Using theories that pertain to space and geography in Australian Outside School Hours settings: Playworkers perspectives

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Abstract: This practitioner paper explores the positive impact playwork could have for Australian OSHC (Outside School Hours Care) environments and in turn, educators and children. Through a discussion of four theoretical perspectives pertaining to physical space from a playworkers perspective, the authors show how developing a conceptual understanding of these can support Australian OSHC settings nurture a place for play. With a focus on affordance theory, compound flexibility,liminality and psychogeography, this paper breaks down these theories and posits their practical applications within an OSHC setting.

Keywords: Outside School Hours Care (OSHC), playwork, affordance, psychogeography, liminality, liminal spaces, compound flexibility

Introduction

Throughout this paper, we will explore how Australian OSHC educators can create an environment conducive to play through an understanding of how space stimulates and cues play for children. As playwork practitioners working in an Australian OSHC, we understand that the physical environment of a play space is critical for children to engage in optimal play opportunities. As playwork practitioners, we facilitate play for plays sake, without alternative agendas in mind and thus, it is important to be critically aware of our own individual impact on the space. By combining the theories of affordance, compound flexibility,liminality, and psychogeography, OSHC educators will have a deeper understanding of how they can facilitate a space and place, both theoretically and in practice, that will invite play. These theories will also inform OSHC educators on the importance of their presence in the space and how they can support children and the play process, without input of alternative adult agendas into their own practice or the children's play. This paper will analyse through theory and practical application how OSHC educators can apply this within their own framework (National Quality Standard and My Time, Our Place) (ACECQA, 2018) (DEEWR, 2011), whilst still emphasising the duty to consider their own individual influence and responsibility to their respective play spaces. Although the authors acknowledge OSHC educators face challenges of perception and aesthetic, this paper considers how the optimal environment for play can still be achieved.

First, we must consider the role of both an OSHC educator and a playworker. Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) is a service provided in Australia for children in primary school (5–12 year olds) that require additional care arrangements before school, after school or during the school holidays. Most primary schools across Australia have some variation of this

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service however, this paper will refer to it as OSHC. Typically, there is a variety of individuals who undertake the roles in an OSHC setting. Generally, the role is known as an educator. However, there are also 'playworkers' present in some services across Australia. These playworkers are typically still labelled as educators. The authors of this paper are playworkers that work in an OSHC that uses playwork to govern their practice. This is not common amongst the Australian OSHC sector.

Australian OSHC educators hold a significant role in the workings of our contemporary Australian society, especially with the increase of formal care arrangement usage (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018). The OSHC sector in Australia is legislated by a National Quality Standard which includes the use of the My Time Our Place Framework for Australian School Age Care (ACECQA, 2022). The National Quality Standard contains seven Quality Areas which guide programs, as well as health and safety, and administrative standards. The Educators' Guide for My Time Our Place states that educators "are responsible for the interactions, experiences, routines and events, planned and unplanned, that occur in a school age care environment designed to foster children's wellbeing, development, and learning." (Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2012). Although educators are solely present for children, the requirements of frameworks and legislation place significant pressure on the OSHC educator workforce to foster learning outcomes, document practice, while also upholding responsibilities such as mandatory reporting and being competent first aid responders. The My Time Our Place framework holds intentions to keep children's play at the forefront however, this can often be lost in the interpretation of the framework (Gorrie, 2022; Newstead, 2019).

Since the beginning of the adventure playgrounds movement in the 1940 s, playworkers have worked to define their role and their purpose with children. Allen and Nicholson (1975) stated that for an Adventure playground, "a leader of the right type was the key to success" but later said "there was no tradition to go on; no one knew what sort of person the leader should be or what he was expected to do." Lady Allen (Allen and Nicholson, 1975), also spoke about how "good leaders, with an instinct for following the children's interests, are born, not made…". This insight into the role of the playworker depicts how intuitive and complex the role can be. Since these initial observations by Lady Allen, the Playwork Principles have been developed. The eight Playwork Principles that govern the practice of playwork interweave the responsibilities and practices expected by playworkers, rooted in support, facilitation, advocacy, responsiveness, intervention, and reflection with the children always at the forefront (PPSG, 2015). Further, Brown (2015) has indicated the practice of the playworker is to remove barriers to play and to create flexible environments for children.

The inability for a universally accepted definition of playwork creates difficulty for the workforce, especially when justifying and explaining their practice to other fields. Newstead (2019) discusses the ongoing issues with the unclear professional role of a playworker, highlighting that the inability for a role and responsibilities outline has led to a decline in the holistic approach of the practice. Further, there are multiple interpretations of the Playwork Principles, sprouting practices claiming 'playwork' (Newstead, 2019). Despite this, playwork in all its holistic, intuitive practice exists within many settings such as OSHC.

When comparing the role of a playworker and an OSHC educator, much of the language and intention is the same however, OSHC educator roles can often be dictated more by frameworks and legislation than being responsive to the child. As playworkers, we see the value of playwork and the theories discussed in the following section as being applicable in an

OSHC. Playworkers can create a place for children to play in the most natural way without the influence of agenda-driven adults.

OSHC educators who are playworkers need to be equipped with and be able to articulate the conceptual understanding of how to manipulate and support the physical environment at the OSHC. This is important so they can justify how their practice is in alignment with the National Quality Standard and My Time Our Place frameworks. Due to the intuitive nature of playwork, these understandings can be articulated if educators who are playworkers combine theoretical knowledge and their ability to understanding the holistic process of play with how the physical environment influences it. The following sections contain descriptions of four theoretical perspectives – affordance, compound flexibility, liminal spaces and psychogeography and how they are viewed in practice in our OSHC setting.

Affordance: *In Theory*

Affordance theory is a critical aspect of space, the analysis of what it offers or even suggests. James Gibson stated that

> The affordances of the environment are what it offers the animal, what it provides or furnishes, either for good or ill. The verb to afford is found in the dictionary, the noun affordance is not. I have made it up. I mean by it something that refers to both the environment and the animal in a way that no existing term does. It implies the complementarity of the animal and the environment. (Gibson, 1979, p. 127).

Gibson (1979) discusses affordance as an ecological niche which characterizes the suitability of the environment for the observer or user, or their ability to make it suitable. For an example, consider from adult perspective chairs set up in room. How they are set up, in a circle, rows, or stacked against the wall with dim lights and a disco ball spinning, all create a unique affordance. It is the same room, with the same chairs, but with a different presentation, that then offers or suggests something entirely different (Armitage, 2019). From the perspective of affordance as it relates to play, a flat rectangular sporting field offers very little affordance. It is perfect for a niche of playing a sporting game or running around, but is suitable, or able to be made so by very few others.

Affordance: *In Practice*

As an OSHC educator utilising playwork, affordance is an important concept. It can be discussed as a group of educators and considered before children are in the space, the latter evolved and improved through documentation and critical reflection. Documentation of a fluid way of viewing affordance and what affordances a play setting offers is critical, as it must meet many niches, to follow the evolving needs of individual children as they change their perceptions of affordances (Gibson, 1979). This fact alone is why loose parts are a favoured resource for playworkers, as they can be adapted, manipulated, and if not suitable, made suitable by the children that use them (Nicholson, 1971). The perceived chaos or mess of unused loose parts is also something that screams affordance, as the resources are begging to be made into something. So, to critically reflect on your space as an educator may be to ask objectively, what does the space offer? Does this meet the children's interest? Are they able to change and modify the space to make it more suitable? It is important to note that space alone

won't satisfy wholeheartedly the practical side of affordance so educator practice is also critical. Educator practice from a playwork perspective must give children space, time, and independent mobility in order to actualise the affordance (Kytta, 2004). If practice is restrictive, regardless of space and resources, the child's interest become stunted to the educator's subjective opinion and individual niches cannot be realised.

Compound Flexibility: *In Theory*

Compound flexibility refers to the interrelationship between a child, the environment, and the way this interrelationship grows and develops (Brown & Webb, 2005). Fraser Brown, states

> This is not a simple interaction but a complex process wherein, flexibility in the play environment leads to increased flexibility in the child. That child is then better able to make use of the flexible environment and so on. There is massive child development potential in a play setting (Brown, 2003, p. 56).

Brown's (2003) definition highlights that the overall compounding flexibility of the space is attributed to firstly, the play space. A flexible play space, which includes the playworkers, allows a child to be flexible with the play in which they engage. Bob Hughes (2001; 2002; 2006) posits 16 play types, each type with unique evolutionary functions needed for the development of humans, and all require a level of compound flexibility to be successful throughout the child's play. The physical environment is critical to this flexibility between child and their development, but so is the way in which a playworker allows a child to interact with it. In consideration of the play types, flexibility should also be viewed as more than the physical space and resources, as this is useless if children cannot interact in a flexible and evolving manner.

Brian Sutton-Smith (1997) referred to one of the functions of play as adaptive variability, a biological function which reinforces an organisms variability covering the actual to the possible (p. 231). This adaptive variability is successful for OSHC settings, as they have capacity to provide significant chunks time and space for genuine play that is freely chosen, personally directed, and intrinsically motivated, as guided by the Playwork Principles (PPSG, 2015). Simon Nicholson (1971), in his theory of loose parts, stated that "In any environment both the degree of inventiveness and creativity, and the possibility of discovery, are directly proportional to the number and kind of variables in it*"* (Nicholson, 1971, p. 30). The variable nature of resources to which Nicholson (1971) refers, ensures OSHC settings have the ability to compound ideas and adapt functions of resources over a prolonged period of time.

Compound Flexibility: *In Practice*

Compound flexibility is a concept that OSHC educators need to consider, due to the frequency and length of time that many children spend in their play space. The responsibility is of significance when it is considered that an inflexible environment may conversely be detrimental to children's flexibility and successful development.

Unlike a novel playground, many children will reside in their respective OSHC setting for up to seven years of their childhood life. The challenge lies in ensuring that the play space can continue to provide flexible opportunities for children, and in an environment that can lack adaptive variability, this is potentially impossible. This is where loose parts come in as an ideal

resource, vital in supporting the potential for flexibility to compound in play. Although not a requirement, many playworkers use loose parts as a standard resource for this reason. If OSHC educators use loose parts to increase adaptive variability, this will allow for compounding flexibility to occur between the child, playworker, and space, and encourage varied affordance in how children can interact with them. In our own OSHC environment, it has been demonstrated that loose parts are a key part to maintaining a flexible and adaptable space.

Liminal Spaces: *In Theory*

Liminal space and liminal spatial qualities are an important aspect of any ludic space, and need to be considered due to the rich play they cue. Liminality that occurs of a play area, is a condition that generates myth, legend, story-telling and make believe play (Turner, 1974). In this threshold realm, children tackle play that involves origins, emergence, trials, rituals, initiations, and release ideas of the type that transcend body and form (Nuttal, 2012). The Latin word 'Limen' translates to the word threshold. Thus, it is not surprising that children harness this threshold realm (between real and fantasy) to engage in rich make-believe play, which is often serious in nature. Despite its serious nature, the freedom that educators or playworkers give liminality allows play to exist and maintain in its threshold state (Spariosu, 2015).

Liminal spaces can be interpreted and delivered both in physical embodiment and intangible practice mechanisms. For example, liminal spaces may include the nooks and crannies where children can create entire worlds. Liminal features could include a statue hidden in a thicket or a tree stump shaped like a creature about which children build stories, narratives, and folklore. Practice that supports liminal spaces and nurtures liminal play is often displayed through the process of 'stepping back' to give time and space for worlds to be born (Stephenson, 2009). As frivolous as make-believe play may appear to adult eyes, it is an extremely important aspect of play for children to effectively tackle rites of passage, as they experience primary emotions such as anger, fear, disgust, and 'play' with them (Spariosu, 2015; Sutton-Smith, 2017). In this way, children learn, in adaptable and modifiable scenarios, ways to cope with these very emotions. It is critical that educators viewing liminal play in the space offer children this opportunity, lest the first time they experience these emotions they are not 'play' but 'real'.

Liminal Spaces: *In Practice*

The facilitation of liminal spaces and liminal play in OSHC is arguably quite simple from a geographical perspective and slightly more complex from a supervision perspective. Historically, children have had far more freedom to move freely between areas, explore, and delve into the edges of space and they are far more likely to seek out pockets where their imaginations can thrive (Armitage, 2001). It is important that the children can and are encouraged to explore edges, as these places are usually the ones (unlike the sporting field or fixed metal playground) that offer undefined purpose (Wilson, 2010). Undefined spaces foster imagination and creativity through divergent thinking, allowing children to appropriate what is available into what they need (Robinson, 2008). From a geographical perspective, this is

seemingly simple to achieve. However, children should be able to access these spaces and edges without educator interference. From a supervision perspective, this can be challenging for OSHC educators, as there are concerns over adverse behaviour, injuries, conflict, and other supervision and duty of care requirements.

This is where the resourcing of an environment and the space can overcome the need for educators to be far away and out of sight for children to engage in these liminal play frames. The ability for children to build dens, caves, cubbies, castles, and homes speaks deeply to their human need for privacy and secrecy (Leichter-Saxby, 2009). Children occupying dens of their own creation can be mere meters from a playworker who is acutely aware of what is happening and yet be, in the child's mind, a million miles away. Thus, the authors encourage educators to allow children to play on the edges and consider developing the edges of their play spaces, thinking about the corners to go around, the underneath of hedges, and the inside of dens. Critical reflection and implementation of varied liminal spaces may encourage liminal play in a context suitable to meet regulatory OSHC standards and frameworks and may increase the affordance the space offers.

Psychogeography: *In Theory*

The theory of psychogeography was largely utilised by anarchists and Marxists as a way of articulating urban design and its nature of freedom and expression (Plant, 2002). Guy Debord (1995) defines psychogeography as "the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals" (Debord, 1955, p. 23). Playworkers have adapted this idea for the facilitation of the playground, and the authors suggest that this can be seen in the notion of "consciously organised or not," with playworkers becoming quite conscious and intentional within their organisation of the geographical environment. As with Debord's definition, the authors suggest that playworkers often subjectively view and aid children through their play with emotions, and this consideration of emotion and behaviour of individuals within the space may suggest the impact the psychogeography has for that individual child.

Whether it is the explicit design and construction of play equipment, the structures and fences, the chaotic natural elements (such as trees, gradients, shaded corners, waterways), permanent pre-existing constructs (nearby roads, concrete walls, surrounding buildings), a playworker should be cognisant that these all have a psychogeographic effect on all parts of children's play. Conscious organisation of the space that can be manipulated allows for critical reflection to determine whether modification of adverse elements is required, whether the psychogeography is positively affecting play, and an appreciation for everything in between.

Psychogeography: *In Practice*

Psychogeography is an important consideration during the planning of an existing OSHC play space, as this analyses its nature and potential evolution. Playwork Principle 5 states that the role of the playworker is to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in

which they can play (PPSG, 2015), and for OSHC educators, it is also our responsibility to understand children and their unique dispositions within our service.

Understanding psychogeography allows educators to create and support conditions where children can play, especially as this is more deeply rooted than the physical space alone. Harnessing this knowledge gives clues for educators to adapt the way space is offered and understand that features in it may be more conducive to stimulating children. An example is that children may be stimulated to moving from a metaludic state into play, causing a play cue issue or response (King, 2020; Sturrock & Else, 1998). From a psychogeographic perspective, educators can appreciate this might not be a physical cue (an object or other child), but rather a cue to play from a feeling, an emotion, a pre-existing experience, or a mere hint manifesting in déjà vu, daydreaming or whimsy.

When these four theories are used in conjunction and applied directly into a play space, there are many benefits that have been demonstrated. Such benefits include but are not limited to; enhanced cognitive and problem solving skills (Manwaring & Taylor, 2006); enhanced oral language development (Kanowski, 2021); reduction in adverse behaviour, due to greater flow state engagement (also an optimal learning state) (Gorrie, 2021); reduction in injuries during play (Wood & Leichter-Saxby, 2018); supporting inclusion and therapeutic play (Gorrie & Udah, 2021; Sturrock & Else, 1998); increased physical activity encouraged with access to 'loose items' (Willienberg, et al., 2009); reduction in the likelihood of obesity (Harrison & Jones , 2012); supporting the regulation between primary and secondary emotions (Cartmel, Udah, Gil & Prause, 2019; Ekman, 1999); reducing the likelihood of childhood anxiety and depression (Gray, 2011); supporting multiple learning intelligences regardless of predisposition (Gardner, 1993); the enhancement of the creative mind (Ariel, 2002; Nicholson, 1971). An example of this, as witnessed by the authors, was the creation of a liminal pocket of space by the children alone using pallet walls, tarps, and rope to create a shaded corner. This was sectioned off and only accessible from one side of the liminal space, affording the creation of liminal play. This play frame explored real life narratives including the design of 'house', families, and a safe place, which compounded as the child was able to build upon their ideas both physically (manipulating the resources) and in their mind. The space that was created was protected by large scale scrutiny and the child appeared relaxed, then able to dip deep into imaginary play. Following this child finishing their place and moving on, the educator manipulated the space to include different resources and a different affordance. Later, this space was reimagined by a different set of children and through the flexibility of the space, and the children, new play including a funeral and a graveyard was created in the same liminal space. Combinations of all four discussed theories are common in the play space the authors work due to these theories being known, and not implemented as an afterthought.

As playworkers, our priority is play facilitation for the sake of play, as outlined in the Playwork Principles. However, in our practical experience as playworkers in an OSHC, it is valuable to highlight the benefits and outcomes of playwork, and the theoretical consideration of physical environment in a dialogue form that allows us to advocate for play over adult agendas in a way that school faculty and other key stakeholders can mutually appreciate. The advantage of these benefits is that they are often a direct result of a carefully considered physical environment, which promote children to engage in intrinsically motivated, freely chosen, and personally directed play.

One of the ideas that we will posit in this paper is that an in-depth understanding of playwork theory and practice has the potential to arm OSHC educators with the ability to articulate the complexities of space facilitation and intentionality. Space, and the facilitation of space that supports, encourages, and even cues play, has long been a consideration of primacy for playworkers rather than direct involvement in the play itself. It is probably no coincidence that several contributors to the playwork movement had minds committed to advocating for children and their play, but were also professionally concerned with design, facilitation, and use of space. From Danish landscape architect Carl Theodore Sorensen's creation of the first "junk" adventure playground, to English architect and artist Simon Nicholson's development of loose parts theory, and English landscape architect Lady Allen and her enormous advocacy of the adventure playground, a meshing of play and design consideration have long been embedded in the playwork world (Allen & Nicholson, 1975; Lambert & Pearson, 1974; Nicholson, 1971). So, what do OSHC educators have to gain from applying a deep understanding of space and place to their practice? Consider the wise words of experienced playwork practitioner Jack Lambert (1974) who suggested that it is far better to have physical controls to guide and support play, rather than 'human ones' revolving around, telling children what they can do, where they can do it and how. However, in the world of OSHC educators who are framework bound to provide child-led experiences, develop agency and interests of children, and develop reciprocal and respectful relationships, these playwork notions seem extremely synonymous.

In Consideration of Space

The previous paragraphs introduce concepts to aid OSHC educators in reimagining their space potential and give theoretical dialogue to arm them in supporting their practice. A deeper understanding of space not only allows an educator to better support and facilitate play through ludelic improvement (ludelic meaning play-expanding), but also allows them to effectively plan, execute and critically reflect on their practice (Palmer, Wilson, & Battram, 2007). This understanding also supports an educator's ability to articulate how they are meeting and exceeding the National Quality Standards in all seven areas (ACECQA, 2018). Table 1 below gives an example of how this may be evidenced in documentation for a Quality Improvement Plan associated with the National Quality Standard (ACECQA, 2022).

Table 1. *Mapping how understanding spatial theories links to the National Quality Standards(ACECQA, 2018)*

Quality Area	Descriptor	Supporting Practice
Quality Area One	Educational program and practice	• A deeper understanding of spatial issues allows an educator to identify and respond to how children use space. This ensures ongoing planning remains child-centred and that child directed learning is identified holistically rather than ma-

Quality Area	Descriptor	Supporting Practice
		nipulated for adult agenda (supporting NQS element 1.1.2, 1.2.3). • Educators can effectively and responsively scaffold ludelic opportunity spatially by knowing which areas are being used, why, how, and the additional resources potentially required to further expand play opportunities (supporting NQS element 1.2.2). • Educators can effectively engage with the planning cycle spatially before, during, and after children are present. This enables complex and meaningful critical reflection of spatial use and the ludic ecology (supporting NQS element 1.3.1, 1.3.2). • Educators have detailed dialogue to engage with parents and the community, and are able to articulate and demonstrate intentionality, and seek collaboration (supporting NQS element 1.3.3).
Quality Area Two	Children's health and safety	• Educators, through detailed understanding of space and resources, can work towards ensuring opportunities for relaxation and rest are met, regardless of predisposition (quiet areas, shaded areas, nooks that fast play flows around etc) (supporting NQS element 2.1.1). • Educators have an in-depth understanding of the space and how children engage with it. This allows for optimal risk benefit analysis and dynamic risk assessment, eliminating hazards, and mitigating chance of injury or harm (Gill, 2021) (supporting NQS element 2.12, 2.2.1, 2.2.2).
Quality Area Three	Physical environment	• Knowledgeable Educators who are actively engaged in and with their space are able to ensure equipment is for purpose, and children's structures are safe, both when children are present and not (supporting NQS element 3.1.1, 3.1.2). • Educators engaged in and with their space can ascertain equipment, areas, and play cues to suit a wide range of predispositions and a wide range of children (supporting NQS element 3.2.1, 3.2.2).
Quality Area Four	Staffing arrangements	• Educators who are organised and supported with a common language of theory and practice can better support children's play, leading to learning and development (supporting NQS element 4.1.1). • Educators who are organised and supported with a common language of theory and practice can work collaboratively and challenge each other's

Quality Area	Descriptor	Supporting Practice
		varied perspectives through critical reflection (supporting NQS element 4.2.1).
Quality Area Five	Relationships with children	• By harnessing the environment to engage children through play rather than focusing on post-incident behaviour management, there is far less chance of authoritative and negative interactions between children and adults (Lambert & Pearson, 1974) (supporting NQS element 5.1.1). • Environmental features that are manipulative allow for compounding flexibility, and support collaboration between children and their peers. This enhances opportunities for children to learn from and teach each other (Brown, 2002) (Gorrie & Udah, 2021) (supporting NQS element 5.2.1).
Quality Area Six	Collaborative partnerships with families and communities	• Through shared understanding of theories that support space and children's play, educators will be more effective and confident in supporting families to understand the intentions and planning of the service (supporting NQS element 6.1.3). • With the support of Educators, environment is a significant contributor to many aspects of inclusion (supporting NQS element 6.2.2). • By understanding space and environment through a playwork lens, educators can collaborate with families and the wider community to directly contribute to design, resourcing, and participation of the space (supporting NQS element 6.2.3).
Quality Area Seven	Governance and leadership	• Overarching theoretical understanding, specifically pertaining to the importance of spatial consideration, can inform the service philosophy (supporting NQS element 7.1.1). • Through a deeper understanding of space and environment, clearer expectations of roles and responsibilities can exist within the team (supporting NQS element 7.1.3). • Critical reflection of space and environment, and pedagogical perspectives helps to achieve overall quality improvement of the service (supporting NQS element 7.2.1). • Educators possessing a shared language of theory and practice, in regard to space and environment, assist the Educational Leader to provide meaningful and high quality documentation (supporting NQS element 7.2.2). • Approaching space and environment from a theoretical perspective supports the development of

Quality Area	Descriptor	Supporting Practice
		professionals, their practice, and allows for knowledge based KPIs to support evaluation (supporting NQS element 7.2.3).

Discussion

For educators and playworkers alike, the obligation to consider the creation of physical space exists in both the OSHC National Quality Framework and Playwork Principles respectively (ACECQA, 2018; PPSG, 2015). However, the OSHC workforce must also see beyond the space and not view it as something that exists in a bubble. Thus, deeper thinking and application of the theories explored above should not be overlooked by OSHC educators seeking to create a space for play. It is important for educators to consider that the 'creation of space' is as much about intangible conditions of that space as the tangible, as discussed throughout the theories of affordance, compound flexibility, liminal space and play, and psychogeography.

For this role of OSHC educator, consider the power these theoretical ideas can give in advocating for play in their space and the best possible outcomes for children. Playgrounds could cease being thought about in terms of primary colours, cost benefit ratios, age range suitability and which flat rectangular piece of land will make for the easiest install. Rather, playgrounds and the entire space they occupy, can be considered in how they best produce the ideal conditions for play. Theories give educators the capacity, dialogue, and articulation to champion ideas that playwork theorist, Gordon Sturrock, suggested gave a playworker the ability to act as a shaman, working within a subtle "otherness" at the liminal edges of the psyche (Nuttal, 2012). Thus, it is important that educators utilise theory to support practice around their space, and to present as the professional, as this is needed when working with other stakeholders.

It is also important for OSHC educators to consider their own individual impact on the affordance, compounding flexibility, liminality and psychogeography. These aspects of space go beyond tangible geography and encroach the mind. In play, children share a certain gestalted mutuality, what Sturrock and Else (1998) refer to as a 'ludic third'. Adults in a space with children run an unavoidable potential of allowing their internalised subjective materials to encroach on and possibly adulterate children's play experience (Sturrock & Else, 1998). However, educators with a deeper understanding of the theories discussed in this paper, can be aware of their presence and its effect on the affordance of not only how a space presents but also how a child may engage with it; how, despite the flexible nature of the resources, an adult allows a flexible response from the child; how merely the presence of an adult has potential to disrupt liminal potential of a play frame; and how they can affect the psychogeography through creation of their mood, expectation, and disposition. Careful consideration must be given to these factors, as they are subtle, nuanced, and may not present as overt attempts at authority, but rather through body language, mood, disposition, comfortability, and the existing relationship between educator and child.

Ultimately for an educator, the theories presented in this paper are intended to assist in the creation of spaces where the experience and psychological connection for children is not an afterthought. Educators developing a deeper understanding of their role with a holistic playwork lens will encourage child-focused decision making and engagement to the benefit of the children and their individual play opportunities. An increase of spatial consideration, whether set up through the resources in the environment or the subtle movements and guidance of educators, has the potential to allow further opportunities for children to explore their world in a way that makes sense to them.

One of the first challenges an Australian OSHC educator whom desires to use a playwork lens to modify and harness space for optimal potential, is that OSHC space is typically located on a school site, and is often shared space. This shared space situation leaves a lot out of the direct, or at least permanent control of OSHC educators and adds a multitude of additional agendas to the play space. This further complicates how OSHC educators utilise space, as OSHC often is relegated to a perspective of inferiority or lacking professional esteem (Cartmel, 2007). Smith and Barker (2000) stated, regarding school faculty, that they "considered themselves to be more powerful than the playworkers who were officially in charge" (p. 253). The reciprocity required to bridge this gap has come from the OSHC sector. One example of this is The Professional Standards for Educators, which has been created to enhance the professionalism of OSHC as an industry (QCAN, 2018). To further bridge the gap between school faculty and OSHC, the research benefits of loose parts and playwork could be used. A successful application of the theories to creating the physical environment in an OSHC would provide the best play opportunities for children. Theoretical based practice will also give OSHC services the ability to develop reciprocal relationships with school faculty by allowing them to articulate their intentionality and knowledge clearly.

This understanding of theories in relation to space needs to be understood across the board. Without an understanding of these theories, issues could arise with the perception of the educators practice and an inability for educators to justify this. This lack of knowledge can lead educators to fall into an outcomes-focused practice that disengages children from their freely chosen and intrinsically motivated play. There is future research needed to focus on the impact of an educator and their practice within an OSHC setting, specifically regarding space, and research is needed to study the impact a permanent space would have for OSHC services.

Conclusion

Playwork has the potential to have a significantly positive impact for Australian OSHC physical environments and children if a theoretical understanding of physical space is developed and applied by educators. Educators with a conceptual understanding of the theories discussed above and their ontology in practice will be able to justify their professional practice, will allow greater capacity to critically reflect on practice and play space, and encourage holistic play opportunities for children. The authors acknowledge the challenges that educators face within their role in an OSHC of perception and with other stakeholders, which needs to be addressed with research and evidence for educators and services alike. Educators with a conceptual understanding of the theories discussed will ideally be able to

advocate for play over adult perceptions and agendas with a strong and clear evidence base. Playwork practice, with the consideration of affordance, compound flexibility, liminality, and psychogeography, will provide educators with the tools to achieve an optimal play space and environment for children. Furthermore, a playwork approach to space by educators within OSHC can meet, if not enhance links to the NQS and thus be a base for exceeding practice.

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