



Article

Parental Play Beliefs in the Developing Areas of China: A Multiple Case Study

Yiqi Zhang ¹, Suzannie K. Y. Leung ^{1,*}  and Hui Li ² 

¹ Department of Curriculum and Instruction, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong; yiqizhang@cuhk.edu.hk

² School of Education, Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW 2109, Australia; Philip.li@mq.edu.au

* Correspondence: suzleung@cuhk.edu.hk

Abstract: Existing studies have explored parental play beliefs in the developed coastal cities in mainland China, leaving parents in developing areas unstudied. This study aimed to understand how these understudied parents view and engage in their children's play at home, using Bronfenbrenner's process–person–context–time (PPCT) model. Eight families were interviewed and observed to explore parental beliefs and practices regarding young children's play at home. Thematic analysis showed that most parents appreciated the importance of play in children's early development but did not know how to scaffold their children's play activities. In addition, the high SES families supported child-led play (i.e., free play), whereas the lower SES families adopted traditional rule-based and adult-driven modes. Therefore, more parent education programs and support should be provided to lower SES families in these developing areas.

Keywords: play; parental beliefs; parental practices; early childhood education



Citation: Zhang, Y.; Leung, S.K.Y.; Li, H. Parental Play Beliefs in the Developing Areas of China: A Multiple Case Study. *Educ. Sci.* **2021**, *11*, 625. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11100625>

Academic Editor: John Barker

Received: 30 August 2021

Accepted: 6 October 2021

Published: 11 October 2021

Publisher's Note: MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Copyright: © 2021 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

China has launched a series of early childhood education (ECE) reforms to import a child-centered approach from Western societies to replace the teacher-directed pedagogy prevalent in Chinese preschools. As a result, ECE experts and authorities have advocated the value of play by focusing primarily on children's choices, exploration, freedom, and autonomy, which conflict with China's deeply rooted Confucian cultural heritage [1]. Previous studies conducted in developed coastal cities in China, such as Shanghai [2], Shenzhen [3], and Fuzhou [4], have suggested that Chinese parents have transformed their traditional views about play to cope with tensions between their *host* beliefs based on Chinese traditional cultures and *guest* ECE notions and practices imported from the West. However, parental play beliefs and practices in developing areas remain unknown [5]. To fill this gap in research, this study explored how parents living in the developing area of China viewed and engaged in their children's play at home. The findings will provide empirical evidence about the nuanced differences in play beliefs and engagements between parents from different social backgrounds.

1.1. Parental Play Beliefs in Contemporary Chinese Societies

In everyday language, play refers to voluntary activities for recreational enjoyment, self-amusement, and pleasure [6]. It takes many different forms in early childhood, including imaginative play, free play, rough-and-tumble play, socio-dramatic play, constructive play, heuristic play, and guided play. All these types of play involve a wide range of behaviors and activities, resulting in varied developmental and learning outcomes [7]. Thus, it has been challenging for educational theorists to settle on a formal concept of play; instead, they agree that play is an ambiguous, multifaceted, and culturally based construct [8].

Scholarly conceptions of play are compatible with what modern curricula refer to as “free play”, or child-led activities defined by autonomy, independence, and a lack of adult-imposed structure or goals [9]. Nonetheless, because of the increased focus on school preparation and accountability [6,10], many early childhood education (ECE) systems across the globe have recommended using playful activities and games to help children accomplish academic goals or make work more engaging, motivating, and entertaining [6,11]. Therefore, some new concepts such as “eduplay” [2], “guided play”, “purposeful play”, “playful learning”, “structured play”, and “teacher-directed play” [12] have been proposed to label this endeavor to balance between children’s right to play and learning for school readiness. These concepts, however, do not completely square with the traditional definitions of play; instead, they are the hybrid and fusion of the Eastern and Western beliefs about early childhood learning and play [13].

In the 21st century, the phenomenon of globalization has been widely observed in the field of ECE around the world, and notably in Asian societies [6,13–15]. The notion of child-centeredness became a globally recognized and accepted ECE concept. The purpose of ECE should be to encourage each child’s uniqueness, personality, freedom, rational thinking, imagination, and leadership [16]. This vision of ECE, a normative philosophy worldwide, is based on various contemporary European and American curricula [17]. In education, the phenomenon of globalization refers to the process by which worldwide influences and trends (e.g., discussions, institutions) end up having a tangible impact on local educational practices and policies. In recent decades, the globalization of education “has served prominently as a channel for bringing dominant Western influences into the non-West” [18] (p. 12). Indeed, this phenomenon has profoundly impacted educational policies on continents such as Asia in terms of defining what quality, effective, and responsive education should be [6,13–15]. Not only have the mindsets of teachers and educational leaders been influenced by this phenomenon, but also parents and caregivers.

However, Western ECE notions are incompatible with cultural values and social mindsets in many Eastern societies, such as China, Korea, and Japan. These societies generally believe in Confucianism, which highly values education as the instrument for social mobility, honoring family, and making societal contributions [19]. According to Confucianism, one’s greatest and ultimate goal is achieving self-perfection and self-realization with discipline, obedience, and effort. This philosophy has directed Chinese parents’ educational ideas away from fun, happiness, and independence [13]. Furthermore, the Confucianism concept of Guan (i.e., teaching children to exhibit proper or expected behaviors) has cultivated a top-down, adult-directed learning culture in both the home and the classroom [13,20].

For example, influenced by Confucian culture, which emphasizes obedience and conformity, Chinese mothers have traditionally played instructor roles [3], making decisions about what to play, how to play, and what should be learned from play during mother–child play interactions [21]. Confucianism is a social and ethical philosophy associated with values such as respect for authority, conformity, loyalty to good leaders, hard work, collectivism, thrift, and an emphasis on education [22,23]. To achieve these purposes, the Chinese learner relies on attitudes such as determination, diligence, endurance of hardships, perseverance, and concentration [6].

Since the end of the 20th century, due to imported values from the West, many Asian countries, including China, have experienced a paradigm shift from direct teaching to the development of appropriate practices [24]. Zhu and Wang believed that the various curriculum models adopted in contemporary China reflect its openness and diversity in early childhood education [25]. Nevertheless, Chinese traditional values, beliefs, and cultures are still evident and even dominant in the early childhood curricula. For instance, the educational authorities highly value traditional Chinese virtues such as self-discipline, emotional control, and moral development [26]. In fact, China’s early childhood education has been labeled as a fusion of Chinese traditional culture, Western culture, and communist culture [27].

Parental play beliefs can affect practices in parent–child interactions, and different parents have shown various ways of interacting with children. It is widely believed that parental beliefs guide parents’ decisions on childrearing [28]. For instance, the parents in the two studies [4,29] distinguished the concepts of youxi (structured play) and wanshua (unstructured play). They believed that early learning might take place in youxi rather than wanshua, as youxi (structured) could be introduced and directed by parents and teachers, whereas wanshua (unstructured) should be initiated and directed by young children. Previous studies conducted in developed cities in mainland China, such as Shanghai and Shenzhen, have provided empirical evidence [3,30]. There are also several ECE studies in rural areas [31–33]. However, it remains essential to explore parental beliefs and practices regarding young children’s play and learning in less-developed urban regions of China. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the beliefs and practices of parents about children’s play in Zhengzhou, which is one of the less-developed urban regions of China.

1.2. Theoretical Framework: The Process–Person–Context–Time (PPCT) Model

Human development and psychology theories can be divided into three key paradigms: mechanist, organicist, and contextualist [34,35]. Contextualist ideas need contextualist approaches [36,37]. The implementation of the *bioecological model* appeared in Bronfenbrenner and Ceci and Bronfenbrenner [38,39]. The process–person–context–time (PPCT) model was found a to be suitable research design to explore fundamental bioecological hypothesis theories and generate subsequent discussions of such theory [40–42]. The central construct of the PPCT model is the proximal method, which refers to the mutual relations between a growing human being and one or more of the entities, objects, and symbols in their immediate setting. Such mutual relationships can become *progressively more complex* [43].

There are three types of personal characteristics: force, resource, and demand [43]. Force features are the nuanced personality traits that can facilitate or maintain proximal processes or interfere with or even prohibit their occurrence. Resource characteristics are the biological, emotional, or experiential tools that people add to proximal systems. One illustration used many times by Bronfenbrenner [44] drew on Drillien’s analysis [45]. Finally, demand characteristics are the readily observable factors that can promote or discourage social context reactions and thereby enable or inhibit the initiation of proximal processes.

By emphasizing the importance of context in human development, Bronfenbrenner’s goal was to redress the balance. Initially, he conceived context as a set of nested environmental structures, including microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, and macrosystems [46]. In the PPCT model, the final construct is time, consisting of three forms of bioecological theory, with the names mimicking those used for the context structures. Microtime deals with what occurs during the proximal processes (i.e., the degree to which the activity or interaction has continuity or discontinuity). Mesotime refers to the degree to which the proximal processes occur over days, weeks, or months. Finally, Macrotime, analogous to the chronosystem that Bronfenbrenner spoke about in earlier iterations of the theory [47], “focuses on the evolving perceptions and events in the wider society, both within and through centuries, as they shape and are influenced by the processes and effects of human evolution throughout existence” [43].

Meanwhile, Lillvist and Wilder’s study of the educational transition from preschool to school for young children with intellectual disabilities has inspired us to analyze learning processes and development in the field of early educational transitions [48]. Contextualizing their research on educational transitions using Bronfenbrenner’s PPCT model, they finally proposed a conceptual framework for the learning journey in the context of early childhood education [49]. However, limited research has focused on the investigation of parental beliefs based on the PPCT model. Accordingly, the following two questions guided this study:

1. What were the beliefs and practices of parents about children’s play?
2. How could parental beliefs be explained through the PPCT model?

2. Materials and Methods

This study adopted a qualitative method to collect various data to comprehensively explore parental play beliefs and practices. The method followed included semi-structured interviews, observations of the home environment, and parent–child interactions.

2.1. Participants and Context

Purposive sampling was adopted in this research to ensure that our sample represented different ages, genders, and socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds [50]. Eight families with children around one to six years old were recruited in Zhengzhou (see Table 1). Zhengzhou is the capital and largest city of Henan Province in the central part of China. At the center of the central plains area and one of the central cities in China, it serves as the political, economic, technological, and educational center of the province. In 2019, Zhengzhou had a population of 10,352,000 inhabitants and a GDP of 1.159 trillion (RMB), and the per capita GDP was 113,139 (RMB). Zhengzhou promotes high-quality and balanced education and the universal development of preschool education. By 2019, there were 414,477 students and 29,922 teachers in Zhengzhou kindergartens. Table 2 shows that the number of kindergartens in Zhengzhou increased from 1454 in 2015 to 1729 in 2019. In total, 275 new kindergartens opened for students during that period.

Table 1. Demographic information regarding the eight families in this study.

Family	Child's Gender and Age	Father's Age	Father's Education and Occupation	Mother's Age	Mother's Education and Occupation	Family Income (RMB/Year)
A	Boy 29 months	30	Bachelor's degree Businessman	35	Bachelor's degree Full-time mother	192,000
B	Boy 66 months	31	Bachelor's degree Businessman	31	Master's degree Journalist	240,000
C	Girl 24 months	29	Bachelor's degree Manager	28	Master's degree Computer Specialist	240,000
D	Boy 13 months	32	Bachelor's degree Office worker	31	Bachelor's degree Doctor	72,000
E	Girl 52 months	32	Bachelor's degree Businessman	30	Bachelor's degree Nurse	10,000
F	Boy 66 months	38	Bachelor's degree Office worker	38	High-school Full-time mother	48,000
G	Boy 37 months	22	Technical college Waiter	21	High-school Full-time mother	48,000
H	Boy 44 months	26	Technical college Factory worker	21	High-school Full-time mother	48,000

Along with this growth, both student and teacher numbers have been increasing. From 2015 to 2019, Zhengzhou recruited almost 7500 new teachers for kindergartens. The average proportion of full-time teachers with an undergraduate degree and above is around 14% [51].

Table 2. Profile of education system in Zhengzhou.

Years	Number of Kindergartens	Number of Students	Number of Full-Time Teachers	Proportion of Full-Time Teachers with Academic Qualifications	Proportion of Full-Time Teachers with and above Undergraduate Degree
2019	1729	414,477	29,922	98.55%	14.57%
2018	1651	397,683	27,651	98.67%	14.10%
2017	1611	391,203	26,297	98.60%	14.13%
2016	1516	368,270	24,059	98.30%	13.60%
2015	1454	357,879	22,459	98.25%	13.25%

Note. (1) All data were reported in the Zhengzhou educational annual report [52–56]. (2) The Zhengzhou annual educational reports are published in Chinese by the Zhengzhou Educational Bureau. (3) Kindergarten teachers should have a nationally recognized technical secondary school qualification or above to obtain the registration [57].

2.2. Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews (approximately 20 to 40 min each) with parents were conducted online via instant video and audio-recorded for later transcription and analysis. Data from a total of 12 interviews with eight mothers and four fathers were collected in this study. Four focused open-ended questions guided the interviews: (a) How do the parents view children's play and learning? (b) How do the parents support children's play? (c) How do the parents participate in children's play activities? (d) What factors affect parental play beliefs and practices? In the semi-structured interviews, the parents were expected to interact with the researchers actively and were encouraged to ask questions. New questions were allowed to appear, and the researchers extended the questions based on the answers given by the parents and flexibly adjusted the interview procedures and content according to the specific situation of the interview [50].

2.3. Family Observations

The participating families were asked to provide images of their home environments, including the play spaces arranged for children, the facilities for children's play activities, the number and types of toys, and other play and learning resources available to children. Each family also provided a video (approximately 30 min) of parent-child interactions in play activities. Particular attention was paid to what activities were carried out in daily play activities and what the parent-child interactions were like during these play activities. The parent-child play videos were analyzed using a coding scheme adapted from Johnson et al. to categorize the parents' roles (playmate and teacher) in their children's play [58]. As coded based on the observational data, the parents' roles were regarded as a supplement to the interview data reported by the parents and as further support for the summary of parental beliefs regarding children's play and learning at home.

2.4. Ethical Concerns

All the participants received a letter of notification that set out the purposes of the research project and the procedures to be followed, explained issues relating to confidentiality, anonymity, and storage of data, and highlighted participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason without prejudice. The participants' consent was sought on this basis. Research ethics were strictly observed concerning the collection, management, and storage of the data collected in this project. This study's data are not accessible for ethical reasons (i.e., protecting the participants' identities). This research was carried out with the approval of the relevant institutional ethics committee and in full compliance with its ethical guidelines.

3. Data Analysis

A thematic analysis approach was used to analyze all the interview data. Along with the research questions and the theoretical framework, the codes were inductively grouped under specific topics (e.g., perceptions of children's play and learning and practices in children's play activities). Meaningful patterns emerged when the content associated with these topics was compared and contrasted. The process of data reduction and complication occurred at this stage. To help alleviate researcher bias and reduce instances of over-analysis of the data, we employed an iterative review process whereby a nonparticipating researcher provided constructive feedback and suggestions [59]. In addition, we invited a kindergarten teacher working in Zhengzhou to be a third-party consultant. This teacher had lived in Zhengzhou for more than 20 years and had extensive kindergarten teaching experience. We invited her to review the themes to determine their quality and effectiveness based on her evaluation of the interview transcripts.

4. Findings and Discussions

In this section, the findings of this study are introduced and discussed based on the PPCT model, primarily focusing on the aspects of *person* and *context* and assuming that

these two core components reciprocally interact and become *progressively more complex* over time [43].

4.1. Person

Previous studies showed that a family's socioeconomic status has become increasingly important in determining a child's development [60,61]. For instance, Fang and Feng found that the family's socioeconomic status affects children's academic scores, significantly surveying the middle school students of Nanjing [62]. Sun et al. found a significant positive effect of parental income and educational levels on children's academic achievement based on a longitudinal study in Gansu province [63]. Families with higher socioeconomic status can use their advantages to gain access to better educational opportunities for their children and enhance their higher education possibilities [64]. Therefore, we assumed that the parents' knowledge and perspectives of play and learning were related to their educational level and socioeconomic status. We also assumed that force, resource, and demand characteristics would support or inhibit the proximal processes [41].

High education and SES status group. Families with high education and SES status believed that free play was critical for children's development. Parmar, Harkness, and Super reported that Euro-American children had more opportunities for free play than their Asian counterparts, who spent much time engaging in early academic preparation at home [65]. In this study, Mother A studied abroad and achieved a bachelor's degree in nursing in New Zealand. She had acquired Western educational concepts and ideas when studying abroad: "I have lived in New Zealand for five years. I know how New Zealand parents interact with their children. The way they play with children inspired me a lot." According to the ecological perspective, individuals bring experiential resources (e.g., educational experiences) to a proximal process [66]. The other two mothers who had gained master's degrees also had a better understanding of Western educational concepts and recognized the educational values of play.

These three mothers had a higher acceptance of the introduced ideas, and they were able to internalize the concepts into their own beliefs quickly and put them into practice. They explained their play perspectives clearly in the interview:

"I pretend to be a kid of the same age or a little older than him. I will be more like his playmate than an elder or commander." (Mother, Family A)

"What time is there to do that kind of thing? I do not want my daughter to be like a grown-up. She is happy when she plays with toys, dirt, sand, and any other objects she likes—that she enjoys herself in play carries a lot of weight for me." (Mother, Family B)

"I would let her imitate me rather than tell her what to do next directly. Little children can imitate adults' behaviors and observe the surroundings around them. They are perceptive enough to understand the world. I don't need to tell her how to play at this time. She can observe my actions and has her ideas. If I instruct her directly while playing, I will force her to follow my ideas unconsciously. It's not a good way. Learning through observations is much better for little kids." (Mother, Family C)

In Lin and Li's study, some parents in China started to regard themselves as children's playmates and considered young children capable of learning and solving problems independently [30]. As a result, they provided appropriate support rather than giving full assistance, believing that the role of parents was to engage children in creative and enjoyable activities and help them learn things appropriate to their developmental stage. As Father A said, "My son opened the box and took out everything inside. He had fun while exploring it. This is play." Father A, echoing Lin and Li's previous study, had a penetrating insight into play and understood how to interact with his child. He made good use of toys for developing his child's personality and helping his child acquire knowledge during play activities. Child A was fascinated by cars, so different toy cars were prepared to "inspire him to develop some of his potential" (Mother A). As the parent-child play video showed, Father A squatted down beside the child, kept the same height, and made

eye contact with his child now and then. He kept talking and shared the same emotional feelings with the child when playing. Although Child A was in the babbling stage, Father A would ask him simple leading questions when it was the right time, such as “what is this?” and “what is the sound of the train?” Father A offered his child a strategic advantage in that he emphasized his child’s play and understood how to provide his child with cognitively stimulating resources and timely support. For Family A, play activities were considered a serious endeavor and powerful instrument to encourage the child to explore new experiences [67]. Family A used the most appropriate methods and tasks for engaging their child in various play practices. Depending on the situation, they were both playmates and teachers, and they assumed responsibility for the child’s skills and dispositions [58] (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Father A and Child A.

Lower education and SES group. However, the parents in Families D to H with lower educational levels often adopted adult-centered beliefs and practices because they seemed not knowledgeable about child-centered practices and play-based learning. Some of the parents with a lower educational level did not truly recognize the imported concepts and had doubts about the power of play. As observed in the interactions between the father and son in Family F, Father F spent most of his time guiding his child’s behaviors during playing. For example, in the video, Father F and Child F were assembling a dinosaur model. When the child encountered difficulties in the process of assembling, Father F directly grabbed the half-assembled model out of the child’s hand and said, “Do not do this. It is wrong. You should listen to me and put it here.” He then demonstrated the correct method. However, in this process, Father F found that his method was not correct—he could not install the dinosaur’s legs on its torso—so he hesitated for a while. At this point, the child said, “Daddy, look, I assembled it correctly. That is how it is installed.” His mother also wished his son to learn rules through play as his father did.

“My son is almost six years old; I don’t want him to play all day. I expected him to interact with adults or peers in more structured activities. There are many rules in structured play, and he can learn how to follow some rules.” (Mother, Family F)

Father F directed his child to play and replied perfunctorily, “Yes, yes, this is fine”. He seemed to feel a little embarrassed because of his wrong guidance; therefore, he took back the dinosaur model from the child to restore its lost face. Then, he said, “You should cooperate with Dad”, instructing his child that “this small triangle board should be placed in the dinosaur’s mouth.” Father F always used such direct words to make demands of his little child, and he was not patient when the child was exploring the dinosaur model—his

expression was slightly irritable, and his hands were always pointing at the child. It seemed that Father F wanted to finish the model by himself rather than work with his child. During the parent–child interaction, Father F played the role of a strict instructor and did not encourage his son to explore new ways during play (see Figure 2). For Father F, playing as a playmate with his child might have affected his authority; instead, he adhered to traditional rules-based values, which were consistent with China’s deeply rooted Confucian cultural heritage [1].



Figure 2. Father F and Child F.

Lin and Li indicated that parents emphasized play to enhance children’s academic skills [30]. Indeed, Chinese parents have high expectations of their children’s academic performance, even in very early childhood [20]. A parent with younger children valued the ability of play to “enhance the emotional ties and give her a sense of security” (Mother, Family E), while a parent with older children emphasized the ability to “develop some communicative skills while playing and learning how to get along with others” (Father, Family F). Moreover, Father D noted that his child could “learn how to use the toilet through play. He should develop routines before entering kindergarten. Play is the best way for young children.” Father E said, “I like to buy educational toys like building blocks, picture books, and jigsaws.” Mother F was anxious that play would affect her son’s academic performance: “He does not like to do homework. He likes to play. Play only brings him happiness and pleasures but cannot help him achieve academic progress. Moreover, he often secretly plays video games these days, which affects his learning. I do not want him to play video games” (Mother, Family F). Similar to Parmar, Harkness, and Super’s findings, the Euro-American parents engaged in more pretend play, whereas the Asian parents engaged more constructive play [68]. However, Asian parents prefer to spend more time on academic activities for school readiness with their children, such as playing cognitive games and learning letters and numbers [68].

“I want him to learn more words while playing because the vocabularies are very important. Therefore, I often read books and poems with him. However, I find that he is not interested in the printed books; he just likes watching videos through the iPad. I try to change my strategy to the e-book.” (Mother, Family F)

“We often play counting games. I hope he learns basic arithmetic concepts while playing. But he prefers playing chess, so we spend lots of time playing chess as long as I have spare time. I like him to play chess because it is helpful for my son to develop logical ability.” (Father, Family F)

As full-time mothers, they were busy taking care of their children and dealing with tedious matters at home, so they had little time to learn professional knowledge of the early childhood field. Concerning the person factor, being a full-time mother (Families F, G, and H) is considered a demand characteristic that can discourage reactions in the social environment and impede interactions in the proximal process [66]. Therefore, low-income families made instrumental decisions in buying toys for children. “I rarely buy new toys for him. He can play with the remaining toys of his two older brothers” (Father, Family D). As one mother said, “I will not buy him expensive toys. He is a naughty boy. He often disassembles his toys into several parts. Expensive toys are not worth buying” (Mother, Family H).

4.2. Context

Microsystem. The parents’ knowledge and perspectives regarding play and learning were related to their socioeconomic status and educational level. Most parents from high and medium-SES families set up play areas at home for their children. Three mothers emphasized the educational value of the playroom. They arranged a Lego wall for developing creativity and physical fitness (Mother, Family A; see Figure 3) or classified “all the toys according to different functions” in a spacious room (Mother, Family C). Play areas were not arranged in the homes of the lower SES families, as it was regarded as unnecessary to spare a particular room for children’s play. Limitations in terms of house space and disposable salary were why parents from lower SES families could not set up play areas for their children.

“His game room is well designed. There is a Lego wall for him to develop creativity and a small slide for training physical fitness. And all his toys are well classified according to the functions of each toy. For example, plush toys, building block toys, and sound toys were put in different boxes. All the toys belonged to him in the room, and he could explore every place here. I know he felt relaxed in his playroom.” (Mother, Family A)

“I just want a space for him to play. We prepared two mats; he can play with toys on the mats. He always crawls around on the floor, and I am afraid he will be injured. Considering the safety issues, I restricted his play spaces.” (Father, Family D)



Figure 3. Lego wall of Family A.

Mesosystem. The mesosystem comprises the processes and linkages between two or more settings containing a developing person [39]. Family members and kindergartens are considered parts of the mesosystem, and parents have access to professional educational concepts and direct interactions with kindergarten teachers. However, around 85% of

kindergarten teachers in Zhengzhou had less than a bachelor's degree or even no teacher qualifications [51]. Indeed, some of these teachers' classrooms might have just a few play-related components, whose educational approaches were mostly content-focused and academically oriented. According to Rao and Li, direct instruction (whole-class activities) took up the most time in Chinese kindergartens (up to 51.6%), followed by teacher-led fun activities (up to 33%), and lastly, free play (which ranged from 0% to 13.8%) [2]. During playtime, including free play, however, teachers were observed assisting children in achieving academically linked goals. In 174 Chinese kindergartens, Hu et al. observed outdoor play activities [69]. Even in outdoor settings, where the most frequent teaching style was whole-class teacher-led activities, comparable to indoors, playtime was found to be minimal. Teacher quality is linked to the quality of education and learning outcomes of young children and the quality of school–family interactions [2]. Teachers with relatively weak educational backgrounds are not knowledgeable enough to understand the definition of play, nor do they mention or elaborate its importance to parents; moreover, parents cannot seek outside-the-home learning opportunities or receive timely professional guidance regarding policies through interactions in the mesosystem to compensate for their lack of understanding of the introduced ideas.

Exosystem. In the Chinese social context of increased competition, parents faced peer influence from their neighborhood group [70]. Mother F felt contradictory emotions because her friends' children participated in various after-school tutoring courses and learned tasks to prepare school readiness. Thus, recognizing play's role in releasing the child's nature, she was anxious that her child would be left behind on the starting line.

"It's contradictory. I want him to grow up happily and naturally, but other children around us participate in various after-school tutoring courses. Other children of my friends arrange learning tasks such as reading poems alphabet every day, but my son just likes playing. This is a competitive era. I feel a lot of pressure if my child lags behind others in learning." (Mother, Family F)

However, Mother A could constantly receive advice on good parenting from social media, expert opinions, and even other parents to support her knowledge of play and interaction skills with the child. Thus, peer influence is bidirectional. From this perspective, through interactions with a developing individual, parents transform the peer influence in the *exosystem* into positive effects or negative pressures as they reconstruct professional knowledge and values and gain the tools to concretize the theoretical knowledge in practice.

Macrosystem. Parents' play beliefs and participation in their children's play may significantly impact their children's early learning and development and have therefore been extensively studied in Euro-American contexts [71,72]. Play is crucial to children's learning, according to ECE practices in Euro-American countries. China has adopted Euro-American educational ideals and policies, shifting away from adult-directed, didactic, and academically-oriented approaches toward child-centered and developmentally appropriate practices [5,73]. In this study, Mother A earned a bachelor's degree in New Zealand and was exposed to local educational concepts and ideas when studying abroad. She was the only one among the eight families who employed a professional infant nurse to care for her child. The other two mothers who had gained master's degrees had a better understanding of Western educational concepts and recognized the educational value of play.

"I would let her imitate me rather than tell her what to do next directly. Little children can imitate adults' behaviors and observe the surroundings around them. They are wise enough to understand the world. I don't need to tell her how to play at this time. She can observe my actions and has her ideas. If I instruct her directly while playing, I will force her to follow my ideas unconsciously. It's not a good way. Learning through observations is much better for little kids." (Mother, Family C)

Parents' experiences can influence their beliefs and goals for their children's growth, influencing their childrearing strategies [74]. For example, parents with extensive Western culture exposure had higher acceptance of the concept of *eduplay*, which combines play and

pre-academic learning, rather than seeing these as dichotomous practices [2]. However, Western ideologies cannot be applied to all contexts and may conflict with traditional Chinese values [75,76]. Parents' views on more formal early academic training may take priority over play, or, at the very least, raise a cultural paradox. For instance, Father F regarded his child's play as inappropriate, affecting his authority if he played as a playmate. Furthermore, Mother H preferred to be involved in academic learning (poems or letters) rather than play while recognizing the contribution of play to her children's development. A typical dichotomy is that play is essential for children's development but not for their academic preparation [30]. In summary, it is important to understand how parents adapt to this cultural globalization by reformulating their traditional beliefs to include different cultures present in local contexts.

5. Conclusions, Limitations, and Implications

Previous studies conducted in coastal China, such as Shanghai, Shenzhen, or Fuzhou, indicated that the academic learning of very young children through adult-directed play was a unique and essential construct underlying Chinese parents' play beliefs [30]. Therefore, similar to those coastal areas but at an early stage, the concept of eduplay, a fusion of play and early academic learning "rather than a division between them" [5] (p. 84), has been started to be incepted by parents in developing urban areas in China. This study has collected empirical evidence about parental play beliefs and engagements in Zhangzhou. The parental beliefs demonstrated a dichotomy between child-led and adult-directed play. Most parents appreciated the importance of play in children's early development but did not scaffold their children's play activities. According to Lin et al., highly educated families may be more exposed to Euro-American culture, while parents with relatively lower education levels may have different perceptions and practices of young children's play and learning [5]. Although a dichotomous belief about play and academic learning was found among upper-middle-class Chinese parents in mainland China and Chinese immigrant parents in the United States, the findings differed in the current study [77]. Parents with higher SES and educational levels seem to be more adaptive to child-led play. The theoretical framework of PPCT proposes that the intertwining ecological systems influence parent-child interaction. According to this framework, parents with higher living standards tend to have fewer life stressors and are more attentive to children's needs [70,78,79], resulting in a high proportion of child-led play in their families. On the contrary, the families with lower education and SES still adopted traditional rule-based and adult-driven modes in play interactions with children. Therefore, more parent education programs and support should be provided to lower SES families in these developing areas.

This study, however, has some limitations. First, it only recruited some Chinese parents living in the urban area of Zhengzhou, leaving those living in rural areas untouched. Therefore, the findings cannot represent the real situation of Zhengzhou. Second, this study only adopted self-report interviews and non-participant observations; future studies should adopt validated scales in previous studies to provide further evidence. Finally, more research is needed to fully understand the relationship between parents' knowledge, beliefs, and current at-home practices in China. Understanding the relationship between these factors will provide further insights into how parent-child interactions can be improved to promote more child-centered beliefs and practices.

Nevertheless, the findings of changing beliefs and conflicting values have some implications. First, the findings of this study echo the classical study of Wood et al. on caregivers' different patterns of scaffolding for children [80]. Specifically, the high SES group in this study supported child-led play (i.e., free play). Still, the lower SES group was concerned about whether play was an educational tool for children's academic achievement. Second, the present study suggests that the educational value of play is one of the critical aspects underlying contemporary Chinese parental play beliefs. Nevertheless, parental beliefs regarding early childhood education in China, especially in the high SES community, have been highly influenced by Western philosophies, pedagogies, and values due to

globalization. The pervasive use of the idea of play directly indicates Western rhetoric's domination [6]. Third, parents play a vital role as partners in the child's learning regarding how play is represented, respected, and exercised. Such changing values may have an indirect yet far-reaching effect on the child's outcomes through parent–child interactions. To address the challenges that parents face due to the forces of globalization, it seems critical: (a) to prepare parents in culturally appropriate practices for parent-and-child interaction, and (b) to create an awareness in parents of the implications of globalization in ECE settings [81]. These strategies would bridge the gaps between parents with diverse socio-economic backgrounds and educational levels and facilitate them to situate practice in the local families [82]. Policymakers should also pay more attention to the globalized influences on early childhood education and the socio-cultural appropriateness of children's play and learning in the Chinese context [1,17,83].

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, Y.Z. and S.K.Y.L.; methodology, Y.Z. and S.K.Y.L.; data collection, Y.Z.; writing—original draft preparation, Y.Z.; writing—review and editing, Y.Z., S.K.Y.L. and H.L.; visualization, Y.Z. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: This research was carried out in full compliance of the ethical guidelines as approved by the institutional ethics committee of the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: Publicly available datasets were analyzed in this study. This data can be found online.

Acknowledgments: The authors would also like to thank all the parents and children for their time to participate in this study.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

- Li, H.; Rao, N.; Tse, S.K. Adapting western pedagogies for Chinese literacy instruction: Case studies of Hong Kong, Shenzhen, and Singapore preschools. *Early Educ. Dev.* **2012**, *23*, 603–621. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Rao, N.; Li, H. "Eduplay": Beliefs and practices related to play and learning in Chinese kindergartens. In *Play and Learning in Early Childhood Settings*; Pramling-Samuelsson, I., Fler, M., Eds.; Springer: Berlin/Heidelberg, Germany, 2009; Chapter 5; pp. 97–116.
- Lin, X.Y.; Li, H. Chinese mothers' profile which values play and academics predicts better developmental outcome in young children. *Int. J. Behav. Dev.* **2019**, *43*, 61–66. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Lin, X.Y. An interview study of Chinese parents' beliefs about play and learning on younger children. *Hong Kong J. Early Child.* **2013**, *12*, 35–43.
- Lin, X.Y.; Li, H.; Yang, W.P. Bridging a cultural divide between play and learning: Parental ethno-theories of young children's play and their instantiation in contemporary China. *Early Educ. Dev.* **2019**, *30*, 82–97. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Bautista, A.; Bull, R.; Ng, E.L.; Lee, K. "That's just impossible in my kindergarten." Advocating for 'glocal' early childhood curriculum frameworks. *Policy Futures Educ.* **2020**, *19*, 155–174. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Wood, E.; Attfield, J. *Play, Learning and the Early Childhood Curriculum*, 3rd ed.; SAGE: London, UK, 2013.
- Burghardt, G.M. Defining and Recognizing Play. In *Oxford Handbook of the Development of Play*; Pellegrini, A., Ed.; Oxford University Press: New York, NY, USA, 2011; pp. 9–18.
- Wyver, S.; Tranter, P.; Naughton, G.; Little, H.; Sandseter, E.B.H.; Bundy, A. Ten ways to restrict children's freedom to play: The problem of surplus safety. *Contemp. Iss. Early Child.* **2010**, *11*, 263–277. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Keung, C.P.C.; Cheung, A.C.K. Towards holistic supporting of play-based learning implementation in kindergartens: A mixed-method study. *Early Child. Educ. J.* **2019**, *47*, 627–640. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Nilsson, M.; Chisholm, E.; Griggs, D.; Howden-Chapman, P.; McCollum, D.; Messerli, P.; Neumann, B.; Stevance, A.S.; Visbeck, M.; Stafford-Smith, M. Mapping interactions between the sustainable development goals: Lessons learned and ways forward. *Sustain. Sci.* **2018**, *13*, 1489–1503. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Pramling-Samuelsson, I.; Carlsson, M. The playing learning child: Play a pedagogy of early childhood. *Scand. J. Educ. Res.* **2008**, *52*, 623–641. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Bautista, A.; Yi, J.; Lee, K.; Jin, S. Play in Asian preschools? Mapping a landscape of hindering factors. *Contemp. Issues Early Child.* in press.

14. Rentzou, K.; Slutsky, R.; Tuul, M.; Gol-Guven, M.; Kragh-Müller, G.; Foerch, D.F.; Paz-Albo, J. Preschool teachers' conceptualizations and uses of play across eight countries. *Early Child. Educ. J.* **2019**, *47*, 1–14. [CrossRef]
15. Van Oers, B. Is it play? Towards a reconceptualisation of role play from an activity theory perspective. *Eur. Early Child. Educ.* **2013**, *21*, 185–198. [CrossRef]
16. Starting Strong: Curricula and Pedagogies in Early Childhood Education and Care: Five Curriculum Outlines 2004. Available online: <https://www.oecd.org/education/school/31672150.pdf> (accessed on 29 August 2021).
17. Chen, J.; Li, H.; Wang, J.Y. Implementing the project approach: A case study of hybrid pedagogy in a Hong Kong kindergarten. *J. Res. Child. Educ.* **2017**, *31*, 324–341. [CrossRef]
18. Gupta, A. How neoliberal globalization is shaping early childhood education policies in India, China, Singapore, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. *Policy Futures Educ.* **2018**, *16*, 11–28. [CrossRef]
19. Li, J. Learning to self-perfect: Chinese beliefs about learning. In *Revisiting the Chinese Learner*; Chan, C., Rao, N., Eds.; Springer: Hong Kong, China, 2010; pp. 35–69.
20. Luo, R.; Tamis-LeMonda, C.S.; Song, L. Chinese parents' goals and practices in early childhood. *Early Child. Res. Q.* **2013**, *28*, 843–857. [CrossRef]
21. Wang, X.X.; Lam, C.B. An exploratory case study of an American-style, play-based curriculum in China. *J. Res. Child. Educ.* **2017**, *31*, 28–39. [CrossRef]
22. Yang, W.; Li, H. *Early Childhood Curriculum in Chinese Societies: Policies, Practices, and Prospects*; Routledge: New York, NY, USA, 2019.
23. Yang, W.; Li, H. The role of culture in early childhood curriculum development: A case study of curriculum innovations in Hong Kong kindergartens. *Contemp. Issues Early Child.* **2020**, 1–20. [CrossRef]
24. Li, H.; Wang, X.C.; Wong, J.M.S. Early childhood curriculum reform in China. *Chin. Educ. Soc.* **2011**, *44*, 5–23. [CrossRef]
25. Zhu, J.; Wang, C. Contemporary early childhood education research in China. In *International Perspectives on Research in Early Childhood Education*; Spodek, B., Saracho, O.N., Eds.; Information Age Publishers: Charlotte, NC, USA, 2005; pp. 55–77.
26. Wong, M.; Pang, L. Early childhood education in China: Issues and development. In *International Developments in Early Childhood Services*; Chan, L.K.S., Mellor, E., Eds.; Peter Lang: New York, NY, USA, 2002; pp. 53–69.
27. Wang, X.C.; Spodek, B. Early childhood education in China: A hybrid of traditional, communist, and western culture. In Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the National Association of Young Children, Atlanta, GA, USA, 8–11 November 2000.
28. Sigel, I.E.; McGillicuddy-De Lisi, A.V. Parent beliefs are cognitions: The dynamic belief systems model. In *Handbook of Parenting: Being and Becoming a Parent*, 2nd ed.; Bornstein, M.H., Ed.; Lawrence Erlbaum Associates: Mahwah, NJ, USA, 2002; pp. 485–508.
29. Lin, X.Y.; Li, H. Eduplay: A pilot study of Chinese parental beliefs and practices about younger children's play and learning in Shanghai. In Proceedings of the World Organization for Early Childhood Education (OMEP) Conference, Cork, Ireland, 1–5 July 2014.
30. Lin, X.Y.; Li, H. Parents' play beliefs and engagement in young children's play at home. *Eur. Early Child. Educ. Res. J.* **2018**, *26*, 161–176. [CrossRef]
31. Chi, J.; Rao, N. Parental beliefs about school learning and children's educational attainment: Evidence from rural China. *Ethos* **2003**, *31*, 330–356. [CrossRef]
32. Hong, Y.; Fuller, C.; Serpa, S. Alone and "left behind": A case study of "left-behind children" in rural China. *Cogent Educ.* **2019**, *6*, 1654236. [CrossRef]
33. Zhong, J.D.; Gao, J.J.; Wang, T.Y.; He, Y.; Liu, C.F.; Luo, R.F. Interrelationships of parental belief, parental investments, and child development: A cross-sectional study in rural China. *Child Youth Serv. Rev.* **2020**, *118*. [CrossRef]
34. Goldhaber, D.E. *Theories of Human Development: Integrative Perspectives*; Mayfield Publishing: Mountain View, CA, USA, 2000.
35. Tudge, J.R.H. *The Everyday Lives of Young Children: Culture, Class, and Child Rearing in Diverse Societies*; Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK, 2008.
36. Tudge, J.R.H.; Mokrova, I.; Hatfield, B.E.; Karnik, R. The uses and misuses of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory of human development. *J. Fam. Theory Rev.* **2009**, *1*, 198–210. [CrossRef]
37. Tudge, J.R.H.; Payir, A.; Merçon-Vargas, E.A.; Cao, H.; Liang, Y.; Li, J.; O'Brien, L.T. Still misused after all these years? A re-evaluation of the uses of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory of human development. *J. Fam. Theory Rev.* **2016**, *8*, 427–445. [CrossRef]
38. Bronfenbrenner, U.; Ceci, S.J. Heredity, environment, and the question 'How?' A first approximation. In *Nature, Nurture, and Psychology*; Plomin, R., McClell, G.G., Eds.; American Psychological Association: Washington, DC, USA, 1993; pp. 313–323.
39. Bronfenbrenner, U. Developmental ecology through space and time: A future perspective. In *Examining Lives in Context: Perspectives on the Ecology of Human Development*; Moen, P., Elder, G.H., Jr., Lüscher, K., Eds.; American Psychological Association: Washington, DC, USA, 1995; pp. 619–647.
40. Bronfenbrenner, U. Ecological systems theory. In *Encyclopaedia of Psychology*; Kazdin, A., Ed.; American Psychological Association: Washington, DC, USA, 2000; pp. 129–133.
41. Bronfenbrenner, U. The bioecological theory of human development. In *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*; Smelser, N.J., Baltes, P.B., Eds.; Elsevier: Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2001; pp. 6963–6970.
42. Bronfenbrenner, U.; Morris, P.A. The bioecological model of human development. In *Handbook of Child Psychology: Vol. 1. Theoretical Models of Human Development*; Damon, W., Lerner, R.M., Eds.; Wiley & Sons: Hoboken, NJ, USA, 2006; pp. 793–828.

43. Bronfenbrenner, U.; Morris, P.A. The ecology of developmental processes. In *Handbook of Child Psychology: Volume 1. Theoretical Models of Human Development*; Damon, W., Lerner, R.M., Eds.; Wiley & Sons: Hoboken, NJ, USA, 1998; pp. 993–1028.
44. Bronfenbrenner, U. Environments in developmental perspective: Theoretical and operational models. In *Measuring Environment across the Life Span: Emerging Methods and Concepts*; Friedman, S.L., Wachs, T.D., Eds.; American Psychological Association: Washington, DC, USA, 1999; pp. 3–28.
45. Drillien, C.M. *Growth and Development of the Prematurely Born Infant*; E. & S. Livingston: London, UK, 1964.
46. Rosa, E.M.; Tudge, J.R.H. Urie Bronfenbrenner's theory of human development: Its evolution from ecology to bioecology. *J. Fam. Theory Rev.* **2013**, *5*, 243–258. [[CrossRef](#)]
47. Bronfenbrenner, U. Ecology of the family as a context for human development: Research perspectives. *Dev. Psychol.* **1986**, *22*, 723–742. [[CrossRef](#)]
48. Lillvist, A.; Wilder, J. Valued and performed or not? Teachers' ratings of transition activities for young children with learning disability. *Eur. J. Spec. Needs Educ.* **2017**, *32*, 422–436. [[CrossRef](#)]
49. Wilder, J.; Lillvist, A. Learning journey: A conceptual framework for analyzing children's learning in educational transitions. *Eur. Early Child. Educ. Res. J.* **2018**, *26*, 688–700. [[CrossRef](#)]
50. Patton, M.Q. *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, 2nd ed.; SAGE: Newcastle upon Tyne, UK, 1990.
51. Zhengzhou Statistics Yearbook. Available online: <https://www.yearbookchina.com/navibooklist-n3020072003-1.html> (accessed on 29 August 2021). (In Chinese)
52. Zhengzhou Educational Annual Report 2015. Available online: <http://zzjy.zhengzhou.gov.cn/tjnb/2423029.jhtml> (accessed on 29 August 2021). (In Chinese)
53. Zhengzhou Educational Annual Report 2016. Available online: <http://zzjy.zhengzhou.gov.cn/tjnb/2423102.jhtml> (accessed on 29 August 2021). (In Chinese)
54. Zhengzhou Educational Annual Report 2017. Available online: <http://zzjy.zhengzhou.gov.cn/tjnb/2466355.jhtml> (accessed on 29 August 2021). (In Chinese)
55. Zhengzhou Educational Annual Report 2018. Available online: <http://zzjy.zhengzhou.gov.cn/tjnb/2493549.jhtml> (accessed on 29 August 2021). (In Chinese)
56. Zhengzhou Educational Annual Report 2019. Available online: <http://zzjy.zhengzhou.gov.cn/tjnb/2510433.jhtml> (accessed on 29 August 2021). (In Chinese)
57. Educational Statistics Yearbook of China 2019. Available online: http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_sjzl/sjzl_fztjgb/202005/t20200520_456751.html (accessed on 29 August 2021). (In Chinese)
58. Johnson, J.E.; Christie, J.F.; Yawkey, T.D. Play and development. In *Play and Early Childhood Development*; Johnson, J.E., Christie, J.F., Yawkey, T.D., Eds.; Longman: New York, NY, USA, 1999; pp. 25–52.
59. Creswell, J.W. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 2nd ed.; SAGE: Newcastle upon Tyne, UK, 2007.
60. Wu, Y.X. Inequality and evolution of educational opportunities for urban and rural residents in China (1978–2008). *Chin. Soc. Sci.* **2013**, *34*, 4–21. [[CrossRef](#)]
61. Li, Z.L. Family background, academic performance and admission to postgraduate study in China. *Chin. J. Social.* **2016**, *36*, 86–109.
62. Fang, C.C.; Feng, X.T. Family background and academic achievements: A study of stratum differences in compulsory education. *Zhejiang Soc. Sci.* **2008**, *24*, 47–55.
63. Sun, Z.J.; Liu, Z.Y.; Sun, B.C. Family, school, and children's academic achievements—Based on the study of rural areas in Gansu Province. *Chin. Educ. Soc.* **2015**, *48*, 464–482. [[CrossRef](#)]
64. Zhao, Y.D.; Hong, Y.B. Social capital and education attainment: A perspective of social network resources and social closure. *Sociol. Study* **2012**, *42*, 47–68.
65. Parmar, P.; Harkness, S.; Super, C.M. Asian and Euro-American parents' ethnotheories of play and learning: Effects on preschool children's home routines and school behavior. *Int. J. Behav. Dev.* **2004**, *28*, 97–104. [[CrossRef](#)]
66. Xia, M.; Li, L.; Tudge, J.R.H. Operationalizing Urie Bronfenbrenner's process–person–context–time model. *Hum. Dev.* **2020**, *64*, 10–20. [[CrossRef](#)]
67. Scarlett, W.G. *Children's Play*; SAGE: Thousand Oaks, CA, USA, 2005.
68. Parmar, P.; Harkness, S.; Super, C.M. Teacher or playmate? Asian immigrant and Euro-American parents' participation in their young children's daily activities. *Soc. Behav. Personal.* **2008**, *36*, 163–176. [[CrossRef](#)]
69. Hu, K.L.; De Marco, A.; Chen, Y. Examining the quality of outdoor play in Chinese kindergarten. *Int. J. Early Child.* **2015**, *47*, 53–77. [[CrossRef](#)]
70. Xie, S.; Li, H. 'Tiger mom, panda dad': A study of contemporary Chinese parenting profiles. *Early Child Dev. Care* **2019**, *189*, 284–300. [[CrossRef](#)]
71. Fisher, B.; Turner, K.; Zylstra, M.; Brouwer, R.; De Groot, R.; Farber, S.; Ferraro, P.; Green, R.; Hadley, D.; Harlow, J.; et al. Ecosystem services and economic theory: Integration for policy-relevant research. *Ecol. Appl.* **2008**, *18*, 2050–2067. [[CrossRef](#)]
72. Manz, P.; Bracaliello, C. Expanding home visiting outcomes: Collaborative measurement of parental play beliefs and examination of their association with parents' involvement in toddler's learning. *Early Child. Res. Q.* **2016**, *36*, 157–167. [[CrossRef](#)]

73. Li, L.; Tan, C.L.; Goh, H.H. Home language shift and its implications for Chinese language teaching in Singapore. *Cogent Educ.* **2016**, *3*, 1161958. [[CrossRef](#)]
74. Conger, R.D.; Donnellan, M.B. An interactionist perspective on the socioeconomic context of human development. *Annu. Rev. Psychol.* **2007**, *58*, 175–199. [[CrossRef](#)]
75. Li, H.; Chen, J.J. Evolution of the early childhood curriculum in China: The impact of social and cultural factors on revolution and innovation. *Early Child Dev. Care* **2017**, *187*, 1471–1483. [[CrossRef](#)]
76. Pearson, E.; Degotardi, S. Education for sustainable development in early childhood education: A global solution to local concerns? *Int. J. Early Child.* **2009**, *41*, 97–111. [[CrossRef](#)]
77. Jiang, S.; Han, M. Parental beliefs on children's play: Comparison among mainland Chinese, Chinese immigrants in the USA, and European-Americans. *Early Child Dev. Care* **2016**, *186*, 341–352. [[CrossRef](#)]
78. Chen, F.M.; Luster, T. Factors related to parenting practices in Taiwan. *Early Child Dev. Care* **2002**, *172*, 413–430. [[CrossRef](#)]
79. Xu, Y.; Farver, J.A.M.; Zhang, Z.; Zeng, Q.; Yu, L.; Cai, B. Mainland Chinese parenting styles and parent–child interaction. *Int. J. Behav. Dev.* **2005**, *29*, 524–531. [[CrossRef](#)]
80. Wood, D.; Bruner, J.S.; Ross, G. The role of tutoring in problem solving. *J. Child Psychol. Psychiatry Allied Discip.* **1976**, *17*, 89–100. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
81. Gupta, A. Pedagogy of third space: A multidimensional early childhood curriculum. *Policy Futures Educ.* **2015**, *13*, 260–272. [[CrossRef](#)]
82. Ødegaard, E.E. 'Glocality' in play: Efforts and dilemmas in changing the model of the teacher for the Norwegian national framework for kindergartens. *Policy Futures Educ.* **2015**, *14*, 42–59. [[CrossRef](#)]
83. Yin, Q.; Yang, W.; Li, H. Blending constructivism and instructivism: A study of classroom dialogue in Singapore kindergartens. *J. Res. Child. Educ.* **2020**, *34*, 583–600. [[CrossRef](#)]