

Playing and Daring in Childhood: Benefits, Limitations and Ethical Challenges in the Practice of Risky Play

Milena Masseretti – University of Bologna, IT

Abstract

Play is crucial for child development, serving as an essential activity that promotes exploration and learning. The pedagogy of risk emphasizes spontaneous play in natural environments, where the educator acts as a guide and companion, with children and the environment as the real protagonists of the experience.

Advocates of play highlight its autotelic value - an activity pursued for its own sake - free from moral and social constraints. Play is viewed as an innate biological need, vital for the development of children's psychophysical, social, and cognitive skills.

The concept of risky play links play with the aspect of physical risk, which is an indispensable element that offers children unique opportunities to develop motor, social, emotional and cognitive skills. However, diminishing opportunities for outdoor play and increasing safety concerns have limited these experiences. It is essential to differentiate between risk and danger, enabling children to engage in controlled challenges to foster their self-esteem and cultivate resilience over the long term.

The Norwegian educational context exemplifies a positive approach by acknowledging children's right to actively participate in decisions that affect them, thus giving them a voice and encouraging risky play in early childhood settings.

Ethical considerations surrounding risky play underscore the need to balance the promotion of enriching educational experiences with the prevention of harm. An inclusive approach is crucial to ensure that all children have equal access to play opportunities which are both stimulating and safe. Recognizing play as a fundamental right is the first step in providing a childhood which is rich in meaningful and formative experiences.

1. Introduction: The Value of Play

A century ago, Hall (1916) emphasized the significance of play in childhood, portraying it as a period of freedom and autonomous exploration. His early insights helped establish the foundation for viewing play as a vital element in human development and education. In humans, play is an integral component of development and education cannot be fully understood without it. As humans have developed increasingly complex social and cognitive capacities, the importance of play has grown accordingly. This suggests that during the evolution of primates, characterised by a protracted period of immaturity, the selection of the ability to play during these years has played a crucial role (Staccioli, 2008). This capacity not only persisted but also expanded during the evolution of the human species, establishing human infants as the most playful of animals.

Among the various theories regarding play, Huizinga offers a vital perspective by conceiving play as a free and voluntary act. His idea of *ludus* enriches both the social fabric – that is, the network of interpersonal relations – and the individual experience. It is a “serious game,” yet free from ethical, ideological, or economic constraints, as play, according to Huizinga, lies outside the domain of moral norms (Huizinga, 1938/1949). Fink (1969/1991) similarly emphasises that play is fundamentally a process that goes beyond any objectives, in this way underscoring its autotelic value – an end in itself. According to Fink (1969/1991, pp. 66–67), play is an activity made up of gestures without a purpose, distancing itself from the non-serious and obvious aim of recreational games we play to pass the time. He also portrays play as an oasis of pleasure (Fink, 1957/2008). In contrast, Caillois (1958/1981) refers to it as an insecure island, highlighting that play exists within a defined space separate from everyday reality. Huizinga also mentions this separation, describing play as a *magical space* where the rules of everyday life are suspended. However, an island of uncertainty is not necessarily an island of happiness. Although the ludic dimension is associated with the pleasure of play, Caillois ascribes a different meaning to it than Huizinga does. The fair and noble competition that Huizinga envisions in the context of chivalry becomes, for Caillois, a disturbing experience marked by the ambiguity of a mask and the destabilizing effect of vertigo (*ilinx*) (Caillois, 1958/1981). The mask and verti-

go correspond to two categories of play identified by Caillois – *mimicry* and *ilinx* – both involving a temporary loss of identity or control. For Caillois, entering the game signifies not only stepping into an illusory and unstable realm but also exposing oneself to risk while experiencing the excitement characteristic of a gambler. He emphasizes the gratuitous nature of the game and asserts that its rules, if they exist, do not imitate or simulate the rules of real life and do not serve as a form of training for it. Consequently, the game is neither useful nor productive; rather, it is an activity that exists for its own sake (Rovatti, 1981), and this very nature can be seen as a devaluation. As Massa (1986) wrote in a provocative reflection on play:

For what is less educational than playing? To play is to assimilate the world to oneself, to enclose oneself in one's egocentrism, to dominate one's own painful experiences with the compulsion to repeat facts and words within a framework of dramatization of one's desires. [...] But also, what is more pedagogical than play? Play is at the same time an action regulated by norms, a functional preparatory exercise, a device for technical and cognitive learning, a ritual of cultural initiation, an occasion for moral formation, a practice of identifying social roles. (Massa, 1986, pp. 230–231)

This dual nature of play becomes evident from the earliest moments of life: by the third or fourth week, in fact, infants begin to experience play, driven by a curiosity that leads them to movement and physical exploration. In the subsequent months, they take their first steps and later start climbing, running, jumping and engaging in other increasingly challenging physical activities. It is through the willingness to participate in games and activities, through experimentation and failure, that children learn about the world and about themselves. Through play, they discover that it is possible to lose without necessarily feeling like a loser, as playing also embodies the enjoyment of challenges, the thrill of uncertainty and the allure of disguise. Moreover, it serves as a means of interaction with others, allowing for the exploration of complex relationships through actions that convey deeper meanings beyond their literal interpretation. It is a way of experiencing in a rich and varied way the infinite possibilities of communication, coexistence, difficulties, respect and the pleasure of being together (Antonacci, 2022).

Play is first and foremost an innate biological need that precedes the cultural dimension. Children play spontaneously because play is not an activity learned from society. Bondioli (2019) thinks that, play cannot be domesticated by being guided in the directions wanted or desired by adults; it can only be supported and encouraged (p. 77). Although it is not a basic need, depriving a child of play goes against human nature. Farné notes that such deprivation would harm the development of a child's psychophysical, social and cognitive skills, which are essential for her/his growth (2015).

2. Risky Play Does Not Exclude the Encounter With Risks

Article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations General Assembly, 1989) recognises play as a fundamental right to be protected and promoted. The *Linee pedagogiche per il sistema integrato zero-sei* (MIUR, 2021) also dedicate a specific paragraph to the value of play in early childhood contexts. That paragraph is inspired by the thoughts of the great play theorists who have already been written about.

Over the last thirty to forty years, a glaring contradiction has emerged: although play is seen as a central element of childhood, opportunities for free play have been significantly reduced. This form of play involves activities that carry a certain level of physical or emotional risk and are typically thrilling, adventurous, and challenging for children. Adults play a crucial role in either allowing or denying children the opportunity to play (Dweck & Molden, 2017). In recent years, adults have become increasingly concerned about the safety of early childhood environments in Western countries, including Italy (Farné, 2022; Bertolino, 2022). Even in Norway, considered one of the least risk-averse countries, there is growing concern about the safety of children's active play, as documented in recent research (Obee et al., 2020). This heightened focus on safety has contributed to a significant decline in opportunities for children to play in diverse outdoor spaces (Storli & Sandseter, 2019). Changes in the urban environment have further complicated children's ability to find suitable places to play and develop in their neighbourhoods (Francis & Lorenzo, 2006), with increased traffic and a reduction in parks and playgrounds.

Peter Gray, in his book *Free to Learn* (2013) links the decline in free play to the rise in anxiety, depression and feelings of helplessness among young people. According to this American psychologist, free play is nature's strategy for boys and girls to discover that they are not fragile subjects, contributing to the development of decision-making and the creation of a more equal relationship with peers. Outdoor play in particular immerses children in the heart of playful activity, in its expressive and free dimensions, stimulating reflection on all that children do when they are free from adult control (Schenetti & Li Pera, 2021).

In this respect, it is interesting to consider the studies (Sandseter, 2007, 2009) that have investigated risky play: an exciting and challenging form of play that does not exclude the encounter with physical risk and thus the possibility of injury. Sandseter (2007, 2009) identified six categories of high-risk play: (a) play with great heights; (b) play with high speed; (c) play with dangerous tools; (d) play near dangerous elements; (e) rough-and-tumble play; and finally (f) exploratory play, in which one can get lost or disappear, such as when playing in unfenced places like a forest or a large garden, outside of adult supervision.

In the pedagogy of risk, which characterises educational paths based on spontaneous play in a natural environment, the educator has the role of companion and sometimes of guide. The real protagonists of the experience are the children and the environment: relevant learning paths emerge from their interaction.

Despite the varying definitions, some common denominators can be identified: challenge, excitement, facing and overcoming fear, and the possibility of injury, although in most cases these are minor injuries. Several studies (Apter, 2007; Brussoni et al., 2012; Brussoni et al., 2015) identify numerous benefits associated with the practice of risky play that extend beyond mere fun (Masseretti, 2023). Risky play acts as a natural training ground for the development of essential skills (Gray, 2013). By engaging in physically and mentally challenging activities, children learn to recognise and manage real risks, improve their ability to assess danger and develop a sharper awareness of their own limits and abilities (Apter, 2007; Brussoni et al., 2012). In addition to challenging their physical abilities, active play offers children unique opportunities for motor, social, emotional and cognitive development (Farmer

et al., 2017; Lavrysen et al., 2017; Little et al., 2011; Sandseter et al., 2020). As early as in the late 1990s, Smith (1998) noted that natural risk-taking in motor play is a precursor to risk-taking in other contexts involving the emotional, social and affective domains. Facing and overcoming physical challenges and confronting personal fears also help to build up self-esteem and resilience, qualities that are fundamental to long-term mental wellbeing. Tovey (2007) also goes beyond the concept of risk in a purely physical sense, suggesting that social and emotional risk-taking is a natural progression from physical risk and is a vital component of the educational experience. Nevertheless, the implementation of risky play involves several challenges and constraints that must be critically considered.

3. Risky Play Between Benefits, Barriers and Challenges

In the context of studies and practices on risky play, Farné (2014, p. 19) argues that it is necessary to ask what the relationship is between risk and danger, two terms that, when referring to children's play activities, often tend to blur into each other in the adult's perception. Active play promotes children's development and helps them to become familiar with risk. Hazards, on the other hand, are those obstacles within play spaces that need to be reduced or removed, with the primary aim of preventing serious injuries. The role of adults is to identify and mitigate risks, offering supervision to the activity being carried out, to the child's abilities, personality and level of maturity (Schenetti, 2022). It is essential that educators/teachers are ready to intervene when play becomes dangerous but it is crucial that they do not uncritically exclude all play experiences involving risk, just for fear of exposing children to the possibility of being injured. This choice does not represent a forward-thinking educational intervention. It is impossible to eliminate risks in education, nor is it advisable to do so, since the dimension of risk is a constitutive part of being human (Bertolini, 2006). Accepting risks presupposes a profound knowledge of the child and a meaningful relationship with him/her: it is essential to enter his/her world, to observe it carefully, to use a language made up of tangible realities and to promote education in adventure. Furthermore, accepting risk implies being aware of one's own educational role with its specific responsibilities (Schenetti, 2023).

Recently, the position statement of the Canadian Paediatric Society expressed strong support for the practice of risky play (Beaulieu & Beno, 2024). The same document lists what cannot be considered risky play: neglecting safety measures such as helmet use; allowing children to play in potentially dangerous environments without adult supervision, such as busy streets; and finally, encouraging children to engage in adventurous activities against their will, forcing them out of their comfort zone (Beaulieu & Beno, 2024).

However, given the many benefits reported in the specific literature, it is questionable whether risky play is actually beneficial for all groups of children. While some papers urge parents to allow their children to play outdoors more freely and independently and to encourage risk-taking during play (Tremblay et al., 2015), others show how risk can easily lead to danger (Giles et al., 2018). This is the case for children from low-income families living in poverty and social exclusion: here, risky play crosses the line of risk and becomes dangerous due to the lack of safe play areas (Milteer et al., 2012). The presence of large machinery and the ease of encountering animals (Little et al., 2003; Ryan et al., 2014) makes risky play dangerous even in rural areas (Pickett et al., 2005).

Finally, the question of the inclusion of children with disabilities in risky play is not easily answered. Children with developmental disabilities are often excluded from this play experience due to overprotection and low adult expectations (Bundy et al., 2015; Grady-Dominguez et al., 2021).

It is therefore necessary to consider not only the benefits of active play, but also the structural inequalities that characterise society and limit the effective opportunities for some groups of children to play actively in safe, outdoor environments (Giles et al., 2018).

4. Ethical Challenge and Risky Play

In the text *Risky Play: An Ethical Challenge*, the construct of risky play is intertwined with ethical theory, Kvalnes and Sandseter (2023) provide a systematic account of active play as an ethical challenge for all those (teachers, educators, parents, legislators) who directly and indirectly influence children's play. According to the authors, each of them has an ethical responsibility

within their own role to ensure that children have sufficient space for active and adventurous play. At the same time, however, consideration must be given to the possible consequences of such adventurous activities. The ethical challenge lies in striking the right balance between allowing valuable experiences and preventing significant harm. The tension between these two dimensions is captured by Kvalnes and Sandseter (2023) through the use of the terms do-good ethics and avoid-harm-ethics: the former focuses on the responsibility to create stimulating and uplifting play experiences for children, the latter on the responsibility to protect children from significant harm. A good assessment of the framework for risky play is therefore based on a reasonable balance between these two poles.

The Norwegian pre-school curriculum emphasises children's right to be active, responsible and protagonists in their experiences. Children should have considerable freedom in their choice of activities and be able to express their opinions about the school's daily routine.

Little and Wyver's study found (2010), through interviews with children, that children use their risk assessment skills to make decisions during play. This aligns with the findings of a recent systematic review, which highlights how children often perceive school rules as overly restrictive, complaining that "all the fun stuff" is labelled as dangerous (Jerebine et al., 2022a). According to the results of this study, children with previous experience in risky situations gain a base of experience useful for assessing and managing risk in future situations. Interviews with four- and five-year-old children show that they are even able to explain their strategies for increasing or decreasing risks during play. For example, they try to reduce risk by choosing less risky strategies, such as reaching a lower point before jumping when climbing a tree (Sandseter, 2010).

Whether children's choices are respected often depends on the willingness of adults to actively and courageously support children's choices. The perception of children as "precious cargo" to be protected strongly influences school decisions, often leading to an overly cautious approach by adults (Jerebine et al., 2022b).

In Norway (Obee et al., 2020), institutions for early childhood education and care, commonly referred to as kindergartens, are known to actively empower children. Under the *Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kinder-*

gartens (NMER, 2017), children have the right to express their opinions and actively participate in daily activities and learning environments that directly involve them. In this framework, NMER emphasises the importance of free and risky play in pre-school education, the need to recognise its value and to guide children in facing physical challenges in order to develop skills that are important for the future (Obee et al., 2020). In addition to Norway, Canada has adopted a proactive approach to risky play. The Canadian Paediatric Society highlights a broader international recognition of risky play as a key component of healthy child development, rooted in a pedagogical view of the child as an active subject with a voice to be acknowledged.

This pedagogical approach focuses on respecting children as individuals with their voices, conveyed through non-verbal modalities, such as bodily expressions related to emotions. Understanding and honouring this voice needs specific observation and listening: this form of empathic listening requires adequate specific training and implies a radical change in traditional childcare methods (Bondioli & Savio, 2017).

Facing challenges, taking risks with uncertain outcomes, overcoming failure and taking responsibility for choices allows children to feel fulfilled and learn more about themselves. Even negative experiences have formative potential (Kvalnes & Sandseter, 2023).

5. Final Reflections

Play is an essential part of every child's growth and development. Through play, children explore the world, develop social, cognitive, physical and emotional skills, learn to manage their emotions and discover more about themselves. According to Bertolino (2022, p. 13), preventing a child from taking risks means hindering his or her free play and ability to encounter the unknown, to respond creatively to it and, paradoxically, to prepare for the world from which adults want to protect the child, a world that is – by its very nature – increasingly unstable and unpredictable.

However, risky play also poses an ethical challenge: adults have a responsibility to strike a balance between allowing children to experience risk and ensuring their safety, transforming it from a constraint into an opportunity (Kvalnes & Sandseter, 2023; Masseretti & Schenetti, 2024).

Equal access to active play must also be ensured: children living in disadvantaged contexts or with disabilities are often excluded. Therefore, an inclusive approach that overcomes structural inequalities in society is needed.

The Norwegian educational context offers interesting insights: the right of children to participate actively in decisions that affect them is recognised and respected.

Recognising and valuing play as a fundamental right and a biological necessity is the first step towards guaranteeing all children a childhood full of meaningful and formative experiences. It is desirable that we can ensure that all children are given the opportunity to play and grow in a full, joyful and rewarding way.

References

- Antonacci, F. (2022). Il gioco come esperienza educativa. In C. Riva & E. Rossoni (Eds.), *La ludotecnica inclusiva* [Inclusive play-based methodology] (pp. 45–59). FrancoAngeli.
- Apter, M. J. (2007). *Danger: Our quest for excitement*. Oneworld.
- Beaulieu, E., & Beno, S. (2024). *Healthy childhood development through outdoor risky play: Navigating the balance with injury prevention* (CPS Position Statement). Canadian Paediatric Society.
- Bertolini, P. (2006). Rischio. In P. Bertolini (Eds.), *Per un lessico di pedagogia fenomenologica* [Towards a lexicon of phenomenological pedagogy] (pp. 241–248). Erickson.
- Bertolino, F. (2022). Il rischio di cambiare. In F. Bertolino (Eds.), *Salvare Robinson. La dimensione pedagogica del rischio nelle esperienze all'aperto* [Saving Robinson: The educational dimension of risk in outdoor experiences] (pp. 9–15). Edizioni Junior.
- Bondioli, A., & Savio, D. (2017). Introduzione. L'infanzia e la sua pedagogia: educazione dei bambini e formazione degli adulti. In A. Bondioli & D. Savio (Eds.), *Crescere bambini: Immagini d'infanzia in educazione e formazione degli adulti* [Educating children: Images of childhood in adult education and training] (pp. 7–18). Junior.
- Bondioli, A. (2019). Gioco è/e apprendimento. In A. Bobbio & A. Bondioli (Eds.), *Gioco e infanzia* [Play and childhood] (pp. 59–80). Carocci Editore.

- Brussoni, M., Olsen, L. L., Pike, I., & Sleet, D. A. (2012). Risky play and children's safety: Balancing priorities for optimal child development. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 9(9), 3134–3148. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph9093134>
- Brussoni, M., Gibbons, R., Gray, C., Ishikawa, T., Sandseter, E. B. H., Bienenstock, A., & Tremblay, M. S. (2015). What is the relationship between risky outdoor play and health in children? A systematic review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 12(6), 6423–6454. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph120606423>
- Bundy, A. C., Wyver, S., Beetham, K. S., Ragen, J., Naughton, G., Tranter, P., & Stermann, J. (2015). The Sydney playground project-levelling the playing field: a cluster trial of a primary school-based intervention aiming to promote manageable risk-taking in children with disability. *BMC Public Health*, 15, 1-6. <http://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-015-2452-4>
- Caillois, R. (1981). *I giochi e gli uomini: La maschera e la vertigine* [Man, play and games]. (Dossena, Notes on the Italian edition). Bompiani. (Original published in 1958)
- Dweck, C. S., & Molden, D. C. (2017). Mindsets. Their impact on competence motivation and acquisition. In A. J. Elliot, C. S. Dweck, & D. S. Yeager (Eds.), *Handbook of competence and motivation. Theory and application* (pp. 135–154). Guilford Press.
- Farmer, V. L., Williams, S. M., Mann, J. I., Schofield, G., McPhee, J. C., & Taylor, R. W. (2017). The effect of increasing risk and challenge in the school playground on physical activity and weight in children: A cluster randomised controlled trial (PLAY). *International Journal of Obesity*, 41(5), 793–800. <http://doi.org/10.1038/ijo.2017.16>
- Farné, R. (2014). Per non morire di sicurezza: l'intenzionalità pedagogica del rischio in educazione. In R. Farné & F. Agostini (Eds.), *Outdoor education. L'educazione si-cura all'aperto* [Outdoor education: Learning and caring outdoors] (pp. 15–23). Edizioni Junior.
- Farné, R. (2015). Play literacy. *Studium Educationis*, 16(3), 87–100.
- Farné, R. (2022). Rischiando s'impara. In F. Bertolino (Eds.), *Salvare Robinson. La dimensione pedagogica del rischio nelle esperienze all'aperto* [Saving Robinson: The educational dimension of risk in outdoor experiences] (pp. 17–28). Edizioni Junior.

- Fink, E. (1991). *Il gioco come simbolo del mondo* [Play as symbol of the world]. Hopefulmonster. (Original published in 1969)
- Fink, E. (2008). *Oasi del gioco* [Oasis of Play]. Raffaello Cortina Editore. (Original published in 1957)
- Francis, M., & Lorenzo, R. (2006). Children and city design: Proactive process and the ‘renewal’ of childhood. In C. Spencer & M. Blade (Eds.), *Children and their Environment* (pp. 217–237). University Press.
- Giles, A. R., Bauer, M. E. E., & Darroch, F. E. (2018). Risky statement?: A critique of the Position Statement on Active Outdoor Play. *World Leisure Journal*, 61(1), 58–66. <http://doi.org/10.1080/16078055.2018.1549590>
- Grady-Dominguez, P., Ragen, J., Sterman, J., Spencer, G., Tranter, P., Ville-neuve, M., & Bundy, A. (2021). Expectations and assumptions: Examining the influence of staff culture on a novel school-based intervention to enable risky play for children with disabilities. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(3), 1008. <http://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18031008>
- Gray, P. (2013). *Free to learn: Why unleashing the instinct to play will make our children happier, more self-reliant, and better students for life*. Basic Books.
- Hall, G. S. (1916). *Adolescence*. Appleton.
- Huizinga, J. (1949). *Homo ludens* [Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture]. Einaudi Editore. (Original published in 1938)
- Jerebine, A., Fitton-Davies, K., Lander, N., Eyre, E. L. J., Duncan, M. J., & Barnett, L. M. (2022a). “All the fun stuff, the teachers say, ‘that’s dangerous!’”: Hearing from children on safety and risk in active play in schools: A systematic review. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, 19(72). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12966-022-01305-0>
- Jerebine, A., Fitton-Davies, K., Lander, N., Eyre, E. L. J., Duncan, M. J., & Barnett, L. M. (2022b). “Children are precious cargo; we don’t let them take any risks!”: Hearing from adults on safety and risk in children’s active play in schools: A systematic review. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, 19(111). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12966-022-01344-7>
- Kvalnes, Ø., & Sandseter, E. B. H. (2023). *Risky play: An ethical challenge*. Palgrave Macmillan. <http://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-25552-6>
- Lavrysen, A., Bertrands, E., Leyssen, L., Smets, L., Vanderspikken, A., & De Graef, P. (2017). Risky-play at school: Facilitating risk perception and com-

- petence in young children. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 25(1), 89–105. <http://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2015.110241>
- Little, D. C., Vermillion, J. M., Dikis, E. J., Little, R. J., Custer, M. D., & Cooney, D. R. (2003). Life on the farm – Children at risk. *Journal of Pediatric Surgery*, 38, 804–807.
- Little, H., & Wyver, S. (2010). Individual differences in children's risk perception and appraisals in outdoor play environments. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 18(4), 297–313. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760.2010.531600>
- Little, H., Wyver, S., & Gibson, F. (2011). The influence of play context and adult attitudes on young children's physical risk-taking during outdoor play. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 19(1), 113–131. <http://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2011.548959>
- Massa, R. (1986). *Le tecniche e i corpi. Verso una scienza dell'educazione* [Techniques and bodies: Towards a science of education]. UNICOPLI.
- Masseretti, M. (2023). Risky play. Quando il gioco incontra il rischio e diviene un'opportunità di benessere per il futuro dei bambini [Risky play: When play meets risk and becomes an opportunity for the future well-being of children]. *Infanzia*, 50, 46–52.
- Masseretti, M., & Schenetti, M. (2024). Il valore del rischio nell'esperienza educativa all'aperto [The value of risk in the outdoor educational experience]. *Encyclopaideia: Journal of Phenomenology & Education*, 28(68), 43–56. <http://doi.org/10.6092/issn.1825-8670/18407>
- Milteer, R. M., Ginsburg, K. R., Mulligan, D. A., Ameenuddin, N., Brown, A., Christakis, D. A., & Levine, A. E. (2012). The importance of play in promoting healthy child development and maintaining strong parent-child bond: Focus on children in poverty. *Pediatrics*, 129(1), 204–213. <http://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2011-2953>
- MIUR The Ministry of Education, University, and Research. (2021). Linee pedagogiche per il sistema integrato zerosei [Pedagogical Guidelines for the Integrated 0–6 Education System] (Annex 1 in Ministerial Decree November 22, 2021, No. 334). Adoption of the “Linee pedagogiche per il sistema integrato zerosei” referred to in Article 10, paragraph 4, of Legislative Decree April 13, 2017, No. 65. <https://www.miur.gov.it/-/decreto-ministeriale-n-334-del-22-novembre-2021>

- NMER Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research. (2017). *Framework plan for the content and tasks of kindergartens*. Ministry of Education and Research.
- Obee, P., Sandseter, E. B. H., Gerlach, A., & Harper, N. J. (2020). Lessons learned from Norway on risky play in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 49, 99–109. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-020-01044-6>
- Pickett, W., Brison, R. J., Berg, R. L., Zentner, J., Linneman, J., & Marlenga, B. (2005). Pediatric farm injuries involving non-working children injured by a farm work hazard: Five priorities for primary prevention. *Injury Prevention*, 11(1), 6–11. <http://doi.org/10.1136/ip.2004.005652>
- Rovatti, P. A. (1981). Prefazione. In R. Caillois, *I giochi e gli uomini. La maschera e la vertigine* [Man, Play and Games] (pp. VII–XVIII). Bompiani.
- Ryan, A., Gerberich, S., Alexander, B., & Renier, C. (2014). Regional rural injury study III: Sources, severity, and consequences of injuries among children in agriculture. *Journal of Agromedicine*, 19, 235–236. <http://doi.org/10.1080/1059924X.2014.886610>
- Sandseter, E. B. H. (2007). Categorising risky play: How can we identify risk-taking in children's play? *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 15(2), 237–252. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13502930701321733>
- Sandseter, E. B. H. (2009). Characteristics of risky play. *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*, 9(1), 3–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14729670802702762>
- Sandseter, E. B. H. (2010). It tickles in my tummy!: Understanding children's risk-taking in play through reversal theory. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 8(1), 67–88. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476718X09345393>
- Sandseter, E. B. H., Cordovil, R., Hagen, T. L., & Lopes, F. (2020). Barriers for Outdoor Play in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Institutions: Perception of risk in Children's play among European Parents and ECEC Practitioners. *Child Care in Practice*, 26(2), 111–129. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13575279.2019.1685461>
- Schenetti, M., & Li Pera, C. (2021). Riscoprire il gioco all'aperto per innovare i servizi educativi e le competenze professionali degli adulti [Rediscovering Outdoor Play to Innovate Educational Services and Adults' Professional Skills]. *IUL Research*, 2, Article 9, 120–132. <https://doi.org/10.57568/iulres.v2i4.187>

- Schenetti, M. (2022). Il professionista in natura tra sguardi trasversali e prospettive inedite. In M. Antonietti, F. Bertolino, M. Guerra & M. Schenetti (Eds.), *Educazione e natura: Fondamenti, prospettive, possibilità* [Education and nature: Foundations, Perspectives, Opportunities] (pp. 86-95). Franco Angeli.
- Schenetti, M. (2023). Educazione all'aperto e Progettazione Pedagogica 10 passi intenzionali per rendere la connessione possibile. In S. Bonaccini & M. Schenetti (Eds.), *Osservare progettare educare green* [Observe, design, educate green] (pp. 17-26). Junior.
- Smith, S. J. (1998). *Risk and our pedagogical relation to children: On play-ground and beyond*. University of New York Press.
- Staccioli, G. (2008). *Il gioco e il giocare. Elementi di didattica ludica* [Play and playing: Elements of play-based education]. Carocci.
- Storli, R., & Sandseter, E. B. H. (2019). Children's play, well-being and involvement: How children play indoors and outdoors in Norwegian early childhood education and care institutions. *International Journal of Play*, 8(1), 65-78. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21594937.2019.1580338>
- Tovey, H. (2007). *Playing outdoors: Spaces and places, risk and challenge*. Open University Press.
- Tremblay, M. S., Gray, C., Babcock, S., Barnes, J., Bradstreet, C. C., Carr, D., & Brussoni, M. (2015). Position statement on active outdoor play. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 12(6), 6475-6505. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph120606475>
- United Nations General Assembly. (1989). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Adopted and opened for signature, ratification, and accession by General Assembly resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989. Entry into force 2 September 1990, in accordance with article 49. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments/convention-rights-child>