents and family of the children. The exosystem contains external factors that affect the children in some way, like parents' work and the programs they watch on television. Finally, the macrosystem comprises cultural symbols, social institutions, history, values and beliefs.

Since I am interested in exploring gender roles through children's play episodes in an early childhood setting in Puerto Rico, it is fundamental to establish the importance of the context in which the participants are active on a daily basis. Nevertheless, this theory might be somewhat rigid by establishing four different layers. Consequently, I realized that it is indispensable to add another theory, one that is more dynamic and can complement the Ecological model, simultaneously providing other theoretical lenses to describe each child.

Super and Harkness' Developmental Niche theory

The Developmental Niche theory allows parsing the child's daily environment in which the play episodes take place. The theory relates the systematic organization of human environments provided by cultures to the daily microenvironment that influences early development (Super &

Harkness, 1986). Each child has his or her own niche.

The developmental niche is formed by three subsystems that work concurrently as a larger system. Super and Harkness (2002) describe those subsystems as the physical and social settings, the culturally regulated customs of child rearing, and the psychology of the caretakers. Those subsystems have the task of being mediators between the child's daily experiences and the larger culture (Super & Harkness, 1997).

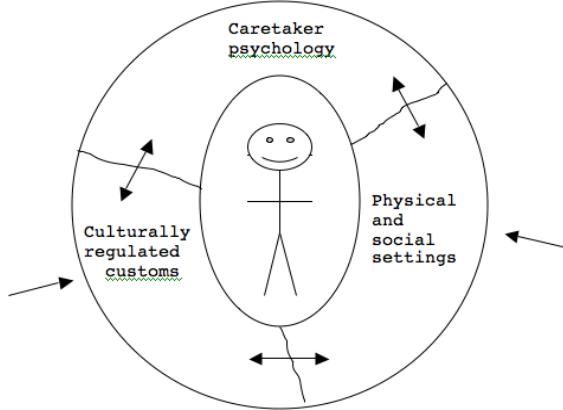
The first subsystem describes the physical and social settings in which the preschooler lives or spends a lot of time, like the preschool center. Super and Harkness (1997) explain how those settings are important in shaping what the child does in the classroom, not only through the kinds of activities that the center promote, but also in the expectations of all who are present there. The persons who interact in the preschool setting also influence the interactions that take place there; for example, the interactions between teachers, parents, and peers. In addition, the opportunities the child has to enter or leave a specific area of the classroom could be framed by cultural expectations.

The second subsystem, and the one in which I will focus, consists of the culturally regulated customs of

childcare and childrearing. Based on this subsystem, the parents and teachers tend to preserve the culture without being consciously aware. The practices they use to take care of a child are closely related to the cultural setting (Lytle, 2003) and could perpetuate a message without knowing it.

The third subsystem is the psychology of the caretaker, which is based on the beliefs, expectations, and goals of the person taking care of the child, whether it's the parents or the teachers. In other words, it refers to the experience of parenting, what they consider as the needs of their children, their goals of rearing, and their understanding of effective ways to relate with a child (Lytle, 2003). Figure 2 illustrates the Super and Harkness' Developmental Niche theory.

Figure 2. Super and Harkness' Developmental Niche theory graphic representation:



Based on this paradigm, in my study the first subsystem would be the preschool setting in which the study takes place and the interactions between teachers and peers while playing. Johnson, Christie, and Yawkey (1999) described how Super and Harkness proposed that children's interactions while playing can't be understood apart from the settings in which they occur.

The second subsystem reflects the practices the teacher decides to implement in the classroom and how she, without knowing it, could be perpetuating stereotyped gender roles.

And the third subsystem could be the way the teacher organizes and structures the activities in the classroom based on her own beliefs. The interactions between the teacher and the parents could also be a reflection of their ideals. Clearly, children play episodes are influenced not only by the social and physical setting, but also by the beliefs, attitudes, and values related to play that teachers and parents have (Johnson, Christie, & Yawkey, 1999).

In the following section I will present the necessary concepts to facilitate understanding and delineate the scope of my study.

Key concepts

As part of this chapter, in the following pages I will focus on the four major topics that are pertinent to my study: early childhood, Puerto Rican culture, play, and gender roles.

Early childhood education

UNICEF is very clear about the rights of children. In terms of education, boys and girls have the right to a basic one and through it, gender equity and fairness in the classroom setting (UNICEF). At the same time, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) emphasizes that parents should be attentive of ways to make the most of the learning opportunities available for their children. Those first eight years of life, which are the years covered in early childhood education (Morrison, 2004), are crucial in human development. Advances in research in how young children grow and develop point out that the conditions and experiences of early childhood have a permanent impact over the person's lifetime (Bosch, 2001). Children should be nurtured and stimulated during those years to prepare them for formal reading and math skills, besides the essential social skills necessary for a healthy, satisfying, and successful adulthood (NAEYC).

Parents are the children's first educators but, in our time, early childhood education programs are becoming more important than ever. Since there are more single-parent families as well as more families in which both parents work full time, many choose to enroll their kids in preschools centers. However, not all centers offer play-centered experiences that explore the children's talents and encourage them to be aware of their own identities. That is why early childhood educators need to become facilitators in the process of development (Zambrana, Negrón Landrón, y Aponte Medina, 2008). And that is why I consider that we are in the perfect historical moment to be part of the early childhood education field. It is very exciting because we are in the spotlight. It is also exciting because of the current emphasis in school readiness, early literacy, reading, and brain research. In other words, we are in the center of the current areas of educational interests, coupled with the growing awareness of the importance of the early years (Morrison, 2004).

Early childhood education has evolved rapidly in recent years as a result of the remarkable increase in knowledge about how young children learn (Morrison, 2005). This new understanding leads educators to see children in different ways and to acknowledge a more holistic view of

the child instead of seeing him or her as an empty vase. Consequently, teachers are changing their methods and are starting to value play as a key element in early childhood learning.

At the same time, the United States of America, and Puerto Rico as part of it, has continued to develop as a very culturally diverse society. Since that diversity is reflected in early childhood classrooms (Morrison, 2004), it is another factor that needs to be included in the knowledge base of early childhood education. Gender roles are part of that diversity.

Recently, significant effort and work has been dedicated to create awareness and equity in the classroom. In order for young children to experience optimum learning, early childhood educators must be prepared to meet children's diverse developmental, cultural, linguistic, and educational needs.

Schools that provide a nurturing environment where children feel accepted and where their identities are acknowledged make a positive contribution to children's learning (Hassanali, 2007). Those schools also represent an encouraging change from the conventional approach of teaching students in ways that are only familiar and common to the majority (Nieto, 1999). Consequently, it is

essential for the teacher to become actively engaged in learning through their interactions with students, rather than only transmitting knowledge.

Today more than ever, the field of early childhood is interested in improving the quality of early education and in research based practices. There must be a knowledge base supporting educational practice so that decisions in classrooms can rely on information that is more reliable rather than on individual intuition. Moreover, this has to take into consideration educational settings that promote and encourage fairness, justice and equity for everyone.

Focusing on Puerto Rico, Hernández-Candelas (2007) divided early childhood education in two groups: preschool for children from birth to age four, and early elementary school for children ages five to eight. This structure has been active since the beginning of the twentieth century, when Puerto Rico became a territory of the United States and the American K-12 system was implemented.

The Department of Education (DE) is the agency responsible for all public education of children from Kindergarten through high school. However, Glorimar Figueroa, representing the Early Childhood Education office in the Department of Education (DE), explained that the DE is responsible for only 12 preschool centers for the

children of their employees. (G. Figueroa, personal communication, February 23, 2009). On the other hand, Canales Guzman (2008) explained that the first group, children from birth to 4 years old, fall under the umbrella of the Family Department (FD). That Department (FD) includes the ACCUDEN office that administers Head Start and supervises private day care centers (G. Figueroa, personal communication, February 23, 2009). As is widely known, the Head Start program was created in the United States of America in 1965 and has been the most "successful, longest-running, national school readiness program" (National Head Start Association). Low-income Puerto Rican children under age five benefited from that program since they could not attend the private preschool centers (Canales Guzmán, 2008). The private preschool education, then, is the day care for children of families who can afford to pay (Canales Guzmán, 2008).

Puerto Rican Culture

Puerto Rico is a Caribbean island 35 miles wide by 100 miles long and we call ourselves *Puertorriqueños*. In the early 1500s, the Spaniards disembarked in Puerto Rico in search of gold and nearly destroyed the native Indian population through diseases, conflicts and overwork. Later,

since there were almost no natives left, the Spaniards brought African slaves to work. In 1898, the United States defeated Spain in the Spanish-American War and Puerto Rico was ceded to the U.S. as part of the peace treaties. Almost twenty years later, as a result of the Jones Act, official American citizenship was granted to the Puerto Ricans in 1917 (Díaz Soto & Negrón, 1994). In summary, Puerto Rico is a Hispanic Caribbean, racially mixed, U.S jurisdiction, not equal to a state, and at the crossroads between North America and Latin America (Colón Warren, 2003).

Before focusing on Puerto Rican culture, however, we need to establish what culture is and clarify why it is important to define it in terms of gender roles.

Bank (2007) defines culture as the unique values, symbols, lifestyles, and institutions that distinguish one group from another. We can add to that definition that culture is different ways of thinking, believing, feeling, and acting within a group, that are socially transmitted from one generation to the next (Gollnick & Chinn, 2006). It is constantly changing because groups transform, however culture also shapes the manner we see and understand the world. To summarize, culture is "the sum total of ways of living, including values, beliefs, aesthetic standards,

linguistic expression, patterns of thinking, behavioral norms, and styles of communication that a group of people has developed to assure its survival in a particular physical and human environment" (Redman, 2007, p. 194).

Beliefs, attitudes and values are key concepts in understanding the process of culture. Having an opinion, expectation, or judgment that an individual recognizes as real is what we consider belief. When we create a "package" with all those beliefs and use them to describe and evaluate a situation, that's what we consider an attitude. Finally, values are beliefs that tell us how to behave; it is an abstract idea, positive or negative, that defines modes of conduct and goals (Bennett, 2003).

Concomitant with values we have "stereotypes", which are exaggerated and usually unfair views of a group (Gollnick & Chinn, 2006). It can be an "accurate reflection of a group's norm; an overgeneralization, applying the norm to every member of the group or not allowing for variation about this norm; or it can be simply inaccurate" (Scott Mio, Barker-Hackett, & Tumambing, 2006, p 147).

Stereotyping is actually applying those generalizations to a group that could be negative or positive, without even considering individual characteristics of the persons in that group (Gollnick & Chinn, 2006). For example, gender

roles are clearly stereotyped in Hispanic families. Levin (2000) illustrates this in his description of preschoolers playing in the "house area":

Alfredo goes into the dramatic play area and starts setting the table with plates, forks, glasses, and napkins. Then he goes to the stove, fills the large bowls with "food", and places them in the middle of the table. -"Come on everybody, 'ya es hora de comer! Vámonos!" Let's eat!", he says excitedly. Nancy, David, and Ming decide to join the fun. Alfredo says: -"I am the 'papi' and I sit here and Ming is the 'mami' and she sits here, and you are the kids so you sit there. He then asks Ming to serve the food. David interrupts: -"No, I wanna serve me!" -"The 'mami' always serves the food", Alfredo insists, "Right Nancy?" Nancy looks between Alfredo and David. -"Well, at MY house my dad cooks and we take turns putting the plates on the table" (p. 56).

Being Hispanic, I can easily relate to that incident. I did not see anything wrong with what Alfredo did, but what Nancy said "shocked" me. In the same way, a teacher who is not used to diversity in terms of gender roles in the classroom could invalidate Alfredo's or Nancy's

statement. Awareness of gender roles is an essential tool for an ECE educator. Knowing their students facilitates the play dynamics that arise in the classroom. That example shows how by understanding children's play, the teacher can take part in the process of creating equity in the classroom by validating each gender and their cultural background. Teaching children how to interact and resolve cultural gender differences should foster better relationships among children.

Based on my own initial play experiences, I recognize that as children grow up they learn what their culture wants them to learn: the priorities, social conventions, values and beliefs. These are manifested in play patterns of independence and interdependence, family responsibilities, and ways of expressing emotions. Those patterns, in turn, stage-manage children's play themes and social relationships (Norbis, 2004).

However, issues related to sexuality and gender roles are basically considered taboo in Puerto Rico. As a result, there are few studies regarding the influence that culture plays in the development of the meanings ascribed to gender roles (Perez Jimenez, Cunningham, & Serrano-Garcia, 2007). Pérez Jiménez, et al. (2007) also described how institutions like family, church, school, and mass

media exert great influence on the transmission and acquisition of these roles.

Bronfenbrenner, and Super and Harkness have stressed that children learn through interactions with others and that in this learning process they begin to act and understand the world as their culture presents it. During play their behaviors, cultural values, and hidden agendas emerge (Test, 2006). Languages, rituals, tools, are some examples of manifestations of the implicit beliefs, values, and orientations that define a culture and that children represent in their play (Ramsey, 2006).

Play

In all the readings, conferences, and classes that I had the opportunity to enjoy since the very beginning of my career under the big ECE umbrella, I have consistently found a specific aspect that intrigues me. Play in the early years is that aspect. The capacity for play that children have has never ceased to amaze me. Playing between them or playing by themselves, they know how to do it like a beautiful gift that they received when they were born, but sadly usually lose in their journey to adulthood.

During this last year I also had the opportunity to familiarize myself with the issue of gender roles and how

they affect ECE practices in preschool. This combination of interest areas has led to the rationale behind this study: to give voice to the advocates for equity and fairness for everyone in the early year's classrooms, and at the same time empower play as a vehicle and tool to learn, understand, and acquire the gender roles awareness in the ECE settings that we aim for.

Another key element here deals more thoroughly with examples of how play is a vivid reflection of every child's cultural expectations and how the teacher is a vital element in understanding that and creating an atmosphere of equity. Every teacher enters the classroom with "theory glasses" on. That means that every activity, decision, or even a comment the teacher makes, is based on what he or she believes constitutes appropriate teaching practice. It is the "north star" that he or she will follow.

Another aspect to consider is that many of the skills that children in early childhood exhibit during play, mirror the values, child rearing practices, and social structures of their home culture. Based on that we cannot expect the same behaviors from children of different or even the same cultural groups, but we can observe patterns that can help teachers understand variations in play styles in the classroom (Teaching tolerance project, 1997). That

is why it is important to be familiar with recent research in the area. Moreover, in the area in which the importance of play has been devaluated (Johnson, 2006) we also need to validate it in terms of gender roles.

Play can be considered the universal language of childhood, the most efficient resource by which children understand each other and the world around them (Teaching tolerance project, 1997). But defining play is not an easy task. One point of view describes play as an enjoyable, self-amusing activity and another describes it with an educational focus (Youngquist & Pataray-Ching, 2004). What is or is not play depends entirely on how we frame the situation (Johnson, Christie, & Wardle, 2005).

For example, a child could be helping his mom mop the floor (chores), but if the child is imagining that he is a knight using the mop as a sword that is destroying the enemy (dirt), then it is fun and the child is playing. On the other hand, if the parent wants his or her son to play baseball and the kid does not want to, then it is not play. The child's distinction between planned activities, like piano lessons or baseball practice, and play, is very clear (Corsaro, 1997). Play is what children want to do and work is what they have to do. It could consist basically of "work" such as building, housekeeping, or picking up his

toys, but if they want to do that, they are playing (Teaching tolerance project, 1997).

During the early years, play is fundamental because it motivates their development. Through it we can perceive the child's emerging sense of self, cognitive processes, socialization, and physical coordination. In play, children decide between activities and make their own choices. (Van Hoorn, et al, 2007). It is normally considered as being intrinsically motivated and the universal performance of children, "not only present but also qualitatively similar in all cultures" (Gaskins, Haight, & Lancy, 2006, p. 179). In short, play is a common youth activity that provides an important context for cultural learning and may express concerns particular to each culture as well (Bornstein, et al, 1999).

Understanding the value of play and how it helps children become happy, healthy, and productive adults (Klein & Mills, 2002) is the key element in creating equity in a classroom. To corroborate that information, teachers should be aware of the "funds of knowledge" that preschoolers display in play. This term refers to the "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (Moll, Amanti, Neff,

& Gonzalez, 1992, p. 133). Although this study deals with play in general, it is particularly during sociodramatic play that teachers can most easily see children practicing the cultural behaviors transmitted by their families, or their "funds of knowledge". For example, family, food, holidays, music, values, beliefs, gender roles, and language, are themes that can be explored there (Riojas-Cortez, 2001).

In a study made by Riojas-Cortez (2001), she observed the dramatic play of Mexican American preschoolers. Through those observations she was able to distinguish themes that were very important in Mexican American families. For example, with respect to values and beliefs, they were very clear in their "sleeping arrangements": "boys and girls can't sleep together". Observing children's play through cultural awareness lenses can give the teacher essential information necessary in creating equity in the classroom.

Gender roles

Gender studies in education are the result of an academic and intellectual international movement that influences every one of the educational areas. The basic purpose of this endeavor is to encourage respect for human dignity, equality, and justice, in order to have a peaceful

and fair society (Rodríguez Del Toro, 2008). Significantly, in early childhood education, next to developmental age, gender is the best single predictor of how children respond in a given situation. It is a social indicator and an individual difference that determines how children behave, think, and play (Johnson, Christie & Wardle, 2005).

The concepts of gender and sex are frequently used interchangeably but it is necessary make a distinction and define both. Sex refers to biological differences between male and females (Schmalz & Kerstetter, 2006). Gender, on the other hand, is idiosyncratic and reflects degrees of femininity and masculinity (Schmalz & Kerstetter, 2006). In children, gender is described as a cognitive concept formed by their own experiences with behaviors usually associated with men or women (Thornton & Goldstein, 2006). Pérez Jiménez, et al, (2007) defines gender roles as a set of norms and beliefs about how men and women must act and think in a specific culture. It is socially constructed and it is active and ongoing (Thorne, 1993). Or as Cahill and Adams (1997) define it, gender roles refer to the socialization process by which children learn the values and behaviors accepted in their society.

This study aims to promote gender equity in the early

childhood settings. That entails creating a balance between boys and girls in terms of the opportunities, responsibilities, power, and rights that are presented. Equity is more than sameness; it promotes that men as well as women are able to achieve their goals without barriers that impede their development (Puerto Rico Bureau for the Defense Office)

As I portrayed in the beginning of this study, my culture, with its concomitant female expectations, was embedded in my play. In another example, when my daughter Paula was five years old, she saw a baby boy dressed in yellow clothing and Paula asked very seriously to the mom, "Why are you dressing Marcos like a girl?" In Puerto Rico, yellow is not a color normally associated with a boy.

Gender is an ever-present social influence. For example, in the United States when a baby girl is born everything in the room is pink and you can also see pink balloons on the door of the house; but when it's a boy, everything is blue. In South Korea, when a girl is born they put a coal black sash on the door and when a boy is born a garland of red peppers (Hyun & Choi, 2004).

Ramsey (2006) contends that gender entails a power discrepancy in our society and that children usually reflect that in their play. Boys tend to be rough, active,

and forceful, frequently engaging in physical contact like fighting and taunting. Girls, on the other hand, tend to promote cooperation among play partners and use communication to create a harmonious atmosphere (Fabes, Martin, Hanish, 2003). That is what our society (both U.S. and P.R.) usually expects from them.

Corsaro (2003) adds how role-play allows kids to experiment with gender expectations about the appropriate behaviors and give them the space to challenge and refine such expectations by sometimes doing something different than what is expected; like boys using a wig or a skirt. Briefly, playing reflects social and cultural norms and is how children assimilate and construct their emerging understanding of gender and cultural roles through their acting and interacting with others (Corsaro, 2003).

Hyun and Choi's study (2004) demonstrated those differences. Their research explored how preschool children from two different cultures (US and South Korea) perceived gender-based behaviors in classroom play. South Korean boys were more socially powerful than girls. South Korean fathers are stricter than American fathers in term of the expected roles of a man. Their culture emphasizes the need for males to know how boys and men should behave. That was clearly reflected by the way boys dominated in

their voicing and girls seemed not to mind the boys domination (Hyun & Choi, 2004). The study focused on the father's position in terms of social - gender roles, but Farver & Lee-Shin, (2000) showed how the mother perpetuates that also: "71% of the Korean American mothers and 43% European American mothers preferred their child to play with sex-typed toys" (p. 331).

Another example is what Rossie (2005) observed in Tunisian and Moroccan children. Those children were exposed to gender differentiation from infancy, as manifested in their pretend play and the objects that they used while playing. It is very common to see in their play reflections of everyday situations in their community. For example, it is expected that older girls take care of younger children while the boys, when they are about six years old, leave the girl's group and start enjoying more freedom, roaming the neighborhood more freely than girls, who are taking care of the young ones and doing domestic chores.

In another very interesting study, Kendrick (2005) presents an analysis of a Vietnamese preschool girl (Leticia) playing in the home area.

Pretend you go home and I stay here. I haven't slept.

Leticia positions herself outside of her home context,

separated from her husband and extended family while she recovers in the hospital. She suggests her husband return home for several days before coming back to pick her up. When he returns to the hospital, she wants him to know that she has not slept during his entire absence and asks that he take the baby from her and place her in the crib (p. 20).

This description shows that Leticia understands that a mother's role is to make sacrifices for her children and family. Another example of how gender identity making is reflected in her play is when she said, "A good wife is someone who will provide her husband with children as quickly as possible" (Kendrick, 2005, p. 21). For Leticia this is being a woman. During her play she never expressed interest in non-traditional professions for a woman, like lawyers or doctors; she always played doing domestic roles, being a teacher or a store clerk. Later the researcher found that those were the expectation of Leticia's parents, in accordance with their culture (Kendrick, 2005).

Johnson, Christie, and Wardle (2005) expose gender differences in communication and interactional styles. "Boys are better known for their more assertive, direct, physical way of obtaining what they want during play...girls

are better known for their more verbal and prosocial manner" (p. 93). Girls employ more make-believe play and use cooperative and facilitative initiation strategies with peers (Lindsey & Mize, 2001). Also, girls' play is "relational, inclusive, and highly verbal" (Frost, Worthman, & Reifel, 2001, p. 282).

Focusing now on Puerto Rico's studies, Canales Guzmán (2008) did a study in which she observed manifestations of gender roles through dramatic play, in two preschool centers. She found that in the initial selection of games and toys, children were very "stereotyped", but afterward they moved to neutral types of games. She also described how the teacher's role was very influential in the play interaction between children. Her conclusion was that Puerto Rican culture might be slowly moving toward more gender equity.

All of these examples demonstrate how, we, as ECE educators, need to understand the role that cultural context has in the discourse and actions of boys and girls, and how fundamental that is when attempting to interpret children's construction of gender in their play (Aydt, & Corsaro, 2003). The imaginative personalities children adopt in play reveal how they position themselves in their world and how they engage in the identity making embedded

in their culture. Frost, Worthman and Reifel (2008) posit a very interesting asseveration:

We know boys like boy toys, but what makes adults give boys those toys? We know that boys are more active than girls, and girls are more verbal, but do we as culture provide play opportunities to enhance or diminish those differences? (p. 214)

This study is descriptive but also transformative or emancipatory in its underlying educational research paradigm.

The purpose of this dissertation is to validate equity and fairness for everyone, and at the same time empower play as a vehicle and tool to understand gender roles in the ECE settings. Unless issues such as social justice and gender bias are raised, children come to believe simply that life within contemporary gender boundaries is natural and correct (Chick, Heilman-Houser & Hunter, 2002). Through this review of the literature we have seen that all children play and enjoy that time in which they can explore and take risks with gender roles. Based on that, teachers are a crucial part in the process of creating play spaces in the classroom and being aware of the interactions there. The way children use play as a cultural activity is influenced by the demands of a specific context (Goncu &

Gaskin, 2007). Within that context, those interactions and play episodes provide special windows for teachers if they know what and how to observe the cultural representations that kids employ while playing. Through play we can promote equity in the classroom and encourage good relationships regardless of gender.

Through this review of the literature, I have been able to become familiar with considerable research about how values, gender expectations, and beliefs are reflected through play. Recent research has focused on studying play in one particular culture, play in cross cultural studies, and studying children from one country that are living in another.

Observing play is a privilege that gives us glimpses of children's perceptions, questions, fears, and ideas. Careful and systematic observations allow us to do this. Through skilled observation the teacher can learn what is going on in children's minds, between and among children, and children in relation to their cultural context. We should focus on all kinds of play, not only dramatic play. Let's open that window and let in the myriad opportunities for cultural learning about gender and play and young children that emerge and can be discerned with careful study and discipline inquiry.

Chapter III

Methodology

Given the exploratory nature of this research, a qualitative study design and methodology was employed. The primary research question of this study is: In what ways do gender roles of four years old children become apparent through play episodes in a preschool center in Puerto Rico? In addition, the study aims to explore (1) what expressions of gender roles expectations are reflected in children's play? (2) how does culture influence or impact gender-role decisions made through play? (3) which are the preferred activities and toys of boys and girls during play? (4) how do parents perceive the culture (home, Puerto Rican, family, etc.) in their children's play? (5) how does the teacher perceive the culture (home, Puerto Rican, family, etc.) in her students' play?

Qualitative research provides an established field dedicated to the inquiring process in the social and human sciences (Lucca & Berrios, 2003), that attempts to understand whoever and whatever are being studied from their own perspective. Moreover, the study of social interactions is based on the assumption that social reality is constructed and depends on multi-layered contexts that

need to be described in detail, to fully understand any event being investigated (McMillan & Wergin, 2006). Hence, in order to be able to answer these research questions it is indispensable to rely on strategies within methodologies that allow us to hear the voices, the stories, and the realities of the participants, instead of simply focusing on numbers. By focusing on gender roles in children's play we also take into consideration their surroundings and cultural background, recognizing the importance of understanding the relationships among children with their peers, families and teachers. Therefore, it is necessary to incorporate observations, interviews, and other methods, in order to produce a qualitative study that reveals dimensions of early childhood that are impossible to capture quantitatively (Hatch, 2007).

Research design

This study follows the multiple case study approach in order to be able to gain an in-depth understanding of play episodes of four (4) children in an early childhood center in Puerto Rico. Exploratory design is also part of this case study since I also aim to influence policy, procedures, and future research. Hancock & Algozzine (2006) consider exploratory design as "often a prelude to

additional research efforts and involves fieldwork and information collection" (p. 33).

Since this study is based on the methodology of "case studies", it is essential to frame it in the context of this research. A case study involves a range of data collection as the researcher attempts to build a deepness picture of a specific situation (Creswell, 1998). In this study, the situation consists of the expressions of gender roles in preschoolers' play episodes.

The review of literature shows that some sort of dilemma often arises regarding "what my case is" and "where my case leaves off" (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Merriam (1998) posits that a qualitative case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit. Yin (2003) adds that a case study is an empirical examination that investigates an event in a real life context. And Miles & Huberman, (1994) complemented that definition as "an event of some sort occurring in a bounded context. The case is in effect your unit of analysis. Studies may be of just one case or of several" (p. 25). A graphic representation of a case study could describe it as a circle with a heart in the center. The heart is the center of attention of the study,

while the circle defines the limits of the case. (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

There are three different types of case studies. The first one is the intrinsic case study, which contributes to a better understanding of a particular case. The second is the instrumental case study, in which a specific case is studied to provide insight about a subject or to formulate a generalization. The third one is the collective or multiple case studies, which involves looking at several cases and allows you to investigate a phenomenon, population or general condition (Glesne, 2006). Since in this study I am going to be looking at several cases, I will rely on the third type, the collective or multiple case studies.

This approach provides also a valuable tool for an in-depth understanding (Creswell, 1998) about how to observe children's play episodes in terms of gender roles. Yin (2003) contends that a case study is chosen when the researcher has little control over the event and when the focus is on a real life situation. This type of research is implemented by carrying out a detailed and comprehensive data collection process that relies on multiple layers of evidence such as observations, documents, and interviews (Yin, 2003). The research findings are then analyzed and

presented in a narrative description (Stake, 2000).

Another key element in the decision of choosing case study as a research method is that case study is a "highly personal research" (Stake, 2000, p. 135). Not only are the children studied in depth, but also this research method encourages the researcher to include his or her personal perspective into the interpretation (Stake, 2000). In that way, this study allows me to reflect on my role as a Puerto Rican woman and a Puerto Rican teacher in the early childhood field.

Narrative descriptions in a case study create an image through colorful descriptions (Merriam, 2002). In this study, these descriptions attempt to convey the contextual meaning from the perspectives of children, parents and teacher through interviews, observations, structured games and focus groups. This provides a realistic understanding of the importance of observing and interpreting children's play in terms of gender roles within a specific culture.

McGuffey and Rich (1999) promoted the use of case studies to study gender roles in children because it is important to observe the micro level where the researcher can see face-to-face social interactions. Their case study provided empirical evidence about the ways in which boys

and girls negotiated gender relations in a specific social context. Gender type behavior is something dynamic that must be continually created and recreated.

Another example of a case study as a useful research design option is one by Skattebol (2006). She studied an early childhood setting with the intention to improve the center's approach to equity. The established pattern of play enabled children of both genders to make a wide set of play choices. But Kyle, the case studied, wanted to establish himself as dominant within peer networks, through expressions of masculinity. In the process of establishing himself as an attractive playmate, he defied the established pattern of cross-gender play at the center and appealed to other boys to engage in same sex and stereotypical masculine play.

In summary, by utilizing the case study research method, I am also able to explore in depth how gender roles expressions emerge in play episodes.

It is important to emphasize that the data collected in this study derives from a small population and therefore, findings seek to offer modestly empirically based conclusions and encourage additional research. These findings do not pretend to generalize about all Puerto Rican preschool children's expressions of gender roles

through play episodes. Rather, I seek to explore what is personally and socially valuable in terms of gender roles within Puerto Rican culture as a potentially distinctive and meaningful means for understanding children, and teacher and parents beliefs about the same.

Research Center

This multiple case study was carried out in one classroom of a preschool center in Carolina, Puerto Rico. Carolina is a large city in the northeastern part of the Island. The center was built in 2004 inside the perimeter of a university and started operations in 2005. The program operates on a full day (7:30am - 5:00pm), academic-year schedule and serves approximately 60 children from 3 years to 5 years of age. The families can perhaps best be characterized as essentially middle/working class and lower/middle socio-economic class status families.

The Center, as part of the School of Education of a private university, is the result of the initiative of a group of professors committed to early childhood education. The purpose of the center is to benefit the children of the university's employees and students, as well as the adjacent community. The center also helps future early childhood teachers in their field experiences and practice.

This center was selected because its teachers encourage girls and boys to use play as a learning strategy, allowing them to explore, create, and enjoy their experiences in the center. This promotes positive experiences intended to cultivate a holistic development.

The Center's philosophy has its foundations on recent research about the development and learning of children from 3 to 5 years old. This presupposes that girls and boys are active creatures that construct their own knowledge through their interactions with the environment that surrounds them. Teachers are facilitators of that process and as such, provide learning experiences based on themes that rely on play as the main learning strategy. Through play, children adapt to the school setting with positive attitudes and learn at the same time. Naturally, Puerto Rican culture is reflected throughout the entire curriculum, developing values that identify the center as Puerto Rican.

In order to nurture a holistic development, teachers in the Center take into consideration the social, emotional, physical, cognitive, linguistic and creative aspects of development. This leads to activities that foster the formation of a well-rounded personality besides allowing the students to construct their own knowledge. The

goal is both individual and social, by helping to develop a new generation of healthier children physically, socially and emotionally, who are self-sufficient individuals able to solve problems in a fair and harmonious way.

The Center uses the Integrated Curriculum, which takes into consideration all the different dimensions of development. This curriculum can also be attuned to the needs of every child and allow for individual attention to those who require it.

Physical facilities

The Center is a one-story building painted with bright colors and two large cement crayons as decoration. From outside, one can see many crystal windows and doors that allow parents to see what is going on inside. Even though as a visitor one can see inside, the security measures are extreme. Besides a security guard in the area, a sophisticated system of security cameras is in operation 24 hours a day.

To gain access to the building the receptionist has to open the door from the inside, requiring identification and registration. Even parents have to go through all the security procedures to have access to the reception area. Another door has to be opened from inside in order to have

access to the classrooms.

The Center has three classrooms: the 3 years old group, the 4 years old group, and the 5 years old group. (A more detailed description of the classrooms is provided in Chapter 4.) Each classroom has a teacher and two assistants who help with the daily routine. All of them have preparation in early childhood education and have the constant support of a psychologist and the professors of the School of Education, to which the center is consigned. The Center also has a nurse and a nutritionist to provide for a healthy and appropriate environment. The children receive breakfast and lunch, that are prepared in the Center's own kitchen and certified by the nutritionist. Additionally, the Center has a patio, which is an essential part of the curriculum, since outdoor play is promoted.

The 4 years old classroom was selected for this study. That specific group was chosen because of both the children's age and the teacher. In terms of the age, Aydt and Corsaro (2003) posit that by the end of their third year, children become very accurate in recognizing their own gender. Adding to that, Roger and Evans (2008) noted that "studies suggest that by the age of four, children already have a firm understanding of the social worlds in which they live: they are classed, raced and gendered" (p.

117). Therefore, 4 years old children are expected to be cognizant of their gender, which could be easily expressed through play. With respect to the teacher, she was very open to the research, expressed her interest in the topic, and strongly believes in the importance of free play.

Although a description of the classroom is included in the next chapter, it is necessary to illustrate here the research setting.

Looking at the classroom from the door, one sees seven different areas on the sides of the classroom, and in the middle there is a rug area and two working tables. The first two areas are not educational areas. Those are the teacher's area, with her desk, files, and personal belongings; and the "reflection area", in which misbehaving students are assigned to sit for a while and reflect about their behavior.

The first play area in which I observed the students is the blocks area on the left side of the classroom. This area also has a rug in the middle and shelves with boxes filled with blocks. The boxes are plastic and transparent, allowing the children to see what is inside. Inside each box there are different educational building sets, like gears, for example. The children can choose plastic and colorful building sets or wooden ones.

Next to it is the art area. That area has an oval table in the middle and has shelves around it with all the materials necessary for artistic or graphic expressions. On one shelf there are all kinds of blank papers of different sizes, for them to work on. On another shelf behind the table there are sixteen boxes, like shoe boxes, with art materials. Pencils, markers, crayons, aprons, brushes, finger paint, and glues are some of those materials. Next to that shelf there is a cart with other materials, like modeling clay, ribbons, and craft materials. Finally, on the right side of the middle table, there is a wood division in which the students can expose their paper artwork.

The following area is the theater area. That area has a wood puppet stage painted with green, yellow, and red colors. The curtain is pink and red. On the side of the stage is the puppet stack with different puppets. Those puppets represent either animals or humans. Among the "humans" there is only one white girl puppet, and it is dressed in a pink gown. There are also three black girl puppets dressed in a purple and pink dress.

The last and largest area is the housekeeping area, located in a corner of the classroom. It is divided in three sub-areas, the bedroom, the kitchen, and the living

room.

The bedroom consists of a wooden set with a closet, a bed, a night table, and a mirror. In the closet there is an iron, dolls, hangers, and a set of daily clothes and police, firefighter and astronaut costumes. On the bottom of the closet there are high heels and other shoes. The bed is covered with a multicolor mini comforter and a pillow. In the night table the children will find jewelry. Every piece of furniture has a piece of paper with its name on it.

The kitchen also has a set of wooden furniture simulating the stove, microwave, fridge, sink, the dinner table, a pantry, and places to keep stuff. The dinner table has plastic placemats on it. On the pantry the children keep the plastic foods, like bread, vegetables, meats, and so on. In the cabinets under the stove and sink, there are plates, cups, forks, spoons, and so on. There is also a mop and a broom in one corner. Like in the room area, everything has its name on it.

Lastly, the living room area has a sofa, a chair and a center table. The sofa and the chair are yellow. Obviously, everything in these three sub-areas attempt to recreate a house setting.

After observing and analyzing all the areas in the

classroom, I noticed that none was gendered in any way. All the colors used were either neutral or equally divided in feminine or masculine associated colors. I did not find any stereotyped area either. The housekeeping area has girls' and boys' costumes, clothing, accessories and shoes.

Participants

At the beginning of the study, the participants were all the children from the 4 years old group, and most of them were in their second year at the Center. The parents and the teacher were also participants in the study. After obtaining Institutional Review Board's (IRB) approval to insure the anonymity of the school, district, and participants, I met with the parents to explain the purpose of the study. Then, letters were sent home to parents, requesting their consent to allow their child to participate in a study about gender roles and play in a preschool setting. Of 20 families who returned consent forms, only two parents declined to allow their sons (both were boys) to participate. In general, the response rate for the study was high, exactly 90%. After the parents signed the letter and I had all the necessary requirements to start my research, I started to visit the Center every other day for three months. At the beginning of the study,

I observed all of the children and took notes about their play episodes. Then, based on that, I chose 2 boys and 2 girls as my four case studies.

Glense (2006) explained that in qualitative research it is admissible to select cases that the researcher considers the most appropriate to lead to rich information regarding the research questions. Patton (2002) categorizes purposeful sampling in 16 different strategies, from which I will focus on one: homogeneous sampling. This means that the researcher selects all the similar cases in order to describe some subgroup in depth.

After observing and interacting with the whole group during approximately two months, I chose the two boys and two girls using two different criteria. First, I wanted to have as my cases the boys and girls who represented the rest of the group in most ways. For example, those who expressed gender roles through play. Second, I wanted children that are leaders, those that call your attention immediately when entering the classroom.

In conversations with the teachers and my own observations, I concluded that those four students represented the ideas of the entire group. They were leaders and at the same time, liked to play together. In addition, in them I was able to see remarkable expressions

of gender while playing.

For the purpose of this dissertation I will use pseudonymous to represent the children. The two boys are Diego and José and the two girls are Andrea and Normita.

Data collection methods

In a qualitative study it is essential to do everything possible to contribute to the trustworthiness of the research. The best way to do that is by using "triangulation". Creswell (1998) defines triangulation as the use of multiple methods of collecting data to provide corroborating "evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective" (p. 202). This strategy reduces the risk that the researcher arrives at limited or biased conclusions because of the use of only one source of recollecting data (Maxwell, 2005).

Since I am using a qualitative approach, I relied on several sources of data collection: journal, observations, specific tasks with the kids, and parents' and teacher's interviews.

Researcher journal

The data was collected during sessions of three (3) hours, three (3) days a week, during 8 weeks, for a total

of seventy-two (72) hours of observation. The journal was a key element in the process because in it, I kept observations, notes, drawings, and responses of the participants, as part of the evidence required in rigorous qualitative research methodology. The journal provided a constant means of reflection and supplied in written form the researcher's thoughts, concerns, and any other possible aspect of the process.

Later, at home, I reread the notations made during the observation session and transferred them to a well-organized notebook divided by child, so that each child had a different section in it. Through that technique I could review what I had observed and determine what were the themes and the children that I wanted to focus on. In the next table (Table 1) I will show a timeline in which I describe what I did and when.

Table 1: Research methods timeline

	November 08	December 08	January 09	February 09
Andrea	Play observations	Play observations Structured games	Play observations Structured games Focus groups	Play observations Parents interview
Normita	Play observations	Play observations Structured games	Play observations Structured games Focus groups	Play observations Parents interview
Diego	Play observations	Play observations Structured games	Play observations Structured games Focus groups	Play observations Parents interview
Jose	Play observations	Play observations Structured games	Play observations Structured games Focus groups	Play observations Parents interview

Observations during playtime

This research focuses on how children learn, interpret, assimilate, construct, and express gender roles in early school experiences and how they reveal their gender norms through play. But why observing children play? Vygotsky (1978) summarize the answer of that in a very simply way:

"Play creates a zone of proximal development in the child. In play, the child always behave beyond his average age, above his daily behavior; in play it is as though he were taller than himself. As in the focus of a magnifying glass, play contains all developmental tendencies in a condensed form and is itself a major source of development" (p. 102).

I, as a researcher, want to use play as the window who will

let me see the cultural instances of the emerging gender roles.

Observation is a basic method in qualitative investigation, which allows to understand multifaceted interactions in natural social settings (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). It is also defined as a "systematic or more informal, participatory or not -the most important methodology in research on children's play" (Meire, 2007). Through observations we explored the children's play and also examined children's expressions of gender roles expectations, preferred activities during play, and how peer culture impacts those activities.

I used an observer as participant stance, from Gold's (1958) classic typology. In the observer as participant method, the group knows beforehand the research observer's activities (Merriam, 1998), and gathering information is the principal intention, not the participation (Glesne, 2006).

In the early stages of the study, I went to the classroom and introduced myself, then explained to the kids what I was going to be doing there. The observations sessions were conducted during "assembly meeting", "free play", and "outdoor play" periods, in a span of about three hours. I usually stationed myself in a child-size chair,

near one of the play areas, took notes and wrote detailed narratives of events, with particular attention to words, gestures, and the dynamics that took place. Since the children included me in their conversations, I was able to get more information from them.

In the "assembly meeting" the teacher called each child and asked them in which area they wanted to be. Invariably, the first 5 children (girls and boys) wanted to be in the dramatic play area. Then, the others decided among the other areas (Blocks, Puppets, Art, Library, and Writing). They were allowed to change between areas as long as there were no more than five students per area. If someone left, another could come. Needless to say, everyone wanted to visit the dramatic play area. Johnson, Christie, and Wardle, defined this area as the "traditional housekeeping area, with child-size furniture, dolls, clothes, and props" (p. 172). It is also the area in which most observations took place, because of the interactions that are generated there.

When the "free play" period ended, the children stood in a line to go to the patio for the outdoor playtime.

Playing structured games with the participants

The purpose of these activities was for the

participants to generate data about their beliefs regarding gender norms and to see how that influenced the way they play with their peers. This method was very useful for this study because it explored the participant's knowledge and experiences. All the children participated in these next three activities.

The first activity consisted of showing each child pictures of different toys or games typically available in early childhood settings (See Appendix I). Two baskets were placed on a table and the children were asked to place in one basket all the pictures of toys or games he or she would never play with and why. In the second basket they had to put the ones that they might use and why?

The second activity consisted of showing pictures of different occupations being performed by each gender. For example, one picture was from a policeman and the other from a policewoman. I then asked the children which one was correct, which was not, or if both were correct.

This activity proved to be more difficult than expected. The first set of pictures (See Appendix II) represented a particular job usually done by a man and the same job being done by a woman. The problem was that the pictures were not identical, apart from the difference in genders. When asked the children which one was or was not

correct, they tended to focus on the color of the shirt, or the little bird in the back of one of the pictures. I realized that the interviews I did that day were not reliable. Therefore, I photocopied all the pictures showing a man doing the job and just added a ponytail to look female in its exact copy. This way, not only was I eliminating color as a factor, but also used the exact same picture (See Appendix III).

The next observation day I asked the children again and they were clear in their responses. They focused on what I was asking instead of the details in the pictures.

The third activity was asking them to draw a picture of them playing. This visual method is used to document perceptions of play places and peers that are important to them. Based on their drawing they were asked: how is he or she playing? is he or she alone? in groups? with boys? with girls? with both? Then the participant had to explain the drawing to me. This activity was video recorded.

Focus groups with the four cases

Focus groups are generally arranged with people who share certain characteristics that are pertinent to the study. This technique presumes that an individual's attitudes and beliefs are not formed in a vacuum; they are

socially oriented (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

One of the purposes of this research is to understand the beliefs and attitudes children have regarding gender norms in their classroom and to see how that affects the way they play with their peers. But interviewing children in a focus group is not an easy task. "It is unrealistic to expect them to sit face to face and engage in a long dialogue with the researcher" (Rossman & Ralis, 2003, p. 193). However, "deliberate conversations" can occur while doing other activities and through that, obtain their perspectives (Rossman & Ralis, 2003). Based on that, I invited the four cases to the outdoor gazebo. Since I wanted to video record the session, I introduced the video camera to them. They played with it, recorded themselves doing fun things, and then watched it back and forward. Then, they were ready to talk about their favorite topic: play. I wanted to focus on how they talked in a group about their play episodes, play partners, toys, and so on. These were the questions asked: Tell me the kinds of play activities you enjoy the most. Why? What are the play activities you enjoyed the least? What are some things you would like to do in the play area? Whom would you like to play with more? How do you compare playing with girls and playing with boys? Do you do house chores at home? Which

ones? At the end, they were shown a picture of a toy kitchen and a picture of a tool set. They had to comment on those toys. What happens if you see a girl playing in a "tool set toy" and what happens if you see a boy playing in the "toy kitchen set"? What you would do?

Interviewing the teacher and parents of the four cases

In-depth interviewing is a method of collecting information described as an exchange with a purpose. The idea is to explore general topics to help uncover the participant's perspective on the topic being investigated (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). As part of this qualitative study, I wanted to draw together culture, gender and play concepts. To be able to do that, I needed to make the teacher and parents part of the study. Through individual interviews I explored each parent's and teacher's understanding and ideas about gender roles at home and school, in order to be able to compare and contrast them with what I saw in their child's play. In those interviews I asked questions regarding what I saw in the child's play episodes related to gender-role activities. Since they are immersed in Puerto Rican culture, I also asked how they relate those episodes to the home or the school culture.

All the interviews with the teacher and with the parents were audio recorded to produce another way to obtain data. Although I was taking notes about everything they were saying, having it in audiotape helped me in finding themes and coding them. I heard those segments over and over, noting important themes, comparing with the written notes, and focusing on a particular topic's frequency and duration (Mac Naughton, Rolfe, & Siraj-Blatchford, 2001).

Data Management

As suggested by Merriam (2002), it is essential to have a method for managing and organizing data. In view of that, I had a notebook in which I wrote everything that happened while I was observing the children at the Center.

At first, I designed a system of files for all the kids and classified everything that I saw in his or her play. Then, after analyzing all the data, I chose the four cases that are presented in this study.

Besides the file for each case, there were files for their parents and the teacher. The case files contained the raw observations, the transcriptions of all the audio recordings, tasks results, drawings, the parents' authorization, interview transcripts, and any other

document that adds to the validity, reliability, and documentation of the study.

Data Analysis

Data analysis requires managing what I have seen, heard, and read so that I can make sense of what I have learned. To do that I classified, synthesized, and searched for patterns, in order to interpret the data collected (Glesne, 2006). That ongoing process allowed for further clarification of themes within the data as well as to create meaning from the data collected (Yin, 2003).

The initial step in qualitative analysis requires going through the observational notes, the interview transcripts, and other documents that I want to analyze (Maxwell, 2005). In my case I read my field notes after finishing my observation and within that first reading I wrote themes at the sides of the pages in my notebook. Then, the next observation day, I would do the same. Glesne (2006) described that as the process of naming and locating data, and the process of dividing and subdividing it in categories. The goal of coding is to "break" the data and rearrange it into categories that facilitate comparisons between data in the same category (Maxwell, 2005). It is important to point out that the categories

that I had at the beginning of the study were not the same ones at the end of it.

At first I wanted to divide girls and boys play but later I realized that in the dramatic play area there were a lot of cross gendered play. Because of that I added a new category (See Table 2). Then, while I was observing and interviewing children, I found recurrent themes that could be easily place under subcategories within those big clusters (See Table 3).

Once the interviews and other data had been collected and coded, I proceeded to the next step of data analysis: arranging the codes into bigger clusters. In doing that one can sort out what was learned by making connections and achieving new insights (Maxwell, 2005). In this study, I divided all the observations with the children into three big clusters. Those big clusters will be explained in more detail in the following chapter.

Table 2: Big cluster of data

Clusters	Participants
Girls playing with girls	Andrea and Normita
Boys playing with boys	Diego and José
Cross gendered play	Andrea, Normita, Diego and José

For each case, I relied on the observations I made while they were playing. That was the most important piece of information. First, I wrote down where the child was playing and whether the child was playing alone or playing with other children. If the child was playing with other children, I then made a note of whether the child was interacting with peers who were of the same sex, of the other sex, or part of a cross gendered group. Next, I coded the type of interaction that was occurring. For example, the behavior of the preschooler was coded as *gender personal behavior* if it was gender stereotypic for the gender of the child. From my point of view, if a boy was playing with tools or dress as a policeman, or if a girl was playing with dress-up or dolls. At the end of the study I found that I could create four sub categories inside the three big clusters I mentioned earlier. Those subcategories will be explained in more detail in the following chapter.

Table 3: Sub categories

Clusters	Sub categories
Girls playing with girls	(1) Gender personal behavior (2) Gender tasks (3) Gender clothing (4) Gender family role
Boys playing with boys	
Cross gendered play	

Validity and reliability

Validity or trustworthiness is an issue that should be taken into consideration during the research design (Glesne, 2005). A case study requires extensive verification like triangulation and member checking (Creswell, 1998). For triangulation in this study I used multiple data collection methods (Merriam, 2002), like observations, focus groups, interviews, and structured activities with children. In addition, as a means to ensure validity, I used member checking, in which the participants examine written drafts that described their words (Creswell, 1998). For example, after I finished interviewing the teacher, I went home and transcribed the audiotape interview. Then I came back to the center and

met again with the teacher for her to verify the transcript. After her approval she also provided more information about one of the student I chose as my case study. In qualitative research, the understanding of reality is based on the participants' interpretations (Merriam, 2002). Member checks insured the accuracy and credibility of this study's data.

To determine reliability, I consulted with an external person to review the data with me to look for agreement in the coding and the categories. She is a college professor at my university who is finishing her doctoral degree in ECE at U.MASS-Amherst and has ten years of experience working with children.

At first, I gave her all my observations (without any names) and ask her to find recurrent themes. She made a list very similar to mine. Then, we start looking for patterns and similitude between her list and mine and discussing the reason. At the end of the session we ended with the ones I have now.

In conclusion, by using qualitative research methods to study gender roles in play episodes of ECE children in Puerto Rico, I had the opportunity to evaluate play as an important aspect in the ECE setting and as a tool to create awareness in gender roles equity and fairness. The

ultimate goal is to encourage ECE educators to use play as a window to know the cultural background of each student in order to create equity and social justice in the classroom.

Chapter IV

Gender roles' journey through children's play

You can discover more about a person in an hour of play
than in a year of conversation.

Plato

In this chapter I want to present findings that help answer the research questions but also provide the reader with a clear picture of what I did to formulate them, soon after I decided to do this research in a specific center in Puerto Rico. I divide this "journey" into seven different steps, which provide organizational structure: Step one: Entering, familiarizing, and being part of the Center; Step two: Entering the classroom; Step three: Play observations, (Method of data collection #1); Step four: Structured activities, (Method of data collection #2); Step five: Focus groups, (Method of data collection #3); Step six: Parents' interview, (Method of data collection #4); and Step seven: Teacher's interview, (Method of data collection #5). The first five steps are related to the children and will be presented in this chapter. The next two are related to parents and the teacher, and will be described in Chapter V.

All these steps assured the collection of the necessary data to provide answers to the research questions that guided this multiple case study. The primary research question of this study is: In what ways do gender roles of four years old children become apparent through play episodes in a preschool center in Puerto Rico? In addition, the study aims to explore (1) What expressions of gender roles expectations are reflected in their play? (2) How culture influences or impacts gender-role decisions made through play? (3) Which are the preferred activities and toys of boys and girls during play? (4) How do parents perceive the culture (home, Puerto Rican, family, etc.) in their children's play? (5) How does the teacher perceive the culture (home, Puerto Rican, family, etc.) in her students' play?

Step one:

Entering, familiarizing, and being part of the Center

At the beginning of the semester I went to the Center for the first time. I met with the Center's director and explained my doctoral research plans. She was very receptive and eager to cooperate, and started to introduce me to all the staff and teachers. After I explained to her

my ideas and discussed a little bit about the literature and previous research, we decided that the 4-year-old group was ideal for my research. But that day I couldn't enter the classroom because I didn't have the Institutional Review Board's (IRB) approval or parents' authorization to conduct the study.

The IRB is responsible to review and approve all research involving human participants. Each university has their own IRB office, which exists to protect human participants in research project. Because I was a student from one university and doing my research in another one, I had to apply at two different offices. It took me three months to get these permissions (See Appendix IV).

After completing the paper work and obtaining IRB approval, I met with the parents to explain the purpose of the study. Then letters were sent home to parents, requesting their consent to allow their children to participate in a study about gender roles and play in a preschool setting (See Appendix V). Of 20 families who returned consent forms, only two parents declined to allow their sons (both were boys) to participate. In general, the response rate for the study was high, exactly 90%. After the parents signed the letter and I had fulfilled all the necessary requirements to start my research, I started

to visit the Center every other day for the next three months.

Step two:

Entering the classroom

The first day I went to the classroom I introduced myself to the staff and children and explained to them what I was going to be doing there. They were all excited to have me visiting them three days a week in the mornings, during playtime. The morning was divided as follows: from 9:00 am to 9:30 am children were on Assembly (morning all-group meeting on the floor rug), from 9:30 am to 11:00 am they were playing in different areas in the classroom, and from 11:00 am to 11:30 am it was time for outdoor play. Then from 11:30 am to 12:00 pm I would verify my notes and talk with the teacher.

I always arrived at the Center during the "Assembly" period. This gave me the opportunity to focus on each child sitting on the rug while listening to the teacher. Each one of the ten girls in this class of twenty children, had long hair, a lot of them with "pony tails", little bows in their hair, earrings, bracelets, and although they wore uniforms, they looked very feminine. The boys were very

clean cut, with short hair, and looked very masculine. In Puerto Rican culture it is customary to dress the girls very feminine and the boys very masculine. In this respect the classroom was very representative of the culture.

As I explained in Chapter III, at the end of the "Assembly" the teacher called each one of the children and asked them in which area they wanted to play. Consistently, the first 5 girls and boys that were called (the maximum allowed per area) wanted to be in the dramatic play area (housekeeping area). Although I observed all the areas (Blocks, Theater, and Art), it was in the dramatic play area (housekeeping) where the majority of the observations took place. The housekeeping area was the favorite one for all of the preschoolers in the classroom.

Step three:

Play observations

Method of data collection #1

After entering the classroom in the morning, I sat in a child size chair with my notebook and pencil and started observing and writing down descriptions of play episodes. I usually focused on the dramatic play area, in which there was always cross-gender play going on, and concentrated on

gestures, movements, clothing, conversations, and dynamics among them. The first characteristic that caught my attention was the conversation as part of their play and how gender norms emerged from that.

During the first three weeks I observed all of the children (except for the two that I did not get parental permission). Besides trying to know them better, I started looking for activities that recurred, play preferences, gender patterns, hierarchies in play, and representations.

At this point I was not sure what I was going to see or how I would organize the observations. I only knew that I had some questions I wanted to explore and three theories that were going to be my lenses during my observations. However, through that journey I was able to obtain pertinent information, more than I had initially expected. At the end of the eight-week period I decided to sort all relevant data into four cases: two boys, "Diego" and "José", and two girls, "Andréa" and "Normita" (not their real names).

Diego is a 4 years old boy who lives with his mother but has a good relationship with his dad and spends a lot of time with his grandparents from both sides. He tends to be very quiet but with strong opinions. In terms of gender roles, he is very much aware of what is expected of him

because he is a boy. Other classmates rely on him and like to play with him.

José, on the other hand, is outspoken, very loud and definitively the one with whom girls prefer to play. His parents got divorced recently and he spends a lot of time with his grandpa. José is the leader of the boys. He also is very aware of the norms of his gender and is very assertive in terms of protecting what he or his friends should be doing in terms of gender roles.

Andrea is the leader of the girls and is very outspoken when she is with other children. Around adults Andrea is quieter. She lives with mom and dad, is very feminine, behaving very girly and encouraging her female friends to act accordingly. When they play in the house area she takes her role as a mom very seriously.

Normita is very talkative, with playmates and adults. Living with her mom and dad in a traditional home, she is very feminine also. Like Andrea, she also behaves very stereotypically feminine. For example, the way she dressed and accessorized herself; and also, she is very opinionated in terms of what girls should do in play episodes because they are girls.

Since my purpose is not to produce any generalizations but to explore and understand what is happening in this

specific classroom, I selected cases that are rich in providing information about what I wanted to learn in my study (Glense, 2006).

Briefly, the reason I chose those children was that they stood out and during my observations, I saw them performing activities and interactions which presented clear examples of the kinds of behaviors relevant to my research questions. Besides being leaders, they expressed the gender roles through play in a more evident way. They also reflected the rest of the group in terms of areas or toys preferences, gender behaviors, and general performance.

One of the most commonly accepted social characteristics of childhood is the predilection that children show to play with a same sex partner. Martin and Fabes (2001) offer one possible explanation for this. They posit a construct called behavioral compatibility among children. To illustrate, boys who are very active may look for other playmates that are active, most probably boys. Likewise, girls who are soft and cooperative may show enhanced preferences for same-sex play relative to other girls.

Based on that, I divided all the observations in three big clusters: girls playing with girls, boys playing with

boys and something that I saw only in the dramatic play area, cross-gendered playing.

Languages, rituals, tools, are some examples of manifestations of the implicit beliefs, values, and orientations that define a culture and that children represent in their play (Ramsey, 2006). That's why, within those three big clusters, I subdivided each one into subcategories, based on what Ramsey (2006) describe as examples of expressions: gender personal behavior, gender tasks, gender clothing, and gender family roles (See Table 4). I will explain each subcategory at the beginning of each section.

Table 4: Categories and subcategories observed in play

Categories	Subcategories
Girls playing with girls	Gender personal behavior
	Gender tasks
	Gender clothing
	Gender family roles
Boys playing with boys	Gender personal behavior
	Gender clothing
Cross-gendered play	Gender personal behavior
	Gender tasks
	Gender family roles

First main cluster: Girls playing with girls

The findings on the differences between boys and girls play around the world are noted in research. Girls employ more make-believe play and use cooperative and facilitative initiation strategies with peers (Lindsey & Mize, 2001). In addition, girls' play is "relational, inclusive, and highly verbal" (Frost, Worthman, & Reifel, 2001, p. 282; Johnson, Christie, & Wardle, 2005; Meire, 2007).

Mac Naughton (2000) described how four-year-old girls usually meet in the art and housekeeping areas. Apart from the dramatic play area (which I describe in more detail later), the art area was the girls' favorite place in the center. During my observations I did not see boys and girls playing in the art area together.

Sub category: "Gender personal behavior"

The "Gender personal behavior" represents a summary of the entire feminine demeanor the girls naturally show while playing. Meire (2007) explained that children learn very easily "which behaviors are valued, and as a consequence boys and girls develop diverging play styles" (p. 58). Examples of this are the way they talk, gestures, and things that they "need" to do.

In a play episode in the art area (November

21, 2009/9:40am), Andrea and Normita were using modeling clay to create girls' accessories.

Normita: Look how pretty is my ring...it is red!

Normita: Andrea, what are you doing? You are not supposed to be painting your nails (putting modeling clay in her nails like fake nails) you are supposed to be doing bracelets, rings, and earrings!

Andrea: I am doing my nails first...then I will do the rings.

One day (November 24, 2008/9:15am) the teacher asked Normita if she wanted to go to the block area or the art area. The girl looked at the teacher and immediately chose the art area. At that moment the block area was full of boys.

Another play episode (December 5, 2008/10:10am), related to "Gender personal behavior" was also in the art area, in which Normita and Andrea were doing some "paper work" because they were teachers.

Marisel: What are you doing there?

Andrea: We are teachers! (while making scribbles simulating like she was correcting a student work).

Marisel: Wow, so you are teachers! And why is that?

Andrea: Because we are girls!

One morning (January 20, 2008/10:00am) I witnessed a play episode that was based on the expectation that a woman screams when they are scared. Andrea and Normita were playing in the puppets area and suddenly Normita started to scream, but it was obviously part of the play episode. Immediately, Andrea began to scream also. I got closer and asked them:

Marisel: Hey, what is going on? What happened? (In a tone as if I was being part of the play episode as well.)

Andrea: We saw something! We saw something!

Normita: Yes, we saw something?

Marisel: But what did you see?

Andrea: A snake, and we are afraid!

And then the girls left running and moved to another area.

Very similar to the previous example, the following episode took place during the outdoor playtime (November 24, 2009/10:45am). Andrea and Normita were inside the house and they were playing. Suddenly Normita yelled: Where is my child? It's missing! And Andrea started running and screaming. When I asked them why they were screaming they looked at me and answered as if it were obvious, "Because we are scared, we are scared!"

These observations provide vivid illustrations of the Sub category "Gender personal behavior". These occurrences

reveal the girls' expectations of how a woman in Puerto Rico should act in certain circumstances. This may not be unlike what would be seen in other cultures, but some content in the play episodes seemed distinctly Puerto Rican, as I will discuss in a subsequent section.

Sub category: "Gender tasks"

The second category that I used to code the observations was "Gender tasks". Gender tasks illustrate what girls think they are supposed to be doing in this Puerto Rican society.

On one occasion (December 1, 2008/9:30am) I saw Andrea playing in the block area, all by herself. I was intrigued because she never went there. I observed her building something like a box, and after a while I asked her what she was doing. She showed me a picture that she had on her side, a picture of a princess' castle. She was trying to build a castle for her dolls. Even though the block area was usually visited by boys, she used that area to create something usually girl oriented.

On another occasion (November 24, 2008/9:30am) I sat with Andrea and Normita in the art area and they were organizing a birthday party. They were cooking and doing

cookies with modeling clay.

Andrea: We are going to have a birthday party!

Normita: We are preparing cookies...and...cake.

Marisel: Who is invited to this party?

(Andrea and Normita started naming the girls in the group. No boys' names.)

Me: What happened to the boys?

Normita (very seriously and with her hands in her waist)

They are not invited!

The day before Thanksgiving (November 26, 2008/9:30am) the girls were in the art area and they were planning a Thanksgiving party. Andrea took a piece of paper and a crayon and started simulating writing lists.

Marisel: What are you doing Andrea?

Andrea: Writing the guest list...no, no, no, I am doing the supermarket list.

Marisel: And what are you going to buy?

Andrea: Everything, hahaha.

Normita: The turkey is already here.

Andrea: So, I don't need to buy anything then.

Then Normita kept doing the turkey with play-duh and Andrea was drawing pieces of paper. Those were going

to be the placemats during Thanksgiving dinner. They planned to use those placemats for their guests. In Puerto Rico, women are usually in charge of the cooking and planning for a party or family get together.

Sub category: "Gender clothing"

Because four year old children's thinking is concrete, their understanding of gender is limited to behavior and physical appearance. They use clothing and length of hair to distinguish gender (Miller & Booth Church, 2002). Based on that, the gender-clothing sub category reveals how the girls think they need to dress to represent that they are girls.

Since their favorite play area was the dramatic play area, it was the ideal one in which to observe this subcategory. The area was divided in three sections: the bedroom, the kitchen, and the living room. In the bedroom there is a closet, a bed, a night table, and a mirror. The kitchen has a play stove, sink, fridge, and microwave. And the living room has a sofa, a chair and a center table. Obviously, everything is arranged attempting to recreate a house setting, an area in which the acting out of pretend play is acceptable (Jordan & Cowan, 1995). Although I saw

much of cross-gendered play there, in this section I will only focus on the girls-playing-with-girls cluster. In the next sections I will detail more the other clusters.

For example, Andrea and Normita were playing in the house area (December 1, 2008/9:45am). Andrea looked at herself and said: "I have my necklaces and my earrings". Then, looking at Normita asked, "Where are yours? Go and look for them and put them on". Then, both of them, with high heels, long dresses, necklaces and earrings, pick up a baby doll and take care of it. Through this example and the previous one in the art area, we can see how important it is for these girls to dress and accessorize like a Puerto Rican woman.

Girls in Puerto Rico are told since their childhood that they need to be always "de punta en blanco" (a saying in Puerto Rico that means that you always need to be very well dress). It is also very common, almost like a prerequisite, to see a newborn girl with a gorgeous gown and a headband "para salir del hospital" (when leaving the hospital). That outfit has been prepared since the moment the sonogram told the parents the baby was going to be a girl. Approximately a week later, the mom will go to the doctor's office to have her ears pierced for the earrings.

An example of the previous is a play episode between

Andrea and Normita in the dramatic play area (January 22, 2009/10:15am). They were all dressed up with jewelry, high heels and a purse while playing with a baby doll. Suddenly Andrea took the doll in her hands looking directly at the doll's ears and said:

Andrea: Oh my God! The baby doesn't have earrings!

Normita took the baby from her hands and started laughing.

Normita: It is true, hahaha!

Andrea: We need to fix this.

And simulating looking for something in her purse, she took "something" and put it in the baby doll's ears.

Andrea: Now!

This exemplifies what they already know about appropriate clothing and accessories in Puerto Rican culture. As they are growing up, they are receiving through media and community, constants reminder of how important it is to dress appropriately as a woman.

The Miss Universe contest, for example, is a very important event in Puerto Rico. And since five women representing Puerto Rico have won the Miss Universe title, watching the competition attains very high TV ratings.

"Puerto Ricans take pride on how they dress" (Molina-Ramos, n.d.) and Puerto Ricans like to dress well and know

where to shop for fashionable clothes (Deane, n.d.). These are examples of what the girls are hearing throughout their development. This was clearly represented in the girls play.

Sub category: "Gender family roles"

Corsaro (2003) describes how role-play allows kids to experiment with gender expectations about appropriate behaviors. For example, girls in free play try to imitate their mothers (Tulviste & Koor, 2005). Some of the next episodes represent this.

One morning (November 21, 2008/10:10am), I sat near the living room in the dramatic play area. Normita went to the closet, chose her high heels and put them on. Then she came back to the living room and sat in the sofa, crossed her legs and with a cell phone in one hand and a baby in the other, she started to do many of things at the same time: cleaning, patting the baby, and talking on the phone.

An additional incident (November 26, 2008/9:30am) related to that is the planning of family activities. In the kitchen in the dramatic play area, Andrea and Normita were planning Thanksgiving dinner. They were discussing the meals and the guests and at the same time, they were

cleaning the kitchen with a mop to get the house ready for the party.

As we saw in a prior section (planning a birthday party) and with this one (Thanksgiving) we can see how important is the family to Puerto Ricans. Family is perceived as primary, the emphasis is on the group, rather than on the individuals (Cofresí, 1999).

Another interesting example is when Normita was in the dramatic play area (November 24, 2008/10:30am) and suddenly, everyone there starts yelling that there was a fire in the house and ran to hide; everyone except Normita. She said in a very calm voice, wearing high heels and holding a broom, "You go first, I can't leave the kitchen now, I am cleaning and I need to finish".

Cofresí (1999) explains that role expectations for Puerto Rican women are full of family obligations through which a "good woman" is characterized by her self-abnegation and putting family needs before her own. As we saw in the previous example, Normita needed to finish the cleaning because it was important for the family to have a clean house.

Second main cluster: Boys playing with boys

Boys playing with boys typically lead to behavioral interactions that offer different opportunities and experiences than playing with girls. Boys, more than girls, are usually inclined to play actively and with toys that require more physical action (Fabes, et al, 2003). Boys also tend to engage in more physical play than girls (Lindsey & Mize, 2001). Moreover, their play is typified by competition, aggression, and relatively low levels of talk (Frost, Worthman, & Reifel, 2001). During the observations I did with boys playing with boys I noticed that they usually played with trucks and blocks (Mac Naughton, 2000). Based on these observations I was able to frame them in terms of only two categories: Gender personal behavior and Gender clothing.

Sub category: "Gender personal behavior"

Like Neppl & Murray (1997) inferred, boys more frequently prefer themes involving evil behavior and risk. For example, a boy might pretend to be a pilot dealing with adventure and danger. This is perfectly noticeable in the next instances.

José (December 3, 2008/9:35am) was playing near the dramatic play area with a car. Then he saw a broom and

took it pretending it was a horse.

Diego and José (December 3, 2008/9:50am) were playing in the block area. They were playing with little cars and making the sounds of a small car while chasing one another.

Another example of gender personal behavior related to this is when José (December 3, 2008/10:20am) left the dramatic play area and went to the block area. While there, he took two wood sticks:

José: Ha - ya - ha! (imitating the sounds of a person who does karate) I know karate. Ha - ya - ha! (while doing the violent movements of karate).

The next day that I observed them (December 5, 2008/9:50am), José and Diego were in the block area and suddenly they went down on the rug in the middle of the classroom and started to wrestle. The teacher intervened and separated them. Five minutes later they were playing in the puppets area without any problem.

"The impact of the television on boys can be seen by anyone who watches them play" (Paley, 1986, p. 108);

Diego and José were building helicopters in the block area. They were very focused while building them. Then,

when they finished they started talking, changing their voices (December 1, 2008/10:10am) :

José: I am chasing you...my helicopter is bigger...

Diego: Ohhh, I am going to hide...so you can't find me...

Marisel: What are you doing?

José: We are doing like the movie.

Marisel: Which movie?

José: The penguins movie, (he said irritated, I guess I was interrupting the game).

Continuing with gender personal behavior, it was very interesting to watch the boys playing in the puppet area. Here however, I understood immediately that I was responding to my own cultural bias. I was not used to seeing boys playing with puppets. Because of that, I spent considerable time observing them playing there. As I described in an earlier section, the puppets were in the theater area, which had a wood puppet stage painted with green, yellow, and red colors. The curtain is pink and red. On the side of the stage is the puppet stack with different puppets. Those puppets represent animals or humans, females and males.

José (November 24, 2008/9:45am) went to the theater area and started looking through all the puppets available,

taking one in his hand, looking at it carefully and putting it down again. He repeated this several times until he found puppets that were male. Then he put a male puppet in one hand and another male puppet on the other hand and started playing.

Another day (December 5, 2008/9:40am) Diego and José went to the theater area. Diego took the first puppet he found and he took a baby girl puppet. José was very mad and told him "put that girl puppet down". Diego, laughed, said "NO", and started running with the puppet in his hand. José furiously chased him around the classroom until he grabbed Diego's baby girl puppet and put it again on the puppet's rack.

Kowalski (2007) presented research findings that are similar to the above situation. Kowalski's study showed two boys playing in the theater area with puppets. One of them took a female puppet and the other complained and said, "You need to have a boy puppet and give that girl puppet to a girl" (p. 59). Kowalski concluded that when children reach that age they possess a great deal of knowledge about "gender roles behaviors and traits" (Kowalski, 2007, p. 60).

Sub category: "Gender clothing"

Thorne (1993) proposed that children are socialized into existing gender arrangements, which include gender-stereotyped clothes. The next play episode illustrates clearly Thorne's idea.

José, while rehearsing for a Thanksgiving play (November 21, 2008/9:55am) had to use a loincloth and he said in a very energetic way:

-I am not going to wear that skirt! I am not a girl!!

I am a boy!

Although Corsaro (2003) wrote about how dramatic play permits kids to experiment with other-gender expectations, giving them the liberty to do something different from what is expected, I did not see that as frequently as I expected during the four months that I was there. Culturally it is not usually permitted or it is considered highly inappropriate to do break gender norms. You are a boy or you are a girl; so no boy ever wore a dress or something related to a girl, not even as a joke. But, even though it was not very common, (only few situations), there were some children breaking away from the conformity norm.

In the dramatic play area, Diego was dressed as a

policeman (January 22, 2009/9:45am). There was a toy baby doll on the sofa and he took it. He was being very gentle with the baby doll until he saw me watching him. Immediately he took the doll by its leg and threw it as far away as he could. Then he touched his police officer hat signaling that he was a policeman and said, "Diego: Done!" He did that twice that morning.

Associated to that, another day (November 24, 2008/10:15am), in the dramatic play area, José said to Diego:

José: You and me... we are policemen...let's go because we are policemen...look at our uniforms...

But Diego went and changed clothes from policeman to fireman.

José: Why did you change?

Diego: Because the kitchen is on fire.

On November 26, 2008 at 9:50, José started running from one side of the classroom to the other until he got to the housekeeping area. He rapidly dressed like a policeman because he needed to protect the girls.

Third main cluster: Cross-gendered play

Bank, Delamont, & Marshall (2007) have previously reported that the "housekeeping area inside the classroom

is a magnet for girls and not boys" (p. 615). However, through my observations I came across very different dynamics. I found a lot of cross-gendered play in this area. This interaction was one of the first explicit gender expressions that manifested gender exclusivity in this group of children. Nevertheless, there was an established pattern of cross-gendered play in the housekeeping area; a pattern that goes against the grain of the traditional norms of gender development (Skattebol, 2006). This non-normative dynamic is related in part to the importance of the family in Puerto Rico.

As is common in western cultures, the Puerto Rican family is composed of both genders. Martin and Fabes (2001) reported that in peer interactions, young children do socialize with members of the opposite sex a fair amount of time but usually when another member of their own sex is also involved. This was consistently demonstrated in the dramatic play area, which was the only area where I saw the enthusiasm of boys and girls to play together.

Sub category: "Gender personal behavior"

The girls assumed roles of mother, daughter, wife, and baby, while boys were inclined to assume roles as father,

husband, son, firefighter, and policeman. Related to this topic, in the focus group (February 20, 2009/10:30am), which I describe in detail later, I asked Andrea and Normita:

Marisel: If in the art area you did not invite the boys to play, why do you always invite them to play with you in the house area?

Normita looked at me in a very polite but firm manner and answered:

Normita: Because we need a dad!

Neppl and Murray (1997) talked about the role enactments that occur during pretend play and the difference between the enactments of girls to boys compared to the enactments of girls to girls. Because of this, the behavior might seem inflexible in the dramatic play area. Girls can clean a house and cook, but they cannot be soldiers or police officers. Boys can be firefighters but cannot bake cookies or wear a skirt (Miller & Booth Church, 2002).

One day (December 8, 2008/10:20am) I witnessed what I sadly consider part of our culture:

José wanted to pick some clothes from the closet.

Andrea was in front of the closet and José yelled at her, "Move!" Andrea did not move and he pushed her aggressively. She told him, "You should use words".

Another day (November 21, 2008/10:30am) the children were standing in line to go to the patio. Since I was close to them I heard José tell Andrea:

José: Andrea, you are my girlfriend and you have to do whatever I tell you to do!

Andrea: (in a flirting way and smiling) Oh no!

My inference is that Andrea was not mad at all about José's comment. Ramsey (2006) describes this as gender power discrepancy in our society and considers that children usually learn, reflect, or construct meaning in their play.

Noland (2006) illustrated how social messages are clear. A participant in her study discussed the role of machismo in communication: "There's a lot of influence of machismo in the way men and women communicate, I think. That's the way that parents choose to raise their kids" (p. 288).

An additional aspect of "machismo" in Puerto Rico is aggressive behavior. Ramsey (2006) describes how boys

typically use more physical and verbal aggression. For example, one day (December 5, 2008/9:30am) Diego and José started to play very forcefully with the pillows of the sofa in the dramatic play area. Andrea and Normita left the area feeling uncomfortable.

Sub category: "Gender task"

During the dramatic playtime, I observed how boys were inclined to use materials to initiate make believe play, while girls were more focused on the relationships and appropriate role behavior (Lytle, 2003). For example, one day (January 20, 2009/9:30am), Diego, José, Andrea and Normita selected in Assembly to go to the Dramatic Play area. It seemed as if they had already planned that. They knew what they were going to do as soon as they arrived at the area.

The girls went directly to the closet and started dressing themselves like the mom and the daughter.

Diego and José went to the sofa area and started doing something that I could not figure out. Then, Andrea arrived with a baby doll and asked if the crib was ready for the baby.

José said: I do not know where my tools are! Look for them! Andrea gave the baby to Normita and went to the

kitchen, opened the microwave and took out some vegetables. Then she gave the vegetables to José and he started simulating as if he was using a hammer and nails, hammering, putting together all the pieces of the crib (which in reality were the pieces of the sofa). José, with Diego's help, took a considerable amount of time on using the "tools" to put together the crib.

José said: Diego! Those are my working tools!

When it was finished, Andrea put the baby on the crib and all of them looked very pleased with their work. Andrea left the baby in charge of Normita and went to the kitchen to start dinner while José picked up all his "tools".

Another example (December 3, 2008/10:00am) was when José was in the kitchen and used the microwave to store his "tools". Then, Andrea entered the kitchen and took the "tools" out of the microwave because she was going to cook vegetables. José got mad because his "tools" were supposed to be there, so he took the vegetables out of the microwave and put back his "tools". Then Andrea got mad also, took the "tools"

and put them in a cabinet near them, and put her vegetables in the microwave. Pointing at him with her finger, she told him that the microwave was for food, not "tools", but he responded that it wasn't a microwave but a cabinet for tools. Then the teacher asked them to clean up the area.

Sub category: "Gender family roles"

In this section, play episode observations reveal how family traditions in Puerto Rico are embedded in children's cultural and gender-role awareness, and how they are reflected in their play negotiating and enactment.

Andrea (November 21, 2008/9:30am) dressed with a long dress, a necklace and high heels, takes the baby doll, "her baby", and says:

Andrea: I am going to bring you milk, dear baby! I am going to put you in the crib for a while.

Then she called José and told him:

Andrea: Husband! Husband! You need to go and buy milk for our baby!

José: I am going to work and then I bring the milk (he took his briefcase and left).

Diego and José entered the dramatic play area

(December 8, 2008/9:50am) and Normita and Andrea were already there. They were cleaning the kitchen because they were going to have a Thanksgiving party and the house needed to be clean. Diego and José sat in the sofa and stared asking for water, food, and so on. Although Normita and Andrea were cleaning and working, they had to take care of Diego and José that were not doing a thing.

One day (December 8, 2008/9:30am), José, Diego, Andrea and Normita were playing in the dramatic play area and decided to go to the movies. José was the Dad, Andrea the Mom, Diego, the Uncle, and Normita, the daughter. After Andrea and Normita were ready (putting on a long dress, all the possible jewelry, high heels and their cell phones) José said:

José: Mom, you need to take our daughter to the movies because Uncle and me need to get to work.

Andrea accepted that without any problem, and José and Diego "left for work" and sat at a table.

On November 21, 2008 at 9:40am, Andrea called José:

Andrea: Uncle José! Uncle José! Please take care of my

son! (giving him a baby doll)

José went to Andrea to take the baby doll but apparently accidentally hit Diego on the back when going past him. Diego complained and Andrea looked very seriously at José, and pointing at him said:
Andrea: Uncle José, go to Diego and say you are sorry!

Through these examples it is evident how children are dynamically involved in appropriating and maintaining cultural forms. Their play is an important means for the imitation, establishment, and granted membership, as well as for the maintenance but not transformation of that culture (Davies & Kasama, 2004). In a later section I will return to how rarely if ever children violate or attempt to challenge or change cultural gender roles and discuss this feature of my findings.

Step four:

Structured activities

Method of data collection #2

In Puerto Rican current society, gender is used in explicitly functional ways more so than is race or ethnicity. For example, in school, teachers line up

students by gender and create activities grouping boys on one side and girls on the other. Some research points out that this use of gender categories reinforces the creation of stereotypes and group bias. When adults use these kinds of groups they are sending a clear message about their importance, leading children themselves to start categorizing their social experiences in the same way (Kowalski, 2007).

The purpose of the following activities was to understand the children's beliefs regarding gender-norms awareness in our culture and to see how those beliefs impacted or influenced their social experience in their play.

Although I did these activities with all of the children, I am only presenting examples involving and describing the four cases that were chosen.

Structured activity #1

It's a girl's toy or a boy's?

The first activity detailed in the previous chapter (February 2-4, 2009/9:30 - 10:30am) entailed showing the participants' different toys or games typically present in early childhood settings (See Appendix I). In a working

table in one corner of the classroom, I placed two baskets. The instructions were to put in one basket the pictures of toys or games that he or she would never play with and why. In the second basket they were to put the ones that he might use and why?

In this activity, as well as in others, children were asked individually. Table 5 shows the responses of the participants.

Table 5: Responses of the participants

Name	Basket of toys for boys	Basket of toys for girls	Toys that could be used by boys or girls
Diego	Miniature horses	Barbie	
	Tools workbench	Baby girl doll	
		Baby boy doll	
		Toy shopping cart	
		Toy kitchen set	
<hr/>			
José	Tools workbench	Barbie	Miniature horses
	Baby boy doll	Baby girl doll	
		Toy shopping cart	
		Toy kitchen set	
<hr/>			
Andrea	Tools workbench	Barbie	Miniature horses
	Baby boy doll	Baby girl doll	
		Toy shopping cart	
		Toy kitchen set	
<hr/>			
Normita	Miniature horses	Barbie	Baby boy doll
	Tools workbench	Baby girl doll	
		Toy shopping cart	
		Toy kitchen set	

It was very interesting listening to them and observing their reactions. They all responded to this activity in a very serious manner, but differed in their

behavior. Both boys gave more "yes or no" kinds of answer with many gesticulations. Just watching their faces one could tell what the answer was going to be. The girls gave more verbal details in their answers.

Besides classifying the pictures in the two baskets, I also asked them what they would do if a friend invited them to play with some of the toys that they put in the gender basket different from their gender. Next are the responses to that question:

Diego about playing with a Barbie: NOOOOOO! "Fuchi!!!"
(a Puerto Rican expression of disgust). That is for girls
and only girls!!!

Diego about playing with baby dolls: I am not going to play with a baby girl doll. I am not going to play with a baby boy doll. Dolls are for GIRLS!!!!

José about playing with the toy kitchen set: Nooo!
That's for girls and if a girl invites me, I would never go there.

José about playing with the shopping cart: If Andrea asks me to play with her I would play, but never by myself.

My mom doesn't let me.

Andrea about playing with the baby boy doll: I would play with the baby girl doll. I wouldn't play with the boy doll because boys never do what you ask them to do and they always want to do what they want. So, they can play with the boy doll and I play with the girl doll.

Andrea about playing with the tool workbench: Nooo! I would never play with that. That's for boys. My brothers have one. Boys play with that, not girls! I am not going to play with that.

Normita about playing with miniature horses: I am not playing with that, but a boy can play. Because all horses are for boys. I have seen a lot of boys with toy horses.

Normita about playing with tool workbench: No, that is for boys to play with. Those tools are for fixing cars, and boys are the ones who fix cars.

Structured activity #2

Is it a girl's job or a boy's?

The second activity (February 9-11, 2009/9:30 - 10:30am) consisted of showing pictures of different tasks, jobs, or occupations being done by different genders. For example, one picture was of a policeman and the other of a policewoman. I asked children which one was correct, which was not, or if both were correct. Table 6 presents the answers of the four case study children.

Table 6: Answers of the participants

Name	Correct	Incorrect
Diego	Mechanic man	Mechanic woman
	Man mowing the lawn	Woman mowing the lawn
	Woman washing the dishes	Man washing the dishes
	Woman mopping the floor	Man mopping the floor
	Man taking out the trash	Woman taking out the trash
<hr/>		
José	Mechanic man	Mechanic woman
	Man mowing the lawn	Woman mowing the lawn
	Woman washing the dishes	Man washing the dishes
	Woman mopping the floor	Man mopping the floor
	Man taking out the trash	Woman taking out the trash
<hr/>		
Andrea	Mechanic man	Mechanic woman
	Man mowing the lawn	Woman mowing the lawn
	Woman and man washing the dishes	
	Woman mopping the floor	Man mopping the floor
	Woman taking out the trash	Man taking out the trash
<hr/>		
Normita	Mechanic man	Mechanic woman
	Man mowing the lawn	Woman mowing the lawn
	Woman washing the dishes	Man washing the dishes
	Woman mopping the floor	Man mopping the floor
	Man taking out the trash	Woman taking out the trash

In general terms, all four children gave very stereotyped answers.

Diego (responding to who should take out the trash?): Dad of course, they are not afraid of rats!

Diego (responding to who should cook?): Them (referring to women), they do that better, dad doesn't know how to do it.

José (responding to who should be a mechanic?): Dad, because the motor in the car is heavy and mom can't lift it.

José (responding to who should mow the lawn?): Dad, men are stronger!

Although they usually responded this way, something else that caught my attention was that they would answer with strong emotions and they would add something to the response.

Andrea (responding to who should mop the floor?): Both of them can do it, although mom does it better; dad doesn't know how to do it right.

Andrea (responding to should wash the dishes?): Woman, my mom is who does it at home; when I get married I will do it also. But I guess... dads could do it also.

Normita (responding to who should mop the floor?): Well, I guess a woman, I don't know, at home mom does it.

Normita (responding to who should wash the dishes):

Everyone can do it, at my house mom and dad does it.

As you can see, all four children answered based on their home experiences. They always referred to mom and dad as synonymous to man and woman. But different from the boy's responses, girls were more likely to deviate from a stereotype answer. I could sense that maybe we are in a transition point in history, in which girls but not boys are starting to accept that men are capable of doing domestic chores that are generally assigned to women.

Step five:

Focus groups

Method of data collection #3

One of the main purposes of this research is to understand the beliefs and attitudes children have with respect to gender norms and to see how that impacts or influences the way they play with their peers. In the focus group I brought together the four children chosen for this study based on their enthusiasm in playing and their gender

awareness.

I invited Diego, José, Andrea and Normita to the outdoor gazebo (February 20, 2009/10:00am). I wanted to video record the session, so as previously indicated; I needed to introduce the video camera to them. They played with it, recorded themselves doing fun things, and then watched it back and forth. Then, they were ready to talk about their favorite topic: play. I wanted to focus on how they talked about their play episodes, play partners, and toys. Table 7 presents the questions asked.

Table 7: Questions asked in the focus group

Participants	Questions asked
Andrea	Do you like to play?
	Why do you like to play?
	Where do you like to play at school?
	Why do you like to play in the kitchen area?
Normita	What do you do in the kitchen area?
	And why you are not the mom?
Diego	And Andrea, why you are not the dad?
	What are the differences between moms and dads?
	What other differences?
José	What do you do if you see a girl playing with a boy's toy?
	But what do you tell her?
	What do you do if you see a boy playing with a girl's toy?
	Do you help at home?
	How? What do you do?

The discussion lasted like 20 minutes but I am focusing on some of the questions/answers in this section. The complete transcription can be found in Appendix VI.

As I explained in an earlier section, the housekeeping area, or the "kitchen area" as children liked to call it, was their favorite area:

Me: Where do you like to play at school?

Andrea, Normita, Diego and José at the same time: The kitchen!

Me: Why do you like to play in the kitchen area?

José: Because there are a lot of toys and I am new here and at home I didn't have it.

Andrea: I like it too! There is also a mirror and a bed.

Then, I asked about what they usually do in this area that they like so much:

Me: What do you do in the kitchen area?

Normita: We always play moms and dads!

José: I am always the dad!

Andrea: I am always the mom!

Note how quickly the gender-role topic comes up!

Me: Andrea, could you be the dad sometime?

Andrea (Smiling and blushing): No, because I am not a boy, he is the boy!

Normita: NOOOO!!!!!! She is a girl!!!!!!

Me: Diego, could you be the mom sometime?

Diego: Of course not! Because I am a boy and boys never could be moms!

Me: What are the differences between moms and dads?

Diego: Moms have long hair and dads don't.

Andrea: Girls use high heels!

Me: What other differences?

Andrea: Girls can cook!

Normita: Dad can cook too.

Diego: There are boy's shoes and girl's shoes.

Now I wanted to tie this conversation to the structured activity we did before by asking them about house chores.

Me: Do you help at home? How? What do you do?

Diego: I help my mom clean my room.

José: I help my mom.

Normita: I help my mom.

Andrea: I help my mom mop the floor.

It was interesting to see how the four children discussed something related to their moms. No one said that they helped dad in the house. It is as if mom is the only one who works in the house.

Referring to the other structured activity, I asked about toys.

Me: What do you do if you see a girl playing with a boy's toy?

Andrea: Things that are boys', girls can't play with.
It's like that.

Diego: If I see a girl playing with a boy's toy I would say that she should not be doing that.

José: I would say, "That is wrong!!!! They can't play with girl's toys, "Guacala!!!!" (an expression of repugnance!)

Normita: Yes, that it is a boy's toy!

It was fascinating to be able to conduct this focus group because during it children reflected on their ideas about gender norms. Although they were very clear about their own gender roles, they were also very respectful of their friends. It is like "we know that boys and girls are expected to do this or that, but we are fine with that". Not even once did they try to challenge this mind-set, just like in play they never seemed to act or talk in any other way.

Conclusion

How children learn about and embrace gender roles has become a more popular topic. All of these observations, structured activities, and the focus group (that can be considered data sources), come together to cast some light and give some clues about young Puerto Rican children's understanding of gender. It is clearly manifested how much

Puerto Rican culture is embedded in what the kids do, say, and believe about what is "real" and "normal" regarding being and becoming a member of your own sex.

Now it is indispensable for the purpose of this study, to hear the voices of significant others in the children's life: their teacher and their parents, whose voices will be heard in next chapter.

Chapter V

Voices of the teacher and parents

Rogoff (2003) among others has discussed how gender differences of children around the world relate closely to the adult gender roles of their communities. Since the sociocultural perspective is one of the conceptual frameworks of this study, I now focus on how children examine and take part in the gendered roles of the society in which they live. "Children's gender roles development can be viewed as a process of preparing for the adult roles expected in their community", (Rogoff, 2003, p. 182). This next section relies on the information obtained from those adults who are close to the children in this research: parents and the teacher. Picking up from the numbered steps in the previous chapter, I turn to the sixth step.

Step six:

Parents' interview

Method of data collection #4

The family is the most important context of children's everyday lives and parents structure their families to help children develop in socio-emotional and cognitive areas.

The child rearing and teaching practices parents display when relating with their own children facilitate their children's learning through modeling, thereby impacting their own children's development (Ashiabi & O'Neal, 2008). This is clearly seen with respect to gender roles.

Accordingly, since parents are the first teachers in children's lives, as part of this study I needed to study this primary aspect of their lives. Johnson, et al (2005) have discussed how gender-differentiated behavior is first shaped within the family.

As suggested by Patton (2002) "Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit. We interview to find out what is in and on someone else's mind, to gather their stories" (p.341). With these interviews I sought to get an in-depth understanding of the cases' parents, not only to uncover any stereotypes and traditional values, but also their possible hidden perspective on gender equity in their views about Puerto Rican culture, children expectations, and toys. Through these in depth interviews I attempted to explore each parent's understanding and ideas about gender roles at home and compare them with what I saw in their child's play.

I interviewed the four mothers of my four cases and one father, and asked questions regarding their ideas about culture, gender, and children in Puerto Rico, and the relationships among them. Table 8 presents the parents' information, date and time of the interviews. Table 9 presents the questions I asked. Then, I analyzed their answers and checked for recurrent themes and codes. This produced three main themes clusters: (1) Machismo and Puerto Rican culture, (2) Gender roles and expectations, and (3) Play and toys. Afterward I compared and contrasted these results with what I saw in the child's play episodes regarding gender roles activities. I integrate these data and discuss and compare the findings in the final chapter.

Table 8: Parents' interview information

Participants
José's mom (February 23, 2009/8:00am – 8:45am)
Normita's parents (February 25, 2009/9:30am to 10:05am)
Diego's mom (February 27, 2009/9:00am to 9:30am)
Andrea's mom (February 27, 2009/11:30am to 12:00am)

Table 9: Questions asked in the parent's interview

Questions
<p>1) How do you define Puerto Rican culture in terms of gender roles?</p> <p>2) How do you see Puerto Rican culture defining gender roles?</p> <p>3) Related to that, do you think that in 2009 we are different from 1999?</p> <p>4) At home, how does your son or daughter play?</p> <p>5) What do you think about their play?</p> <p>6) At home, does each one of you have an assigned chore? Or both of you do the same?</p> <p>7) What kind of toys do you buy your child?</p> <p>8) What would you do if someone gives your son or daughter a toy that is generally associated with the other gender?</p> <p>9) Anything else you want to add?</p> <p>10) What do you think about this? "I work, my husband works, I come home and I work. I clean the house and I do laundry," said Maria, 30. "Someone comes over and the house is a mess. They don't look at the man and think, 'What a slob,' they look at me and say, 'What a slob.'"</p>

Below I divide the questions/answers under three main clusters: Machismo and Puerto Rican culture, Gender roles and expectations, and Play and toys. Responses revealed a multifaceted matrix of parental beliefs, values, and experiences, about culture in Puerto Rico, gender roles in their families, and expectations for their children.

During the interview I wrote notes describing gestures, circumstances, and related play episodes (which I describe in the last chapter). Each interview lasted about 30 to 45

minutes and focused on the specific questions/answers. The complete transcriptions of these interviews are in Appendix VII and the demographic parents' information are in Appendix VIII.

First main cluster: Machismo and Puerto Rican culture

The interview began with a discussion of Puerto Rican culture and how the way we act is culturally embedded. Three questions were: 1) How do you define Puerto Rican culture in terms of gender roles? 2) How do you see Puerto Rican culture defining gender roles? and 3) Related to the above, do you think that in 2009 we are different from 1999?

It was clear that "machista" attitudes and practices are embedded in the culture. All the participants' answers were consistent with the notion. Parents tended to blame culture as a way to justify the status quo of gender inequality (Dabby & Poore, 2007). Since the term "machista" or "machismo" was frequently mentioned during the interviews, it is important to clarify and define the concept.

Noland (2008) defined "machista" as the belief that women are inferior to men. Faulkner (2003) noted that "machismo" refers to the social expectations for men and

that "mariанизmo" refers to the social expectations for women. In a Catholic society like Puerto Rico, María (Jesus' mother) is an idea to emulate and the term "mariанизmo" derives from María. Faulkner (2003) showed in her study of 31 young adult Latinas (Puerto Rican, Dominican, and Cuban) how feminine ideals are represented by modesty, virtue, and faithfulness. And Emmers-Sommer and Allen (2005) argued that machismo is highly ritualized, with identified gender roles that pressure men to fulfill social demands and expectations, including the control and domination of female partners. Related to this thematic thread in my interviews with the case parents, they responded:

José's mom: In Puerto Rico, regardless of everything, we have a very "machista" culture. That we divide girls from boys? Yes, we do that.

Diego's mom: In Puerto Rico we have "machismo" and it is there, present in everything. The way we raise our kids is based on that. Boys play with cars and girls with dolls.

Normita's dad: Here in Puerto Rico we can see some stereotype behaviors and yes, we can call it "machismo".

Andrea's mom: This is a very "machista" culture, everyone knows that. What we can do?

Noland (2008) reported that "machismo" is an overwhelming cultural force in Puerto Rican society. This was evident in each parent's responses. And although each thought that we are in a cultural transition process, some were more cautious or more reluctant to admit or endorse this view than others.

Andrea's mom: Yes, we are different now; we have more opportunities in terms of jobs. Now husbands help more in the house. For example my husband washes the dishes, mops the floor, etc.

Normita's dad: Yes, we can say we are different. Now women have more opportunities and men do more around the house. And it is ok.

José's mom: Ehh, I would tell, fifty/ fifty. At least at my home I encourage a lot that a man has to do chores also. This is not a matter of gender, you know? A man can do the dishes and wash the clothes, at least at my house. I encourage José to do that.

Diego's mom: Well, I guess but I am not sure how much. We are moving toward a transition.

Related to these findings, Cofresí (1999) presented in her article evidence that confirms that women in Puerto Rico still adhere to traditional roles; but there is also evidence that traditional patterns of behavior coexist with more democratic or modern practices, in which Puerto Rican women's definitions of self and their corresponding orientation toward care and responsibility are changing. An example of this could be seen in Andrea's mom response: "I do a lot of things at home but my husband washes the dishes, mops the floor, folds clothes, and so on".

These findings suggest that Puerto Rican women are changing in their adherence to traditional gender roles in a time of cultural transition. She also explained that even though earlier research supports the idea that gender-role expectations are changing for Puerto Rican women, there is also data that implies that some aspects of gender-role expectations have remained the same (Cofresí, 1999). To illustrate, Diego's mom said, "Moms need to work in something that doesn't affect the family. If you have a job that is interfering or is too demanding, you need to change jobs".

Second main cluster: Gender roles and expectations

The interview continued exchanging ideas about how expectations at home are different for a woman and a man because of the assigned gender roles in our society. I used the following questions as guides: 1) At home, each one of you has an assigned chore? Or both of you do the same? and 2) What do you think about this: "I work, my husband works, I come home and I work. I clean the house and I do laundry," said Maria, 30. "Someone comes over and the house is a mess, they don't look at the man and think, 'What a slob,' they look at me and say, 'What a slob.'"

Diego's mom: At home I tried to teach him that house chores are not a man or woman thing. Each one can do it. But, because he is too young I don't put him in charge of anything, I do it all, but encourage him to see what I am doing for him to learn.

My concern with that response is that the mom is letting her son see what she is doing for him to learn, but he is probably learning that the woman is the one who should do things around the house. The best way to learn is actually doing. The mom does not let the son do, just look.

Normita's dad: It shouldn't be that way, but it happens.

But if people see the backyard being a mess, they would call me slob - said the father.

He was arguing that sometimes the gender roles establish what the man should do also and how society expects some things from men as well.

Another interesting comment from Normita's dad is about house chores:

Normita's dad: For example, if I arrive first at home I could start doing dinner or washing the dishes. It all depends on who arrives first. But, we have to be clear that hard work, like mowing the grass or washing the car, is definitively my job.

Although he has been saying how open they are about gender roles and how they are equally divided at home, during the last question he noted without any doubts that some things should be done by a man. Noland (2006) reports something related to the previous comment, about how a 19-year-old participant on her study said: "My father is a little "machista". He thinks that females are weaker. Women are weaker; they are more vulnerable" (p. 287).

Another aspect that caught my attention during the interviews is that two of the moms mentioned the importance of having well behaved kids.

Andrea's mom: If the girl is sick or if she needs something, I am usually the one in charge of her. Although I know he can handle it, I like to be in charge of her needs. I also want her to be very well-behaved.

Diego's mom: The family is first and it is the only way to raise a well-behaved child.

Two studies investigated how important is this topic of childrearing for Puerto Rican parents. In the first study, Harwood, Miller, and Lucca (1995) provided evidence that Puerto Rican mothers were concerned that their children engage in appropriate relatedness, especially with regard to being "educado," or well behaved. In the second study, Noland (2006) found how important is "simpatía" (sympathy) and "respeto" (being respectful), as salient cultural values among Latino/a groups. These values are a pattern of social interactions that promote smooth, pleasant, and respectful social relationships.

Based on the mothers' responses, I found that they

were clear about how they as women are in charge of the family and in charge of raising well-behaved children. I concluded that the four parents believe that if they maintain some stereotype gender roles perpetuating the status quo, they could attain their goals of having what society expects from their children. They consider that their responsibility and it outweighs endorsing gender equity.

Third main cluster: Play and toys

The last topic from the parents' interviews is their views and beliefs about play and toys. The questions were:

1) At home, how does your son or daughter play? 2) What do you think about their play? 3) What kind of toys do you buy your child? 4) What would you do if someone gives your son or daughter a toy that is generally associated with the other gender?

The preschool years are the years when children play the most and are the years in which children increasingly understand themselves as part of a social world (Frost, et al., 2008). As previously indicated, the favorite classroom play area for the four cases (as well as the other children) was the dramatic play area. Their children were involved in role-playing in which they tend to imitate

their parents and recreate their real-life experiences (Frost, et al, 2008). Chapter IV presents some of my observations about children playing, and through these interviews I explored how the parents viewed their children playing and what captures their attention.

Andrea's mom: Andrea has a lot of dolls and likes to dress like me. She is always trying to use my high heels and accessories.

Diego's mom: He likes sports. He wanted to be on a baseball team, and then he didn't want to be there, so I took him out. But I am going to try to put him again this next year.

Normita's mom: She loves to play. She could spend hours playing with her Barbies and dressing like one. One day I entered her room and she was all dressed up, dancing.

Jose's mom: He also likes to play with cars and video games. He makes car sounds and uses the floor as a road.

It is very clear how, as Mouritsen (1999) in Factor (2009) said, "children play everywhere...and they play differently everywhere". As we saw, the four cases play like any other preschooler: they play at school and they play at home. The focus of my research is what we can

learn from observing those play episodes. Through these interviews I could have an idea of their play at home. For example, we can see how Andrea and Normita are being encouraged and celebrated for playing with dolls, while Diego's mom is trying to push him to play baseball.

In terms of toys, Elkind (2007) explained how societies encourage girls to play with dolls, anticipating some aspects of their adult roles. In the same way, boys all over the world play with "toy replicas of tools and weapons used by men of their society" (p. 24). This is reflected in some of the parents' responses:

Andrea's mom: Andrea has girl's toys of course! I am not going to buy her boy's toys!

José's mom: Ohhh, well, boy's toys of course. But if he wants to play with a doll for example, I am not going to say "Don't do that". He is going to be a father someday and he needs to learn to deal with babies. But I don't expect him to playwith a doll for a long period of time.

In terms of what happens if someone gives their children a toy that is usually associated with the other gender, they responded:

Normita's dad: I wouldn't like that. She is a girl so she deserves girls' toys, don't you think?

José's mom: I would think that the person made a mistake, you know, usually old people can make a mistake. And he would said "that's a girl's toy".

Based on their responses regarding toys and play, it is evident that stereotyped gender roles and expectations are deeply ingrained. I was able to perceive that although parents are clear about the importance of gender equity and social justice in terms of gender, they keep perpetuating the same stereotyped roles that are normal to them.

Normita's dad: But we have to be clear, the hard work, like mowing the grass or washing the car, is definitively my job. I am not going to allow my wife or my daughter to do that.

It was very interesting to hear what the parents said. They are aware of the expectations of this new generation. For example, when I asked about toys, José's mom answered:

José's mom: Ohhh, well, boy's toys of course. But if he wants to play with a doll for example, I am not going to

say, "Don't do that". He is going to be a father someday and he needs to learn to deal with babies.

They know what they should say and I think they believe that they are doing that. For example, when Jose's and Andrea's moms were adding some comments at the end, they valued dad's role at home, but they preferred to be in charge.

Andrea's mom: If she is sick or if she needs something, I am usually the one in charge of her. Although I know he can handle it, I like to be in charge of her needs.

Jose's mom: House chores have to be shared between parents but moms are better making decisions regarding kids.

Although parents were trying to be more open to change, like in the previous examples, traditional gender beliefs and behaviors were prevalent among them. Their actions, some other answers, or their kids' play episodes, conspire to suggest that we need to do a lot more in terms of gender equity in Puerto Rico. The parents' interviews shed some light on how members of groups come to believe in certain social facts that lend order to everyday life.

The next section will add the teacher's voice in how

gender roles are embedded in her classroom.

Step seven:

Teacher's interview

Method of data collection #5

The teacher was a key element and presence throughout the research process because we usually discussed my daily observations. This provided a broader perspective of each one of the four cases.

The in depth interview with her was done at the end of the research period. That data was compared and contrasted with the data generated from the kids and the parents. I asked the teacher the same questions I asked the parents, but added questions concerning the clusters. I also asked questions about what I saw in the play episodes regarding gender role activities, and about what parents (without mentioning any names) told me in their interviews. I wanted to obtain data that allowed me to infer how the home culture could influence the school culture, perhaps without parents' or teacher's full awareness. See Table 10 for the interview questions and Appendix IX to complete transcription.

Table 10: Questions asked in the teacher's interview

Teacher	Questions
May22,2009 3:15pm to 4:15pm	<p>How does Puerto Rican culture define, have an effect on, or influence what gender roles children express in their play?</p> <p>Do you believe things have changed during the last ten years in terms of how you see boys and girls at school?</p> <p>Focusing on your students, do you see some stereotyped behavior?</p> <p>Why do you think is that?</p> <p>And what happens with girls? Do they play with blocks?</p> <p>And boys, in terms of the Art area? Because I always saw girls in that area.</p> <p>What would you do if you observe a boy playing all the time with the same doll?</p> <p>What about chores in the classroom?</p> <p>Do they play a lot in the puppet area?</p> <p>What would you do if a pre service teacher tries to impose stereotyped behaviors s on the students?</p>

As in the previous section, I analyzed the teacher interview and found some recurrent themes that were conceptually grouped in three main clusters: children's roles in dramatic play, kind of play and colors, and teacher roles.

First main cluster: Children's roles in dramatic play.

The interview began by conversing about how Puerto Rican culture influences children's play. I used the following questions to guide the discussion: 1) How does Puerto Rican culture define, have an effect on, or influence what gender roles children express in their play?; 2) Do you believe things have changed during the last ten years in terms of how you see boys and girls at school?

The teacher agreed with the parents about the "machismo" culture that is evident in Puerto Rico and how that affects how children act.

Teacher: We are seeing a lot of boys that are peeing in a sitting position when you know, boys are supposed to do that in a standing position.

Marisel: And do you think that is related to something in our culture?

Teacher: That is another thing; with all the divorces they don't have a man modelling at home.

Marisel: What do you think are the repercussions of this?

Teacher: I think that in some degree moms are encouraging "machismo" for the boys to be more aggressive, manlier and not like them (moms) because they are boys. They need to

rear boys and they don't have a dad to do that. I think the moms are the ones who perpetuate "machismo".

With respect to women supposedly being the ones who perpetuate males' roles and transmit certain stereotyped gender roles, in Perez Jimenez, et al (2007) study about gender roles among Puerto Rican heterosexual male college students, one of the participants said:

"We are not in a male chauvinistic society that women are trying to change, but rather in one that women foster and maintain...it's really rare that you go out with a girl who picks you up, open and closes the door for you. It is unheard of for a girl to get up to offer you her seat" (p. 367).

At this point, it is important to point out some statistics from Puerto Rico Bureau for the Defence of Woman Office. According to their data, women constitute 52% of the Puerto Rican population, 32% of households in Puerto Rico have a woman in charge (without a husband), and the average salary for men is higher than the average salary for women. Related to that, the teacher commented:

Teacher: Well, I think that what is happening is that we are in a process of change in our Puerto Rican society.

Marisel: Why do you think that?

Teacher: Women are assuming other responsibilities and they are not being recognized for that.

Marisel: But, why do you say that women are not being recognized?

Teacher: Women don't have the standing, but they have more responsibilities...moms reassuming responsibilities that were men's responsibilities.

Marisel: Would you please elaborate?

Teacher: Ok, I see a changing process, but it is very gradual, and it is as if we are running two systems at the same time.

Marisel: What systems?

Teacher: In one system mom is assuming her traditional responsibilities, but at the same time she has a lot of other situations that she didn't have before, when she was a staying-at-home wife. The change that I am observing is that women have more responsibilities, not less.

In a personal communication (July 24, 2009, 10:45am) with Attorney Denise Vázquez, she expressed similar concerns about how the women movement seeking gender equality in Puerto Rico was not concomitant with the

expectation of males assuming more domestic responsibilities.

Based on the previous, I can summarize that women in Puerto Rico are more independent professionally, are working more outside the house, are taking care of their finances, and on top of that, they are in charge of the house and everything in it, fulfilling the Puerto Rican expectations of what a woman should do. That is also what the girls are reflecting in their play. The teacher described a gradual change in the girl's attitudes in the classroom:

Teacher: Now, in the classroom you see girls with more aggressive attitudes, there are more, and maybe, imitating a little bit the boy's behavior.

Marisel: What do you mean by that?

Teacher: Although being a boy doesn't justify being aggressive, this society encourages that. I am not sure if this change is due to girls trying to seek equity in rights and that's why they are trying to imitate boys.

Marisel: But how does this affect girls and boys in play?

Teacher: (Girls are) asserting themselves more, but when they play, they assume the role of the mom and wait for a boy to assume the role of the dad.

Marisel: What roles?

Teacher: Well, there, in their play, boys continue deciding and influencing the decisions.

It is very interesting to see through the teacher's eyes how girls have been changing through the years and how the Puerto Rican culture changing process is affecting them. But in end it is also remarkable to see girls playing and assuming a passive role and waiting for the boys to take the lead. The teacher described an incident during dramatic play with José and Andrea, which exemplifies this:

Teacher: For example, one day I went to the dramatic play area and saw Andrea lying down in the bed without saying a word. I got worried so I asked her what was wrong. She didn't reply. Immediately, José, who was sitting on the rug playing with some cars, said..."No, it's that she went to bed earlier. We are husband and wife and I told her to go to bed". Again, Andrea didn't say a word. When I asked him what he was doing he said he was working.

Davies and Kasama (2004) expressed that "in much of the same way that soldiers learn to obey their superiors, Japanese children learn to assent to the dictates of their culture" (p. 137). Children in Puerto Rico are observing

their context and they are using their play as a medium to explore, practice, and reflect on what they understand is going on in their culture. When children engage in pretend play they can generate imaginary situations, inventing roles and scenarios, and imposing "their own ideas and meanings on places, objects, and people" (Spielberger & Brooks McLane, 2002, p. 3).

At this point we can understand how valuable is play as a window to observe children's views of the society they live in. Girls are assuming very active roles, even demanding their rights in the classroom when they like or want to do something. But in dramatic play or even in the art area, they perform the mom act, with cell phone on one hand while cleaning the floor with the other, and alternately taking care of the baby, finish cooking, and serving dinner. In the meantime, the boys were all dressed up with their suitcases or police costumes, "working". Not even once during my observations, did a girl describe herself as being "working". That is what they are observing at home and that is the predominant dynamic in Puerto Rican society.

Second main cluster: Kind of play and colors

The interview continued by sharing ideas about different kinds of play and stereotyped colors between children. I asked the following questions to direct the interview: 1) Focusing on your students, do you see some stereotyped behavior? 2) And what happens with girls? Do they play with blocks? 3) And boys, in terms of the Art area? Because I always saw girls in that area; 4) Do they play a lot in the puppet area?

Since the first day I arrived at the Center I observed where the children were playing and I noticed that in the dramatic play area they all played together, but in the art and blocks areas they were segregated. I asked the teacher about the art area in particular:

Teacher: Mainly the girls are the ones who go there, boys are not interested. You have to invite them for them to go.

It is important to remember that the art area was the girls' favorite place to create jewellery, plan Thanksgiving parties, and to make food with modeling clay. The blocks area was different, that was a boy's area and one of the things they liked to do was build weapons:

Teacher: Another thing is that boys build weapons with whatever they find. Even if they find a piece of a wooden puzzle, they use it as a weapon.

Marisel: Girls do that also?

Teacher: That is something you see only in boys. Girls don't do that.

Marisel: But do you see girls playing in the blocks area?

Teacher: If girls play in the blocks area it's doing castles and playing with princesses. That play is very stereotyped in terms of what they do.

Marisel: What do you think is the reason?

Teacher: That is due in part to the Disney commercials and movies. I also believe that TV and the media in general play an important role in the way the kids are; not only parents and school influence.

Here obviously the media, as part of the culture, influences a lot children's play. "Many children today spend less time playing than children did in the past, and when they do play, their play is often dominated by content from TV" (Levin, 2002, p. 21). Although this could be true in some play episodes, it is not entirely true across the play range that occurs in the classroom. In my observations, the Puerto Rican home culture was the main

part of the themes in children's play.

Another characteristic the teacher pointed out was the use of stereotyped colors in children. There was a discussion in the classroom about "Piglet", a character in the Winnie the Pooh stories.

Teacher: I have seen that a lot with colors. This week we were talking about Piglet, from Winnie the Pooh, and all of them started arguing about Piglet's gender. Everyone was saying Piglet was a girl because it was pink. In the classroom we see that a lot, but also it is more pronounced in boys.

In Puerto Rico it is culturally accepted that pink is a girl's color. All the girls want that color:

Teacher: ...but the girls are the ones who want the pink color. If I am sitting at a table with a girl on one side and a boy on the other, and I have a pink paper and a blue one, the girl is going to coerce me to give her the pink one.

Marisel: But why?

Teacher: Because for them that is the way it should be; not because I think so, it's because the girls believe that.

Third main cluster: Teacher's role

The final main theme that emerged from the interviews was the teacher's views and beliefs about her role as a teacher. The following questions led the interview discussions: 1) What would you do if you (as a teacher) observe a boy playing all the time with the same doll? 2) What about chores in the classroom? 3) What would you do if a pre service teacher starts trying to impose stereotyped behaviors on the students?

In the preschool years, children are developing a great sense of their identities as boys and girls. It's absolutely normal for boys and girls to want to engage in "boy" and "girl" activities, but it's also vital to help children see that classroom activities don't need to be limited by gender (Miller & Booth Church, 2002). And this is an important part of the role of the teacher, to try to be aware of everything that is influencing children's play, in this case Puerto Rican "machista" culture, and try to create spaces to encourage gender equity and social justice. Aedo, Cerdá, Díntrans, Pizarro, Redón, and Romo (2009) studied play in Chile, and Puerto Rico can be compared with Chile in terms of the "machismo" culture and the expectations "to create a man's prototype, a prototype

of a very strong man and a weak woman" (p. 88). In Chile, like in Puerto Rico, there are differences in the play episodes of boys and girls and, Aedo, et al (2009), concluded that this was due to the construction of gender identity in a "machista" culture. Similar to Puerto Rico, Chile has a distinction of roles in which society gives importance to the distinguishing characteristics of gender for boys and girls. Societal norms dictate what each gender has to play and for appropriate-gender gifts. The teachers in Chile were very concerned about gender stereotypes and how children play. The teacher in my study had this to say regarding this:

Teacher: My personal philosophy as a teacher is to put my grain of sand in the changing process toward creating a world with the same opportunities.

Marisel: Why?

Teacher: Nobody is better than the other; we just need the same opportunities.

Marisel: What would you do if a pre service teacher tries to impose stereotyped behaviors on the students?

Teacher: First I would try to guide her, because to begin with, that is not the Center's philosophy. The Center doesn't encourage stereotype roles.

This statement suggests how important it is for the teacher to facilitate and construct activities to promote the same opportunities for everyone in the preschool classroom.

Another example of the teacher's role is what Davies & Kasama (2004) discussed about work by Walkerdine (1981).

Walkerdine (1981) described how teachers could condone boys' bad behavior because "that's the way they are" (p. 75). The Teacher at the Center would not do that because she was very clear regarding the concept of respect and how to create a community that works for peace.

The teacher also expresses herself very clearly about equity in gender, for example when children were arguing about colors:

Teacher: I am the one who said, "colors don't have gender". Everyone can use any color. The ones who have gender are animals and humans because we are born that way.

Jordan and Cowan's (1995) observations of preschool children in Australia showed noticeable gender differences in their play also. Of particular interest, they wrote about boy's determination to explore certain activities of masculinity with which they were already familiar, like guns, fighting, and fast cars. The assertive girls in their

study attempted to assume power by acting the role of mother, teacher, or shopkeeper. Related to this, the teacher commented:

Teacher: In that case (in case the boys or girls are always playing with the same stereotyped toys or area), I would invite them to participate in other experiences. I would try not to see that incident in a gender/sexist way. I would expose them to new experiences.

Marisel: But why would you do that?

Teacher: That is the teacher's responsibility. But we need to understand that we have our own prejudices also, and we need to create a balance between what I personally think and believe and try to offer different opportunities to my students.

This highlights one of my central arguments. The majority of early childhood education teachers are women and I have discussed in an earlier section that women are mainly responsible for perpetuating "machismo".

Teacher: Andrea is a very sexy girl and when we asked them to put on their swimsuits, she appeared with a two-piece one and lay down on the bed (dramatic play area) in a very provocative position. Who encourages that? Who bought that swimsuit for her? Mom! And you know what José said?

"Look how sexy is Andrea!" And they are only four years old!!!. They are clear!

The teacher was very honest to accept that we all have our own beliefs. But even though she was raised in a certain way, she knows what to do in order to create gender equity in the classroom, giving everyone the same opportunities in appropriate ways. Developmental age or level cannot be separated from gender and culture in ECE policies and practices, as I will return to in the next chapter.

Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed the last two methods of data collection: the parents' and teacher's interviews. I presented examples of how clear the parents are about our reality in terms of a society that is not fair to everyone. Although we focused on how women are treated in Puerto Rico, the expectations that society assigns to men are very prejudicial for them also. Perez-Jimenez, et al (2007) showed the pressure men have and how the participants in the study revealed a negative conception of those kinds of behaviors and expectations. For example, "men bring home the food, men should be as masculine as possible, men

should always fight, men don't cry, men should exercise control, men are more in control,..." (p. 366).

My interviews with the parents revealed their interest in trying to move toward a more balanced society, but their responses also showed that we, as a Puerto Rican society, still have deep-seated gender differences in our culture.

The teacher was very enthusiastic and passionate about her classroom and the way she is doing things there. She is aware of the cultural situation and her responsibility in not continuing to perpetuate inequality. As she said, we are in a changing process, a gradual one, and it is reflected in play:

Teacher: But, on the other hand, we see boys playing assuming dad's role, but a gentler dad, helping with chores and helping with the babies. Years ago they only played with cars and stuff. I have seen more boys in the dramatic play area assuming the "new" dad's role.

However, she also acknowledges that because we are reared in a culture with strong gender expectations, we need to be conscious about that. We need to understand that if we want to participate in any culture changing process that has already started, we need to create awareness among children, parents, and the community in general.

Chapter VI

Making sense of all the data

Answering the research questions

This study focused mainly in two areas: play in ECE and gender roles in Puerto Rican culture. The general research question is: In what ways four year old children's gender roles become apparent through play episodes in a preschool center in Puerto Rico. The following research questions were addressed as subtopics of the general research question:

1. What expressions of gender roles expectations are reflected in children's play?
2. How does culture influence or impact the gender roles decisions made through play?
3. Which are the boys' and girls' preferred activities and toys during play?
4. How do parents perceive the culture (home, Puerto Rican, family, etc.) in their children's play?
5. How does the teacher perceive the culture (home, Puerto Rican, family, etc.) in her student's play?

Since this is an exploratory qualitative study, chapters IV and V were dedicated to presenting the results of data collected using the triangulation process. Chapter IV presents the results of observations of children at

play, and their responses to structured activities and in a focus group. Chapter V includes findings from interviews with parents and the teacher. In this chapter I discuss the findings of the four children case studies as a composite and in relation to the research questions.

Gender roles, culture, and play

In this section I will attempt to answer the general research question #1: In what ways four year old children's gender roles become apparent through play episodes in a preschool center in Puerto Rico? I will also try to answer the first two subtopic research questions: what expressions of gender roles expectations are reflected in children's play, and how does culture influence or impact the gender roles decisions made through play.

Observing children playing was the most remarkable aspect of this study. It was amazing to see how seriously they undertook doing what they wanted to do. I observed boys playing with boys, girls playing with girls, and playing together. One way to interpret these observations is through Bronfenbrenner's ecological model. This conceptual framework provides one approach to begin to answer the research questions.

The preschoolers in my study are in constant interaction with external factors, not only the teacher or the family. Bronfenbrenner's model posits the child's development within the context of the system of relationships that constitute his or her surroundings. As discussed in Chapter II, the ecological model pictures a set of circles in which the smaller one is inside a larger one, which means that the four aspects of the milieu affect how the child acts in the smaller circle.

The smallest circle or microsystem, which represents the child's immediate experiences, is the setting in which the child experiences daily reality. This study focuses on the classroom (although interviewing the parents gave me a glimpse of how the home influences the observed classrooms activities, specially play). In Puerto Rico, usually both parents work outside the home. Accordingly, more young children are sent to childcare and preschool centers at a young age, thereby removing or diminishing the rearing responsibility from parents or grandparents.

In Bronfenbrenner's view, playing, working, and loving are the principal types of activities that characterize the child's microsystem (Leu, 2008). In this study, I concentrated on children play episodes. To be able to

answer the research questions I coded the observations into four themes that were recurrent throughout the entire set of play episodes, structured activities, and focus group: 1. gender personal behavior, 2. gender tasks, 3. gender clothing, and 4. gender family roles.

Based on Bronfenbrenner's writings, the four themes observed in the inner circle or microsystem, are influenced by the three all-encompassing circles of the system. The relationship between the family and the teachers at school are the mesosystem (Lytle, 2003). The settings in which children do not directly participate, like parents' work or mass media, are the exosystem. And the ideologies and organizations of social institutions in Puerto Rico are the macrosystem (Rogoff, 2003).

In this study my data showed girls and boys exhibiting the traditional and stereotyped feminine or masculine conduct while playing. For example, while playing by themselves, girls played with modeling clay to create bracelets, rings, earrings, or fake nails. In addition, in the art area they usually played at being teachers, "Because we are girls!" (Andrea, December 5, 2008/10:10am). And in more than one occasion they would start screaming because they were afraid and needed

help.

On the other hand, while playing by themselves, boys would play with cars, making sounds of car crashes, wrestle, or build helicopters.

When boys and girls played together, girls would always act the roles of mother, daughter, and wife, while boys enacted roles of father, husband, son, firefighter, and policeman. Never, in my four months of observations, did I see a child cross the gender line. Once I asked Andrea if she could you be the dad sometime. She replied smiling and blushing, "No, because I am not a boy, he is the boy!" And Normita said very firmly, "NOOOO!!!!!! She is a girl!!!!!!"

Another aspect of the gender personal behavior theme that caught my attention while observing children playing together was the gender power discrepancy. For example, on one occasion a boy tried to physically impose himself over a girl while playing. The girl's response was that he should use words instead of violence. Another day a boy told a girl that she had to do whatever he said because she was his girlfriend. Sadly, that is characteristic of the Puerto Rican "machista" culture.

In Puerto Rican society, those gender personal

behaviors are the gender-based expectations for girls and boys. Children learn very easily "which behaviors are valued, and as a consequence, boys and girls develop diverging play styles" (Meire, 2007, p.58).

The gender tasks yielded findings very consistent with the observations of the play episodes, in terms of the culturally expected responses of girls and boys in Puerto Rico. For example, the few times that girls were in the blocks area, they built castles for princesses. In the art area, their main concerns were to create food and placemats for parties. Boys were not allowed to participate in those activities.

In another example, a boy was all dressed up in a police officer uniform. He was very proud to be an officer, but suddenly a girl gave him a baby doll to hold while she was cleaning the kitchen. He took the baby in his arms and was being very gentle with the baby doll. But as soon as he saw me watching him, he threw the baby doll as far as he could and while touching his policeman cap, said, "Done!" He did that twice on the same day. Obviously, he thought it was not appropriate for him to be holding a baby doll. Again, play observations and gender tasks converge to show how entrenched is gender in the child's mind and actions.

Gender clothing was also very interesting to watch. Four-year-old children's ideas are very concrete. This is why their understanding of gender is narrow and restricted to behavior and physical appearance. As discussed in Chapter IV, in Puerto Rican culture clothing and accessories are very important; community and media make this very clear. It was very easy to see the girls paying so much attention to their appearance, not only while playing, but generally at school as well. All of the ten girls in the classroom had ponytails and wore laces, earrings, and bracelets. And when they had a special day without uniforms, they dressed very feminine and were proud to be and feel pretty.

In terms of play, when the play period began, they would run to the closet in the dramatic play area and look for high heels, long dresses, necklaces, and earrings. Then, and only then, they would start playing. Boys would dress up like firefighters, police officers, or astronauts. Never did a girl dress up like a firefighter, police officer or astronaut; and never would a boy dress up in women's clothing, not even as a joke.

Finally, observing the gender family roles in children play demonstrated how family traditions in Puerto Rico are embedded in children's thinking. Through role-playing

children are allowed to practice or experiment with gender expectations about appropriate behaviors. Consequently, in dramatic play, girls would always imitate their mothers. After dressing up, they would clean the house, pat the baby, use the cell phone, plan and organize family gatherings, always placing the family needs before theirs. They did not experiment much or depart from normative behavior and they were always proud to call themselves "Mom". "I am the Mom!"

One incident that exemplifies the above occurred on November 24, 2008 at 10:30am, when everyone started yelling there was a fire in the house and ran to hide. Everyone except Normita. In her high heels and with a broom in hand, she said very calmly, "You go first, I can't leave the kitchen now, I am cleaning and I need to finish".

Boys, on the other hand, were in charge of going to work outside the house and buy milk for the baby. Interestingly and ironically, in real life, moms are going out to work too. But it is this hidden and often not so hidden expectation that the woman's real or central job is in the house and the man's work is outside.

Canales-Guzman (2008) discusses the work by Fabes et al, (2003) in which they proposed that teachers should encourage cross-gender play to promote less gender-

stereotyped activities. During my observations in the dramatic play area I observed cross-gender play (girls and boys playing together), but it did not circumvent stereotyped behaviors. On the contrary, what caught my attention was the way the girls and the boys perpetuated what they thought was expected from them. However, the teacher reported that in other areas or situations, girls were more assertive and even dominant, but not in dramatic play!

This finding is important and requires careful interpretation. Based on my observations and parents' and teacher's interviews, I can infer that kids generate meanings, constructing knowledge of societal norms and role expectations. Girls in particular appear to be very aware of this. They observe how mom is very hard working in her job, using the cell phone in the car on the way home, resolving work related issues and talking about that. But when they get home, their roles change to a domestic one, in which they need to take care of the house, children, pets; basically taking care of other's needs over their own. And in some cases, if there is a dad, he doesn't have so much responsibility in household chores. I believe that is why girls are assuming different roles depending on what area of the classroom they are playing. They perceive the

dichotomy in their moms' life. Female assertiveness is situationally specified. The most traditional is least open to change.

Based on Bronfenbrenner's theory then, play styles are being influenced by relationships among the family, parents' work, mass media, and the prevailing cultural ideologies.

To summarize the first research question, gender roles are very apparent in children play because children demonstrate what they believe the culture expects from them. These results are consistent with the concept of gender roles as those behaviors and ways of thinking that distinguish men and women. To these children, gender roles are normative expectations formed by a process of social interactions with family, peers, religion, media, and the educational system. "These institutions exert different influences during certain periods of time in the process of human growth and development" (Perez Jimenez, et al, 2007, p. 372).

In the next section I will discuss the third sub question, what are the boys' and girls' preferred activities and toys during play?

Girls and boys preferred activities and toys

As previously indicated, four years old children know what society expects from them in terms of gender roles. Peers, family and educators are part of those gender constructions (Canales-Guzman, 2008). By observing children, talking with them, and doing structured play activities with them, I was able to understand what they really like to do while playing and how that relates to gender social expectations.

To facilitate the analysis of this section, I will use Super and Harkness' developmental niche theory, which consists of three subsystems that work concurrently as a larger system. Super and Harkness (2002) describe those subsystems as the physical and social settings, the culturally regulated customs of child rearing, and the psychology of the caretakers. Those subsystems are posited as being mediators between the child's daily experiences and the larger culture (Super & Harkness, 1997). This is a useful lens to examine my results here.

The first subsystem describes the physical and social setting, which in this case is the preschool center where I did my study. Super and Harkness (1997) explained how such a setting is important in shaping what the child does in the setting through the kinds of activities that the

setting promotes. The second subsystem consists of the culturally regulated customs of childcare. These are implemented by parents and teachers who tend to preserve the culture without being consciously aware of it (Lytle, 2003). The third subsystem is based on the beliefs, expectations, and goals of the person taking care of the child, in this case the parents and the teacher. Their beliefs about play determine what play opportunities they provide or allow for children, for instance.

When children play, they often imitate the adult roles that they observe. They practice social roles in which they may later participate (Rogoff, 2003). Let us now think in terms of developmental niche.

For the first subsystem I will focus on the children's favorite play area: "the kitchen" (they always called the dramatic play area "the kitchen"). During the play period children's cross-gender play takes place mainly in the dramatic play area. Their children were free to act as they wanted. "They work out the scripts of everyday life, adult skills, roles, beliefs and values as they play" (Rogoff, 2003, p. 298).

Related to Super and Harkness' physical and social settings, I observed one of my favorite play episodes (also described in Chapter IV). On (January 20, 2009/9:30am)

Diego, José, Andrea and Normita selected in Assembly to go to the dramatic play area. It seemed as if they had already planned that. They knew what they were going to do as soon as got there. The girls went directly to the closet and started dressing themselves like mom and daughter. Diego and José went to the sofa area and started doing something that I could not figure out. Then, Andrea arrived with a baby doll and asked if the crib was ready for the baby. José said, "I do not know where my tools are! Look for them!" Andrea gave the baby to Normita and went to the kitchen, opened the microwave and took out some vegetables. Then she gave the vegetables to José and he started simulating as if he was using a hammer and nails, hammering, putting together all the pieces of the crib (which in reality were the pieces of the sofa). José, with Diego's help, took a considerable amount of time using the "tools" to put together the crib. José said, "Diego! Those are my working tools!" When it was finished, Andrea put the baby on the crib and all of them looked very pleased with their work. Andrea left the baby in charge of Normita and went to the kitchen to start dinner while José picked up all his "tools".

In this episode we can also see the second system in the developmental niche model, which consists of how

culturally regulated customs affect play. The four children were imitating adults in a very gendered society, in which dad does the hard work and mom is the assistant who knows where everything is, and at the same time takes care of the baby. Noteworthy too is that the teacher did not intervene in the play episode. This dramatic episode represents a very normal and common activity for Puerto Ricans and a very telling reflection of gender based cultural expectations. Moreover, this event reflects the parents' and the teacher's beliefs, expectations, and goals. This is how the third subsystem is embedded also in children's play episodes.

Another example is (December 8, 2008/9:30am) when José, Diego, Andrea, and Normita were playing in the dramatic play area and they decided to go to the movies. José was the Dad, Andrea the Mom, Diego the Uncle, and Normita the daughter. After Andrea and Normita were ready (putting on a long dress, all the available jewelry, and high heels), José told them, "Mom, you have to take our daughter to the movies because Uncle and I need to get to work". Andrea accepted this without any problem and José and Diego left for work and sat at a table. Super and Harkness (1986) emphasize that play and peer relationships cannot be understood without taking into consideration the external

factors or systems that affect them.

The second part of this research question relates to toys. Toys play a central role in the lives of young children and in this case are a very important part of the physical and social setting that Super and Harkness describe. They inspire and motivate pretend play, the developing of cognitive skills, and social play with other children. Toys are also highly gendered (Blakemore & Centers, 2005).

Although Blakemore and Centers (2005) reported in their review of literature that there is evidence of some change over the years in the direction of girls as likely as boys to ask for cars and male dolls, and boys as likely as girls to request clothing and educational toys, I did not see this in my study. Boys played with boys' toys and girls played with girls' toys, at school and at home (including parents' answers).

One of the structured play activities I did with the four cases was showing them different toys typically existing in early childhood settings. Their responses were very gendered. Miniature horses and tools workbench were exclusive for boys, (although one boy and one girl considered that the "miniature horses" could be a neutral toy, but their first answer was boys'). On the other hand,

"Barbies", baby girl doll, baby boy doll, toy shopping cart, and toy kitchen, were all considered to be definitively girls' toys (with the exception of the baby boy doll that Normita said could be neutral). Regarding this, in my interviews with parents, I found that they were extremely gendered about toys also. Their responses suggested just how embedded indeed are the cultural gender distinctions of toys. Inevitably, even if unconsciously, they are influencing their children's answers and play.

In the focus group with the children, I asked a few questions related to toys. Responses were very consistent with what children answered in the structured activities and with the parents' responses in the interviews. For example, to the question, "What do you do if you see a girl playing with a boy's toy?", their responses were: "That is wrong!" - "No, no, no, no! Only boys play with that!" - "A girl should not be playing with that". When I probed, "But what would you tell her?", they continued: "Things like that are for boys, girls can't play with that." - "That's like that." - "I would say, 'That is wrong!!!!'" - "They can't play with girl's toys, Guacala!!!" (It is an expression of repugnance!) - "If I see a girl playing with a boy's toy I would say that she should not be doing that". And finally when I asked, "What do you do if you see a boy

playing with a girl toys?", they responded: "If I see a boy playing with a doll I would say, 'That's a girl's toy!'" - "That's wrong." - "He can't do that because it is a girl's toy."

I find it very useful to interpret these data using Super and Harkness as a theoretical framework because the scheme helps clarifies how parents, the teacher, and cultural customs, influence the physical and social settings in which children play and engage in other activities at school and at home.

Parents' and the teacher's voices

In this last section I will attempt to answer the final subtopic question, how do parents and the teacher perceive the culture (home, Puerto Rican, family, etc.) in children's play?

Based on Rogoff's writings on cultural historical theory, the data collected is easily classified in relation to personal, interpersonal, and institutional or cultural dimensions (Pramling-Samuelsson & Fleer, 2009). This helps to clarify my findings.

The personal dimension in this model focuses on the child. Children in the Center loved to play especially in the dramatic play area. By focusing on the relations

among the people around the children (peers, parents and teacher for example), I employ the interpersonal focus of analysis. Subsequently, when I focus on the children's surroundings, I have available the cultural-institutional information that is necessary to be able to interpret and understand what children are doing (Rogoff, 2003).

With respect to the second category, parents' interviews allowed me to have a glimpse of my four children cases' home life and parental expectations. The parents were very aware of the rampant "machismo" in our culture and they were clear about wanting to move to a "more equal" society in terms of gender roles. But as Canales-Guzman (2008) concluded from her study in Puerto Rico, there are marked inconsistencies between what we believe and what we say, what we want for our children and what we do.

We can aspire that gender stereotyping be a thing of the past, but at the same time, we want our kids to behave according to Puerto Rican society's norms and traditional values. For example, although Normita's dad said that if he arrived first at home he would start cooking or washing the dishes, he also made very clear that the hard work, like mowing the grass or washing the

car, was definitively his job. He was not going to allow his wife or his daughter (Normita) to do that. Also, minutes earlier, when I asked what he would do if someone gave his daughter a toy generally associated with boys, he replied, "I wouldn't like that. She is a girl so she deserves a girls' toy, don't you think?".

Parents expressed how much they like to see their children play and reported play episodes at home that were very stereotyped by gender. One mom was concerned because she registered her son (Diego), to be on a baseball team and he did not like it. But she will try again soon because "that is important".

The teacher, on the other hand, was very open in terms of gender equity in the classroom. Her personal philosophy as a teacher is that it is her job to promote the changing process toward a society with equal opportunities for all. "Nobody is better than the other; we just need the same opportunities". To pursue that, she gave children lots of free play opportunities without intervention; she assumed an observer's role. But she is also keenly aware that we live in Puerto Rico and that society has strong stereotyped gender expectations for girls and for boys. For example, she has to deal with the expectation of boys being

aggressive and violent. They are always building weapons, while she is trying to create a community of peace in the classroom.

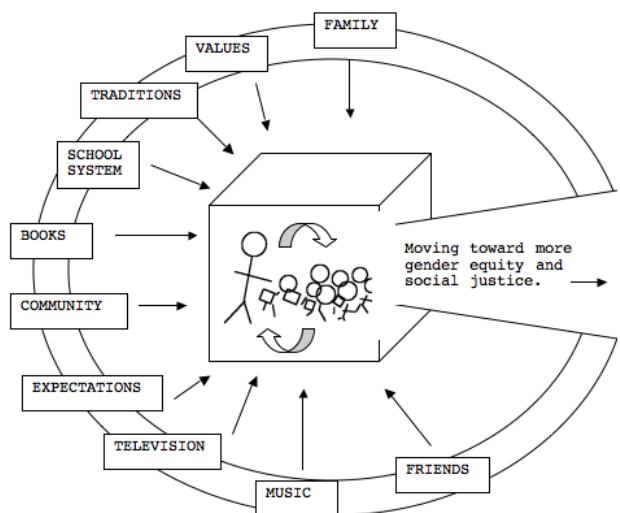
The third focus of analysis is the cultural-institutional dimension. This category concentrates in particular objects and processes in the setting that reflects cultural institutions and customs. The parents played an important role in the center because the Center's philosophy is to make the family and the community part of the curriculum. Because of that, parents bring with them the gender biases that the Center tries to eliminate. For example, the Center has an activity that each Friday a different student takes home a bag with books to read with their parents. A very concerned mom told me that she was worried because the bag the Center sent home was pink and she has a boy.

The teacher also mentioned the role of the media in children play, as in the aggressiveness in boys and the fascination with princesses and clothing in girls. Nevertheless, the teacher strives to create routines that promote spaces for children to develop freely their capacities in a non-gendered setting (Silva, 2004).

Conclusion

Socialization among preschoolers in Puerto Rico reveals a society in conflict and in a slow transition process. Gender roles, values, and expectations held by the family are deeply rooted in Puerto Ricans, and preschool children's play episodes manifest that. Yet there are some traces of change in girl's assertiveness outside of the dramatic play area, and in statements by parents and the teacher. But still, we have too much to do and educators need to move toward more gender equity and social justice-- although they have to do that moving against the stream. I have tried to represent a conceptual model influenced by my findings. See figure 3.

Figure 3: Conceptual model influenced by my findings



Chapter VII

Conclusions and implications

Basically, I consider that the research questions have been addressed and answered. In addition, I was able to confirm how essential it is to create awareness among ECE teachers and parents, of the importance of play as a window to understand cultural beliefs, values, and bias. Thirdly, I should emphasize the increasing insight of how all the different psychological, social, and physical factors that surround children are affecting them and the way they act.

Puerto Rico's society has traditional expectations for each gender, which create the foundations for stereotyped roles that limit equal opportunities for both men and women. One of many consequences is that in Puerto Rico single women, who generally have low incomes, head a very large number of Puerto Rican homes. Another consequence is that Puerto Rico has a serious domestic violence problem.

In addition, many responsibilities exist now for these women in Puerto Rico in terms of working in and out the house (Bureau for the Defense of Women Office, 2009).

With this in mind, my main interest in doing this research was to explore to what extent the gender stereotype in Puerto Rico was being embedded beginning in

the early years and then start creating some awareness about young children and gender equity. I think that if we start providing this knowledge or awareness to early childhood teachers and parents, we can begin to nurture future adults to be more accepting of gender fairness.

This study, then, connected two areas: play in ECE and gender roles in the Puerto Rican culture. Why ECE? Because these first eight years of life are crucial in human development. Advances in research in how young children grow and develop point out that the conditions and experiences of early childhood have a permanent impact over the person's lifetime (Bosch, 2001). Why play? Because many of the attitudes and behaviors that children in early childhood exhibit during play, mirror the values, child rearing practices, and social structures of their home culture. Play performed as imitation of gender content help form social identities. We cannot expect the same behaviors from children of different or even the same cultural groups, but we can observe patterns that can help teachers understand variations in play styles in the classroom (Teaching Tolerance Project, 1997). Why Puerto Rican culture? Because institutions like family, church, school, and mass media exert a great influence on the transmission and acquisition of children's gender roles

(Pérez Jiménez, et al., 2007)

Sadly, research in Puerto Rico about gender roles, play, and early childhood is practically non-existent (Canales Guzman, 2008). I wished to contribute to this new field and make an impact on parents, teachers, principals, and others in the education of our children. A background point to my study or an underlying rationale was to promote a clearer understanding of how crucial and critical are the first eight years in the life of a human being in so many ways, not least of which is sex role socialization, gender identity formation, and gender-related attitudes. I want my colleagues to accept our responsibility in providing joyful, constructive, hands on, and free play based activities, that enable children to learn gender equity and justice in a very natural way, that will also prepare them to develop successfully through school and life.

The reason I chose a preschool center is that schools as a system perpetuate what is natural and standard for the majority group (Banks, 2002), and as such contribute to the process of molding the adults in our society. A preschool setting is very important in early identity and attitudes formation because children spend a lot of time there. Preschool space and time frames and allows for the transmission of attitudes, knowledge, experiences, and

values (Canales Guzmán, 2008).

My experience as a researcher

It was very enlightening for me to observe my four-year-old cases while playing. It was like watching a Puerto Rican cultural movie. In their play, they represented everything that was normal to me, a woman who was born and reared immersed in Puerto Rican culture. In a personal communication (July 30, 2009) with my best friend and ECE teacher Jennifer Cockfield Pyles, she said "Normal is what you know, what you live with day to day, minute to minute". I was writing my notes while observing children play and then I realized that we still perpetuate machismo because it is normal to us. I had to make an effort to visualize what was happening in children play and the implications of my reactions. They were imitating their families and everything about them.

As previously noted, Corsaro (2003) wrote about how dramatic play permits kids to experiment with other-gender expectations, giving them the liberty to defy doing something as typically expected. I did not see this as frequently as I expected during the four months that I was doing the study. Culturally it is not permitted or considered highly inappropriate.. You are a boy or you are

a girl, so no boy ever wore a dress or something related to a girl, not even as a joke. But, even though it was not very common, (only few situations), there were some children breaking away from the conformity norm. For example, when the boy threw away the doll when I was looking at him and when the other boy took a "girl" puppet and the other boy called him on it. These are examples of how children police or deal with gender transgressions.

Teacher's role: Suggestions from the study

Teachers play an important role in the socialization of children because, while teaching, they also pass on the socially appropriate expectations and behaviors for girls and boys. Teachers in Puerto Rico's preschools will have to be prepared to criticize and remove the biased or dated children's books, toys, and movies, and to identify persons who can represent positive role models. They will also have to examine school practices and find different ones in areas such as curricular activities or child management (Bennett, 2003). To be able to do that, teachers need to have knowledge about cultural diversity (which includes gender roles), history, and current events. Teachers must also be aware of their own prejudices.

I also want to stress the importance of parents and

teachers working together to be able to move forward in the battle for gender awareness and equity. Lawrence-Lightfoot (2003) said in her book, "Families and schools are overlapping spheres of socialization, and the successful learning and development of children depends, in part, on building productive boundaries between and bridges across them" (p. xxiii).

A main motivation for this study was an attempt to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the ways gender roles operate systematically in early childhood settings. I also wished to learn how play could be used to foster equity and social justice. Children like to play, so by observing, focusing, and reflecting on children's play episodes, teachers can use this as a tool to gain cultural knowledge about their students and create a classroom climate of equity and social justice. I now know how hard and complicated this is and that is why it is important to clarify and emphasize that this doesn't occur automatically. The educators need to have an understanding of what needs to be observed, focused on, and reflected upon. That's why it has been important to do this exploratory study-- to estimate where we are and in what direction we need to move. If we want to create equity and social justice we need to provide children with the

comparable opportunities and foster similar role expectations for all. In the desire for making fairer and more equal opportunities, teachers can devise and implement informal and intentional teaching practices that can hopefully lead to a more social equity in classrooms, schools and in society.

Parents at best are ambiguous about that goal and even the teacher in my study seemed resigned to the status quo in the area of gender play.

Further reflections on the findings

I love preschoolers and during the four months I spent in the Center they were fascinating to watch. The findings of my study regarding the context where gender role socialization is taking place among preschoolers in Puerto Rico point to a society in a slow transition process, suggesting a culture wanting to change. Gender roles, values and expectations held by the four cases' families were all very consistent with traditional Puerto Rican norms, and children play episodes also manifested this. However, based on parents' and teacher's interviews, although it is evident that some elements of our culture remain unaltered, others are changing little by little. Gender construction is a process, and gender roles in

Puerto Rican culture are being reconstructed as we speak.

My introspection as a researcher

At the end of this journey I can say that one of the most important outcomes was developing self-awareness.

Through this process, I had to deal with my own biases as a Puerto Rican woman reared in this culture. While doing the study I found myself thinking about how gendered I was in my role as a teacher and as a mother.

Upon finishing this research and after a long reflection, I realized that as a teacher I always tried to protect the boys and I didn't expect much from them in terms of helping in the classroom. With girls, on the other hand, I assumed that "they should know better". I was stricter with girls than I was with boys.

I am a mom. My daughter sometimes says some things that let me know that even though I am consciously trying to rear her in a world in which equity between genders can prevail, I am still perpetuating differences. For example, when I was growing up we were a family of five, my dad, my two brothers, my mom and I. The women in the family were in charge of everything inside the house, everything related to house chores. The "guys" worked outside. Now I find myself asking my daughter to wash her dishes and she

points out that I do not ask her dad to do the same.

Before this research, I did not question or realize what I was doing. But with this research journey I have certainly developed a greater awareness about this. I truly believe that the most important step to take in creating a gender fair society is to become gender-cultural self-aware.

Strengths and limitations

All studies have strengths and limitations, and mine is no exception. One of the strengths of this study was the use of multiple data sources to generate information about the four children. This facilitates the analysis of the information to answer the research questions. Another strength of this study was that it was a naturalistic field study. It added to the field knowledge about play, gender roles, and ECE in Puerto Rico. Before my study there was very limited information about this, particularly regarding using vivid descriptions of play episodes as a window to explore children's cultural awareness. Finally, the research process developed awareness among the Center's parents, teachers, and staff about equity in gender roles topics.

In terms of limitations, since my study had only four

cases, I cannot generalize nor sought to. I also was limited by how I collected the data. For example, parents did not allow me to videotape play episodes. I had to rely on my field notes.

I also encountered four difficulties in carrying out my research. First, because I was a student from one university and doing my research in another, I had to apply to two different Institutional Review Board (IRB) offices. It took me three months to get permissions. IRB is stricter if you have children as participants in your research. Second, in Puerto Rico, issues related to sexuality and gender roles are basically considered taboo. Hence, explaining my study to the parents was a delicate process. I had to meet with almost every one of them individually to explain my study, even though I had a group meeting with all the parents at the beginning. The problem was, and this is the third difficulty I found, that the majority of the pool of participants' families (enrolled in the Center) were single-parent families or were families in which both parents worked full time. It was difficult to have both parents at the meeting at the same time (if the family had two parents). In retrospect, not surprisingly, none of the parents signed the letter of consent immediately. I had to wait until the parent who was

present at the meeting explained the letter to the one who was not. Subsequently, the parents that were not at the meeting wanted to meet with me. As a result, I could not start my research when I had planned. Finally, apparently because the gender topic is controversial in Puerto Rican culture, most of the parents did not allow me to video record or take pictures of the play episodes. I was not able to do this as originally planned.

In a sense, all of this that transpired supports the conclusions I have reached based on data I was able to collect in my study proper. Gender is a sensitive topic. There are strong traditions in the Puerto Rican culture regarding this and the parents were cautious in agreeing to get involved. Then their interviews and children's play observations corroborated the gendered picture that emerged.

Suggestions for future research

After this study, I want to continue working to improve the early childhood curriculum and to create awareness with regard to the importance of play and gender equity. There are several issues that still need to be addressed in future studies. First, how doing this study in different parts of the Island could have similar or

different results? Would we find more "machismo" in towns in the interior of the Island and less in the Metropolitan areas? Does socio economic status affect gender bias and beliefs as seen in play of young children?

We also need to examine more closely the subtle ways in which Puerto Rican women may be perpetuating "machismo". This is important because women are the ones who teach in the early childhood years. Finally, if gender awareness courses or course work is taught at the college level, could we help shape a new generation of teachers who will stand against inequality?

Final thought

We must see ECE as part of the socio-cultural puzzle to understand there is still much work to be done in terms of developing equity awareness. But it is our responsibility to work with the ECE part of the puzzle and use play to be able to move one step closer for children and adults to fully understand the importance of boys and girls having the same opportunities.

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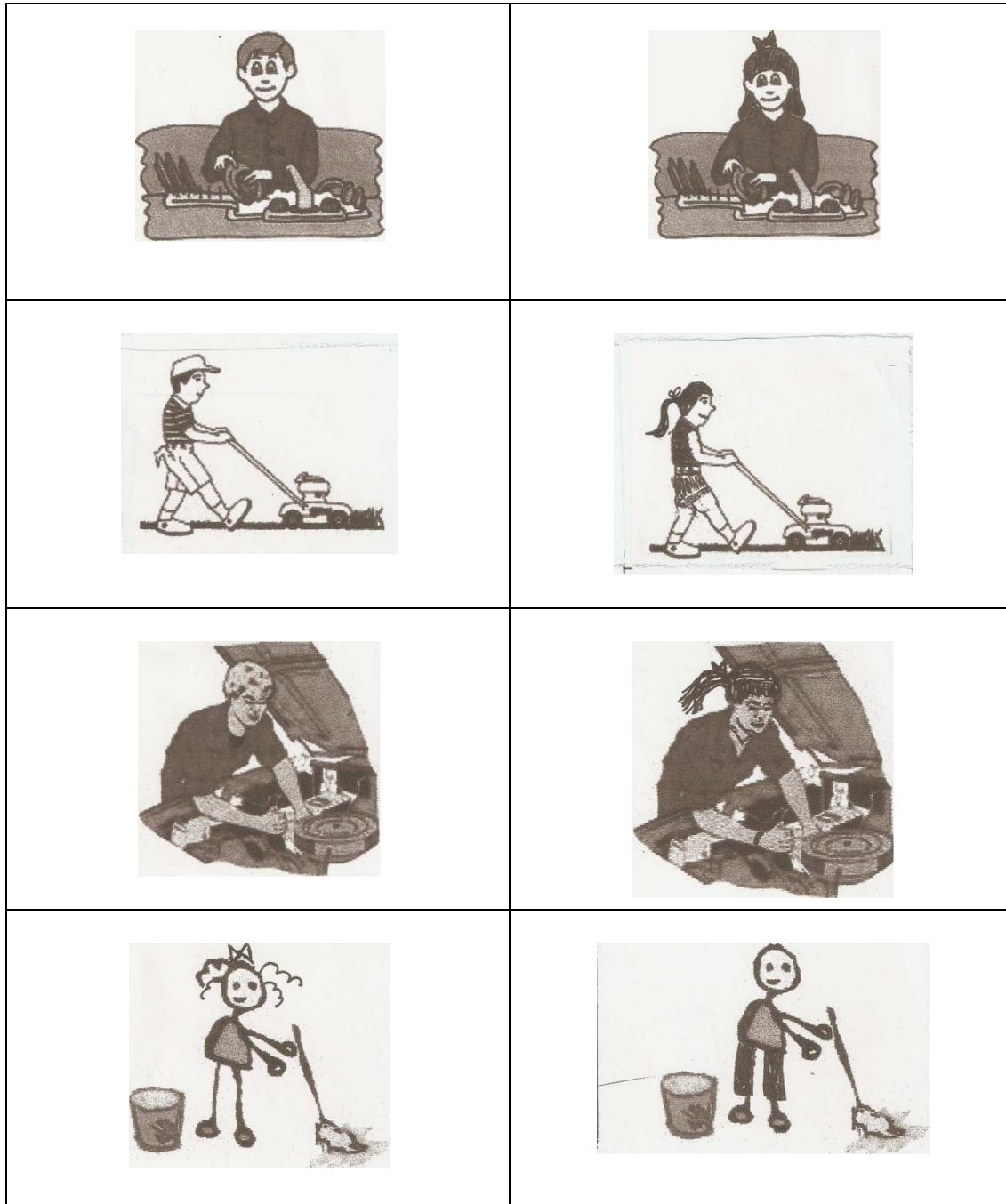
Appendix A:
First activity: Pictures of different toys and games

Appendix B:
Second activity: Pictures of different occupations



Appendix C:
Second activity: Pictures of different occupations
(Modified)



Appendix D

IRB Permissions:

Penn State approval letter

SUAGM approval letter

PENNSTATE



Senior Vice President for Research
Office for Research Protections

The Pennsylvania State University
201 Kern Graduate Building
University Park, PA 16802-3301

(814) 865-1775
Fax: (814) 863-8699
www.research.psu.edu/orp/

Date: October 23, 2008
From: Andrea R. Seisler, IRB Administrator
To: Marisel N. Torres-Crespo
Subject: Results of Review of Proposal - Expedited (IRB #29507)
Approval Expiration Date: October 12, 2009
"Exploring Gender Roles Through Children's Play Episodes in an Early Childhood Setting, as part of Puerto Rican Culture: A Qualitative Study"

The Social Science Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed and approved your proposal for use of human participants in your research. By accepting this decision, you agree to obtain prior approval from the IRB for any changes to your study. Unanticipated participant events that are encountered during the conduct of this research must be reported in a timely fashion.

Enclosed is/are the dated, IRB-approved informed consent(s) to be used when recruiting participants for this research. Participants must receive a copy of the approved informed consent form to keep for their records.

If signed consent is obtained, the principal investigator is expected to maintain the original signed consent forms along with the IRB research records for this research at least three (3) years after termination of IRB approval. For projects that involve protected health information (PHI) and are regulated by HIPAA, records are to be maintained for six (6) years. The principal investigator must determine and adhere to additional requirements established by the FDA and any outside sponsors.

If this study will extend beyond the above noted approval expiration date, the principal investigator must submit a completed Continuing Progress Report to the Office for Research Protections (ORP) to request renewed approval for this research.

On behalf of the IRB and the University, thank you for your efforts to conduct your research in compliance with the federal regulations that have been established for the protection of human participants.

Please Note: The ORP encourages you to subscribe to the ORP listserv for protocol and research-related information. Send a blank email to: L-ORP-Research-L-subscribe-request@lists.psu.edu

ARS/ars
Enclosure
cc: James E. Johnson



SISTEMA UNIVERSITARIO ANA G MÉNDEZ
Vicepresidencia de Planificación y Asuntos Académicos
Vicepresidencia Asociada de Recursos Externos
Oficina de Cumplimiento

Junta para la Protección de Seres Humanos en la Investigación (IRB)

Fecha : Noviembre 10 de 2008
Investigador principal : Marisel N. Torres Crespo
Título protocolo : Explorando el desarrollo de los roles de género a través de episodios de juego en los niños preescolares como parte de la cultura puertorriqueña: Un estudio cualitativo
Número de protocolo : 02-021-08
Tipo de solicitud : Protocolo inicial
Institución/Escuela : UNE y Penn State
Tipo de revisión : Expedito
Acción tomada : Aprobado
Fecha de revisión : Octubre 31 de 2008

Certificamos que la propuesta/protocolo de referencia recibida en la Oficina de Cumplimiento fue revisada por la Junta para la Protección de Seres Humanos en la Investigación (IRB) en octubre 31 de 2008. La misma fue evaluada a través de una revisión expedita bajo 45 CFR 46.110; 21 CFR 56.110.

Los siguientes documentos fueron revisados:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Protocolo | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Carta de autorización |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Asentimiento Informado en español e inglés | <input type="checkbox"/> Hoja Informativa |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consentimiento Informado en español e inglés | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Curriculum Vitae |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carta de Enmienda | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Certificado de HIPAA |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Instrumento | <input type="checkbox"/> Formulario FDA 1572 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anuncio | <input type="checkbox"/> Administración Federal de |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Certificado de Protección para Participantes | <input type="checkbox"/> Alimentos y Drogas |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Humanos | <input type="checkbox"/> "Package Insert" |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Derecho de autor | <input type="checkbox"/> "Investigator Brochure" |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Evidencia/ Recibo de compra del instrumento | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Otras: <u>Documentos de Penn State</u> |

Favor de tener presente los siguientes puntos:

- La hoja de consentimiento es un documento que asegura que los sujetos o participantes entienden su participación en un estudio, además de ser un seguro de protección para los mismos después de ser firmado. De acuerdo con las Regulaciones Federales se requiere que los participantes reciban copia del consentimiento después de ser firmado.
- De realizarse algún cambio en los documentos anejados con este estudio deben ser sometidos nuevamente al IRB para su debida revisión y aprobación utilizando la forma de IRB solicitud para Cambios/ Enmiendas.
- Todo evento adverso o no esperado debe ser informado al IRB utilizando la forma de IRB de Eventos Adversos.
- Todos los documentos relacionados con la investigación deben ser guardados hasta un término de cinco (5) años. Pasado este término los mismos deben ser eliminados/ triturados, no quemados.
- De no realizar su investigación en el término aprobado deberá someter una solicitud de Revisión Continua llenando la forma IRB asignada para estos propósitos antes de vencerse el mismo.
- Al finalizar su investigación debe someter una solicitud de cierre utilizando la forma de IRB Solicitud para Cierre de Protocolo aprobado por el IRB.
- Los participantes de esta investigación (maestros, padres y niños) deberán firmar tanto los documentos autorizados por Penn State como los documentos autorizados por SUAGM.

Usted podrá llevar a cabo este estudio durante el término de un año venciendo en **Octubre 31 de 2009**. Para más información, aclarar dudas, notificar algún evento adverso o no anticipado favor de dirigirse a:

Oficina de Cumplimiento
 Vicepresidencia Asociada de Recursos Externos
 Vicepresidencia de Planificación y Asuntos Académicos
 Sistema Universitario Ana G. Méndez
 P.O. Box 21345
 San Juan, PR 00928-1345
 Tel. 787 751-0178 exts.7195-7197; Fax 787 751-9517

En la Universidad Metropolitana la Srta. Carmen Crespo al (787)766-1717 ext. 6366; Universidad del Turabo la Prof. Josefina Melgar al (787)743-7979 ext.4126; y en la Universidad del Este la Dra. Rebecca Cherry al (787)257-7373 Ext. 6396.

Atentamente,


Co-Presidente IRB

Appendix E

Letters of consent:

Penn State letter of consent

SUAGM letter of consent



Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research
The Pennsylvania State University

Título del estudio: Explorando el desarrollo de los roles de género a través de episodios de juego en los niños preescolares como parte de la cultura Puertorriqueña: Un estudio cualitativo

Investigadora principal: Marisel N. Torres-Crespo
59 Yaguez Estancias del Rio
Aguas Buenas, PR 00703
787-649-9251
mnt122@psu.edu

Mentor: Dr. James Johnson
145 Chambers Bldg., University Park, PA, 16802
814-865-2230
jej4@psu.edu

1. Propósito del estudio: El propósito de esta investigación es observar como los niños preescolares reflejan a través del juego cuánto saben de sus roles de género. A través del juego, podemos observar como los niños y niñas le dan sentido a su mundo alrededor, como desarrollan sus destrezas sociales y como visualizan sus roles de género como parte de la cultura puertorriqueña en particular, entre otros aspectos.

La meta final es poder impactar positivamente las prácticas educativas de la educación preescolar en término de desarrollo de roles de género a través del juego y como eso enfatiza la igualdad en los salones de edad temprana en la cultura Puertorriqueña. Por tal razón es indispensable que usted sea partícipe del estudio también para poder ver a través de sus ojos como la cultura Puertorriqueña de su hogar y familia influye en el juego de su hijo.

2. Procedimiento a seguir: Si acepta que su hijo o hija participe en esta investigación, es importante que usted entienda las actividades que se llevarán a cabo en este estudio:

I. Niños:

- El primer día en el cual yo estaré allí, le voy a pedir a los participantes individualmente que me hagan un dibujo de ellos mismos. De esta manera, utilizando el medio del dibujo, podré facilitar el diálogo entre el participante y mi persona y comenzar a crear confianza entre ambos. Confianza necesaria para el desarrollo del estudio. Esta actividad durará aproximadamente de quince (15) a veinte (20) minutos.

- Durante tres mañanas en la semana (lunes, miércoles y viernes), estaré observando las interacciones entre los participantes mientras juegan. Estas observaciones durarán aproximadamente dos (2) meses. Utilizando video, grabaré los episodios de juego para examinar y explorar el desarrollo de los roles de género en el ambiente preescolar.
- Durante el mes de octubre, me reuniré con cada uno de los participantes individualmente para que participen de una actividad/juego estructurado en donde ellos clasificarán varios láminas con juegos o juguetes típicos de la niñez temprana. Colocaré en una mesa dos canastas. La canasta #1 representará los juegos que ellos jamás jugarían y la canasta #2 representará los que tal vez jugarían. En ambas contestaciones deberán explicar el por qué de su selección. Esta actividad estará grabada también y durará aproximadamente de diez (10) a quince (15) minutos.
- La otra actividad que realizarán es hacerme un dibujo sobre lo que para ellos es jugar y explicármelo.
- Y finalmente me reuniré con ellos en grupitos de dos o tres para un grupo focal y discutir sus opiniones y creencias sobre el juego y sus roles de género en él. Solicitaré que lo que al salir de esa reunión, no deben repetir lo que sus amiguitos dijeron.

II. Padres:

- Como parte de este estudio cualitativo, quiero unir la cultura, el juego y la escuela. Para poder hacer eso necesito los padres. Los entrevistare individualmente (no necesito ambos) y les hare unas cuantas preguntas:
 - a. Como ve el desarrollo de roles de género en su casa?
 - b. Como clasifica los roles de género en su casa?
 - c. Si tiene una niña, le pide que haga tareas usualmente asignadas a varones?
 - d. Si tiene un niño, le asigna tareas usualmente asignadas a niñas?
 - e. Que clase de juguetes le compra a su hijo?
 - f. Como reaccionaría si alguien le regala un juguete típico de nene a su hija?
 - g. Como reaccionaría si alguien le regala un juguete a su hija típico de niño?

3. Riesgos: No existen riesgos más allá de los experimentados en el diario vivir al participar en este estudio aunque algunas preguntas son personales y pudieran causar incomodidad. Este estudio se llevará a cabo en acuerdo con la maestra y será en el tiempo dedicado a participar de las diferentes áreas en el salón. El tiempo que su hijo o hija pasará es el tiempo que el o ella decidan. Si se cansa y no quiere participar más, ahí termina su participación por ese día. No se le obligará a ningún colaborador a participar y repito que no habrá ninguna penalidad con aquel niño o niña que no quiera participar. Tanto usted como su hijo o hija pueden decidir no contestar cualquier pregunta.

4. Beneficios: No existe un beneficio directo de esta investigación para su hijo. Sin embargo, para la sociedad incluye ser capaz de impactar positivamente las practices educativas en la educación de la niñez temprana en términos de crear conciencia en el desarrollo de roles de género en salones preescolares y enfatizar justicia e igualdad durante los primeros años en los salones de clase dentro de la cultura Puertorriqueña.

5. Duración y tiempo: Estaré en el centro durante tres mañanas a la semana durante la mañana por aproximadamente 2 meses. Los estaré observando mientras juegan, así que no espero ninguna actividad de ellos. Las únicas actividades que realizaré con ellos serán las siguientes:

I. Niños:

- 1ra actividad – presentarse (15 minutos)
- 2da actividad - entrevistarlos (15 minutos)
- 3ra actividad - dibujar (15 minutos)
- 4ta actividad – grupo focal (15 minutos)

En resumen, tomaré una hora del tiempo de sus hijos para este estudio.

II. Padres:

La entrevista con los padres durara aproximadamente 15 minutos.

6. Confidencialidad: Es bien importante aclarar que la participación de los niños es estrictamente confidencial. Los datos, incluyendo videos y grabaciones, estarán guardados bajo llave en un archivo en mi hogar por diez (10) años académicos (octubre 2008- octubre 2018), luego serán borrados y destruidos. Sin embargo, puede que algunos segmentos de video se conserven para propósitos de poder representar visualmente las diferentes categoryas estudiadas en alguna presentación o conferencia profesional. Pero nunca esos segmentos de video estarán bajo la tutela de alguna otra persona y las caras de sus hijos seran borradas para evitar la identificación de los participantes. Las siguientes oficinas pueden revisar y copiar documentos relacionados con esta investigación: La Oficina de Human Research Protections en el U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, el Social Science Institutional Review Board y el PSU Office for Research Protections.

7. Derecho a preguntar: Favor contactar a Marisel N. Torres-Crespo al (787) 649-9251 con preguntas, quejas o preocupaciones sobre este estudio. Preguntas sobre sus derechos como participantes pueden ser dirigidas a Penn State University's Office for Research Protections al (814) 865-1775 y a Miriam Rivera Cano, Associate Vicepresident of External Resources, "Oficial Institucional" of the "Oficina de Cumplimiento" at (787) 751-0178 Ext. 7283 or to mriverac@suagm.edu. Puede también llamar a este número si n puede

conseguir a la investigadora principal. Puede también contactar mi mentor Dr. James Johnson at jej4@psu.edu.

8. Participación voluntaria: La decisión de participar en este estudio es totalmente voluntaria. El tiempo que su hijo o hija pasará es el tiempo que el o ella decidan. Si se cansa y no quiere participar más, ahí termina su participación por ese día. No se le obligará a ningún colaborador a participar y repito que no habrá ninguna penalidad con aquel niño o niña que no quiera participar. Tanto usted como su hijo o hija pueden decidir no contestar cualquier pregunta.

Su firma en este documento significa que ha decidido que su hijo o hija participen después de haber leído y discutido la información presentada en esta hoja de consentimiento. Usted tiene que tener por lo menos 18 años de edad para dar permiso.

Autorizo a mi hijo(a) _____ a participar en esta investigación.

No autorizo a mi hijo(a) _____ a participar en esta investigación.

Permitiré a la investigadora a entrevistarme.

No permitiré a la investigadora a entrevistarme.

Colocar sus iniciales en donde autorice:

No autorizo a que los videos en los que sale mi hijo(a) sean guardados por diez (10) años para ser usados en presentaciones profesionales.

Autorizo a que los videos en los que sale mi hijo(a) sean guardados por diez (10) años para ser usados en presentaciones profesionales. La cara de mi hijo(a) no será identificable cuando sean presentados los segmentos de video. Estos videos serán destruidos en diez (10) años.

Nombre padre o encargado

Firma

Fecha

Nombre padre o encargado

Firma

Fecha

He discutido el contenido de esta hoja de consentimiento con el arriba firmante.

Investigador principal

Firma

Fecha

Le será entregada una copia de este documento para sus archivos.

Sistema Universitario Ana G. Méndez
Universidad del Este
Carolina
Escuela de Educación

Consentimiento Informado

Título: Explorando el desarrollo de los roles de género a través de episodios de juego en los niños preescolares como parte de la cultura Puertorriqueña: Un estudio cualitativo

Nombre del Investigador: Marisel N. Torres-Crespo

Nombre del Mentor: Dr. James Johnson

Esta hoja de consentimiento puede contener palabras que usted no entienda. Por favor, pregunte al investigador encargado o cualquier personal del estudio para que le explique cualquier palabra o información que usted no entienda claramente. Usted puede llevarse a su casa una copia de este consentimiento para decidir si participará o para consultar con su familia o amigos antes de tomar su decisión.

I. Introducción

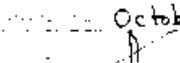
Usted ha sido invitado a participar en un estudio de investigación. Antes de que decida participar en el estudio, por favor, lea este consentimiento cuidadosamente. Haga todas las preguntas que tenga, para asegurarse de que entiende los procedimientos del estudio, incluyendo sus riesgos y beneficios.

II. Propósito del Estudio

El propósito de esta investigación es observar como los niños preescolares reflejan a través del juego cuánto saben de sus roles de género. A través del juego, podemos observar como los niños y niñas le dan sentido a su mundo alrededor, como desarrollan sus destrezas sociales y como visualizan sus roles de género como parte de la cultura puertorriqueña en particular, entre otros aspectos.

III. Participantes del Estudio

El grupo de preescolar al cual su hijo asiste fue seleccionado para participar en esta investigación porque es un salón del Centro Educativo Preescolar de la Universidad del Este. Este centro cumple con los recursos, el personal de apoyo y el criterio imprescindible de fomentar el

02-02-08
November 10, 2008
October 31, 2009


02-02-08
November 10, 2008
October 31, 2009

juego como estrategia educativa, necesarios para el desarrollo del estudio. La Prof. Marybell Rodríguez, Directora del Centro, me autorizó a realizar la investigación en le salón de preescolar.

Se espera que participen de cinco (5) a diez (10) niños y de cinco (5) a diez (10) niñas. La participación de ellos será totalmente voluntaria. Primero se solicitará el consentimiento de ustedes los padres y luego el asentimiento de los niños. Luego de explicarles a los niños(as) en que consiste lo que la investigadora hará, ellos decidirán si participan en el estudio o no. Se realizará la investigación solamente con aquellos participantes que asistan voluntariamente. No habrá ninguna penalidad con aquel que no quiera participar.

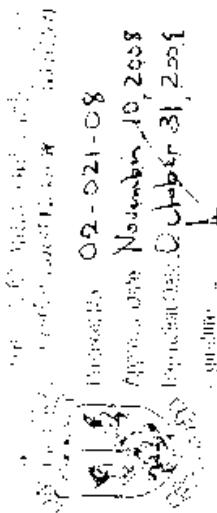
IV. Procedimientos

Si acepta que su hijo o hija participe en esta investigación, es importante que usted entienda las actividades que se llevarán a cabo en este estudio:

- El primer día en el cual yo estaré allí, le voy a pedir a los participantes que me acompañen a una esquina del salón en donde nadie pueda interferir en lo que su hij(a) está diciéndome. Esto será individual y les pediré que me hagan un dibujo de ellos mismos. De esta manera, utilizando el medio del dibujo, podré facilitar el diálogo entre el participante y mi persona y comenzar a crear confianza entre ambos. Confianza necesaria para el desarrollo del estudio. Esta actividad durará aproximadamente de quince (15) a veinte (20) minutos.

- Durante tres mañanas en la semana (lunes, miércoles y viernes), estaré observando las interacciones entre los participantes mientras juegan normalmente. No se moverán de sitio ni se alterará de ninguna manera su rutina. Estas observaciones durarán aproximadamente dos (2) meses. Utilizando video, grabaré los episodios de juego para examinar y explorar el desarrollo de los roles de género en el ambiente preescolar.

- Al comienzo del segundo mes del estudio, me reuniré individualmente con cada uno de los participantes en una esquina de salón para garantizar la privacidad de su hijo(a), para que participen de una actividad/juego estructurado en donde ellos clasificarán varias láminas con juegos o juguetes típicos de la niñez temprana. Colocaré en una mesa dos canastas. La canasta #1 representará los juegos que ellos jamás jugarían y la canasta #2 representará los que tal vez jugarían. En ambas contestaciones deberán explicar el por qué de su selección. Esta



actividad estará grabada también y durará aproximadamente de diez (10) a quince (15) minutos.

La meta final es poder impactar positivamente las prácticas educativas de la educación preescolar en término de desarrollo de roles de género a través del juego y como eso enfatiza la igualdad en los salones de edad temprana.

Este estudio se llevará a cabo en acuerdo con la maestra y será en el tiempo dedicado a participar de las diferentes áreas en el salón. El tiempo que su hijo o hija pasará es el tiempo que el o ella decidan. Si se cansa y no quiere participar más, ahí termina su participación por ese día. No se le obligará a ningún colaborador a participar y repito que no habrá ninguna penalidad con aquel niño o niña que no quiera participar. Tanto usted como su hijo o hija pueden decidir no contestar cualquier pregunta.

V. Riesgo o Incomodidad

No existe ningún riesgo en participar en este estudio mas allá de lo experimentado diariamente.

VI. Beneficios del Estudio

El objetivo final de este estudio es impactar positivamente las prácticas educativas en la educación de la niñez temprana en término de desarrollar conciencia de los roles de género en la preescolaridad y como enfatizar igualdad y justicia en la sala de clases. Esto es considerado un beneficio a la sociedad en general incluyendo a los participantes.

VII. Incentivo al Participante

No se ofrecerá ningún incentivo a los participantes.

VIII. Privacidad y Confidencialidad

Su identidad será protegida aclarando lo siguiente. La participación de los niños es estrictamente confidencial. Sin embargo, puedo que algunos segmentos de video se conserven para propósitos de poder representar visualmente las diferentes categorías estudiadas en alguna presentación o conferencia profesional. Los resultados generales de esta

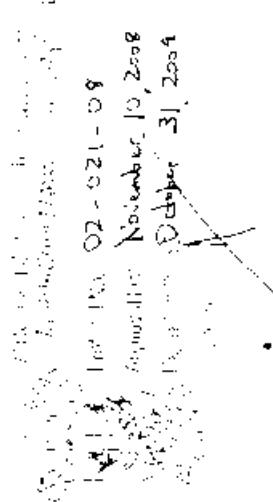
investigación serán compartidos con mi mentor, mi comité de tesis, publicaciones, entre otras. Pero los datos crudos solo los conoceré yo como investigadora principal. Toda información o datos que pueda identificarte serán manejados confidencialmente según establecido por la ley (HIPAA). Para esto se tomarán las siguientes medidas de seguridad: los participantes nunca se identificarán por nombre. Se les asignará un número. Su hijo(a) será siempre identificado con el mismo número nunca con su nombre. La única persona que sabrá la identidad seré yo como investigadora principal. Al igual, los segmentos de video nunca estarán bajo la tutela de alguna otra persona y las caras de sus hijos serán borradas para evitar la identificación de los participantes. Las siguientes oficinas pueden revisar y copiar documentos relacionados con esta investigación pero solo verán los números con los que identificamos a sus hijos(as) y nunca sus caras: La Oficina de Human Research Protections en el U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, el Social Science Institutional Review Board y el PSU Office for Research Protections. Solamente yo como investigadora principal que tendrán acceso a los datos. La hoja de consentimiento podrá ser una manera de identificar al participante. Sin embargo, estos datos serán almacenados bajo llave en un archivo en mi hogar por un período de (5) años académicos (octubre 2008- octubre 2013) una vez concluya este estudio.

Los resultados de esta investigación pueden ser publicados en revistas científicas o ser presentados en las reuniones médicas, pero la identidad suya no será divulgada. La información puede ser revisada por la Junta para la protección de Seres Humanos en la Investigación (IRB siglas en inglés) del Sistema Universitario Ana G. Méndez. El IRB del SUAGM es un grupo de personas quienes realizarán la revisión independiente de la investigación según los requisitos de las regulaciones. Su información será mantenida tan confidencial como sea posible bajo la ley. Esta autorización servirá hasta el final del estudio, a menos que usted la cancele antes. Usted puede cancelar esta autorización en cualquier momento.

IX. Compensación por Daños

- En el caso de lesión física como resultado de su participación en este estudio de investigación, usted recibirá tratamiento médico, libre de costo, en el Hospital designado para cada Institución Primaria.

1- Universidad Metropolitana y sus Centros Universitarios-Sala de Emergencia del Centro Médico de Río Piedras



2- Universidad del Este y sus Centros Universitarios-Hospital de la Universidad de

Puerto Rico de Carolina

3- Universidad del Turabo y sus Centros Universitarios-Hospital HIMA de Caguas

- En caso de sufrir alguna lesión mental como resultado de su participación en esta investigación, tendrán disponible una evaluación inicial en su Institución Universitaria correspondiente. De ser necesario, será referido a su médico primario para tratamiento.
- El Sistema Universitario Ana G. Méndez no provee alternativa de pago u otra forma de compensación por posibles daños relacionados con participación en la investigación. Por ejemplo salarios no devengados, pérdida de tiempo invertido o sufrimiento. Ninguna forma de remuneración económica será otorgada directamente a usted. Sin embargo, al firmar esta forma de consentimiento no renuncia a sus derechos legales.

X. Participación Voluntaria

Su participación en este estudio es voluntaria. Usted puede decidir no participar sin penalidad alguna. De usted decidir participar, puede retirarse del estudio en cualquier momento sin ninguna penalidad ni pérdida de beneficios. Durante su participación en este estudio, el IP o su representante pueden solicitar que se retire del mismo.

XI. Persona Contacto para Información

Si tiene alguna pregunta adicional sobre este estudio o sobre su participación en el mismo, o si entiende que ha sufrido alguna lesión por su participación en el estudio, usted puede comunicarse con:

Marisel N. Torres-Crespo, al 787-649-9251 o a su correo electrónico mnt122@psu.edu. Pueden también comunicarse con mi mentor Dr. James Johnson al jej4@psu.edu. O comunicarse con la Oficina de Research Protections de Penn State al 1-(814)-865-1775 (USA).

Si usted tiene alguna pregunta sobre sus derechos como participante del estudio, puede contactar a la:

Oficina de Protección de los Seres Humanos en Investigación
Teléfono (787) 751-0178 ext. 7196

09
10, 2008
31, 2009
02 -> November
03 October
04 September
05 August
06 July
07 June
08 May
09 April
10 March
11 February
12 January

E-mail: cumplimiento@suagm.edu

XII. Consentimiento

He leído la información de esta hoja de consentimiento, o se me ha leído de manera adecuada. El contenido del estudio me ha sido explicado y todas las preguntas sobre el mismo han sido aclaradas.

Al firmar esta hoja acepto participar en el estudio y certifico que mi participación es voluntaria e informada.

Nombre del Participante
(Letra de Molde)

Firma del Participante

Fecha

Nombre del Investigador
(Letra de Molde)

Firma del Investigador

Fecha

Si el participante del estudio es menor de 18 años, firma de ambos padres es requerida.

Nombre del Padre
(Letra de molde)

Firma del Padre

Fecha

Nombre del Madre
(Letra de molde)

Firma de la Madre

Fecha

Appendix F:
Transcription focus groups

Questions	Answers			
	Andrea	Normita	José	Diego
Do you like to play?	Yes!	I am an expert!	Yes!	Yes!
Why do you like to play?	It is fun!	Because I like it!	It is fun exciting!	It is fun to play!
Where do you like to play at school? (All at the same time)	Kitchen	Kitchen	Kitchen	Kitchen
Why do you like to play in the kitchen area?	I like it too! There is also a mirror and a bed.	There is a bed and shoes	Because there are a lot of toys and I am new here and at home I didn't have it.	There are tables and toys.
What do you do in the kitchen area?	I am always the mom!	We always played moms and dads!	I am always the dad.	
And why you are not the mom?			Angrily he responded: Because I am not a girl!	He is not a girl (almost immediately)
Andrea, could you be the dad sometime?	Smiling and blushing: Because I am not a boy, he is the boy!	NOOOO!!!!!! She is a girl!!!!!!!		
Diego, could you be the mom sometime?			Hahaha!	Of course not! Because I am a boy and boys never could be moms!
What are the differences between	Girls can cook!	Dads can cool too.	I am always the dad.	Moms have long hair and dads don't.

moms and dads?				
What other differences ?	High heels.	I have a dress!	I don't look like that...never!	There are boy's shoes and girl's shoes.
Who would you like to play more?	I like to play with José, he is always the dad! And I am the mom!	I like to play with my friends Andrea, Diego and José. We need moms, dads, brothers and sisters.		
What do you do if you see a girl playing with a boy toys?	That is wrong!	No, no, no, no!	Only boys play with that!	A girl should not be playing with that.
But what do you tell her?	Things that are boys, girls can't play with that. That's like that.		I would say, "That is wrong!!!! They can't play with girl's toys, Guacala!!! (It is an expression of repugnance!)	If I see a girl playing with a boy's toy I would say that she should not be doing that.
What do you do if you see a boy playing with a girl toys?	If I see a boy playing with a doll I would say: That's a girl's toy!	That is wrong.		He can't do that because it is a girl's toy.
Do you help at home?	Yes	Aha	Yes	Yes
How? What do you do?	I help my mom mop the floor.	I help my mom.	I help my mom!	I help my mom clean my room.

Appendix G:
Transcription parents' interviews

Questions	Answers			
	Andrea's mom	Normita's mom and dad	José's mom	Diego's mom
How do you define Puerto Rican culture in terms of gender roles?	Oh God, very very "Machista". No doubt about that.	Here in Puerto Rico we can see some stereotype behaviors and yes, we can call it "machismo".	In case of my son, playing with toy cars appropriate to his age, let me see what else?... Doing everything a child should do because is a boy or a girl. We could also say, in case of a boy, playing hide and seek, playing basketball like my son does it at home, and so on.	In Puerto Rico we have the "machismo" and is there, present in everything. The way we raise our kids it is based on that. Boys play with cars and girls with dolls.
How do you see Puerto Rican culture defining gender roles?	This is a very "machista" culture, everyone knows that. What we can do? Boys doing what boys do and girls doing what girls are suppose to be doing.	Woman in Puerto Rico, for example, needs to dress in certain ways. In our house, Normita's mom takes very good care of herself in terms of clothing and accessories and all that stuffs they do. Normita	In Puerto Rico, regardless of everything, we have a very "machista" culture. That we divide girls from boys? Yes, we do that.	If I understand correctly, in Puerto Rico we hear a lot "that is for boys or that is for girls". I am more open to that, Diego has little female cousins and they play together. And he can play with

		<p>is copying that way and that's why she is so feminine. Puerto Rican culture determines how woman should act and dress.</p>		<p>their toys but he should know those toys are theirs not him. He is very clear about that. Also, like in Christmas for example, if he wants to play with a girl's toy he can do it but only for a while because that is a girl's toy not boys.</p>
Related to that, do you think in 2009 we are different from 1999? Do you see a transition process?	<p>Yes, we are different now; we have more opportunities in terms of jobs. Now husbands help more in the house. For example my husband wash the dishes, mop the floor, etc.</p>	<p>Yes, we can say we are different. Now women have more opportunities and men do more around the house. And it is ok.</p>	<p>Ehh, I would tell, fifty/fifty. At least at my home I encourage a lot that a man has to do chores also. This is not a matter of gender, you know? A man can do the dishes and wash the clothes, at least at my house. I encourage José to do that.</p>	<p>Well, I guess but I am not sure how much. We are moving toward a transition.</p>
At home, how do your son or daughter play?	<p>Andrea has a lot of dolls and likes to dress like me. She is always</p>	<p>Normita has a lot of Disney princesses and loves to play with</p>	<p>He likes to play outdoors, with his cousins and friends.</p>	<p>He likes sports. He wanted to be on a baseball team, and</p>

	trying to use my high heels and accessories.	them while she is dress like one. She likes to play with her cousins.		then he didn't want to be there so I took him out. But I am going to try to put him again this next year.
What do you think about their play?	Ohh, I love to see her play. She is so sweet with all her dolls and all the stories she create while playing. Like she is the mom or the teacher to her dolls. It is very sweet and delicate.	She loves to play. She could spend hours playing with her Barbies and dressing like one. One day I entered her room and she was all dress up dancing.	He also likes to play with cars and video games. He makes car sounds and uses the floor as a road.	I like him to play sports, it is important for his health. To mucho obesity and passivity with all those video games.
At home, each one of you has an assigned chore?	I do a lot of things at home but my husband washes the dishes, mop the floor, fold the clothes, and so on. There is a dad in the house and he can do house chores also. Andrea help me with the laundry and time ago she also helped with the dishes but she was so	We can say that. For example, if I arrived first at home (dad is talking now) he could start doing dinner or washing the dishes. All depends on who arrived first. But, we have to be clear (dad still talking), the hard work, like mowing the grass or	I am a divorce mom, so we are only two at home. José and me. I am in charge of cleaning the house and he is in charge of taking out the trash. I don't allow him to wash the dishes...he is too young. He has a very short age so when I wash the clothes I	At home I tried to teach him that house chores is not a man or woman thing. Each one can do it. But, because he is too young I don't put him in charge of anything, I do it all but encourage him to see what I am doing for him to learn.

	<p>so messy that I am not letting her doing that again, hahaha! But she help me more than her dad.</p>	<p>washing the car, which is definitively my job. I am not going to allow my wife or my daughter to do that.</p>	<p>took him with me for him to see what I am doing. When I do the dishes the same. I am familiarizing him with house chores. His room, I let him doing something in terms of cleaning and organizing but because of his age he doesn't do that well, so I finish.</p>	
What kind of toys do you buy your child?	<p>Andrea has girl's toys of course! I am not going to buy her boy's toys!</p>	<p>Normita has girls and neutral toys, like educational ones. She doesn't have any boy's toy.</p>	<p>Ohhh, well, boy's toys of course. But if he wants to play with a doll for example, I am not going to say "Don't do that", he is going to be a father someday and he needs to learn to deal with babies. But I don't expect from him to play for a long period of time with a doll.</p>	Boys of course!

<p>What would you do if someone gives your son or daughter a toy generally associate with the other gender?</p>	<p>Ohh, no, that's not correct!</p>	<p>I wouldn't like that. She is a girl so she deserve a girls toys, don't you think?</p>	<p>I would think the person made a mistake, you know, usually old people can make a mistake. And he would said "that's is a girl's toy".</p>	<p>First of all is that Diego is going to say "that is for a girl". I always say to him, say thank you, that person made a mistake. And I would give the gift to a girl.</p>
<p>Anything else you want to add?</p>	<p>If she is sick or if she needs something I am usually the one in charge of her. Although I know he can handle I like to be in charge of her needs.</p>	<p>The first time the mom talks: I am sure if someday I am not around, for any reason, he would take a good care of Normita and he would make sure she grow up being a girly person like I am doing now. That's important, you know?</p>	<p>House chores have to be share between parents but moms are better taking decisions regarding kids.</p>	<p>Moms need to work in something that don't affect the family, if you have a job that is interfering or is to demanding, you need to change jobs. The family is first.</p>
<p>What do you think about this? "I work, my husband works, I come home and I work. I clean the house and I do laundry," said Maria,</p>	<p>That is totally true because our culture is like that. People has this idea that is the woman has an unorganized house is because is lazy. We are still in</p>	<p>It shouldn't be that way, but it happens. But if people see the backyard being a mess, they would call me slob - said the father.</p>	<p>That is totally true. Incredible as is sounds Puerto Rican society think like that nowadays.</p>	<p>Sadly in Puerto Rican culture house responsibility is on the woman's shoulder.</p>

30. "Someone comes over and the house is a mess, they don't look at the man and think, 'What a slob,' they look at me and say, 'What a slob."	a cultural transition process.			
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Appendix H:
Parents' demographic information

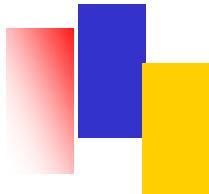
Demographic questions:				
	Andrea's mom	Normita's mom and dad	José's mom	Diego's mom
1. What age group do you fall into?	41-50	20 - 30	31- 40	20 - 30
2. What is your gender?	Female	Female and Male	Female	Female
3. Please indicate your highest level of education completed:	Bachelor degree	Both of them Bachelor degree	Bachelor degree	Bachelor degree
4. What is your current marital status?	Married	Married	Divorce	Divorce
5. How many children do you have?	1	1	1	1
6. Girls ages	Girl 5 years	Girl 4 years	N/A	N/A
7. Boys ages	N/A	N/A	Boy 5 years	Boy 5 years

Appendix I:
Transcription teacher's interviews

How Puerto Rican culture define, have an effect on or influence what gender roles children express in their play?	<p>What do I think? Well, I think that what is happening is that we are in a changing process in our Puerto Rican society... where women are assuming other responsibilities and they are not being recognized for that. Women don't have the standing but she has more responsibilities...where the mom is doing responsibilities that were man's responsibilities. Now, in the classroom you see, for example, girls with more aggressive attitudes, imposing themselves more but when they play, they assume the role of the mom and waiting for a boy to assume the role of the dad. Well, there, in their play, boys continue deciding and influencing the decisions.</p> <p>For example, one day I went to the dramatic play area and saw Andrea lying down in the bed without saying a word. I got worried so I asked her what was wrong? She didn't reply.</p> <p>Immediately, José, who was sitting on the rug playing with some cars, said..."no, is that she went to bed earlier, we are husband and wife and I told her to go to bed". Again, Andrea didn't say a word. When I asked him what he was doing he said he was working.</p> <p>I see a changing process, but it is very gradual and is like if we are running to systems at the same time. In one system mom is assuming other responsibilities but at the same time has a lot of other situations that she didn't have before when she was a stay-at-home wife. In Puerto Rico, the change I am observing is that the woman has more responsibilities, not less.</p>
Do you believe things were different from now in terms of how do you see boys and girls at school?	<p>Very different! Maybe, I can say that girls are more aggressive; they are more, and maybe imitating a little bit the boy's behaviour. Although being a boy don't allow me to be aggressive but the society encourage that. I am not sure if this change is woman trying to seek equity in rights and that's why they are trying to imitate men.</p>
Focusing on your students, do you see some stereotype behaviour?	<p>I have seen that a lot with colours. This week we were talking about Piglet, from Winnie the Pooh, and all of them started arguing about Piglet's gender. Everyone was saying Piglet was a girl because he was pink. In the classroom we see that a lot, but also is more focused on</p>

	boys. It is true we are seeing more boys choosing pink colours and saying that they are more like their moms and not like their dads. That is weird.
What do you think is that about?	I don't know! We see receiving a lot of boys that are urination in a sitting position when you know, boys has to do that in a standing position. That is another thing; with all the divorce they don't have a man modelling at home. And one thing that I think about is in what degree moms are encouraging "machismo" for the boys to be more aggressive, manlier and not like them. They need to raise boys and they don't have a dad to do that. I think the moms are the one who perpetuate "machismo". But, on the other hand, we see boys playing assuming a dad's role, but a more gentle dad. Helping with chores and helping with the babies. Years ago they only played with cars and stuffs. I have seen much more boys playing in the dramatic play area playing as a dad. Assuming the dad's role.
And what happened to girls? Do they play with blocks?	Yes, but less than boys. And if they play is doing castles and playing with princesses. That play is very stereotyped in terms of what they do. And that is because Disney's campaign.
And boys, in term of Art area? Because I always saw girls in that area.	Principally the girls are the ones who go there, boys are not interested. You need to invite them for them to go.
What would you do if you as a teacher observe a boy playing all the time with the same doll? Focusing in the Puerto Rican society.	In that case, I would invite him to participate in other experiences. I would try no to see that incident in a gender/sexist way. I would expose him to new experiences. And that is the teacher responsibility, but we need to understand we have our own prejudices also and we need to create a balance between what I personally think and beliefs and try to offer different opportunities to my students.
And what about chores in the classroom?	Here everyone needs to clean, and with the color I am the one who said, "colors don't have gender, everyone can use any color. The ones who have gender are animals and humans because we

	<p>are born that way" but the girls are the ones who wants the pink color. If I am in a table with one girl on one side and a boy on the other, and I have a pink paper and a blue one, the girl is going to force me to give her the pink one. Because that is the way it should be (not because I believe so, is because the girls believe that). Boys, on the other hand could want the pink but they don't care.</p>
And in the puppet area, do they play a lot?	<p>No, they don't play a lot in that area. Another thing is that boys build a weapon with whatever they find. Even if they find a piece of a wooden puzzle, they do a weapon. And that is something you see only in boys. Girls don't do that. That's why we need to work in building a peace community.</p> <p>Andrea is a very sexy girl and when we asked them to put on their swimsuits she appeared with a two-pieces one and she laid down on the bed (dramatic play area) in a very provocative position. Who encourage that? Who bought that swimsuit for her? Moms! And you know what José said? Look how sexy Andrea! And they are four. They are clear!</p>
What would you do if a pre service teacher starts trying to impose stereotype behaviours in the students?	<p>First of all I would try to guide her because for a start that is not the Center philosophy. The Center doesn't encourage stereotype roles. And also, my personal philosophy as a teacher y to put my grain of salt in the changing process toward creating a world with the same opportunities. Nobody is better than the other; we just need the same opportunities. I also think that the media and the surroundings play a lot in the way the kids are. Not only parents and school influence.</p>



Curriculum Vita

Marisel N. Torres - Crespo
#59 Yaguez, Estancias del Rio
Aguas Buenas, PR 00703
Tel. (787)649-9251
mtorres304@suagm.edu

<u>Education</u>	
Dec 2009	Expected Ph.D. graduation Early Childhood Education C&I, College of Education Pennsylvania State University
August 1999 – May 2002	M. Ed., Early Childhood Education College of Education University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras Campus
August 1990 – December 1994	BA, Elementary Education, K – Third grade College of Education University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras Campus
<u>Work experience</u>	
August 2008 – present	Early Childhood Education Instructor College of Education Universidad del Este, Carolina, PR
January 2008 – May 2008	Early Childhood Education Instructor Engaging cultural context in a Pre-K setting Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education Pennsylvania State University
September 2006 – May 2008	World Languages Instructor/Supervisor Early Field Experience WLED Teacher Preparation Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education Pennsylvania State University
<u>Recognitions</u>	
Fall 2006	Bunton –Waller Fellow Award Pennsylvania State University
May 2002	Graduate Studies Department Award Based in grades, experiences, and research College of Education University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras Campus