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Playing along (with)in the hard yard?

Exploring play, practices, and occupational justice in Irish schoolyards

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Occupational Science & Occupational Therapy

This thesis is a collaboration between Luleå University of Technology and University College Cork that aims towards a double degre

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DOCTORAL THESIS

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Exploring play, practices, and occupational justice in Irish schoolyards

by

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2024

Playing along (with)in the hard yard?

To all the troublemakers

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Abstract

This thesis aims to generate knowledges on practice possibilities concerned with children's play and occupational justice in Irish schoolyards. Navigating the intersections between theory and practice required an ongoing examination of the tensions and points of resonance between ideas, ideals, and practices. Drawing on critical occupational perspectives, four distinct yet interrelated studies contribute to the thesis aim, exploring play, particularly the play of children with minoritized identities, as an issue of occupational justice from diverse perspectives. Minoritized draws attention to the active social processes that create inequitable opportunities for children because of their identities relative to gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, religion, sexuality, and disability.

In Study I, a scoping review using the Joanna Briggs institute methodology, showed a paucity of existing research on the play of Irish Traveller children, an ethnic minoritized community. Using an existing conceptual model to categorise reported influencing factors emphasized the distinct restricting factor of racism on Irish Traveller children's play. To address the problematization of at-risk representations of Irish Traveller children, as reflective of culturist assumptions, greater attention to children's own diverse constructions of play as a capability is proposed.

Study II completed virtual and walking interviews with ten primary school teachers to explore their practices and experiences of particularly children with minoritized identities play in Irish schoolyards. The reflexive thematic analysis highlighted how prevailing norms interrelated with the locus of risks of exclusion to children's individual choices and how teachers' while valuing play, prioritised safety, and an absence of conflict. Knowledges constructed on teachers and children negotiating individual and collective interests within diverse occupations in relationships (with)in the schoolyard, resonated with conceptualisations of collective occupations as constitutive with the production of the social space.

Study III used individual and group walking interview methods to explore with 23 children their play in two Irish primary schools, identified as disadvantaged. Using the lens of the theory of practice architectures, the analysis highlighted children's contrasting representations of play as habitual and emerging situated relational processes. Children's acceptance of social hierarchies, individualistic and exclusionary social practices within schoolyards generated insights into the

consequences of significant constraints and normative ideas on children's play. Play was thus interrelated with the reproduction of what was termed the "hard yard". However, the transformative potential of play was also suggested in how shared play created possibilities for fun, solidarity, and friendship.

Study IV drawing on earlier studies, engaged six occupational therapists from diverse sites of practice in a critical action research inquiry to interrogate existing practices and generate practice possibilities focused on play and occupational justice in Irish schoolyards. Putting the theory of practice architectures to use again, the analysis drew attention to how habitual practices interrelated with constraints including circumscribed professional identities, service expectations and cultural norms to (re)produce practice possibilities, in tension with occupational justice ideals. Furthermore, the research process using dialogical focus group and occupational mapping methods provided a mechanism for raising consciousness that (re)mattered occupations and occupational justice.

In conclusion, this thesis contributes nuanced understandings of play as socially situated practices interrelated with significant constraints and diverse social practices (with)in the particularities of Irish schoolyards. The ways in which inequities were (re)produced in habitual, individualistic, and exclusionary practices within schoolyards, and relationships of solidarity and fun were created within shared play supports understandings of the centrality of occupations to (in)justice. The insights generated problematized inclusive practices drawing attention to normative discourses, the individualising of choices, the neglect of substantive issues, such as racism and the significance of vulnerabilities and friendships. This thesis suggests practice possibilities that extend beyond play as an individual concern to consider ethical responsibilities to raise consciousness on the relational nature of collective practices with(in) shared spaces. Furthermore, in connecting theorizing on occupation as relational and collective, the theory of practice architectures and mechanisms of raising consciousness this thesis contributes to understandings of praxis.

Keywords: Children's play; collective occupations; conditions of possibility; critical occupational research; inclusion; occupational science; occupational therapy; practice architectures; schoolyards.

List of original papers

This dissertation is based on the following original articles, which are referred to in the text by their Roman numerals:

I.   Bergin, M., Boyle, B., Lilja, M. & Prellwitz, M. (2023). Irish Traveller Children's Play: A Scoping Review. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*. DOI:10.1007/s10826-023-02695-w

II. Bergin, M., Boyle, B., Lilja, M. & Prellwitz, M. (2023). Irish Schoolyards: Teacher's Experiences of Their Practices and Children's Play-"It's Not as Straight Forward as We Think", *Journal of Occupational Therapy, Schools, & Early Intervention.* DOI: 10.1080/19411243.2023.2192201

III. Bergin, M., Boyle, B., Lilja, M. & Prellwitz, M. (2023). Exploring with children, play in Irish primary schoolyards. [*Accepted to International Journal of Play*].

IV. Bergin, M., Boyle, B., Lilja, M. & Prellwitz, M. (2023). "Finding the play"- exploring with occupational therapists practice possibilities in the context of Irish schools. [*Unpublished manuscript*].

Original Studies I & II have been published with open access. Original Study III is accepted for publication with open access. Original Study IV is in manuscript form, with revisions resubmitted.

A Note on Language and Citation

This thesis is mindful of citation as a critical practice (Itchuaqiyaq et al., 2020) and has prioritised referencing the work of scholars that are often less cited to counter inequitable practices (Smith, 2021). To provide an overview of the current life situation for Irish Travellers, the words and work of Irish Traveller scholars *'unmediated by gatekeepers from the settled worlds'* (deBhardúin, 2018, para 2) have been used where possible. The capitalization of the T in Traveller reflects recommendations in the Equal Status Act (2000) and the stated preference of Irish Travellers (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, NCCA, 2023).

Words have power. While recognising that language holds plural meanings depending on the context and is always changing, certain words required specific consideration in this thesis.

Minoritized

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child identifies specific concerns regarding "*the difficulties faced by particular categories of children in relation to enjoyment and conditions of equality of the rights defined in article 31*" (UNCRC, 2013, General Comment 17, p. 9) especially, girls, children with disabilities, children from indigenous and minority communities and children living in poverty, institutions and situations of conflict, humanitarian, and natural disasters. In this thesis, the use of minoritized understands that "at risk" groups do not exist due to individual characteristics but are created by unjust systems of discrimination and oppression. The term, coined by Gunaratnam (2003) shifts the emphasis to the active social processes involved in allocating power based on hierarchical categories that "other" certain individuals. While, connecting with the concept of intersectionality that recognises that individuals can hold multiple "othered" identities, scholarship also asserts the need for careful use of minoritized lest it discount unique forms of oppression experienced (Black et al, 2023; Crenshaw, 1991; Flanagin et al., 2021). Minoritized is therefore used as an adjective when referring to for example a minoritized ethnic community or as minoritized identities relative to race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sex, (dis)abilities and socio-economic status. It is worth noting also that while within Europe, there is ongoing debate regarding the use of disaggregated data, the right to self-identify is central to a rights agenda (Craig, 2016).

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (F.R.A, 2020) and Irish Traveller Advocacy organisations (Pavee Point, 2023) have repeatedly argued for voluntary data collection based on self-identification to inform policies and practices.

Minority World & Majority World

This thesis uses the terms "majority world" to represent Africa, Asia and South America as Alam (2008) advocates in "*terms of what it is, rather than what it lacks*" (p.87) where the majority of the world's human population lives. "Majority" world therefore emphasises the inequitable distribution of power and wealth globally which is held primarily in "minority world" countries, also referred to as "Western", "Anglophone" or the "Global North".

Disability

The National Disability Authority (2022) advice paper on language which involved consultation with disabled persons organisations informs the decision to use person-first language, for example, child with disability and identity-first language, for example autistic child, interchangeably. Person first language is used predominantly in UN documents.

Breaktime, Recess, Playtime

While the term "recess" is used in other contexts (Ramstetter et al, 2021), this thesis uses "breaktime" to refer to the mandated time allocated within Irish primary schools for children to use the schoolyard. Both children and teachers who participated in the research that informs this thesis used breaktime as their preferred term.

Practices

This thesis draws on the theory of practice architectures to define practices as socially situated activities (Kemmis, 2019) which aligns with understandings of occupation in this thesis. As such the term practices and occupations are used interchangeably.
Professional practices refer to the occupations/practices that are specific to a certain discipline.

Preface

The schoolyard was where I learned that play could make all sorts of worlds possible and what friendship required and was worth but also that things weren't always fair and that we can make invisible divisions in a shared space that leave little room for "differences". As I began to work as an occupational therapist, schoolyards were an absent presence. Children described their schoolyard as a source of upset, loneliness, and conflict while families struggled with trying to find ways to help while neither being able nor wanting to be right beside their child in the schoolyard. I began to understand these feelings more as a mother. The schoolyard however was somehow "beyond the scope" of service policies and evidence-based practice pathways (which I had readily embraced). In attempting to move from practices that seemed to make differences a problem, I became more interested in community-based practices and in human rights and social justice theories. This PhD scholarship was a gift of time to think how these ideals and ideas might contribute to "better" ways of working. For this thesis I must now demonstrate my abilities as an independent researcher and contextualise this within existing fields of knowledges. Researching issues of justice in relation to children with minoritized identities, has required listening to those who have lived with oppressions and extractive harmful research practices. Interrogating my own assumptions and intentions and reading beyond the scope of disciplinary fields has unlike St. Pierre (2020) not been my ruination. Rather this PhD has been a process of reconsidering certainties about science and practices and recognising the horizons of my knowledges and my own complicities with (in)justices. This thesis started amidst the COVID 19 pandemic where, the "obscenity" of a scientific triumph inequitable shared, as Guterres (2021) lamented is a moral indictment of our humanity. This thesis ends in a world with more than 110 armed conflicts, where an "estimated" 13,450 Palestinian children have been killed over 6 months and almost half the population of Sudan requires humanitarian assistance. The point of this thesis is that this often overwhelming and unattainable idea of justice happens in ordinary moments. How we play in the schoolyard seems an importance place to begin to create worlds (again and again) where justice is not just possible for some children. I hope that in sharing this brief glimpse of how this thesis came to be that you will accept this invitation to read on and "*find the play*".

Is mise le meas/ sincerely,

Michelle

Introduction

Due to societal restrictions on play, breaktimes in schoolyards are identified as increasingly important and atypical in affording opportunities for children to play with peers (Baines et al., 2020; McKendrick, 2019; Russell, 2021). The inclusion in General Comment 17 of obligations on schools to provide for children's right to play (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013) is underscored by research on the importance of play to children's health, wellbeing, and social lives and concerns regarding a lack of value, limited provision, and restrictions to children's play in schoolyards (Baines & Blatchford, 2023; Beresin, 2016; McKendrick, 2019; Ramstetter et al., 2021). Alongside a dearth of research on play and existing provision for play during breaktimes, studies particularly for children in middle childhood (7-12 years) have focused on the schoolyard as a site of exclusion and bullying, moreso for children with minoritised identities (Clevenger et al., 2023; London, 2022; Howard et al., 2017; Massey et al., 2020; Russell, 2021). Research has identified the need to understand how play and diverse contextual constraints on play influence inclusion and exclusion in the unique context of schoolyards (Hyndman & Wyver, 2020; McNamara et al., 2017; Massey et al., 2021; London, 2022).

Adopting an occupational justice agenda, school-based research and practice guidelines position occupational therapists as concerned with children's rights to participate in meaningful occupations, as the most effective way to realize health, wellbeing, and inclusion, in schools (Fitzgerald & Mac Cobb, 2022; Laverdure et al., 2019; Salazar Rivera et al., 2023; World Federation of Occupational Therapists [WFOT], 2016). Studies to date however report limited implementation of occupation focused school-based practices, scant attention to play and moreover a lack of "evidence" on participation and inclusion outcomes (deOliveira Borba et al., 2020; Lynch et al., 2023; Salazar Rivera et al., 2023; Sterman et al., 2020). Occupational science research proposes that knowledge generated on play as occupation can contribute to addressing the diverse barriers to children's equitable opportunities for play on schoolyards and to leveraging the benefits of play (Gerlach & Browne, 2021; Lynch et al., 2018; Prellwitz & Skar, 2016; Sterman et al., 2020). Further critical contextualised research is recommended to understand existing situations in terms of the diverse enablers and constraints on play and occupational therapy practices (Gerlach & Browne, 2021; Sterman et al., 2020).

The point of departure for this thesis is to explore how an occupational perspective can contribute to understanding children's play on Irish schoolyards, as an issue of occupational justice. Moreover, how the knowledges generated on children's equitable opportunities to play on Irish schoolyards can inform occupational therapy practice commitments to contribute to children's participation and inclusion in play in schoolyards. Given concerns regarding the limited realization of aspirations constructed in occupational science theorizing on occupational justice (Farias & Rudman, 2019; Frank, 2022; Hammell, 2023; Stanley & Simaan, 2023) exploring the intersections between theory/research/practices is also considered relevant to wider disciplinary discussions on justice focused praxis.

The following sections attempt to locate this thesis and weave together the context and rationale for the proposed inquiry. The first section will consider the differing conceptualizations of play as occupation and as a right before moving to consider play in relation to breaktimes in schoolyards. The challenges and tensions providing for play in schoolyards identified in a review of interdisciplinary research are presented prior to examining the research on practices concerned with creating conditions for children's right to play in schoolyards. To situate the inquiry, the research on occupational therapy practices, play in schoolyards and inclusive schools in an Irish context are outlined. The next section discusses alternative perspectives on play and proposals to adopt a more critical occupational perspective to examine play in schoolyards. The final section introduces the theoretical perspectives that inform this inquiry.

Conceptualisations of play as a right and play as occupation.

The positioning of play as a right in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) is described as a significant shift in thinking about play also influencing conceptualisations of play as occupation (Fahy et al., 2020; Russell, 2021). Article 31, as Russell et al. (2023) observe, has prompted a renewed interest in play as a "forgotten right" reflected in the emergence of dedicated academic journals over the past twenty years and systematic reviews of research specific to play in schoolyards (Bikomeye et al., 2021; Dankiw et al., 2020; Gibson et al., 2017; Jerebine et al., 2022; Russell, 2021; Russell et al., 2023). However, play has long occupied the minds and work of a wide range of disciplines- philosophers, evolutionary biologists, historians, folklorists, psychologists, anthropologists, educators, geographers, physicists, and those interested in health (Henricks, 2015).

In attempting to understand play's meaning, purpose, and significance in and to human's lives, the canon of interdisciplinary literature attesting to the ambiguous and fundamental nature of play, is matched in breadth and depth by attempts to define, and categorize play (Evans et al., 2016; Henricks, 2015; Roopnarine et al., 2015; Zosh et al., 2017). How play is understood then differs depending on one's theoretical perspectives, what Sutton Smith (1997) referred to in his historical analysis as "play rhetorics" and more pointedly by recent play scholars as societal, political, and disciplinary agendas (Lester, 2020; Russell, 2021). Research has highlighted conflicting perspectives on the purpose of play in schoolyards and the influence of service requirements for evidence-based practices in terms of how play is provided for (Baines et al., 2020; Lester, 2020; Massey et al., 2020; Moore & Lynch, 2018; Russell et al., 2023). The conceptualisation of play as occupation, as a right and as an issue of occupational justice therefore requires consideration in terms of why and how play is considered important in the context of breaktimes in schoolyards.

Play as a Right.

Play as a right defined as "*any behaviour, activity or process initiated, controlled, and structured by children themselves'* (GC 17, UNCRC, 2013, p.1) is influenced by what has been termed, the "new paradigm" of childhood studies (Russell, 2021; Sutterlüty & Tisdall, 2019). The "new" paradigm understands childhood not as a passive linear progression through normative developmental stages but as socially constructed, in which children's lives are inherently different to adults and children are capable agents and rights holders (Spyrou et al., 2019). The degree of concern regarding societal restrictions on children's play prompted the publication of a General Comment (UNCRC, GC 17) in 2013, reminding governments and schools of their obligations to protect and promote the realization of children's right to play. While relationships between play "deprivation" and detrimental developmental outcomes are largely hypothesized research provides considerable support for the contention that children experience increasing restrictions on opportunities to play outdoors, including within schools (Baines & Blatchford, 2023; Beresin, 2016; Dankiw et al., 2020; Dodd et al., 2021; Hyndman et al., 2016; Kilkelly et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2021; Lester & Russell, 2010; Russell et al., 2023). However, as Gill's (2018) often cited review on children's play in public spaces accepts, significant "gaps" are also evident with limited data in many contexts, and as Lynch et al. (2017) points out in an Irish context data more relevant to time available outdoors or in sports rather than play.

An increasingly risk adverse society is often identified as a reason for children's reduced opportunities to play outdoors (Gill, 2018). However, play rights scholarship (Lester, 2020; Russell, 2021) has acknowledged GC 17's recognition of play as an issue of social and spatial justice identifying a) diverse societal restrictions on children's play including limited safe spaces to play; increased educational demands; reduced societal value on play; poverty; climate change and natural disasters and b) specific concerns regarding conditions of equality of play rights for certain children with minoritized identities relative to ethnicity, gender, (dis)abilities and socio-economic status (UNCRC, 2013). This reflects increasing understandings of the complex often inequitable social and spatial factors restricting opportunities to play in certain contexts (Gerlach et al., 2014; Lester, 2020; Russell et al., 2023). The positioning of play as a right is also underscored by as Russell's (2021) review of the international literature on outdoor play in schools similarly concludes sufficient evidence on the significance of play for health, wellbeing, educational and societal purposes. Play's intrinsic value to children is however emphasized in GC 17's recommendations and references to instrumental purposes is suggested to reflect more the political realities of negotiating attention to play as a right (McKendrick, 2019; Russell et al., 2023). Concentrating on providing adequate space, time, and permission for children to play what they value rather than providing play for health, educational or societal purposes is then fore fronted in play rights recommendations (Ramstetter et al., 2021; Russell, 2021).

Play as occupation.

While developmental perspectives on play have informed and continue to inform occupational therapy (Bundy, 2011; Rae-Kaeser & Lynch, 2017; Royal College of Occupational Therapists, RCOT, 2023), (re)conceptualisations of play as occupation have drawn on occupational science, ideas in the new paradigm of childhood and representations of play as a right (Fahy et al., 2020; Moore & Lynch, 2018; Sterman et al, 2020). Though differing perspectives exist on the relationship between occupational science and occupational therapy as Whiteford (2023) argues, occupation is a shared domain of concern. The importance of occupation rests on the assumption that there is a relationship between opportunities to do "*all the things we need, want or have to do'* (Wilcock, 2001, p.413) and possibilities to live healthy and fulfilling lives with more recent conceptualisations considering the "*implications for individuals, societies, and the earth*" (Laliberte Rudman et al., 2022 p.15). The framing of play occupation as a right also corresponds with theorizing on occupation as central to the realization of human rights which is increasingly

reflected in occupational therapy position statements and practice guidelines identifying the right to meaningful and necessary occupations as an issue of occupational justice (Regulating Health and Social Care Professionals, CORU, 2019; Royal College Occupational Therapists, 2023; WFOT, 2016; 2019). Research on children's play from an occupational perspective considers play as children's primary occupation and conceptualises play as a freely chosen self-directed, subjective experience of fun (Bundy, 2011; Fahy et al., 2020; Graham et al., 2018; Moore & Lynch, 2018; O'Connor et al., 2021). Using primarily qualitative methods , research on play as occupation with children from 0-18 years, has described play as involving a wide range of solitary, onlooker and shared activities and highlighted the importance of challenge, risk, relationships and friendships in familiar outdoor spaces with loose materials and hiding spaces to children's enjoyment of play (Bartie et al., 2016; Berinstein & Magalhaes, 2009; Blake et al., 2018; Fahy et al., 2020; Hinchion et al., 2021; Miller & Kuhaneck, 2008; Moore & Lynch, 2018; Morgenthaler et al., 2023; Wenger et al., 2021). In examining how play as occupation is influenced by diverse contextual factors, research has shed light on both spatial and social restrictions in terms of the usability and accessibility of spaces for play and the influence of negative societal, adult and peer attitudes on the play opportunities of particularly children with disabilities (Anaby et al., 2013; Fahy et al., 2020; Lynch et al., 2018; Moore & Lynch, 2015; Prellwitz & Skär, 2016; Sterman et al., 2019;2020). While understanding play as fundamental to children's health, development, social participation, and a determinant of wellbeing, the focus of research on play as occupation aligns with play rights scholarship focusing on addressing the barriers to children's equitable opportunities to play as a right and as an issue of occupational justice (Gerlach & Browne, 2021; Loudoun et al., 2024; Moore & Lynch, 2018; Prellwitz & Skar, 2016; Wenger et al., 2021).

However, corresponding with diverse contested perspectives on play, the meaning and purpose of occupation in human lives is by no means agreed upon. Attempting to understand the complexity of occupations and relationships with health, wellbeing and social participation is an ongoing endeavour of occupational science (Morville et al., 2023; Wilcock & Hocking, 2015). Furthermore, the publication of a Global Recess statement by an international group of play researchers (Ramstetter et al., 2021) reflects research reviews, indicating little progress with implementing play rights obligations (even within countries that have developed play policies, including Ireland) and limited attention to children's right to play in schoolyards (Janot & Rico, 2020; Lynch et al., 2018; Russell, 2021).

A limitation to current understandings of play as a right including in schoolyards is the dearth of research with children, particularly children beyond the early years and with minoritized identities relative to ethnicity and race, on their own constructions of play (Bergen & Fromberg, 2009; Finney & Atkinson, 2020; Howard et al., 2017; Massey et al., 2020; Russell, 2021). Current understandings of play as a right and as occupation have thus been critiqued as based on research from mostly minority world contexts (Bazyk et al., 2003; Gerlach & Browne, 2021; Lester, 2020; Russell, 2021; Roopnarine et al., 2015; Woodyer et al., 2016) connecting with examinations of the dominance of minority world bias underpinning ideas in the new paradigm on childhood and in the drafting of the UNCRC (Quennerstedtal et al., 2018; Spyrou et al., 2019). While research on play as occupation and play as a right prioritise children's own constructions of play, there has then been limited attention to the children identified as of most concern in relation to play rights. Moreover, advocating for play as freely chosen and self-directed in schoolyards is identified as holding inherent contradictions with the core educational focus of schools (Lester, 2020; McKendrick, 2019; Russell, 2021). The next section will consider these tensions in relation to existing research on play in the unique context of the schoolyard.

Children's play during breaktimes in schoolyards.

Breaktimes are generally represented as regular scheduled times away from classroom learning that usually takes place outside in schoolyards (Baines & Blatchford, 2023; London, 2022; Mulryan-Kyne, 2014). While considered a less formal time where children can engage in unstructured play, physical activity, and social activities, breaktimes according to the limited research remain controlled and regulated by adults and bounded by spatial and temporal rules of the school (Baines & Blatchford, 2023; London, 2022; Thomson, 2005; Rönnlund, 2017; Larrson & Rönnlund, 2020). The Global Recess statement positions breaktimes as an ideal space and time within the school to provide for children's play rights (Ramstetter et al., 2021) aligning with GC 17 recommendations to provide scheduled times during the school day and safe spaces with appropriately trained staff that afford diverse equitable opportunities for play, inclusive of all children (UNCRC, 2013). There remains however limited research or data on how play rights are provided for during breaktimes in most countries (Baines et al., 2020; Clevenger et al., 2023; McNamara et al., 2017). Beresin's (2016) attempt to gather the available information affirmed the need for a global survey on breaktime play provision and drew attention to how existing informal data reflects the differing

ways that school routines are organised across countries- in a European context according to recent research school routines are influenced by both global trends and socio-historical and cultural traditions (Parente, 2020). Several U.S & U.K studies have identified a lack of policy, guidance, and training on the provision of play in schoolyards; poorly designed, under-resourced, inadequately supervised, crowded hard-surfaced schoolyard spaces; and increasing removals of breaktimes and restrictions on children's unstructured play (Baines & Blatchford, 2023; Beresin, 2016; London, 2022; Massey et al., 2020; Russell, 2021). A lack of agreement on the value and purpose of play in breaktimes within schools is identified as the most significant challenge to realising play rights (Baines et al., 2020; Clevenger, et al., 2023; Hyndman & Wyver, 2020) and as reflective of the different meanings, socially produced by adults and children (Russell, 2021).

Children and adults differing values on play in breaktimes on schoolyards.

Interdisciplinary studies have highlighted children's value on breaktimes mostly for the opportunity to play, have fun, choose what they want to do and most importantly to be with friends and familiar peers with studies reporting children's prioritisation of play with others over the own play preferences (Baines et al., 2020; Beresin, 2010; Clements & Harding, 2022., Hyndman & Wyver, 2020; Morgenthaler et al., 2023; Prompona et al., 2020; Russell, 2021). Children's play in schoolyards is further conceptualised as reflective of children's culture, framed as often largely invisible to adults and a resistive response to the structures of schools, where children engage in transgressive acts, challenge adult rules and appropriate spaces and objects to create play opportunities (Henze-Pederson, 2021; McKinty, 2016; Potter & Cowan, 2020; Rönnlund, 2015; Thomson, 2005). Alongside a reported dearth of research with older children and children with minoritized identities relative to ethnicity, race and (dis)ability on their play, breaktimes for older children according to the limited research are less associated with play and more with social interaction, exercise and as a rest from learning (Clevenger et al., 2023; London, 2022; Jarrett & Duckett-Hedgebeth, 2003). Studies have thus focused moreso on older children's physical activity and issues of antisocial behaviour, bullying and exclusion in breaktimes in schoolyards (Bergen & Fromberg, 2009; Clevenger et al., 2023; Finney & Atkinson, 2020; London, 2022; Howard et al., 2017; Massey et al., 2020; Russell, 2021). While play in breaktime is represented as contributing to children's social inclusion, recent research has highlighted the limited knowledge of social dimensions within play during breaktimes beyond the identification of social hierarchies and

exclusion within schoolyards (Clevenger, et al., 2023; London, 2022; Massey et al., 2020; McNamara, 2013; Hyndman & Wyver, 2020; Russell, 2021). Beresin's (2010) longitudinal analysis of play in urban American schools and Titman's (1994) multi component analysis of play in English and Welsh schoolyards highlighted how the poor design and provision of schoolyard spaces alongside restrictive rules created a schoolyard culture that children interpreted as a reflection of their own value which both authors proposed reinforced exclusion and conflict on schoolyards. Examinations of gender dynamics within older children's play have highlighted boys as typically involved in physical games with girls more likely to be socialising and within limited spaces how boys' engagement in ball games then reinforces gendered hierarchies (Jarrett & Duckett-Hedgebeth, 2003; Baines & Blatchford, 2023). As discussed, occupational therapy research has identified how adult and peer attitudes restrict play opportunities of children with disabilities (Fahy et al., 2020; Lynch et al., 2018; Sterman et al., 2019;2020). Interdisciplinary research also sheds light on children's constant negotiations of social relationships and positions within schoolyards, motivated by a desire for friendship, acceptance, popularity and as a protection from exclusion (Baines et al., 2020; Lodewyk, et al., 2020; Monnard, 2016; Ringrose & Renold, 2010; Rönnlund, 2017). Examinations of peer cultures within schoolyards emphasise how friendships exist in many forms as a mere co-presence to a deep engagement influencing children's sense of safety and belonging within schoolyards and while not the focus, these studies refer to play as an important method of making meaning within peer relationships (Alerby, 2019; Carter & Nutbrown, 2016; Corsaro, 2009; Harris, 2016). Overall, the assumption that play during breaktimes is inherently positive is problematized given the reported limited attention to how play in schoolyards interrelates with racialised, classed, and gendered exclusionary processes, issues of violence, and bullying on schoolyards (Lester, 2020; Massey et al., 2020; McNamara et al., 2017; Njelesani et al., 2022; Walker et al., 2022).

Anti-social behavior and expectations to ensure children's safety on schoolyards are however identified as teachers primary concern regarding breaktimes and as influencing an increasing interventionist stance to maintain control of what is perceived as a most challenging time and space within the school day (Baines et al., 2020; Jerebine et al., 2022; London, 2022; Putra et al., 2020; Russell, 2021). Data on supervision practices across countries is also limited (Beresin, 2016; McNamara, 2013). However, studies employing spatial and sociological theories have reported on how teachers' normative values intersect with judgements on children's play as "good, bad or risky" to regulate and restrict children's space,

time, and permission for play (Beresin, 2010; Chancellor & Hyndman, 2017; Ringrose & Renold, 2010; Thomson, 2005). Recently, Larrson & Rönnlund's (2020) comparison of French and Swedish adult supervision practices identified that despite differing influencing factors such as diverse pedagogies and insurance requirements maintaining control was the predominant agenda, differing only in the intensity to which it was applied.

Despite GC 17's identification of increasing educational and instrumental demands as a restriction on children's right to play (UNCRC, 2013), research also reports a shift towards considering breaktimes as an opportunity for promoting pro-social behaviours, physical activity, and learning (Baines & Blatchford, 2023; Chancellor & Hyndman, 2017; London, 2022; Putra et al., 2020; Russell, 2021). While this thesis is focused on children's play in breaktimes, it is worth noting the parallel interest in schools on how playful pedagogies best support learning variously termed as play for learning, play-based learning, playful learning, and playful integrated pedagogies (Parker et al., 2022; Walsh & Fallon, 2021). With a focus on learning outcomes, definitions of play for learning as meaningful, actively engaging, joyful and socially interactive within a spectrum of child-led and teacher-led activities holds many similarities with play rights practice scholarship (Zosh et al., 2017; Parker et al., 2022). However, this scholarship critiques the play/learning dichotomy as trivializing *"play as an activity for recess only"* (Parker et al., 2022 p.2). Schools' perspectives on breaktimes as marginal to educational outcomes according to recent research may then be a factor in the reported limited value on play during breaktimes (Clevenger et al., 2023; London, 2022; McKendrick, 2019). However, from a play rights perspective, the encroachment of play for learning into breaktimes reflects as Brown & Lynch (2022) suggest more play-based work occupations. The "adultification" of children's play (McKinnty, 2016) is emphasised as a significant barrier to authentic play restricting children's agency and development of their own culture in schoolyards (Ronnlund, 2015; Russell, 2021; Thomson, 2014). Play rights scholarship also argues that focusing on children's intrinsic value for play with minimum adult interference will best contribute to instrumental outcomes (Russell, 2021). Given the diverse tensions and challenges identified in providing for play during breaktimes, the next section considers the approaches recommended and outcomes of existing practices focused on creating conditions for play as a right in schoolyards, occupational therapy practices and issues specific to the Irish context.

Creating conditions for play as a right on schoolyards.

Reflecting GC 17 recommendations, the predominant focus of interdisciplinary research beyond advocating for schools to provide adequate breaktimes is to address the limited space, particularly green areas, lack of diverse play options and adult restrictive practices including school rules (Russell, 2021). There has been a notable increase in the development of schoolyard guidelines within play advocacy organisations while interdisciplinary research has provided recommendations on how to design play friendly schoolyards emphasising the importance of including children's perspectives (Almers et al., 2023; Burton et al., 2019; Pawlowski et al., 2019; Play Scotland, 2016; Play Wales, 2020). Research drawing on Gibson's affordance theory and loose parts theory has explored how in schools with diverse features and area types, more children engage in a wider variety of play (Aminpour et al., 2020; Bundy et al., 2017; Brussoni et al., 2017; Sando & Sandseter, 2020) and examined how risk reframing interventions can change adult protectionist tendencies and attitudes to play and risk (Bundy et al., 2017; Brussoni et al., 2017; Sando & Sandseter, 2020). There is also increasing attention to how "greening" nature-based approaches can create more play opportunities within schoolyards (Bikomeye et al., 2021; Raney et al., 2021). Studies on schoolyard interventions have however reported mostly on improved levels of physical activity (Andersen et al., 2015; Bikomeye et al., 2021; Bohnert, et al., 2022; Raney et al., 2021; van Dijk-Wesselius et al., 2018) and teacher's observations of less conflict and injury and improved enjoyment, longer engagement, and greater diversity of play by children (Bundy et al., 2017; Brussoni et al., 2017; Sterman et al., 2020).

Social attitudes and behaviours within schoolyards have been identified as a substantial barrier to play (Sterman et al., 2019; van Engelen et al., 2021; Wenger et al., 2021). However, recent research including systematic reviews of various schoolyard play interventions highlight a lack of evidence on the benefits of play to social inclusion emphasising the absence of children's subjective experiences (Clevenger, et al., 2023; Eichengreen et al., 2023; Gibson al., 2017; Russell, 2021; Massey et al., 2020; Hyndman & Wyver, 2020). School interventions to promote pro-social behaviours have according to recent studies not extended to consider how pro social attitudes interrelate with social practices such as play in schoolyards (Berggren et al., 2020; Putra et al., 2020). Furthermore, recent research suggests that the interrelationships between adults, children and play in schoolyards are more complex than existing binaried representations (Baines et al., 2020; Jerebine et al., 2022; McNamara et al., 2017).

Studies have highlighted children's equal concern regarding anti-social behaviours, fighting and bullying on schoolyards; how children seek out adults to mediate and prevent conflict within play; the need for supportive adult play partners, specifically for children experiencing challenges within schoolyards and children's enjoyment of adult presence in play (Massey et al., 2020; Mulryan-Kyne, 2014; O' Connor et al., 2021; Pursi & Lipponen., 2018; Thomson, 2005; Russell, 2021). However, as Woodgate et al.'s (2020) synthesis of studies on social inclusion highlighted, children with disabilities also associate support with dependency and stigmatization. Teachers' tendencies towards protectionism have also been examined as influenced by increasing professional accountability, limitations in space, staff ratios and equipment, and contradictory guidelines (Baines & Blatchford, 2023; Jerebine et al., 2022; McNamara, 2013; Spencer et al., 2016.; Van Rooijen & Newstead, 2017). In corresponding children's rights research, teachers' negotiations of individual and group interests particularly for children challenged by intersecting inequalities is increasingly acknowledged as requiring ongoing balancing of participation and protection rights (Gillett Swan & Lundy, 2022). McNamara et al. (2017) describe personal experiences of bullying within schoolyards as central to recommendations for greater consideration of recess as a social time and as relevant to wider societal wellbeing and cohesion. McNamara et al. (2017) identify the need for trained play coordinators to scaffold children's play and model empathy and compassion and shared financial and logistical responsibility with health services. Recent research has explored breaktime participation as a predictor of future physical activity enjoyment and social emotional wellbeing (Massey et al., 2021) and highlighted the cost of supervision on schoolyards as further reasons for schools to take more seriously how breaktimes can contribute to overall school outcomes (Baines & Blatchford, 2023; Russell, 2021). However, further research is needed to evaluate the outcomes of play promoting interventions in schoolyards particularly in relation to social inclusion intentions.

Occupational therapy in schools and play as occupation.

Given occupational therapists' understanding of play as a fundamental childhood occupation, textbooks, systematic reviews, and practice guidelines specific to children's play have been developed (Brown & Lynch, 2022; Cahill et al., 2020; Kuhaneck & Spitzer, 2023; RCOT, 2023; Schulze et al, 2016). In the context of schools, occupational therapy research has highlighted how occupational therapists can advocate for play in schoolyards at a policy level; use coaching, capacity

building and inclusive design approaches to support teachers with reframing attitudes to play and with providing accessible inclusive spaces that afford diverse play opportunities; use play-focused assessment tools to support schools with creating just right conditions for an individual child's play and use play and playful approaches to develop skills and support engagement in other school activities (Cahill & Bazyk, 2020; Fahy et al., 2020; Grady & Dominguez et al., 2021; Kuhaneck & Spitzer et al., 2023; Moore & Lynch, 2015; 2018; Moore et al., 2020; Prellwitz & Skar, 2016; RCOT, 2023; Schulze et al., 2016; Sterman et al., 2020; Wenger et al., 2021). However, promoting children's participation and addressing the barriers to children's play as occupation according to surveys in the U.S & Europe (including Ireland), remains obscured by a continued focus within occupational therapy on the more measurable therapeutic outcomes of skill development, mostly with children with disabilities (Lynch et al., 2017; Miller Kuhaneck et al., 2013; Moore & Lynch, 2018; Nordström et al., 2023). This reflects the limited adoption of participation focused school-based practices despite systematic reviews identifying a lack of evidence of the effectiveness of "bottom" up interventions (Novak & Honan, 2019) and the adoption of an occupational justice agenda in the WFOT (2016) position statement on school-based practice.

A knowledge translation roadmap was developed recently by Anaby et al. (2022) in an attempt to progress the implementation of research recommending a shift from individual deficit-focused interventions towards occupation-focused tiered approaches that focus on children's rights to participation and inclusion in natural contexts within schools (Cahill & Bazyk, 2020; Camden et.al., 2021; Corley et al., 2021; Hutton et al., 2016; Laverdure et al., 2019). Research on the implementation of school-based practice approaches has emerged primarily in U.S & Canadian contexts reporting improved collaborative working relationships with schools, greater access to occupational therapy for children and parent and teacher reported improved independence and enjoyment of school occupations (Bazyk et al., 2018; Bonnard et al., 2022; Camden et al., 2021; Kennedy et al., 2020; Lynch et al., 2023; Missiuna et al., 2015;2017). There has also been increasing attention to occupational therapy's potential role in relation to social, emotional, mental health and trauma informed school practices (Cahill et al., 2020; Fitzgerald & Mac Cobb, 2022; O'Donnell et al., 2023; Walsh-Garcia et al., 2023; Whiting, 2018). However, alongside challenges translating occupational justice ideals, studies report limited evidence of participation or inclusion as school-based practice outcomes even within research adopting tiered and occupation-focused approaches (Anaby et al., 2022; Cahill & Bazyk, 2020; Lynch et al., 2020; 2023;

Marczuk et al., 2014; de Oliveira Borba et al., 2020; Madieu et al., 2023; Njelesani et al., 2022; Parsonage-Harrison et al., 2023; Salazar Rivera et al., 2023). Reflecting play rights research, occupational therapy scholarship has also critiqued practices for neglecting social and structural barriers to participation (De Oliveira Borba et al, 2020; de Souza Batiste et al., 2021; Gerlach et al., 2018) alongside the added complication of a reported lack of shared understanding within occupational therapy on the concepts of participation and inclusion (da Silva & Oliver, 2021, Kaelin et al., 2021; Piškur et al., 2014). The diverse constraints to translating school based practice recommendations highlight the importance of context including a perceived lack of training; differing perspectives within schools' on the purpose of occupational therapy; occupational therapists uncertainty regarding their role in relation to social, emotional and mental health; adoption of practices based on research from other countries; insufficient space, time and differing systems and service expectations (Clough, 2019; Lynch et al., 2023; Meuser et al., 2023; O'Donoghue et al., 2021; O'Donnell et al., 2023; Salazar Rivera et al., 2023; Truong & Hodgetts, 2017). Overall diverse challenges exist in attempts to move towards justice focused praxis in school contexts, not least the limited engagement with occupational science research to inform occupation focused practices.

Breaktimes, play and occupational therapy in the Irish context.

Over half a million Irish children attend approximately 3300 primary schools from age 4-5 to complete 9 of the 12 minimum years required for education (Devine et al., 2020). About 20% of primary schools receive additional supports under the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) policy (Department of Education, DOE, 2017). Aimed at tackling educational disadvantage DEIS supports include lower teacher: pupil class ratios, access to additional literacy and numeracy resources, additional funding to support school academic and wellbeing initiatives and free school meals (Byrne & McCoy, 2017). While described as a latecomer to inclusive education (Shevlin & Banks, 2021) Irish schools have increasingly adopted rights-based inclusive education policies to ensure all children have the right to access and participate in education in mainstream primary schools. This rights based agenda is embedded in the recent School Inclusion Model which aims to provide supports based on the students educational support needs rather than diagnosis (National Council for Special Education, NCSE, 2011;2017).

Devine et al.'s (2020) recent survey suggests that Irish schools are complying with Irish primary school rules to provide 30 minutes daily (out of a total school day of

5 hours 40 minutes) of recreational breaktime with the option of two additional 5-minute breaks. Guidance to schools consists of a) a circular reminding principals of their duties to organise a supervision roster where all teachers must complete a minimum number of supervision hours on schoolyards. Special Needs Assistants can support supervision when a teacher is present and there are no specific guidelines on the required ratio of adults: children b) health, safety and welfare guidelines that refer to teachers' duties of care to vulnerable children, and the need to include schoolyards in safety statements and c) technical design guidelines (DOE, 1965; 2003; 2017). There is little research on schoolyard provision beyond Marron's (2008) description of schoolyards as mostly hard surfaced areas with little funding allocation or guidelines and Kilkelly et al's. (2016) review of three primary schools which highlighted how Irish schools vary widely with additional resources such as sensory gardens and playground equipment dependent on school fundraising. Technical design guidelines recommend schools adopt child-led, context based and universal design approaches to provide flexible, diverse outdoor spaces including for play (DOE, 2017). However, there is a lack of clarity regarding funding with the suggestion that schools apply for adhoc arts & sports grants, limited guidance beyond the design of hard surfaced areas and contrasting recommendations for staff to control access to spaces for children with special educational needs with tamper proof locks, unclimbable fences, and the removal of hi(ding)den areas. While bullying has been identified as interfering with children's rights, moreso in schoolyards, play and schoolyards are entirely absent from the new action plan on bullying (apart from notably a child's quotation) (DOE, 2022).

Play based learning is increasingly present within Irish primary school curricula beyond early years education (Walsh & Fallon, 2021). However, there is limited guidance on the provision of play during breaktimes outside of optional initiatives to promote physical activity and outdoor learning (Kilkelly et al., 2016). Kilkelly et al. (2016) also drew attention to restrictions on children's access to grassed areas and to research suggesting a cultural preference for being indoors. Despite Irelands development of a national play policy in 2004 (NCO, 2004), research has highlighted the limited implementation of recommendations and identified the need for a review of this now twenty-year-old policy (Janot & Rico, 2021; Lynch et al., 2018; Moore & Lynch, 2018). While limited, Irish based studies have reported on autistic children's and children attending disadvantaged schools value on play in schoolyards, for friendships and overall belonging within schools and restrictions to children's play participation, particularly disabled children (Blake et

al., 2018; Fahy et al., 2020; Fennell, 2021; Lattimer et al., 2023; O Rourke et al., 2017). Furthermore, educational studies consistently identify the schoolyard as the place where most bullying occurs in Irish schools and where children with disabilities and from minoritized ethnic and migrant communities experience racism, restricted physical activity opportunities, an absence of meaningful mixing and fewer friendships (Banks et al., 2018; Devine, 2009; D'Urso et al., 2021; Fennell, 2021; Kitching, 2020; McGillicuddy, & Machowska-Kosciak, 2021; Ní Dhuinn & Keane, 2021; Scholtz, & Gilligan, 2017). Of particular concern are Irish Traveller children who according to research experience the most substantial racist bullying on Irish schoolyards (Devine & McGillicuddy, 2019; F.R.A, 2020; McGinley & Keane, 2022; Mulryan-Kyne, 2014).

Irish Traveller children are identified in both play and inclusive education policies as at most risk in terms of the realization of their rights (DCEDIY, 2017, National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017–2021; NCO, 2004). Pavee Point (2024), an advocacy organisation describes Irish Travellers (who also use Pavee and Minceir to describe their identity and represent .7 percent of the Irish population) as "*being part of Irish society for centuries… with a long-shared history, language and culture..and nomadic tradition, that sets Travellers apart from the sedentary population*"(p.1). Despite the movement from discriminatory and assimilative government policies to rights-based policies, research and human rights reports document persistent systemic and societal discrimination, rights violations and racism towards Irish Travellers and a predominant dismissal of racism by the majority population (Community Foundation for Ireland, 2017; Joyce, 2015; National Action Plan Against Racism, 2023-2027, DCEDIY, 2023; F.R.A, 2020). Only 13% of Irish Traveller children complete secondary school while research has identified; the school as Irish Traveller children's first introduction to racism (Cavaliero, 2011); lower expectations in terms of Irish Traveller children's educational abilities and higher numbers accessing DEIS schools (McGinley & Keane, 2022; Watson et al., 2017; Fleming & Harford, 2021); teachers benign and complicit responses to racism (Devine et al., 2008) and parental experiences of discrimination when in contact with school authorities (F.R.A., 2020). The National play policy advocates for play to promote inclusion recognising social discrimination as a potential barrier to Irish Traveller children's play rights alongside an absence of play spaces (NCO, 2004). However, recommendations for local councils to lead on improving play spaces in Irish Traveller specific accommodation and access to community spaces are contrary to continued reports of council inaction in terms of providing for Irish Traveller rights (F.R.A, 2020).

77.5% of Irish Traveller parents confirmed a lack of safe community play areas as an issue of concern in the All-Ireland Traveller Health Study, Our Geels (2010), an important participatory research report while Joyce's (2015) research *with* Irish Traveller youth identified access to community spaces as restricted most significantly by racism. Reflecting the wider dearth of research with children with minoritized identities relative to ethnicity (Gerlach et al., 2014; Dender & Stagnitti, 2015; Russell, 2021) there is limited research with Irish Traveller children in relation to play and an absence of attention to Irish Traveller children within occupational therapy research.

Recent Irish government and policy reviews have emphasised the intersectional and layered nature of educational inequalities in Ireland due to class, poverty, disability, and ethnicity (Oireachtas Joint Committee Report, 2019; NCSE, 2024). Furthermore, Irish inclusive policies are critiqued for perpetuating social inequities and intergenerational advantages of dominant social groups, and legitimizing deficit focused practices (Byrne & McCoy, 2017; Fleming & Harford, 2021; Ní Dhuinn & Keane, 2021; Smyth et al., 2015). Reflecting international research on the dilemmas of inclusion within education systems (Ainscow, 2021; Nilhom, 2021) there is ongoing debate regarding the idea of inclusion in Ireland (Shevlin & Banks, 2021; Murphy et al., 2023). Studies on Irish inclusive educational provision have identified a conflation of inclusion with placement, access to supports as dependent on diagnosis (or on whole school socioeconomic data to access DEIS supports), continued segregation within special classes and limited funding and infrastructure (McGinley & Keane, 2022; Murphy et al., 2023; Rose, 2021). The need to move from ideologies of meritocracy to rights, improve interagency collaboration and develop approaches configured to the Irish context is advocated (Lynch, 2018; Shevlin & Banks, 2021).

Occupational therapists in Ireland are a registered health and social care profession primarily employed in health and disability services (CORU, 2019). Following a pilot initiative, an emerging school-based service, adopting WFOT (2016) guidelines and an occupational justice agenda is identified as having a significant contribution to make towards progressing the School Inclusion Model (Fitzgerald & Mac Cobb, 2022; Lynch et al., 2020; N.C.S.E, 2023). However despite research in an Irish context contributing to understandings of play as occupation and the potential role of occupational therapy in school-based practices (Fitzgerald & Mac Cobb, 2022; O'Donnell et al., 2023) reflecting international research, there has been limited adoption of school-based practice approaches or attention to play as

occupation in an Irish context (Lynch et al., 2017; Moore & Lynch, 2018; Nordström et al., 2023). Differing service expectations and a lack of coordination across health and education services is identified as a specific constraint on school-based practice approaches in an Irish context (Lynch et al., 2020; O' Donoghue et al., 2021). Aligning with Salazar Rivera et al.'s (2023) scoping review of school-based practices emphasising the contextualised nature of constraints and need for "*research that considers its reality*" (p.1), Fitzgerald & MacCobb (2022) propose a scholarship of practice approach in an Irish context.

Alternative ways of thinking about play

Critical perspectives at the margins of play rights and in occupational science scholarship emphasise the need to interrogate existing ideas and assumptions of play and generate more contextualised knowledges (Lester, 2020; Gerlach & Browne, 2021; Ramugondo, 2015). As Brackmaan et al. (2017) highlight while criticizing play for progress, research on play as occupation and as a right has been restricted "*by the equally individualistic lens of play for self*" (p. 28). Alternative constructions of play include play as an ethos, a spiralling process where feelings of curiosity, surprise, fun and success are central (Eberle, 2014), play as an elemental experience of optimism (Henricks, 2015) and reflecting increasing attention to the social nature of play, play as immanent and relational, a life affirming event and as a space for building community (Brackmaan et al., 2017; Kane, 2015; Lester, 2020; Russell et al., 2023). Critical scholarship advocates for research that considers the complex social processes that occur within play in the unique context of breaktimes in schoolyards and the experiences particularly of children with minoritised identities (Baines et al., 2020; Clevenger et al., 2023; Hyndman & Wyver, 2020; London, 2022; Massey et al., 2020; McNamara et al., 2027). As McKendrick (2019) asserts in his ongoing research into the play(fullness) of Scottish schoolgrounds, the more radical proposal in relation to play in schoolyards is to examine the ways in which children play together and how this relates to school and wider societal life. This resonates with critical educational scholarship's calls for better theories to support inclusive educational ideals that focus on how inclusion is understood and enacted in everyday social contexts (Byrne & McCoy, 2017; Nilholm, 2021; Qvortrup & Qvortrup, 2018).

Drawing on critical, social, and spatial theories, occupational science research has contributed to understandings of the contextualised and social nature of play drawing attention to the diverse factors that enable and restrict children's equitable

opportunities to play (Galvaan, 2015; Moore & Lynch, 2018; Prellwitz & Skar, 2016) and inequities and injustices that occur within play (Angell, 2014; Dender & Stagnitti, 2015; Galvaan, 2015; Ramugondo, 2012;2015; Wenger et al., 2021). Occupational science research has examined how play can act as a site of oppression (Angell, 2014; Gerlach & Brown, 2021), how internalised intergenerational oppressions constrain play choices (Galvaan, 2015; Ramugondo, 2015), how children's street play and family play decisions involve collective negotiation and meaning making (Brackmaan et al, 2017; Sterman et al., 2019) and how discriminatory attitudes as Wenger et al. (2021) articulate represent "invisible social barriers" within children's play. Occupational science research has also constructed understandings of inclusion as influenced by contextual conditions, personal experiences and participation in everyday life with others, recommending greater attention within practices to the multiple dimensions of visibility, consideration, access, rights, and resources (Bogeas et al., 2017; Fransen et al., 2015; Pollard et al., 2023; Pereira & Whiteford, 2021; Reinhold & Mondaca, 2023). Occupational perspectives thus recognise inclusion as more than an end outcome but rather as fluid negotiated social processes experienced in diverse ways to differing degrees within various relationships and contexts (Edwards et al., 2021; Kaelin et al., 2019; Morville & Jessen Winge, 2019; Kantartzis, 2019; Marczuk et al., 2014; Sterman et al., 2019). As highlighted in recent occupational therapy research, disrupting current school-based practice constraints will require examining existing ideas about inclusion and the overall project of education in schools (de Souza Batiste et al., 2021; Pan & Lopes, 2022). Aligning with critical perspectives on play, considering educational aims in relation to occupational justice alongside ideas of radical inclusion that focus on collective rather than individual outcomes is proposed (Lopes & De Oliveira Borba, 2022; Teachman, 2023).

This thesis adopts an understanding of play that is informed by critical play and occupational science scholarship and is open to the plurality of ways play may be experienced and valued in and of itself and for health, learning and relationships, particularly friendships. This thesis is informed by constructions of play as interrelated with diverse personal and contextual factors and critical perspectives on the need for greater examination of the social dimensions of play and to play as an issue of occupational justice. As highlighted critical occupational science perspectives may then offer a way to examine the equitable opportunities children have to play and how play relates to inclusion and exclusion in Irish schoolyards. This will be explored further in the theoretical perspectives section.

Theoretical Perspectives

Alongside the adoption of an occupational justice agenda in school-based practices (WFOT, 2016), research on play as occupation positions play as a right and as an issue of occupational justice (Moore & Lynch, 2018; Prellwitz & Skar, 2016; Gerlach & Browne, 2021). Examining the wider occupational science scholarship on occupational rights and occupational justice may therefore provide additional insights relevant to attempts to examine play in Irish schoolyards. The potential relevance of occupational science theorizing to this thesis is further supported by Morville et al.'s (2023) review of occupational science research in Europe highlighting the need for more critical research to address the situated nature of occupation particularly for "*children, indigenous peoples and vulnerable groups*" (p. 921) and examine concepts of occupational justice, occupational rights, and inclusion.

Occupational (in)justice, occupational rights, and capabilities

Theories of social justice while eschewing a single agreed upon definition, predominantly consider how resources, opportunities and privileges are distributed fairly within society and the procedures by which this is or should be organised (McArthur, 2023). While occupational science scholarship has considered justice in relation to human rights, participation and structural inequities and constructed differing perspectives on justice, a unifying dimension is the importance and benefits of focusing on "occupation" as a means of understanding the realities of justice in everyday life (Gupta, 2016; Hocking, 2017).

The concept of occupational justice introduced by Wilcock in 1998 has seen multiple reconstructions in continued theorizing, including on different forms of occupational injustice. The research on play as an issue of occupational justice reflects the recent definition focusing on having equitable opportunities and resources "*to do, be, belong and become what people have the potential to be and the absence of avoidable harm*" (Wilcock & Hocking, 2015, p.414). However, there have been various critiques of the concept of occupational justice that are relevant to this thesis in terms of how justice is understood including that the concept a) overlooks the role of individuals and communities in the justice of others and "others" those represented as subject to injustices b) relies on ideas of distributive justice while neglecting issues of power, oppression, racism and social inequities including within the systems in which occupational therapists practice and finally c) holds normative ideas on justice (Bailliard, 2016; Durocher et al., 2014; Emery-Whittington, 2021; Córdoba, 2020; Hammell & Iwama, 2012).

Hammell (2017) emphasises the challenges inherent in gaining consensus on what constitutes a "just" world. The proposal to focus more on human rights as the minimum requirement for the achievement of occupational justice appears consistent with play scholarship (Hocking et al., 2022). Examining Hammell's (2008) definition of occupational rights as the "*right of all people to engage in meaningful occupations*" aligns with understandings of children's right to play for the sake of play, however, also considers meaningful occupations as contributing "*positively to their own well-being <u>and</u> the well-being of their communities*" (p.62). The WFOT's (2019) position paper on human rights sees an attempt to cohere differing perspectives stating that "*occupational therapists are concerned with human rights in pursuing occupational justice for all*" (p.1). And furthermore, that Occupational rights are secured by "*identifying and addressing the capabilities, opportunities, and freedom of choice for individuals, communities and populations to participate in society*" (p.1). Occupational science scholarship has thus extended to advocate for the capabilities approach as a theoretical foundation for occupational justice (Hammell, 2017; Pereira & Whiteford, 2021).

Based on Amartya Sen's work on social justice, the capabilities approach shifts focus from distributive ideas and equal opportunities, to focus on an individuals' "real" opportunities to do and be what they most value for a flourishing life (Sen, 2009). The capabilities approach alignments with theorizing on meaningful occupations as influenced by diverse contextual factors, is evident in the focus on individuals' freedoms to choose and access opportunities that are enabled and constrained by factors (conversion factors) influencing the extent to which they can convert the resources available to them (Domínguez-Serrano et al., 2019). The approach has been widely applied in interdisciplinary scholarship and extended particularly by Nussbaum (2011). While relatively unexamined, play is identified as a central capability in Nussbaum's (2011) minimum list of ten capabilities which suggests that play might be considered a minimum threshold for occupational justice. Recent research has proposed a capabilities approach as a useful interdisciplinary construct to explore play and evaluate children's equitable play opportunities (Sterman et al., 2020; McKie & Campbell, 2019; Hart & Brando, 2017). However, while Hammell & Beagan (2016) critique the conflation of concepts of rights and justice, there is a need to also consider the different perspectives within the capabilities literature in terms of rights and capabilities (Hammell, 2017;2023; Pereira & Whiteford, 2021). Both Sen & Nussbaum, while recognising human rights, consider capabilities as a more useful construct, a "species of rights".

Sen's (2009) commitment to the centrality of individual freedoms contests the application of the capabilities approach beyond an evaluative framework. Contrasting with this Nussbaum (2011) argues that identifying a minimum set of capabilities for a just society is necessary, providing a partial theory of justice. Within occupational science, Bailliard's (2016) adoption of the capabilities approach aligns with Nussbaum in identifying the need to define a minimum threshold for occupational justice. Hammell's (2017) critique of occupational justice in terms of who gets to decide what is a "just" world seems however equally relevant to the identification of certain capabilities as a minimum threshold for justice. As Robeyns (2021) points out the centrality in the capabilities approach of the individual as a moral concern and value on individual reasoning is a normative claim which has been problematized as reflective of more universalist worldviews.

Recent capabilities scholars respond that the capabilities approach inherently recognises capabilities as situated and interdependent and focuses on creating conditions that support freedoms of *all* individuals to determine their flourishing life (McKie & Campbell, 2019; Robeyns, 2021). Contrasting with critiques of occupational justice, Sen (2009) rejects the idea that justice is a Western concept advocating for recognition of plural ways of doing and being in the world. The need to shift to recognizing plural understandings of occupational justice has also been identified in occupational science scholarship that adopts a decolonial lens to disrupt minority world perspectives of justice (Emery-Whittington, 2021; Guajardo Córdoba & Maltifano, 2023; de Brito et al., 2023). Given the dearth of knowledge on play as an issue of occupational justice in an Irish context, of relevance to this thesis are recommendations to construct contextualised understandings of occupational justice in a European context (Morville et al., 2023) and as deBrito et al. (2023) argue specifically in post-colonial countries such as Ireland. This requires according to occupational science scholarship making visible the mechanisms and consequences of (in)justices, inequitable concentrations of power and oppressions and individuals and communities' real freedoms to determine and achieve capabilities (Ahmed-Landeryou, 2023; Farias & Rudman, 2019; Galvaan & Van der Merwe, 2021; Guajardo et al., 2015; Hammell 2023; Ramugondo & Emery-Whittington, 2022). The next section moves to consider how occupational science scholarship proposes creating conditions for occupational justice, occupational rights and capabilities given the adoption of an occupational justice agenda within school-based occupational therapy.

Doing justice focused practices

The construction of multiple practice frameworks concerned with justice, rights, inclusion and social transformation reflects the differing perspectives and also the disciplines focus on how to "do" justice focused practices (e.g. Participatory Occupational Justice Framework, (Townsend & Whiteford, 2011); Occupational Justice Plus (Whiteford, 2023); Capabilities, Opportunities, Resources and Environments (Pereira & Whiteford, 2021; Social Occupational Therapy (Lopes & Maltifano, 2021); Occupation Based Community Development (Galvaan & Peters, 2017)). Despite the differences, a review of the frameworks and approaches identifies similar principles; 1)The importance of developing respectful collaborative relationships *with* particularly minoritized communities to examine everyday occupations in particular contexts 2) The need to identify collective strengths and resources and critically examine how everyday occupations intersect with injustices and inequities 3) To move beyond individualism to consider collective, societal and system level occupations and social as well as health issues 4) To co-construct transformative actions to address inequities and injustices and alternative ways of doing 5) To recognise that these processes are not linear but generative (Galvaan & Peters, 2017; Maltifano et al., 2021; Whiteford, 2023; Pereira & Whiteford, 2021; Pollard et al., 2023).

Occupational science scholarship also argues for greater attention to critical praxis whereby critical reflexivity particularly on taken for granted values, assumptions and practices is embedded within research/practice processes (Farias et al., 2019; Pooley & Beagan, 2021; Reid et al., 2024). Understanding theory/research/ practices as interrelated and as critical praxis provides an approach to examining play as an issue of occupational justice in Irish schoolyards. Occupational science theorising has also proposed that the concepts of occupational possibilities, collective occupations, and occupational consciousness can contribute to examining occupational justice and "doing" justice focused praxis.

Occupational Possibilities, Collective Occupations & Occupational Consciousness
Rudman (2010) used Foucault's ideas on power and governmentality to conceptualise occupational possibilities as a useful means of critically examining "*the ways and types of doing that come to be viewed as ideal and possible within a specific sociohistorical context*" (p.55). The concept considers the interplay between agency and diverse political, social, cultural, institutional, and spatial contextual features in negotiating occupations emphasising particularly the influence of assumptions and discourses (Rudman, 2010;2013).

Occupational possibilities may then provide a useful sensitizing concept to critically reflect on children's play and practices and if and how certain possibilities are differentially promoted and constrained within schoolyards.

Theorizing on collective occupations is relevant to recommendations for greater attention to the social nature of play as occupation. This concept was initially defined by Ramugondo & Kronenberg (2015) as *"occupations that are engaged in by individuals, groups, communities and/or societies in everyday contexts; these may reflect an intention towards social cohesion or dysfunction, and/or advancement of or aversion to a common good"* (p.8). This concept thus highlights the significance of understanding intentionality in relation to play and practices within schoolyards. Furthermore, as Kantartzis & Molineux's (2017) research emphasised it supports a shift in focus to how oppressive and positive relationships are maintained through "*the numerous people engaged*" (p.173) in collective social processes to produce, in terms of this thesis the social fabric of the schoolyard. Ongoing theorising on collective occupations has highlighted the utility of this concept in examining the consequences of collective occupations in terms of inclusion/exclusion, inequities, and the power to create more inclusive, healthier, cohesive communities and societies aligning with justice focused praxis (Guajardo et al., 2015; Núñez, et al., 2021; Parra Molina at al., 2020).

Ramugondo (2015) constructed the related concept of "occupational consciousness" as a critical praxis that provides a mechanism of examining how *"the things people do every day, individually and collectively, sustain systems and structures that support and promote certain occupations or certain ways of doing, to the exclusion of others"* (p.492). Ramugondo (2015) in considering Freire but also Biko, and Fanons theorising on consciousness moved to ideas of resistance, liberation, and emancipation where collectives begin to examine issues of oppression and racism and influence their own occupational narrative. Given the limited knowledges on the complexities of racism in everyday doing (Guarjardo et al., 2023; Lavalley & Johnson, 2020) and identification of racism as restricting Irish Traveller children's access to human rights in an Irish context, occupational consciousness may offer a mechanism to support a critical examination of racism and play. The need to further examine the potential connections between concepts of occupational justice and the above concepts has been identified (Maltifano et al, 2021; Ramugondo, 2015) and in doing so may provide alternative ways of thinking about what occupational (in)justice might mean in the context of play and practices in Irish schoolyards.

The theory of practice architecture

As this thesis progressed, what Kemmis calls his fully "*theorised account of praxis*" (Mahon et al., 2017, p.14) the theory of practice architectures was also used as a lens to support the research processes. First articulated by Kemmis (2019) with a focus on educational praxis, the theory has continued to evolve and be applied to diverse disciplines (Kemmis, 2019). Occupational therapy and play practice research have recently engaged with practice theories to examine professional practices, defined by Kemmis (2019) as socially and ethically informed practices in various professional fields and to move beyond categories of play to consider "playing" (Kane, 2015; Kaukko et al., 2022; Chester et al., 2019; Albuquerque, & Farias, 2022; Gappmayer, 2019). Kemmis (2019) conceptualises practices as particular ways of saying, doing, and relating within intersubjective physical, social, and semantic spaces enabled and constrained by diverse arrangements reflecting as Bukkhave & Creek (2021) highlight theorizing on occupations.

The theory of practice architectures understanding of theory/practice/research as interrelated (Kemmis, 2019) also coheres with the critical occupational science perspectives informing this thesis. Important alignments include: an explicit ethical, political, and moral agenda (occupational justice); a focus on "how" practices happen and co-exist in complex ecologies, what intentions, actions and anticipated outcomes make practices possible and hold them in place to constitute social life (occupational possibilities, collective occupations); the use of action research processes to raise consciousness on how existing practices are constitutive with diverse arrangements and to examine the consequences, particularly where power resides within relationships towards generating alternative ways of doing (occupational justice, occupational consciousness). The theory of practice architectures also offers a way of considering the social processes involved in praxis, which as Pentland et al. (2018) highlight have proved challenging. Finally, Kemmis's (2019) praxis embeds a dialogical component in the process of raising consciousness. While Freire's ideas of dialogue and critical consciousness are most referenced in occupational therapy research, Farias & Lopes (2022) identified the need for greater understandings of the principles adopted in critical praxis. The theory of practice architecture aligns with the focus on collective reflexivity and action of Rudman, Kantartzis & Ramugondo albeit drawing more on Marxian ideas. However, in also considering praxis from neoAristotelian and post Hegelian perspectives, the theory or practice architectures connects with recent occupational therapy and play practice scholarship on the importance of

intersubjective spaces and processes and the need to generate practice knowledges or wisdoms (phronesis) in tandem with theoretical and technical knowledges (Arntzen, 2018; Kronenberg et al., 2015; Russell, 2017). The theory of practice architectures conceptualization of practices thus offered a way to critically examine the occupations of both play and professional practices and provided a research resource to examine how theories interrelate with practice knowledges.

Thinking with decolonial and post humanist theories

Finally, ongoing exposure to critical scholarship and engagement in the inquiry process led to entanglements with decolonial and post-humanist scholarship. The lens of decolonial theory has been used within occupational science and play scholarship to examine the adoption of knowledges, values and power structures, based on only one world view and to advocate for the legitimizing of diverse ways of knowing and anti-racist praxis (Emery-Whittington & Te Maro, 2018; Magalhães et al., 2019; Ramirez et al., 2023; Simaan, 2020; Trammell, 2022). Denzin & Lincoln (2018) describe post humanist thinking as a loose array of theories that challenge the dominance of minority world views, adopt relational ontologies, and consider the materiality of the world as more than human. Transactional perspectives drawing on Dewey's theorizing on pragmatism have informed occupational science research contributing to understandings of individuals and environments as interdependent rather than separate constructs (Bunting, 2016; Dickie et al., 2006). Post humanist theorizing however deals not just with ways of knowing the world but ontological issues in terms of what constitutes the world. Interestingly, Dewey's writings refer to Bohr's view of humans as *within* the world. Recently, interdisciplinary research has employed post humanist theories in inquiries on play (Horton & Kraftl, 2018; Kane, 2015; Lester, 2020). As will be discussed in the methodological section, this thesis was reluctant to adopt a post- approach in the middle of the inquiry. However, decolonial and post humanist perspectives did provide an additional lens with which to consider both play and occupational therapy practices and are an important recommendation for future research. Adhering strictly to initial theoretical constructs may restrain the possibility to consider otherwise and the need for ongoing theorizing and examination of occupational science ideas and constructs is advocated (DeJong et al., 2022; Benjamin Thomas, 2018). The theoretical concepts and perspectives discussed influenced the adoption of a critical approach in this thesis and the lenses with which the data was approached and understood which is further examined in the methodology section.

Rationale

While the right to play in schoolyards is emphasised as mutually constitutive with inclusive education (UNCRC, 2013), the existing research highlights a lack of knowledges on how play in breaktimes interrelates with inclusion and moreover on how play can be leveraged to support inclusive schools (Baines et al., 2020; Clevenger, et.al., 2023; London, 2022; McNamara et al., 2017; Sterman et al., 2019). Furthermore, advocating for play as a right given the overall dearth of research on social processes including issues of exclusion, violence, and bullying within play in schoolyards as Russell (2017) argues risks promoting "*children's play as an unmitigated force for good*" (p.41). The research on inclusion in schools, play in schoolyards and occupational therapy practices concur on the need for more critical examinations of the social processes that occur within play and school practices and the diverse enablers and constraints on play opportunities within specific contexts (Shevlin & Banks, 2021; Russell, 2021; Lynch et al., 2020). In an Irish context, where occupational therapists are positioned as having a significant contribution to make to Irish inclusive educational agendas (Fitzgerald & McCobb, 2022), limited knowledges on play and how play is provided for in schoolyards, how play relates to issues of inclusion and exclusion on schoolyards, particularly for children with minoritised identities and challenges enacting school-based practice approaches constitute significant challenges in terms of realising commitments to contribute to equitable conditions of possibility for play in Irish schoolyards.

This thesis proposes that critical occupational perspectives offer alternative ways of exploring and understanding play and existing school practices within the unique context of the schoolyard. Critical occupational perspectives emphasise the importance of examining existing ways of doing to identify issues of occupational injustice and moreover what is then required and why in particular situations (Farias & Rudman, 2016; Ramugondo, 2015; Whiteford, 2023). Considering play as an issue of occupational justice forefronts the importance of constructing knowledges *with* children, teachers, and occupational therapists to generate understandings of the diverse personal and contextual factors that enable or constrain equitable play opportunities within Irish schoolyards. Given criticisms of the "stuckness" of occupational justice focused practices (Frank, 2022), critically examining how justice is understood in relation to play, school and occupational therapy practices in an Irish context may also contribute to the generation of knowledges on justice focused praxis.

Research aims.

Overall aim of the thesis

To explore children's play and existing practices in Irish schoolyards from a critical occupational perspective, to construct knowledges on practice possibilities concerned with children's equitable opportunities for play, as an issue of occupational justice.

The inquiry consists of four studies that correspond with the overall aim (Table 1 provides an overview). The first three studies aimed to generate knowledges on play and practices in the Irish schoolyard context, from multiple perspectives with a specific focus on children with minoritized identities. In an Irish context, the need to construct understandings of Irish Traveller children's play was identified as a specific aim in Study I. The fourth study aimed to draw on the contextualised knowledges generated, to explore with occupational therapists existing practices and practice possibilities.

Specific aims for each study

I. To identify and summarize the available research on representations of Irish Traveller children's everyday play and the factors influencing play opportunities.

II. To explore with teachers, play and practices in Irish schoolyards, and specifically play of children with minoritized identities.

III. To explore with children their experiences of play in Irish DEIS primary schoolyards.

IV. To explore with occupational therapists existing practices to raise consciousness and generate practices possibilities concerned with play in Irish schoolyards as an issue of occupational justice.

Methodology and Methods

Critical qualitative methodologies are a coherent or at least cohering choice for a thesis informed by critical theoretical perspectives however also position the inquiry in the ongoing discussions regarding what counts as "evidence" in relation to occupational science and occupational therapy (Farias & Rudman, 2016; Magalhães et al., 2019). Critical theoretical perspectives forefront methodologies of "critical praxis" disputing ideas of theory/research/practice divides and rejecting ideas of objectively finding generalisable truths (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Kratochwil, 2018; Mignola & Walsh, 2018; Thibeault, 2019). Ontological (what exists in the world(s)) and epistemological (how we can know the world) assumptions are then relevant in considering what critical qualitative methodologies propose as approaches to generating "knowledges". While inevitably overlapping somewhat with the discussions on critical theoretical perspectives, this section focuses on how critical qualitative methodologies informed the design of this inquiry.

Critical social research and critical methodologies appear interchangeably as the increasing use of "critical" within particularly social science research according to Denzin & Lincoln (2018) blurs demarcations of positivistic, interpretive, and critical. Critical methodologies hold plural perspectives on the dynamic or fixed nature of reality(ies) and diverse conceptualisations of knowledge(s) including realist, interpretive, social constructionist, feminist and increasingly post humanist, decolonial and indigenous (Denzin et al., 2017; Harvey, 2022; Nayar & Stanley, 2023). Drawing on the critical perspectives informing this thesis (Farias et al., 2019; Kemmis, 2019; Lester, 2020), the nature of reality in thus inquiry understands existence as neither one fixed reality (realist) nor entirely socially constructed (relativist) but as relational, situated, and dynamic. "Knowledges" are then also understood to be situated and interrelated in the dynamic production of world(s). This thesis is mindful of the need to respect the histories of critical theorizing in adopting critical methodologies and will return to these core principles. The entanglement with post qualitative theorizing (Jackson, & Mazzei, 2022; Lester, 2020) however requires consideration given the argument that in unsettling the boundaries of methodologies, post qualitative and critical theories are incommensurable (Denzin, et al., 2017; St. Pierre, 2020). These absolutisms seem incongruent with the shared intentions of both approaches to think and do differently. It is also notable to trace how "play" has been recruited by diverse theorists from Derrida to Deleuze (Henricks, 2015; Kane, 2015; Lester, 2020) to

articulate disruptive, indeterminant, transgressive and emancipatory ideas and practices. This thesis has thus negotiated (cautiously) the borderlands between theoretical coherence and what Smith (2019) calls 'methodological syncretism' remaining open to "playing" with ideas and the possibilities this might produce.

Critical qualitative methodologies do not offer prescribed research processes to explore children's play and practices in Irish schoolyards, but as most texts assert rather propose a way of approaching research, a way of thinking and doing research (Harvey, 2022; Denzin et al., 2017). The lack of specific rules however is tempered by some core principles and in reviewing how these have been applied in critical occupational science research (Farias et al., 2019; Farias & Rudman, 2016; Fransen et al., 2015; Galheigo, 2020; Galvaan & Peters, 2017; Gerlach et al., 2018; Morville et al., 2023; Ramugondo, 2015) the following are considered relevant to this inquiry.

a) To explore the situated nature of play and practices in Irish schoolyards
b) To critically examine dominant ideologies, relations of power and the complex conditions of possibility that shape (in)equitable opportunities within Irish schoolyards.
c) To forefront experiences of injustice and those excluded from research to date i.e; children and specifically Irish Traveller children in an Irish context.
d) To hold intentions to address the diverse factors that restrict equitable opportunities to play and co-construct justice focused practice possibilities.

Qualitative methods have been employed within critical social research and occupational science, to examine individuals' subjective experiences of everyday occupations in specific contexts, their perspectives on the meaning and purpose of these occupations in their lives and to critically interrogate how occupation interrelates with diverse contextual factors (Nayar & Stanley, 2023). Drawing on critical qualitative research this thesis uses various qualitative methods including scoping review methods in Study 1 to examine existing representations of Irish Traveller children's play and the factors influencing play; creative interview methods in Study II & III to explore with children and teachers their experiences of play and practices in Irish schoolyards and dialogical and mapping methods in Study IV to explore with occupational therapists their existing practices in relation to play in Irish schoolyards. These methods of constructing understandings of the

situated nature of play were enhanced by critical play scholars use of "exemplars" to examine play with(in) specific contexts (Lester, 2020; Russell et al., 2023).

In reviewing the critical research scholarship, certain tensions were identified that required consideration in relation to the methods used. Paradoxically, despite transformative intentions, concerns exist regarding the utility of critical research to advance practices beyond making visible injustices (Denzin et al., 2017). Within occupational science the task according to Venkatapuram (2023) is "*how are you going to bridge knowledge production with transforming this world*" (p.11). In 2015, an International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry critical research panel (Denzin et al., 2017) emphasised the need to use qualitative methodologies as a method of change that fosters as well as critiques, aligning with understandings of critical research methodological choices as ethical, moral, and political and as "*a necessary struggle for all and performed as an act of solidarity rather than empowerment*' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p.84). Axiological considerations are central in this renewed focus on critical research as involving both a) an empirically focused critical analysis of situations and b) a normative standpoint on the principals and values the research wishes to advance as praxis (Harvey, 2022; Nayar & Stanley, 2023). The limited consensus on normative concepts of justice inclusion, and participation within occupational science thus raised challenges.

In attempting to address these tensions, the inquiry connected with dialogue and with post qualitative ideas on "thinking with theory" to inform the research processes. Study II, III & IV while using various interview methods, was informed by a Freirian approach to dialogue as a "relation of empathy*"* (Freire, 2003) and with ideas of intersubjective praxis processes (Arntzen, 2018; Kemmis, 2019) to co-construct knowledges with children, teachers, and occupational therapists. The use of a "thinking with theory" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2022) approach coheres with ideas of theory as practice and intentions to co-construct knowledges. To support the generation of normative values in relation to practice possibilities, theory was "brought into the field" (St Pierre, 2020) and shared with teachers and occupational therapists in Study II & IV. The concepts of collective occupations and occupational justice were collectively examined in terms of what a just schoolyard might be, what "real" possibilities for healthy, meaningful, and equitable participation exist within the shared space of the schoolyard, why and for whom? The analytical choices continued to be informed by "thinking with theory" extending to include post humanist understandings of "*the micro politics of playing as a process*" of always becoming (Lester, 2020, p.39; Kaukko et al., 2022).

This process supported a noticing of differences and resonances within participants experiences and theories and also consideration of how theories existed in play and practices within schoolyards. Similarly, Kemmis's (2019) conceptualisations of practices provided a resource in Study III & IV to consider the tensions within critical social research on the need to move towards generating practice knowledges.

Researcher Positionality

The importance of positionality within critical research has shifted from sharing particulars on researcher identities to articulating how researcher subjectivities interrelate with research processes (Braun & Clarke, 2023; Smith, 2021). Given my identity as an occupational therapist, exploring occupational therapy practices in an Irish context made the research processes and outcomes of consequence to my professional relationships. If the inquiry's critical intentions were to hold any authenticity however, this was considered necessary. My identity as a researcher created potential imbalances in terms of perceptions of having more knowledge when attempting to co-construct knowledges and encourage collective "theorizing". Furthermore, as a researcher I was mindful of my perceived distance from the realities of practices. Sharing my work history and the resources from which my "knowledges" on the topic were informed helped to support reciprocal dialogue. The critical standpoints assumed in this inquiry often constrained the reciprocity of the inquiry process requiring a constant (re)turn to the data to discipline tendencies to privilege existing assumptions and ideas in research and scholarship. Examining the play of Irish Traveller children and with children in disadvantaged schools as a woman racialised as white and now middle class required constant reflexivity. However, I was increasingly aware of the limitations of reflexivity and sought out opportunities to dialogue within supervision, in critical research forums, with advocates and activists and to read critical scholarship beyond the boundaries of my discipline and context. The most difficult conversations I had were with the writings of indigenous, decolonial and feminist scholars effecting humility on my partial knowledges and complicit practices. However, this scholarship also inspired greater consideration of emotion and affect and a need for "slow" ethical practices that recognised knowledges as produced in relations. My experiences resonate with conceptualisations of researcher-as-becoming (Denzin et al., 2017; Smith, 2019) as I attempted to maintain a *"pragmatics of hope in an age of cynical reason"* (Kincheloe & McLaren, p.324*).*

Table 1. Overview of Studies I to IV

	Study I	Study II	Study III	Study IV
Aim	*To identify and summarize the available research on representations of Irish Traveller children's everyday play and the factors influencing play opportunities*	*To explore with teachers', play and practices in schoolyards, and specifically the play of children from minoritized communities.*	*To explore with children their experiences of play in Irish DEIS primary schoolyards*	*To explore with Occupational Therapists existing practices and generate practices possibilities concerned with play in Irish schoolyards as an issue of occupational justice.*
Design	Scoping Review Study	Qualitative Interview Study	Critical qualitative Interview Study	Critical Action Research Study
Study Context Inclusion Criteria	Review Protocol using PRISMA ScR framework. Peer reviewed English studies 1989-present. About or including Irish Traveller children. Any reference to play, sport, games, toys, leisure, recreation, physical activity, or social interaction *Exclusion*; Ambiguity re; participants identities. No primary data.	Irish primary school teachers with an interest in play and schoolyards and experience working with children from minoritized communities.	Children aged 9-12 years attending Irish primary schools identified as disadvantaged (DEIS) in one regional area.	Registered occupational therapists from diverse practice sites reflective of the Irish context with an interest in children's play and experience working in schoolyards.
Data Collection	Scoping Review using Joanna Briggs Institute Guidelines 9 databases: Scopus, Web of Science, PubMed, Cinahl, PsychInfo, Embase, Google Scholar, Soc Index, Cochrane Lib	Virtual and walking interviews.	Walking Interviews	Multistage 4 Dialogical Focus Groups using Video Conferencing, Individual Situational Mapping & Reflexivity
Participants	36 Peer Reviewed studies.	10 participants 9 women, 1 man. 7 Teachers >20 years' experience 1 Teacher >10 years' experience 2 Teachers > 7 years' experience All experience in DEIS schools.	23 participants 6 girls and 17 boys (aged 9- 12) from 2 Irish DEIS primary schools, a city and town school with 300 and 800 pupils respectively.	6 participants 5 women , 1 man 2 (private practice) 2 (disability services), 1 (school service), 1 (primary healthcare service) 5 participants with > 15 years' experience, 1 participant with 3 years' experience.
Data Analysis	Charting, Coding & Categorisation using J.B.I guidelines. and Finney & Atkinson's (2020) model	Reflexive Thematic Analysis	Reflexive Thematic Analysis	Informal and Formal Analysis using NVIVO to support coding.

Ethics as a point of departure

The following section aims to present an authentic account of the research choices made that extends beyond the refinements required for publication to include how reflexive insights, dialogue and diverse contextual factors interrelated with the research processes. Critical research emphasises ethical praxis requiring consideration of European, Swedish & Irish legislation and recognised research standards of integrity alongside the open science, data management and rights-led research agenda of the P4 Play project which this PhD is situated. The research plan identified and put in place strategies to address ethical issues anticipated, guided by the Rights Based Research Ethics and Participation Planning Framework (Mayne et al., 2018). Ethical approval for this study was granted by the Swedish Ethical Review Authority (Log number: 2021-0357) and the Social Research Ethics Committee, University College Cork (Log number: 2021-111). However, adherence to ethical guidelines as a rational exercise does not account fully for the need for ethical consciousness which required intentional, complex, and continuous ethical negotiations in relations (Mustajoki & Mustajoki, 2017). The following section thus embeds ethical decision making in the account of the recruitment, data gathering and data analysis processes for each of the four studies.

Study I

Study I used scoping review methods to identify and summarize the available research on representations of Irish Traveller children's everyday play and the factors influencing play opportunities. Despite the absence of "participants", this initial study required considerable ethical decision making that influenced the direction of future studies.

Preparing for the Scoping Review

The dearth of research on children's play in Irish schoolyards, of ethnic minoritized children's play and specifically Irish Traveller children's play underscored the legitimacy of the research aims for Study I. However, there was an equally significant need to be attentive to critiques of extractive research as perpetuating inequities by contributing to "othering" and presenting issues of injustice as intractable (Barlott et al., 2017; Denzin et al., 2017; Smith, 2021). The development of respectful relationships with Irish Travellers was necessary and this process required taking responsibility for sustaining communication due to staff changes within the non-governmental organisations.

Furthermore, frank feedback from Irish Traveller organisations on their prioritization of issues such as housing and health required making clear the expected research outcomes to avoid contributing to further mistrust of tokenistic collaborations (F.R.A, 2020) and acknowledging the personal benefits of the research in fulfilling PhD requirements. A proposal to scope out the breath of existing research on representations of Irish Traveller children's play and the factors' influencing play was made and approved by the three primary National Irish Traveller advocacy organisations. Further presentations and dialogue with Irish Traveller representatives working specifically on education rights contributed to the decision to a) gain feedback on the review prior to publication to respect Irish Travellers right to have a say in the claims made regarding their lives b) focus on peer reviewed literature to ensure the outcomes and dissemination would be most beneficial to current advocacy work. Finally, the research process involved seeking out opportunities for deeper learning through reading and participation in wider critical indigenous research spaces.

Data Gathering & Analysis

Scoping review methods were chosen to map the breadth of existing research on Irish Traveller children's play (Peters et al, 2020). Adopting systematic review methods risked positivist understandings of research that focus on systematic, objective, evidence. However, given the reported dearth of knowledge on Irish Traveller children's play, a scoping review method allowed for inclusion of any relevant findings across disciplines using varied methods supporting the critical intentions to generate understandings of how play was represented; the key concepts; the research contexts and approaches used to produce this knowledge and the factors identified as influencing Irish Traveller children's play (Gutierrez-Bucheli et al., 2022). The aim to explore representations of play was informed by the critical scholarship on the need to interrogate representations of play of indigenous children (Gerlach & Browne, 2021). The decision to use an existing conceptual framework to categorise factors provided a means of highlighting any differences identified against existing research on factors influencing children's play (Finney & Atkinson, 2020). The time taken to complete this review was increased by adopting the JBI 3 step design to support the critical intention to maximise the integrity of the research (Peters et al., 2020). Consultation with university librarians and completion of doctoral training on review methods supported the implementation process.

The scoping review protocol established (Peters et al., 2020) broad inclusion/exclusion criteria (Table 1). This involved an initial review of primary databases using the PICO tool to identify relevant indexed, general, and specific terms and synonyms and generate a concept analysis which was trialled to support the identification of search terms. Wide search terms using few limits were identified (Table 1) and required moving from assumed definitions of play to use words including games, leisure, physical activity, and the discriminatory term of Gypsy. The literature search of nine databases (Table 1) across two university systems was completed in April- June 2021 and re-run in August 2021. Mendeley Referencing Software was used to perform an initial screen to remove duplicates which proved useful in removing many irrelevant results identified on Google Scholar referring to different topics e.g. Tourism. The review used (rayyan.ai/) software which supported the management of the data, and the peer review process however did not align well with the Mendeley Referencing Software requiring a review of all references. A review of titles and abstracts was completed separately by the researcher and two supervisors. The ambiguity of titles and intent to scope out any references to play involved a full reading of most of the initial studies identified which informed subsequent collaborative discussions and adaptations to inclusion/exclusion criteria. This resulted in a decision to include studies that discussed social processes relating to play such as friendships. Confirmation from study authors was sought out and received regarding whether studies reporting on Gypsy/Traveller children referred to Irish Traveller children. The final stage involved separate peer review of the full texts.

The initial data extraction form developed and piloted to inform the protocol was refined collaboratively following the review stage (Peters et al., 2020). A Microsoft excel spreadsheet was created to extract and chart descriptive information about the studies (year, authors, titles, discipline, context), study participants and research aim. Finney & Atkinsons' (2020) model was used to develop a coding frame in a separate Microsoft word document to extract and chart all references (exact words and sentences) to play and play factors which were summarized and transferred to the excel chart. This required expanding on Finney & Atkinson's (2020) model to separate enabling and restricting factors. The data extracted from each study was included in the metadata to ensure complete transparency. As the summarizing of information and charting of factors involved a risk of moving to interpretation rather than description, ongoing collaborative review of the data extraction chart and included studies was completed.

The exclusion of a significant body of grey literature was identified as a limitation of this process. A subsequent grey literature review was completed using the same search terms and inclusion criteria and a framework analysis approach (Paez, 2017) for the purposes of a doctoral assignment prior to the publication of this scoping review. Sources of unpublished/grey literature included the initial scoping review results and a further search of EU & government websites, Traveller & Roma Rights organisations websites and thesis and conference repositories [OpenGrey, OpenDOAR, EBSCO Thesis Repository). This review did not differ from the peer reviewed literature however highlighted the a) recurring reference by Irish Traveller children and parents to a lack of space for play and racism experienced in community settings, b) the volume of unpublished thesis including interviews with Irish Travellers c) the relevance of play to housing evaluations in a U.K context and d) the lack of attention to play in overall recommendations. The critical understanding of knowledge as political was reaffirmed during the scoping review process and informed the decision to change focus from exploring Irish Traveller children's play in further studies, recognising the current Irish context where Irish Travellers access to justice requires gaining control over the shaping of their own occupational narratives.

Study II.

This qualitative interview study used virtual and walking interview methods to critically explore with 10 Irish primary school teachers, play and practices in Irish schoolyards, and specifically the play of children with minoritized identities.

Recruitment and Participants

The decision to purposively recruit teachers with an interest in play and inclusion, particularly for children with minoritised identities was underpinned by the critical aims to co-construct knowledges and critical perspectives on knowledges as relational (Denzin et al., 2017; Harvey, 2022). The information provided to potential participants clearly outlined in a summary the overall research intentions and value on teachers' experiences and perspectives supporting the balancing of power differentials. Practically, recruitment required harnessing existing contacts and social media to share the study call and the MS form inviting expressions of interest. While there is no agreed upon number of participants for qualitative studies (Levitt et al., 2021), six- eight participants were anticipated.

Overall, ten primary school teachers consented to participate which was supported by the simultaneous completion of Study III expanding the opportunities to communicate this study. Minimal participant information was gathered as the research was interested in a critical analysis of the situation from the perspective of teachers while balancing the potential risk of generalist representations. In raising play as an issue of justice on schoolyards, the potential for participants to raise upsetting experiences was identified as an ethical consideration. While difficult experiences were shared, participants discussed the management of these challenges as part of their everyday practices.

Data Gathering

Interview methods were chosen as appropriate to support teachers with sharing their experiences and perspectives of play and practices in Irish schoolyards (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). In considering interview methods, the work of occupational scientists who have employed narrative interview approaches to understand how narrative, meaning and action interrelate and are negotiated and constructed in everyday situations was relevant (Alsaker & Josephsson, 2013). As Denzin & Lincoln (2018) assert the boundaries of what can be defined as narrative and dichotomies between structured and unstructured interviews are currently being stretched within qualitative research and there is also a need to avoid narrative essentialism. Given the critical occupational perspectives of the overall inquiry a critical qualitative approach to interviewing was adopted in thus study. This approach understood participants responses as dynamic social and situated constructions intersecting with multiple factors including the participants emotions, values, memories, and context of the interview (Kvale & Brinkmaan, 2009; Nayar & Stanley, 2023; Smith, 2021). Furthermore, the proposed interview questions were shared in advance (Table 2) alongside clear expectations of the study's focus on critically interrogating practice experiences and the issue of exclusion/inclusion within play in schoolyards underscored by critical play scholarship and occupational science theorizing. The importance of context informed the decision to use virtual and walking interview methods within schools. 8 teachers choose to complete virtual interviews and 2 teachers completed walking interviews. The use of Microsoft Teams online platform allowed participants to take part from various geographical locations and provided a cost effective and confidential way of recording, saving, and creating an initial transcript of the interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Table 2: Summary of questions shared in advance with teachers.

Can you tell me about your experiences (specific examples) as a schoolteacher of children's play in breaktimes in Irish schoolyards? This research is particularly interested in the play of children with minoritized identities.

- Can you describe your understanding of the purpose of play in schoolyards, and how you think it is understood by schools, your colleagues, parents, and children ?
- Tell me about the role of teachers and your experiences of teachers practices on schoolyards? What supports or constrains teachers practices on schoolyards?
- What in your experience do children want to do and choose to do in schoolyard play?
- What factors do you think influence play opportunities for children on schoolyards? Are any factors relevant to only certain children and why? What do you think influences inclusion/exclusion in play?
- What resources and supports enable or restrict children's play in schoolyards?
- What do you think might be helpful to create play opportunities on schoolyards?
- What do teachers want/need in relation to breaktimes and play in schoolyards?

Further to COVID 19, teachers expressed limited availability to take time to participate in research however also held improved competencies and confidence with using online platforms. In contrast to the reported potential unfriendliness of this method (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018), the interviews were experienced as comfortable and open where teachers had control over organising the time of the interview in a familiar space. Furthermore, the completion of interviews in the school context, prompted teachers with recounting specific experiences and factors most obviously in walking interviews. The interviews took place between February and May 2022 and the interviews ranged from 50 -100 minutes.

A dialogic approach was adopted akin to Freire's (2003) reflexive respectful conversation rather than Bakhtin's work (Farias et al., 2019; Nayar & Stanley, 2023). The iterative nature of the interviews was responsive and as the interviews progressed, issues raised informed the direction of the discussion. Detailed listening and re-reading of transcripts between interviews was completed to reflect on the questions posed and how the researchers values, assumptions and potential expectations were presented. However, building on the knowledges generated in Study I, this reflexive process also highlighted the need to embed prompts to discuss discrimination, and racism which teachers were not tending to discuss.

Data Analysis

Reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) offered an analytical approach that while pluralistic demands clarity regarding the underpinning theoretical assumptions (Braun et al., 2022; Braun & Clarke, 2023). Furthermore, RTA recognises the inherent subjectivity of analysis that "*exists at the intersection of the researcher, the dataset, and the various contexts of interpretation*" (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p.1). This analysis method provided clear guidance and in developing competencies as a critical researcher the process benefitted greatly from the multiple publications, webinars and resources (https://www.thematicanalysis.net/doing-reflexive-ta/) supporting this approach.

The six stages were followed using MS word to generate transcriptions, code each interview separately and move to analyse codes collectively as one data set towards generating themes with a shared central concept. The process was recursive and reflexive however and involved moving back and forth between stages to compare data, codes, and themes in attempting to construct a meaning-based interpretation about what the data might mean rather than a descriptive summary. Analysis using RTA as Braun & Clarke (2023) remind required then considerable work to avoid returning to positivist ideas of pre-existing "truths" that emerge, are found or reveal themselves through a process of extraction. Most challenging was choosing text exemplars that supported the authenticity of interpretations while also focusing on critical interpretations of patterns of meaning across the interviews relevant to play, practices and occupational justice (Braun et al., 2022). The recommendation to focus on the construction of a central concept supported the reflexive process as did creating a handwritten visual diagram of the initial themes with codes. The collective reflection with supervisors in the fifth stage involving a return to the interview transcripts was helpful in identifying and dialoguing on dimensions of the interviews that had been more or less forefronted in the themes and how this cohered with the critical research aims. In keeping with the understanding that the themes constructed were those of the researcher, ideas of member checking were not used, however participants reflections and further thoughts on the themes proposed were invited (Levitt et al., 2021). Four teachers responded with few further reflections on the themes beyond the importance of greater attention to play in schools however they also shared their increased commitment to the need for greater attention to play in schoolyards, follow up actions within their schools and a wish to be involved in future initiatives.

Study III

This critical qualitative study used walking interview methods to explore with 23 children their experiences of play in Irish DEIS primary schoolyards.

The Ethical Research Involving Children (ERIC) framework provided additional guidance for this study aligning with accepted ethical principles of respect, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice (Graham et al., 2013). These principles alone may not ensure an approach to research as Lundy (2019) articulates where "*vulnerability should not eclipse agency'* (p.596) and in understanding the indivisibility of children's rights set out in the UNCRC articles, ongoing reflexivity on how to balance protection and participation rights of children was required.

Recruitment, Participants, and Context

As the research aimed to gather data in a school context, both schools and parents acted as gatekeepers which provided additional protection however also risked reducing children's access to the research given reported adult perspectives of children's reduced competencies (Graham et al., 2013; Lundy, 2019). In understanding children's lives as situated the enabling influence of adults in children's lives, within families, communities and schools was also considered. The decision to recruit from DEIS schools with reported greater numbers of children experiencing educational disadvantage while attempting to avoid essentialist categories was supported by not gathering child characteristics respecting that all children have plural identities and unique, diverse, and personal perspectives. This also reduced the potentially unfair burden on children to represent their community voice. Of note all children with migrant and ethnic minoritized identities shared this information as relevant to the discussion with the researcher.

A purposive approach to recruitment of children from DEIS schools involved developing a clear information sheet that would address any ethical and practical concerns and promote school interest in the research. The forwarding of written information by e-mail was supplemented with a phone call to the 51 identified DEIS schools in one region. Most of these calls (43) resulted in conversations with administrators or assistant teachers rather than school principals with no subsequent contact. The three schools that consented to participate involved discussions with principals. The transfer of a school principal in the following weeks however resulted in two schools participating- one city based and one in a larger town, both co-educational catholic schools.

However, the town school had separate boys' classes due to an ongoing process towards co-education which resulted in only boys participating from this school. Negotiating access to children required further discussions regarding the classes best suited to participate, practical availability of children due to additional school activities in the Spring/Summer term, school break times, alongside the researcher's availability across the two school sites. The decision to recruit children aged 9-12 was motivated by the dearth of research with this age group and their increased experience of the social dynamics of play in schoolyards. The decision regarding potential numbers of children was also considered with class numbers estimating 22-24 in both schools. The city school choose to recruit across two different classes, a younger and older group and the town school recruited from one class. Furthermore, this stage involved negotiating a clear plan outlining potential risks and ways of addressing these risks. A significant ethical consideration at this stage was managing potential disclosures of exclusion or discrimination on schoolyards and the researcher affirmed up-to-date knowledge of children's safety guidelines and completion of relevant safety measures (e.g. Children's first training, Police Clearance Certificate) and negotiated a clear process for managing unforeseen incidents (e.g. how to access first aid and whose responsibility first aid would be, how would disclosures or researcher concerns be reported and how to access support for children.

The second stage of recruitment involved developing a second information sheet (outlining research aims, the proposed methods, the possible benefits and risks, information on the researcher, how the data would be collected and stored including anonymisation of the data, the participants right to withdraw from the study within an estimated time frame) for parents and children which accounted for diverse language and literacy levels and used child friendly methods. An initial proposal to provide in-school parent information sessions was deemed unfeasible and replaced with in class presentations to teachers and students. This may have reduced the number of consent forms completed by children who reported willingness to participate however had forgotten to remind parents of the consent form. Class teachers provided an additional prompt to parents using the school messaging system. An offer to complete an interview was provided to children who expressed a wish to participate without consent forms with an understanding that the information could not be used for the research (3 children from the town school completed this).

Reflecting the study values that respects the rights of children to express their views and provide an audience that listens and responds to these views (Lundy, 2019), children were informed of the option to provide additional feedback regarding potential changes to their own schoolyard which principals reported wanting to include in school plans. Reaffirmation of the research expectations and that interviews would not be shared with teachers was required given research on the risks children perceive to relationships further to highlighting exclusion (F.R.A, 2020). During the research process, children reconfirmed confidentiality particularly when discussing teacher practices. Reports of exclusion focused on prior experiences and other children's experiences with no incidents requiring follow up. However, feedback to schools included the need for greater attention to exclusion within schoolyards.

23 children, 6 girls and 17 boys (aged 9-12) consented to participate and follow up information sessions were completed in both schools during scheduled school visits to familiarise the researcher with the context and children. The researcher's availability during school breaks also supported children with asking the researcher further questions informally (Spyrou et al., 2019). Interviews were scheduled to meet with the researcher outside classrooms providing children with an additional opportunity to choose to withdraw participation recognizing that informed consent is a process (Graham et al., 2013; Mayne et al., 2019).

Data Gathering & Analysis

Drawing on experiences of the benefits of walking interviews in Study II and children's research recommendations (Camponova et al., 2023; Devine & McGillicuddy, 2019), walking interviews were chosen to explore with children their play in the context of their schoolyards. Drawing from ethnographic research and Kusenbachs (2003) go along interviews, walking interview methods are advocated as an effective and creative means of exploring experiences of everyday life specifically in familiar spaces (Barlett et al., 2023; Springgay & Truman, 2019). Completing walking interviews during breaktimes where teachers could monitor from inside the school responded to recommendations to use informal familiar spaces that are private yet safe, flexible, and responsive to children's needs to support their participation in research (Lundy, 2019: Potter & Cowan, 2020). The benefits of this method over traditional interview or observation methods as a strengths-based approach was evident in how children took the lead in directing the walk around their schoolyard (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Kusenbach, 2003).

While responding to guiding questions on the sayings, doings and relatings of their play experiences informed by the theory of practice architectures, the spatial cues of the schoolyard prompted both the researcher and children, reflecting the benefits of walking interviews in generating contextualised knowledges (Barlett et al., 2023; Devine & McGillicuddy, 2019; Springgay & Truman, 2019). Children's relaxed engagement included re-enacting play memories during the interview, particularly during group interviews aligning with research reporting walking interviews as useful in leveraging embodied experiences (Springgay & Truman, 2019).

Table 3. Walking Interview prompt questions

- Show me/tell me what you do on the schoolyard?
- Show me where you play/don't play/where you like to play most/least and why?
- Why do children play in schoolyards? Do children do/want to do other things?
- What objects do you (peers) use/would you like to use in the schoolyard?
- Who do you play with and why in the schoolyard? What are other children doing?
- What choices do you have to do things on the schoolyard?
- How do you feel when you play on the schoolyard?
- What helps you/stops you from playing on the schoolyard?
- What are teachers doing in the schoolyard?
- Do you play different things/in different ways outside school?
- Is there anything that you must do/not do in the schoolyard? Are there any rules?
- Tell me about your experiences of children being included or left out in schoolyard?
- Would you change anything about the schoolyard? Why? What would you change?

To remain focused on the topic, children were offered the choice to take photographs of their favourite or important play spaces. The ability to identify schoolyards from photographs informed the decision not to use photographic data given the potential sensitivity of issues discussed. While not used for analysis purposes, taking photographs supported particularly less talkative children with sharing their experiences and during group interviews provided a useful refocusing technique. An outdoor microphone supported clear recording which was beneficial given the weather in an Irish context. Children's request to complete walking interviews with peers shaped the change in data gathering to include group interviews and reflected their enjoyment and confidence in participating. Ethical responsiveness supported the decision to allow children to self-aggregate into peer groups for the second interview (Horgan et al., 2022).

Unexpectedly the group interviews included increased sharing of experiences of the social dynamics of play including exclusionary processes on the schoolyard. As this was the second interview, this may also have been due to children's increased familiarity with the researcher and topic. Given the sensitivity of data, recordings were uploaded to a secure server prior to leaving the school and the 23 individual interviews averaging 20 minutes and 5 group interviews averaging 60 minutes were subsequently transcribed and anonymised. A decision to postpone analysis of children's interviews which took place simultaneously with teachers' interviews was taken. However, this required on returning to the data a refamiliarization process and the time lapse may have added to the challenge of deciphering different children speaking in group interviews. Furthermore, the volume of data which was managed using MS word highlighted the potential benefits of qualitative data management software programmes which informed Study IV.

A Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) was used also for this study, a decision informed by the aims and theoretical underpinning alongside the researchers experiences of the benefits of the method from Study II. The decision to analyse the data in two stages supported the aims to construct knowledges with children on their experiences of play practices and enabling and constraining practice arrangements. The lens of the theory of practice architectures was more explicitly drawn on in the analysis of the entire data set further to an initial inductive coding of interviews separately. The collective analysis at stage five was again useful and involved discussions on the descriptive and interpretive dimensions of the initial coding and how this informed further analysis and the generation of themes. A challenge in this study was being mindful of how important dimensions identified did not require a certain frequency in the data (Braun et al., 2022).

Study IV

This critical action research study drew on knowledges generated in the previous studies to co-construct knowledges with 6 occupational therapists on their existing practices, and practice possibilities, concerned with play in Irish schoolyards as an issue of occupational justice.

Recruitment, participants, and context

As in Study II, purposive recruitment focused on occupational therapists with an interest in play, practices, and occupational justice.

As an occupational therapist, negotiating insider/outsider researcher and practitioner identities required being particularly clear about the critical intentions of the research aims and sharing insights generated to date with participants. National networks and researcher contacts were harnessed to share the research information and invitation widely and an MS form was again used to invite expressions of interest. The inclusion criteria required a group that reflected the diversity of practice sites and fortunately given the small number of expressions of interest, the number of participants sought, and the inclusion criterion were both met (Nayar & Stanley, 2023).

Data Gathering

The choice of methods for this critical action research process was informed by Kemmis's work which recommends critically exploring the local situation and identifying transformative possibilities using the lens of the theory of practice architecture (Kemmis et al., 2014; Kemmis, 2019). Kemmis's identification of two phases of critical action research was crucial given initial concerns regarding the time required to adequately complete a "transformative" change process (Willis & Edwards, 2014). This first stage aligned also with critical qualitative and occupational science scholarship on the benefits of dialogical focus groups to extend beyond individual reflexivity and collectively interrogate theoretical concepts in relation to situated practice experiences (Albuquerque & Farias, 2022; Denzin et al., 2017; Farias et al., 2019).

Given participants geographical spread and reported challenging work demands, the ten-week action research process was agreed with participants with focus groups scheduled online using MS Teams. A final choice was to include the process-oriented method of mapping to reinforce the occupational perspective of the study. Within both critical occupational science and play research, mapping has been used in various ways (Huot et al., 2020; Madsen et al., 2020; Russell, 2017). Common to all is the benefit of mapping to create awareness of how occupation in this instance play happens as situated within contexts, drawing attention to the particulars of the situation, existing ways of doing and possibilities to do otherwise. Reflecting participants reports of limited practice experiences within schoolyards, accessing opportunities to complete the mapping task proved problematic. However, the process of creating a visual map was to inform shared dialogue (Lester, 2020; Russell, 2017). Participants who completed mapping thus shared knowledges of their experiences of the process.

This supported the generation of shared interpretations in relation to play and existing and possible practices. To support participants with sharing individual reflexive processes between focus groups, the researcher shared e-mail and phone contact details. Participants used this to discuss practical questions on accessing resource information, scheduling sessions, completing the mapping task alongside sharing reflections on the benefits of the focus group in highlighting the importance of play to their practice and sharing ideas of ways to extend the practice possibilities generated e.g. harness contacts to raise consciousness on schoolyard play.

Table 4. Summary of initial focus group guidance.

Focus Group Sessions
Research has demonstrated the benefits of collaborative reflexive dialogue to examine existing practices, ideas and assumptions, understand the local situation, and co-construct possibilities for transformative practices. Dialogue can be understood as a process of developing shared meanings and as a change process for the group. To guide our dialogue, we can consider.

- Experiences of play and children's occupations in schoolyards in the Irish context? Purpose/Provision/Enablers/Constraints.
- Experiences of school practices/occupational therapy practices in relation to breaktimes/play in an Irish context?
- If all children (children with minoritized identities) have equal opportunities to play on schoolyards? How does play transact with inclusion and exclusion processes?
- How do/can occupational therapists consider play in practices?
- How do we understand play on schoolyards as an issue of occupational justice? Is this a relevant/useful concept for practice?
- How do/ could occupational therapist create conditions for occupational justice on schoolyards? Why, for whom, where, when, and how?
- What are the enablers and constraints to occupational justice focused praxis?
- What is required to enact practice possibilities?

Mapping
Mapping is both a research and practice tool to examine occupations in specific contexts. Shared meaning making can occur through dialoguing together on the process.

- This task involves creating a visual map of play within a schoolyard during breaktime to support our thinking. The idea is to focus on *how* play is happening and not *why*. The map is not supposed to be a perfect representation but rather what you have noticed- See examples of how mapping has been used.
- When creating the map, it will be useful to think about inclusion and exclusion processes and the different contextual influences on play.
- We will reflect together on the mapping process, and you can share the map or talk about it. We will consider possibilities - what if something was changed ?

Data Analysis

Informal analysis was embedded in the process. Participants were encouraged to engage in individual reflexivity on transcriptions shared between focus groups (which included the researchers' initial written reflections on references to play, practices, (in)justice, contextual factors, and any surprising/alternative ideas) and collective dialogue individual reflexive processes was included at the start of each focus group (Albuquerque & Farias, 2022; Kemmis et al., 2014). The informal analysis thus iteratively informed the subsequent dialogue. A formal structured analysis was completed on all four focus group transcripts using NVIVO software to support inductive coding of focus group data. The initial codes were then further analysed alongside the informal analysis using the lens of the theory of practice architectures (Kemmis, 2019). An MS word document was created with codes from the informal and formal analysis written into tables alongside the supporting text to support development of shared patterns of meaning focused on practices, practice arrangements and play as an issue of occupational justice. The analysis again was clear in the subjectivity of researcher interpretations however the embedding of informal analysis recognised also the collaborative intersubjective processes of constructing meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2023). A final opportunity to reflect on the analysis to offer additional insights and generate further data was provided to participants who primarily affirmed play as a practice concern and provided examples of their continuing commitment to embedding play as an issue of occupational justice within their own practices.

Dissemination

The publication and dissemination of the research also required balancing ethical considerations including differing legislative requirements across Sweden & Ireland (The Swedish Public Access to Information and Secrecy Act (SFS 2009:400) requires that all data is stored within university repositories with privacy agreements which differs to Irish procedures which deletes data after a set time, in line with the Data Protection Act, 2018), with the P4Play's project commitment to Open Science and requirements to disseminate in academic spaces.

Given the Irish context and aims to explore issues of (in)justice, informed consent included several commitments; that transcripts would not be shared in open access journal repositories given the risk to privacy; data would be treated confidentially, anonymised after the data collection for analysis and care would be taken not to include any identifiers in publication.

However, the commitment to protecting the privacy of participants was balanced with responsibilities to disseminate co-constructed knowledges as a dimension of rights focused research (Mayne et al., 2018). A critical perspective also understands knowledge as an expression of power (Denzin et al., 2017) and reflecting on the ways in which evidence may be used was an important consideration particularly in Study I. The sharing of all data and metadata for use in future work and consultation with Irish Traveller organisations regarding publications responded to EU basic principles of research with Roma & Traveller communities (F.R.A, 2020). The writing up of publications was mindful of scholarship on how ethical value is dependent on how interpretations are represented and therefore focused on how insights might be relevant to transforming practices (Itchuaqiyaq et al.,2020; Smith, 2021). In Study II & IV, publications made clear that these studies had focused on generating knowledges with practitioners interested in play rights. Open access publications cohered with values to ensure wider community access to knowledges produced and to influence policy and practice. This was important in the decision to submit the scoping review to an international journal focused on the topic of play rather than a journal related to indigenous communities. However, dissemination also required consideration of how accessible this form of writing is (Mustajoki & Mustajoki, 2017). This prompted the development of alternative methods including video summaries and harnessing of media to communicate important dimensions of the research. Furthermore, conference submissions included seeking opportunities to workshop and creatively dialogue with wider networks on topics particularly the potential within post humanist and decolonial theories and post qualitative methodologies to explore practices. Decisions regarding publication and dissemination were jointly agreed with supervisors, considering project requirements, university funding agreements and the potential audiences.

Results

Cohering with the theoretical underpinnings and methodologies of the inquiry, this section uses the term analysis rather than findings or results. All four studies contributed to the overall aim of this inquiry to generate knowledges on the existing situation and practice possibilities concerned with children's play in Irish schoolyards, as an issue of occupational justice, with a specific focus on children with minoritized identities.

Study I identified the dearth of existing research on Irish Traveller children's play. While 35 studies met the scoping review inclusion criteria, only three studies focused on play specifically, with nine studies reporting on two datasets and almost half (17 studies) completed in the U.K context. However, the identified studies reporting on predominantly qualitative research (34 studies) with children (21 studies) and adults (14 studies) provided knowledges on children's diverse constructions of play, representations of Irish Traveller children's play and the factors influencing play. The analysis highlighted the significant influence of racism on Irish Traveller children's play particularly in school and community contexts supporting further exploration of play as an issue of occupational justice. The reflexive thematic analysis of interview data with children and teachers in Study II & Study III generated themes focused on play in the unique context of the Irish schoolyard. Informed by theorising on collective occupations, occupational justice and the theory of practice architectures, the themes constructed understandings of play and teachers practices as situated and relational and play as an issue of occupational justice. Study IV moved to analyse occupational therapists' construction of knowledges on existing practices and practice possibilities and shed light also on the critical action research process as a mechanism of raising consciousness. As the corresponding manuscripts provide a detailed account of the themes constructed and each study contributed iteratively to the generation of knowledges, an integration of the analysis from all four studies is presented here.

Play in Irish schoolyards as socially situated practices.

Constructions of play as socially situated practices with(in) Irish schoolyards drew primarily from Study II & III however was also supported by the scoping review of Irish Traveller children's play in Study I and analysis of occupational therapists' experiences in Study IV. Children's diverse descriptions of play and their reasons for valuing play (Study III) on the one hand reflected the subjective plurality of children's play experiences.

However, the analysis highlighted also how children's contrasting representations of play as habitual and emerging interrelated with(in) the unique context of the schoolyard. In schoolyards with a limited range of activities -mostly ball play and tag, "*just playing*" was experienced as constitutive with the mundane routines of the schoolyard. Breaktimes however despite children's experiences of boredom and limited play options were identified as a preferred and essential time of the school day with play central to possibilities for fun. Children described ball play as dominating the Irish schoolyard, as an opportunity to practice skills and as mostly for children with good ball skills. Tag while experienced as affording more children an opportunity to play also required certain skills. Chatting and playing imagination games were described as occurring around the edges of ball games. Notably teachers observed increasing numbers of boys opting to play imaginary games rather than ball play (Study II). How children's choices interrelated with their skills, preferences, identities, friendships, the limited opportunities available and relationships with(in) the schoolyard emphasized the relationality and situatedness of play (Study III). While teachers (Study II) observed children's resourcefulness and imagination in appropriating objects and spaces within schoolyards, children's experiences (Study III) deepened understandings of the interrelationships between spatial-material aspects of the schoolyard and play-the absence of objects, the hardness of the yard surface, the materiality of bodies, the blurred boundaries between real and imagined spaces, the agency of objects for example, rain within play and temporality. The bracketing of with(in) aimed to reflect this understanding of play as interrelated with both children and diverse social and spatial dimensions of the schoolyard.

Teacher's diverse values for play (Study II) resonated with children's (Study III)-for fresh air, a break, exercise, fun and friendship and also for learning how to interact socially with peers. Notably, both teachers and children (Study II & III) also described how play in the schoolyard held different qualities related to the "*realness*" of the schoolyard with teachers problematizing the increased attention given to play in curricula over what they perceived as free play. This real-life learning dimension of play was also prominent in results from studies reviewed on Irish Traveller children's play (Study 1). However, the greater value on free play was also examined in terms of certain ideas interpreted from interviews (Study II & III). Both teachers and children shared perspectives of children as always inherently ready for play and also as holding natural tendencies to push boundaries when afforded freedoms within the schoolyard.

Teachers described how children would climb railings on ramps, kick balls over walls and move towards restricted out of sight spaces while children speculated that if unsupervised children would just "go crazy" highlighting the existing predominance of fighting on the schoolyard. The analysis particularly of children's descriptions of how play choices were negotiated to produce and sustain precarious friendships and social identities with(in) the schoolyard (Study III) unsettled however the idea of play as freely chosen. Playing football required getting picked; not getting caught all the time in tag required having friends on your side; playing an imagination game required consensus from the group; inviting or being invited into play required considering the implications in terms of your relationships. The significance of play to children's friendships and identities (Study III) was evident also in the review of studies of Irish Traveller children's play (Study I) while teachers drew most attention to "luck", in terms of having class peers with shared interests, and individual social skills as important dimensions of friendship within play (Study II).

The essentialness of fun to play was emphasised by both children and teachers and contrasted with representations of play as mundane. Resonating somewhat with teachers' constructions (Study II) of play in schoolyards as different, a "*break(in) time*" from other school routines, were children's descriptions (Study III) of their best play as emergent "*crack*s" within mundane routines of the schoolyard. These best play experiences were constructed as an escape from boredom, as playing with the rules, as an opportunity for challenge and mastery and most significantly for fun and connection with others. Best play experiences happened when ice on the schoolyard created opportunities to skate, when the ball went over the wall, when a sunny day allowed children onto the grass or when everyone tried to see who could balance the longest on a moveable platform. This emergent dimension of play in schoolyards was somewhat present in teachers' experiences of play as "just" happening however teachers fore fronted more the chaotic and dangerous nature of the unpredictable schoolyard space given their perceived responsibilities to keep children safe (Study II). The analysis highlighted how children's constructions of emergent play as creating alternative possibilities reflected ideas on the transformative potential within play (Study III). The iterative constructions of play as situated and relational with(in) particular schoolyards contributed to understandings of play as prefigured but not predetermined.

Play in Irish schoolyards as an issue of occupational justice.

Knowledges generated on play as an issue of occupational justice in Irish schoolyards was informed by all four studies and interrelated with understandings of play as situated social practices.

The categorisation of factors influencing play reported in existing studies (Study I) drew stark attention to racism as a significant restriction to Irish Traveller children's play particularly in school and community spaces. The pervasiveness of racism was emphasized in reviewed studies describing Irish Traveller parents' experiences of segregation in schoolyards contributing to their fear for children's safety, Irish Traveller children's continued experiences of bullying, racism, and lack of safety in schoolyards and adult responses to racism in schoolyards as ranging from benign to complicit. While drawing from one research study of an early learning setting for Irish Traveller children, three included publications provided a contrasting report of the creation of a welcoming, safe space that had centred parental involvement, staff training and culturally appropriate resources. The scoping review highlighted the reported impact of indirect and structural racism in the form of discriminatory legislation, policy, attitudes and practices on Irish Traveller children's everyday play opportunities, social inclusion, and health. Existing studies described children's play preferences including role play, roaming freely, and playing with Irish Traveller peers as contributing to children's sense of belonging, safety, social solidarity, and identity. This contrasted with reports of teacher's perceptions of Irish Traveller parents' overly protectionist practices and children's play choices as in tension with the norms of the school which alongside limited educational expectations contributed to deficit-focused perspectives. The analysis of existing studies (Study 1) drew attention to the relationship between representations of Irish Traveller children as "at risk" and discourses of culture as difference and highlighted restrictions on children's equitable opportunities to play in Irish schoolyards, as an issue of occupational justice.

Teachers described schoolyards as mostly overcrowded with limited resources and highlighted a lack of practice guidance, funding, or expectations on teachers to support the promotion of play in schoolyards and experiences of colleagues having little interest in schoolyard play (Study II). Teachers also expressed concerns regarding children's limited play opportunities within schoolyards, particularly for Autistic children and children who did not speak English well.

Extending on Study I, the theme constructed on "*play as producing inclusion and exclusion*" highlighted the significance of normative discourses on how teachers experienced children's play as an individual choice. This theme analysed teachers' experiences of children's play as related to dominant social hierarchies within schoolyards. The risks of exclusion within play were however experienced by teachers as located in the "at risk" child who was marked out by their perceived lack of "natural" play and social skills. Furthermore, while teachers reported experiences of the schoolyard as both a kinder place and a minefield of social conflicts, the ways in which children excluded each other within play were predominantly described as typical and gendered. Racism was recognised but as a complex undercurrent within schoolyards related to wider societal issues; and as absent from schoolyards that were increasingly "diverse" with teachers reporting perspectives of children as naturally not racist and schools as "colourblind". The analysis of how prevailing norms interrelated with teachers' understandings of exclusion within play as individualised and an accepted social practice of childhood (Study II) contributed to constructions of play in Irish schoolyards as an issue of occupational justice.

Occupational therapists (Study IV) similarly experienced limited interest with(in) schools for play in schoolyards yet highlighted multiple examples from practice of bullying and exclusion, particularly of Autistic children within schoolyards. Occupational therapists (Study IV) problematized school inclusion practices underpinned by normative ideas as contributing to exclusion within schoolyards by conflating being on the schoolyard with being included while neglecting the diverse preferences and abilities of children. Occupational therapists highlighted how social and spatial arrangements on schoolyards created inequitable play opportunities for certain children and emphasised the consequences of inclusive practices in relation to health and social participation outcomes for certain children e.g. Autistic children's requests to be removed from schoolyards limiting opportunities for play and physical activity; children engaging in anti-social behaviour on schoolyards due to difficulties coping with overwhelming sensory inputs further impacting their social relationships. Despite the inquiry aims and sharing of insights generated in Study I, the issue of racism was largely absent from teachers and occupational therapists' interviews unless prompted (Study II & IV).

The analysis of children's experiences across two Irish DEIS schools generated further knowledges from children's perspectives on play as constitutive with occupational (in)justices with(in) the schoolyard (Study III).

Children experienced hard-surfaced, empty schoolyards with few objects mostly in disrepair as restricting their play opportunities and furthermore as unfair when compared to other school and community spaces. The spatial-material restrictions interrelated with children's limited play options of ball play or play with friends and prevented possibilities to for example, roam, climb, engage with nature or objects, or play with children in other areas of the schoolyard. The theme the "*hard yard*" was constructed from an analysis of children's experiences of play as interrelated with significant spatial-material constraints and also schoolyard rules, social norms and hierarchies and relationships in the constant (re)production of restrictive, inequitable, exclusionary schoolyard spaces (Study III). In focusing on children's experiences of play practices, the "*hard yard*" also highlighted children's vulnerabilities as they constantly negotiated social identities, popularity, and friendships with(in) play in the yard. Children identified children who were good at football and had lots of friends as popular and were acutely aware of peer group boundaries and social hierarchies (with)in the yard. Despite recognition of significant constraints and limited play choices, resonating with teachers' perspectives (Study II), children experienced exclusion within play as an individual choice and conflict, fighting, individualistic and exclusionary social practices as accepted ways of doing as children, requiring them to play and interact in certain ways to survive on the schoolyard. The analysis interpreted these habitual ways of playing as "*playing along with(in)"* the hard yard.

A related dimension was how despite children's experiences of seeking out opportunities to play with the social rules on the yard, children who broke agreed social norms according to children were "*troublemakers*" who choose to ruin play. The analysis (Study III) however highlighted the complexities of social practices in children's descriptions of recognising intersectional inequities for certain children, of attempts to include peers, of looking out for friends, of experiencing or observing the hurt of exclusion enacted within play and of holding the contradictions of being both "*nice and not nice*". In describing potential ways to improve the schoolyard, children also discussed the need to accommodate diverse play preferences and how play that required turn taking would privilege certain children on the yard i.e. bigger, stronger children would dominate. Contrasting with a predominant agreement of spatial material constraints as unfair, children experienced schoolyard rules as necessary for their safety however inconsistently and unjustly enforced by adults and at times limiting their social learning opportunities.

Alongside experiences of adapting play practices depending on who was supervising the schoolyard, of unjust adult decision making relative to gendered and racialised identities and of perceived negative social consequences for asking for adult help were children's descriptions of a neglect of fighting and social exclusion by adults. Study III thus constructed understandings of children's experiences of significantly constrained play opportunities within two Irish schoolyards. However furthermore, the analysis of the acceptance and consequences of the "*hard yard*" highlighted how children's play interrelated with privileged play opportunities and social hierarchies and the continued (re)production of individualistic and exclusionary social practices.

Professional practices as socially situated in an Irish context.

The research inquiry's overall aim to construct knowledges on practice possibilities included study aims (Study II & IV) to examine existing professional practices relative to play in schoolyards as an issue of occupational justice. Common to both teachers and occupational therapists were experiences of limited attention to children's play in schoolyards and greater focus on issues related to children's social behaviours in everyday practices. Participants in both studies thus highlighted the potential unique interest they held relative to their professional colleagues.

A central concept constructed from teachers' experiences of practices (Study II) was presented in the theme *"certainties and uncertainties produced in teachers' everyday practices"*. This analysis highlighted teacher's experiences of negotiating individual and collective interests within everyday practices, however also generated several interrelated insights that contributed to interpretations of practices as socially situated. Firstly, how teachers value on supporting play was in tension with perceived school, parental and societal expectations to prioritize children's safety reinforced by growing litigation fears with(in) schools. Secondly were teachers' experiences of practices as stressful in requiring constant responsiveness to unpredictable events within busy crowded and underfunded schoolyards ranging from accidents to weather factors. A third dimension was the need to be cognisant of staff wellbeing and relationships with other teachers while also recognising colleagues' practices as potentially restricting children's play opportunities. Finally, while valuing play, teachers held diverse understandings on how best to create play opportunities for all children (with)in the shared space of the schoolyard which interrelated with their personal experiences and ideas and assumptions on childhood, risk, and play.

Overall teachers' constructions of existing teachers practices while often in tension with their personal ideals, were of needing to prioritize minimizing conflict within schoolyards. Given the absence of school guidance beyond supervision, teachers valued most experience as contributing to practice knowledges. Teachers shared experiences of implementing play work models and organising more diverse play options for individual children particularly when supervising their own class daily during COVID 19 restrictions. These experiences highlighted for teachers the spatial-material restrictions within schools; the benefits of getting to know children on schoolyards and also the consequences in terms of "issues" from the yard continuing into classrooms; teachers limited control over the changes that occurred within schoolyards e.g. new buildings; the need to consider storage and maintenance of equipment and vandalization of equipment; children's dwindling interest in new initiatives and limited staff interest in facilitating rather than supervising play. Trial and error, experiences of the outcomes of practices and relationships with children including as parents were identified as central to teachers' constructions of tacit knowledges. Insights were generated into the relevance of the individualising of choice to teachers also given teachers emphasis on the personal responsibility they held for creating calm, safe and inclusive schoolyards (Study II). Teachers' reluctance to acknowledge exclusion within schoolyards was further examined in relation to teachers reported value on their identities as inclusive educators. As explored in relation to play as an issue of occupational justice, children's experiences of teacher's inconsistent and often unfair practices in schoolyards (Study III) reflected teachers' perspectives on the limited guidance and shared agreement on supporting play within schools. While children shed light on how safety was predominantly associated with physical safety (Study III), teachers identified most concern for children who were socially excluded. However, teachers described addressing social exclusion as challenging returning to their experiences of negotiating uncertainties about whether to "*step in*" with certainties about the schoolyard as where children learn social skills and the need to respect other children's choices in terms of play preferences and friendships.

Occupational therapists' examination of their "*existing practices as situated*" (Study IV) included constructions of practices as habitual, social processes interrelating with professional identities, service and societal expectations, normative ideas, and arrangements particular to the Irish context.

The analysis shed led on how in responding to deficit focused referrals as disability experts, occupational therapy practices (re)produced practices that were in tension with their ideals of wanting to focus on participation within schools. Occupational therapists described not receiving referrals regarding children's play in schoolyards and existing school practices as involving mostly observational assessments of children's sensory-motor skills. Occupational therapists also shared experiences of school's reluctance to consider their recommendations to adapt schoolyards to facilitate a child's play preferences. Occupational therapists as predominantly "visiting professionals" to schools was identified as another factor constraining their influence with(in) schools and related to ongoing waiting list demands. However occupational therapists acknowledged their own limited attention to play in schoolyards and tendencies to prioritise responding to referral requests. Occupational therapists moved to problematize remedial practices and inclusion outcomes as in tension with what they identified as a need to create school environments that supported children's diverse interests, preferences, skills, and identities. The situated nature of occupational therapy practices was also reflected in occupational therapist's awareness of the influence of wider arrangements including changing service contexts, policies and approaches, litigation challenges and inequitable resources between schools. Furthermore, occupational therapists represented certain arrangements within schools as culturally specific requiring an understanding of accepted values and ways of doing in an Irish context. Insights into practices as social processes were generated in occupational therapists' experiences of the importance of relationships with teachers and of understanding who held positions of power to influence change with(in) schools.

Collective occupations in Irish schoolyards

The analysis of teacher's experiences of children's play and practices (Study II) generated insights that connected with conceptualisations of collective occupations. The iterative generation of knowledges with children and occupational therapists (Study III & IV) emphasised this resonance further and interrelated with understandings of play and practices as socially situated practices and of play as an issue of occupational justice.

Teachers' constructions of the schoolyard as a space produced by children and teachers with diverse identities, experiences, values, abilities, and preferences collectively engaged in a variety of occupations (Study II) generated interpretations of play and practices as collective occupations with(in) schoolyards.

An important dimension was how teachers experienced everyday social processes as negotiating diverse individual and collective intentions and highlighted children's and teachers shared collective needs and values for a safe welcoming space. The idea of school as community was reflected in teachers' representations of the schoolyard as where "real life" happens complicated by differing constraints including diverse societal and school expectations, the "thrown together" nature of many individuals in one space and social norms and hierarchies with(in) a complex always changing social space. While children experienced the "*hard yard*" as (re)producing and necessitating individualistic and exclusionary practices, children also described a co-existing shared value for a safe, equitable, social space (Study III). Children's experiences of negotiating power with(in) everyday social practices and of shared play as holding potential to disrupt habitual practices and create conditions of possibility for solidarity resonated also with theorizing on the concept of collective occupations (Study III).

Drawing on the knowledges generated with children and teachers (Study II & III), occupational therapists' dialogue on practice possibilities (Study IV) connected with ideas of the schoolyard as constituted by collective social practices. This offered a way of highlighting the complex interrelationships between individual children's play, collective social practices, and diverse arrangements and also the consequences of a lack of shared meaning on inclusion. Furthermore, the analysis examined occupational therapy practices as also socially situated with(in) collective schoolyard practices (Study IV). Informed by the theory of practice architectures, the analysis of existing practices as interrelated with wider service and societal arrangements (Study IV) extended on the concept of collective occupations to consider the idea of "ecologies of practices". Thinking with this concept and occupational therapists' experiences constructed interpretations of interconnected service and societal practices as arrangements that created conditions of possibilities for play (with)in schoolyards and play focused practices (Study IV). Children's and teachers' experiences of collective occupations with(in) the schoolyard as interrelated with service policies, societal norms and families and communities' expectations can also be considered as "ecologies of practices" (Study II & III).

Practice possibilities.

The generation of knowledges on practice possibilities concerned with children's play in schoolyard as an issue of occupational justice was iteratively informed by Study I, II and III and a distinct focus of Study IV.

The necessity for anti-racist practices was highlighted in the scoping review of existing studies (Study I). Insights generated (Study I) on how play in schoolyards was influenced by multiple enabling and restricting factors, also constructed understandings of play as a capability contributing to practice possibilities that focus on issues of equity relative to children's real opportunities in particular contexts. The identification of a paucity of research and significant influence of culturist assumptions in representations of Irish Traveller children's play (Study 1) highlighted the importance of recognising communities as resourceful holders of knowledges and on the need to raise consciousness in schools on the consequences of culturist assumptions. The importance of creating spaces *with* teachers and children to examine existing situations with(in) each schoolyard was underscored by children's and teachers' experiences of the diversity of arrangements that interrelated with collective practices to (re)produce the social space of their schoolyard (Study II & III) and teachers' perspectives of generic policies and guidelines as lacking contextualised knowledges and neglecting teachers own practice knowledges (Study II). Extending on Study I, the analysis (Study II & III) made visible particularly the importance of raising consciousness on the consequences of social norms in the (re)production of individualistic and exclusionary practices (with)in schoolyards.

Drawing on the knowledges generated in Study I, II & III, occupational therapists (Study IV) co-constructed understandings of practice possibilities as situated and relational (with)in schools. The need to first examine existing practices in specific schools was emphasised in shared dialogue on the diverse nature of collective practices within schoolyards (Study II & III) in occupational therapists' identification of the risks of assuming needs and responsive practices and practice experiences of schools' capacities to create conditions for play (with)in schoolyards by harnessing existing resources within schools, communities, and wider services (Study IV). The theme "(*re) mattering play and practices as occupations*" highlighted how the critical action research process using dialogical focus groups to think with occupational science concepts and mapping methods provided occupational therapists with a mechanism for (re)focusing on occupations including play in schoolyards as central to their practices. This process raised consciousness on the importance of play (with)in schoolyards to children's participation and the arrangements that enabled and constrained opportunities for equitable play opportunities with(in) schoolyards and for whom.

Importantly the analysis drew attention to how the research inquiry process also supported occupational therapists to connect theoretical concepts and ideas with practices supporting the construction of practice knowledges; on the lack of shared understandings on inclusion; the influence of professional identities and normative ideas; the significance of power in relationships; the need to consider not just children's play but collective occupations in schoolyards; the lack of shared intentionality in relation to the purpose of collective practices with(in) schoolyards; how injustices were (re)produced in everyday situated social practices including occupational therapy practices and how play held transformative possibilities (Study IV). The formal analysis (Study IV) of the knowledges co-constructed and the critical action inquiry process itself generated practice possibilities as a process of "*finding the play*". This process reflected occupational therapists' identification of the need to examine existing situations, (re)focus on occupations and adopt strengths-focused approaches. Occupational therapists also highlighted how school-based approaches, tools and practice knowledges could be used to support "*finding the play*" including inclusive design and play space assessment tools, supporting schools' awareness of neurodiversity particularly the diverse ways of doing occupations and coaching approaches. Finally, the analysis shed light on how the inquiry raised consciousness on occupational therapists' ethical responsibilities to address children's inequitable play opportunities within schoolyards and the inequitable consequences for certain children, as an issue of occupational justice. "*Finding the play*" was thus constructed as a process of raising consciousness on existing collective social practices in relationships towards collectively identifying how to create equitable conditions of possibility for play (with)in schoolyards.

In summary, all four studies contributed insights into children's play and professional practices as socially situated processes with(in) the unique context of each Irish schoolyard interrelating with various societal, service and schoolyard practice arrangements (Study I, II, III & IV). Children and teachers highlighted the significant spatial and material constraints to play with(in) Irish schoolyards (Study II & III). However, the analysis also shed light on how normative ideas on play, childhood and inclusion significantly interrelated with the individualising of choices, acceptance of the "*hard yard*" and neglect of substantive issues such as racism (Study I, II, III & IV). Knowledges generated on children's play and teachers and occupational therapists' practices as situated social practices (Study II, III & IV) emphasised the centrality of occupations in the constant (re)production of the social space of the schoolyard.

While interrelated with diverse constraints, habitual ways of "*playing along with(in) the hard yard*" and practicing as teachers and occupational therapists were interpreted as constitutive with the maintenance of individualistic and exclusionary social processes with(in) Irish schoolyards (Study I, II, III & IV). "*Finding the play*" thus (re)turned attention to ethical responsibilities inherent in understanding everyday collective occupations as interdependent and constitutive with conditions of possibility for occupational (in)justices. Practice possibilities extended beyond individuals and play to focus on raising consciousness of collective occupations with(in) Irish schoolyards (Study II, III & IV) and the transformative potential identified within play to create conditions of possibility for fun, connection, and solidarity (Study III).

Discussion and reflections

Given the dearth of knowledges on play in Irish schoolyards (Mulryan-Kyne, 2014; Moore & Lynch, 2018) this inquiry aimed to explore with children, teachers, and occupational therapists their diverse experiences of play and professional practices in Irish schoolyards (Study II, III & IV). This discussion will consider how this inquiry contributes to knowledges on conditions of possibility for play in Irish schoolyards and examine this in relation to existing research.

In adopting a critical occupational perspective this inquiry put to use theoretical concepts to make visible the diverse interrelated constraints on children's equitable opportunities for play, as an issue of occupational justice, emphasising the inequitable consequences particularly for children with minoritised identities (Study I, II, III & IV). The next stage of the discussion will examine the insights generated on occupational (in)justice as interrelated with collective practices with(in) Irish schoolyards to produce what this inquiry constructed as the "*hard yard*" (Study II, III IV) and consider how this contributes to existing knowledges towards understanding how the "*hard yard*" is held in place and continuously (re)produced.

The iterative generation of knowledges in this thesis in many ways reflect the mechanisms of raising consciousness embedded in the practice process constructed "*finding the play*" (Study IV). This discussion will then move to consider the practice possibilities proposed in relation to research on school-based occupational therapy practices and how this alternative perspective may contribute to attempts to realize commitments to create equitable opportunities for play in Irish schoolyards. Moreover, this section of the discussion will evaluate how the knowledges generated on occupational (in)justice may also contribute to ongoing disciplinary discussions on the meaning of occupational justice in specific contexts. The discussion is based on the results from the overall inquiry presented in this thesis and the corresponding manuscripts. Finally, potential implications and points of departure for future practices and research will be proposed alongside methodological considerations. To conclude this thesis, reflections will be shared on how decolonial and more than human ontologies may invite alternative possibilities to consider the potential with(in) everyday doing together to realize occupational justice.

Play and professional practices (with)in schoolyards in an Irish context.

In exploring play and professional practices in Irish schoolyards this inquiry contributes to the identified need for research on how play is provided for in diverse contexts (Beresin, 2016; Clevenger et al., 2023). It is useful to consider how the knowledges generated on the perceived purposes of play and breaktimes, the space and play opportunities provided and adult practices within Irish schoolyards relate, differ, or extend on research in other countries and General Comment 17 recommendations.

Teachers' constructions of breaktimes in Irish schoolyards as a "*break(in)time*" align with existing representations of breaktimes as less formal times within schools (Baines et al., 2021; London, 2022; Mulryan-Kyne, 2014). Childrens experiences of breaktimes in Irish schoolyards as necessary and preferred times within school days and play as central to possibilities for fun and friendship corresponds with existing research on the importance of breaktimes in children's social lives (Baines et al., 2020; Massey et al., 2021). However the construction of play in breaktimes as mundane and interrelated with diverse constraints also reflects research on schoolyards as regulated spaces (Thomson, 2005; Rönnlund, 2017). As in UK & US studies (Baines & Blatchford, 2019; Beresin, 2010; Massey et al., 2020) both teachers and children experienced Irish schoolyards as sparce, restricted, hard surfaced, overcrowded spaces. The construction of knowledges on children's experiences of restricted schoolyard spaces with few materials as limiting their play options resonates with research on the importance of spatial dimensions and objects to children's play opportunities (Bundy et al., 2017; Brussoni et al., 2017; Moore & Lynch, 2015; Schulze et al, 2016; Sterman et al, 2020; Wenger et al, 2021). While teachers identified these spatial material constraints as restricting play opportunities on Irish schoolyards, children highlighted the ways in which diverse constraints interrelated with their play choices *and* their identities, relationships, and friendships (with)in schoolyards.

Children's experiences in an Irish context reflect existing research on the importance of friendship to children's positive experiences, relationships, identities, and feelings of safety and belonging within play and breaktimes (Baines & Blatchford, 2019; Carter & Nutbrown, 2016; Coplan et al., 2015; Morgenthaler et al., 2023). However, friendship and play have tended to be examined separately as reflected in Powrie et al'. s (2015) argument that friendship is more important than the activity itself.

This inquiry therefore contributes to occupational perspectives on play choices as transacting with contextual factors (Galvaan, 2015; Moore & Lynch, 2018; Wenger et al., 2021) emphasising play choices as interrelated not only with spatial-material constraints but significantly contingent on friendships, social identities, and social positioning within the schoolyard. Considering friendship from an occupational perspective may then connect with attempts to understand the social processes of play as occupation and how friendships interrelate with children's social practices. This will be further explored later in the discussion.

Teachers' experiences of practices in Irish schoolyards as predominantly a supervisory role where protection was prioritised over participation also corresponds with research in other contexts (Baines et al., 2020; Grady-Dominguez et al., 2021; Larsson & Rönnlund, 2020). While minimal adult interference is recommended in play rights scholarship (UNCRC, 2013), teachers reported reluctance to interfere in play contrasted with children's experiences of significant adult constraints including removal from play if social rules were broken and inconsistent enforcement of schoolyard rules. Extending on recent research examining adult/child values as not mutually exclusive (McKendrick, 2019; Ramugondo, 2015), this inquiry generated knowledges on both teachers and children's diverse instrumental and intrinsic purposes for play during breaktimes. Despite these diverse intentions, the knowledges constructed shed light on how significant spatial and social constraints interrelated with the (re) production of the "*hard yard*" where children determined maintaining social status and relationships as most important while teachers' focused on achieving an absence of conflict. This inquiry resonates with research on how neglected schoolyard spaces and limited attention to providing for play may contribute to social hierarchies, fighting and exclusion on schoolyards and paradoxically more interventionist practices (Beresin, 2016; Titman, 1994). The Global Recess statement (Ramstetter et al., 2021) attends particularly to how schools' removal of breaktimes due to concerns regarding social behaviours is counterproductive arguing that play in breaktimes affords opportunities for the development of social skills and social relationships. While this inquiry corresponds with Devine et al.'s (2020) survey results on the provision of at least 30 minutes breaktime within Irish schoolyards, the potential risk to this provision is also highlighted in children and teachers concerns regarding fighting, bullying and social exclusion within Irish schoolyards.

As reported elsewhere (Baines & Blatchford, 2019; Jerebine et al., 2022; Van Rooijen & Newstead, 2017) teachers' experiences of returning to "classroom practices" was interrelated with perceived professional responsibilities and societal expectations; a lack of funding to provide adequate spaces; limited school guidance or expectations beyond supervision; differing perspectives on the adult role within play and limited interest amongst colleagues in promoting children's play. While existing research has examined the relationships between breaktimes in schoolyards and children's identities and cultures (McKinnty, 2016; Russell, 2021), this inquiry with teachers with an expressed interest in play, sheds light on the relationships between breaktimes and adult identities and cultures also. Teachers' experiences of supervision on Irish schoolyards as stressful supports Van Rooijen & Newstead's (2017) suggestion that school concerns regarding risk and safety contributes to a culture of blame/responsibility. Teachers highlighted how supervision practices involved constant negotiations of children's individual and collective best interests but also their relationships with colleagues and identities as reliable and inclusive educators (with)in schools. In constructing understandings of teachers' practices as situated and relational, this inquiry contributes insights into teachers' vulnerabilities with(in) Irish schoolyards. Extending on the relevance of social and cultural arrangements, teachers and occupational therapists also acknowledged as important the particular "ways" of the Irish schoolyard including specific games unique to the Irish schoolyard, staff's litigation fears and a general reluctance to be outdoors in inclement Irish weather. As Beresin (2016) suggested in calling for a global survey of play provision, this inquiry highlights the importance of understanding the unique contextual dimensions that interrelate with conditions of possibility for play (with)in schoolyards.

Occupational therapists' experiences of limited attention to play in Irish schoolyards and a practice focus within schools on assessment of skills, primarily with children with disabilities, reflects survey research in an Irish and international context (Miller Kuhaneck et al., 2013; Moore & Lynch, 2018; Nordström et al., 2023; Salazar Rivera et al., 2023). Moreover, occupational therapists' identification of schools' limited awareness of the scope of occupational therapy and limited time available within schools as constraints to school-based practices and the importance of developing collaborative relationships with schools corresponds with existing school-based practice research (Bonnard et al., 2022; Bolton & Plattner, 2019; Clough, 2019; Salazar Rivera et al., 2023; Missiuna et al., 2015; 2017).

In exploring practices with occupational therapists from diverse practice sites this inquiry extends on existing research on the influence of service expectations on practices in an Irish context (Lynch et al., 2020; O' Donoghue et al., 2021). While occupational therapists' employment in health services has been identified as a particular constraint within the Irish context, this inquiry highlights how deficit-focused practice traditions were interrelated with professional identities as "disability experts". Given the emerging school-based service attempts to adopt an occupational justice agenda to focus on *all* children's participation in schools (Fitzgerald & McCobb, 2022; Lynch et al., 2020), this inquiry draws attention to how this dominant professional identity may pose a potentially constraining influence on school-based services also.

The lens of the theory of practice architectures proved beneficial in analysing how in an Irish context existing occupational therapy practices were mediated through intersubjective spaces highlighting what occupational therapists represented as the power held within referrals in determining occupational therapy practices. Moreover, specific to play focused practices, this inquiry constructed knowledges on the relevance of school's value and particularly school leaders value on schoolyard play provision to play focused practice possibilities. Occupational therapists' emphasis on the need to be cognisant of what relationships held most potential to contribute to change within schools, highlights relations of power as a factor to consider in collaborative school-based practices. While occupational therapy practice guidelines and service policies provide support for occupation focused practices, this inquiry reflects research on the limitations of policies alone in enacting practice change (deOliveira Borba et al., 2020). In adopting a more critical perspective on occupational therapists continued (re)production of deficit focused practices this inquiry corresponds with research on the development of occupational therapy in an Irish context (Dunne et al., 2018; Cahill & Pettigrew, 2020) in proposing further interrogation of the adoption of biomedical perspectives and focus on professionalization within Irish occupational therapy.

In summary, the knowledges generated in this inquiry of play during breaktimes (with)in Irish schoolyards supported the construction of the "*hard yard*" - a sparce, restricted space with limited funding, guidance, value, or provision for play. The inquiry constructed understandings of children's play and professional practices as socially situated processes contributing insights into the diverse arrangements that interrelate with how play is provided for (with)in Irish schoolyards.

Furthermore, these exemplars generated with children from 2 DEIS schools and teachers and occupational therapists from diverse practices sites suggests that concerns regarding the limited realization of GC17 obligations to provide space time and permission to play within schoolyards (Baines et al., 2020; Beresin, 2016) are of equal concern in an Irish context. Resonating with Titman's (1994) assertion that care-less schoolyards are so familiar as to be unremarkable, this inquiry also sheds light on the acceptance of the "*hard yard*". The next section moves to consider how this inquiry's critical occupational perspective provides further insights into how the "*hard yard*" is held in place in an Irish context and furthermore highlights the consequences, as an issue of occupational justice.

Play (with)in Irish schoolyards as an issue of occupational (in)justice.

Informed by critical occupational and practice theory perspectives (Arntzen, 2018; Farias et al., 2019; Kemmis, 2019; Russell, 2017), this inquiry's focus on constructing understandings of practices supported an examination of the tensions between practitioner values and actions (Study II & IV). Thinking with occupational science concepts of occupational consciousness and occupational possibilities (Ramugondo, 2015; Rudman, 2010) supported a critical interrogation of differing intentions in relation to play provision and highlighted the considerable influence of normative discourses on play and childhood on conditions of possibility for equitable play opportunities within Irish schoolyards (Study I, II, III & IV). Kemmis's (2019) ideas on how practices hang together in distinctive projects informed a further examination of how intentions interrelated with particularly social-discursive arrangements and particular ways of saying, doing, and relating in practices to produce practice traditions (Study III & IV). This section considers these insights on how normative discourses and ideas interrelated with how play was understood, experienced, and provided for (with)in Irish schoolyards in relation to existing research.

The absence of a shared purpose and conflicting values on play in schoolyards is identified in existing research as a significant constraint on realising play rights (Baines et al., 2020; Hyndman & Wyver, 2020; McKendrick, 2019; Russell, 2021). While teachers and children in this inquiry highlighted diverse values and purposes for play in Irish schoolyards for fresh air, a break, exercise, fun and friendship, this inquiry also sheds light on the reluctant acceptance of the "*hard yard*" as how it has always been, as how children "do" together and as reflective of wider societal practices.

Breaktimes in Irish schoolyards were thus considered as more akin to "real life" and as a space for social learning and enacting pro-social skills learned within the classroom interrelating with certain dominant ideas on how to be a child and how to play. This inquiry draws attention to how teachers and children's perspectives on "natural" play skills and dispositions as inherent to childhood, most significantly good ball skills and sociability interrelated with understandings of certain "*ways*" of playing as the "norm" within schoolyards. Existing research has highlighted how gendered norms intersect with opportunities for play within schoolyards (Jarrett & Duckett-Hedgebeth, 2003; Baines & Blatchford, 2023) while Putra et al., (2020) drew attention to the dominance of sociability within overall conceptualisations of play-as in Eberle's (2014) observations of how children with "*disagreeable and hesitant*" dispositions are most likely to be left out of play. This inquiry contributes insights into how these normative ideas interrelated with teachers' judgements of Irish Traveller children's role play as "too adult"; an autistic child's digging for worms as "too destructive"; of girls as preferring social play and in children's representations of children who broke the tacitly agreed social rules of the schoolyard as "troublemakers". Moreover, this critical inquiry examined how ideas on play and childhood contributed to teachers and children's positioning of certain children as lacking "natural" skills and dispositions due to individual deficits, cultural differences, or choices.

While racism was identified as the primary barrier to Irish Traveller children's play across multiple studies, this inquiry highlighted how risks of exclusion tended to be represented as due to "cultural differences". In highlighting how representations of Irish Traveller children as "at risk" reflected and reinforced culturist ideas and practices rather than addressing intersectional and intergenerational oppressions this inquiry supports Gerlach & Browne's (2021) argument for greater critical examinations of universalist ideas underpinning conceptualisations of play. The inquiry also draws attention to how understanding play as occupation as taking different forms in different cultures (Dender & Stagnitti, 2015) may potentially reinforce ideas of certain ways of playing as different to a "universal" norm. Furthermore, while play rights scholarship prioritises children's agency, this inquiry sheds light on how certain choices Irish Traveller children and autistic children made were ignored or problematized. Irish Traveller children's enactment of adult roles and an autistic child's exploration for worms were not considered "normal" play conflicting with understandings of play as freely chosen subjective experiences.

This aligns with analysis of rights-based practices as supporting children's agential actions only when they cohere with "normative" childhood ways of doing (Lester, 2020; Klocker, 2007).

In generating knowledges on children's play choices (with)in Irish schoolyards as situated and relational, this inquiry examined further representations of children's play as freely chosen. In thinking with the concept of occupational justice and occupational possibilities, this inquiry made visible how the individualising of choices neglected the diverse interrelated constraints on children's play choices with(in) Irish schoolyards. Contrasting with teachers' perspectives of schoolyard activities as reflecting universal play preferences and of children being simply lucky enough to share preferences with peers, children experienced playing ball and playing with friends as often the only choices available on Irish schoolyards. This inquiry's construction of knowledges on the constraints of limited play options corresponds with GC 17's recommendations that certain conditions of possibility are first required for children to play whenever the opportunity arises (UNCRC, 2013).

Of most consequence is that attempts to play with(in) the "*hard yard*" according to children were significantly contingent on one's friendships, identities, and position in the social hierarchy, with the limited choices available also associated with being popular with(in) Irish schoolyards. As Rudman (2010) theorized certain possibilities within the Irish schoolyard were represented as ideal, however these were not "real" possibilities for all children. However, children's and teachers understanding of choice as an individual concern interrelated with their perspectives on exclusion from play as because children were unable or unwilling to play according to the "norms" or were "troublemakers". Moreover, children and teachers both identified the unwilling, unable and troublemakers as predominantly children with minoritized identities relative to ethnicity and (dis)ability-primarily autistic children and children who did not speak English. In highlighting play as interrelated with exclusion with(in) Irish schoolyards, this inquiry contributes an occupational perspective to existing examinations of the interplay of classed, ableist, gendered and racialised norms in the construction of popular, ideal and deviant "other" identities within schoolyards (Brown, 2017; Kitching, 2020; McGinley & Keane, 2022; O'Rourke et al., 2017; Ronnlund, 2015; Ringrose & Renold, 2010; Scholtz & Gilligan, 2017; Walker et al., 2022).

While mattering most the inequities inherent in the individualising of choices the knowledges generated on how children "*played along (with)in the hard yard*" emphasise play as an issue of occupational justice for <u>all</u> children. Corresponding with Titman (1994) & Beresin's (2016) research in US & English schoolyards, this inquiry highlighted the consequences of children's acceptance of restrictive spaces and rules, social hierarchies, fighting and normative ways of playing (with)in schoolyards as interrelated with the (re)production of individualistic and exclusionary social practices. Even for children whose play choices were afforded and as this inquiry highlights privileged, children's experiences of maintaining their position within social hierarchies and precarious friendships emphasised children's vulnerabilities, with children describing prioritising one's own self as necessary on the Irish "*hard yard"*. Ramugondo's (2015) theorizing on the concept of occupational consciousness was informed by an analysis of children's play practices as sustaining ways of doing that perpetuated injustices. This inquiry in an Irish schoolyard context thus contributes to existing examinations of play as (re)producing exclusion and social hierarchies (Angell, 2014; Galvaan, 2015) and critical educational and occupational science scholarship on how inequities require the perpetuation of privilege and dominance by others (Lynch, 2018; Ramugondo & Kronenberg, 2015; Smyth et al., 2015; Trentham, 2022).

Children's experiences of "*playing along*" to survive the hard yard can also be considered in relation to Ahmed's (2010) examinations of happiness as often a return for investment in social norms, inviting further interrogation of the centrality of fun and happiness to play as occupation. (Interestingly to collude holds a literal meaning of playing together while Lester (2020) also critiques ideas of the personal utility of play for happiness as individualistic middle-class notions of the pleasured self). Playing along with(in) the hard yard may suggest children are included and participating in play however may also as this inquiry highlights reflect the continued (re)production of individualistic and exclusionary ways of doing together. Drawing on Lorde's interpretations of the work involved in "attuning" to normative expectations, Ahmed (2010) constructed understandings of how the alternative is to be a troublemaker, a killjoy. These ideas correspond with children's experiences (with)in Irish schoolyards of not only prioritising their own best interests by "*playing along*" but also of children being individually responsible for their own trouble.

In constructing understandings of play as constitutive with the (re)production of equitable possibilities to play, this inquiry thus contributes to critical interrogations of play as inherently positive and to the positioning of play as an issue of occupational (in)justice (Angell, 2014; Beresin, 2010; Prellwitz & Skar, 2016; Russell et al., 2023; Sutton-Smith, 1997).

While teachers' everyday negotiations of collective and individual interests on Irish schoolyards have been examined as constrained by diverse arrangements, this inquiry also generated knowledges on children's experiences of adult indifference and complicity with exclusion (with)in Irish schoolyards. This warrants further consideration of teachers reported reluctance to interfere within children's play (with)in schoolyards and perspectives of the schoolyard as a place for social learning in terms of expectations on children to "*play along with(in) the hard yard*". The promotion of play for social learning and particularly "risky play" practices (Sandseter et. al., 2023) is problematized in this inquiry as failing to recognise the substantive intersectional inequities, oppressions and harms experienced by children with minoritized identities. Of particular concern are teachers reported "colourblind" perspectives which Kitching (2020) argues conceal the privileges afforded to some, and inequitable barriers to other. Reflecting existing studies on teachers' practices (Devine & McGillicuddy, 2019; Mc Ginley & Keane, 2021), teachers in this inquiry tended to deny racism or represent racism as an unseen intractable societal issue while accepting bullying and fighting as an inevitable dimension of the "minefield" that is the schoolyard. The conflation of bullying with racism in an Irish school context has been critiqued as failing to recognise that not all children are subject to racism (Kitching, 2020; Ní Dhuinn & Keane, 2021). Moreover, children's experiences of teacher's harsher judgments (with)in schoolyards of children with minoritized identities reflects studies on teachers' perceptions of behaviours of Black boys as more aggressive, threatening, and hyper masculine (Baines et al., 2020; Bryan, 2018). Given the continued identification of racism as an everyday dimension of Irish Traveller and many migrant children's lives on Irish schoolyards (McGillicuddy & Machowska-Kosciak, 2021; Ní Dhuinn & Keane, 2021) the problematization of colourblind ideologies in an Irish context are emphasised in this inquiry as particularly important. While General Comment 17 (UNCRC, 2013) identifies the need to create environments free from discrimination, violence etc, there remains a suggestion that these substantive issues are separate to play rather than interrelated corresponding with how Irish educational policies consider issues of exclusion and bullying within schools (DOE, 2022).

Schoolyard risk assessments focus primarily on spatial hazards (Evident in the new international standards on play-spaces, ISO 4980:2023 which moves to support adults with identifying tolerable risks and only implementing restrictions on hazards that are likely to cause harm). Addressing the lack of space, resources, and permission to play with (in) Irish schoolyards is supported by the knowledges generated in this inquiry, however corresponding with recent scholarship further research is required to ascertain if this will contribute to the dismantling of social hierarchies and exclusionary social practices (with)in schoolyards (Massey et al., 2020; Wenger et al., 2021). In constructing understandings of how play choices interrelate with diverse arrangements to (re)produce the hard yard, this inquiry however provides support for proposals that identify as most important the need to involve children in identifying what play opportunities are necessary within schoolyards (Almers et al., 2023; Fahy et al., 2020; Massey et al., 2020; Pawlowski et al., 2019; Russell, 2021; Wenger et al., 2021). This inquiry also highlights that addressing unequal concentrations of power with(in) play in the "*hard yard*" will require disrupting current imbalances rather than as Harvey (2022) argue continued paternalistic damage focused practices aimed at including the "at risk". Given the limited research to date on how attitudes interrelate with older children's play in schoolyards (Berggren et al., 2020; Putra et al., 2020) this inquiry proposes that examining play as situated collective social practices can contribute to alternative ways of creating equitable conditions of possibility to play (with)in schoolyards. This will be explored further in the following section however this discussion will now consider the insights constructed into the consequences of existing occupational therapy practices in relation to conditions of possibility for equitable play (with)in Irish schoolyards.

While inclusion is centred within occupational therapy scholarship as a significant desired outcome of practices (Bonnard et al., 2022; Corley et al., 2023; Edwards et al., 2021; Pereira & Whiteford, 2021) the knowledges generated in this inquiry suggest that inclusion and dimensions of play rights discourses may be constitutive with constraints on school-based occupational therapy practices with(in) Irish schoolyards. In examining play as an issue of occupational justice, the interpretations generated thus support critical play and occupational science scholarship on the need to interrogate dominant "mantras" underpinning practices (Córdoba, 2020; Lester, 2020; Spyrou et al., 2019; Sonday et al., 2019; Woodyer et al., 2016).

This inquiry contributes knowledges on how in "responding" to referrals to address children's individual skill difficulties occupational therapy practices reinforced normative ideas that children required certain skills to participate and moreover to be included (with)in schoolyards. Further examination of school-based practices that focus on developing children's autonomy, self-determination, and individual agency is thus required in terms of outcomes focused on how the child can "fit into" school norms (Cahill & Bazyk, 2020; Meuser et al., 2023). Critical occupational science scholarship has examined individualistic values of self-determination and autonomy in practice discourses as related to neoliberal ideologies (Gappmayer, 2019: Gerlach et al., 2018; Farias et al, 2019; Rudman, 2013) which corresponds with critiques of Irish inclusive education policies as reinforcing ideas of meritocracy and intergenerational societal privileges and oppressions (Lynch, 2018). This critical inquiry also contributes to occupational science and play scholarship on the need for greater attention to attention to issues of bullying and racism within existing occupational therapy practices (Gerlach & Browne, 2021; Lavalley & Johnson, 2020; Stanley & Simaan, 2023). While research has identified occupational therapists' uncertainty regarding their role in relation to social, emotional, and mental health within school settings (Cahill et al., 2020; Whiting, 2018; Walsh-Garcia et al., 2023), occupational therapists' tendencies to avoid the issue of racism in this inquiry corresponds moreso with Pooley & Beagan's (2021) contention that the discipline may be afraid of oppression.

Novak & Honan's (2019) systematic review of occupational therapy practices highlighted the need for research and proposed interventions to address the situated nature of participation and consider individual, contextual, and occupational factors. In problematizing normative ideas underscoring participation focused practices, this inquiry contributes to the knowledges on the importance of understandings children's play opportunities as situated and relational with diverse interrelated constraints. While school-based practice research has fore fronted the need to shift to occupation focused practices, this inquiry also contributes knowledges that support Brackmaan et al.'s (2017) assertion that current constructions of play as occupation also prioritise play for self. In identifying the consequences of the individualising of choice this inquiry draws attention to the need for further consideration of how conceptualisations of play as occupation as freely chosen may contribute to individualistic practices.

While school-based practice research and policy guidelines focus on how to translate participation focused practice research (WFOT, 2016), the knowledges generated in this inquiry propose that attending to the consequences of existing practices as constitutive with conditions of possibility for occupational injustices may be equally relevant. This inquiry sheds light on the importance of interrogating occupational therapists' identities as disability focused professionals as potentially constraining practices focused on addressing intersectional forms of oppression and the diversity of restrictions on children's equitable play opportunities with(in) schoolyards. This critical examination highlights the constraints of ideas of inclusion and individual choice and the interrelated nature of intentions, practices, and outcomes. In critically interrogating ideas of inclusion, occupational therapists in this inquiry moved to consider ideas of acceptance for diverse ways of doing (with) in schoolyards as more relevant to practices concerned with creating equitable opportunities for play (with)in schoolyards. The next section moves to consider how this inquiry may contribute alternative perspectives on how school-based practices can realize commitments to occupational justice.

Occupational justice (with)in Irish schoolyards.

Given critiques within occupational science scholarship regarding the performative use of occupational justice concepts (Emery-Whittington, 2021; Hammell & Began, 2016), the need to interrogate the relevance and shared understandings of occupational (in)justice in relation to play and practices concerned with play in the context of Irish schoolyards was an important dimension of this thesis. Dialoguing with teachers and occupational therapists on their existing practices and practice possibilities provided a mechanism of raising consciousness towards constructing shared understandings with theory with(in) practices (Study II & IV). The iterative generation of knowledges on play (with)in Irish schoolyards as situated and relational shifted focus from the individual to consider how collective social practices interrelated with conditions of possibility for equitable opportunities to play (Study II, III & IV). Generating understandings of certain ways of saying, doing, and relating as prefigured but not predetermined contributed to the construction of practice possibilities that (re)mattered occupations as central to disrupting practice traditions in tension with occupational justice ideals (Study III & IV). The knowledges constructed on practice possibilities as a process of "*finding the play*" therefore propose that engaging with critical occupational perspectives and justice focused praxis can support the creation of conditions of possibility for equitable play with(in) schoolyards.

This section first considers the knowledges generated on what occupational justice might mean in the context of breaktimes in Irish schoolyards and moves to examine how the process of "*finding the play*" relates to existing research on school-based practices concerned with play in schoolyards.

In adopting a critical occupational perspective this inquiry made visible the social processes and diverse arrangements that interrelated with inequitable opportunities for play (with)in Irish schoolyards. However, as advocated in recent critical theorizing (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Nayar & Stanley, 2023; Venkatapuram 2023) it was equally necessary to generate shared understandings of what constitutes occupational justice (with)in Irish schoolyards to inform praxis possibilities. This inquiry also generated insights into play (with)in Irish schoolyards as emergent and as creating conditions of possibility for fun, connection, and solidarity. While children described everyday mundane ways of playing along with(in) the *hard yard* as play, these play experiences were absent from their constructions of "best play". Within play scholarship, violence, exclusion, and oppressions are predominantly represented as entirely separate to play, as barriers to play and as negating the very possibility of play as a freely chosen subjective experience of fun (Eberle, 2014; Henricks, 2015; Russell, 2021). Occupational science theorizing similarly constructs understandings of occupational justice as the absence of avoidable harms, oppressions, and inequitable concentrations of power (Galvaan & Van der Merwe, 2021; Guajardo et al., 2015; Guajardo Cordoba & Maltifano., 2023; Hammell 2017; Hocking et al., 2022). Whether children's habitual mundane experiences of play constitute "real play" is then worth considering particularly given children's perspectives on play as "just" what children do on the Irish schoolyard.

This inquiry's construction of knowledges on play as creating possibilities for fun, solidarity, and friendship extends on Moore & Lynch's (2018) examination of play as occupation as a determinant of happiness and also connects with Venkatapuram's (2023) work on the meta capability of health capabilities and capabilities scholarship on fertile functionings (Robeyns, 2021). Equitable opportunities for play can thus be considered as fertile functionings that support other capabilities creating real possibilities for being and doing well (Guajardo et al., 2015; Russell et al., 2023) while conversely the absence of play capabilities represent a corrosive disadvantage, restricting these possibilities. This interpretation contributes further insights into play as significant to children's opportunities to flourish with(in) schoolyards (Ramstetter et al., 2021) and as

important to children's health and social lives (Russell, 2021). Furthermore, these insights highlight how restrictions on play can perpetuate inequities for certain children. Educational scholarship has identified the need for "better theories" on inclusion that moves from placement and support for those identified as "at risk" to creating cohesive communities (Byrne & Lynch, 2017; Nilholm, 2021). This inquiry's constructions of knowledges on the transformative potential with(in) play to create connections and solidarity may contribute to ways of leveraging the potential within play during breaktimes to support inclusive educational goals (Clevenger, 2023; McNamara et al., 2017). The knowledges constructed shift focus however from play as contributing to social learning or expectations for co-operative play to how equitable opportunities for play with(in) schoolyards creates conditions of possibility for doing well together in this shared space.

In examining the social processes of play, this inquiry also contributes insights into intersubjective and embodied dimensions of occupation identified as requiring greater consideration in recent research (Angell, 2014; Bailliard et al., 2022; Pooley & Beagan, 2021). The inquiry constructed knowledges on how children's experiences of emergent play (with)in Irish schoolyards involved the collective use of spaces and resources and feeling of happiness from being part of a shared experience of play. Children's collective reenactment of shared play experiences during group walking interviews highlighted the reciprocal nature of these play experiences and how shared play created intersubjective meanings. This inquiry also shed light on the inherent vulnerabilities of both children and adults' and interdependent emotional dimensions of social practices (with)in schoolyards. Children experienced "*being nice and not nice*" as they negotiated social relationships while teachers described schoolyard conflicts seeping into classrooms and shared worries regarding children's exclusion (with)in schoolyards. The knowledges generated emphasising the emotional dimension (with)in social practices contributes to occupational science theorizing on inclusion as fluid negotiated social processes (Edwards et al., 2021; Kaelin et al., 2019; Morville & Jessen Winge, 2019; Kantartzis, 2019) whereby children's experiences of play often held contradicting intentions and feelings that interrelated with(in) complex relationships in the constant (re)production of the social space of the Irish schoolyard. Children's experiences of play as emergent however held possibilities to disrupt the "*hard yard*" cultivating possibilities for connection for all children reflecting Lorde's (2012) theorising on shared joy as "*a bridge between sharers that lessens the threat of their difference*" (p.56).

Concluding that friendship is the "*most important social glue in contemporary society*" (p.3), Blatterer (2021) asserts the benefits of examining the consequences of friendship at the collective level. This inquiry's construction of play as emergent aligns with Nyman & Isaksson's (2021) concept of enacted togetherness as a process of intersubjective meaning making. Aligning with the construction of play as a relational capability, enacted togetherness emphasizes how being invited into shared occupations, and doing with and for others gives access to resources to express and develop identities and experience togetherness and belonging. Enacted togetherness may then offer a way to explore how being invited or not invited into play and playing with and for others interrelates with "doing" friendship with(in) schoolyards. The knowledges constructed in this inquiry on the interrelated nature of play and friendship and the importance of both to children's positive experiences suggests that equitable opportunities for friendship may be equally as important as play to realizing occupational justice (with)in Irish schoolyards.

However, as this inquiry has highlighted, we cannot assume or as Nilsson et al. (2018) suggests "*trust that the processes taking place in play*" (p.243) will create conditions of possibility for doing well (with)in schoolyards particularly in schoolyards with diverse interrelated constraints. Corresponding with theorizing on collective occupations, the inquiry's construction of play choices as relational cohered with how "*occupation happens in the spaces between people*" (Kantartzis, 2019, p.562) and understandings of play as always becoming not in the developmental but in the ontological sense corresponding with recent post-humanist examinations (Änggård, 2016; Kane, 2015; Lester, 2020; Woodyer et al., 2016). The knowledges generated on children's choices as interrelated (with)in social practices and contingent on interdependencies between humans and non-human elements therefore support conceptualizations of capabilities and agency as relational (Lester, 2020; Russell et al., 2023). While diverse constraints create certain conditions of possibility for equitable opportunities(with)in schoolyards, this inquiry highlights the centrality of occupations -the sayings, doings and relatings- to sustain or disrupt ways of doing together. The iterative generation of knowledges in this inquiry contribute to the construction of occupational justice not only as an outcome to be realized but as interrelated with(in) situated collective social practices in the ongoing (re)production of social worlds with(in) schoolyards. This inquiry suggests that this is the point of departure for considering practice possibilities concerned with children's play as an issue of occupational (in)justice in schoolyards.

Practice possibilities concerned with play as an issue of occupational justice (with)in schoolyards.

The core elements of school-based practice recommendations involve working collaboratively with teachers, parents, and children, focusing on occupations, and identifying and addressing the barriers to equitable opportunities to participate in schools (Laverdure et al., 2019). The proposed process of "*finding the play*" involves co-constructing in relationships of solidarity contextualised understandings of existing collective practices to raise consciousness on strengths and inequities and generate alternative conditions of possibility concerned with occupational justice with(in) schoolyards. The practice possibilities proposed thus extend on school-based practice recommendations and resonate with the principles adopted in occupational justice focused frameworks and approaches (Galvaan & Peters, 2017; Lopes & Maltifano, 2021; Pereira & Whiteford, 2021; Whiteford, 2023). The practice possibilities constructed thus suggest that harnessing critical occupational perspectives and justice focused approaches may contribute to addressing the challenges realising occupational justice commitments in relation to play (with)in schoolyards and to school-based praxis.

The theory of practice architectures provided a mechanism of raising consciousness with occupational therapists on how socially situated practices (with)in schoolyards interrelated with diverse arrangements and conditions of possibility for play (with)in Irish schoolyards supporting the identification of issues of occupational injustice. The knowledges generated during this action research process contributed to the construction of "*finding the play*" to support justice focused praxis. Corresponding with critical occupational science and play scholarship on the importance of generating practice knowledges with theoretical and technical knowledges in specific contexts (Arntzen, 2018; Farias et al., 2019; Guajardo et al., 2015; Russell, 2017) "*finding the play*" contributes knowledges on how theory contributes to constructing understandings of existing situations through shared dialogue. The proposed process of "*finding the play*" provides a mechanism of raising consciousness on intentions, existing social practices, and anticipated outcomes to co-construct with children and teachers a contextualised shared project (with)in schoolyards. Importantly "*finding the play*" forefronts occupations/socially situated practices as the central concern of praxis supporting school-based practice recommendations.

In considering the process of co-constructing a shared project, this inquiry constructed knowledges on two important dimensions that may support justice focused praxis; solidarity as the basis of collaborative relationships and a shift to consider occupational justice in relation to collective social practices. Before discussing how "*finding the play*" may support future praxis in an Irish context, these two dimensions require consideration.

The importance and ongoing challenges with developing reciprocal collaborative working relationships within schools has been a focus of research on school-based occupational therapy practices highlighting as in this inquiry the need for; sharing of expertise; respectful recognition of contextual constraints; and partnership approaches (Bonnard et al., 2022; Bolton & Plattner, 2019; Cahill & Bazyk, 2020; Clough, 2019; Fitzgerald & MacCobb, 2022; Meuser et al., 2023; Missiuna et al., 2015). The knowledges constructed in this inquiry highlight also the importance of examining "at risk" assumptions and need to move towards co-constructing contextualised knowledges in relationships with children and teachers resonating with ideas of reciprocal ethical justice focused practices (Cordoba, 2020; Ramugondo, 2015). This inquiry drew attention to the importance of creating spaces for Irish Travellers to generate their own narratives on play; the benefits of walking with children to understand their experiences of play (with)in specific schoolyards and teachers desire for time to dialogue together rather than receive "generalist" recommendations. Furthermore, this inquiry emphasises a strengths focused approach that recognises school communities as holders of contextualised knowledges and focuses on harnessing existing strengths and unrealized potentials. While current school-based and justice-focused occupational therapy practices position occupational therapists as partners, collaborators and allies, there is less acknowledgement as Simaan (2020) highlights to occupational justice outcomes as equally relevant to occupational therapists. In constructing understandings of occupational therapy practices as interdependent with equitable opportunities for occupational justice (with)in Irish schoolyards, this inquiry highlights raising consciousness on occupational therapy practices as an equally important dimension of praxis. In shedding light on the interdependencies of children's play, professional practices and systemic and societal structures, this inquiry thus proposes solidarity as the basis of collaborative practice relationships. Solidarity as a predisposition to justice focused practices is identified in recent occupational science scholarship (Pereira & Whiteford, 2021; Simaan, 2020; Venkatapuram, 2023) further emphasising the benefits of engaging with critical occupational perspectives to support school-based justice focused praxis.

The process of "*finding the play*" proposes co-constructing rather than pre-determining praxis outcomes, however the knowledges constructed also highlight praxis as interrelated with justice focused normative values. While aligning with recent research on occupational therapy practices as relational, situated, and generative (Bontje et al., 2022) this inquiry's problematization of normative ideas underpinning practices also coheres with recent research on the need to clarify rather than assume shared values and intentions to progress critical praxis (Farias & Rudman, 2019; Galvaan & Peters, 2017; Lopes & Maltifano, 2021). The construction of occupational justice as a dynamic process of doing well together interrelated with(in) situated collective social practices in this inquiry therefore requires consideration in relation to existing constructions of occupational justice.

Occupational science theorizing on justice and rights has drawn on capabilities approaches to shift the evaluative space to focus on individuals' "real" equitable freedoms and opportunities to participate in valued and necessary occupations (Bailliard, 2016; Hammell, 2017; Hocking & Mace, 2022; Pereira & Whiteford, 2021). While Robeyns (2021) distinguishes between ethical individualism (individuals as the unit of moral concern) and ontological individualism (only individuals exist), this inquiry highlights how focusing on individual freedoms risks neglecting the situated and relational nature of play alongside the ongoing complication of whose capabilities are deemed most important with(in) schoolyards. As Fielding (2022) suggests alongside positive and negative freedoms, there is also freedom in community and the rights to care and reciprocity with(in) an inclusive democratic community. The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights recognises not just the dignity, freedom, and equality of each individual but "*their solidarity with one another*". (Article 1, UDHR). More recently a complimentary Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities (InterAction Council 1997) attempted to rebalance asymmetries resulting from a focus on individual rights. This declaration emphasised the need for greater recognition of the interconnectedness of peoples, of the rights of others, of shared agency and responsibilities to address common challenges and share burdens and of the need for solidarity to realize more equitable worlds. Irish intercultural, inclusive and wellbeing policies have since 2005, emphasized responsibilities as equally relevant to rights and the need to both challenge unfair discrimination and respect, celebrate and recognise diversity to contribute to the development of pluralist intercultural Irish societies (Devine et al., 2020; N.C.C.A, 2017;2023; NCSE, 2011;2017; 2024).

Existing conceptualisations of occupational justice and occupational rights position justice focused praxis as concerned with "*pursuing occupational justice for all*" by "*identifying and addressing the capabilities, opportunities, and freedom of choice for individuals, communities and populations to participate in society*" (WFOT, 2019, p.1). Justice focused praxis approaches advocate for greater attention to social issues and a shift towards community and societal level interventions (Galvaan & Peters, 2017; Maltifano et al., 2021; Whiteford, 2023; Pollard et al., 2023). This inquiry proposes that justice focused praxis therefore have clear normative values embedded within core assumptions on the interrelationships between occupations and equitable opportunities for health and social participation (Hocking, 2017; Pentland et al., 2018) and conceptualisations of occupational justice and occupational rights. Furthermore, this inquiry proposes that the interdependent nature of rights and responsibilities can be best examined as situated and relational with(in) collective schoolyards practices. Theorizing on collective occupations has highlighted the importance of understanding situated practices in attempting to identify inequitable constraints and construct shared understandings of how we can act together and alongside each other (Brackmaan et al., 2017; Kantartzis, 2019; Núñez et al., 2021; Parra Molina et al., 2020; Ramugondo, 2015). Occupational therapists, teachers and children's in this inquiry held shared ideas on the need for schoolyards that create safe, equitable spaces and accept all children's diverse identities, preferences, and abilities. However, as highlighted in this inquiry, diverse constraints interrelated with the continued (re)production within collective occupations of inequitable conditions of possibility for play (with)in Irish schoolyards. Critical educational and occupational science scholarship similarly highlights how inequities with(in) Irish schoolyards require the perpetuation of privilege and dominance by others (Lynch, 2018; Ramugondo & Kronenberg, 2015; Smyth et al., 2015; Trentham, 2022). Shifting focus to considering occupational justice in relation to collective occupations thus importantly also offers a way to raise consciousness on responsibilities to address inequalities between those with privilege and those who are oppressed; adopt anti racist praxis; and disrupt and dismantle inequitable social practices. However, understanding occupational justice as interrelated with(in) situated collective social practices also supports the co-construction of what "doing well together" might mean in specific contexts. "*Finding the play*" thus understands practice possibilities concerned with occupational justice as always situated struggles towards pluriversal rather than universal social worlds.

This inquiry proposes that school-based practices may benefit from greater engagement with critical theorizing on occupational justice, collective occupations, and the theory of practice architectures to contribute to justice focused praxis by raising consciousness on occupational (in)justices in relation to *all* children's equitable opportunities for play with(in) schoolyards. The discussion now considers how the knowledges generated in this inquiry may support future praxis.

Implications and points of departure for future research/practices.

This thesis focused on the interrelated nature of theory/practice /research and the knowledges generated propose that critical occupational perspectives can contribute to realizing occupational justice praxis with(in) schoolyards. The proposed implications and considerations for future research and practice are thus presented as interrelated.

Implications and consideration for research/practices concerned with creating equitable conditions of possibility for play in Irish schoolyards.

The critical occupational perspectives adopted in this inquiry supported the generation of knowledges on play as situated and relational. In generating insights into the social processes (with)in play and diverse interrelated arrangements, this approach to considering play may contribute to ongoing attempts to advocate for greater consideration of children's play with(in) schoolyards.

The knowledges constructed on play in Irish schoolyards as an issue of occupational justice highlight the need for further research on how children's play rights are provided for with(in) Irish schoolyards. The critical action research process adopted in this inquiry and walking methods provide a potential way of exploring with children and teachers play in diverse schoolyard contexts. Given the limited data on socio-spatial dimensions of play in Irish schoolyards, this inquiry's use of mapping tools provides a potential way of constructing knowledges on how play happens and existing play provision. This could be complimented by examining national spatial data sets in relation to compliance with minimum schoolyard spatial guidelines and extending to use creative visual methodologies, play value assessment tools and technologies such as GPS (Global Positioning Systems) to explore with children and teachers how spatial, material, and social arrangements interrelate with social practices including play (with)in schoolyards.

While play specific policies have been identified as lacking in relation to Irish schoolyards (Moore & Lynch, 2018; Marron, 2008), interdisciplinary research has highlighted how wider school policies and guidelines can influence how schoolyards are used (Baines & Blatchford, 2023; Beresin, 2016; Larsson & Rönnlund, 2020; McKendrick, 2019; Russell, 2021). This inquiry also shed light on the interrelationships between providing for play as an issue of occupational justice and Irish inclusive and intercultural educational policies. This inquiry proposes that greater consideration of play (with)in breaktimes can contribute to inclusive education agendas to create welcoming school spaces that foster respectful relationships and friendships. Furthermore, the knowledges constructed shed light on how an occupational perspective can contribute insights into how exclusionary practices, bullying and inequities are (re)produced within schoolyards which may provide alternative ways of addressing these substantive issues.

Implications and consideration for research/practices on school-based occupational therapy practices concerned with play in Irish schoolyards.

The knowledges constructed on play as occupation in the specific context of Irish schoolyards are particularly relevant to occupational therapy practices. In providing further insights into the importance of play in children's school lives and consequences of constraints and inequities, this inquiry supports occupational therapists with focusing on play as an issue of occupational justice (with)in Irish schools. Importantly, this inquiry suggests greater consideration of play as relational and situated to support understanding of how play choices interrelate with diverse arrangements and plural ways of playing as children. While existing occupational therapy and play research recommends attending to the spatial material arrangements within schoolyards, this inquiry provides additional support to consider social, discursive, and cultural dimensions as equally relevant. In drawing attention to the importance of identities, relationships, friendships, and emotions with(in) play in schoolyards this inquiry highlights the need for further research on these aspects of play as occupation. The inquiry's proposal to consider play as interrelated with(in) collective social practices offers a way to think with occupational science theorizing on collective occupations and the concept of enacted togetherness to identify ways of approaching this research.

Given the recent national policy review's identification of occupational therapists as a significant factor in progressing the School Inclusion Model (N.C.S.E, 2023) in an Irish context, this inquiry has generated knowledges that may support school-based practices and address the constraints identified in existing research. The proposed process of "*finding the play*" emphasises the potential benefits of the theory of practice architectures as a mechanism of raising consciousness on existing social practices that aligns with collaborative occupation focused recommendations. Aligning with occupational science critical scholarship on praxis "*finding the play*" provides a way of embedding theory within practices and putting to use occupational science knowledges to support occupation focused praxis. Understanding occupations as socially situated forefronts the need to consider how social-political, cultural-discursive, and spatial-material arrangements interrelate with occupations within intersubjective spaces. This offers a way of raising consciousness on the potential constraints of dominant normative ideas by highlighting the consequences from an occupational perspective. Given the challenges identified in adopting tiered approaches within school-based practices (Lynch et al., 2023), the theory of practice architectures and refocus on collective occupations (with)in schoolyards also provides an alternative way of considering interventions for individual children, groups of children and the whole school with an understanding of social practices as interdependent with societal and service ecologies. Occupational therapists highlighted in this inquiry, how existing knowledges on neurodiverse and coaching approaches and skills with analysing the spatial influences on occupations can be harnessed to contribute to mechanisms of raising consciousness and reconstructing alternative ways of practicing with(in) schoolyards. This highlights the salience of this approach with occupational therapists' ideals for occupation focused practice. The theory of practice architectures provides a potential way of evaluating outcomes of interventions that have proven difficult to date, for example, an intervention to raise consciousness on what the shared understanding of inclusion within schoolyards is; an intervention to examine how ways of relating to one another as children and teachers enables or constrains play opportunities on schoolyards. The proposed process of "*finding the play*" thus also provides opportunities for contextualised research on the outcomes of justice focused praxis in school contexts.

While reflexivity is embedded within current occupational therapy practice recommendations, this inquiry highlights the benefits of dialogue as an approach for occupational therapists to create spaces to collaboratively examine existing practices, interrogate concepts and ideas and construct shared understandings. This approach recognises the capacities held within groups and communities to harness their existing strengths and so aligns with justice focused praxis.

Occupational therapists' identified mapping as beneficial in (re)mattering occupation and as corresponding with existing occupational therapy skills with analysing the interrelationships between environments and occupations. Aligning with play and occupational therapy research (Lester, 2020; Madsen & Josephsson, 2017) this inquiry proposes that mapping offers a strengths focused approach to occupation focused praxis to collaboratively examine with children and teachers the situated nature of occupations.

The importance and urgency of adopting anti racist practices is emphasised in this thesis. The absence of attention to racism reflects a wider interdisciplinary neglect of this substantive issue within an Irish context (Kitching, 2020; McGinley & Keane, 2022). For occupational therapists, national accreditation and competency standards include commitments to human rights and culturally competent, non-discriminatory, inclusive practices (CORU, 2019). However, given the dearth of research to date the need for greater attention to anti-racist approaches and how occupational therapy's occupational perspective can contribute to addressing racism is required. The proposed mechanisms of raising consciousness using dialogical approaches may contribute to anti racist praxis.

In examining the constraints on occupational therapy practices in an Irish context, this thesis has shed light on the influence of decontextualised normative ideas embedded within service and professional structures in reproducing individualistic practices. Furthermore, this thesis draws attention to school practice traditions unique to the Irish context and the continued pervasive oppression of Irish Travellers. Despite Ireland's post-colonial status, there has been limited examination of the influence of coloniality on how people live their lives, on how services are designed and implemented and on the continued oppression of Irish Travellers particularly. However, there is increasing awareness of the need to confront coloniality in an Irish context and according to McVeigh & Rolston (2022) this is central to tackling racist ideologies perpetuating inequalities and reconnecting with understandings of who we are and who we might be.

The adoption of constructs such as "Meitheal" (Gaelic word for the coming together of communities to support one another) in children's social services also suggests a movement towards reconnecting with traditional understandings of ways of living well together on this island. Recent occupational science scholarship has adopted a decolonial lens to examine the impact of coloniality on occupations described as privileging certain ways of being, doing, knowing, and belonging, as normative at a societal level (Emery-Whittington & Te Maro, 2018; Ramirez et al., 2023; Simaan, 2020). This thesis proposes that thinking with occupational science and decolonial scholarship to examine coloniality in relation to occupational therapy practices can support more contextualised understandings of occupational justice in an Irish context.

Doing something different(ly)

Frank 's (2022) critique of occupational science's stalled revolution argued for a focus on the empirical as well as subjective meanings of occupations. In constructing understandings of collective occupations as constitutive with the (re)production of our social worlds, this thesis suggests that occupational science and occupational therapy may benefit from also entangling with relational ontologies and epistemologies.

As this inquiry progressed, connections between the data and post humanist ideas were made in how children and teachers experienced play as "cracks" within routines; of a flat ball stopping play; of puddles creating play; of changing seasons producing possibilities; of cuts & bruises generating stress and of feelings sustaining friendships. The troubling of individual agency in this thesis leaned into scholarship that extends to consider a world where human agencies are not considered the axis upon which the world turns. This is not a return to discussions of structure/agency but an alternative conceptualisation of the world as not preexisting the relations or practices that bring it about. Referred to as more than human, these ideas described as the ontological turn in science propose a shift from (re)presentation to pluralist ontologically generative approaches which decentre the human (St Pierre, 2020). Kemmis' (2019) theory of practice architectures engages with relational ontologies however restrains from considering more than human agencies. Collaborative theorizing on practice architectures with decolonial ideas however suggests scholars may open up to this possibility (Mahon et al., 2017).

Occupational science theorizing on the generative and transactional nature of occupations; on the need to refocus on occupation as the unit of analysis; and as has been discussed to examine collective occupations as occurring in the spaces between relationships all hold the idea of occupation as transformative (Bunting, 2016; Galheigo, 2020; Galvaan, 2015; Kantartzis & Molineux, 2017). Post humanist scholarship extends to consider how both human and non-human elements are intra-related in a constant remaking of the world (Barad, 2007). Post humanist scholarship then centres doing however widens the boundaries of current thinking on occupation to consider not just how social-material elements transact with human doing but how they are equally agential. This suggestion opens possibilities to consider occupation at the molecular and metaphysical level. Occupational science's potential to explore "doing" at the more than human level offers way to consider how inclement weather intra-relates with going outside on Irish schoolyards; how differing play objects not just afford but initiate, stop, or extend play and may also be helpful in attempts to grapple with issues of planetary health, sustainability, and artificial intelligences. Post humanist ideas resonate with indigenous and decolonial scholarship on human interdependencies with the world and pluriversal cosmologies (Smith, 2021; Todd, 2016). The use of "post" is then problematic in suggesting this thinking is new and requires mindful consideration of the potential for further epistemic injustices (Cordoba, 2020; deBrito et al., 2023; Todd, 2016). While play and childhood scholars have begun to examine the world with post humanist ideas (Änggård, 2016; Kane, 2015; Lester, 2020), there have been few attempts within occupational science. However, Barlott et al., (2017) have drawn on Deleuzian concepts to consider how occupational science can move from affirmative to disruptive poles, to reimagine alternative futures.

Cohering post-humanist and decolonial scholarship is the contention that striving to think up new approaches, new solutions to the injustices of this world while continuing to consider humans as separate and the world as one reality will return us to the same place. As Akomalfe suggests ""*what if the way we respond to the crisis is part of the crisis?".* A pluriversal politics as Escobar (2020) imagines engages with the politics of the possible. Usefully, Barad (2007) has considered the question about what it is we can do and proposed an ethics of accountability and responsibility for what exists. Occupational science is a searching for a way to realize the potential of occupation, this thesis proposes that greater consideration of relational ontologies may reconnect us with understandings of possibilities as always already becoming, requiring us to slow down rather than advance.

In proposing a shift to think about collective occupations in the shared space of the schoolyard, this thesis also found resonances with ideas of commoning. In examining the need to interrogate how existing occupational therapy practices can also be constitutive with the reproduction of inequities, the thesis connected with Illich's (1973) critical scholarship on how institutions create dependencies that best serve professional rather than community needs. Aligning with research on community-based, collective, and social approaches to occupational therapy, ideas of the community as commons emphasise the importance of recognising, preserving, and strengthening existing community resources (Russell, 2020b). Recent scholarship has extended to consider commoning as situated collective practices and to examine more than human interdependencies (Bresnihan, 2015; García-López et al., 2021). Drawing on feminist perspectives Federici (2018) considers principles of co-operation, care and nurturing as central to human flourishing emphasising the unpaid work involved in sustaining everyday life. Doing commoning recognises the fragile affective ties and relations of power that create unpredictable yet interdependent futures as Tsing et al., (2017) reminds *"humans and non-humans are tied together whether they like it or not,.. the commons is first and foremost about collaborative survival"* (p.255). Doing commoning connects post-humanist and decolonial ideas with justice focused praxis providing a way of articulating how collective occupations produce the social fabric and the need to construct a shared project that recognises inherent interdependencies. The construction of play as emergent in this thesis suggests that play in shared spaces may be understood as doing commoning or creating the commons through relations of reciprocity and solidarity.

Methodological discussion and reflections

Given the inherent pluralism of qualitative research, efforts (and ongoing requirements) to "prove" the relevance of qualitative research have involved much debate on how to achieve and determine quality in research processes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Guba & Lincoln's (1994) criteria for trustworthiness are commonly used to address the rigor and integrity of qualitative research. However, the adoption of postpositivist ideas and language such as member checking, researcher bias and data saturation have been highlighted as often incongruent with the epistemological underpinnings of qualitative research (Clarke, 2022; Harvey, 2022). Levitt et al. (2021) propose "methodological integrity as '*one of the most effective standards for measuring rigour*' (p. 29). Levitt et al.'s (2021) guidance recognises the need for flexibility and aligns with the identification of theoretical and methodological coherence or "fit" as most important for good quality qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2023; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Nayar & Stanley, 2023). Reflexivity on researcher subjectivities and ethical considerations were embedded in the research processes discussed on the methodology section. Moreover, many of the research decisions were considered in this section. However, there is also a need for reflexivity on whether the methodologies support trust and confidence in the research. Levitt et al., (2021) identified two main components to support this 1) Fidelity to subject matter and 2) Utility of research contributions. This section uses these two components to consider the methodological integrity of this inquiry and importantly identify also what may not have worked well and why and what alternative methodologies and methods might have been more effective.

Fidelity to subject

This component is concerned with how research connects with the phenomenon being studied. To understand play in the context of breaktimes in schoolyards, this inquiry completed a review of interdisciplinary scholarship beyond occupational therapy. The methodological decision to focus on constructing contextualised understandings of play and how play is provided for *with* children and teachers is supported by interdisciplinary recommendations. Moreover, the need to co-construct practice knowledges *with* occupational therapists connects with research recommendations on justice focused praxis. Ongoing consultation with the wider expertise on the phenomenon of play within the P4Play project also contributes to the fidelity of the inquiry aims.

The methodological choices in this inquiry also cohered with critical theoretical underpinnings which position the phenomenon of play and professional practices as situated and relational. Research aims to construct a contextualised analysis were enhanced by gathering diverse perspectives in the context of concern, while making clear the intent to generate situated knowledges rather than construct generalisations. Cohering with critical research recommendations the inquiry focused on constructing understandings of how play interrelated with inequities and exclusion in Irish schoolyards. This was supported by focusing on Irish Traveller children's play in Study I, recruiting children attending DEIS schools in Study III and recruiting teachers and occupational therapists with a stated interest in play as a right and an issue of occupational justice in Study II & IV.

The decision to exclude grey literature from the scoping review in Study I was identified as a potential limitation. Furthermore, while completing the scoping review process the potential to extend to consider alternative forms of knowledges such as oral histories and visual data was also identified. This is relevant given Irish Travellers identification of oral knowledges as particularly important in sustaining shared collective histories (deBhairdiún, 2018). Irish Traveller led research is an important recommendation from Study I which can support the identification of methods best suited to construct knowledges on Irish Traveller children's play. In attempting to avoid assumptive categories while recruiting across two schools identified as disadvantaged, Study III risked discordance. However, clarity regarding the focus of the research on the phenomenon of play as practice, was supported by inclusion criteria which did not focus on any specific identities or characteristics but rather on recruiting children who were interested in sharing their experiences of play across two school sites. The recruitment of children of different ages and genders and from different classes across the two schools may have benefitted from further consideration in terms of the analysis. Producing a spatial map of each schoolyard was considered as potentially contributing to situating the study for readers also. The prioritisation of maintaining privacy and focusing on the practice of play rather than children's identities was however the main rationale for not pursuing these options. The lack of engagement with families beyond letters and school communication due to the school's busy schedule also a limiting factor evident in how several children expressed a desire to participate but were unable to complete the consent forms. However longer engagement with the schools would have overcome this challenge and may also have supported greater numbers of children to engage with the research.

The methods chosen in this inquiry for each Study were informed by interdisciplinary recommendations with a focus on co-constructing contextualised knowledges of play and professional practices (with)in Irish schoolyards and in Study 4 the co-construction of practice possibilities. The sharing of inquiry aims and prompt questions and in Study II & IV additional reading supported the aim to co-construct knowledge and the dialogical approach to interviewing. This provided participants with time to consider the phenomenon of interest and take a more active role in the interviews. The opportunity to complete a second interview supported children with reflecting and adding to their initial interviews. However, while the researcher spent time prior to interviews in both schools, additional time with children in Study III may have contributed to further insights. This is also relevant to the critical action research process as additional time may have afforded all participants the opportunity to complete the mapping task.

The use of an existing conceptual framework to map the factors identified as influencing Irish Traveller children's play contributes to contextualised knowledges. In Study II, while virtual interviews were beneficial in supporting teachers to participate, the walking interviews provided more extensive knowledges on teachers practices and how play was provided for (with)in schoolyards. These benefits of walking interview methods informed the decision to use this method in Study III alongside children's research recommendations. Children's active engagement and enjoyment of the research process provides further knowledges on the benefits of this method to support the construction of contextualised knowledges on occupations with children. However, children's engagement with the photographing activity (which was also useful in supporting children to remain on topic) and interest in creating a visual map of their schoolyard suggest that Study III may have benefitted from the use of additional spatial and visual methods for example photovoice, photo story and mapping to contribute further understandings of the situated nature of play. These methods are identified as particularly useful for action research processes that focus on creating change. As this was not a focus of Study III beyond providing children's agreed feedback to the school principal, engaging in a participatory process, and using mapping methods was considered inappropriate in terms of the expectations this may have generated. Greater attention to post humanist and indigenous approaches that attend to the agency of matter may also have expanded understandings of the interrelatedness of social and spatial-material dimensions within play in schoolyards.

Reflexivity on initial studies contributed to the choice to use mapping methods in Study IV. However practical constraints on participants access to schoolyards limited the potential to explore more deeply this process which resulted in the decision not to forefront this data in the analysis. Mapping methods were identified as very beneficial in Study IV however to construct understandings of occupations and as a dimensions of justice focused praxis and the potential usefulness of this method was highlighted in research recommendations for this study.

In exploring the differences and relationships within the overall data and locating this theoretically, the analysis and discussion in this thesis further improves the coherence of the overall inquiry which aimed to be iterative in constructing critical knowledges on the situation of play and professional practices. Importantly while adopting a critical perspective supported the mattering most of injustices and inequities, the tension between research and activism was an ongoing dimension of this inquiry. Participants in Study II, III & IV were informed of the critical aims and rationale for each study in initial information letters, during the consent process and before and after interviews. Each study embedded reflexive processes on how the data supported interpretations but also how in focusing on mattering exclusion and inequities, there was a constant risk of neglecting other important dimensions. Key considerations of quality RTA identified by Braun et al., (2022) are useful in considering the analytical approach. Describing the processes involved at each analytical stage in Study II & III, provides a transparent account of how knowledges generated were grounded in data and also consciously interpreted in relation to identified theoretical concepts and researcher subjectivities. In Study IV, co-constructing knowledges was enhanced by sharing focus group transcripts and embedding informal analysis processes. In Study II & IV, the final analysis was also shared with participants inviting further reflections, not as a means of member checking but as part of the ongoing process of co-constructing knowledges. Participants engagement with this was primarily to provide feedback on the benefits of the research in raising their awareness and interest in committing to future actions. Across all four studies, critical reflexivity was enhanced by ongoing collective dialogue within the research team.

Utility of research contributions

The proposed utility of the inquiry and individual studies is underpinned by a clear rationale supported by a comprehensive review of existing research that identified the need for research on play and existing practices in Irish schoolyards. Moreover, in adopting a critical occupational perspective this inquiry aimed to contribute to the dearth of research with children and teachers on their experiences, on issues of inequities and injustice in relation to play in schoolyards and on Irish Traveller children's play. The utility of Study I was also affirmed by Irish Traveller representative organisations as discussed in the methodological section. The recruitment process for Study II & III inviting practitioners concerned with play in schoolyards supported the potential utility of this research with participants highlighting the anticipated outcomes of the research as necessary within their respective disciplines. While entirely situated, transparent documenting of the research decisions attempted to support an evaluation of the integrity and potential resonances of the knowledges generated to other contexts. Given the dearth of research on this topic, the methodological choices and knowledges generated are thus both relevant to the utility of this inquiry.

The cautionary approach adopted to first examine the existing situation is relevant however to criticisms of critical research that fails to achieve and examine actions and outcomes (Denzin et al., 2017; Farias & Rudman, 2019). In Study III, follow up communication with schools included additional schoolyard play resources and offers to support change processes however the decision to restrict the inquiry to exploring with children the existing situation is considered a limitation in this study. The differing experiences of developing reciprocal relationships with professional practitioners and with children in this inquiry emphasised further the need to consider if constructing knowledges on existing situations is sufficient when working with children. The research methods in Study II and Study IV were also limited to the first stage of raising consciousness on existing practices and identifying practice possibilities. However, the utility of the methods in developing critical consciousness and co-constructing knowledges with a community of practitioners concerned with play as an issue of justice have been outcomes of this research. The process supported the construction of a community of practitioners that have continued to engage in wider initiatives in relation to play in schoolyards for example: applying for research grants; sharing knowledges with colleagues at events; completing radio interviews.

The importance of constructing reciprocal relationships with(in) research resonates with critical occupational research (Galvaan & Peters, 2017; Farias & Rudman, 2019; Pollard et al., 2023). Furthermore, the decision following Study I to recommend and support the creation of spaces for Irish Traveller led research rather than continue to focus on Irish Traveller children's play contributes to moves to decolonize research practices.

The use of critical qualitative research methodologies and a thinking with theory approach is considered a meaningful contribution to occupational therapy research given ongoing discussions regarding theory/practice divides. This inquiry provides an example of how theory can contribute to understanding situations and generating knowledges to inform praxis. Furthermore, the use of the theory of practice architectures provides a meaningful contribution to future research and practices concerned with play proving beneficial as a way of examining particularly the social dimensions. The use of the PRISMA protocol, PICO tool and J.B.I guidelines in Study I and the RTA approach to analysis in Study II & III support the integrity and thus the utility of this research. These systematic approaches provide a way of understanding the research processes in this inquiry and potentially replicating the methods. The sharing of metadata in Study I further supports this.

The quality of interpretations generated were undoubtedly constrained by my praxis knowledges as a researcher becoming. The RTA approach to analysis and Kemmis's (2019) scholarship on research as praxis were most useful in recognising and avoiding tendencies towards post positivism. However, enacting the ideals of these approaches requires considerable time, practice and perhaps confidence to develop proficiency with particularly generating unified interpretative themes from data. In honestly describing the methodological decisions made, this thesis however hopes to contribute to understandings of the "messiness" of research that supports the constructions of research as praxis. The acceptance of three of the studies for publication in peer reviewed journals and abstracts to conferences is also considered reflective of the utility of this research. Moreover, requests to discuss the research by media suggest that this research is considered useful at a wider societal level. In terms of the utility of this research the need for further research to explore the implementation of the practice possibilities identified in this thesis is important. The critical action research process used in this inquiry is proposed as a way of approaching this research.

Conclusion

This inquiry contributes insights into children's, teachers and occupational therapists' experiences of play as socially situated practices interrelated with significant spatial, material, and social constraints (with)in Irish schoolyards. In adopting a critical occupational perspective to make visible "*what matters and what is excluded from mattering*" (Barad, 2007, p.148) this inquiry iteratively generated knowledges on the interrelationships between social-discursive and spatial-material constraints and collective social practices in the (re)production of the "*hard yard*" and the inequitable consequences for children with minoritised identities. Moreover, the inquiry shed light on how school and occupational therapy practices can also interrelate with the (re)production of the "*hard yard*" emphasising the consequences of normative discourses, the individualising of children's choices and neglect particularly of social constraints, such as racism (with)in play.

Regardless of whether children play together or apart, this thesis highlights the inherent interdependencies of all children and teachers (with)in this shared space. This thesis therefore proposes a shift in focus to how collective social practices are central to conditions of possibility for occupational (in)justice (with)in schoolyards. Moreover, the knowledges constructed with children highlight how moments of shared play can create conditions of possibility for fun, connection, and friendship. Play offers a way to do differently and creates conditions of possibilities for diverse capabilities. Creating equitable conditions of possibility for play then invites possibilities to disrupt exclusionary, individualistic, and inequitable practices (with)in schoolyards and contribute to inclusive education agendas. "*Finding the play*" provides a mechanism of raising consciousness in solidarity with children and teachers on *how* inequities are (re)produced within collective social practices and more importantly how to construct alternative ways of doing well together and creating conditions of possibility for occupational justice within Irish schoolyards. In constructing understandings of occupational (in)justice in an Irish context as always becoming with(in) everyday socially situated practices this inquiry contributes to justice focused praxis.

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Faoi scath le chéile/ we live in each other's shadows.

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My contributions in this project

The point of departure for this thesis was to contribute to knowledges on practice in schoolyards as part of the P4Play research programme. The overall conception of this thesis was completed jointly with supervisors and submitted and approved at an LTU admissions seminar.

Authorship contribution statements support research integrity by making clear each author's contribution to the work and are also an important requirement of a doctoral degree. The authorship for all studies in this thesis was discussed with supervisors at the research planning stage and reaffirmed prior to submission. Based on the international committee of medical journal editors' authorship criteria (ICMJE, 2023), all authors agreed to be accountable for the research and approved the final manuscript and made contributions at the design, data collection and/or analysis stage and with drafting and/or revising the manuscript. The ICMJE (2023) authorship criteria is used to describe in more detail my contributions to each study (Table 5).

Table 5: Overview of Author Contributions

	Study I	Study II	Study III	Study IV
Design	Developed study aim and design for the study with supervisors. Evaluated review methodologies Drafted study protocol in consultation with supervisors, NGO stakeholders and university librarians	Developed study aim and design for the study with supervisors.	Developed study aim with supervisors. Reviewed methodologies and agreed study design with supervisors.	Developed study aim and design for the study with supervisors.
Ethics & Data Management	Responsible for completing documents required for UCC ethics committee including study information and consent forms. Completed draft document for Swedish ethics committee which supervisors translated and submitted. Responsible for managing data throughout the research in line with Data Management plan developed jointly with supervisors.			
Data Collection	Completed initial database searches and managed data	Responsible for participant recruitment and organisation of interviews	Responsible for participant recruitment and organisation of interviews	Responsible for participant recruitment and organisation of focus groups
	Completed title & abstract review (Supervisors completed separately)	Designed interview protocol with support from supervisors	Designed interview protocol with support from supervisors	Designed focus group protocol with support from supervisors
	Actively involved in full text review	Completed interviews	Completed interviews	Completed focus groups
Data Analysis	Drafted data extraction charts	Transcribed interviews	Transcribed interviews	Transcribed focus groups
	Completed initial data extraction	Coded interviews and generated initial themes	Coded interviews and generated initial themes	Completed initial analysis of focus groups
	Completed final analysis of data jointly with supervisors	Completed final analysis jointly with supervisors.	Completed final analysis jointly with supervisors.	Completed final analysis jointly with supervisors.
Writing	Responsible for drafting and revising manuscripts based on discussions and written feedback from supervisors. Primary responsibility as corresponding author to communicate with and complete administrative requirements of each journal and be available to respond to queries regarding the publication.			

Dissertations in Occupational Therapy at Luleå University of Technology

Doctoral theses

Gunilla Isaksson. Det sociala nätverkets betydelse för delaktighet i dagligaaktiviteter: erfarenheter från kvinnor med ryggmärgsskada och deras män. (Health Science and Human Services) 2007.

Maria Prellwitz. Playground accessibility and usability for children with disabilities: experiences of children, parents and professionals (Occupational Therapy) 2007

Anneli Nyman. Togetherness in Everyday Occupations. How Participation inOn-Going Life with Others Enables Change. (Occupational therapy) 2013.

Cecilia Björklund. Temporal patterns of daily occupations and personal projects relevant for older persons' subjective health: a health promotive perspective. (Occupational therapy) 2015.

Ann-Charlotte Kassberg. Förmåga att använda vardagsteknik efter förvärvadhjärnskada: med fokus mot arbete. (Occupational therapy) 2015.

Ulrica Lundström. Everday life while aging with a traumatic spinal cord injury. (Occupational therapy) 2015.

Marianne Sirkka. Hållbart förbättringsarbete med fokus på arbetsterapi och team Möjligheter och utmaningar. (Occupational therapy) 2016.

Jennifer L. Womack. The Occupation of Caregiving: Moving BeyondIndividualistic Perspectives. (Occupational Therapy) 2018.

Alexandra Olofsson, Possibilities for activity and participation outside home for persons with acquired brain injury. (Occupational Therapy) 2019.

Jenni Riekkola, Older Couples participation in everyday life – when living inchanging and shifting contexts. (Occupational Therapy) 2019.

Ines Wenger. Inclusive Playgrounds: Insights into Play and Inclusion from the Perspectives of Users and Providers (Occupational Therapy), 2023

Licentiate theses

Anita Lindén. Vardagsteknik. Hinder och möjligheter efter förvärvad hjärnskada. (Health Science) 2009.86

Ann-Louise Lövgren Engström. Användning av vardagsteknik i dagligaaktiviteter - svårigheter och strategier hos personer med förvärvad hjärnskada. (Health Science) 2010.

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