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AN ANALYSIS OF A CHILD'S EXPERIENCES IN PLAYING A GENDERED CHARACTER DURING PLAYWORLD

Ade Dwi Utami^{a*}, Marilyn Flee^b, Liang Li^c

^aFaculty of Education, Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia, ^{abc}Faculty of Education, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

^{a*}ade.dwi.utami@monash.edu, ^bmarilyn.flee@monash.edu, ^cliang.li@monash.edu

Although numerous studies have investigated gendered play in early childhood settings, they have mostly explored educators' gender beliefs and practices or gender positioning in children's stories and toys in Western contexts. Little is known about gendered play in Indonesia. This paper explores how children take up and experience different gendered roles within a playworld activity setting of a traditional Indonesian folktale. Vygotsky's (1966) cultural-historical play concept and Hedegaard's (2002) concept of motive were used to understand how one 4-year-old focus child experienced the tensions and drama of gendered roles. From a total of 98 hours of video observation of nine teachers interacting with 18 boys and 20 girls (3.5-5 years; mean age 4.4 years) during group-play activities, 11 hours of data were selected to observe the focus child's interactions. The findings show how playworld creates conditions and possibilities for the child to experience different gender roles, and also suggest that more attention should be focused on how children experience gender role tensions while entering a play-based environment. In its support of children's development through play, playworld can be seen as a pedagogical approach that highlights the teacher's active role. Consequently, playworld supports motive development while children experience gender tensions.

Keywords: Gender; playworld; early childhood education; teacher; Indonesia.

1. Introduction

Internationally there are different societal expectations and values associated with the position girls and women hold in their communities. It has become increasingly important in some countries, such as Indonesia, to better understand the complexity surrounding how societal values, institutional practices, and the expectations surrounding gender are realised from the very beginning (Blaise, 2005; MacNaughton, 2000). Although there are many longstanding theories about how gender is socially constructed, such as through socialisation within cultural surroundings (MacNaughton, 2000), we need to know more about how this plays out in early childhood settings in Indonesia. Importantly, the Indonesian Government has realised the importance of developing an awareness of gender equity and equality in the education sector, aiming for equal treatment and equal rights in learning regardless of gender (Ministry of National Education (MoNE) 84, 2008).

To support this agenda, this paper reports on a study of the play practices of children in early childhood settings where new practice traditions are being introduced that give possibilities for a broader development of gender identity that go beyond gender stereotypes and binaries.

When the government launched the Law of National Education System No. 84 that addressed the mainstreaming of gender in education (MoNE, 2008), the government pointed out the importance of gender equity, and that these equity practices should include provision of anti-gender biased educational services in educational settings, including in early childhood education settings where gender bias is commonly practiced. Specifically, the aim of this legislation was to provide children with adequate educational stimulation to support all aspects of their development, including gender development (MoNE, 2008). However, the effectiveness of the implementation of this policy is in question, as the childhood curriculum framework currently being followed has a focus on identity without any requirement to address gender equity issues in the curriculum (Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) 146, 2014; Warin & Adriany, 2017).

In Indonesia, gender is constructed by the interaction between three influences on Indonesian society: traditional cultures, politics that have been influenced by Indonesia's history of colonisation and the globalisation processes which have brought other cultures to Indonesia, and religious discourse, which has been influenced by Islam, as Muslims are the largest demographic (Blackburn, 2004; Oetomo, 2000; Robinson & Bessell, 2002; Warin & Adriany, 2017). As a result of these influences, the common traditional gender perspective positions men as superior to women, with women being placed in domestic roles, which is a view that affects gender behaviour in Indonesian society, including institutional practices (Soelistyarini, 2013).

In Indonesia, as in many other countries, teachers' gender beliefs and understandings play a crucial role in contributing to and reproducing gendered behaviours and practices in early childhood play pedagogies (Adriany & Warin, 2014; Kristensen, 2006; Warin & Adriany, 2017). In particular, it has been reported that teachers' traditional gendered perspectives and behaviours are based on gendered stereotypical patterns, such as that boys should not play with Barbie dolls (Adriany & Warin, 2014). It has also been found that girls and boys are provided with unequal opportunities to play with non-gender-stereotyped materials (Hallström, Elvstrand, & Hellberg, 2015), which means children are situated in a gender binary with opposing femininity and masculinity. For example, by differentiating boys and girls in relation to their play space, stories, toys, types of the games, and children's play behaviours, teachers seem to normalise the gender stereotype and regard gender as an unimportant issue (Adriany, 2019; Adriany & Warin 2014; Kristensen, 2006; Soelistyarini, 2013). Therefore, as argued by Warin and Adriany (2017), teachers need to develop an explicit gender consciousness in order to implement gender conscious pedagogy in their practices.

Although studies show that gender stereotypes exist and influence children's play in different contexts (Soelistyarini, 2013; Wohlwend, 2011), it is important for early childhood teachers to understand the need to educate children by respecting gender differences rather than perpetuating the traditional gender roles (Adriany & Warin 2014). This paper seeks to identify if playworld activity settings as a new practice tradition for Indonesia can be used to address, disrupt and develop the gender identity of young children in ways that the Indonesian Government is hoping to realise. The research question that is the focus of this paper asks, 'How does a playworld approach create motivating conditions for the formation of a broader sense of identity in early childhood settings in Indonesia that goes beyond traditional stereotypes' that Government has identified as worrying? To achieve the goal of this paper, we have employed cultural-historical theory to frame our study of the social interactions of a focus child, Fatah, as he experiences different gendered roles and develops motive orientation towards playing a gendered character within the playworld activity setting that has been developed from a traditional Indonesian folktale. The paper begins with an overview of the literature on gender and the cultural-historical conceptions of play and motive, followed by the study design, findings, and discussion.

2. Construction of Gender in Early Childhood Education

The complexity of gender identity and gender equity has become an important issue in play pedagogy in relation to gender construction, equality in gender, and gender binary (Alloway, 1995; Kristensen, 2006; MacNaughton, 2000; Rainio & Hilppo, 2017). The naturalist or biological perspectives of developmental theories understand gender to be naturally and biologically determined, unchanging, and constant (Adriany, 2019; Kohlberg, 1966). However, feminist poststructuralists and post developmentalists recognise the importance of both the biological and socio-cultural aspects of sex, age, race, religion, and socioeconomic background in the conception of gender (Hellman, Heikkilä & Sundhall, 2014; Valentine 2007).

Feminist poststructuralism has a nurture perspective and considers gender behaviour to be the product of socialization, where a society has determined how to be masculine and feminine (Blaise, 2005; Blaise & Taylor, 2012; MacNaughton, 2000). In addition, feminist poststructuralism believes that gender is constructed through discourses that situate a person differently (MacNaughton, 2000; Osgood & Robinson, 2017; Smith, Alexander, & Campbell, 2017). These discourses refer to social practices such as how to dress up and act, social structures such as family and religion, and the emotional investments of people that represent gender, specifically masculinity and femininity (MacNaughton, 2000). Therefore, the different social, cultural, and historical backgrounds are considered to conceptualise gender (Tong, 2014). These discourses on gender

contribute to early childhood teachers' understanding of gender and early childhood education practices (MacNaughton, 2000; Warin & Adrian, 2017).

To frame children's masculinity and femininity, including choices of play materials, teachers pedagogical practices need to consider the unequal opportunities and societal demands of the gendered environment (Hallström, Elvstrand, & Hellberg, 2015; Tonyan & Howes, 2003; Walkerdine, 2006). Activity settings and motivating conditions play a significant role in shaping boys' and girls' behaviours, particularly in relation to engineering (Fleer, 2019). A play pedagogy that provides children with learning experiences that do not differentiate girls and boys is needed in the early childhood setting to actively counter gender-stereotyped situations. Therefore, the cultural-historical nature of this study has the potential to provide a new understanding of a child's experiences in play in relation to gender identity by focusing on the child's motives in social interactions in play. Specifically, this paper aims to explore how a child experiences gender roles while in a play-based environment, namely playworld.

3. Theoretical Concepts

3.1 A cultural-historical conception of play

A cultural-historical conception of play sees play as a product of cultural processes in which the creation of imaginary situations is foundational (Bodrova, 2008; Elkonin, 1999, 2005; Fleer, 2011, 2017; Hakkarainen, 2006; Vygotsky, 1966). With regard to a child's incentives and motives for action, "why a child plays must always be interpreted as the imaginary, illusory realization of unrealizable desires" that contain rules of behaviour (Vygotsky, 1966, p.8). This imaginary situation is believed to be the "basic unit of play" (Elkonin, 2005, p. 13), where children manipulate objects and give new meanings to objects and actions from what is seen to what is imagined (Fleer, 2017; Vygotsky, 1966). In this sense, the imaginary situations help children to learn about roles and rules in society through play, where the children create a meaning-changing of action and object (Fleer, 2014; Vygotsky, 1966).

Play is more than just a prototype of children's everyday life (Vygotsky, 1966). Rather, it is "a dynamic meeting between a child's inner life (emotion and thoughts) and its external world" (Lindqvist, 2003, p. 71). The dialectical relations between imagination and reality in play can create a movement either towards or away from reality (Vygotsky, 2004). By moving towards reality in play, children experiment and explore how roles in society work (Elkonin, 2005), including gender roles. In this sense, "in play the child creates models of human relations" (Elkonin, 1999, p. 23). This happens, for example, when children portray roles such as the roles of mothers and fathers and how they function in society.

On the other hand, children move away from reality when they give new meanings to objects by seeing the object beyond its physical appearance (Fleer, 2014; Vygotsky, 1966). They use their imagination to use this new meaning to construct a new social reality based

on their needs and desires (Vygotsky, 2004). “A child’s play is not simply a reproduction of what he [sic] has experienced, but a creative reworking of the impressions he has acquired” (Vygotsky, 2004, p. 11). In play, the gender roles are not simply a reproduction of a child’s experiences from reality, but are based on the child’s representational thought about gender roles.

Using the cultural-historical concept of play, Lindqvist (1995) developed a creative pedagogy of play called playworld. Playworld is a pedagogy of play where children and adults collectively create and engage in a shared imaginary play that is based on multi-layered children’s literature (Lindqvist, 1995). By highlighting adult’s pedagogical roles in the imaginary play, playworld provides pedagogical insights for promoting children’s play, learning and development (Lindqvist, 1995). Specifically, playworld has the potential to support children’s development by creating conditions that dramatise problems and develop concepts for children’s learning (Fleer, 2017). Therefore, this study focused on discovering how the use of the playworld pedagogy creates the conditions for young children to experience gendered roles. In particular, we asked how the child’s motive is developed while children experience gender tensions within the playworld activity setting. These tensions are important in both learning and development and the development of motive orientation, because tensions or contradictions activate children’s development (Vygotsky, 1997). The emergence of tensions and contradictions that are a result of the dynamic of a child’s and an adult’s world in concrete activity settings are considered to be the leading force in learning and development (Fleer, 2019; Hedegaard, 2005, 2012b; Lindqvist, 1995). Through the drama that is core to a playworld, children can disrupt gendered patterns and explore different roles and identities when role-playing a traditional Indonesian folktale.

3.2 A cultural-historical conception of motive

Motive is defined as a goal, a basis or a fundamental force that characterises a person’s acts in different activities (Hedegaard, 2002; Kravtsova & Kravtsov 2012), and “As something generated through observing or participating in an activity” (Fleer, 2012, p. 91). Also, “Motive is not located solely in a person, nor solely in a situation or condition external to a person” (Chaiklin, 2012, p. 209). The concept of motive provides the opportunity to understand the child’s actions within the social interaction in which they participate. Particularly in relation to a child’s gender identity, this concept helps to understand the child’s actions in relation to gender roles. The concept of motive highlights the relationship between people and their surroundings, and has three different kinds: (1) dominant motives, which are central to a person’s life, (2) meaning-making motives, where the dominant motives are always meaning-making motives as they dominate a person’s self-expression, and (3) stimulating motives, which are dominant motives that can be used to stimulate activities (Hedegaard, 2002). The concept of motive is used to identify a child’s motivated actions, particularly in this study on gender roles.

Rather than perceiving gender as being something that is either biologically determined or the result of social processes where the role of the environment is neglected, the cultural-historical perspective conceptualises gender through a person's motives as seen in their participation in the social environment. The children's motives emerge during the social interactions that occur in everyday-life activity settings, including where the teacher creates conditions for a child's development as part of institutional practices (Hedegaard, 2012a). Identity is also a cultural product that is created as a result of children's participation in everyday life (Hedegaard, 2011), and children develop their gender identity by reproducing the existing gender roles in their society, including those presented in institutional practices. Therefore, as part of their institutional practices, the preschool practices can provide a crucial contribution to children's motive development.

The concept of motive in relation to the cultural-historical concept of play can be argued to offer an opportunity to examine a child's experiences with gender roles in play. Understanding children's motives by examining their motivated actions may provide useful insights into understanding the children's perspective of gender and how children experience gender roles in play. Therefore, the concepts of play and motive can be used to systematically examine children's perspectives on gender roles in play, which in this study is within the context of playworld. By exploring how a playworld approach creates motivating conditions for the formation of gender identity in an early childhood setting in Indonesia, this study theoretically gives new possibilities for gender identity that go beyond gender stereotypes, as children can explore different roles in the playworld activity setting without attribution of gender to those roles or characters in the traditional story. Therefore, by studying how children enter into, contribute, and shape the practices of the activity setting of a traditional Indonesian folktale can give insights into what possibilities are created for the development of broader constructions of gender identity for Indonesian children that go beyond gender stereotypes and binaries.

4. Study Design

The data presented in this paper are drawn from a larger study that was an educational experiment (Hedegaard, 2008a) based on cultural-historical theory. In this educational experiment, a playworld approach was used as an educational intervention. The study was framed by Hedegaard's (2012b) model for learning and development, which uses multiple perspectives, namely the societal perspective, the institutional perspective, and the child's perspective, to understand children's learning and development. Figure 1 below shows that the different perspectives are interrelated. This interrelationship offers a potential way to better understand the child's learning and development as it includes different planes for analysing a child's social situation (Hedegaard, 2012b). In this study, the model was used to analyse the focus child's participation in the playworld activity setting as a new institutional practice within the Indonesian context. In using this model we were able to study the child's experience (Person category in figure) by considering the societal

conditions (Society in figure) created by the new policies set by the Indonesia Government (Cultural tradition category in figure), which give guidelines to institutions (Institution category in figure), such as an early childhood setting, to realise new practices that can support broader constructions of gender identity for Indonesian children through playworlds (activity setting category in figure) that go beyond gender stereotypes and binaries.

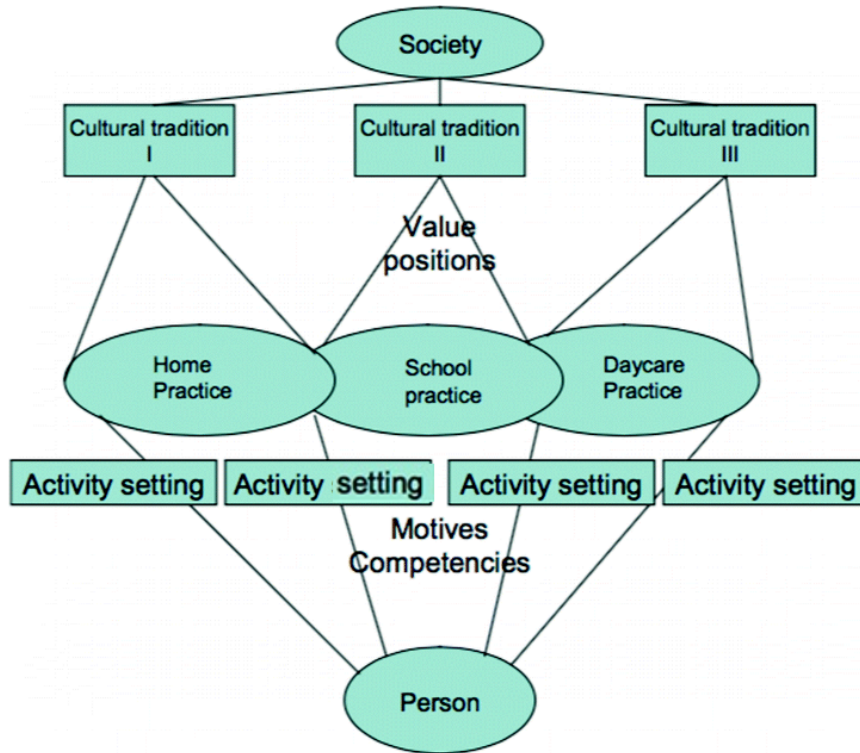


Figure 1. Hedegaard's (2012b) model for learning and development.

In using this model for our study, we can ask deeper questions of the data set, such as, what are the societal perspective surrounding expected gender roles in Indonesia, how do the institutional practices introduce different gender roles in play activities, and what is the child's motive development to play different gender roles? This exploration is exemplified in this paper by presenting the findings of how one child, Fatah, experiences gender roles across different activity settings within the playworld in Indonesia by capturing the perspectives of the child, the teacher, and the society. Throughout the children's participation in the playworld activity setting, it could be seen that different children took on gender roles and explored gender identity in different ways. The subject

of the study, Fatah, was an exceptional child in his willingness to deviate from expected gender roles, which he did in a completely different manner to the other children. It is interesting to study Fatah's experiences, which show how playworld creates new conditions that support some children in deviating from gendered roles that the Indonesian Government is concerned about.

4.1 Sampling and participants

The larger study from which the data presented here are drawn involved two early childhood settings; however, this study discusses data collected from one participating childcare centre located in Jakarta, Indonesia. This childcare centre is a culturally diverse centre as the 38 children and nine teachers come from different ethnicities within Java and other Indonesian islands. The childcare centre follows the Indonesian Early Years Learning Curriculum Framework (MoEC 146, 2014) when planning children's activities for learning and development.

In total, 38 children and nine teachers participated in this study; however, this paper focuses on one child—Fatah (a 4-year-old boy). The ages of the other children participating in the playworld setting ranged from 3.5 to 5 years with a mean of 4.4 years. Video observations were made of Fatah's everyday interactions during playworld at the childcare centre.

Ethics approval was obtained from the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval No. 10755). The children's consent was given by parents or guardians after talking with their children and discussing their participation in this study. All the consenting children and teachers were observed; however, the data specific to this paper were concerned with the preschool group with the one focus male child. Pseudonyms were used in this study and any potentially identifying information was masked.

4.2 Procedure for data gathering

The video observations, video interviews, and focus group discussions that were undertaken to introduce and plan the playworld and the field notes for the two periods of data collection were collected in the larger study. Digital video observations were the main source of data gathering, and three video cameras captured children's everyday experiences at the childcare centre. In order to capture the interactions between the teachers and the children, the first camera followed the teacher, while the second and the third cameras followed the children who were selected to be the focus of the larger study (a boy and a girl respectively). Data of the playworld intervention in the childcare centre were collected for six weeks. A total of 11 hours of video observation of the focus child, Fatah, were selected for data analysis to address the aim of this study. The video observations discussed in this study documented Fatah's experiences in the group time playworld activity setting.

The teachers were interviewed individually twice during the data collection period, before and after the playworld intervention. These interviews were an informal open-ended interview session of 30 to 45 minutes that explored the teachers' implementation of play. In the interview that took place after the intervention, the selected video observations were shown to the teachers as a prompt.

4.3 Data analysis

In this study, Vygotsky's (1966) concept of play in relation to meaning making and Hedegaard's (2012a) concept of motive are used to examine the child's experiences. After organising the data into a series of video clips, it was analysed and categorised using three levels of interpretation: common-sense interpretation, situated practice interpretation, and thematic interpretation (Hedegaard, 2008b). As the first level of data analysis in this study, the common-sense interpretation provided different understandings of Fatah's participation in all play activities. This level of analysis provides the child's perspectives of the play without any influence from the theoretical framework used. The following step in the data analysis was the situated practice interpretation, in which the patterns of the child's interactions when facing tensions in relation to gender were noted. These complex interaction patterns that were part of institutional practices were used to analyse the child's perspectives and provide more meaning of the child's perspectives of tensions related to gender roles in different activity settings during playworld. Finally, the thematic interpretation was used to conceptualise the findings based on theoretical interpretation using the analytical concepts. In order to answer the research question, meaningful patterns in the concepts of play and motive were identified. It is through the dialectical relations between the concepts of motive and play as a part of a system of cultural-historical concepts that deeper insights into the development of Fatah's experience of tensions related to gender roles were gained.

5. Findings and Discussion: A Boy's Perspective in Playing a Gendered-Character in Playworld

One of the aims of playworld is to create conditions that support children's development through drama, which is important in playworld because it links to children's development (Fleer, 2019). This cultural-historical study sought to explore how a playworld activity setting creates motivating conditions that support a child's gender identity formation through dramatic contradictions when playing gendered roles. Specifically, this paper sought to understand how Fatah experiences tensions while playing a gendered character in playworld—in other words, to understand how he develops his motive orientation to actively play different characters in the playworld activity setting where gendering is evident in the traditional folktale.

In this section, four vignettes gathered from the relevant play activities are presented and discussed. These data reveal how the child experienced tensions during playworld, as well as how teachers responded to the situations and how the teachers and children

actively engaged in the collective imaginary play. The analysis pointed out three themes about the conditions where the children experienced gender role tensions in the collective imaginary situations. The first theme provides an overview of the playworld being played out with four different gender roles and how the child enters the playworld by choosing one of the gender roles. The second theme reveals details of situations where a new motive to play a new gender role appears as a result of the tensions experienced during the playworld activity setting. Finally, the third theme shows how the child's motive is developed through the gender role tensions that are evident in the social interaction within the playworld environment. These data provide context and insight into the development of a child's motive as it is associated with tensions related to gender roles in the playworld activity setting.

5.1 A dominant motive of playing a male-oriented character in playworld

The playworld story is about a princess, Kemuning, and her father and sisters. Coming from a traditional culture in Indonesia, the story used in this playworld situates gender in a binary of masculinity and femininity. There are some roles that have a specific sex orientation. For example, there is a king character and a soldier character, which are signifiers of being a boy, and a princess character, which is a signifier of being a girl. In addition, there are power-gendered roles in the story. The king is a powerful character and the soldier is a type of a strong character; however, the *inang*, which is a name for the servant in the palace who is usually female, is a powerless character. Furthermore, Kemuning, as the youngest princess, is powerless compared to her older sisters. There is no queen character in the story as the queen is said to have died after giving birth to the youngest princess.

The teacher appears to have set up this story for playworld without realising that it was a gender-role stereotyped story. Many of the children reinforced the gender stereotypes in the story by choosing the typical or common characters for boys and girls. However, some boys resisted this stereotyping during playworld, as did some of the girls. Fatah is one of the children who resisted the stereotyped gender roles in this playworld; however, at the beginning, he decided to be a king, which was one of the mainstream characters for the boys along with the soldier. Vignette 1 below shows Fatah's decision to be a king at the beginning of playworld.

Fatah appeared to interpret the story in the context of the gender roles and entered into playworld by following the common gender construction, playing a "boy's character" of king as part of the stereotypical community practices. In this case, the teachers allowed the children to have the freedom to choose their character role in playworld, which showed that they valued the child's choices. Hedegaard (2002) believes that motives are developed through interactions in the social situations created. Although there was an opportunity to choose a non-typical character, when Fatah joined the play, his dominant motive appeared to be to choose one of the mainstream characters for boys or a powerful

role, just as most of the other children did. With regard to the gender roles, the social situation developed in the story was influenced by a developmental approach that believes children identify their gender by stereotyping gender-role activities. As a character, the king obviously has a power position that can attract boys and girls. However, regardless of the space for imaginative play, in this playworld, this character mostly attracts boys, which is an example of the common practices of children's play that follow the Indonesian traditional gender perspective.

Further, while the teacher wanted to support the child's play by taking the child's interest in playing the king character into account, she seemed to direct the play with her view that a king's typical role is to sit on the throne. This view influenced the way the king character was played by the children. This example exemplifies that the teacher's perspective, which is adopted from cultural tradition in the society, influences the institutional practices and the child's social situation in the activity setting, as Hedegaard (2012b) emphasises these different planes are an integrated unity. This teacher practice also shows that gender beliefs influence the stereotyping of gender roles in practices (Tong, 2014). In this case, the king seemed to be culturally and historically framed as a powerful man who has authority in the palace. This finding supports the understanding of how the cultural and historical values of community beliefs influence the children's play practices, as in the Hedegaard's (2012b) model of children's activity settings. In particular, this example illustrates the establishing of gender identity through the reproduction of traditional gender construction.

5.2 An emerging motive through contradictions on choosing a gendered role in playworld

Vignette 2 below shows that Fatah moved from the role-play of a king to another character.

This vignette shows how playworld creates conditions that contribute to motive development through contradictions, which is to play different gender roles and disrupt the gendered roles in the play. Playworld is designed to provide opportunities to explore concepts and to facilitate children's needs and ideas (Fleer, 2018). In this case, playworld provides opportunities for children to experience different gender roles. When playing the king's role, Fatah may have found that the king's role was boring as it required him to keep sitting and giving commands. This situation shows the contradiction experienced by the child that resulted in an emerging motive to play an anti-mainstream character related to gender.

Fatah moved to other areas. Attracted by the *inang*'s role in the kitchen and the social situations that were occurring, Fatah silently moved to the kitchen area and joined other players playing as an *inang*. Through motivating conditions that were created in the playworld activity setting, Fatah changed his motive orientation, which meant that playworld contributed to his motive development to play various gender roles in different ways. This new motive oriented Fatah to play a different gendered character, which is

suggestive of an emerging identity and motive orientation to role-play different roles. His desire to play in the kitchen area results in him unintentionally challenging the gender stereotyped character, as from an Indonesian traditional gender perspective, the kitchen is a site of domestic roles and therefore associated with women. However, he may have thought that it was much more interesting to have the power role in the kitchen by deciding what had to be cooked, what had to be given or served, or what they had to eat rather than taking on the passive role of king. In this sense, the playworld created a dramatic contradiction between societal values and the child's traditional Indonesian identity as a boy in a role that the story prescribes as being female.

Although Fatah was motivated to play a different character in the kitchen area, he himself questioned the *inang* role as a gendered role by noticing that the other *inang* characters were being played by girls. However, when the teachers explained that there are both female and male *inang*, Fatah successfully manages his transition from a male-stereotyped character to a female-stereotyped character in contradiction to the gender-stereotyped practices in the playworld scenario. These actions provide evidence that an active role of the teacher can have an effect on the children's play (Fleer, 2019). By taking part in the children's play through helping Fatah take off the king's costume and explaining that "there are female inang and male inang", thus indicating a potentially gender-neutral character, the teachers offer support and value the child's intention to change the role, which shows their closeness and tenderness (Hedegaard, 2012b). These actions by the teacher opened up the possibility for all children to play the *inang* character.

These examples show the importance of educators' understanding and beliefs on gender when deciding whether to reproduce or counter gender stereotypes in cases that require them to support the child's gender identity (Gullberg et al., 2017). The explanation provided by the teacher in Fatah's situation aimed to support the child and comfort him, as she assumed by reading the child's facial expressions and his rejection of the *inang*'s costume that he might not feel confident or could be shy. As such, the teacher has an important role in creating a gender-neutral environment in children's play.

Through imaginary play, children experiment and explore how roles in society work when moving towards reality in play (Elkonin, 2005). Similarly, in this particular shared imaginary play, the children and teachers freely chose to explore their own roles based on their desires, including to follow or resist the gender stereotypes. As commented by teacher Ati, a boy could be an *inang* or a girl could be a king. Children move away from reality when they give a new meaning to objects by seeing the object beyond its physical appearance (Fleer, 2014; Vygotsky, 1966). Such a situation can be seen in how the child creates new meanings from objects they use, such as a stick as a kitchen tool and the actions of cooking in the kitchen. In this way, the imaginary situations are developed and the children can be involved in characters across the gender stereotypes.

While Fatah was deciding whether to play a character that in the traditional view is gendered, the child is managing the tensions linked to gender. Fatah was one of the children who showed agency in playing his desired character by taking the opportunities that are created in playworld to explore other roles. Through this opportunity, he gained different learning experiences and unintentionally resists the gender stereotyping presented in the play. This experience exemplifies the possibilities of the various rich experiences that are offered by playworld, which position teachers as play partners, as a play pedagogy that supports children's development. This strength is possible because playworld provides the dynamics of social situations that can provide opportunities for rich experiences that eventually will support children's development. As well as creating problems to be solved in the imaginary situation, playworld provokes children's development in many ways.

Vignette 3 below shows how Fatah experiences another contradiction while being questioned about his character in playworld.

The contradiction was experienced when Fatah needed to state his role. The gender patterns emerged as a stereotyping of the characters in playworld based on the gender perspective from society. In this vignette, Fatah hesitantly announced his role as a king, a male-oriented character, which went against his intention to play the *inang* role, a female-oriented character. This may have occurred for different reasons, one of which could be the way the teacher asked the question. The teacher did sound a bit pushy and raised her voice while asking about the child's role. However, the teacher was acting as a soldier who was responsible for the palace's safety. This vignette suggests that the way the teacher acknowledges and responds to children's behaviours, can influence the children's gender role identity when role-playing. This is consistent with the findings of earlier studies (Blaise, 2005; MacNaughton, 2000).

Fatah's actions indicated that he was pushing against gendered-roles. Similarly, the teacher, Ati, disrupted the gendered roles by being a female soldier. Using the wholeness approach (Hedegaard, 2012b), the example of the teacher's action of taking a female soldier role is seen as being part of her participation in the activity setting that creates the possibility of an emergence of a new motive in the child's social situation. The new motive in this case is to play a non-typical gender role; however, Fatah seemed uncomfortable stating the character that was chosen, remaining silent, rolling his eyes and biting his finger while being questioned by the teacher. Vignette 3 shows the child's discomfort at being exposed and questioned about his role, which may have been caused by the teacher's raised voice.

Vignettes 1-3 show that playworld provides opportunities for children to experience various gender roles, and creates conditions for a motive to move to a new gendered character. For example, Fatah's motive to move from a king character to an *inang* character also created a tension because he disrupted the stereotypical gender roles.

Contradictions create conditions for children's development (Fleer, 2017; Vygotsky, 1997). The playworld scenarios create an environment that offers flexibilities and richness that can support the child's development by providing the opportunity to learn and experience different things in the imaginary play. However, the teachers' roles in this play is an important key in developing children's play that supports children's development (Fleer, 2017).

5.3 A stimulating motive for a new role that resists gender stereotypes in playworld
During playworld, Fatah experienced tensions related to his gender identity by playing a gendered character that deviated from traditional gender patterns. The child first entered into the play by playing a common role based on a gender stereotype, which was a king (Vignette 1). However, the male-oriented character that was the king's role fell short of his expectations. He showed agency in choosing what character of the story plot he really wanted to be and how he wanted the character to be played. Instead of being the king, the child decided to be the *inang*. Although Fatah seemed uncertain with his decision at the beginning (see Vignettes 2 and 3), he successfully managed the contradictions in his choice to play the gendered character. Then, by receiving an explanation that *inang* roles can be for both boys and girls (Vignette 2) and seeing the teacher playing a female soldier character (Vignette 3), he developed his motive to choose a role that is traditionally played by the other gender and disrupted the gender binary in the playworld scenario. Vignette 4 shows that as he experienced more playworld situations, he seemed to become more used to how it works.

Through the social interaction created, playworld promotes the child's motive development. As Fatah became more familiar with the playworld activity setting, he developed his motive to play a gendered role and disrupt the gender stereotype within the playworld activity setting of the Indonesian traditional story. As can be seen in this vignette, he expressed his intention to play the gendered character during the group time by raising his hand when the teacher asked the children "Who will be the *inang* today?". Later, he mentioned *inang* as the character he chose when the teacher asked his role. Many playworld studies have shown that playworlds have a positive impact on early childhood practices and children's development (Fleer, 2019). In particular, this study shows how playworld as an activity setting creates conditions that help to develop the child's motive to play different gendered-roles and manage gender-related tensions. This is particularly significant for Indonesia where there the position of girls and women has been identified by Government as in need of urgent disruption and the need for a more equitable value position being development in society and local community. Importantly, it is evident that the teachers' actions and intentions that are manifested through the teachers' play role and participation in the playworld activity setting are crucial in supporting a new motive development (Hedegaard, 2012b) that goes beyond binaries and stereotypes.

6. Discussion

The study reported in this paper shows how the child's motives are developed when experiencing the tensions associated with gender roles. However, motives are formed by interacting in social situations (Hedegaard, 2002). Therefore, this paper shows how playworld creates conditions that support a child who is developing his motive to actively play a gendered role. Specifically, the study reveals different conditions that support the child's motives to push against the gendered roles by moving from a male-oriented character to a female-oriented character.

In this playworld activity setting, all of the children played the roles based on their desires and mostly as guided by their gender perspectives that are socially and culturally constructed and most familiar to the society. Vignette 1 showed that most of the boys chose to play a king or a soldier and the girls chose to play a princess or an *inang*. During the play, many children reinforced the gender stereotypical roles in the story, which are influenced by traditional views. However, some children challenged the gender boundary and pushed against the stereotypical gender roles, including Fatah, as was evident in Vignettes 2 and 3. As part of the social situations, a child's motives orient the child in the play (Hedegaard, 2014), and playworld creates social situations that develop the child's motive to explore other gender roles that are available in the playworld, which means they unintentionally resist the gender stereotyped roles. As Vignette 4 showed, finally, Fatah managed the tensions and consistently played the gendered character during playworld.

The teachers play a significant role in supporting the children's play by developing non-gendered play environments that assist children's development. The teachers in this case worked effectively to provide the children with the freedom to choose their roles in playworld. This kind of teachers' response supports children's exploration of different worlds related to gender roles. In addition, in these imaginary situations, the teachers tried to be supportive of Fatah's choices. The teachers' engagement in the children's play and their sharing of their experiences are crucial, as the relations between the children and the teachers in the play support the development of the learning motive (Fleer, 2020; Hedegaard, 2012a). Throughout the imaginary play, the teachers' gender perspectives can be seen to influence their responses, such as explaining that *inang* roles can be for both boys and girls (Vignette 2). In the beginning, Fatah seemed to be intimidated by the teacher questioning him using a raised voice; however, the teacher did not mean to discourage him from exploring different gender roles. From the beginning of the play, the teachers did not intend to limit the play in relation to the gender roles; hence, they offered flexibility and support so the children could explore different gendered roles as provided in the rich learning experiences offered by playworld. These actions indicate a willingness to open the gender boundaries in the play. Indeed, one of the teachers also disrupted the gender stereotypes in the imaginary play by playing a female soldier character (Vignette 3). Overall, these practices show the relation between activity settings and a child's social situation, where the teachers' engagement in the children's play within the playworld

activity setting, such as supporting children by using their closeness and tenderness, has a significant impact on new motive development (Hedegaard, 2012b). This gives directions to teachers on how to realise in practice the Indonesian Governments concern for the development of equity through disrupting traditional stereotypes, many of which are mirrored in traditional folktales.

Drawing upon the cultural-historical theory of play, three key characteristics of playworld that are related to the child's experiences of gendered roles are identified. First, playworld provides a wide opportunity for children to choose a character in order to enter the imaginary play. By following their motive developed through interactions in the social situations created (Hedegaard, 2002), the children choose any character, disregarding the gender roles. Second, playworld creates conditions where a new motive to play various gender roles in different ways emerges. This was an important finding, because it is argued that providing opportunities to learn different concepts and to support children's needs and ideas is the main purpose of playworlds (Fleer, 2018). In this case, playworld provided opportunities for the children to explore different gender roles, which resulted in an emerging motive to play a character that disrupted the mainstream gendered characters. By being inside the play, the teachers can help to support the development of the child's motives through reinforcement that influences the child's actions in the imaginary play. Additionally, by joining the imaginary play, the teacher plays an important role as a model that influences the child's perspective in the play. In this case, the child's gender identity is affected when, by playing a female soldier character, the teacher became an example of a character that disrupts the gender stereotypes in the imaginary play. These examples show the relation between the children and the teachers in the collective imaginary play, which is essential for supporting the child's development of new play practices which are important for all children to experience in Indonesia, because gendered practices and problems with equity in everyday life are in need of change (MoNE, 2008). This aspect of the study is different to previous studies that have mostly positioned teachers outside of the children's play (Fleer, 2015). Finally, playworld's environment supports the child's motive to be developed through social interactions. In particular, playworld's environment appeared to help orient the children towards a motive for playing different gendered roles. Hedegaard (2005) points out that a conflict and how a child deals with the conflict can affect motive and identity development. In this study, the child develops his motives through the gender-related tensions, and this supports his agency in relation to his gender identity. Thus, participation in playworld provides all children with the opportunity to explore different roles and to experience in play broader identities that are not gendered binaries and stereotypical.

7. Conclusion

By examining the child's experiences in relation to gender roles in playworld, this paper provides a deeper understanding of the dynamic relations between motive development and the child's experiences of gender tensions, including how teachers engage in the

situations. The vignettes show that the child's stimulating motive is vital for further play and learning experiences. This dominant motive for play enabled the child to develop agency to explore different gendered roles to fulfil his desires during the play. Therefore, a rich play approach such as the playworld approach that involves the teachers taking active roles in the play is vital for creating conditions and opportunities for children's learning experiences and motive development.

The gender-related tensions experienced by the child enhance the child's motive to play a role that is in contradiction to the specific gendered roles in the playworld activity setting of a traditional Indonesian folktale. The gender binary can prevent the children from exploring the play environment and gaining richer experiences from the play. Through social interaction in imaginary play, playworld breaks the kind of gender boundaries that restrict children's potential. The contradictions identified within the child's perspective and the social interactions, including the adult interactions, support the child's motive development for further potential learning. In order to support successful play experiences, it is important that there are rich possibilities for exploration available in playworld activity setting. The investigation shows how the child experiences the gender-related tensions while using opportunity provided in playworld to explore different gendered roles.

The findings suggest that there should be more focus on how the child manages the gender role tensions while playing. These findings contribute to teachers' pedagogical understanding and practices on how to support children's development when children experience gender role tensions in play, which is relevant for early childhood practices in Indonesia. These findings also contribute to the limited body of research on gender educational play in early childhood education.

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