



Art Play with Daddy: Father-Child Play with Art Materials at Home

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Abstract

Paternal involvement in household and childcare has increased over the past century, but global studies show that most mothers still remain responsible for a significantly higher proportion of total household care and childcare. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has further negatively impacted mothers, who take on the majority of childcare responsibilities. However, scholars agree that a father's devotion to playing with the child fosters the child's cognitive, linguistic, and socio-emotional development. Acknowledging and approaching art as a dynamic and integrated play, this qualitative case study investigates five South Korean father-child dyads and their interactions while playing with art materials. The participants engaged in three thematic art sessions designed by the author. Data collection involved audio and video recordings of each session, surveys of adult participants, and photos of finished artworks. The study found that fathers' varied educational backgrounds and perceptions of their abilities to facilitate arts learning influenced their confidence in teaching the arts at home. Furthermore, having a theme and prompting questions assisted the fathers to facilitate more focused art play. The art play also provided the father-child dyads with arts learning opportunities, including learning and distinguishing colors and recognizing stereotypes associated with colors. Moreover, one-on-one interaction between the dyads helped them build a more intimate bond. This study presents specific examples of art activities and participants' responses, which might offer insights and educational implications for paternal involvement in child play and thematic art play at home.

Keywords Father-child interaction · Paternal involvement · Art education · Art play · Learning at home

Introduction

As a result of the growing contemporary interest in diversified parenthood over the past century, scholars have conducted many studies that have enriched the empirical literature to illuminate the role of the father in child development, fatherhood, and father-child relationships (Grossmann et al., 2002; Lamb, 1981; Paquette, 2004). Although paternal involvement in household care and childcare has increased, studies show that mothers worldwide remain responsible for a significantly higher proportion of total household care and childcare (Craig & Mullan, 2011; McMunn et al., 2017; Paquette, 2004). Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic further negatively impacted the distribution of childcare, with the burden falling on mothers, especially those with young children (Calarco et al., 2021; Pruett et al., 2021).

However, scholars have recognized that the quality (positive engagement, warmth, and responsiveness) of father-child interaction is just as important as the overall time spent together (Jia & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2011; Kroll et al., 2016; Lankinen et al., 2018), and that the paternal involvement helps their partner's well-being due to shared responsibility and harmonious relationships within the household (McMunn et al., 2017). Among the quality father-child interactions, play is considered one of the prominent father-child interactions (Grossmann et al., 2002; Lamb 1981; Paquette, 2004). Thus, acknowledging the positive influence of art on young children and approaching art as a dynamic and integrated play (Ahn & Filipenko, 2007; Ahn & Lee, 2018; McWilliams et al., 2014), this article explores how South Korean fathers facilitated thematic art activities in the home environment for their preschool-aged children and the kinds of learning that occurred from the interaction between father, child, and art.

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Paternal Involvement in Childcare

In the past, the parental roles assigned to the father and the mother were entirely distinct in many cultures. The mother oversaw household duties and childcare while the father represented authority and secured resources for the family (Grossmann et al., 2002; Paquette 2004). However, beginning in the 1970s, the massive entry of women into the workforce caused a transformation in family structures, as well as parental roles (Paquette, 2004). Accordingly, as maternal employment increased, scholars expected that mothers and fathers would share domestic responsibilities (housework and childcare) more equally (Craig & Mullan, 2011; Raley et al., 2012). Indeed, since the 1970s, the average level of paternal responsibility and involvement in childcare was reported to have increased among married couples in the United States (Lamb, 1981; McMunn et al., 2017). Also, paternal involvement and accessibility in two-parent families with employed mothers were significantly higher than in families with unemployed mothers (Lamb, 1981; Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004).

Despite the change in women's participation in the labor force, studies show that—in all measures and across all countries—most mothers remain responsible for a significantly higher proportion of total household care and childcare (health and physical care) (Craig & Mullan, 2011; McMunn et al., 2017; Paquette, 2004; Raley et al., 2012). Scholars argue that values concerning gender and family, disparities in paid work (income), and class and social context (policy differences, cultural, and social norms) are the causes of an unequal division of childcare between fathers and mothers (Craig & Mullan, 2011; Raley et al., 2012). Furthermore, it is reported that many fathers still assume little responsibility for childcare, such as “participation in key decisions, availability on short notice, involvement in the care of sick children, management and selection of alternative childcare,” even in dual-earner families (Lamb, 1981, p. 2; Yoo 2017).

Scholars argue that, unfortunately, COVID-19 pandemic-related disruptions, including school and childcare closures, some job losses, the shift to remote work, the implementation of social distancing, and the negotiation of different COVID-19 protocols among households further negatively impacted mothers disproportionately; making them responsible for additional childcare, especially those with young children (Calarco et al., 2021; Pruett et al., 2021).

The South Korean Context

These trends are similar in the South Korean context. Although currently, South Korean men show a greater interest and participation in raising children and completing housework compared to the past generation, Korean women are generally more devoted to childcare than men (Ji & Jung, 2021; Kim & Cheung, 2018; Kim & Jeong, 2020; Yoo 2017). Korean men tend to be secondary caregivers or overestimate their responsibility for childcare, and many men still expect their wives to do housework and take care of children and elderly parents, even if their partners attained higher educational levels and have promising career opportunities outside the home (Kim & Cheung, 2018; Yoo, 2017). Scholars argue this unequal division is due to traditional gender roles, gender stereotypes, and Confucian ideology, which long formed the cultural basis of Korean society (Kim & Cheung, 2018; Lee & Lee, 2021). In Korean society, where traditional Confucianism—gender roles clearly divided into male breadwinners and female homemakers—still prevails, the burden of housework, childcare, and eldercare is still being passed onto women, even in dual-earner households (Kim & Cheung, 2018; Lee & Lee, 2021).

Father-Child Play in Development

Interests and expectations for fathers' active involvement with their children have increased over the past century (McMunn et al., 2017). Previous research on paternal roles and father-child interaction generally focused on three categories of paternal involvement (engagement, accessibility, and responsibility) and were often examined through observation and parents' reports (Lamb, 1981; Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004). These studies mainly focused on two-parent families and examined whether and how much time fathers spent with their children compared to mothers (Lamb, 1981). However, fathers' direct involvement in one-on-one activities with their children and the developmental importance of those activities, as well as how fathering might contribute to the life trajectories of children and families have been underscored in numerous studies (Jia & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2011; Lamb, 1981). Furthermore, scholars have begun to recognize the quality of father-child interaction to be as equally important as the overall time spent together (Lankinen et al., 2018).

Among many paternal interactions, play is considered one of the prominent father-child interactions, which may enhance fathers' importance in their children's lives (Grossmann et al., 2002; Lamb 1981; Paquette, 2004). Some researchers argue fathers' frequent participation in child-related activities has significant beneficial effects on children's cognitive, linguistic, and socio-emotional

development (Jia & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2011; McMunn et al., 2017). Others insist that a father's devotion to playing is a unique aspect of the paternal role that endows children with competence, trust, autonomy, and emotion regulation (Grossmann et al., 2002; Lankinen et al., 2018; Paquette, 2004). This is largely because fathers tend to engage in more active physical play, follow the child's lead, challenge the child, and encourage children to take risks, while also ensuring children's safety and security (Lankinen et al., 2018; Paquette, 2004). Thus, father-child interactions through play permit children to learn to be braver in unfamiliar situations and to stand up for themselves, while they develop an openness to the world, along with competition skills (Paquette, 2004). However, previous studies have mostly focused on the physical play between father and child (Lamb, 1981; Paquette, 2004).

Art Activities at Home as a Play

Engagement with art activities at home can be viewed as a form of play between father and child. Scholars have recognized the importance of approaching art as dynamic and integrated play because the freedom to take risks and experiment is pivotal in both play and art experience, which might not be possible in other circumstances (Ahn & Filipenko, 2007; Ahn & Lee, 2018; McWilliams et al., 2014; Spitz, 2009). Also, art and play both originate from the child's imagination and develop in communication with the child's continuing imaginative and fantasy states (Ahn & Lee, 2018; Bhroin, 2007). Moreover, young children's response to the world is primarily sensorial and aesthetic (O'Sullivan et al., 2018), and they learn how to express themselves visually and spontaneously before they learn to interpret textual information (Lopatovska et al., 2016). Accordingly, art not only allows children's narratives to emerge naturally, but also allows children to elaborate on their ideas, interests, and meaningful life experiences, as they use different senses (sight, sound, and movement) to make their thinking visible (Ahn & Lee, 2018; Bae, 2004; Bhroin, 2007; O'Sullivan et al., 2018). Thus, art viewing and making at an early age is important because children's art makes a significant contribution to their understanding of themselves and the world around them.

Furthermore, scholars suggest home as an environment where children can present their understanding and feelings in individual ways that support and value their creations (Abdulah et al., 2021; Burke & Cleaver, 2019; Kantner & Hoffman, 1992; Weida, 2011). To be specific, compared to classrooms where the spatial arrangement is often very purposeful, the home allows for more unconventional art engagement because of its setting (Weida, 2011). Art practice at home may support open-ended, unstructured, creative, and experimental learning opportunities

(Burke & Cleaver, 2019). Similarly, art activities carried out by the parents allow one-on-one individual interaction that can be tailored to the individual developmental situation and condition of each child (Lee et al., 2018). Providing art activities for children at home is especially relevant in this era where children spend a significant amount of time in the house due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The World Health Organization (2020) encouraged creative activities, such as playing, drawing, and painting as a positive method to express children's feelings, including fear and sadness. Nevertheless, there is limited research about the need for and impact of home-based father-child play with art materials and its influence on children.

Driven by this gap, this article investigates the following three questions: (1) How might South Korean fathers facilitate thematic art activities in the home environment for their preschool-aged children? (2) What kind of learning occurs from the interaction between father, child, and art? (3) What are the educational implications of paternal involvement in child play?

Methods

As the purpose of this study is to understand and interpret the experiences of the participants and their experiences, a qualitative multi-case study was employed to investigate the father-child art-focused play (Merriam, 2009). The participants' lessons took place between December 2020 and March 2021.

Participants

The participants involved in this study are five father-child dyads living in South Korea. All fathers (37 to 41 years of age at the time of the study) are married Korean men and have full-time professional careers. The occupations they hold include mathematics professor, artist/university lecturer, and employee of a large corporation. At the time of the study, the five children were three to five years of age. One of the five children was a boy, while all the others were girls. Three children attended weekly extracurricular art classes, and the others had basic art experiences from kindergarten and home (see Table 1). Only one mother had a full-time career, and the others were homemakers. Due to the tendency of qualitative research to depend on small samples, I am mindful of the importance of selecting information-rich cases (Williamson, 2006). As such, the participants were not only selected because of the accessibility for the researcher, but also through purposeful sampling (fathers' professions, children's genders, ages, and previous art experiences, and

Table 1 Study participants

Participant	Age/ profession or gender	Previous experience with art
Han	41 years old/ mathematics professor	No specific art education experience
Han, Jr.	3 years old/ daughter	Art classes from kindergarten
Koo	38 years old/ corporate employee	Basic art experiences from school education
Koo, Jr.	4 years old/ daughter	Extracurricular weekly art classes (home visiting educator)
Lee	37 years old/ artist and university lecturer	Extensive art and education experiences
Lee, Jr.	5 years old/son	Experience in drawing, coloring book, building blocks, and playdoh
Moon	40 years old/ corporate employee	No specific art education experience
Moon, Jr.	3 years old/ daughter	Extracurricular weekly art classes and draws and uses coloring books at home
Choi	40 years old/ corporate employee (IT)	No specific art education experience
Choi, Jr.	3 years old/ daughter	Extracurricular weekly art classes

the family's inclination to be involved). All the adult participants (fathers and mothers) agreed to participate in the study through informed consent forms, both as study participants and as legal guardians of their children. Pseudonyms have been used for the purpose of confidentiality.

Procedures

After the participants were recruited, I sent art play guidance, pre and post-surveys, art materials, and descriptions of art materials by mail to all participating families. Prior to art activities, the fathers were asked to complete a brief demographic survey, inquiring about their age, profession, and previous experience with art, as well as their child's age and previous experience with art, the average time they spend together (on a daily and weekly basis), and the usual activities they do together. After the survey was completed, fathers were asked to lead three sequential thematic art sessions that could happen on other days (possibly weekly). All father-child interactions were audio or video recorded (participants chose between the two methods) at participants' homes. After each art session, fathers took photos of the finished artworks and filled out a post-survey to record the date and duration of the session, and describe their general experience of the art activities—including the successes, challenges, and what they learned about their children and themselves (see Table 2). I did not include any specific instructions or roles for the mothers in the art play guidance. Mothers were only asked to fill out a survey after all the sessions were completed. The surveys for mothers asked them to describe their general experiences with the art play, what role they inhabited during the sessions, and any differences between, before, and after the art play.

Art Play Guidance

My background as an art museum educator shaped the design of the art play guidance. I argue that children have

a meaningful experience with art when they engage in an exploration of art materials (Hafeli, 2014), the interpretive process (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2011), and social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). In particular, I adopted an inquiry-based teaching approach, which generally involves the teacher's facilitation of dialogue prompted by open-ended questions and students' active involvement in their learning processes (Schmidt, 2004). Accordingly, I designed three semi-structured lessons, and each lesson included a theme (lines, colors, and shapes), an objective, a warm-up activity, a motivating question, art materials, and questions for reflection. The types of art projects were drawing, watercolor, and mixed media sculpture, all designed to produce artworks related to self, family, and home. The materials included sheets of white paper, color crayons, colored pencils, watercolor markers, different types of colored papers, paper cups, popsicle sticks, toilet paper rolls, a glue stick, safety scissors, and tape.

All the fathers received the art play guidance, which included instruction and suggestions for facilitation, as well as a brief description of the art materials. To be specific, fathers were asked to lead the lessons in the order of warm-up activity, art-making, and reflection (see Fig. 1). The three semi-structured lessons and possible questions (fathers could

Table 2 Art play survey questions

Father-child art play survey
1. After the 'Lines' play
Date/ Time of Art Play: (e.g., 12/30/ 10:00 am ~ 10:50 am)
Could you briefly describe your play today?
What materials and contents was your child interested in today?
What did your child hesitate or have difficulty with today?
What have you learned about your child through the art play?
What did you find most interesting about today's activity?
What did you find most difficult about today's activity?
Please write if you have any other comments.

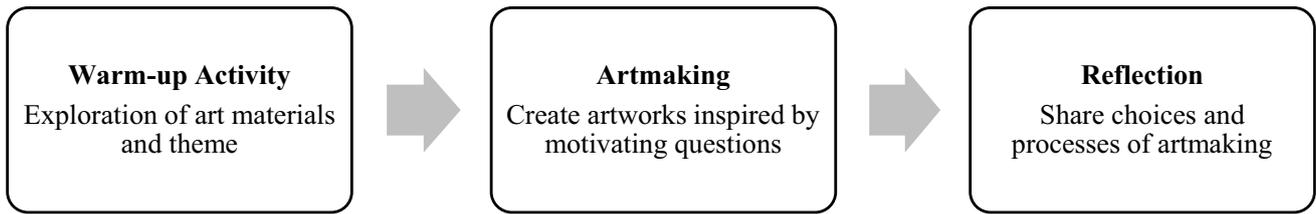


Fig. 1 Lesson sequence

flexibly add or remove questions) were summarized in a table for the fathers to reference during the facilitation of art activities (see Table 3). Each session was designed for about a 45-minute duration, but I assured the participants that they could adjust the length and interval between the lessons based on their schedules and the child’s interests.

Moreover, I emphasized that the main purpose of this project is not to complete technically well-made artworks but to investigate the process and interaction between father and child while they explore art materials. I also gave my contact information (email address and cell phone number) to all participants in case they had any questions or concerns.

Table 3 Outline and procedure of the lessons

Week 1 theme	Lines
Objectives	The child and father will explore diverse lines together using parts of their bodies and experiment with art materials.
Materials	Cards with different lines (straight, wavy, and zigzag), white paper, colored pencil, or crayon
Warm-up activity	Observe cards with different lines and make poses to depict the lines. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might you make a straight line with your body? A wavy line? Zigzag? Take a seat and draw various lines onto the paper (try using black or single drawing material to focus on lines) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might you make the longest line? A wavy line? A zigzag?
Motivating question	Prepare a new piece of paper. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might you use different lines to draw your favorite thing (i.e. a toy, food, animal, etc.)?
Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could you describe your drawing? • What kind of lines did you use the most? • Could you tell me about your favorite part of the drawing? • Do you have anything else you want to share?
Week 2 theme	Colors
Objectives	The child and their father will explore various colors visible in their home and use those colors to depict their family.
Materials	White paper and watercolor marker
Warm-up activity	Observe the colored papers (red, yellow, blue, green, etc.) and spot those colors in the home (i.e. in furniture, clothes, interior objects, toys, etc.).
Motivating question	Take a seat and discuss the colors you found at home. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might you use the different colors you found at home to make your family portrait?
Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could you introduce your family members in your painting? • Which colors did you use the most today? • Could you tell me about your favorite part of the painting? • Do you have anything else you want to share?
Week 3 theme	Shapes
Objectives	The child and their father will explore materials with various shapes and textures and use them to build a house.
Materials	Papers with different textures, paper cups, cardboard paper, glue, scissors, and colored tape
Warm-up activity	Explore materials with various shapes and textures and spot objects at home that have similar textures. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you find an object that has a smooth surface? Rough? • Find objects at home with different lines, colors, and shapes.
Motivating question	Take a seat and discuss what you found at home. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might you build the “coolest house” with these materials?
Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could you tell me about the home you built today? • Who lives in the home you built? • Could you tell me about your favorite part of the home? • Do you have anything else you want to share?

Data Collection and Analysis

In collecting the data, I used methods including video or audio data (video or audio recordings of each session) along with my detailed reflection notes, adult participants' surveys, photos of participants' artwork, and the lesson plan. I chose to observe the sessions via video or audio recordings, not only as a result of safety measures taken into consideration because of COVID-19 but also to allow the fathers to take the lead role in creating the learning space and facilitating the art activities without the presence of a professional. Three fathers sent video data while two chose to audio record the sessions. Video data captured activities as they happened, including “nonverbal behavior and communication as facial expressions, gestures, and emotions” and ensured the descriptive validity of the researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, as cited in Merriam 2009, p.145). In both cases, I had the opportunity to review the action and observe and isolate individual parts of what occurred in the learning space (Maxwell, 2005).

All the documents, including audio or video data, surveys, and photos of finished artworks were shared via email. Upon receiving the data from the adult participants, I transcribed all the video and audio recordings of the sessions into a written Word document. I reviewed and examined all transcribed data, categorized, organized, and color-coded observable themes that were similar or different among the five cases. Video, audio, image, and survey data provided me an entry into understanding how the father and child interacted with each other while exploring, discussing, and creating art.

Findings

Based on the investigation of five cases (15 art sessions), three themes were identified that relate to father-facilitated art play in a home environment: (1) quality interaction between the father and child, (2) the father as the facilitator of art play, and (3) the kinds of art learning that occurred. Each theme includes examples of participants' responses, artworks, and reflections derived from multiple sources.

Quality Interaction Between the Father and Child

The first identified theme was the quality interaction between the father and child. Some studies suggest that fathers in professional occupations who have more control over their work schedules can be more involved with their children (Berg et al.; La Valle et al.; cited in McMunn et al., 2017), but other studies suggest the opposite (Shows & Gerstel; cited in McMunn et al., 2017). Kreyenfeld & Zinn (2021) found that during the Coronavirus crisis, highly educated fathers



Fig. 2 Choi, Jr.'s family portrait with Mr. Tickle (Theme: Colors)

spent the least amount of time with their children, while less-educated fathers put increased focus on childcare. The participant fathers' occupations included professor, artist, and corporate employee; all professional occupations requiring university degrees. In their surveys, the fathers wrote that during weekdays they spend about thirty minutes to three hours with their children (excluding the hours their children are sleeping), while on weekends, time spent ranges from three hours to complete days. Lee (37, artist) and Han (41, professor) had relatively flexible schedules compared to others, but they wrote that the time they spend with their children varies significantly depending on their work schedules.

The participants generally spent about 45 min per art session. Although 45 min may not be such a long time, all the fathers agreed that it was a fun and rewarding journey to take with their children. Koo (38, corporate employee) and Han (41, professor) wrote in their post-surveys that the art sessions made them realize that they rarely spend alone time with their children and it made them determined to carve out more one-on-one time. All the mothers agreed in their own post-surveys that they appreciated their partner's participation in this study because of the time fathers were able to dedicate to their children. Moon, Jr.'s mother wrote that she felt thankful to her husband for setting aside the time to spend with the child, especially on weekday nights. Moreover, the participants all wrote that the art play was meaningful because it helped the father-child dyads bond. Specifically, I witnessed lots of conversations and laughter between the dyads. The fathers often repeated or paraphrased what their children said, asked follow-up questions, and complimented children's processes and accomplishments. In general, the children listened to their fathers very carefully, often sharing narratives they created about their art, which involved their favorite friends, toys, food, and cartoon characters. For example, Choi, Jr. added Mr. Tickle (a character in her favorite book) to the top left corner of her paper and

explained to Choi that in the drawing Mr. Tickle is following her family to the grocery store with a persimmon in his hand (see Fig. 2). Lee, Jr. drew his favorite toy character, Gil Vader, and explained its characteristics, including sharp teeth, pointy toes, and curvy lines. Koo and Koo Jr.'s conversation involved past family travels while drawing a family portrait. Interestingly, Moon, Jr. placed each family member distant from the other in her family portrait and explained that they were socially distanced due to the coronavirus. Although I did not embed any specific project or questions directly related to the pandemic, I could infer from Moon Jr.'s response that the children were highly influenced by the COVID-19 situation—fear of infection (Abdulah et al., 2021). Indeed, children's narratives naturally emerged as they expressed their ideas, feelings, and experiences with the world around them through their art (Bae, 2004; O'Sullivan et al., 2018). The intimate interactions and conversations between the dyads during art-making provided opportunities for quality interaction, as well as the opportunity to learn about the child.

Moreover, mothers wrote that they liked the free and individual time that transpired during the art play sessions. Interestingly, however, I witnessed three mothers' active involvement in the art sessions (especially in the first sessions)—all stayed in the same room, video recorded the session, and commented on how the fathers should facilitate the sessions. When they were not present in the scene, I could infer the mothers' presence through the recorded data because I heard all of the mothers washing dishes, doing laundry, playing with the other child, or preparing meals throughout all sessions. It was apparent that the mothers were very involved with childcare and homemaking than the fathers (Ji & Jung, 2021; Kim & Cheung, 2018; Kim & Cheung, 2018; Yoo, 2017). The study findings suggest that the fathers' involvement in quality play with their children not only benefited the children directly in terms of an increased quantity of parental attention but also indirectly through decreasing mothers' role overload (McMunn et al., 2017).

Father as the Facilitator of Art Play

The second theme I identified was the fathers as facilitators of art play. Scholars assert that fathers tend to engage in more active physical play than mothers, while mothers tend to read to and participate in artistic activities with their children (Lankinen et al., 2018; McMunn et al., 2017; Paquette, 2004). Indeed, fathers listed in their surveys that the usual activities they participate in with their children include wrestling, dancing, role play, hide and seek, playing tag, using building blocks, reading books, and playing at the park or playground—practices that mostly involve physical activity. Mothers agreed that partnering the father and child in



Fig. 3 Choi and Choi, Jr.'s house (Theme: Shapes)

the art play was refreshing and meaningful because it was not a typical activity for them. Choi, Jr.'s mom wrote in her survey that the relatively subtle and less active art activity might have given their child a more nuanced impression of her father. Lee, Jr.'s mother also wrote that although her husband is an artist, art-making is not an activity he usually participates in with his kids, so she thought that her son might have learned that art activities aren't restricted to the domain of his mother or his schoolteacher.

Moreover, it was instructive to observe how the fathers facilitated the art activities for their children because of their varied previous art education and teaching experiences. Choi (40, corporate employee) does not have a professional art education background or teaching experience. Although he was keen on the choices and processes employed by Choi, Jr. (3, daughter), he often adhered too strictly to the lesson's theme, and as a result, he and his daughter had a challenging time completing the final artwork. To be specific, when Choi introduced materials with different textures to make the "Coolest House" (Theme: Shapes), she immediately grabbed colored popsicle sticks and arranged them flat on the floor to make decorative parts for the house. Choi, on the other hand, wanted to build the foundational structure first, so he insisted that she put the decorative part aside and start with the bigger structure. After a little struggle between the two, Choi decided to help Choi, Jr. finish her decorations, and then they built the house with paper cups and cardboard paper. The decorative parts were added at the end (see Fig. 3). In his survey, Choi reflected on this instance and wrote, "It was fun, but I feel a bit regretful because I would have liked to see the child get closer to the (my expected) goal."

Similarly, Koo (38, corporate employee) wrote in his survey that he had less exposure to and interest in visual arts and that he had a hard time instructing his child, which



Fig. 4 Koo and Koo, Jr.'s drawing (Theme: Lines)

seemed to influence Koo, Jr. (4, daughter), who had difficulty concentrating. Instead of strictly following the lesson plan, he modified and tailored the art sessions to his and his daughter's interests. For example, when Koo, Jr. drew an object and asked Koo to guess what it was, Koo turned the experience into a guessing game that continued for more than 15 min. The following vignette illustrates how Koo led the guessing game:

After discussing and drawing straight and wavy lines that resemble clouds and rain, Koo, Jr. draws an object and asks Koo to guess what it is. Instead of guessing the object right away, Koo asks, "Is this something we could see often in rain?" Koo, Jr. answers, "Yes, that's right." Koo asks again, "Does it have a house on its back?" Koo, Jr. giggles and responds, "Yes!" Koo responds with excitement, "Since it's raining, this friend must have come out! Perhaps, is this friend a snail?" Koo, Jr. laughs and answers, "That's right! But, you won't guess this time." Koo wittily responds, "So, this was a practice game [to see] if I could find the answer or not. Good." Koo, Jr. warns, "This will be challenging because it is even hard for me to draw [it]." Koo responds, "I am getting excited!" When Koo, Jr. finishes her drawing, Koo asks, "Is this an insect?" Koo, Jr. asks him to guess again. After a few more back and forth guesses, Koo asks if it could fight. Koo, Jr. rejects that suggestion, but adds, "It can't fight. It only swims in water when it's a baby." Koo asks, "Does it not have legs when it's a baby?" Koo Jr. giggles and responds, "Yes, that's correct." Koo then asks with a smile, "Do the back legs come out first?" Koo, Jr. says, "Yes." Koo guesses, "Is it a frog?" (see Fig. 4).

On the contrary, I witnessed Lee's (37, artist and university lecturer) natural confidence in embedding additional art materials and activities to accommodate his children's

interests. For example, when using wavy lines and thunder to explore zigzagging lines, Lee asked Lee, Jr. (5, son) and his younger brother to imagine swimming in the ocean (Theme: Lines). Knowing that his kids are energetic, Lee lifted the kids up and down in the air to help them make bigger gestures and further encouraged them to dance and make sounds as if they were in the ocean or in the sky. After brainstorming lines by imagining, Lee made a nice transition into introducing the drawing materials and encouraging the children to draw the explored lines on paper. Similarly, in the Colors session, Lee added additional materials (watercolors and paintbrushes) and taught Lee, Jr. how to hold the brush differently to make thick or thin lines, and showed him how to wash the brush each time he applied different colors. This finding echoes Burke and Cleaver's study (2019) on how home-educating families approached learning in creative arts. They found that the individual parent's personal background, skill, and confidence with the arts influenced the perceived effectiveness and interest in art teaching in the home. While parents' background learning and perception of their ability to facilitate arts learning influenced confidence, parents' perception of a lack of skill and knowledge in the arts made it a challenging subject to incorporate into the home education practice.

However, whether experienced or not, all the fathers agreed that having a theme was helpful in guiding their children's art play. Choi (40, corporate employee) and Han (41, professor) shared similar responses in their post-surveys that the structured play with a theme, warm-up activity, and reflection was better than free play because they felt more responsible. In fact, this finding parallels Hubbard's (2013) and Yoo's (2021) argument that themes applied to art viewing programs are especially helpful in providing a reassuring experience to learners when the educator is absent because the themes help the learners focus on a specific aspect of the artwork and encourage depth of interpretation. The thematic and open-ended instructions provided the fathers with a lens of focus, as well as multiple facilitation options rooted in the themes for art play. Fathers' varied interpretations also resulted in the children's creation of varied artworks (see Fig. 5).

Kinds of Art Learning that Occurred

The last theme I identified involved the kinds of art learning that occurred during the five dyads' exploration of art materials and discussion of their creations. To begin with, Lopatovska et al., (2016) argue that knowledge of and the ability to identify colors, shapes, and lines within an image is the basic classification element in visual literacy. Specifically, introducing more nuanced categories of color, such as value (light and dark) and temperature (cool and warm), contribute



Fig. 5 Houses created by the Koo, Han, Moon, and Lee families (from left) (Theme: Shapes)



Fig. 6 Moon, Jr.'s drawing of home (Theme: Lines)

to the mastery of more complex concepts in visual art. I could witness the five dyads demonstrating enhanced visual literacy. For instance, Moon (40, corporate employee) introduced new colors, and Moon, Jr. (3, daughter) tried them in coloring her bubbles while discussing subtle differences among similar colors (brown and burnt umber, blue and ultramarine, and red and red plum), as illustrated by the following vignette:

Moon, Jr. colors each bubble in using pink, red, and orange. Moon browses the crayon box and suggests, “Let me know which color you want to try, and I will pass it to you. How about this color? It’s called the burnt umber.” Moon, Jr. refuses him, “Nope, I don’t like a burnt umber bubble. It’s weird.” Moon asks, “Why is it weird?” Moon, Jr. responds, “This color is similar to brown!” Moon agrees and clarifies, “Yes, it is very similar to brown but a little darker.” Moon, Jr. agrees and tries burnt umber to color her bubble. Then Moon suggests another color, “Here’s ultrama-

rine, blue but a little darker.” Moon, Jr. repeats, “Yes, an ultramarine bubble!” After coloring bubbles with many different colors, Moon, Jr. asks, “Dad, what is this color?” Moon checks the name written on the crayon, “This is red plum.” Moon, Jr. responds, “I never saw a red plum before. It resembles red.” Moon tries the color on the paper, “Let’s find out.” Moon, Jr. gasps, “This is like red but a little lighter” (see Fig. 6).

Moreover, the participants discussed and learned about stereotypes associated with colors or visual elements. In the second session (Theme: Colors), Lee (37, artist) and Lee, Jr. (5, son) discussed their favorite colors while spotting different colors at home. When Lee, Jr. said that he liked the color purple, even though purple is a girl’s color, Lee kindly explained to Lee, Jr. that there is no gender attached to colors and shared that he used to like red when he was a child. While reflecting on which colors Lee, Jr. used the most in the family portraits, Lee, Jr. answered that he used the *sal* color the most (*sal* is skin in English). Lee taught Lee, Jr. to use the term apricot instead of *sal*, explaining that people have different skin tones; some people have darker skin tones and others have lighter ones¹. Similarly, while Moon (40, corporate employee) and Moon, Jr. (3, daughter) drew a family portrait together, Moon used apricot and black to color in his family’s skin tone and eyes, while Moon, Jr. applied blue, pink, purple, and red to depict her family members’ skin, eyes, and hair tones (see Fig. 7). Moon mentioned in his survey that Moon, Jr.’s use of various colors to show family members’ skin and hair tones made him realize that

¹ In Korea, *sal* color was a commonly accepted term to describe the yellowish apricot color which resembles the East Asian skin tone. However, in 2001, the National Human Rights Commission of the Republic of Korea accepted a citizen’s petition citing racial discrimination and recommended that the Korean Agency for Technology and Standards change the name of the color *sal* (Kim, 2015). An apricot is now substituted for the *sal*, but many South Koreans still use the past term.



Fig. 7 Moon and Moon, Jr.'s family portrait (Theme: Colors)



Fig. 8 Lee, Jr.'s family portrait (Theme: Colors)

he had himself formed a stereotype in how he used specific colors to depict people.

Lee shared a similar experience of learning about his stereotyping of size and arrangement in drawings. That is, Lee, Jr. drew Lee as the largest in the center of the family portrait and depicted himself to be the smallest, even smaller than his younger brother. When Lee asked about the sizes of each family member, Lee, Jr. answered that he drew his dad the biggest because he weighs the most in the family, while his little brother is chubbier than he is. Lee, Jr. added that he is still amazing in the drawing because size does not matter

(see Fig. 8). In his survey, Lee reflected upon this instance and wrote that he realized that his stereotypes associated with size might not always be accurate because he used to think that drawing oneself as smaller than everyone else was a sign of low self-esteem. The collaborative art-making experience provided various kinds of learning opportunities, as well as opportunities for self-reflection on learners' experience and knowledge (Ahn & Filipenko, 2007; Ahn & Lee, 2018; Deguara & Nutbrown, 2018; Kantner & Hoffman, 1992).

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine how South Korean fathers facilitated thematic art activities for their young children in the home environment and the kinds of learning that occurred from the interaction between father, child, and art. The study findings demonstrated that father-child dyads' individualized and quality time together helped them establish a more intimate bond while allowing mothers to have free and individual time. This suggests that fathers' increasing involvement in maternal caregiving could relieve the pressure on mothers, decrease their "role overload" (Jia & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2011, p. 107), and strengthen family life, particularly for the growing number of busy dual-worker households (McMunn et al., 2017). Furthermore, the individual father's knowledge and interests in the arts influenced confidence and flexibility in their facilitation of art activities with their children. Having a specific theme and materials with prompting questions helped fathers facilitate the art sessions and create varied artworks. This implies that thematic art play allows fathers to facilitate more focused play. Finally, the study found that the father-child art play allowed all adult and child participants to learn and develop visual literacy while exploring art materials. All participants discussed and learned about new colors and discovered how to distinguish the subtle differences between similar colors, as well as to perceive stereotypes associated with colors. Kantner & Hoffman (1992) assert the materials and experiences available in the home environment show what parents believe their children can and should learn. This suggests that in order to foster children's visual literacy, parents or caregivers should make art materials accessible to children as part of the play. This study was limited to opposite-sex parents and mostly single-income families living in South Korea. A further longitudinal study on father-child engagement with art activities in a home environment might enrich the findings. Also, future studies involving single-sex parents, single parents, and dual-earner families, as well as families from varying cultural contexts could be considered.

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