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I can confirm that I have not used AI for this assignment. I can confirm that I have not presented any AI materials as my own.

1. Section 1

Albert Einstein once said, “Play is the highest form of research” (Bone, 2021, p1). According to Yaoying (2008) Mildren Parten’s theory on play is one of the most influential studies that was conducted on children’s play. Parten categorized children’s play into three levels of social development. Unoccupied play, onlooker play, and solitary play are forms of non-social activity. Parallel play is a limited form of social perception. The last level of social development is true social interaction, which is known as associated and cooperative play. Bone (2021) supports Yaoying claims that Parten’s theory on play was influential. Bone says that it is still considered one of the most comprehensive descriptions of social behavior. Parten believed in hierarchy play where children would move from independent play to more complex and partner defendant play. Children with disabilities will have difficulty engaging in more complex types of play. According to Play Wales (2017) there are several different types of play. Creative play, communication play, deep play, exploration play, imaginative play, object play and role play. These various play types attempt to describe a child’s behavior and how they contribute to children’s emotional, mental and physical development. For example, Storli (2021) says that rough and tumble play is where children engage in role play that includes aggressive themes of make believe yet are not intended to cause harm to their peers. Stori explains that rough and tumble play can enhance a child’s social skills. Veiga (2017) also supports Storli claims that rough and tumble play helps children develop social skills. Veiga says that children who engage in rough and tumble play have the chance to explore social dominance and test their own personal limits. However, Reed, Brown and Roth (2000) believe that many teachers in early years education have difficulty controlling rough and tumble play. Some teachers believe that this type of play led to aggressive behavior that results in a fight between peers. In addition, the biggest concern schools and teachers have about rough and tumble play were in relation to parental concerns, safety and liability. DiCarlo (2015) says that there is a concern of misinterpretation of rough and tumble play and that it leads to labeling children as aggressive. If the child is led to believe that they are aggressive, the child may have a self-belief that they are in fact aggressive. Therefore, teachers should have

an accurate understanding of children's development, which should include what rough and tumble play looks like among children. According to Smith and StGeorge (2023) mothers and fathers interact with their children in a way that can be described as rough and tumble play. Movement combined with physical touch for example, lifting bouncing and flying the child through the air. This type of play as the child gets older by tickling, chasing and hugging. Smith and StGeorge explain that fathers have more involvement in rough and tumble play more than mothers. A father's involvement in this type of play fosters positive emotions for both fathers and children as the father can balance warmth, sensitivity and challenge whilst maintaining a safe and enjoyable environment. Maslow's Hierarchy of Need theory demonstrates this as Maslow believes that children to able to develop to their full potential then need to feel safe and secure. According to Petersen, Rasmussen and Jakobsen (2015) constructive play encourages open ended play. Children are free to express themselves and can explore new possibilities. Petersen, Rasmussen and Jakobsen say some examples of constructive play toys are play doh, Lego and K'nex. According to Gold, Z.S. et al. (2021) constructive play in early years childhood is rooted in social-constructive theory where children explore and gather knowledge about objects. During constructive play children can work co-operatively. For example, goal setting and problem solving. Loizou and Olymbiou say that block play is related to important skills such as problem solving, abstract thinking and social interaction and resilience. For example, not giving up when a tower of blocks falls and discussing with peers how to build their construction. According to Macdonald (2022) neurological research suggests that play has a positive impact on brain development. Different interactions and experiences build architecture, allowing children to strengthen the connection between what they know and what they experience within the world around them. Mauluddia and Solehuddin (2017) supports Macdonald's claims and says that Jean Piaget viewed play as a way for children to adjust reality to the real world through play. Piaget believed that the way in which children interact with their environment during play has effects on cognitive development. During stages of play children must respond to new experiences and challenges. According to Mfoafo (2017) a simple trip to a play park helps with a child's holistic development. Cognitive development activities happen before play begins where they think about what equipment they want to play with and what they have

enjoyed playing with previously. Next, they must physically get there, children will use their gross motor skills to maneuver over to different play equipment and co-ordinate their bodies to make that piece of equipment work. They may be negotiating with a friend which piece of equipment to play on together, whilst laughing and joking with one another. This is part of their social and emotional development.

2. Section 2

According to Setzer (2019) self-directed play is a type of play where children engage in their own experiences without being rushed. They can tap into their own instinctual motivation where they can take control. The Steiner connection (2025) says that self-directed play is initiated by the child. It is often initiated by something that is irresistible whether it is an object or environment. Steiner believes that there is an increased pressure for academic success and as result of this there is possibility that play will be left behind. Dunlap supports Steiners claims and says that public education has become more standardized, leading to the decline of traditional kindergartens. This means less play time for children and suggests that it can be harmful for children's holistic development. According to Fiechtner and Albrecht (2019) adults can support self-directed play by allowing long periods of uninterrupted time for children to explore their own ideas and experiences. Adults can also look out for children's cues to join in. Once adults respond to children's verbal and non-verbal cues, by describing what is going on in their play without interrupting or directing it, they help to support their language skills. Muryanti and Hartai (2019) describe play as fun and pleasurable but also has many holistic benefits such as learning communication skills by sharing ideas with their peers and providing a variety of responses. Waski and Jacobi-Vessel (2016) say that adults can support self-directed play through scaffolding language. Adults can use different conversational strategies that help support this by asking the child questions that require further responses, providing meaningful feedback that makes the child reflect and circling back to discuss the child's ideas and showing interest in what they have to say. Colliver, Arguel and Parrila (2021) suggests that the adult's role in play can sometimes interfere with play. When adults control or lead a structured play time, children will not consider these activities as play and that adult instruction may limit

exploration and discovery. However, Chia-Yen (2015) suggests that children are more likely to invite their supporting adults to participate in their play. Chia-Yen suggested that adults can join in with play if it is initiated by the child. For example, children who are often familiar with materials they find quickly adopt a role in a role play scenario with they take on the role of a shopkeeper for example. When an adult is asked a question such as what would you like to eat? The adult then can join in without taking control and ask the child for more information about the shop and what it sells. Therefore, assuming the make-believe role of the customer. This supports Waski and Jacobi-Vessel idea of scaffolding language. According to Whitebread, Coltman, Jameson and Lander (2009) Vygotsky believed in the importance of self-directed play by stating that play relates to children's developing sense of control and self-regulation of their own learning. He argued that children set their own level of challenge, therefore it is always developmentally appropriate. According to Bodrova, Germeroth and Leong (2013), a student of Vygotsky, Daniel Elkonin, expanded on the theory of play, particularly on its role to help support self-regulation. Elkonin argued that play helps children to learn to act intentionally and refrain from behaviors that do not align with their role. For example, a child playing the role of a patient can resist the temptation to play with the toy stethoscope, as it belongs to the doctor not the patient. According to Bright Horizons (2024) self-directed play is seen as the primary vehicle of growth in early childhood. Play is seen as developing the child as a whole. Promoting physical, cognitive and social-emotional development. Skills that cannot be reinforced through traditional work sheets or screen time. According to Pentagon Play (2022) adults are encouraged to facilitate, scaffold and support in a way where children can express themselves freely. When adults join in children's they should consider whether it will benefit the child, do they need them to and whether they are able to join in without taking over control of the play. However, according to Bottrill (2018) the school day proposes challenges for adults to create spaces for children to play freely. Bottrill believes that the structure of the school day gives the adult world a sense of order where children can file in and out and is regimented. Quite the opposite to how children see it as a way of exploration and experimentation. Bottrill believes that there is no educational need for children to sit down at 9.30am and engage in a math lesson and

instead children think outside the box. She believes that the school day should be balanced between time to play and to deliver skills in the classroom.

3. Section 3

According to Fawcett and Watson (2016) observation is when adults tune in to children and is more than just seeing what is happening around them. Observation is an opportunity to discover the holistic view of children, where the observer can look at all aspects of development such as physical, emotional, social and cognitive development. According to Canning (2022) observations need to be child led and flexible but also the observer needs a good understanding of how the child's daily lives and cultures play a part in how observations play out. Asking children questions provides an insight to their social worlds and realities of play and how they make connections with other children. According to Bruce, Louis and McCall (2015) the most important observation lies in the continuous assessment of a child's progress. This continuous assessment of progress relies heavily on the adult's knowledge of the child in various situation and experiences. Bruce, Louis and McCall explain that more research is being provided about how children's brains develop and that a holistic approach needs to be considered when taking observations. Thompson and Lamb (2018) narrative observations when allowed in a natural setting allows for an understanding of a child's behaviour and their individual learning process. Narrative observations offer real life context and a deep insight into a child's development. It helps adults to see how children interact making this type of observation more meaningful than traditional assessments used in the classrooms. Sanders and McFarland (2020) say that through narrative observations adults can identify children's individual needs, interests and strengths. By collecting more individualized information adults can plan targeted interventions or provide extra support when needed. Bodrova and Leong (2018) says that narrative observations provide detailed accounts of a child's behaviour and experiences. This detailed information can be shared with the child's caregiver to collaborate with one another. This open dialogue ensures that children receive consistent support at home and in an educational setting. According to Miller and Almon (2019) narrative observation is a powerful tool to understanding children's

development they do have limitations that adults should consider. Milner and Almon gives the example of observers being over biased. Observers may document behaviours as inaccurate due to seeing them through their own perspectives and expectations. Another example would be letting personal beliefs and emotional responses influence how information is documented. Smidt (2015) says that making a judgement or coming to a conclusion about a child after observation, should come from the observers understanding of a child's development. Highlight key words to ensure the real understanding and purpose of the observation. Early years practitioners and educators have a responsibility to ensure children are making progress in all areas of their development. Chavez and McCurdy (2021) suggest that narrative observation offer holistic support to children. Adults can identify key areas where children may need extra support whether it is cognitive challenges or emotion regulation. This refers back to the individualized support children can receive that considers the child's overall development. Forman and Hall (2005) say that observing children's play helps adults to learn about their personalities, interests and to see what strategies they use to reach their goals. Knowing children's interests might help adults to prepare better environments that enable them.

4. Section 4

According to Smidt (2015) observing children play is important as it gives adults an insight into a child's development. Observing also helps promote children's learning further. Drummond (1998) supports Smidt claims that observing play is important Drummond believes that through observation adults get closer to children's learning and thinking and questions. According to Papatheodorou Gill and Luff (2013) adults should use observations as a learning tool, whether that be child development, play or teaching. Papatheodorou Gill and Luff explain that this tool can evolve over time, giving the opportunity to reflect on past data collected from past observations. Adults can help support observations by having a good understanding about which child to observe. If the aim is to observe a child's holistic development, it would be more beneficial to select a child whose development is typical to his/her age. Howard and McInnes (2016) believes that play in its various forms such as constructive, role play,

and dramatic play allows for adults to see each child's developmental stages and well-being. It is through observation, Howard and McInnes believe adults can identify any areas where a child may need extra support and intervention that helps to progress their development further. According to Howard and McInnes the importance of the observer's role is not those of just onlookers but those who play an active part to provide children with an enabling environment, which they are able to express themselves freely. According to McInnes, Howard Crowley and Miles (2013) since the work of Vygotsky there has been more emphasis on the role of the adult during play and in particular, teacher involvement and its increase. However, it has been put into question over the quality of the involvement. There has been more emphasis on managing and monitoring situations rather than supporting the child's development. McInnes, Howard Crowley and Miles explain that adult-child interactions where children do not use the cue of adult presence and where there is open question by both parties, allows control and choice by the children. In settings where closed questions are used, and children do use the cue of adult's presence, control and choice normally resides with the adult. Azilo Training (2025) says that listening, watching and analysing children as they play and explore reveals more about them as individuals. Azlio training explains that observation is a long-term process which should remain consistent to make sure that children are at the expected stages of development. However, First Discoverers (2025) says that there is a possibility for observer-induced bias. The presence of an observer in an early year's setting can often influence the result of the observation. This is referred as the Hawthorne effect. This means that the child or children being observed may behave differently if they are aware or suspect that they are being watched. For example, a group of young children playing whilst being observed may alter the way they behave in the presence of an adult who shows no interest in playing or interacting with them in anyway.

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