



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

GOING TO THE BIG SCHOOL: MANAGING  
INSTITUTIONAL TIME AND SPACE IN A LEBANESE  
DAYCARE

by  
JENNIFER ANN LE VARGE

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for the degree of Master of Arts  
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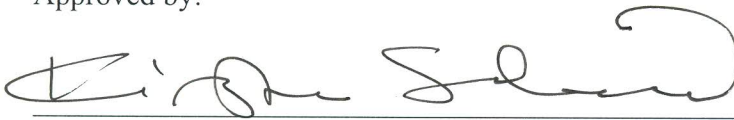
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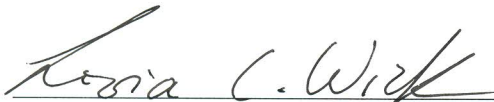
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# AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Jennifer Ann Le Varge for Master of Arts  
Major: Anthropology

Title: Going to the Big School: Managing Institutional Time and Space in a Lebanese Daycare

There are over two hundred daycare facilities in Lebanon, and over 60 percent of Lebanese children attend daycares in the country. While the daycare represents a site of care, it is also a place where children and adults live their lives. This study provides an ethnographic account of a group of 25 two and three-year-olds and their 4 teachers at an elite daycare center in urban Beirut. This age group is significant, as the children were on the cusp of leaving the daycare to enter formal educational institutions, including local private and international schools. This study utilized a non-participant observation approach to explore the ways that “time” and “space” are rendered meaningful in everyday practices of the daycare. Interviews with teachers, field analysis, and mapping of the children’s movements within the learning space revealed that the daycare, as an institution, ordered children in the present, and endeavored to prepare them for the future they were to experience in the formal education system, or the “big school.” While the “big school” and its imagined constraints were a constant concern, field observations and interviews demonstrated that both children, staff and clients were made “docile” (Foucault 1977) by the management techniques that revolved around two constructs, “time” and “space,” endowing them with urgency, suffusing them with significance that was realized in the present and future. Still, observations of the way daycare “time” and “space” hailed the children suggest the latter learned interactive skills that did not necessarily conform to adult constructions of these concepts. This study contributes to the burgeoning field of childhood studies, as well as to research concerned with power, young children, and early childhood education and care.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Within the child, humanity sees its immediate past but also contemplates the immortality of its immanent future' [Jenks 1996:6]

This thesis, based on fieldwork conducted at a local elite childcare facility in urban Beirut, seeks to explore the ways that time and space were imbued with meaning by parents, teachers and children at The Play Garden Children's Center.<sup>1</sup> The daycare, as an institution, ordered children in the present, and endeavored to prepare them for the future they were to experience in the formal education system, or the "big school." While the "big school" and its imagined constraints were a constant concern, field observations and interviews demonstrated that both children, staff and clients were made "docile" (Foucault 1977) by the management techniques that revolved around two constructs, "time" and "space," endowing them with urgency and suffusing them with significance that was realized in the present and future. Still, my observations of the way daycare "time" and "space" hailed the children suggest the latter learned interactive skills that did not always conform to adult constructions or expectations of these concepts.

### 1.1. Significance of Children and Education in Lebanese Society

Children are important in Lebanese public culture. Take a typical Sunday lunch. If you venture out to a restaurant, from Saida to Tripoli or Beirut to the Bekaa, you will most likely see families crowding restaurants, with children in tow. Strollers,

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<sup>1</sup> The Play Garden Children's Center is a pseudonym.

diaper bags, and toys abound. Young children dash around the space, while waiters deftly dodge little bodies amid squeals of delight or dissatisfaction. Older children and teens sit at the table, attached to various digital devices or looking around in bored anticipation. Mothers, fathers, or nannies flit from the table to the children, coaxing some children to eat, or comforting those who are upset. Parents and extended family converse, eat, drink, propose toasts, or are distracted by their mobile phone or iPads. Years ago, the same scene (minus the iPads) might have played out, with children the ubiquitous center of the action, expense, and concern.

Elizabeth Warnock Fernea's text, *Children in the Muslim Middle East* (1995), outlines the history of childhood in the region through topics including health, education, politics, war, and play. Fernea's text argues that, "in the Middle East, the child is seen as the crucial generational link in the family unit, the key to its continuation, the living person that ties the present to the past and to the future" (1995:4). Avner Gil'adi's text, *Children of Islam* (1992) attempts to trace a history of childhood through the writings of Islam. Drawing on the Qur'anic texts, he provides a sketch of the medieval Muslim view of infancy and youth, concluding that medieval childhood was a short period, but was longer than that of medieval Europe as outlined by Philippe Aries (1962). The reason for this more prolonged Islamic medieval childhood, according to Gil'adi, was the "kuttab" which "served as a special institution for child education and, as such, helped in prolonging the period of childhood for a while" as compared to the European context in which education was not a yet an influence (1992:117).

### *1.1.1 A Note About Reflexivity*

In the course of my work on this thesis, I have married a Lebanese person

and had a child. These two life events have allowed me access into the contemporary parenting scene in Lebanon (albeit a very specific scene which is structured by my tastes, people whom I know, and my own cultural background), and have also given me a comparative perspective on the lives of children and their caretakers. I am uniquely positioned in the field site by the fact that I have been a nursery schoolteacher in Beirut for years. I taught the nursery class for years. I admit that I sometimes offhandedly would diminish the daycare as a place where children were kept safe but were not necessarily educated. (I have since called into question what “education” even means!) During my time at The Play Garden, it was also difficult at times to observe the children instead of playing with them, or otherwise acting on my expectations for this age group. But holding back allowed me to draw my attention to the way that people were positioned in space, quite literally, as well as to the sights, sounds and smells of the daycare- feature that could easily fade into the background, but, as I show, are important points of convergence between management and “big school” preparedness.

As a researcher, I am also a mother and teacher, as well as a person learning about Lebanese culture and all its variations and complexities. Because of my own personal stances on education, my feelings about the value of children, and the fact that my own daughter is at daycare (though not The Play Garden), I am personally invested in this study. During my observations, teachers may have initially viewed me in different ways: perhaps as a management spy or someone from the “big school” coming to evaluate the daycare. Over time, though, I got the sense that some of the teachers felt empowered in their stance as informants. For instance, during the interview, a few teachers said, “Well, I’m glad you’re really seeing things here,” and “I appreciate how you seem to really be looking at what is happening.” I also felt that

the fact that I am not Lebanese benefited me in the setting. I was somehow removed from the social practices, and the teachers often told me “how things are done in Lebanon,” which allowed me to gain access to their thoughts in a way that a “known” person might not have been able to tap.

As a result of my fieldwork, I have also come to understand more acutely just how varied the meanings attached to childhood are in different cultural contexts. The field of childhood studies seeks to elucidate, theorize and unpack those meanings within a broad audience. As a person who truly believes (from my heart and as a result of my experience as an educator) in the potentials and existing abilities of children, a cultural study of early childhood education says as much about children as it does about their caretakers, adult assumptions, and the views and constraints of society at large.

## 1.2 Childhood Studies

Historically, children have largely been described as the “primitive other” in works of anthropology. For example, the works of Edward Tylor and C. Staniland Wake set out to examine the development of humankind, from prehistory to modern times, and used the concept of childhood as a metaphor. Tylor described children as “representatives of remotely ancient culture” (1913[1871]:73). Wake (1878) argues that the stages of evolution could be linked directly to the stages of child development; that is, from savagery (infancy) to civilization (adulthood). Over time, the works of Margaret Mead (1928) and John Whiting (1963), to name a few, helped bring about the view that children were worthy subjects of inquiry in their own right. While children have been written about since the beginning of the discipline of anthropology, mentioned for decades in monographs as informants and helpers to the

anthropologist, only recently has a body of childhood studies emerged (Hirschfeld 2002).

Still, it was the process of socialization that received the most scholarly attention from the early 1920s until the 1980s (Holloway & Valentine 2000, Lollis & Kuczynski 1997). The dominance of socialization theory meant that children were seen as *becoming* humans, and therefore normalizing institutions and practices enacted by adults, such as the school, were highlighted as important forces that shaped *future* adults (James, Jenks & Prout 1998). Yet, the concept of *being* and *becoming*, according to anthropologists Tim Ingold and Gisli Palsson (2013) is part of the human experience, where life is imbricated with a matrix of biological and social relations. Bridging the divide between the “social” and “biological” sciences, the authors hold that humanity is not necessarily naturally given or culturally acquired, but is created and recreated throughout the process of life.

Rather than accepting the terms as simply natural and biological, childhood studies has also problematized and re-thought the categories of the *child* and *childhood* (e.g. James 2004, James & Prout 1997, Qvortrup et al. 1994).

Anthropology has contributed to this debate, specifically pointing out the importance of cultural variation and cultural relativism in social constructions of childhood (e.g. Lancy 2008, Montgomery 2009). Even widely held theories of human development, such as those of Piaget (1970), have been called into question by scholars who demonstrate the cultural variations of the acquisition of skills in childhood (e.g. Levine & New 2008, Lancy 2008, Hall & Montgomery 2000). Most importantly, as pointed out by Montgomery (2009:3), the idea of a universal definition of childhood is not possible; thus it must be defined and described within various cultural contexts around the globe. Through the collection of ethnographic evidence, anthropology is



poised to help explicate the diversity and variability of the concepts of childhood that exist in a global context; adding to a critical analysis of the entire notion of childhood.

The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC), which sought to secure a “protected space” for the “innocence” of childhood (Montgomery 2009:6), quite broadly defines a child as any person who is aged between 0 and 18 years, and promotes a globalized view of childhood (Hall & Montgomery 2000). Subsequently, researchers have been drawn to children whose lived reality is incongruent with these globalized notions of children as a protected group, such as street children (Panter-Brick 2000, 2001, 2002), child refugees (Hinton 2000), and child soldiers (Rosen 2007). These authors also note that the idea childhood as an innocent space has not remained constant throughout history.

### 1.3 The Historical Emergence of Childhood

One of the most well known historians to theorize the emergence of the concept of childhood and place children within an historical context is demographic historian Philippe Aries, in his iconic text, *Centuries of Childhood* (1962). Through an analysis of European art from the medieval to the modern era, Aries sought to trace the creation of childhood as a category separate from that of adults. Aries’s work opened up two main themes in the study of youth: the variability of concepts of childhood and the diversity among the experiences of children (Montgomery 2009). Prior to the industrial era, argues Aries (1962:128), “children did not count.” A child transitioned to being an adult when they became an apprentice, at around the age of 12. It was the onset of the industrial age and the advent of mass education that gave rise to the modern conception of childhood as a protected state.

While the industrial workplace demanded an educated workforce, the age-

graded institution of schooling segregated children from adults, and “subject[ed] children to new forms of order and discipline” (Hendrick 2000:39). The school, then, became the “normal instrument of social initiation, of progress from childhood to manhood” (Aries 1962:369). The force of the schooling system and its normalizing effect is a major social concern, according to Aries. While some note the geographical and chronological vagueness of Aries’s methodology and his findings (e.g. Wilson 1980, Vann 1982), he was one of the first historians to argue that the notion of childhood as a social category has changed over time.

Furthermore, Neil Postman, in his widely cited text, *The Disappearance of Childhood* (1982), elaborates on Aries’s findings. While Aries traced the institutionalization of childhood, Postman traces its contemporary decline as a result of mass media and the education system. He argues that the prominence of schooling served to alter the ontological categories of both the *adult* and the *child*:

Because the school was designed for the preparation of a literate adult, the young came to be perceived not as miniature adults but as something quite different altogether-- unformed adults. School learning became identified with the special nature of childhood. What is being said here is that *childhood became a description of a level of symbolic achievement*. Infancy ended at the point at which command of speech was achieved. Childhood began with the task of learning how to read. [Postman 1982:41-42]

However, the extended period of schooling in the twentieth century has had the effect, according to Postman (1982), of prolonging childhood, making the distinction between the child and the adult increasingly vague.

Gill Valentine (2003) reiterates the contemporary blurredness of childhood, maintaining that present-day children are assumed to share a common experience because of their biological age that distinguishes them from adults. This in turn prescribes discursive and physical spaces for children in industrialized nations:

They spend most of their day-time at school; their lives are strongly circumscribed by adults; they experience spatial restrictions on the basis of age (such as not being allowed into bars/clubs and so on); and their independent mobility is restricted by parental concerns, a lack of their own money, and access to transport (although this is not to suggest that children are a homogeneous

group, rather, for example poverty, disability, being taken into care or looking after a sick parent, can all deny children a right to what is considered “normal” childhood experiences).  
[Valentine 2003:37-38]

Experiences such as going to school and being under adult control simultaneously unite and oppress children, confined in this specific category of existence, around the globe. The traditional model of schooling, where knowledge is transmitted from adult (teacher) to child (student) also reinforces differences in power and authority between adults and children. As a result, children learn how to be children in schools (Valentine 2003). The education system is a significant institution in Arab conceptions of childhood as well.

While studies on childhood have gained momentum in the last few decades, more research is needed in the everyday, lived, and varied experience of childhood that exist in different global contexts. A growing body of literature on children in the school setting emphasizes social agency and the articulation of identity and difference by children themselves (e.g. Mayall 1994, Devine 2003, Punch 2002, Gallacher 2005). Studying the childcare allows many researchers from different cultural sites to share one common feature of modern childhood that exists in many places around the world.

Anthropologists who study the educational and collective care experience in non-Western cultures often focus on schools as sites of cultural reproduction that may be inconsistent with embedded societal norms. Such examples include the contrast of home/school discontinuities (Tharp & Gallimore 1988, Heath 1983), the social organizations of classrooms and curricula (Coe 2005), and investigations on the link between rote learning used in developing countries and educational failure (Anderson-Levitt 2005). However, an under-developed research focus from the bulk literature on the anthropology of education and the anthropology of childhood are micro-studies on

the everyday worlds that children inhabit in various cultural contexts.

With the global rise of early childhood education, some sociological and anthropological researchers on education have found that classroom management and discipline techniques that were once recommended for the elementary school are now part of the pedagogical practice utilized in the childcare setting (e.g. King 1978, Canella 2002, Devine 2003, Prochner & Hwang 2008). The contemporary prominence of the daycare as a social entity represents the institutionalization of childhood at earlier and earlier ages, often beginning in infancy.

The institution of education, when conceptualized as a space for ordering and disciplining, evokes notions of traditional education, and thus it seems that has not changed much since the industrial revolution. Such a notion problematizes ideas of progress, and of the school as a gateway to future success. Rose (2011:16) points out that in late modernity, many traditional schools are becoming “inadequate in delivering the tasks they are expected to perform – educating children for the future.”

#### 1.4 Contemporary Childhood, Childcare and Education in Lebanon

Also called nurseries, childcare centers, and collective care facilities; daycares are numerous in the country, and typically serve children until the age of three. Recent reports indicate that there are 222 registered daycares in Lebanon, mainly in the greater Beirut area; though over 50 others are suspected of operating without a license (Hamyeh 2012). While extended family members, often grandmothers, care for many Lebanese children, daycares are also an option for parents, and most facilities accept children from the age of 12 months, while some take on children immediately after the current 49 days of paid maternity leave (Alabaster 2012).

In the context of Lebanon, concepts of childhood and its localized meaning are especially timely. For the last decade, Arab states and development institutions have “long felt the need to know the status of the ‘average’ Arab child” (UNICEF 2002:1). With sensitivity to cultural diversity, The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) has called for a synthesis of information that has previously been available in disparate documents on children in Africa, the Middle East and Asia. UNICEF also holds that Arab children and childhood should be placed at the forefront of the political agenda. More recently, with the crisis in Syria extending over the border into neighboring countries, UNICEF has launched a campaign called “No Lost Generation” (2014). This campaign aims to draw attention and collect funds for children who are victims of the war in Syria, which has affected the lives of families and children in Syria and in Lebanon. The “No Lost Generation” campaign is aimed at primary as well as pre-primary schools and early childhood education initiatives.

A special report, entitled *The Situation of Children in Lebanon 1998-2003*, found that the early childhood and pre-primary sectors of education are “characterized by disparity and decentralization” (Ministry of Social Affairs:116). According to the Lebanese Ministry of Education, compulsory primary education begins at six years of age, with the pre-primary sector caring for children aged three to six years, and the daycare serves children up to age three. The pre-primary or preschool sector enrolls about 80 per cent of children in Lebanon, while the daycare and childcare sector cares for about 60 percent of the Lebanese child population (UNICEF 2012). The Lebanese Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Affairs state that the goal of the early childhood and pre-primary education in Lebanon is to “initiate children into the school environment” (UNESCO 2006:4). The preschool setting should enable communication and language abilities, the development of the senses, moral and

intellectual development, and “limb control and coordination of movements” (UNESCO 2006:4). The child should learn “to reason” and understand “discipline and moral behavior,” which is achieved “all under the eye of the kindergarten teachers” (UNESCO 2006:5). Disciplined childhood seems to be the aim of the Lebanese preschool, according to the Lebanese Ministry of Education.

Other more sobering figures shed light on the underside of childhood in Lebanon. While it was noted that in 2004-2005 about 80 per cent of children attended preschools, the United Nation Development Program (2009) reports the widespread use of child labor in the informal economic sector, including carpentry, construction, farming and fishing industries. It is also believed that a growing number of Lebanese children are involved in a ring of human trafficking that links Eastern Europe with other countries in the region for the prostitution business (US Department of Labor 2009:379). With the massive influx of over 1 million Syrian refugees, half of whom are children, the child labor problem is growing ever still (Gilbert 2014).

Pre-primary education, including the daycare, is not publically funded (UNESCO 2006). The kind of education that paying daycare parents seek is important for the concerns of this study. While Lebanon is termed a “developing country” (US Department of Labor 2009), the kind of families that pay the high tuition fees associated with private childcare must be able to afford it, and may have specific tastes regarding the kind of care that they expect their children to receive (Vincent and Ball 2007).

The case of early childhood education in Lebanon is a compelling one, since the sector is not state-funded, yet a large number of contemporary Lebanese children attend some kind of early childhood program. Exploring the kind of education that children receive and the expectations created for children by educational

establishments in Lebanon is an under-researched area; a gap to which this research project intends to contribute.

### 1.5 Power and Discipline

Disciplinary power, according to Foucault (1980:104), is one “mechanism of power which permits time and labor to be extracted from bodies.” It is exercised by surveillance and its discourse is “that of normalization” (Foucault 1980:104). This normalizing truth is inherent in the school system. As Foucault (1980:125) explains, “school discipline conditions and manipulates the child’s body in order to gain access to an individual’s acts, attitudes, and modes of everyday behavior.” The child is normalized through the school’s discipline of the body. In his analysis of the birth of the modern penitentiary system, Foucault suggests that the transition to the modern age has resulted in the replacement of the law with the “norm” as the primary instrument of social control. One example of norm referencing in regards to the child’s body is the particular discourse used when evaluating individual children. Like the discerning eye cast towards children during the private school interview; parents, teachers, and health care professionals in contemporary times often refer to children’s behavior, cognitive and bodily development as “normal” (e.g. within the average) or “abnormal” (e.g. too big, too small, too fast, too slow).

In tracing the emergence of the modern penitentiary system, Foucault claims that punishment, which was represented by terror in history, was replaced by “the lesson,” which he describes as “the discourse, the decipherable sign, the representation of public morality” (1977:110). He was especially interested in the micro-practices of power, such as the prison guard-prisoner and priest-confessionary relationship (Ortner 2006).

Some might question the use of Foucault's theories on discipline and power networks in an analysis of very young children and daycare teachers. Even more, the idea of ordering and disciplining children may seem out of place with the ethos of care in early childhood. Parents may think of daycare as a fun, happy place where their children will learn and make friends. Adults in general may romanticize their notions of childhood and look back on the time fondly, though this may have little to do with the actual lived reality of the time period.

Foucault (1977, 1980) adamantly states that power exists everywhere; there is no way to be out of power. This is even true within the lived reality of childhood. Prochner and Hwang (2008) have noted that forms of discipline largely utilized with older students (themselves products of other institutions like the prison) are imbricated within the discourse of "best care" practices in early childhood institutions. Notions of discipline, control, power and order, which are inspired by the works of Foucault, have been used to analyze the worlds of young children (cf. Gallacher 2005, Jones 2008, Cannella 1999) though contributions to the field are still needed.

## 1.6 Research Questions

In my review of the literature on childhood studies and the anthropology of childhood, I located a gap in the literature on children in Lebanon specifically and in the Middle East more generally, with a great dearth of research on young children in the home and in the daycare. The question I attempt to answer in this thesis is: how are concepts of time and space rendered meaningful in a Lebanese daycare, and how do these conceptions impact the lives of the children and teacher who live within its walls?



## 1.7 Methodology

The fieldwork for this thesis draws from non-participant observation conducted at a daycare in urban Beirut, from January to March 2014. I observed in a single classroom within the daycare for ten weeks, three times per week, from 7:45 am until 3:30 pm. My observational focus group was a class composed of 25 children and four teachers. I obtained permission to observe the children from the daycare administration and from all of the parents in the class, via written consent. All four teachers signed consent forms where they agreed to participate in the research as well as participating in one recorded interview session, conducted in English.

I took copious field notes and drew maps of the daycare space and children and teachers moving within that space (to facilitate a spatial analysis of children's movement within the daycare space). I made weekly entries in my field diary, where I recorded my impressions of the people I encountered, the daycare space, and my personal connections to the field as a teacher and a mother. I conducted an interview with the class teachers toward the end of my fieldwork, where I was able to ask them about specific instances that caught my attention throughout the fieldwork process.

The use of non-participant observation and ethnographic "writing up," I felt, helped me view myself as a meaning-maker throughout the fieldwork process. That is, in watching other people *be*, I was left both space and time to reflect on my own role as researcher in the moment and during the analysis phase. The ethnographic method also encouraged me as a researcher to make the on-going, messy, intricate, lived *everydayness* of children's lives worthy of scholarly attention. In sum, I had to undergo a process of de-naturalizing the daycare, unlearning much of the discourse of education and child development that I had (unknowingly or unconsciously) been part

of reproducing in my role as an educator.

### *1.7.1 The Field Site*

The Play Garden Children’s Center, a reputable childcare center amongst parents in Beirut, was privately owned by Mayssa<sup>2</sup> and was located in a rather swanky area of Beirut. Sixty employees filled various roles in the 3,000 square meter large facility; including cleaners, cooks, teachers and assistant teachers, security guards, and administrative staff. All teachers, assistant teachers, and administrative staff were female. The cleaners and cooks were comprised of women and men, while the security staff were all men. Over two hundred and fifty children attended the daycare, though enrollment fluctuated over the course of the calendar year. The children were grouped in classes of about twenty-five children each, divided by age and language of instruction. The “baby” classes included children from 1 to 2 years of age, and the “preschool” classes included children from 2 to 3 years of age. Each class was marked by a name from a popular children’s television series or a cartoon character.

I asked to conduct observations in the “preschool” class with English as the main language, with two and three year-olds. This age group was specified because, in the popular lexicon, the children were in the middle of the “terrible twos,” a phase which generally describes children who are becoming more autonomous and who test the boundaries of social relationships (Gallacher 2005). The “terrible twos” are also considered to be a life period for asserting control (on the part of the children), and taking control (on the part of adults). However, what I soon realized at The Play Garden was that my assumption about the “terrible twos” was not part of the teacher’s conceptions of the children. The two-year-olds were grouped in the “preschool class,”

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<sup>2</sup> All staff and children, as well as the daycare mentioned throughout this document are referred to using pseudonyms.

which sought to prepare them for their imminent entrance into the Lebanese formal education system. As part of my research goals, I wished to record conversations between and among adults and children, and so the age group, which was termed the “preschool”, meant that children could move within space and were most likely more verbally-inclined than their younger counterparts.

At the time of my observations, the cost of full-time enrollment for children was \$750 per calendar month<sup>3</sup>, plus additional fees for extended hours. The main language of instruction was either French or English, with Arabic classes offered one day per week. The Play Garden, after 4 pm, also served as a commercial play and educational space, and had a specialized program that offered an array of extracurricular classes such as Zumba, yoga, karate, arts and crafts, and Spanish language courses.<sup>4</sup> Some of the daycare areas were also available for rent as spaces for birthday parties.

## 1.8 Theory and Organization

This thesis on children in a Lebanese daycare relies heavily on the theories of Michel Foucault, particularly his ideas of power/knowledge (1980), “docile bodies” (1977), and the “art of distributions” of control (1977). What may seem at first glance as a Foucauldian analysis, the chapters on discipline, order and perceptions of time and space draw upon several other theorists and the work of researchers from seemingly disparate fields such as human geography, phenomenology, cultural psychology, structuralism, and philosophy.

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<sup>3</sup> The monthly cost of daycare enrollment at The Play Garden is a significant expense in the case of Lebanon. The United Nations Development Program (2007) estimates that almost thirty percent of the Lebanese population lives below the poverty line, which is set at just \$4 per day.

<sup>4</sup> Zumba is an aerobic fitness program which features movements inspired by different styles of Latin American dance, typically performed to Latin American dance music (Oxford English Dictionary 2014)

Chapter Two will explore the daycare in terms of spatiality and temporality, exploring the ways that time was rendered meaningful in the context of The Play Garden Children's Center. Drawing from this, Chapter Three probes more deeply into spatiality, unpacking the ways that the organization and passage of time were overlaid onto space, creating a network of "disciplinary power" (Foucault 1977). An intended outcome of disciplinary power is the production of "docile bodies" (Foucault 1977), and Chapter Four elucidates the techniques used by teachers to monitor and control the bodies of children at the daycare, as well as the ways in which adult teachers themselves were disciplined within the setting.

While previous chapters sought to deconstruct and unpack the meanings imbricated within conceptions of time and space at the daycare, Chapter Five presents instances where the system of disciplinary power vis-à-vis the control of time and space left room for children to make an impact on their lives and the daycare setting. Rather than giving answers or presenting arguments, this chapter brings up lingering questions about the nature of time and space in the daycare, opening up avenues for future research. Chapter Six concludes the thesis, with some closing remarks and a summary of the findings as well as possibilities for subsequent research projects.

### 1.9 Folk Terms: Discipline and Order

Much of the analysis in this thesis draws upon notions of *discipline* and *order* in the daycare setting. The folk term definition of *order*, as I observed its use in the field, was described as children "listening," and entailed ideas of organization, quietness, children standing in a straight line, children following teachers' commands, ferrying children from one space to another, and maintaining a "safe" environment for the children. *Discipline*, on the other hand, was posited as "making" children

complete a task that was “for their own good,” or that used time in ways that was pre-determined to be productive and useful; or ensuring that children “do the time” for “misbehaving,” such as “sitting on the side” of an activity to “think about” their transgression. However, the daycare space was imbued with notions of discipline and order that influenced staff to comply with the same kinds of behavioral norms expected of children. Such examples for staff include a strict adherence to the daycare timetable, the near-constant answering of the telephone, and specific criteria for eating and talking in front of children and parents. For parents, donning shoe covers and keeping track of theme days and their associated dress codes disciplined them to conform to daycare norms. For adults in general, ensuring that “everything looks nice on the surface” was an enactment of docility, born out of the network of disciplinary power constructed at The Play Garden.

## CHAPTER 2

### TEMPORALITY AND FUTURITY IN THE DAYCARE

A teacher glances at the clock. She calls out “quiet time.” She and the other staff members sing  
(to tune of *London Bridge*):  
Everybody sit down please  
    Sit down please  
    Sit down please  
Everybody sit down please  
    It’s time to sit and wait

This chapter seeks to explore how time was rendered meaningful in the context of The Play Garden Children’s Center. In the everyday life of the children and adults at The Play Garden, time was a key feature of existence. Both physical time (measured by clocks) and waiting time (imbued with notions of liminality) ordered the actions and conceptions of children as well as the teachers who worked with them. The chapter follows children during the morning arrival time, emphasizing the conceptions of time that constructed the ways that children were viewed by adults, as well as the ways that spaces were utilized within the facility.

#### 2.1 What is the daycare?

It depends who you ask. A parent might say it is a place where their child goes for a significant portion of their day, so that parents can work or do other things not related to childcare. A grade school teacher might say that the daycare is a place where children are cared for, not educated. Images of children in diapers sucking on pacifiers might come to mind. Daycare teachers or caregivers might say that it their workplace, a place for children to play and learn, or a place where children at a certain age need to be prepared for “the big school” (their entrance into the Lebanese

formal education system). Recently, a close friend of mine who worked at a daycare for years told me, “As long as no one dies at the daycare, and as long as parents don’t complain, then it’s a good day.”

As a mother, I noticed that as soon as my daughter turned one year old and was integrated as part of a “class” of children, she brought home little coloring sheets and fingerpaintings on templates. When I asked one of her caregivers about it, they said, “This is her schoolwork! Isn’t it good? She is really progressing.” In my opinion, she was being asked to do “work” that I did not particularly like or think was the best use of her time in daycare. But, the fact that the teacher was so enthused about the worksheets for such young children made me think that other parents might expect this kind of work to be done with their children at the daycare, for reasons that I understood more fully while researching at The Play Garden.

Missing from this analysis, of course, are the views of the children, and the meanings they attach to the place where they might spend eight hours a day. As a visitor in an elite daycare in urban Beirut, I attempted to find out the meanings attached to the daycare, through an analysis of time and space and how they are rendered significant for parents, teachers and children. This thesis explores the way “going to the big school” constructs time and space at a Lebanese early childcare institution, loading them with meaning in the present and the future. Our first stop is to situate ourselves in space and time. We begin our journey in the car, on the way to The Play Garden, and explore the reception area.

## 2.2 Through the Sliding Glass

We drive down a long road, lined with palm trees and glossy new high-rise buildings. At the bottom of the street, where the Mediterranean laps at the road’s edge

is The Play Garden Children's Center, taking up the ground floor and the one immediately above in a swanky apartment block. A large illuminated sign bears its name, arching over the gated entrance. The car drives up to the gate, amid luxury sedans and SUVs. After glancing at the glowing dashboard clock (which reads 8:02 am), we get out of the car and walk up to the security guard. He asks our names, and then turns away from us and uses a walkie-talkie to speak to someone inside the daycare. Once he receives a confirmation that we are granted access, he opens the gate to let us in. Mothers donning designer lenses and fathers in business suits glide past us. Some children are carried in, and some walk, holding their parents' hands. Others still run ahead, past two outdoors playgrounds, into the building.

We are following Omar, a two-year-old child in the Mickey Mouse class. His father holds the child's backpack in one hand, propping Omar up with the other arm. This allows Omar a high vantage point from which to survey the pressed concrete walkway and decorative pots containing colorful flowers just outside the door. Omar's dad pushes through the first glass door into the vestibule. He waves at the secretary inside, and she presses a button to let them in through a sliding glass door. A fellow visitor next to us walks over to a machine near the automatic door and steps one foot onto a platform. With a *woosh*, her shoe is outfitted with a vinyl shoe cover (the kind that surgeons wear in the operating room). She repeats this process with the other foot and waves at the secretary.

We follow this woman into the daycare reception once the door is clicked open. The woman speaks to the secretary and then waits on a cushioned bench, next to a crying child named Hassan who is gripping his blankie, and a uniformed maid, her striped outfit topped off with a lacy kerchief that matches the peter pan collar of her tunic. Omar's dad stops to talk with his teacher. She mentions that Omar's hair



needs to be cut, as it is always falling in his eyes. The dad tells the teacher that his son had an interview at a local, well-known private school on Saturday. “Omar, tell the teacher how you knew all the colors!” tells the dad. Omar holds his father’s hand and stares at the teacher. The father glances at his mobile phone, then says goodbye and the child goes to his classroom with the teacher.

We approach the secretary’s desk and look around the space. Bright white is everywhere- on the walls, and the furniture. The desk we are standing at is white. The doors to other offices and rooms are white. An impressive glass staircase has white and gray stairs, backed with a fuchsia accent wall. A large canvas painting of a giraffe is hung in the stairwell. I recognize it from a children’s furniture store where I purchased my daughter’s crib and bedding. The secretary, Dina, greets us. She points at a large, lime green basket on the corner of her desk. It contains more shoe covers. We obligingly sit down on the bench to encase our feet in the plastic. Dina tells the maid, “Nanny, just a few more minutes ‘till the teachers arrive.”

Just then, a mother enters with her child. Dina waves at them, picks up the telephone, dials a number, and then states, “Ali is here. “She immediately hands up the phone. After 30 seconds, a teacher comes down the stairs, smiles, and says, “Hi, Ali!” She is wearing flannel pajama pants with a monkey motif, a matching t-shirt, and a gray fleece sweatshirt. Her fluffy bunny slippers make noise on the gray vinyl floor. The teacher stops short, and asks Ali’s mother, “*Weyn l'pyjama?*” [Where are his pajamas?] “*Shu?*” [What?] asks the mother, with wide eyes.

The teacher explains that it is Pajama Day, and that all the children should be wearing pajamas. She states that a group photo will be taken of all of the children wearing pajamas in Ali’s class today, by the daycare’s resident photographer, Anthony. She points at a sign on the secretary’s desk, which announces that today is

Pajama Day for the Daffy Duck class, and reminds parents in bold print, “Please try not be late or absent on these days.” The mother lowers her sunglasses off of her face and looks embarrassed. She looks at her watch, and tells the teacher, “I will ask the driver to bring *l’pyjama hala*” [the pajamas now], and turns to dash out the door, leaving her child with the teacher without saying goodbye. Ali and the teacher walk up the stairs to the classroom, on the right hand side. The boy glances down at the reception area when he is halfway up the stairs, then looks forward while continuing to ascend the staircase.

Now, let us push pause on the clock: around the reception area we have a frazzled mother rushing out the door and a boy ascending the staircase on the way up to his classroom, a visitor in shoe covers, and a crying child with their blankie. In this moment, time and space are intersecting. In the following section, I will dissect the concept of time and analyze how it is imbued with meaning within the confines of The Play Garden facility.

### 2.3 Daycare Space and Time: Waiting for the Future, Looking at the Past

Theme days marked time as meaningful within the daycare. On these days, which occurred every month, children should be dressed according to the marker associated with the day. (The dress code for pajama day is obvious. On another theme day, Valentine’s Day, the children had to wear red clothing).

We can see in Ali’s mother’s reaction that the idea that her child must wear pajamas to school at a specific point in time is not even questioned. She rushes off, not having the chance to say goodbye to her son, to retrieve the all-important pajamas. Her rushing (not wanting to waste time) to retrieve an article of clothing (which is being used to symbolically mark time as a theme, and then preserved in a photograph

which could be considered frozen time) warrants some further unpacking. Adults, including parents and staff, may perceive the photos as “cute.” The daycare can use these images to demonstrate how they are caring for the children, or even more cynically, how well the parents’ money is being spent. Furthermore, such images represent how time (represented by theme days) has become productive and valuable. For the daycare, the images of children dressed appropriately can demonstrate the kind of care they give children, or clients. They represent the management of time for the parent, who has to remember the dates and dress codes of these days, and this marking of time as meaningful also represents a disciplining of the body made visible in the photos of children. Time has become a resource and a source of productivity for both current children and potential clients.

Time was marked as meaningful by the daycare in numerous other ways. First, Hassan, the child clutching his “blankie” was also the subject of another daycare temporal construct called “transitioning,” which marked a child’s initial adjustment period to the daycare. According to a teacher in the Mickey Mouse classroom, Sawzan, “all kids go through it,” this initial stage of adjustment to the new setting of the daycare, where children may have a “tantrum” but learn to “adjust,” though some “learn the hard way.”

Second, futurity was a concept that also infused present-time events with meaning, as when Omar’s father recounted the school interview that his son had over the weekend, at the school that he hopes his son will attend in the future. Lastly, the daycare space itself also embodied time in different ways, including the décor as well as the absence of natural light in some of the spaces. While the décor of the entire daycare space was contemporary and pleasing to the eye, the hallways and reception area were adorned with signifiers of the past; including photos, images and signs that

displayed the daycare's bygone days. The Play Garden's spatial and temporal constructs of past, waiting and futurity will be deconstructed in the following sections of this chapter, preceded by a discussion of time as a social construct.

### *2.3.1 Time as a Social Construct*

The existence of time and its purported composition has been a debated topic for over a century (e.g. Boltzman 1886; Hawking 1988, 2005; Carroll 2010). A sense and construction of time in many cultures is an agreed upon construct that permeates human existence. In some cultures, people keep track of time, lose it, waste it, measure it, and make use of it. They adjust time, fight against it, bemoan its passing and mourn its loss. Notions of time are relevant to concepts of space. Within the vast array of cultural conceptions of time and space, one is somehow located in a certain place, at a certain time. Concepts of space and time represent the *when* and *where* of human experience.

There is a considerable body of anthropological literature on time and how perceptions of time vary across cultures and history (e.g. Gell 1992, Munn 1992, Geertz 1973, Fabian 1983, Sinha et. al. 2012). Organizations of time, for example on a calendar, are “expressive of cultural beliefs and values” (Sinha et. al. 2012:17). The “fatal intersection of time and space” in the course of history has constructed concepts of time as well as the organization of space that still influence contemporary thought (Foucault 1984:1).

In this thesis, I take as a premise that time is a social construct, and I show how it becomes specifically a disciplinary technique, and as a structuring element. The most cited conception of time as it relates to constructs of childhood is that of

physical chemist and Nobel Laureate V. Ilya Prigogine, and his concept of the “arrow of time” and irreversibility. His keystone text, *From Being to Becoming: Time and Complexity in the Physical Sciences* (Prigogine 1980), holds that the “arrow of time” is irreversible. Prigogine gives the example of a tree. It grows and changes over time, and so the passage of time on the tree is irreversible, as the age of the tree impacts how it functions. Therefore, conceptions of the tree are founded in the present and the future; it is “being” and “becoming.” He theorizes that time itself needs to be seen as being and becoming, since it describes the state of things in the present, and is actively constructed by societies in different ways, contributing to understandings about how the world works.

It has been argued that children are devalued when reduced to future adults in waiting (becomings), rather than as individuals whose current capacities, priorities and activities are important (beings) (Hill and Wager 2009:16). Prigogine’s theory of time is important to child researchers because it provides a conceptualization of time that posits the child as “being” in the present, and also “becoming” through the ageing process on the way to adulthood (James and Prout 1997). The social studies of childhood has urged that greater attention be given to understanding children’s own perspectives on their everyday lives (Christensen and James 2000, Valentine and Holloway 2000). At the same time, the whole notion of child development such as Piaget’s (1970) developmental stage theory, has been called into question as being too deterministic and future-oriented, while at the same time ignoring or glossing over cultural differences (Hill and Wager 2009:16). Such an approach devalues children’s abilities to take part in constructing their own lives (James et. al. 1998; James 2004, James and Prout 1997, Hill and Wager 2009).

Childhood theorists Allison James and Alan Prout (1997:230) suggest that the social construction of time is a key consideration in studies of childhood. The authors argue that during childhood and its contrary, old age, temporality has the greatest social importance.<sup>5</sup> James and Prout explain the “centrality of time” in two main themes: “time *of* childhood” and “time *in* childhood” (1997:230-231). Time *of* childhood entails the way that this lifestage is marked or organized via the structure of the ageing process, which may vary from culture to culture. Time *in* childhood, or children’s everyday experiences, involves “the ways in which time is used effectively to produce, control and order the everyday lives of children” (James and Prout 1997:231).

Child historian Harry Hendrick (2000:37) also points out that in the vernacular, childhood; and therefore children, are generally fragmented into a number of different identities, such as “babies, toddlers, juniors, pupils and young adolescents.” This vocabulary allows adults, for the sake of order, to insert children into predetermined phases along the trajectory toward adulthood. In this regard, childhood is arranged as a structural form, which is broken down into “a complex series of transitions” (Magnusson 1995:300). In the case of The Play Garden, the children in the Mickey Mouse class have either transitioned from the “baby class” (for one to two-year olds) into the “preschool class” (the Mickey Mouse group), or may be children in the process called “transitioning” which marks their initial foray in the setting of the daycare. The children who were part of this study will also face a new transition in the near future, one which serves as a point of reference for the teachers at The Play Garden: their entrance into the “big school,” or formal schooling.

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<sup>5</sup> Though anthropologists such as Margaret Mead (1928) and Akhil Gupta (2002) also point out that dividing the life course into the stages of childhood, adolescence and adulthood; and determining the experiences that are characteristic of these stages; is far from natural or universal. Great differences remain and vary according to culture and time period.

### *2.3.2 Waiting to Transition*

Returning to Hassan, sitting on the bench in the reception area, we can see a child who is waiting for his teacher, and waiting to adjust to the daycare setting. He is in-between, both spatially (as he is in the reception area and not his classroom) and temporally (in that he is still not quite “part” of the Mickey Mouse class). The liminal zone, that is “betwixt and between” (Turner 1964:4) more defined periods or markers in the life course, is befitting for this analysis of children in a Lebanese daycare. Firstly, the Mickey Mouse children, as a collective group of two and three-year-olds, were imbricated in a liminal zone between infancy and childhood (Gupta 2002). They were becoming “big kids” who were at the cusp of enrolling in “the big school.”

Since the daycare was a porous entity, where children enroll and leave at different times of the year, classes were not temporally homogenous. That is, in a single class, there were children who had been at The Play Garden for years, for months, or for just days. This conception of time within the early childhood facility constructed children within a framework of institutional time, therefore removing them from other notions of time that exist outside the daycare. During my fieldwork, I was able to observe two children who had just enrolled at The Play Garden in the Mickey Mouse preschool class. These children were in the liminal state that the teachers called “transitioning.”

The teachers discussed this particular stage as if it were both universal and inevitable. They mentioned that all children, when they first start attending The Play Garden, go through some period of adjustment. Some children had less eventful or difficult periods of transition, and adjusted to the life at the daycare in different ways. Firstly, Hassan’s transition was quite rocky:

It is 7:45 am. The new boy, Hassan, is in the classroom with his mom. He is crying hysterically. He whines, screams, cries, grabs his mom's legs, and coughs. Ignoring this, YVONNE<sup>6</sup> and SAWSAN tell the mother that Hassan is acting like this "for attention." The mother responds, "*Houe* [he] never *tamel heik* [does this]."

Hassan continues pleading with his mom, saying, "No go! I want go home!" while crying and coughing at the same time. His face is saturated with tears and his nose is running. His face is red. Mom at first looks embarrassed, then distant. When the crying goes on, she looks annoyed and exasperated. She finally shouts "*Khalas* [enough]! No crying!" The teachers set out toys on the carpet for Hassan to play with.

With all of the crying, which can be heard around the facility, two teachers on two separate occasions pop their heads into the room and ask if everything is alright. SAWSAN half-whispers, half-mouths "transition" and the teachers nod knowingly. Other teachers come into the room and smile during all the commotion. One teacher suggests that Hassan might have a fever- that is why he is throwing what she calls a "tantrum." The mother is obviously upset. One adult suggests that she and Hassan go and play out on the slide. The mother and Hassan leave, and I am left in the room with the teachers. They discuss how Hassan is "in transition," since last week was his first week at "school," and mention that he is just now realizing that he is staying "here for good." SAWSAN says, "He is not having a good transition." They discuss that they felt upset for the child, saying that he must feel confused among "us strangers." "*Haram* [poor thing], tsk tsk," adds SAWSAN.

In the field note extract cited above, the fact that the teachers who came to check on the class (after hearing Hassan's loud and extended cries) almost immediately seemed to understand Sawsan's message about transitioning demonstrates the daycare's cultural construction of this phase as excruciating yet expected. Over the following month, Hassan still cried quite frequently in the morning and at various points of the day. Hassan, in his liminal zone of transitioning, was located somewhere between being a full-fledged member of the class and a stranger within the daycare environment.

Victor Turner's (1964) definition of "liminality" builds from Van Gennep's (1909) theorization of "rites of passage." Turner (1964:4) holds that, in a structural society, liminality is an "interstructural" period. He notes, "the subject of passage ritual is, in the liminal period, structurally, if not physically, 'invisible'" (1967: 95). That is, liminal individuals in society are structurally indistinct. In this in-between

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<sup>6</sup> The names of all children and staff have been changed. In the field extracts, the names of teachers have been capitalized in order to differentiate them from those of the children.



state, individuals in liminality are somehow located out of the structural grid, and are cut some slack, so to speak.

During the transition period, children were given some time and space to adjust. This meant that the children may not have been expected to conform to norms of behavior or to follow routines like their classmates, at least for a little while. I was able to ask Sawsan about Hassan during her interview:

J: I wanted to ask you about the new boy, Hassan. How is he?

SAWSAN: Well, you were here on his first day, and he was sitting on my lap. I was really frustrated on that day.

J: I remember you mentioning that he did not have a good “transition.” I am wondering if you can explain more about that...

S: Okay, so, when we are having a new child here, the mother needs to stay with them for the whole first day, and then the next day she will stay less time, and so on. But, uh, in Hassan’s case, the mother didn’t do that. He is doing much better now, but he learned the hard way. The proper way to do the transition is for the moms to stay with the kids for the first few days. And then after those first days, they can drop off their kid, but they should wait outside [the classroom]. Then, if the child is crying too much and we cannot handle him anymore, we call the mom to come and take over and calm them. But many parents are not willing to do that... Some others send the maid instead of the mom... All the kids went through this. Hassan learned to adjust, but he learned the hard way. Now he can follow rules and stuff. He’s fine.

Sawsan’s response further elucidates the conception of the liminal stage of transitioning that was constructed at The Play Garden. In this liminal state, children could cry for extended amounts of time, and their parents or caregivers could stay in the classroom with them. Parents may have felt judged in regards to the actions of their children- like Hassan’s mother who insisted that he does not usually have “tantrums.” In my observations, I noticed that the child could also bring a favorite toy, which the teachers called a “comfort object,” to the daycare during the transition stage. All three of these things (parents/caregivers, extended crying, and personal toys) were not allowed in the classroom at other times- only during the transition phase. Teachers had to “bear” children like Hassan in their liminal state, giving them

special accommodations, and wait for it to pass. But once the child was considered to be “adjusted,” expectations made apparent through the control of time and space were thrust upon them, and they were expected to behave accordingly.

Amine, on the other hand, had a less stressful transition, or perhaps, he was just quieter about it all. When Amine’s mother tried to get him acclimated to the daycare, she stayed with him for the same amount of time as Hassan’s mother for about forty-five minutes. When his mother left, Amine cried for some time, like Hassan, but was interested in playing with the toys and even began joining in with some games by the end of the day. The next few days seemed less and less stressful, and by the end of the week Amine seemed to be “adjusting” to the daycare (becoming institutionally normalized). The liminal transition phase, therefore, was not the same duration for all children at The Play Garden.

Once it was assumed that the children had finished the adjustment process, they were expected to follow the routines and rules like their fellow peers. As we will see, those mostly had to do with the use of time and space. Yet, within this liminal zone, the “transitioning” children were left time and metaphorical space to adjust to the daycare routines and environment.

### *2.3.3 Waiting Time*

In the everyday life of the children at The Play Garden, time *in* childhood structured their day (James and Prout 1997:230) into thirty-minute blocks of physical time, and into varying amounts or types of waiting time. Time *of* childhood (James and Prout 1997:231), including concepts of age (“you’re a big boy now; you’re going to the big school next year”), positioned the children in waiting. This waiting time was a part of life at the daycare in many ways. For example, the teachers would often

sing little songs such as the “waiting song,” to tell children what was expected of them:

A teacher glances at the clock. She calls out “quiet time.” She and the other staff members sing the “waiting song” (to tune of *London Bridge*):  
Everybody sit down please  
Sit down please  
Sit down please  
Everybody sit down please  
It’s time to sit and wait

When it was waiting time, children had to do just as the song indicated: sit and wait. I observed that the children spent much of their day waiting, and developed some coping behaviors to endure this temporal juncture:

The children move from the pretend room to the carpet. The teachers sing, “Cross your legs and sit right down, circle time is here.” While on the carpet, the children sit with crossed legs. If they sit with their knees on the floor, or spread their legs out, they are told to sit cross-legged. The teacher asks questions directed at one child at a time. Those who are not given a task or asked a question exhibit an array of coping behaviors; such as chewing on the collar of their shirt/sweater, chewing on their sleeves, rocking back and forth, yawning or opening their mouths, playing with their hair, looking around, and making funny faces at a friend. During this activity, the children spend a total of 30 minutes on the carpet until lunch.

Much like transitioning time, where the teachers must bear the liminal individual and wait for the stage to pass, during waiting time, the children found ways to endure the passage of time, measured by the omnipresent clock on the wall, until the next activity.

#### 2.3.4 *Futurity*

The daycare itself inhabits a liminal space: it stands at a crossroads between concepts of care (daycare) and education (formal schooling). The children and parents, like Omar, who had recently had a school interview and his dad in the reception area, were also in an in-between stage, positioned somewhere between the daycare and the school. At the time of my observations, from January to March, the children were undergoing the interview process at some well-known international

schools in the Beirut area. Concerns were focused on the future of the children. According to the daycare teachers, the interviews for the Nursery class are cutthroat at some schools; where children are quizzed on their knowledge of animals, patterns, colors, shapes, letters and numbers. How well children perform at entrance interviews not only reflects on the children themselves, but also on the daycare they currently attend.

Parents might seek out daycares in which a significant percentage of the students are admitted to the better international schools, enhancing their chances for educational success in school and improving their chances to get accepted to universities in Lebanon and abroad (Lebanese Association for Educational Studies 2006). Because the political situation in Lebanon is not stable, parents may feel that they need to educate their children as much as possible, even at young ages, so that they can compete for university acceptance and jobs later in life.<sup>7</sup> High-priced daycares like The Play Garden attracts those with the funds available to send their children to expensive private schools after their children are three years old.

The increasing number of daycare facilities that exist in the country stands as evidence for the move towards the greater value of or demand for collective childcare in Lebanese society. According to recent reports, over 220 registered daycares belong to one of two daycare owner unions, under the authority of Ministry of Health, though several other daycare centers in Lebanon are suspected of operating without a license.<sup>8</sup> The institutionalization of childhood and the current need for daycare

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<sup>7</sup> In 2014, the New York Times reported that in the United States, Lebanese immigrants and Lebanese-Americans rank among the top earners in household income ([http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/26/opinion/sunday/what-drives-success.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/26/opinion/sunday/what-drives-success.html?_r=0))

<sup>8</sup> A recent incident in December 2012, at a local daycare in New Jdeideh, resulted in the death of a three-month-old child, according to Al Akbar News (<http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/6759>). This incident spurred a government investigation into the number of daycares who are registered with the unions, and threatened the closure of those operating without a license if they made no moves toward legalizing their business.

facilities is a topic of concern for researchers and theorists from diverse fields, including human geography, childhood studies, health care, psychology, etc; and has been addressed with wariness for decades (Ward 1978, Gallacher 2005, Manlove et al 2008, Spivak 1986, Taylor 2011, Holloway and Valentine 2000). While many see institutional childcare as a move towards an increasingly disciplined ideal of childhood (cf. Gallacher 2005, Cannella 1999), at The Play Garden, teachers saw the education they provided to be important for the educational future of the children under their care.<sup>9</sup> Yvonne, a teacher in the Mickey Mouse classroom, spoke quite emphatically about what she believed to be the value for children attending daycare, which was that “exposure” to more children and to “the idea of school” would benefit the child’s future academic success:

J: I’m wondering about your opinion...What do you think is the main reason why parents send their kids to daycare?

YVONNE: Interaction with other kids; it’s for interaction. I think a lot of kids, whose parents do not put them in daycare- they develop much slower than kids who are in more exposed to different types of kids. We get kids from all parts of the world here. The kids at daycare have integrated with others and don’t have fear of strangers. They get used to the idea of school and will adjust to nursery much better.

The age of the children that I studied in the field, and the age group that the daycare serves, is part of the marking of age according to the Lebanese educational system. Formalized schooling generally begins at around age three, with the “nursery,” also called *hadana* (Arabic) or *petit jardin* (French) class. In general, while school policies vary, children must turn three years of age by the month of October of the year of enrollment (Higher Council for Childhood 2004). The nursery class is part of a larger school, one that may educate students up to grade nine (age fourteen) and beyond. The daycare often caters for children at much younger ages; some from six

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<sup>9</sup> That is, the teachers revealed that “care” and “education” seemed to be synonymous terms concerning their roles as teachers in the Mickey Mouse class.

weeks of age<sup>10</sup>, while others start taking children from the age of 12 months. The Play Garden Learning Center accepts children starting at twelve months, if they are able to walk. The group that I observed was called the “preschool class,” and at the time of my observations, the ages of enrolled children ranged from thirty to thirty-eight months. These children were expected to enroll in the nursery class at a formal educational institution the following academic year.

The fact that the families of the children under study were in the midst of applying to several international and private schools in Beirut is a critical point of this analysis. Many private schools in Lebanon conduct interviews for the child and their parents as part of the application process. The interview acts as a screening mechanism to whittle down the pool of applicants and find the most suitable<sup>11</sup> candidates to fill a limited number of places. Children are tested on their knowledge of numbers, shapes, and colors, among other topics. The following excerpt from an article published in the *Los Angeles Times* in 1991, paints a picture of the experience of applying and being admitted to well-known international schools in Beirut. Though the article is from over twenty years ago, neither the techniques nor the urgency felt by parents appear to have changed:

Getting off on the right educational foot is a serious matter for Lebanese parents who invest thousands of dollars starting at the preschool level to ensure that their children someday might qualify for a Western university... Parents seeking admission to the academic institution for their children often go pale with anxiety... One father, his eyes brimming with tears when his son was turned down, could only say, “But where are we going to put him?”

Parents in Beirut “show up flashing the (business) cards of government officials, politicians and professors, hoping to add to their child’s chances of getting in,” said one teacher... The test scrutinizes the children’s knowledge of colors, ability to follow directions, basic vocabulary and simple math... One father who sat with his 2 1/2-year-old son during the tests gave the child a good whop when he failed to identify the colors. “We spend a lot of time calming down the parents,” another tester said. [Raschka 1991]

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<sup>10</sup> Current maternity laws under the Ministry of Labor indicate that paid maternity leave in Lebanon is 45 days (Alabaster 2012).

<sup>11</sup> In my experience at a few schools in Lebanon, the “most suitable” candidates should answer the questions “correctly,” and should preferably be from families that are well-known or whose parents have high-paying or otherwise impressive jobs.

Many parents (at the very least, in Beirut) spend large amounts of time, money and energy to ensure that their children are admitted to reputable private schools. The link between the daycare and the school here is crucial. S.C. Aitken (2000), a human geographer and childhood studies scholar, argues that, as commercial daycare centers begin to fill certain market niches, selective parents in turn fill the need for costly daycares. Such daycares may consequently modify their everyday practices and notions of care, so that children are prepared for the kind of formalized education available in the local market. In this regard, the daycare stands as the gateway to, or the training ground for the institutionalization of education for the child.

The next step in the children's education, from the daycare to the school, was a concern for both parents and teachers. When I asked teachers about how they perceived their job, Sawsan described her role as a daycare teacher:

J: So, why do you think people send their children to daycare, or what do you see as your job here?

SAWSAN: The parents want to prepare them to the big school. And me, as a preschool teacher, I have to prepare them to their interview to get in. For the babies, people send their kids here because we are a good daycare. It is well known. We give the babies the care and attention they need. We spoil them a lot. We really love them. But as a preschooler teacher, I need to prepare them to the big school. I think that we are doing a good job. We are getting good feedback and that the kids are happy. And we want them to be happy.

Sawsan revealed two sides to her role; one as an educator preparing the children for formal schooling (in the future), and one as someone whose job it is to make sure that the children are happy (in the present). Yvonne's perception of her role referenced the future as well:

J: I wanted to ask you about the school interviews. I noticed a lot of children are going to school interviews at this time, I've heard the parents talking about it. Do you feel pressured by that, by the fact that children need to get into different schools?

YVONNE: No, not at all. The parents are the stressed ones. I mean, at the interview they are looking at behavior, and the kids' organizational skills... so not just academics. Whatever we teach here, as far as educational skills, they will learn again in nursery and kindergarten. They will learn it all over again.

The fact that Yvonne mentioned that the children will learn the content of the curriculum all over again bridges the present with the imagined future.

The Mickey Mouse children, who were the oldest children at the daycare, were often reminded of the “big school” that they would encounter “next year.” When being reprimanded, for example, teacher sometimes told the children, “You can’t do that at the big school!” The children were also reminded of the future when teachers were trying to get them to stop crying. For example, in this extract:

YVONNE tries comforting Hadi, who is crying because his mother left. She tells him, “Don’t cry. Mommy will come back later. You’re a big boy now. You’ll go to big school next year!”

Hadi was told that he is a “big boy” in the present, and was reminded that he is going to go to the big school in the future, where crying is apparently not what big boys should do. The teachers’ references to the future “big school” in their interactions with the children also posit the child as one in waiting: waiting to get older, and waiting to go to a new school.

### *2.3.5 Environment*

The parents of children who attended The Play Garden in years past often gave a similar gift, which included trinkets, photos or posters which voiced the child thanking the staff and the director for “years of happiness,” or for “teaching me everything I need to know.” The posters and trinkets were displayed with care in the common areas such as the reception, imbuing the environment with a feeling of timelessness. No photos or work of children who currently attended the daycare were displayed. Through the nostalgic decorations, combined with the very contemporary design of the daycare space, the environment itself embodied time as simultaneously up-to-date yet removed from the present. The décor celebrated those who have passed



through the daycare and onto formal schooling. The images of children dressed according to theme days show that temporal discipline is valued at The Play Garden.

While the reception area looked to the past, the basement level of the daycare, while being well-lit with recessed as well as decorative lighting, felt disconnected from physical time. As there were virtually no windows on this level, it was impossible to tell the time of day, the weather, or any other natural indicators of time when moving around in the areas. The fact that this level was underground also insulated sound. One could not hear car horns or any other kind of ambient noise, apart from that emanating from within the daycare.<sup>12</sup> The feeling of detachment from time that permeated the basement level also fed into the notion that the daycare occupied a liminal space relative to “adult” society and the institution of education.

## 2.4 Conclusion

In the everyday life of the children and adults at The Play Garden, time was a key feature of existence. Both physical time and waiting time ordered the actions and conceptions of children as well as the teachers who worked with them. Transitioning, five-minute blocks of time, and formal schooling were concepts that not only ordered the day and described children, but also served to construct what it is to be a child at The Play Garden.

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<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, during one of my observations, a bombing occurred about a kilometer away. I was observing the children in the canteen, then Candyland, and finally the theatre; all of which were on the basement level, and neither myself nor the teachers were aware that an explosion had occurred. It was only until we ascended the stairs, and were literally and figuratively faced with the light of day, that both myself and the teachers found out what had occurred while we were blissfully unaware. This moment of crisis crystallized time. At once I was flooded with relief in the moment for being alive, then filled with fear for the immediate state of my family. After finding out that my family and friends were safe, I was hit with fears over the future of this country. While in general the days at The Play Garden were hectic, I found myself longing for the feeling I had in the recent past, only minutes before, when no bomb had shattered the (now imagined) peace of the day.

In their time *in* childhood, the ticking of time structured the day. In their time *of* childhood, the children were seen by adults as waiting in the present; waiting to adjust, waiting for the next activity, waiting to grow up and go to the “big school.” Their lives were described in reference to futurity, while the posters and photos in the reception area lauded those who have already passed through the liminal state that is the daycare. These children, having been prepared for the future (and disciplined both temporally and spatially) within the walls of the facility, move on and grow up- and are thus celebrated in the reception area. They serve as a model for children and families, peering out from the perfectly aligned photographs, and link the institution of the daycare simultaneously to the past and the future.

## CHAPTER 3

### RULES, CLOCKS, AND TIMETABLES: SPATIAL DISTRIBUTIONS IN THE DAYCARE

We must evaluate in everyday life how much environments allow or forbid, how much they encourage or censor, how much they educate ways of seeing, exploration and sensibility.  
[Vecchi 2010:89]

This chapter seeks to outline the ways that space and time overlapped at The Play Garden, and mutually constituted the experiences of children and staff. Teachers often made explicit references to time, and enforced rules that involved managing individuals within time and space, as well as discipline and order. A division of linear time is intrinsic to the functionality of the “art of distributions” (Foucault 1977), whereby the management of space in terms of temporal segments, laid out according to a detailed plan, regulates the use of the facility by groups of individuals. At The Play Garden, the architecture of the facility and the use of the timetable divided space both physically and temporally, structuring the day-to-day activities and experiences of children and teachers.

#### 3.1 Concepts of Space

As with notions of time (which were discussed in Chapter Two), concepts of space also structure our lives, in literal as well as metaphysical ways.<sup>13</sup> Spaces can make us feel comfortable or uneasy, frightened or welcomed, close to others or isolated. Spaces can be warm or cold, light or dark, open or closed, suffocating or liberating. In some spaces, the passage of time is visible, such as the view of a sunset

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<sup>13</sup> Nigel Thrift (2003) and Michel Foucault (1984) define “spaces” as relational and meaningful to human life.

from a bay window. In others, the course of time is purposely hidden from view, as in the insulated atmosphere of the casino or the shopping center. Yet, in these different environments, it is imperative that we ask the question: what is forbidden and what is encouraged, and why?

Initial impressions of particular spaces can influence life decisions. One may purchase a house because it feels like home, or spend hours in a café that has just the right atmosphere. Accordingly, parents may choose a daycare for their children based on how the space looks or the kinds of toys and areas available for play. Parents may not know much about what is happening with and to their children during the day, but might still feel that the care their children are receiving is adequate because they themselves liked the space for one reason or another (Prescott 1987).

### 3.2 At the Reception: Spatial Meanings

Returning to the reception that introduced the daycare space, let us view the area now through a spatial lens. A bench, desk and staircase anchor the reception zone and set it apart from the hallways and passageways to offices and classrooms. Several people often milled about the space; perhaps delivery services bringing in food to the kitchen, a repair service fixing the telephones or computers, people keeping appointments with the director or administrators, or potential clients checking out the facilities for either the daycare or the after-hours extracurricular programs offered after 4 pm. The secretary's desk was the initial contact space for these disparate individuals, serving as the focal point of the entrance lobby. In regards to the daily routines of The Play Garden, it was at the desk, with the secretary, that parents dropped off their children in the morning. It was at the desk where signs and announcements (addressed to parents) were placed. Some of these announcements

included information about theme days, which were temporally analyzed in Chapter Two.

Furthermore, the automatic sliding glass doors, controlled by the secretary and her switch, sealed off the childcare facility from the exterior environment. The shoe covers, worn by daycare visitors, marked individuals within the community.<sup>14</sup> The covers as well as the doors constructed a visible distinction between *inside* and *outside*, and *known* and *unknown*. The vestibule, located before the sliding glass door at the entrance, was a liminal zone: a distinct waiting area for marking people who were entering the space, and a transient area for people who were in the process of exiting. Those who were *known* were waved inside, while *unknown* individuals were allowed in, recorded, and marked with shoe covers.

### 3.3 Rules, Discipline and Order

In advance of the discussion of field data, it is necessary to first define the terms *rules*, *discipline* and *order*, which will be utilized in the following discussion of the everyday use of space at The Play Garden. Firstly, *rules* can be defined as social practices that consist of regular, socially-sanctioned patterns of behavior among a social group (Hart 1994). According to Foucault (1977, 1980), *discipline* is a mechanism of power that regulates the behavior of individuals in the community, and

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<sup>14</sup> The environment communicated the message that one must follow the shoe cover rule: a machine that automatically fitted one's shoes with the covers was placed prominently in the entrance; and a large, colorful basket containing more covers was placed conspicuously on the secretary's desk at the entrance. The staff did not have to wear shoe covers in the environment, except in the Candyland room, where children had to remove their shoes to use the padded play equipment. The teachers informed me that they should clean the bottom of their shoes with disinfectant when they arrive at work, though I did not witness anyone doing so upon arrival during my fieldwork. What I began to theorize over the course of my observations was that the functionality of the shoe covers upheld the perception of the space as clean and hygienic (by *unknown* people or visitors) rather than the everyday practice of shielding the environment from dirt.

is visible in the organization of space, of time, and of the activities and movement of group members. The word *order* connotes the arrangement of things or people according to a specific pattern or method. Order can also denote categories, hierarchical systems, rank, class, or organization. Foucault would encourage us to pose the question, who does the ordering and who decides the principles against which objects, persons or ideas are arranged?

### 3.4 Foucauldian Space and Time: Managing Groups of Individuals

For historian and philosopher Michel Foucault, the control of space and time are intrinsic to disciplinary power. This is especially apparent in his suggestion, “thinking about and organizing space is one of the preoccupations of power” (Foucault 2007:25). He holds that “spaces demarcate and communicate; they guarantee obedience with an economy of time and gesture” (Foucault 1977:148). The management of people within space “must be understood as machinery for adding up and capitalizing time” (1977:157). Temporal control regulates time as it is experienced by people. Accordingly, time becomes valuable and thus must be spent productively: “a time without impurities or defects; a time of good quality throughout which the body is constantly applied to its exercise” (Foucault 1977:151). The practice of discipline positions and controls individuals in space, regulating the experience of time. The organization of individuals in space is achieved according to certain techniques, which Foucault terms the “art of distributions” (1977:141).

In the case of The Play Garden, the economy of space and time centered on preparedness for institutionalized education, and the daycare served as a site for generating individuals who would be accepted to international schools. In a country

where a large percentage of university-educated individuals move out of the country to find work, economic and educational mobility are considered desirable traits (Lebanese Association for Educational Studies 2006). Thus, the daycare site represents the beginnings of an educated, economically mobile person.

### 3.4.1 Daycare Distributions

As we saw when we entered The Play Garden, the typical child goes almost immediately to her classroom and spends most of her day there. When she moves around the facility, she is following the lead of a teacher to a specific room where she follows a routine and does similar things every day. In the classroom and in the canteen, she must sit on the carpet or on a chair, while at other times and in other spaces, she must stay in specific areas. Other rooms like Candyland, the theatre, the playground, and the canteen are shared with the rest of the children enrolled at the daycare, and have very specific uses. Each class is named after a children's cartoon character, and children are often addressed, in the whole group, by their class name.

Foucault goes into some detail as to how schools “manipulate” and “condition” children's bodies.<sup>15</sup> The use of Foucault's theory of disciplinary power within time and space serves the purpose of the field research, in a site where formal education, or the “big school,” was a constant concern. The following definitions of each technique will be utilized in the analysis: *enclosure*, or The Play Garden Learning Center facility itself; *partitioning*, or the distribution of adult teachers and children into single classrooms arranged by age and language of instruction; *functional sites*, or the shared spaces of the daycare allocated for use according to the

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<sup>15</sup> Focusing on the conditioning of the body here does not mean that I am reducing humans to just their bodies. However, for the sake of clarity, bodies will be analyzed, though children and adults amount to more than just their corporeal body.

timetable; and *rank*, or the classification of large groups of children with class names (e.g. “Mickey Mouse” class) and the labeling of individual children using specific terminology (e.g. “smart,” “troublemaker”).

### 3.5 Back on the Stairs

Let us rejoin Ali who we first met at the secretary’s desk. It is 8:00 in the morning. He is being led up the stairs to his classroom, on the right hand side of the railing, although no one else is currently going up or down the steps. The stairs at The Play Garden were rife with meaning: they were used constantly by several groups of children and teachers throughout the day. The children were instructed to walk up the stairs on the right, and down the stairs on the opposite side. A low metal railing divided the stairs into two parts, or lanes, for travel. The children were also taught to put one hand behind their back, and one hand on the railing, while moving between floors.

Since groups of people had to walk in a single-file line when going between floors, as well as while traveling to rooms around the facility, there was always a child who was chosen to be the line leader. This title, indicative of rank, was bestowed upon the child who was being “good” or who lined up first. The teachers would sometimes praise the children, and make the position of line leader a reward. For instance, Anita once told Amine, when he stopped crying, “Oh, wow, you’re a big boy. You can be the line leader!” when the class was about to go up the stairs.

The way that children were taught to walk on the stairs- on a particular side



depending on the direction of their travels, as well as the specific posture of their hand- is noteworthy. In her interview, I asked Muneera about the fact that the children were asked to walk with one hand on the railing and one hand behind their backs. I tried doing this myself, and felt extremely off-balance when climbing the stairs this way. Muneera relayed that following the rules for the sake of order was important, and did not seem to take into consideration how this posture influenced how the children must move on the stairs:

J: I wanted to ask you about the stairs. I noticed that the children have to go up the stairs with one hand behind their backs, and one on the railing. And I noticed that this is hard to do, because I tried it myself...

MUNEERA: Yeah, well, this is a rule for all of the kids. So, they need to put their hand behind their back so they learn to balance themselves using the bannister. This is a rule. Nothing I can do about it. They will learn to balance themselves.

Here, Muneera felt confident that the children “will learn” to go up the stairs appropriately, and also showed that the rule must be followed, even if it put demands on the children and the way that they moved their bodies. She removed herself from the situation, saying that the rule needed to be followed and that there was nothing she could do about it. Muneera’s repudiation of her own agency as an educator demonstrates the system of spatial discipline conveyed to children as well as staff at The Play Garden. Muneera effectively made herself a subject of the rules, and in turn subjugated the children to follow them.

However, in this conversation and in my observations, I discovered over time that most of the rules at the daycare revolved around the management of lots of bodies in space, and most were rooted in concepts of both space and time simultaneously. For example, the “hand” rule managed how children moved within space (up the stairs). Having their hands behind their backs safeguarded the children from touching walls or objects within the space, which would then make the journey even longer.

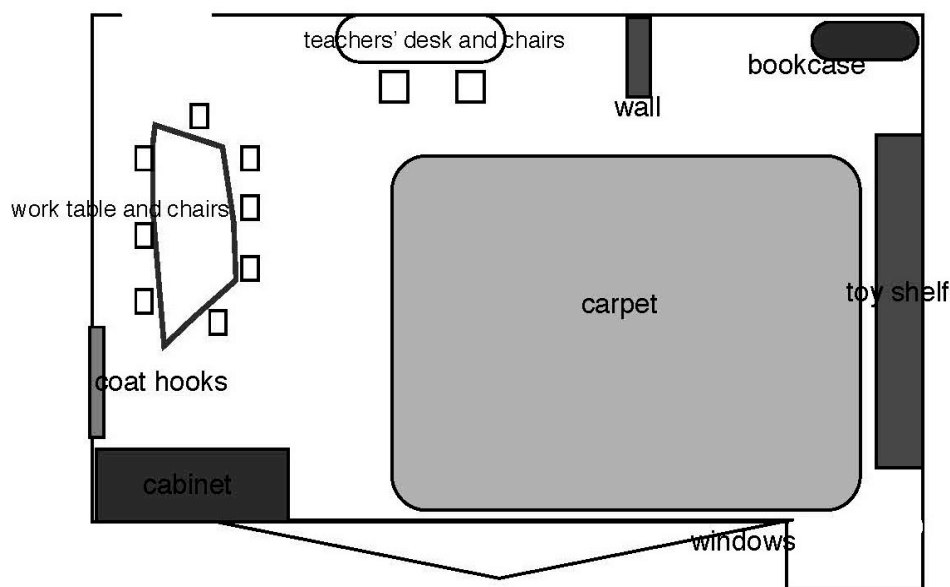
Yet, this posture did not help the children navigate the uneven surface of the stairs.

Many of the rules at The Play Garden seemed to be attempts to direct children in time and space, yet also were rules for the sake of rules, with no clear object other than management.

### 3.6 From the Stairs to the Classroom

We follow Ali to the Mickey Mouse classroom, perched high above the playground, just to the left of the stairwell on the first floor. The following map, Figure 3.1, depicts the spatial layout of the classroom. Twenty-five children and four teachers shared the space. The classroom was about thirty square meters in size, and included a desk and computer for teachers, a table and chairs for the children, a tall white storage cabinet, hooks for coats and backpacks, and a large maroon carpet. A single bulletin board was affixed to the back wall, where a scene that depicted cars, a hot air balloon, boats, roads, and a train on a track. A bookcase and shelves framed the carpet on one side, while floor-to-ceiling glass windows framed the other, with available views to the Mediterranean. A small nook, where two panes of glass met, was tucked in the corner of the room. Twenty-five almost identical “trains” made out of toilet paper rolls and cardboard shapes, which were taped to the glass, blocked part of the view.

Figure 3.1 Mickey Mouse Classroom



This map illustrates the classroom space, where the carpet took up a large portion of the classroom. The carpet was a significant location in the room for the partitioning of individuals in space. Children spent a significant amount of their time on the carpet, which served as the *de facto* space for the children to remain in place. The use of the carpet changed according to the time of day. In the early morning, children arrived at various points in time. When they entered the room, they were asked to sit on the carpet and play with toys that were set out. If desired, the children could retrieve a book from the bookshelf and sit back down on the carpet to read it. Sometimes, teachers would come and read a book with specific children; other times, they looked at books or played with toys alone or in small groups. The timetable labeled this period, from 7:45-8:30 am, as “free play,” though it was short-lived:

It is a rainy morning. Two children look at raindrops running down the windowpane. Yasmine and Louloua look at the book, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, which seems to be a favorite. They recite some parts of the story together. Amine glances at his peers on the carpet, and then joins Omar and Rhea. They are sitting with MUNEERA, who holds some cards with photographs of animals on them. She asks the children, “What animal is this?” Omar raises his hand and says, “polar bear!” excitedly. MUNEERA replies, “No, no, this is a panda. He lives in the –“ Abruptly, she is cut off by ANITA, who announces, “Clean up!” in a loud voice. MUNEERA tells Omar,

Amine and Rhea: “Okay, clean up! Circle Time!” The children put the toys and books back and begin taking their places on the edge of the carpet.

In this instance, a glance at the clock showed that it is 8:30 am. In this instance, the management of bodies in space, unlike the stairs, is dependent on time. While the spatial constraints of the stairs as well as the associated rules forced individuals to move in a single line in space, the teachers’ monitoring of the clock and adherence to the timetable necessitated a change in the distribution of bodies in space.

### 3.7 The Timetable: Managing Bodies in Space

The organization of time and space into the timetable is an intrinsic part of the management of individuals in space and time, as it orders and re-orders spaces and activities (Foucault 1977). At The Play Garden, each class of children had a timetable that was to be followed everyday. The typical schedule for the Mickey Mouse class apportioned the children’s day into 30-minute blocks of time, where they moved to different spaces in the daycare every half hour:

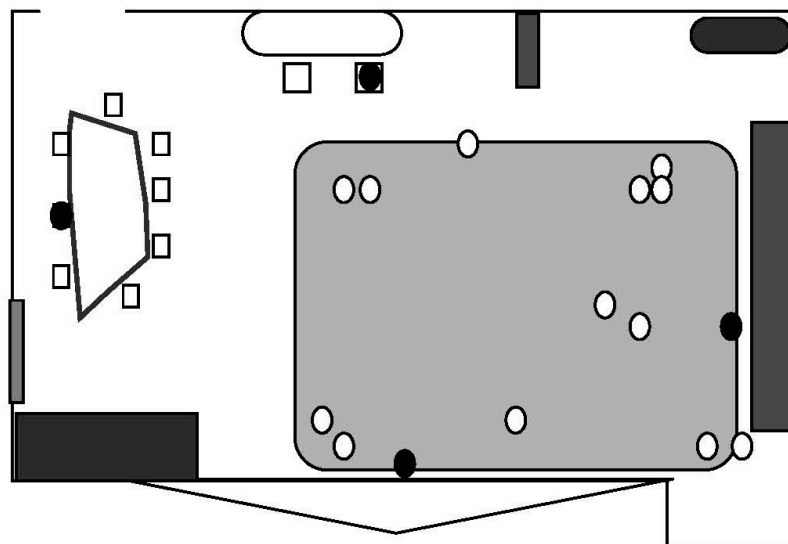
7:45- 8:30	Greeting, free play*
8:30-9:00	Circle time, toilet/diapering*
9:00-9:30	Outdoor play
9:30-10:00	Breakfast
10:00-10:30	Exercise in theatre (Yoga4Kids in the theatre on Tuesdays)
10:30-11:00	Candyland
11:00-11:30	Circle time, toilet/diapering* (cooking in the canteen on Thursdays)
11:30-12:00	Storytelling, toilet/diapering* (Arabic on Fridays)
12:00-12:30	Art
12:30-1:00	Pretend room (Kindermusik on Wednesdays in the music room)
1:00-1:30	Lunch, toilet/diapering
1:30-2:30	Playing quietly at centers*
2:30-3:00	Toilet/diapering, center play*
3:00-3:30	Snack/center play*
3:30-4:00	Daycare closes (all children must be picked up)

\*The asterisks in the schedule above show the times where the children should sit on the carpet in the classroom.

The map below depicts the first part of the day, the greeting and free play time, which was viewed as non-instructional time. Here, the teachers (black dots)

were dispersed in space. One teacher was working at a table, one was at the computer, and two were on the carpet with the children. While the teachers were spread out around the room, the children (white dots), despite the “free” label associated with this time of day, were partitioned to the carpet area. When the clock struck 8:30 am, the spatial arrangement changed. Children were still partitioned in their expected place on the carpet, though their place became more specified, as depicted in Figure 3.2:

Figure 3.2 8:05 am, *Free Play*<sup>16</sup>



Despite the “free” label, the children were partitioned in the classroom space and were required to remain in a very specific area of the room. While children were sometimes told directly to “sit down on the carpet,” this expectation was also relayed in more subtle ways. For instance, in this excerpt from my field notes, Louloua once ventured off of the carpet to get her own toy from her bag and was led back to what

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<sup>16</sup> The children are represented in the map by the white dots, and teachers by the black dots.

was considered her rightful place:

It is morning arrival time. Seven children are seated on the carpet, playing with toys or reading books. When Louloua enters the room, the teachers are busy. One teacher is cutting cardboard into little pieces. Two are sitting on the carpet. ANITA is working at the computer. Louloua seems to want to be noticed. She announces, “Hey, I’m here!” ANITA turns around on her desk chair, lifts her up, and kisses her. Louloua ventures onto the carpet, and then walks over to the coat hooks. She reaches inside her open backpack, and begins to pull out a toy (a My Little Pony figurine). ANITA notices, walks over to Louloua, and tries to take the backpack gently. SAWSAN distracts Louloua, saying “Wow! Nice shoes! What color is your t-shirt?” All the while, SAWSAN puts her hand on the child’s back and slowly inches her away from the coat hooks. Louloua makes her hands into fists and stomps her feet. But after a minute- after she is led to the carpet by SAWSAN, away from the coat hooks- she begins playing with a puzzle on the carpet.

In this example, the teachers tried to persuade Louloua to return to the carpet, and to use only the toys set out there, which were materials that were controlled by the daycare.

While the morning arrival time on the carpet allowed for a limited choice of activities, the use of the carpet changed according to the timetable. At 8:30 am, it was “circle time.” The teachers would tell the children to clean up the toys and “sit on the edge of the carpet.” The use of the carpet changed from “free” to “instructional,” and certain spatial expectations came along with the ticking of the clock. Muneera, in her interview, explained the arrangement of the classroom and how children were distributed within the space:

J: Can you tell me about the day? What are the expectations for the different times of day?

MUNEERA: Most of the time they stay on the carpet for an hour in the morning. First they play with things in the classroom, and then it is circle time. So then, like, if it’s circle time, you don’t go and touch the books and the manipulatives<sup>17</sup>... they understand it’s circle time, you know, it is not time to do something else. It’s time to learn something. You need to sit and listen.

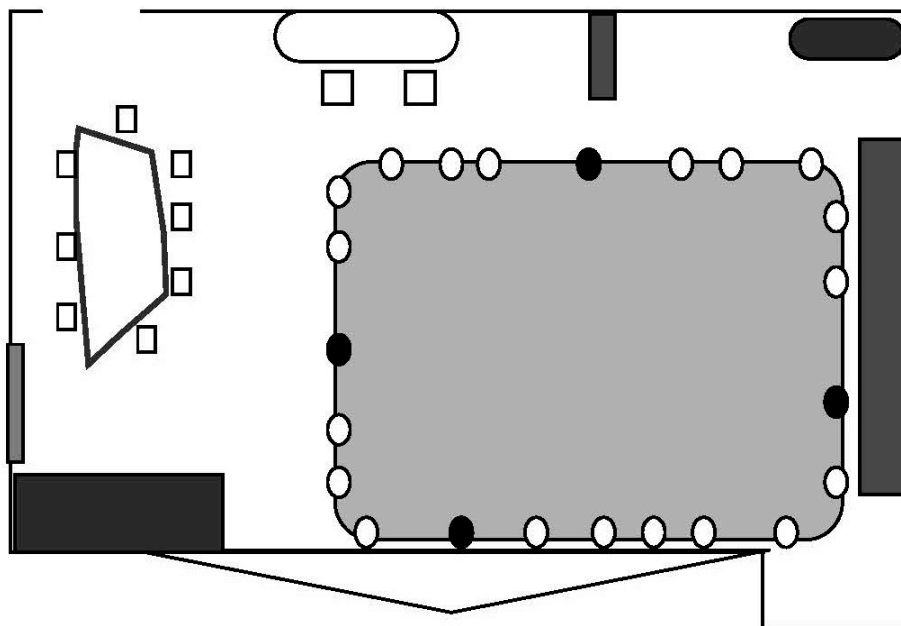
As Muneera explained, the fact that the clock read 8:30 am meant that the expectations for the same space, the carpet, changed and children had to act

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<sup>17</sup> The term *manipulatives* is part of educational discourse. Manipulatives are, in general, objects that can be moved or constructed, such as small blocks, Legos, and other objects with very specific functions. The use of this term is ironic here, as the bodies of children and adults at the daycare were also objectified as “manipulatives” in the sense that they were molded and made useful via the enactment of disciplinary power.

accordingly (as depicted in Figure 3.3). Circle time was conceived as an instructional time, where children had to put the toys away and “learn something.” The posture and spatial distribution of children on the carpet, within the time span of circle time, defined this time as instructional: sit and be quiet, and you’ll learn something.

Figure 3.3 8:30 am, *Circle Time*



During this time, the children and teachers all gathered on the carpet, around its edge, with one teacher leading the group in a lesson based on routines or the monthly curricular theme. For the most part, the children sat quietly. Some squirmed in place or played with their hair or their clothing, but were still quiet. In this next field note extract, while twenty children and four teachers were seated on the carpet, I sat at the table and chairs near the classroom door and observed the circle time routine:

ANITA leads the children in circle time. They sing a song, called “say good morning to all.” She shows the children some name cards. They are told that if they see their name, they are to say, “I am ---. I am present. My name starts with letter --.”

ANITA tells the children that only those who say as they're told will get a sticker. One child says his name but not the whole sentence (I am---. I am present. My name starts with the letter ---.) ANITA tells him, "no sticker!" She goes through the entire class list, and puts the name cards into two groups: those who are present and those who are absent. She leads the class in counting both groups. Only the teachers count along. ANITA says, "Only the teachers<sup>18</sup> will get stickers because they're the only ones talking." A child begins squirming around. ANITA tells him, "Look, if you can't sit properly, you will leave the carpet." He stops. The rest of the children including Hadi continue sitting for the remaining 15 minutes of circle time, before heading downstairs to the outdoor playground.

In this example, Anita led the children in a routine that required them to conform to expectations, and also marked them in time and space. Anita told Hadi to sit still, an expected behavioral norm on the space of the carpet when it was circle time. Five minutes before, Hadi could have roamed all around the carpet without issue, when the time was marked as non-instructional. Also, Anita's division of the children into two groups; those who are present and those who are absent, marked the children within time (i.e. now) and space (i.e. at the daycare).

### 3.8 Functional Sites

The classroom carpet, while it partitioned individuals in the space, can also be conceived as a functional site, whose expected use changed over time. When the children arrived at the daycare in the morning, they were instructed to play with resources that were available in the room. The teachers chose some toys to set out, but children could also go to the low shelf and choose other items. Their use of materials and location in space, therefore, was not designated by the area in which the toys or resources were placed; children read a story, played with blocks or toy animals, or sat in the circle all on the same carpet.

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<sup>18</sup> Working from Muneera's earlier statement that explained that during circle time, the children must "sit and listen," it seems here that teachers are subjecting themselves to the same sorts of rules and behavioral expectations. In the extract with Anita, she points out that only her fellow teaching colleagues were counting along, instead of the children.



A strictly followed schedule ensured that each age group or class had exclusive use of different parts of the facilities for a very specific amount of time. The entire daycare of over 250 enrolled children shared many of these spaces. The shared areas included the canteen, the pretend room, the music room, Candyland, the theatre, and the outdoor playground. These areas were functional sites, in that the spaces were used for specific activities that varied by time and age group. For example, the canteen was an eating space, but was also a space where children had art class and baking time. The function of the canteen varied according to the time of day, with the spaces itself structured by the timetable.

The art room, theatre, pretend room, canteen and Candyland had concrete physical boundaries, such as walls and doors. These functional sites, in terms of The Play Garden, produced a reality of time within space: for example, one eats only in the canteen and one paints only in the art room. The teachers maintained the functions of the different space in their interactions with the children, as the following examples indicate:

It is 8:15 am in the classroom. Hadi asks to drink water. ANITA tells him, “Hmmm... it’s not time for that yet...In five minutes, we’ll have breakfast in the canteen.”

In the classroom, some children begin roughhousing on the carpet. YVONNE says, “Stop it. You play like that in Candyland, not here. You can’t do that here.”

Two girls begin laughing about something in the music room, and then run to get in line with their friends. SAWSAN sees them and states, “We’re not outdoors! We don’t run inside.”

A close look at the timetable shows that the day was composed of blocks of time that had very specific uses and purposes. While diapers were changed and children used the toilet as needed throughout the day, even bathroom time was noted on the schedule. The shared functional sites of the daycare included specific rooms which had very explicit uses. The teachers enforced the use of the functional sites often in

their interactions with children, as the preceding examples illustrated, seemingly for the sake of control and management of bodies in space and time.

While the educational space was divided via walls, windows and doors; the daycare space was also temporally partitioned by the timetable, so that different distributions of individuals organized by rank (class) were enclosed within particular spaces. In effect, the timetable controlled the classes of children and teachers and dictated where they were to be at different times of day. The routine of the day became the kind of “disciplinary monotony” (Foucault 1977:141) that positioned individuals in time and space according to the daily program.

### 3.9 The Canteen: A Negotiation Space

Time and its passage was a constant concern for the teachers. During my observations, one of the most frequent questions that I heard teachers asking each other was “what time is it?” Since most of the spaces of the daycare were shared among 250 children, the timetable was an important organizing mechanism for the course of the day. Due to spatial constraints, teachers had to ensure that the children moved through space and remained in certain areas at specific intervals. In this way, the entire group of 250 children could share the areas of the daycare facility.

In my interviews with teachers, I was able to ask about the timetable and how I noticed teachers frequently looking at the clock. Yvonne mentioned that the shared use of the space was especially difficult, and highlighted the canteen as a particularly meaningful zone of spatial negotiation:

J: I want to share with you one of the things that I've noticed. I noticed that a lot of the teachers look at the clock.

YVONNE: It's such a tight schedule. All our activities are half an hour based. And we have to always be on time for the others kids and other teachers and classes who are coming into these classes that we're using. For example, art: we have to leave spot-on time because there is another group coming in right after us. That's why we're always looking at the clock. Always.

J: Yes, I noticed this for almost all of the teachers.

Y: Because... if you realize that sometimes Mayssa [the daycare owner] comes and tells us to hurry up, especially in the canteen, because other classes are waiting to come in to the canteen after breakfast, and it can become chaotic because you have to share all of the space. I mean, we need to rush the kids so others can come in.

Here, Yvonne referred to the daycare timetable's stipulation that different classes used the canteen directly after her class ate breakfast. In her interview, Sawsan mentioned the canteen and relayed that teachers had to follow the timetable exactly, even if it meant that the children did not have a chance to eat:

J: I noticed that lots of teachers look at the clock quite a bit. Can you tell me about that- the clock and how the timetable guides your work with the children?

SAWSAN: Umm... We have specific times to stay in one place [pause]. It is about 30 minutes, not more. Actually let's say 25 minutes, because the last five minutes we should be getting ready to leave where we are, because other classes need to come in and use the place. So, like at breakfast, five minutes before our time is up, because other classes need to come in to the canteen because they have art or cooking class, we need to get the kids to wash their hands. So we need to make it snappy, let's say. We can't just stay however long we want. Even if children come in late... and need to eat, we can't stay with them after our breakfast time. We need to leave at this specific time because other classes need the space.

J: So, if a child comes late and misses part of the breakfast time, they can't finish their food?

S: If their parents are willing to come down and sit with them, then yes, they are allowed to. But as *teachers*, we can't. We need to go to another location.

Sawsan's answer to my query demonstrates the intricate relationship between time and space that was constructed at The Play Garden. If somehow teachers spent too much time in a particular space with the children, they were disciplined via the timetable. The teachers also used concepts of physical time, especially the time unit "five more minutes," to discipline each other when attempting to share the daycare space. For example, one day when I was observing during breakfast time in the canteen, a teacher from another class approached the Mickey Mouse teachers:

I am sitting next to Nathan in the canteen. The Mickey Mouse children are sitting and eating. MUNEERA tells one child, "You need to sit and eat." A teacher whom I've never seen before approaches YVONNE and MUNEERA. She says, "Tables, tables, where are our tables?" in a

rhetorical fashion. YVONNE gives her a tight-lipped smile in return, and crosses her arms over her body. She tells this teacher, “We have five more minutes.” This teacher looks at YVONNE, then at her watch, and replies, “Well, you’ve actually got *four* more minutes.” YVONNE, seemingly annoyed, suddenly calls out to the children: “Alright, everyone! Stop eating now. Go wash!” The children and the other Mickey Mouse teachers gather by the sinks to wash their hands. I am writing in my notebook, and Nathan comes over to me and says, “You need to move. Time to wash.”

Nathan, a child in the Mickey Mouse class, informed me of the expectations that changed with time in the canteen. While a minute before, the children were expected to be sitting down and eating, the arrival of this unknown teacher and the ticking of the clock changed the distribution of individuals in space. Suddenly, the children were told to go and wash their hands. The partitioning of space, according to the timetable, was managed not only by referencing the clock but was also policed by individuals within the daycare space.

### 3.10 Conclusion: Missing Spaces

Childhood studies scholar Allison Clark notes that spaces away from adult eyes, in which to simply *be*, allow the child to be private in a public space, where they can be observers as well as actors in the social context. At The Play Garden, there did not seem to be any areas intended for private retreat. Clark writes that “private spaces” are “rarely part of the design” of schools and daycares (2010:71).

While there were a few small playhouses scattered about for the children to play in, teachers would frequently pop in the windows to say “peek-a-boo” or station themselves right outside. These areas were not intentional private areas for the children. Furthermore, doors to the bathrooms and changing rooms for children were left open, with no coverings or walls to separate the spaces from view. The only toilets with doors and walls were those for adults. From the bathroom doorway, fellow children, passers by and adults could see children engaged in what could be

argued is a private act. While of course this analysis is coming from a personal perspective based on my conceptions as an adult, I argue that the daycare space as a whole was conceived of as a public arena, where the actions of children and adults, managed within time and space, were open to monitoring and discipline. The proceeding chapter, Chapter Four, will explore how the management of time and space converged at The Play Garden, producing “docile bodies” (Foucault 1977), or suitable candidates for the “big school.”

## CHAPTER 4

### MANAGING BODIES IN TIME AND SPACE

For someone like me, brought up as a provincial petite bourgeois, learning comes with your baby bottle before you even go to primary school. Knowledge was the rule of existence, the kind of learning that amounted to a prohibition against knowing certain things. Learning is something erotic, [but] teachers manage to make learning depressing... We need to understand how that serves the needs of society... you have to make learning rebarbative if you want to restrict the number of people who have access to knowledge. [Foucault 1974:52]

In this chapter, we will analyze the movement of children within space and time and look at the ways in which this movement was made productive and ordered in terms of the present as well as the future. In The Play Garden's economy centered on formal school preparedness. Time, space and bodies became imbued with notions of use and production. While the teachers contemporaneously managed children's bodies for the sake of order and safety in the daycare space, they also looked to the "big school" and disciplined children according to what they imagined these young boys and girls would face in the near future. However, the question arises, what kind of learning is being valued here? Is this kind of education rebarbative, or is it necessary for life at the "big school?" The events outlined in this chapter follow the children out of the classroom in their travels to the playground, the canteen, and the theatre.

#### 4.1 Out on the Playground

First, we follow the Mickey Mouse children out to the playground- the next destination in the daily routine. On their path, they re-encounter the stairs and descend them in a single-file line. They then pass through the reception area, going around the

secretary's desk on the left side, to a small glass side door that leads to the outdoor playground for three-year-olds.

It is a sunny and blustery morning. The wind moves the shrubs that are planted at the base of a long and tall metal gate, which shields the children from the busy road just outside. On the playground, which is about 100 square meters large, there are swings, tricycles, small plastic slides and climbing equipment for children. Two playhouses are nestled under a large piece of playground equipment, comprised of a high platform housing tunnels, an observation deck, a climbing wall and a tall slide. The morning is calm, and the children eagerly make their way outdoors. At 9:00 am, about fifteen children are present.<sup>19</sup> When entering the playground, six children immediately hop on tricycles. Two children begin going down the slide, and one of the teachers stations herself at the base of the plastic and metal play structure. Another teacher lifts some children up onto the swings. At one point in time, Nathan arrives at the daycare. His mother brings him directly to the playground, handing the teacher his backpack and water bottle, and kissing him goodbye before driving off.

Adam, a spritely and rambunctious boy with a mop of blonde, curly hair runs around the playground with a friend. Adam's hair flaps in the wind as he glances back at his friend while running. The two move continuously, organically, around the play structures. The equipment, like the slide, seems to be part of their play path, and the slide is integrated seamlessly into their continuous movement. Both are quiet, wide-eyed, and smiling. Adam comes around to the slide and begins walking up the incline. His friend stands at the base. Sawsan sees them and calls out loudly to everyone,

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<sup>19</sup> Here, we see notions of convenience, care and education colliding in terms of The Play Garden. While the daycare was a site for getting children ready for the "big school," it still represented a convenience for parents. Many children were dropped off early in the morning, though some continued arriving until about 9:30 am, due to their parents' schedules. Therefore, those "late" children, like Nathan, missed circle time, but the teachers could not tell the parents that they were late for "school," because the daycare was also viewed as a place where children are cared for, and not educated in the sense that they would "miss" something important.

“Adam is not allowed to go on the slide because he is walking up it! I told him for the hundredth time...” Yvonne nods and says, “He doesn’t listen.” Adam comes down from the slide and begins to cry. One teacher says, “No, don’t give me that fake cry. You need to listen.” She guides him to the side of the play structure. Another teacher interjects: “That was extremely dangerous. If you don’t stop crying, you will not be allowed to play.”

Adam seems to try to stop crying. He quiets himself, walks around with his fingers in his mouth, and sniffles. One minute passes, and he says, “Ivano (his nickname for Yvonne), only, I want to ride the tricycle” in a calm, measured voice. She responds, saying, “Okay, but remember.... No slide.”

#### 4.2 On the Playground: Intersection of Time and Space

In this vignette, notice how time and space are intersecting. The teacher’s initial response to Adam going up the slide the “wrong” way, is to put him on the side of the playground, a kind of unmarked but meaningful liminal zone. This area where Adam stood, away from his peers, was visually non-distinct. In terms of the “art of distributions” (Foucault 1977), the teacher effectively partitioned Adam in time and space. She created “sideness,” or a spatial area in which she monitored Adam’s behavior and deemed when he was ready to re-join the playtime. Here, the danger was not Adam’s crying, but his use of equipment that was out of the bounds of rules associated with space: a slide is for going *down*, not up. When he stops crying and is able to explain his play intentions to a teacher, he is able to emerge from liminality into the vibrant morning. He suggests to Yvonne that he could ride a tricycle, and she agrees.



What I find quite remarkable in this example was Adam's display of self-discipline. After his encounter with the teachers, he demonstrates ability and an apparent willingness to conform to the essentially random rules of the use of the slide that are intrinsically spatialized. The downward direction of the slide is a given to adults, yet Adam's actions seem to ask the question, "Why can't a slide be used for going up?" After being put on the side, Adam was able to stop himself from crying after only a short while, which was quite remarkable on the daycare timescale, where some children might cry for hours on end. In this scenario, Adam's rambunctiousness is being quelled. The side-disciplining and prohibition from the use of the slide actively constructs the child as a docile body that can be removed from space and time until allowed back into the social milieu by an adult.

During their interviews, I asked Yvonne and Sawsan their views on the "slide situation":

J: I wanted to ask you a bit about the time that Adam walked up the slide. I am wondering, from your perspective, what are the rules that children should follow on the playground?

SAWSAN: They are definitely not allowed to walk up the slide. They might fall and hurt themselves... So, we consider this dangerous and not allowed. I mean, we tend to leave them to play freely on the outdoor playground... but we have to draw a line somewhere for their own protection, for the children not to hurt themselves. And walking up the slide is one of these things...

J: So at this time, when Adam walked up the slide, he was asked to stand on the side, and was not allowed to play until he thought about his behavior.

S: ...Maybe this way he will keep it in his mind for next time. He might think, "Okay if I walk up the slide this time, I will not be able to use it, so I better go down the proper way."

Here, Sawsan explains her belief that controlling Adam's body at the moment of his transgression will not only ensure his safety, but will, primarily, encourage him to self-regulate his own behavior in the future- what Foucault (1977:201) termed "internalizing the gaze," or the desired result of surveillance. Yvonne also explained that she asked Adam to get off of the slide because, although he possessed sufficient

control over his own body to be able to accomplish the goal of reaching the top of the slide, other children might hurt themselves if they tried the same thing:

J: I noticed a time on the playground when Adam walked up the slide and he was told it was dangerous. So, walking up the slide is not okay?

YVONNE: No, of course not! [They should go] the other way around. I mean, Adam is able to walk up the slide, but others cannot. So they follow him and we might have an accident. He's opening eyes to kids who don't know how to do that. But of course another will see his buddy doing it, and say, "oh, let me try that!" ...

J: So putting Adam on the side was a punishment or a consequence for walking up the slide the wrong way?

Y: The kids are not punished. We don't punish them. We can move them on the *side*. Like, Adam is moved and put on the side a lot. Then I tell him, "When you are ready to behave, come back and join us." I mean, in England where I used to teach, we used to tell a child that they were being naughty. It is very normal to say. And we would put them in the naughty corner. But here in this daycare, you say *misbehaving*. It's not allowed to say naughty. This is my way of handling things- I put them on the side.

Yvonne and Sawsan both mentioned that, in the "big school," there would be less staff available to manage the children, and so they should learn to "sit and listen" because the teacher would not be able to constantly remind them to follow classroom norms. In her answer, Yvonne highlights an idea brought up by Prochner and Hwang (2008) in their analysis of early childhood behavior management techniques. In their article, provocatively entitled *Cry and You Cry Alone*, the authors cite a childcare manual which states that children who misbehave pose a threat to the social order, and their misdeed may "spread like a pestilence" and disrupt the order of the classroom.

Yvonne's explanation that Adam's decision to walk up the slide is "opening eyes" to this "dangerous" method of play justifies her attempts to control his body. The form of discipline that Yvonne utilized- removing the child from the activity and having him sit on the side- perhaps stems from a desire to find a way to make Adam stop the behavior without labeling him as "naughty," a word that she mentions teachers were "not allowed" to use in their interactions with children. Adam, treated

as a body of stilled or suppressed skills, is put on the side until he can be considered ordered and useful again, which becomes apparent when he stops crying and demonstrates that he will follow along with the consequences for his actions.

#### 4.3 Distributions: Producing “Docile Bodies”

According to Michel Foucault (1977), the “art of distributions,” which manages time and space, produces bodies that can be rendered useful and productive. These bodies, through the system of disciplinary power, should conform to order in even the minutest ways. This control of the body is accomplished in the educational setting by repetition and routine, and is internalized by the individual through the consistent, minute-to-minute reinforcement of rules so that adhering to them becomes habitual. In the case of The Play Garden, these minute ways are represented by the supposed inherent directionality of a slide or a stairwell, essentially random distinctions that feed into the teachers’ ideas of the “big school,” where docility is akin to conformity.

The analysis of disciplinary power in this chapter relies on the concept of “docile bodies,” which Foucault defines as bodies that can be “subjected, used, transformed, improved” (1977:136). The body, therefore, becomes “the object and target of power” (136). For discipline, bodies are malleable and are rendered docile. In this state of docility, production increases and resistance decreases. Control of the body is sought at the individual level, and once accomplished, it becomes obedient and thus valuable. A body that is useful in some way expresses the end goal of discipline. In the case of The Play Garden, the Mickey Mouse children’s bodies were disciplined for the sake of order and safety in the present, and were also seen as useful in the production of suitable (well-behaved, docile) candidates for the nursery class at

the “big school.”

The use of disciplinary techniques, by teachers, to render children’s bodies docile and useful arose from a “folk pedagogy” (Bruner 1996) of what constitutes the best care for children. Jerome Bruner, as part of his well-known text, *The Culture of Education* (1996), analyzed folk pedagogies, or the taken-for-granted practices that emerge from deeply embedded cultural beliefs about how children should learn and how teachers should teach.<sup>20</sup> In the context of the daycare, teachers operated within a folk pedagogy that constructed children as in need of discipline to ensure that they were safe, and to help get them prepared for their next step to the “big school,” or formal education. However, the words, management techniques, and use of space and time for teachers were also monitored by the daycare administration via the surveillance cameras, and modes of comportment were reiterated inside the space of the staff room. Therefore, teachers were subject to similar rules that they used to manage the children within the daycare space. This shows that “folk pedagogies” are only part of the nexus of control and order inherent in the management of individuals at the daycare. Adults were made docile by the same practices that they utilized with the children.

#### 4.4 Rules

In the everyday life of the daycare, teachers often referred to rules and ordered children to behave in specific ways, in specific places and at specific times. Referencing rules is perhaps to be expected in the educational setting, though the

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<sup>20</sup> Jerome Bruner is a psychologist who contributed to the fields of cognitive, developmental and educational psychology. His work, *The Culture of Education*, challenged conventional educational practices and explored the ways that culture and education affect and are affected by teachers and students.

daycare was also a site of care: caring for children while their parents were away as well as preparing them for formal education. What was remarkable about The Play Garden was that rules and order permeated the everyday lives of the very young children as well as the adults who were present in the setting. In each and every educational space in which I observed, teachers made reference to rules, which varied according to time and place. Within the daycare, children had to comply with an inherent structure of rules that, at their heart, maintained order.

In her interview, Anita mentioned to me that in the daycare, “there are rules, and we need them.” When I asked her about her beliefs about these rules and their usefulness, Anita’s answer juxtaposed notions of order with chaos:

J: So, can you tell me what you think about the idea of rules?

ANITA: For some children, you just say, “we don’t do this now, try to find something else to do, later on we will do this or that...” If it is fun, all of the others will follow easily; if not right away, then after some time. But some don’t like to follow the rules. This is the problem. But you cannot do everything out of the rules.... But you need rules, too. If not, after some time, it will not be a class. It will be a big jungle land! [laughs]

Here, Anita explained that she felt rules were necessary for the effective functioning of the daycare. This relates to the folk pedagogy about the needs of children and created expectations for their comportment: children and their activities should be orderly, and children are made orderly by following rules. Anita mentioned that she tried to make things “fun” so that the children were coaxed into complying with the rules. She also pointed out an order-chaos dichotomy when she states that without rules, the classroom would become chaotic: a “big jungle land.”

Anita’s use of the term “jungle land” is interesting here. First, there is a commercial play space called “Jungle Land” that located in a popular Beirut shopping center. This space is one where children reign; ball pits, slides, trampolines and the like provide a place for children to be active. Secondly, Anita’s metaphorical use of

the “jungle” is also noteworthy. A jungle, where (uncivilized) animals reign can be conceived as a place where (civilized) order does not exist.<sup>21</sup> Looking deeper into this example, the Lebanese educational system can be seen as representing civility and order amidst the chaos of children’s (and perhaps larger society’s) inherent disorder.

#### 4.5 Going to the Canteen

One of the spaces that had the potential to become a “jungle” was the canteen, the next stop for the Mickey Mouse children after the playground. The canteen was a large space, illuminated by recessed lighting. It was located on the underground level. Low red tables with red vinyl chairs were positioned all around the interior, on a brightly patterned vinyl floor. A telephone was mounted to the wall, to one side of the door. Seventy-five children could sit inside the canteen at a given time. A row of three low sinks and mirrors lined one wall. High, red shelves around the room displayed Looney Toons figurines, as well as some other trinkets, positioned out of the children’s reach. A few posters depicting personified woodland animals were framed in red and hung on the walls.

The canteen was linked to the internal kitchen, where meals were prepared for the children by a team of cooks. The cooks and cleaning staff often smiled at the children filing into the canteen, or moving within it, from behind a tall counter. This counter framed the back of the canteen, and provided a link to the kitchen, which extended far back into the basement. The counter was white and contained a backlit

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<sup>21</sup> Take, for example, the term *law of the jungle*, which generally means “every man, child or beast for himself.” Anita’s use of the word “jungle” also made me think of a recent New York Times article entitled *The Terrible Twos Who Stay Terrible* (Dobbs 2013). The article outlines the work of a developmental psychologist who sought to trace violent behavior to the comportment of two-year-olds, where he claims that humans (over the course of childhood) “eventually” learn “civility rather than cruelty.” The article likens the so-called violent behavior of two-year-olds to that of animals, painting an inhuman picture of the two-year-old in comparison to the criminal: “the toddler as a creature who reflexively uses physical aggression to get what he wants; the criminal as the rare person who has never learned to do otherwise.”

red square as a feature in the center. Right before snack time, matching melamine plates and cups were stacked and placed on its surface, ready to be arranged for the imminent hungry crowds. The plates contained a design of a little mouse, and matched the cups with the same motif. I recognized most of the items from a recent IKEA catalogue.<sup>22</sup>

During the eating times, children filed into the space with their teachers. Different classes of children sat in the same areas everyday. About eight children could fit at each table, with one teacher. The noise level in the canteen was very high. The sounds of scraping dishes, adult conversations, children laughing, children being told to sit down or eat, the ringing telephone, and the intermittent sounds of the PA system were almost overwhelming. The canteen as a space embodied paradoxical notions of access and success: access to globalized home goods, adult-only access to items on high shelves, and success in terms enrollment. The daycare institution has to be successful (profitable) for the access to and investment in IKEA goods to be worth it.

While in the canteen, the breakfast and lunch times were the only daily occasions where children in the Mickey Mouse classes saw peers who are members of other classes. For example, the Mickey Mouse, Daffy Duck, and Big Bird classes all ate together in the morning at 9:30 am. The flow of the snack time, in general, was the same everyday, and similar spatial constraints were enforced. Take this extract from my field notes:

It is breakfast time in the canteen. The children must sit and wait to be served. A cleaner or a teacher brings over a stack of identical melamine plates. She passes them out abruptly. Then, the children are served a sandwich. Cups with two handles on the sides are set out next, along with a large pitcher of water. When the children are given a small serving of water in their cups, they are instructed to say “thank you.” If they want more food or water, they hold up their plates or cups to indicate this and wait for an adult to notice. Most of the children eat quietly, and some

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<sup>22</sup> IKEA is a Swedish company that sells ready-to-assemble furniture and home goods, with 349 stores in 43 countries, but there is no outlet in Lebanon; consequently, gaining access to IKEA goods is looked on favorably (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IKEA>)

smile or whisper to each other. Other classes are eating at the same time- I estimate there are about 70 children and maybe 15 adults.

The words I most often hear teachers telling the children include how to use their bodies:

Line up	Stop
Sit	Eat
Sit properly	Hurry up
Wait	Go

While in the room, the teachers had to find a way to ensure that their 25 charges (who were seated at tables among at least fifty other children) ate the food set out for them (and only that), in the span of 25 minutes. A five-minute block of time was set aside for washing hands. The room was not very large, and with all of the people crammed into the area, the canteen represented a location where time and space became very meaningful, and where the behavior of children was monitored closely.

#### *4.5.1 The Space of the Canteen: Ticking Time and Monitoring Bodies*

At the beginning of snack time, while sitting at the tables, the children were instructed to “eat properly,” “say thank you,” take “one more bite,” “eat slowly,” “sit down,” “less talking, more eating,” or “get back to your place now.” Yet, as the clock ticked away and the snack period was almost over, the children were told: “get up” and “let’s go.” The contradictory commands of “sit down” and “stand up,” which varied according to time within a single snack session, reflect how time altered the meaning of space and the expected bodily behavior that should take place within it.

First, children should be seated, calm and orderly; yet when time was “running out,” they had to stand up quickly and make their way over to the sinks to wash their hands. In this next excerpt, at the beginning of snack time, Nathan was conversing with the teacher, and was told to stop talking and start eating:

At the beginning of the snack time, the children are told to “eat slowly.” Nathan and 6 other children are seated at a round table with a teacher. He asks his teacher a question, but she takes a piece of sandwich and brings it near his mouth. Nathan opens his mouth to take the food. The teacher says, “Now, sit and eat your breakfast.” Time passes (about 10 minutes) and transition



time is looming. Suddenly, the teacher tells the children, “eat quickly!” When this is said, Nathan stuffs the remaining bread in his mouth- it is a large piece. Crumbs spill on the tabletop. Nathan can barely close his mouth, and spits out a piece of bread so that he can chew and swallow the rest. The teacher looks surprised, and asks Nathan, “Now, why did you do that?” She grabs a tissue to clean up the spit-out bread, waits for Nathan to finish chewing, and then tells him to go and wash his hands.

Nathan, who was complying with the demand to eat quickly, did as he was told. He ate the rest of his food in the most expeditious way possible, but this attempt became quite messy and did not reflect the general rule of orderliness.

Surprisingly, while some forms of behavior such as eating were closely supervised, other activities like crying were ignored. Crying children in a daycare might be seen as expected, commonplace, or otherwise not worthy of discussion. However, hearing children cry was a very audible feature of life at The Play Garden, even though indirectly and directly, teachers and their actions sent the message to children that crying was an undesirable form of behavior. Especially in the canteen, where it was already very noisy, crying was often disregarded. This next excerpt from my field notes describes Stephan, who often cried in the morning during my observation period:

Stephan is crying again when he arrives at the daycare. Since I have been observing, he has cried every morning. We are in the canteen. Stephan is in a far corner of the room, seated at a table with his classmates. After the crying continues for ten minutes, a teacher tells him, “Do you mind? I’m trying to talk here,” when the noise interfere with a conversation she is having with a colleague. He remains in the corner, at the table with his classmates. He does not eat the breakfast. Some children look at Stephan while he is upset, though most of them continue eating. I notice that Stephan is not the only child who is crying in the canteen, and the others are also sitting at the table with their peers, but not next to a teacher.

The teacher who spoke to Stephan made it clear that his crying was an offensive behavior, and that it disturbed her. The fact that Stephan was left alone also sent the message to the children that the behavior was unwanted and unacceptable. After this episode, Stephan continued crying throughout the snack time and later on in the theatre. When he was given a pacifier, he immediately quieted. The pacifier can be

seen as an attempt to control Stephan's body. While the pacifier may soothe the child, it also blocks the source of the audible annoyance; the mouth. Unlike Adam, who had "internalized the gaze" and made himself docile, Stephan apparently needed a mechanism to quiet down and become obedient. In Stephan's case, docility is represented by silence, while in the case of Adam it was represented by stillness. Both boys, in their state of docility, are more easily managed by the adults.

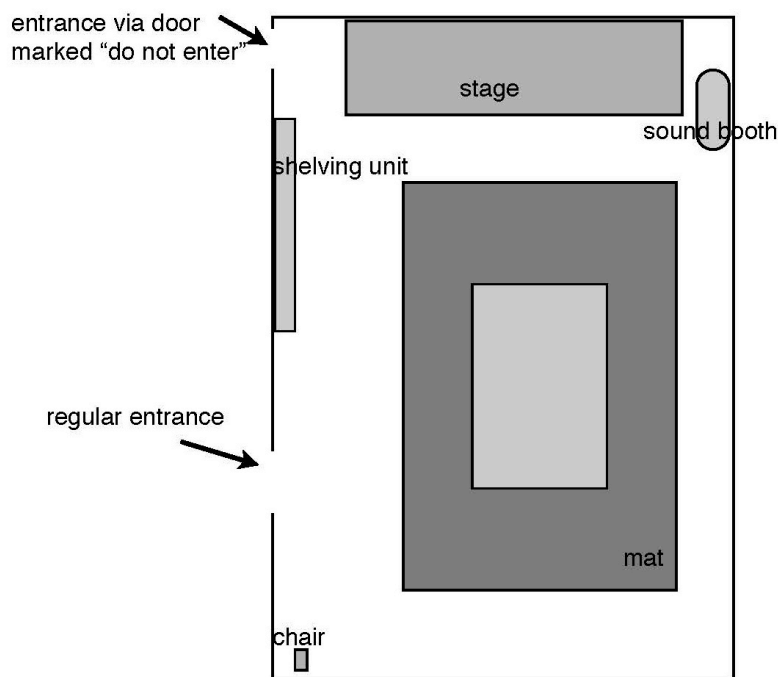
After eating, the children were sent to wash their hands in groups. Often, one teacher would go to the sinks initially, and others would follow as more and more children finished their food. After washing their hands, the children had to make a line in front of the counter to wait for the rest of their classmates, and then began ambling towards the theatre, for "exercise time."

#### 4.6 In the Theatre: "Dancing" and "Free" Time

The theatre was on the basement level, and had no windows. It was a very large space, and included low-pile, high-traffic carpeting, like the kind one might find in a hotel, in a grey and lavender print. Double doors opened up onto a wide and very long area, with a large stage at one end. A curtain and a black backdrop framed the stage. A sound booth was located next to the foot of the stage, and included a microphone and soundboard. On the opposite side of the room, large white cabinets and drawer units contained some play equipment such as chiffon scarves and musical instruments, which were accessible only to adults. Speakers were mounted on the walls, overlaid with amorphous shapes in bright colors. While the theatre was used daily by the children for exercise and yoga time, I was informed by the teachers that the main purpose of the theatre was for the "end of year show", and its vast size ensured that all parents could fit inside to watch the festivities.

During the exercise time, the children entered the room and were instructed to sit against one wall. When the teachers were ready, they asked the children to stand up and arrange themselves on a large foam mat in the middle of the room. The following map, Figure 4.1, illustrates the layout of the space:

Figure 4.1 The Theatre



I found the theatre a particularly interesting place in which to observe, because most of the activity was partitioned to the mat in the center of the floor. From my vantage point near the chair depicted at the bottom left corner of the map, I was afforded a clear view of all of the individuals who were present in the theatre. In this space, time was rendered real in the music tracks that were played for the children to dance to, and the use of space was closely controlled. In this next example from my observations, the map illustrates the spatial arrangement of children during “dancing time” in the theatre. The ways that teachers attempted to distribute children within the

space varied according to the song being played. As part of the exercise routine, during the 30-minute block of time, the children listened and danced to musical tracks on a CD. They moved around for 25 minutes, and sat quietly for the last five minutes. Almost all of the songs had lyrics that dictated how to “dance” to the music, such as the “Hokey Pokey” song, which is depicted in the map below.<sup>23</sup>

Figure 4.2 Theatre: the “Hokey Pokey”

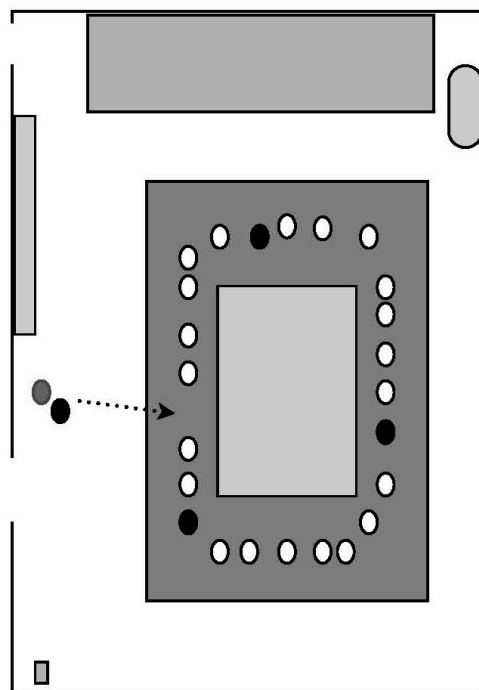
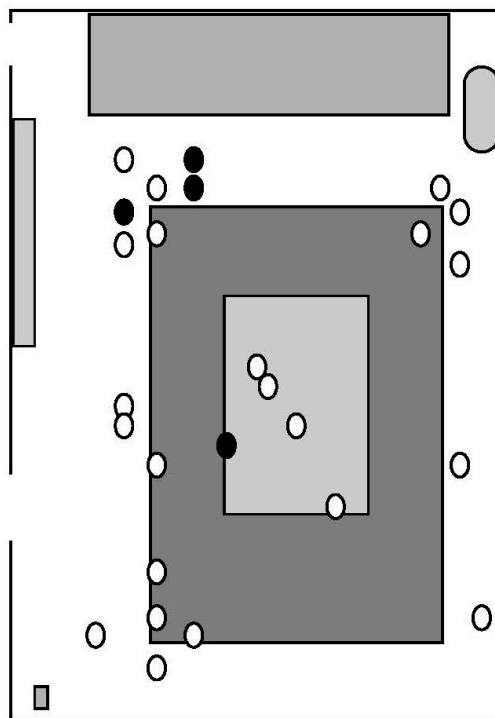


Figure 4.2 illustrates that while the rest of the class was in a circle formation on the mat when dancing to the “Hokey Pokey,” Rhea (represented by the dark gray dot) stood away from the group. Yvonne (represented by the black dot next to Rhea) tried several times to get Rhea back to the circle formation, by taking her hand and

<sup>23</sup> The “Hokey Pokey” lyrics include: Put your right hand in/ put your right hand out/ put your right hand in, and shake it all about/ you do the Hokey Pokey/ and you turn yourself around/ that’s what it’s all about. The teachers actively monitored the children to ensure that they were dancing to the song as indicated by the lyrics. In most cases, the children had to stand in a circle for the whole of theatre time while moving in very specific ways to the music.

attempting to lead her back to the mat (as represented by the arrow). The rest of the children stayed in the general area. Some danced vigorously, some bopped around, and some stood and swayed. As long as they seemed to move to the music, the teachers did not mention anything. During the exercise time, children were expected to move throughout the twenty-five minutes of active, instructional time. In general, the flow of the exercise time was such that the last song played before quiet time was a “free” song, which had no lyrics. Instead of staying in a circle on the mat, the absence of lyrics meant that children and teachers could move around the space without hindrance, as depicted in the next map:

Figure 4.3 “Free” Song



During a “free” song, rather than being dispersed among the children, the teachers were able to converse with each other while the children roamed around the

theatre alone or in groups. This “free” time, which was non-instructional, lasted for about three minutes, immediately before quiet time. During quiet time, the children had to sit and wait yet again until the clock read 11:00 am, indicating their designated time to return to the classroom.

#### *4.6.1 Productive Time*

The preceding examples of the construction of time and space at The Play Garden demonstrate that for the children and adults, time had to be productive, and must be spent in specific ways. Productivity was determined by how closely the lyrics of the musical track were followed (docile bodies conforming to choreography), serving as a training activity for listening to the teacher and the completion of assignments that the children would encounter in their educational futures.

#### 4.7 Why All These Rules?

In my interview with Sawsan, I asked her about something I noticed quite frequently; the teachers called The Play Garden “school.” For example, at circle time, they might ask the children “who is at school today?” Or, when a child arrived after a long absence, they might say, “Oh, you came to school today!” I first asked Sawsan about the notion of teachers calling the daycare “school”:

J: I noticed that some teachers call this daycare school, and I am wondering what you think about that...?

S: Well, we need to get them ready to go to the big school. And this is why our class, with the oldest kids, have more rules than the classes with the younger kids. We follow the daily routine, and follow rules, and follow the schedule, to let them get used to the idea of going to the big school later on. You have to listen to your teachers, and follow rules, and do this and that... Yeah...That’s why we had a few clashes with parents at the beginning of the year, saying that we’re a bit tough on the kids. But we’re not even close to being tough with them. However, the parents are used to seeing their kids spoiled with the younger classes, the baby classes. So that’s why... And so the parents are not used to the idea of the big school, actually. So it’s a good thing that we are working with the kids and the parents at the same time. This is what they will deal with next year.

Sawsan revealed the idea that the enforcement of certain rules is necessary in her preparation of the children and parents for going to the “big school” next year, and that she must prepare both parents and children to face what she determines to be the harsh reality of formal schooling. However, some of the rules changed over time, especially in the canteen. At one point in time the children were told to eat slowly, and at other times they were instructed to hurry up, finish their food, and rush over to the sinks to wash their hands. These sorts of rules and modes of expected behavior were inconsistent and were geared towards the management of individuals in the immediate present. The commands of the teachers and the expectation that children follow them related to Suad Joseph’s (2005:1019) finding that in Lebanon, child learn that “any adult has authority over them.”

#### *4.7.1 Signage as a Disciplinary Tool*

Teachers at The Play Garden may have enforced rules that they did not create, yet were also subjected to rules of order that were concerned with their bodies and their functions. For example, as the signs below indicate, the teachers were instructed to hide the functions of their bodies (in this case, eating) as well as the most minute details of their conversations. These signs were placed on the back of the door in the staff room, where teachers took their breaks:<sup>24</sup>

The first sign stated:

Please keep this place clean and orderly: helpers are not responsible for cleaning up after you.  
Thank you.

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<sup>24</sup> I have kept details, such as the use of capitals, italics and underlining consistent with how the signs actually appeared.

Another sign read:

Dear teachers:

You are kindly asked to NOT have your breakfast meals with your kids during THEIR breakfast time. (*Have your breakfast in the lounge*).

The words “their breakfast time” was written in red. Lastly, a third sign reminded teachers how to converse:

Keep your conversation restricted to work-related topics. (Especially when parents are around.)  
Your #1 priority is the KIDS.

The last sentence was written in red. In a small room at the back of the staff room, a laminating machine was available, but a handwritten sign is affixed to it reminded the staff, “do not use this without permission!”

The signs in the staff room disciplined teachers, telling them where to eat, how to talk, and to use equipment only after seeking permission. The signs also maintained the same *inside-outside, known-unknown* binary as the secretary’s desk at the entrance. That is, staff could talk and eat their own food in the staff room, but not outside where the children were. They were instructed to stay mindful of speaking about non-work related topics with their colleagues (known people), especially in front of parents (unknown individuals). These minute details of the body’s comportment- such as how to eat, how to talk, and how to use materials- were born out of the same nexus of discipline and order that are continually emerging in their encounters with children in time and space. Like with the children, the institution of The Play Garden also conceptualized teachers as things to be managed, and bodies to be made docile and thus productive.



## 4.8 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the disciplinary techniques that were utilized by the teachers at The Play Garden in order to monitor and control the bodies and activities of children. Such techniques drew from Foucault's (1977) "art of distributions" and the creation of "docile bodies." Monitoring children and their use of their own bodies and materials was considered necessary for the classroom to avoid becoming a "jungle land." The entire daycare facility itself can be seen as a "functional site" (Foucault 1977) for the ordering of children, staff and parents.

The disciplining of individuals was most apparent in the ways that adults and children moved and acted within the daycare space. At The Play Garden, control of the body was sought through monitoring and ordering the activities that were occurring in space and time: at a very broad level according to the timetable, and at a micro-level by monitoring the individuals within space. Teachers watched over the children and made corrections to behavior, as they deemed necessary, to maintain order and discipline. Teachers guided children and operated within an implicit rule system where order and discipline were the utmost concern. In this regard, the management of children was conceptualized for management's sake, as well as for the reinforcement of particular modes of behavior and the suppression of other forms that were not considered valuable for the institution of the daycare or the "big school."

The teachers viewed the enforcement of rules as a crucial in the preparation of the Mickey Mouse children for the "big school." Interviews with teachers revealed that their use of such techniques drew from a "folk pedagogy" (Bruner 1996) prevalent among staff that children needed to be prepared at the daycare for the rigors

of formal schooling. However, teachers were also subject to similar modes of order and comportment, as noted by Yvonne in her assertion that she was “not allowed” to call Adam “naughty.” Field analysis and interviews also revealed that an adherence to norms and rules, and references to modes of dress and comportment influenced teachers as well, demonstrating that disciplinary power exists in a nexus of control and order that involves whole social groups and is geared towards docility, or submission to authority.

## CHAPTER 5

### TIME –SPACE OVERLAP

We live in our own world,  
A world that is too small  
For you to stoop to enter  
Even on hands and knees,  
The adult subterfuge.  
And though you may probe and pry  
With analytic eye,  
And eavesdrop all our talk  
With an amused look,  
You cannot find the center  
Where we dance, where we play.  
[From *Children's Song* by R. S. Thomas, 1973]

No system is perfect, and no description of a system would be fair without including the elements that exceed it. The actions of the children outlined in this chapter divert from the “script” of the institutional control of time and space. They provide a peek into the cracks and fissures that are sure to emerge in when the fabric of life is pulled so tautly. While no one can fully “know” the intentionality behind anyone’s actions, whether it be an adult or child, the network of power that was imbricated within daily life at The Play Garden permitted the actions of some children to shine through, while making other actions less possible or apparent. Some children were “ranked” and labeled with terms which may serve them well in the “big school,” while others may have received a label that could have a long-lasting impact on their educational future. The children, though, might have operated from a different standpoint than the teachers (who geared their energy towards preparation for formal schooling). The vignettes outlined in the remainder of this chapter demonstrate an the children impacting time and space that came to encompass their interactions with peers and with teachers. Rather than finding answers, these usefulness of these

examples lay in questions that emerge in their wake, such as: What meaning do children attach to time and space at the daycare?

### 5.1 Venturing into Candyland

First, we will move from the theatre, where we left off in Chapter Four, and follow the children to Candyland. Candyland was a padded indoor playground. The walls, equipment, and floor were covered with brightly colored, padded vinyl, and users had to take off their shoes when playing inside. A large metal structure of stairs and two slides, with a ball pit in the middle, were upholstered in vinyl made to look like a candy house. A playhouse opposite the door was set up like an obstacle course, with hanging vinyl tubes that children had to push through to get to the other side. On the wall near the playhouse, movable toys were mounted, including the helm of a pirate ship that children could use to pretend to steer (though most spun it around relentlessly).

Another ball pit behind a dividing wall extended around the back, and was not immediately visible from the rest of the room. Because of this, teachers most often divided themselves around Candyland to monitor the children while they were playing. Next to the balls, a mechanical circular platform with seats was upholstered in vinyl, made to look like a carousel. All sharp edges were wrapped with foam padding. One small, high window outfitted in glass brick allowed some natural light to enter the space. A poster on the wall entitled “The Rules of Candyland” included rules such as “no shoes” and “no climbing on the outside of the play equipment.”

When playing in this space, some children seemed to enjoy going up and down the slides for the 25 minutes allocated for play. Others concentrated their

activity to the ball pits or the carousel. Most children, in my observations, seemed to enjoy running around the area, bouncing themselves against the foam padding, or moving from one area to the next in quick succession.

The size of the equipment in Candyland was suited for small children. Therefore, the teachers could not fit on most of the play gear. The stairs that led around the slide, for example, were too small and fragile for an adult to traverse. While the children removed their shoes when playing in Candyland, the adults wore shoe covers, purportedly to protect the foam surfaces. This room was the loudest area in which I observed- the children, while far from chaotic, were able to move more freely on the equipment because the space was scaled to their size. Due to its architecture, Candyland could not possibly be a zone of adult control. As a result, the teachers seemed to let things go until the 25 minutes were up, at which point, they would sing the waiting song (outlined in Chapter Two) and the children would gather on a specific mat to wait until it was time to go back to the classroom.

While playing in the space, certain all-encompassing rules were reiterated, including “no hitting others,” and “no screaming.” Beyond those guidelines, though, the children played with less adult surveillance than other areas of the daycare. They were, however, not allowed to venture behind the play equipment. A large net and a sign, which said “do not enter,” prevented people from going behind the large slide, ball pit and bridge.<sup>25</sup> Despite this, Nathan managed to get in this nether area, in order to retrieve a ball. His use of language to explain why he was in a restricted area allowed him to interact effectively with the teacher:

Nathan jumps into the ball pit. He makes his way to the back of the pit, climbs out, and gets behind the net, which is off-limits. MUNEERA calls out to Nathan, and he comes out from under the net with a handful of balls. He tells the teacher, “I am getting the balls.” The teacher

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<sup>25</sup> Although, with the sign, adults could read it while children could not. The signs placed on the equipment as well as the list of rules on the wall seemed to discipline teachers, who could read, more so than the children.

responds, “Oh, thank you” with a bemused smile. Nathan ventures behind the net for the second time. MUNEERA calls out to him again [exasperatedly], “Nathan! There are no more balls back there! Come out.” Nathan does, and then grabs a big foam block from another area and brings it to the ball pit. He throws the block into the ball pit. MUNEERA exclaims, “No, Nathan! You could hurt someone. Remove that right now.” He walks towards the block slowly and smiles, then looks at the teacher. “That’s treasure!” he explains, “I am a pirate.” “Oh,” replies the teacher. Nathan takes a few seconds, and then touches the block. MUNEERA lowers her voice, and she says, “Go put the treasure back.”

Here, Muneera seemed annoyed initially by Nathan’s actions, which were not in line with the rules of Candyland. This was evident in an exasperated tone of her voice when saying “Nathan!” However, Nathan’s explanation allowed him to continue to use the materials (the “treasure” foam block) with which he played in a different way (by throwing it in the ball pit)- one divergent from the way that was taught and monitored by the teachers. His linguistic abilities enabled him to explain his play in terms that the teacher could value, justifying the slight prolonging of the use of the “treasure.” Since Muneera accommodated the idea that, while playing, Nathan was being helpful (by retrieving the balls from a lost space) and seemed to be amused that he was being imaginative (by acting like a pirate with treasure), her voice became softer and she was more willing to “play along” with the storyline he provided. Imagination and helpfulness may very well be skills valued at the “big school.”

It is important to note that the back area where Nathan retrieved the balls could not be accessed by adults- he managed to fit through a very small opening in the net. While in the end he still put the block back and came out from the restricted area, Nathan was able to stretch the use of time and space. He gained more time to play without being overseen, and was able to venture into areas where adults could not fit, but when Muneera said “now” he accepted the urgency of time and worked within it.

## 5.2 Adult Perceptions of Children: Rank/Labels

It is important to deconstruct Muneera's amusement with Nathan and his play, and the theory of Foucault lends us a way of doing just that. As discussed Chapter Three, *ranking* is one Foucauldian disciplinary technique that arranges individuals within a system of classification. Teachers at The Play Garden ranked children by labeling them according to different characteristics. The children found ways to move within their rank and impact time and space at different moments. Three specific children, Nathan, Rhea and Adam; were described by the teachers according to certain labels, which will be outlined in the next section.<sup>26</sup>

As noted by Holloway and Valentine (2000), children play an active role in constructing and contesting the labels they are given by adults and the adult-child relationship is central to analyzing the childcare setting. For example, Muneera labeled Nathan as “funny” and “smart”:

J: Can you tell me more about how you see Nathan as a child in your class?

MUNEERA: He is a really smart kid. He asks, he interlinks things, you know, and he asks a lot. He gets attention for stuff. But he does things, and turns it into a funny way. Just to grab your attention, you know, to see that he's funny, that he's not doing anything wrong. So, of course we know that it's funny... He turns everything into a funny thing... but whenever he does something wrong, he needs to follow the rules. We can't be unfair. I mean, we try a lot not to smile when he is funny, but sometimes we can't. We smile, but... well, he needs to follow the rules like everyone else.

Yvonne described Adam as a “troublemaker” and a “leader”:

J: So, Adam seems to have a lot of friends.

YVONNE: The troublemakers are the most popular. Always. And then the problem is that others boys, who are followers and not leaders, follow Adam. He is just sometimes out of control.

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<sup>26</sup> As part of my research, I took copious notes about the children during my period of observation. Upon reviewing the data before my interviews with the teachers, I noticed that many of the vignettes that I wished to analyze more deeply involved three children: Nathan, Rhea and Adam. I was able to ask about these specific children in my interviews with the teachers.

During Anita's interview, immediately after discussing Nathan, whom she called "funny," she described Rhea with a very distinctive, yet non-descript label:

J: Can you tell me about Rhea?

ANITA: We are not going to talk about Rhea. I don't think so, because she is another case from Nathan.

Calling Rhea a "case" basically means that Anita felt she was "different" than other children, particularly precocious Nathan.<sup>27</sup>

### 5.2.1 Rhea

The labels that were given to Nathan, Rhea and Adam allowed them to impact time and space in the daycare. Firstly, I found Rhea's actions noteworthy because, despite the teachers' various attempts to control her movements, they did not often put her "on the side" during activities, perhaps on the grounds that she was "different." For example, in this extract from my field notes, Rhea attempted to go up the stairs on the wrong side:

It is just after lunchtime, and the children need to climb two flights of stairs and go back in the classroom. The children are told to get in line, and must walk up the stairs on the right side. Rhea, instead of lining up, begins climbing the stairs on the left. She almost makes it up the first flight on the "wrong" side. MUNEERA is at the front of the line of children, and notices that Rhea is going up the stairs on the opposite side. She tells Rhea: "Rhea, look! Go to the other side! All of your friends will copy you!" Rhea continues up the stairs on the left. MUNEERA is able to reach her and guides her to the other side of the railing on the stairs, putting Rhea at the front of the line.

In this example, Rhea was able to go up the stairs on the "wrong" side, and thus able became the line leader. Moreover, as depicted in Chapter Four, figure 4.2, Rhea

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<sup>27</sup> I have worked in schools in Lebanon for almost a decade. In my time as a teacher, I have frequently noticed that children whom are thought of as having "special needs" (i.e. not "normal") are often referred to as a "case." Because Anita used this term, I did not ask about it in greater detail. I felt that she would be uncomfortable describing specificities about Rhea, as in that moment Anita gave me a "look" which I interpreted as, "don't ask me more, because I am not supposed to say anything." The "case" label is a potentially destructive one in the Lebanese school system, as there are very few educational opportunities for children with "special needs," and many schools actively try to keep these children out of their student population.



impacted her own movement in time and space in the theatre. While the rest of the class was in a circle formation on the mat when dancing to the “Hokey Pokey,” Rhea ventured off of the mat, standing away from the group. Yvonne tried several times to get Rhea back to the circle formation, by taking her hand and attempting to lead her back to the mat. Each time, however, Rhea let go of Yvonne’s hand and turned away. After several attempts, Yvonne went back to the circle and shrugged her shoulders at her fellow colleagues. The rest of the children continued dancing to the song. Rhea was left on her own, and explored the theatre space until a song she seemed to enjoy lured her back to the mat.

### 5.2.2 *Nathan*

Nathan’s “funny” nature and purported intelligence allowed him to impact situations in interesting ways. His attempts to make things “funny” mitigated the teachers’ approaches to dealing with Nathan. In this next example, Nathan is allowed to venture to the toilets alone, with a friend. This experience extends the space made available to him, but also obliges him to stay within the realm of expected behavior:

ANITA is in the toilet with some children, near Candyland. Nathan tells SAWSAN that he needs to go to the bathroom. She asks him, “You can go by yourself to the toilet, right? You know how to do it and be good?” Nathan nods and begins to walk down the hallway to the toilets. Another boy, Omar, also needs to go to the bathroom, so SAWSAN tells the two of them to walk together. SAWSAN goes back inside the Candyland room and I am left in the hallway alone with the boys. In the hallway, there is a path of several small, green, circular carpets laid out along the length of the passage. The boys began jumping from one carpet to another. Nathan squeals with delight, and says “Yeah, we’re frogs! We jump! We are going to Dubai!” The boys jump down the hallway to the toilets.

While in the previous example, Nathan and a friend were able to go to the bathroom alone, the labeling of Nathan as “funny” and “smart” enabled him to impact his own path to the toilets, and made the journey with another friend. They jumped in the hallway and walked without an adult- two things that would otherwise not be allowed.

### 5.2.3 Adam

While Nathan seemed to revel in adult perceptions of him as precocious, Adam, on the other hand, was marked as a “troublemaker” and actively worked against this label. While he was willing to “do the time” for his attempt to walk up the slide the wrong way (as noted in Chapter Four), he often pointed out to the teachers when he was following the rules. For example, one day when Adam was sitting quietly on the carpet as he and his classmates were instructed to do, he called out to the teachers, “Look, I am sitting! I am behaving!” Adam also pointed out when the teacher was not following the guidelines and rules that she set for the class. For example, one day, while Sawsan was playing a game with the children, Adam indicated that he did not get a turn to play the game:<sup>28</sup>

After coming to the classroom from the pretend room, the children go right to the carpet and sit down. SAWSAN is already on the carpet, waiting for the children. She tells the children, “you will all take turns” matching a two-piece puzzle. The puzzle pieces each depict either an object, such as a banana, or the same object represented as a black outline form. SAWSAN calls the outline form of the object “the shadow.” She speaks in a lilting tone: “See, this is the *banana* [emphasizing banana], and this is its [pause] ... *shadow!* [emphasizing shadow]. Some children have a turn coming to the middle of the carpet and finding the matching “shadow” of different objects. When all of the puzzle pieces have been matched up, Adam tells SAWSAN, “I didn't have a turn. Sousou? Sousou, I didn't have a turn.” SAWSAN tells Adam, while she is picking up the puzzle pieces, “If you didn't have a turn this time, you will have one next time.” Adam replies, “But... but last time I didn't have a turn, too.” SAWSAN looks at Adam, then at the rest of the class, and says, “Oh, look! We have time for a story before lunch!” She asks Adam to pick out a story for her to read to the class. He walks to the bookcase and chooses a text entitled *Shark in the Park*.

In this extract, Adam utilized two strategies for getting the teacher's attention. First of all, he referenced the teacher's opening to the activity, where she stated that everyone would get a turn in the game, and pointed out to Sawsan that he did not have a turn this time, nor the last time the game was played. He also referred to Sawsan as “Sousou,” a pet name that the teachers called her. Adam also called Yvonne “Ivano,”

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<sup>28</sup> Many games and “lessons” in the Mickey Mouse classroom were conducted with the entire group of 25 children. As a result, very seldom did all children have a chance to play the game or contribute to the lesson. As such, the teachers often placated the children by telling them, “If you didn't get a turn this time, you'll get one next time.”

as analyzed in Chapter Three. Calling Sawsan by a name that adults called her seemed to get her attention, and the fact that Adam was using terms that adults used is noteworthy. In the end, while Adam did not get a turn in the game that he initially desired, he was able to pick out a story for Sawsan to read to the class. He picked out what seem to be a favorite book, as I noticed that he had asked the teachers to read it several times before.

### 5.3 Adults and Children Working Within Time and Space

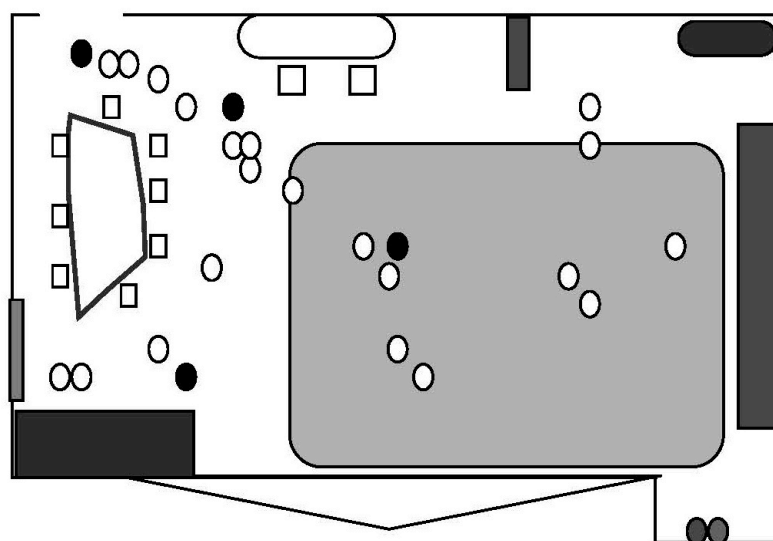
The examples of impact on time and space by Rhea, Nathan and Adam reiterate the words of human geographer Owain Jones, who stated: “children may not readily adopt the generic identity thrust upon them, but they can operate under the cover it may provide.” While the ideas of identity and cover are difficult to prove in this analysis, Jones’ words can be utilized to interpret the productivity of the children’s actions in terms of the “big school.” In the case of Nathan, the label bestowed upon him lent him time to move within space without the monitoring of an adult. Adam demonstrated that he accepted the management of time and space by teachers, and he pointed out when such an organization was not followed exactly. For Rhea, adults’ perception of her as “different” meant that the teachers did not enforce the rules as consistently, thus leaving her time and space in which to act. The involvement of adults is crucial here, and their perceptions of the children enabled the extension of time and space, even though the children’s actions were not necessarily with their expected, conventional uses and management.

Beyond labels, other children found ways to gain more time in which to impact their experiences in space. For instance, while in the pretend room, on various occasions, I observed children who continued to play when it was time to clean up.

Two boys often continued their game of “cars” by “driving” the cars over to the box where they belonged while their classmates were cleaning up.

Sometimes, the teachers became occupied or had misjudged time. For example, one important event occurred when a teacher looked at her watch and mistakenly thought it was time to go out to play. She gathered the children in a line by the classroom door. However, when her colleague pointed out that the wall clock was set earlier than the time indicated on the teachers’ watch, the children had to remain in the classroom for seven minutes (until the wall clock read 9:00 am, or playtime). It was during this seven minutes that the children became dispersed in space, and the two boys (represented by two gray dots) in the map below, ventured to a corner of the room where two panes of glass met. I watched them from behind, while standing at the bookcase, and it appeared that they were pressing their bodies up against the glass. I thought they were looking out the window:

Figure 5.1 Mickey Mouse Classroom: Licking the Glass



Because of the layout of the room and the locations of the adults in the space, the teachers were not able to see the two boys in the corner of the room. The boys remained in the corner for three minutes, and then filed in line to the playground when a teacher called out “let’s go” at 9:00 am on the dot. The children and teacher all filed out of the room, and I assumed my usual position at the back of the line. Before going out the door, I glanced back at the glass and noticed two smudges on the glass, where it appeared that the boys pressed their tongues against the window, without being noticed. This example shows the intersection of time and space in the classroom: the teachers’ observance of the timetable, the “real” time represented by the classroom wall clock, and the subsequent dispersion in the classroom space, allowed children to impact the local environment.

Sometimes, routines were diverted by child-led conversations with the teachers. The following extract from my field notes describes an episode where Yasmine and Marwa wished to continue playing on the carpet instead of going to the bathroom:

SAWSAN sits with the children on the carpet while YVONNE calls out small groups to go to the bathroom. While their peers take turns going to the bathroom, the children remaining in the classroom sit on the carpet. They are told to sit still. If the children move or make noise, SAWSAN asks them to be quiet or to cross their legs. Suddenly, the phone rings and SAWSAN leaves the carpet to answer it. Two girls, Yasmine and Marwa, start laughing and giggling. YVONNE enters the room in the midst of ferrying children to and from the bathroom, and asks the girls to come and line up. The girls continue laughing while facing each other, their heads bent together. “Hey! Excuse me! Are we having a coffee here? Really?” asks YVONNE, trying to get their attention. Yasmine answers, “Yes! Really!” and both girls dissolve in a fit of giggles. YVONNE replies, “hhhhmpf” and puts her attention back on gathering children to go to the bathroom. The two girls remain on the carpet. SAWSAN continues talking on the telephone.

Sawsan was distracted by the telephone, and Yvonne had to bring other children to the bathroom, so the girls were able to remain on the carpet, and did not have to move to go to the bathroom.

In another illustration, Nathan and Rhea played a bouncing game in the canteen, where they jumped up and down and laughed. They were able to do this even

though they “should be” waiting patiently in line. Yvonne had to make the children wait in the canteen because another class took longer than expected in Candyland, the children’s next scheduled destination:

At the end of snack time, Nathan and Rhea help each other stack their plates on the table. The teachers are busy helping other children clean up. Nathan and Rhea wash their hands and then go and stand in front of the counter in the canteen. This is the line-up spot. I look for a place on which to prop my notebook, and stand in the corner made by the counter meeting the wall near the sinks. Nathan and Rhea are behind me. They begin playing some sort of bouncing game, where one jumps and the other follows suit. They are able to play this game for over a minute, and I realize that I am blocking them from the view of the teachers. After a minute, a teacher hears them giggling and tells Nathan and Rhea to get in line with their classmates.

I blocked the children visually, but not audibly, and because they were heard, they were expected to move within space according to the expected norm.

#### 5.4 Conclusion

In the extracts from my field notes mentioned above, it is important to note how the spatial arrangement of the daycare as well as the adherence to the timetable helped enable the children’s impact on moments and spaces in time. In the “glass licking” example (illustrated in figure 5.2), complete surveillance was not possible due to the layout of the classroom and the position of teachers in space. In Nathan’s “treasure play” example in Candyland, where he was able to retrieve some balls from a restricted area, the size of the play equipment was a factor in how the scenario played out. The opening in the net that Nathan managed to get through was very small- only a child of Nathan’s size could fit through.

In the canteen vignette where Nathan and Rhea were playing, I actually inadvertently blocked them from view, even if for a little while. The ringing of the telephone and the call to bathroom duty distracted both Sawsan and Yvonne, so Yasmine and Marwa were able to remain on the carpet. In these two examples, the spaces in which the children acted came into being when the management of time was

not entirely possible. Other spatial and temporal constraints impacted the enforcement of rules.

Adam and Rhea, on the other hand, represent two sides of the spectrum of the “art of distributions” and management of time and space. Adam’s reference to rules, when he told Sawsan that he did not get a turn, eventually led to him being able to choose a book for her to read to the class. He acted within behavioral and management expectations, upholding the conventional distribution of time and space. Rhea’s supposed “difference” and her unconventional actions, on the other hand, allowed her to use space and stretch time beyond the management limits of disciplinary distributions.

These fleeting moments of interaction beyond the “script” on the part of the children may seem insignificant when considering the full scale of the institution of daycare and all that it stands for, but are poignant examples of the ways that the children impacted time and space at The Play Garden. While we can’t fully “know” the intent behind these actions, the field note extracts do show (on some level) children operating within the kind of management that the “big school” will likely be emphasizing, thus gaining experience with the notions of institutional time and space.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

#### 6.1 Summary and Theoretical Contributions

Utilizing an ethnographic, non-participant observation approach, this thesis has sought to explore the everyday lives of children and teachers at a Lebanese daycare, highlighting how time and space were made meaningful within it. Utilizing the theories of Michel Foucault's (1977) "art of distributions" and the production of "docile bodies," the preceding chapters highlighted themes of order and futurity. The organization of the environment, management of children's behavior (both in terms of safety and normalcy), adherence to the timetable, and emphasis on rules structured the children's day and the relationships that emerged between children and teachers. Teachers' concerns with (clock) time and the productive use of time, as well as the ways that both teachers and parents were disciplined by the daycare administration; were important features of this analysis. Furthermore, the impact that children demonstrated on time and space, within the management structure of daycare underscore the point that no system operates without diversions from routine.

Constructs of formal education played an integral role in the management of time, space and bodies at The Play Garden. Futurity, represented by the "big school" and all of its real and/or imagined rules and regulations, located the two and three-year-old Mickey Mouse children somewhere between the present and the future. The nature of the disciplinary network present within the daycare itself also embodied time in a remarkable way, in that its unique spatial and temporal distributions promoted the practice of discipline in the present, based on ideas about what the



children would encounter as students in private and international schools. Many activities and routines, which were embedded within the day-to-day life of the daycare, emphasized rules and the memorization of facts such as colors, shapes and numbers. While such information was regarded as part of what makes up a good school candidate, the love of learning did not seem to be the goal of daycare productivity. The labeling of children as “smart,” “funny,” “troublemakers,” or “cases” have the potential to impact their educational futures. The Play Garden worked with an economy of management of time and space, producing children ready for the “big school.”

As a teacher myself, I know that in many ways, looking towards the “big school” never ends. Preschoolers will be posited in waiting until they can go to the primary school, and those students will be taught to look towards the middle school. Middle schoolers will wait yet again to get to high school, and high schoolers will look towards university. Yet, a college education does not end the waiting and the trajectory towards futurity. I recall, at my college graduation, my father saying, “Wait until you get into the real world.”

Thinking about life in terms of the “big school,” I have realized this focus on the future never ends. There will always be another “big school” to get ready for: a new job, marriage, paying bills, maintaining a retirement fund, building your resume... the list goes on. The question that arises from this thesis is: How young do we need to start looking to the future, which is largely viewed by society as uncertain? What kind of life does that construct for us? And just what does “preparation” mean? Given that more than half of all Lebanese children attend daycares, such questions are timely and important.

## 6.2 Applications and Future Research

The use of theories, such as those of Michel Foucault on power, discipline, and the body within an analysis of the daycare; as well as notions of time and space, were meant to propose a process of “unknowing” and prompt a deconstruction of prevailing educational discourse. While many of us were students at one time, those who have never worked in schools may never fully comprehend how entrenched the notions of management are in the field, even in early childhood education. Grappling with binaries and dialectics, and questioning *who determines the future*, serves the process of unlearning and subsequently re-formulating the values and goal of education. An inquiry into the taken-for-granted practices that are part of the institution of education may help practitioners feel that they have a choice in the matter of education. This process of becoming self-aware could also serve to build an interest in and awareness of the everyday words that children inhabit, which often go unnoticed, understudied, and worst of all, unquestioned.

This study serves as a contribution to the field of childhood studies in general, and more specifically to studies concerned with teachers, early childhood institutions, and Lebanese everydayness. Subsequent studies could aim to fill the gap in literature on these topics and more. Engaging with children more directly as research participants, perhaps using visual or geographical forms of ethnography, is one direction that could be taken by future studies. While in the field, I often wondered what parents thought about the whole idea of daycare and its role in contemporary Lebanese society, and research geared toward the usefulness of the daycare for parents would be interesting. More studies on teachers’ perceptions of their practice would contribute vastly to the field of anthropology. Research that delves more

deeply into the class structures, and the similarities and disparities that may exist between affluent and middle class daycares would likely be thought provoking. Lastly, longitudinal studies on the children's move to the "big school" may also prove fascinating.

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