

PLAYTrack Research Project:

Using visual Q-methodology to explore children's perceptions of outdoor play environments

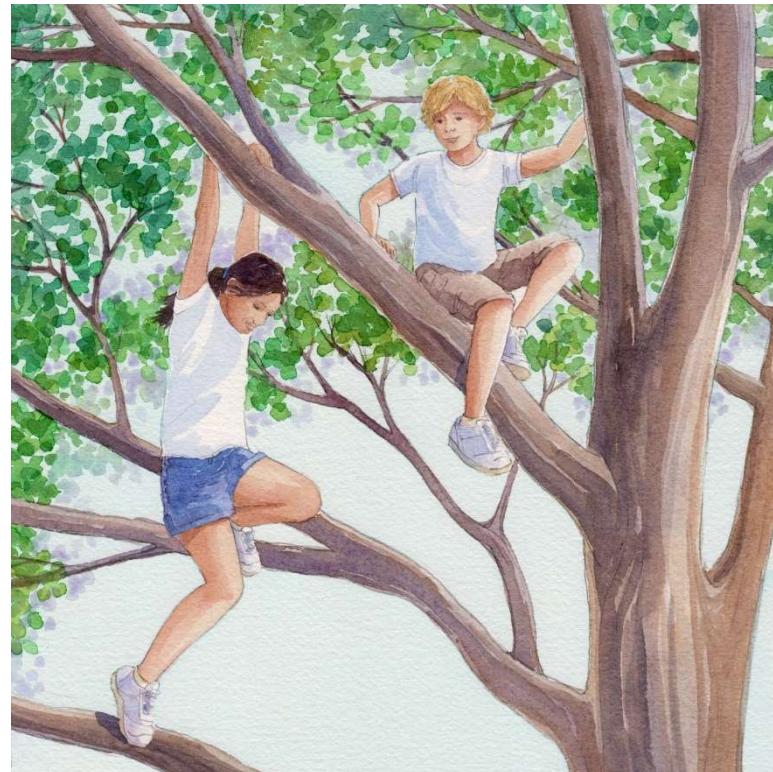
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The LEGO Foundation



Key Findings

Suitability of Method

- Visual Q-methodology is highly suited to play research
- Promising method for exploring cultural differences
- Suitable for wide age range of participants
- Q-Method technique is efficient and provides robust data

Understandings of Children's Perceptions of Play

- Results suggest gender differences in play preferences
- Children with different cultural backgrounds differ in play preferences
- Older children are more likely to dislike activities if they have experienced incompetence
- Play environment is highly important for some groups of children (*where*), while the activity (*what*) is most important for others
- “Contemplative play” may represent a 6th play type

Research Problem

“Little is known about how environmental influences interact with individual perceptions; in the past decades few studies have been conducted that examine person-environment fit or congruence for young people”

(Horelli 2007)

Purpose

To develop a technique that allows children to express their knowledge and preferences about outdoor play activities and environments



Method: Visual Q-methodology

Step by Step Process

- Semi-structured approach to theory using key models (Addams 2000)
- Five play types (Whitebread and Neale et al., 2007)
- Skill Development in play (Zosh et al., 2017)
- Spatial types and environmental perception models (Meinig 1979, Kaplan and Kaplan 1989, Appleton 1975, Kellert and Wilson 1993)

Play types	Skill Development	Environmental Types
Physical play	Emotional skills	Urban Amenities
Play with objects	Cognitive skills	Natural Amenities
Symbolic play	Physical skills	Biophilia – love of living organisms
Pretend play	Social skills	Information Processing
Games with rules	Creative skills	Prospect-refuge
Contemplation		Restorative environments
		Fascination

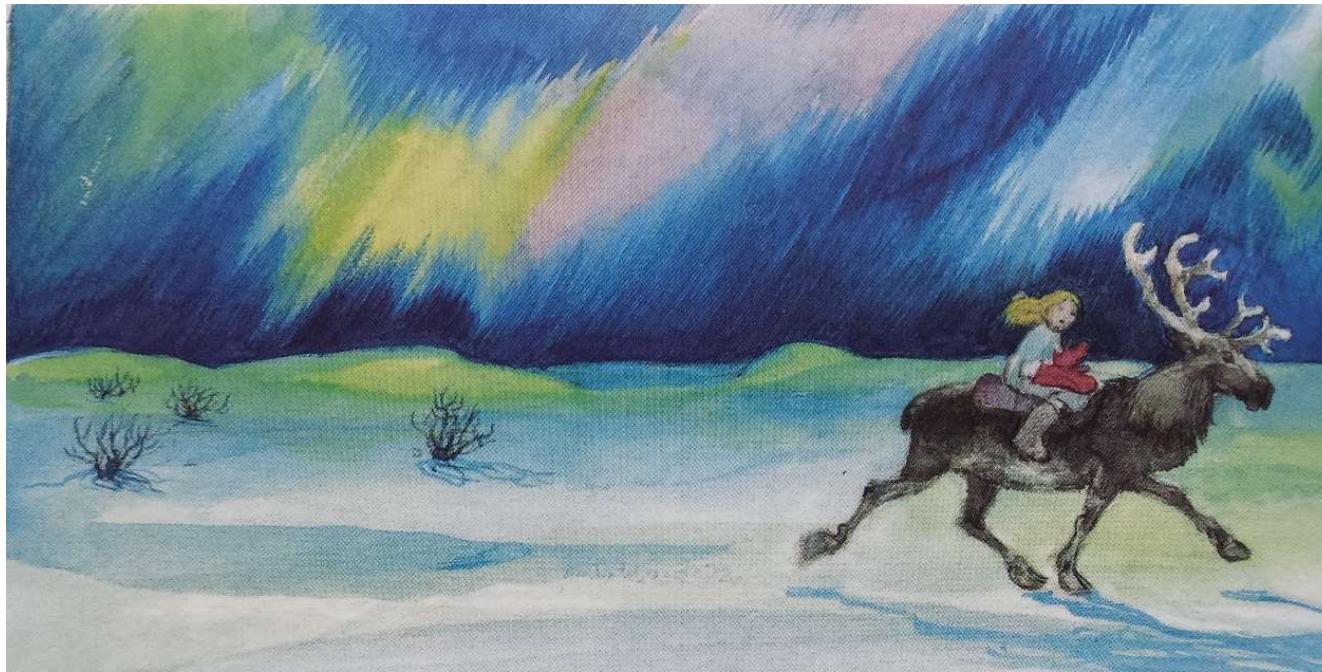
Step 1: Review of Opinion Domain

- Sentiments expressed in books, movies, public art, advertisements
- Field observations



Development of Concourse

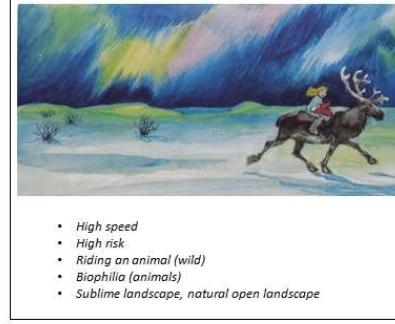
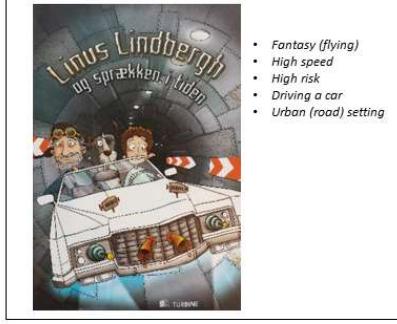
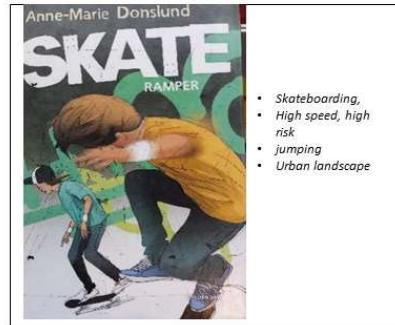
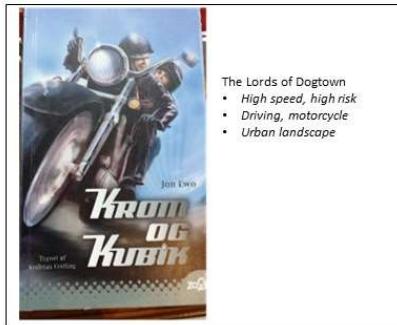
- images are collected into a catalogue with sources noted
- Catalogue is subdivided by themes and keywords



H.C. Andersen, The Snow Queen (Snedronningen). Ill. by Svend Otto S.
Keywords: ***high speed movement, biophilia (animals), sublime, natural open landscape, winter***

Development of Concourse

Sub-category:
Physical Play-Movement:
 • high speed
 • high risk



Movement: High Speed, high risk

Step 2: Creation of Q-Set

Play types	Skill Development	Environmental types
Physical play <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High risk (flying) • High speed – vehicles • High speed – running • Low speed (hiking/walking) • climbing • Rough play • Throwing • Swimming • jumping 	Emotional skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathy • Attention • Bravery • Patience Cognitive skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Puzzles/games • Physical games/strategy • Reading • Investigation • Exploration (urban) • Exploration (natural) • Trading • Music (listening, playing) • Watching people Physical skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance • strength • Speed • Fighting skills • Fine motor skills (artwork) • Musical skills • Stillness • Co-ordination Social skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendship/loyalty • Dancing • Group building projects • Games with rules • sportsmanship Creative skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Street art • Music performance • Costumes/drama • Imagination/fantasy • Tinkering (small scale) • Building (larger scale) • collecting Contemplative skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alone in nature • isolation • wonder with others • meditation 	Urban <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City roads/highways • View over city • Bustle/business Tame <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country roads/paths • Park-like environments Natural <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • View over nature • Forests (dangerous) • Forests (benign) • seascapes Sublime <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban (night scenes) • Weather/atmosphere • Wild forests • Wild animals • storms Biophilia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love/care of plants • Immersion in forest/trees • Bonds with tame animals • Bonds with wild animals Affordances <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water • Food (found in nature) • Food (urban market) • Shelter from elements Enclosed (shelter) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Built spaces (forts) • Natural enclosures • Urban rooms Open (prospect) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • View from above (flying) • Open meadow • View from hill/cliff • View of road Wayfinding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roads and paths (forests) • City roads Complexity/mystery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural (tangled garden) • Urban complexity • Investigation • fascination Comprehension/Legibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open field • Open roadways • paths
Play with objects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play with weapons • Construction tools • Trading cards • Musical instruments • Art objects • Fishing rods • Play with pets • Flying kits • Play equipment - swings Symbolic play <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drawing/painting • Music performance • Music (alone) • Story-telling • Dramatic performance • dance Pretend play <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • domestic tasks (cooking) • shopping (market) • hunting/fishing • Nurturing plants/animals • Nurturing people (friendship/partnering) • Fighting/war • Detective play Games with rules <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical games (soccer, baseball, basketball) Board games Solo puzzles (rubic's cube) Solo physical games (hopscotch) Trading games Contemplation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Star gazing Immersion in nature Groups (campfires) Wonder exploration 		

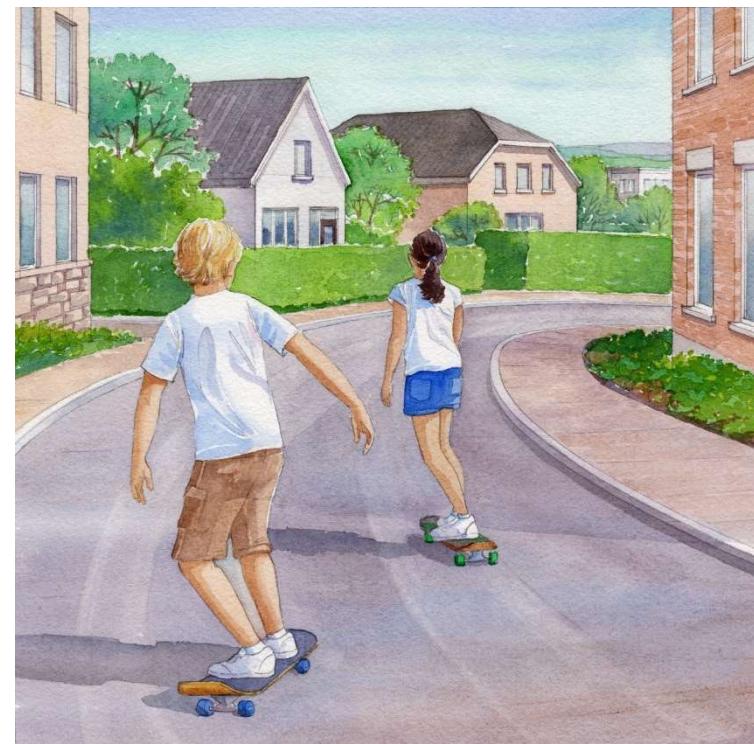
Saturation of concourse:

- 340 images (including duplicates)
- No new themes emerging
- Analysis of concourse
- Creation of Balanced Block Matrix (Addams 2000)

Step 2: Creation of Q-Set

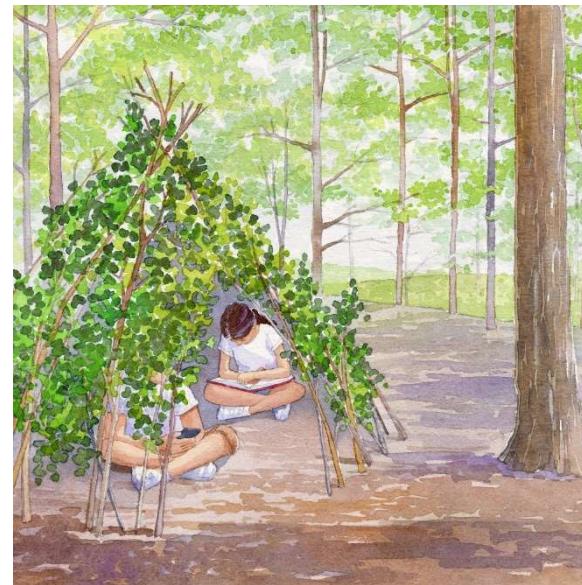
Play types	Skill Development	Environmental types
Physical play		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High risk (flying) • High speed – vehicles • High speed – running • Low speed (hiking/walking) • climbing • Rough play • Throwing • Swimming • jumping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emotional skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathy • Attention • Bravery • Patience Cognitive skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Puzzles/games • Physical games/strategy • Reading • Investigation • Exploration (urban) • Exploration (natural) • Trading • Music (listening, playing) • Watching people 	Urban <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City roads/highways • View over city • Bustle/business
Play with objects		Tame
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play with weapons • Construction tools • Trading cards • Musical instruments • Art objects • Fishing rods • Play with pets • Flying kits • Play equipment - swings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country roads/paths • Park-like environments 	Natural
Symbolic play		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drawing/painting • Music performance • Music (alone) • Story-telling • Dramatic performance • dance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fighting skills • Fine motor skills (artwork) • Musical skills • Stillness • Co-ordination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • View over nature • Forests (dangerous) • Forests (benign) • seascapes
Pretend play		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • domestic tasks (cooking) • shopping (market) • hunting/fishing • Nurturing plants/animals • Nurturing people (friendship/partnering) • Fighting/war • Detective play 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendship/loyalty • Dancing • Group building projects • Games with rules • sportsmanship • Creative skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Street art • Music performance • Costumes/drama • Imagination/fantasy • Tinkering (small scale) • Building (larger scale) • collecting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sublime • Urban (night scenes) • Weather/atmosphere • Wild forests • Wild animals • storms
Games with rules		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical games (soccer, baseball, basketball) Board games Solo puzzles (rubic's cube) Solo physical games (hopscotch) Trading games 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contemplative skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alone in nature • isolation • wonder with others • meditation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biophilia • Affordances • Enclosed (shelter) • Open (prospect) • Wayfinding • Complexity/mystery • Comprehension/Legibility
Contemplation		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Star gazing Immersion in nature Groups (campfires) Wonder exploration 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love/care of plants • Immersion in forest/trees • Bonds with tame animals • Bonds with wild animals • Water • Food (found in nature) • Food (urban market) • Shelter from elements • Built spaces (forts) • Natural enclosures • Urban rooms • View from above (flying) • Open meadow • View from hill/cliff • View of road • Roads and paths (forests) • City roads • Natural (tangled garden) • Urban complexity • Investigation • fascination • Open field • Open roadways • paths

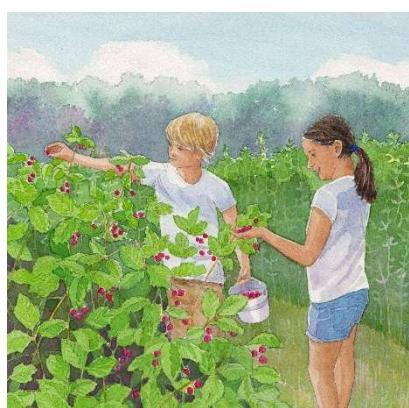
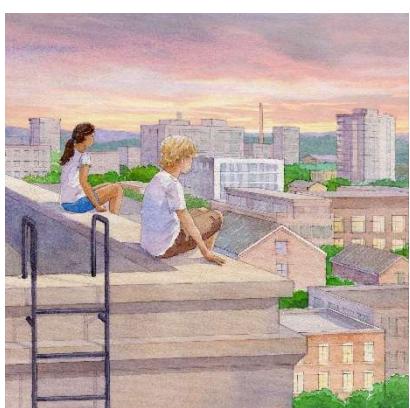
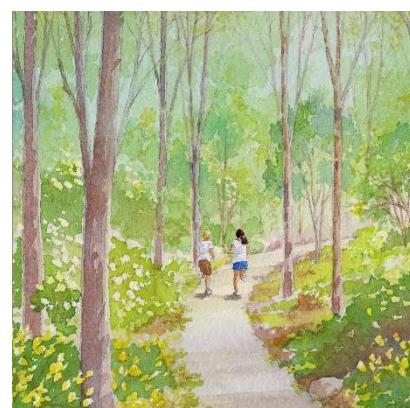
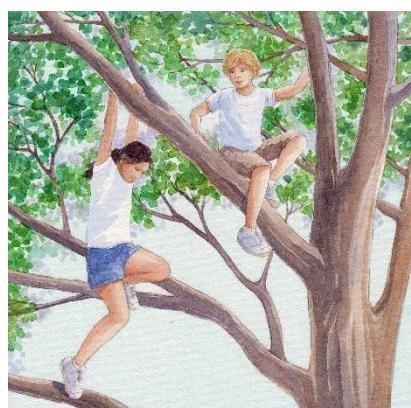
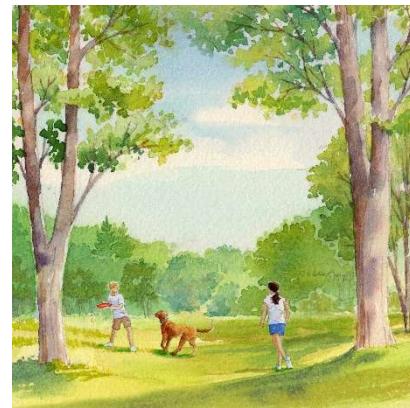
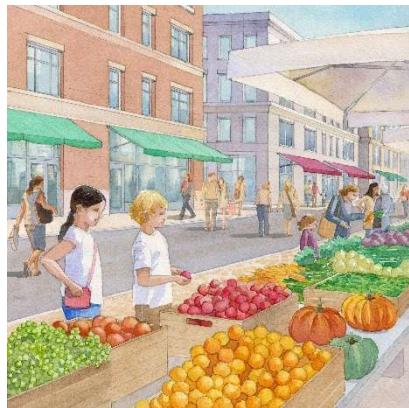
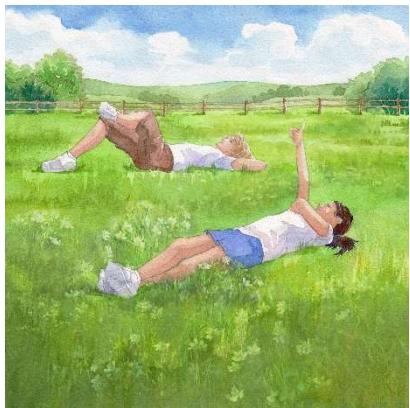
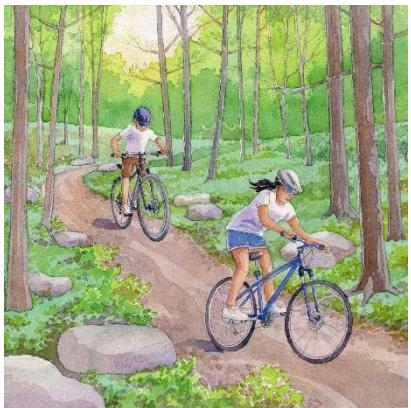
Items in Q-set: “Carpet Tiles”
(Watts and Stenner, 2012) to represent the opinion domain

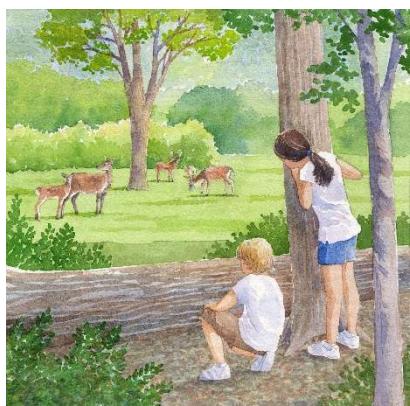
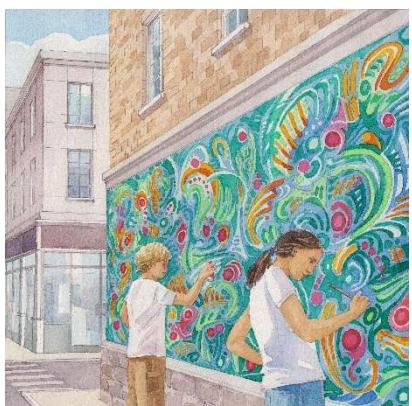
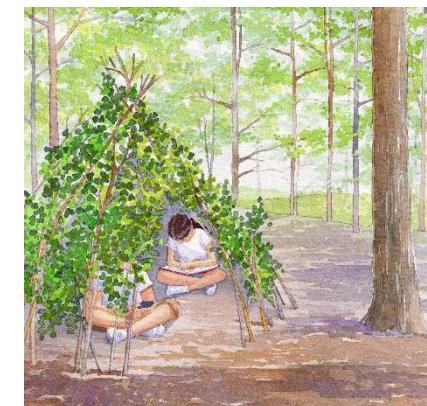
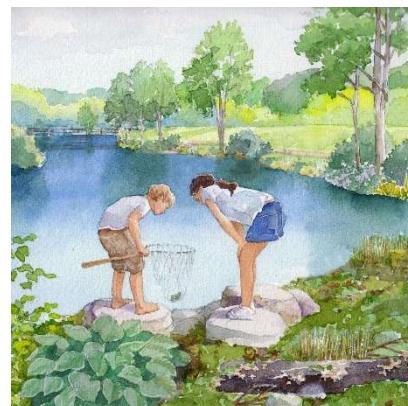
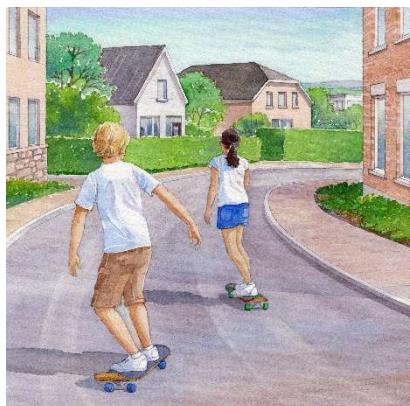
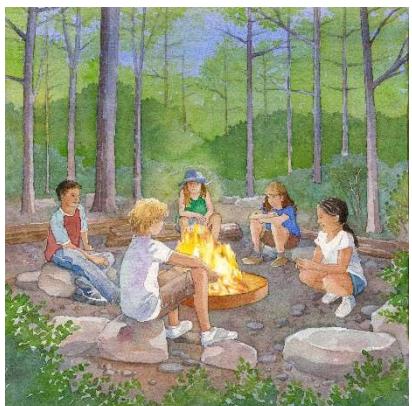
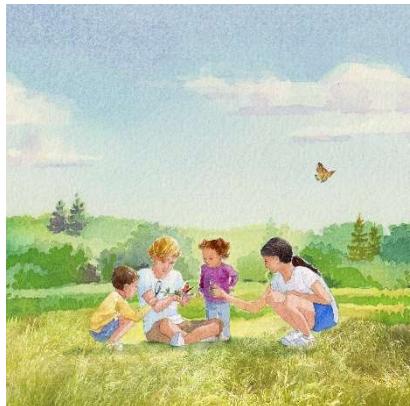
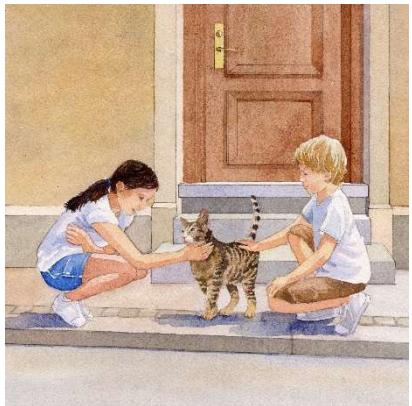


Step 2: Creation of Q-Set

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Physical play		
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Play with objects		<p>Urban</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> City roads/highways View over city Bustle/business <p>Tame</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Country roads/paths Park-like environments <p>Natural</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> View over nature Forests (dangerous) Forests (benign) seascapes <p>Sublime</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urban (night scenes) Weather/atmosphere Wild forests Wild animals storms <p>Biophilia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Love/care of plants Immersion in forest/trees Bonds with tame animals Bonds with wild animals <p>Affordances</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water Food (found in nature) Food (urban market) Shelter from elements <p>Enclosed (shelter)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Built spaces (forts) Natural enclosures
Symbolic play		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urban rooms <p>Open (prospect)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> View from above (flying) Open meadow View from hill/cliff View of road <p>Wayfinding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roads and paths (forests) City roads <p>Complexity/mystery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural (tangled garden) Urban complexity Investigation fascination <p>Comprehension/Legibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open field Open roadways paths
Pretend play		
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Games with rules		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical games (soccer, baseball, basketball) Board games Solo puzzles (rubic's cube) Solo physical games (hopscotch) Trading games 		
Contemplation		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Star gazing Immersion in nature Groups (campfires) Wonder exploration 		







Step 3: Administration of Q-Sort



Interview process:

- Child reviews book of printed images
- They sort the deck of smaller images into 3 piles (like most, least, medium)
- They sort these onto the Q-sort board in order of preference
- Takes approx. 15 minutes
- Children enjoyed the interviews and were happy to participate.
- Some received a thank-you gift, but others (at schools) did not.

Sample

- 49 children (24 boys, 25 girls)
- Residents of Vejle/Billund area
- 13 children have non-Danish parents and were born outside of Denmark
- 10 children have one non-Danish parent

Recruitment

- International School (Billund) -after hours program
- Vejle Bibliotek – drop-in
- Internationals dinner in Vejle
- Vejle School – after hours program
- Misc: children of colleagues, local shop owners, other contacts



Age breakdown:

- | |
|--------------|
| 5 years (1) |
| 6 years (8) |
| 7 years (7) |
| 8 years (6) |
| 9 years (14) |
| 10 years (5) |
| 11 years (5) |
| 12 years (2) |
| 13 years (1) |

550

Deltagerinformation (valgfrit)

Alder: 10 Køn: ♀ Bopæl:

Har boet andre steder end i Danmark, hvis det er relevant:
 Feje Højhus i Italien
 Tywald Kølke

Fortæl os om de kort du føler stærkest for:
 Hvorfor foretrak du de landskaber, der er afbildet i felterne +3 og +4?
 jeg selv til fodbold, sjovt at bruge alle sine krafter & kæmpe om ballen & man får en masse gode venner. Jeg kan godt vide dog yndlingsdag hat hund (sjovt at gå ture med)

Hvorfor kunne du mindst lide dem i felterne -3 og -4?
 kedeligt at plante & vandre ting det tager lang tid at få et jeg & både tilhører & ikke tåler det at blive man bare en masse ting

Er der nogen udendørs aktiviteter eller miljøer, som du ville ønske havde været med på disse billeder?
 suprene vid i en spil ellers pool

Har du noget tilføje til forskningsemnet?
 De voksne skulle selv være lidt vildere lidt mere & vise und til bogen De skulle selv prøve det af se hvor sjovt det var at ligge.

Questionnaire

- Age, Gender, Place of Residence
- Other places of residence
- “Why did you prefer the images in the +3 and +4 boxes?”
- “Why did you least prefer those in the -3 and -4 boxes?”
- Are there any play activities you wish were included in these pictures
- Additional comments about the topic (usually asked as “is there anything you think the researchers should know about playing outside”)

“Adults should not work so much but play more with us”

playtrac 4 centroid.lis.txt - Notepad
 File Edit Format View Help
 PQMethod2.35 Visual Q Study of Children's Outdoor Play Preferences
 Path and Project Name: C:\PQMethod\projects\playtrac
 Factor Matrix with an X Indicating a Defining Sort

QSORT	1	2	3	4
1 01M9J	0.0363	0.1653	0.2550	0.7956X
2 02F11A	-0.1797	-0.0896	0.6648X	0.2499
3 03M11S	0.2085	-0.0495	-0.2258	0.8807X
4 04F6A	-0.2321	0.6170X	-0.0565	0.3872
5 05M8D	0.0416	0.4860X	-0.1406	-0.3791
6 06F12I	0.2989	0.3580	0.0508	0.2446
7 07M13S	-0.2395	0.2866	-0.4890X	0.0618
8 08F10S	0.6073X	0.1634	-0.2693	0.3373
9 09F9E	0.4288X	-0.0115	0.2315	-0.0013
10 10M6M	-0.0701	-0.1129	-0.1180	0.4474X
11 11F5E	-0.1512	0.5339X	0.2527	0.2013
12 12M7J	-0.0294	0.1097	0.4377X	-0.0963
13 13M9B	0.1849	0.1796	-0.1511	0.5695X
14 14M7L	0.3843	-0.0913	0.0362	0.2574
15 15F6J	0.5117	-0.4251	0.0405	0.6778X
16 16M9M	0.0553	-0.3019	-0.0395	0.1481
17 17F9C	0.5665X	0.1422	0.1669	0.2822
18 18F9E	0.8212X	0.0381	0.2637	0.1927
19 19M9A	0.4441	-0.1880	-0.0558	0.4585
20 20M8I	-0.0806	0.3982	-0.0061	-0.0696
21 21F9K	0.3707	-0.0238	-0.1770	0.3974
22 22M8S7	-0.0025	0.0137	-0.5297X	-0.0006
23 23F7C	0.5390X	-0.1861	-0.2829	0.0117
24 24F9C	0.3069	0.1907	-0.1887	0.1099
25 25F6R	0.6493X	-0.1716	0.1945	-0.3388
26 26F7L	0.4714	0.3047	0.1491	0.4393
27 27M10A	-0.1685	0.7593X	-0.0442	-0.4400
28 28F6S	0.4003	-0.0166	0.4883X	0.2518
29 29F10S	0.2220	0.6027X	-0.0928	0.1583
30 30M7N	-0.2662	0.2884	-0.0112	0.3144
31 31M6R	-0.2724	0.1315	-0.1665	0.6610X
32 32M7N	0.0026	0.4537	-0.3921	0.2845
33 33M6V	-0.5777X	0.0104	0.2282	0.1732
34 34M12M	0.1863	0.1006	0.6834X	0.4695
35 35F7A	0.1278	-0.4680X	0.2702	0.0617
36 36F11A	0.7049X	0.1717	0.0115	0.0219
37 37M8M	0.3277	-0.1031	0.3816	0.0728
38 38M9S	0.1744	0.0522	0.2748	0.4302X
39 39F8M	0.1758	-0.0344	-0.1969	0.2659
40 40F8E	0.5662X	-0.2272	0.1521	-0.1760
41 41M9t	0.1513	0.3188	0.2073	0.0770
42 42F9C	0.1077	0.0003	-0.4154	0.1607
43 43M6V	0.2236	0.6848X	-0.0726	0.2086
44 44F9E	0.1804	0.4069	0.2313	0.7194X
45 45M11W	-0.1505	0.5360X	0.2061	0.3031
46 46F10A	0.1145	-0.0115	-0.6971X	0.3390
47 47F9L	0.5488X	-0.0520	-0.2940	0.0319
48 48M10S	0.0565	0.3062	0.3229	-0.1212
49 49F11J	0.6857X	-0.0836	0.0143	0.1937

% expl.Var. 13 9 8 13

Step 4: Data Analysis

- PQ method software (Schmolk 2012)
- Plots correlation matrix
- Finds 8 factors initially
- Humphrey's rule performed
- Eigenvalues (8.8, 5.3, 4.0, 3.7) plotted with Scree test
- 4 defining factors
- Centroid analysis and Varimax rotation
- Defining sorts automatically flagged

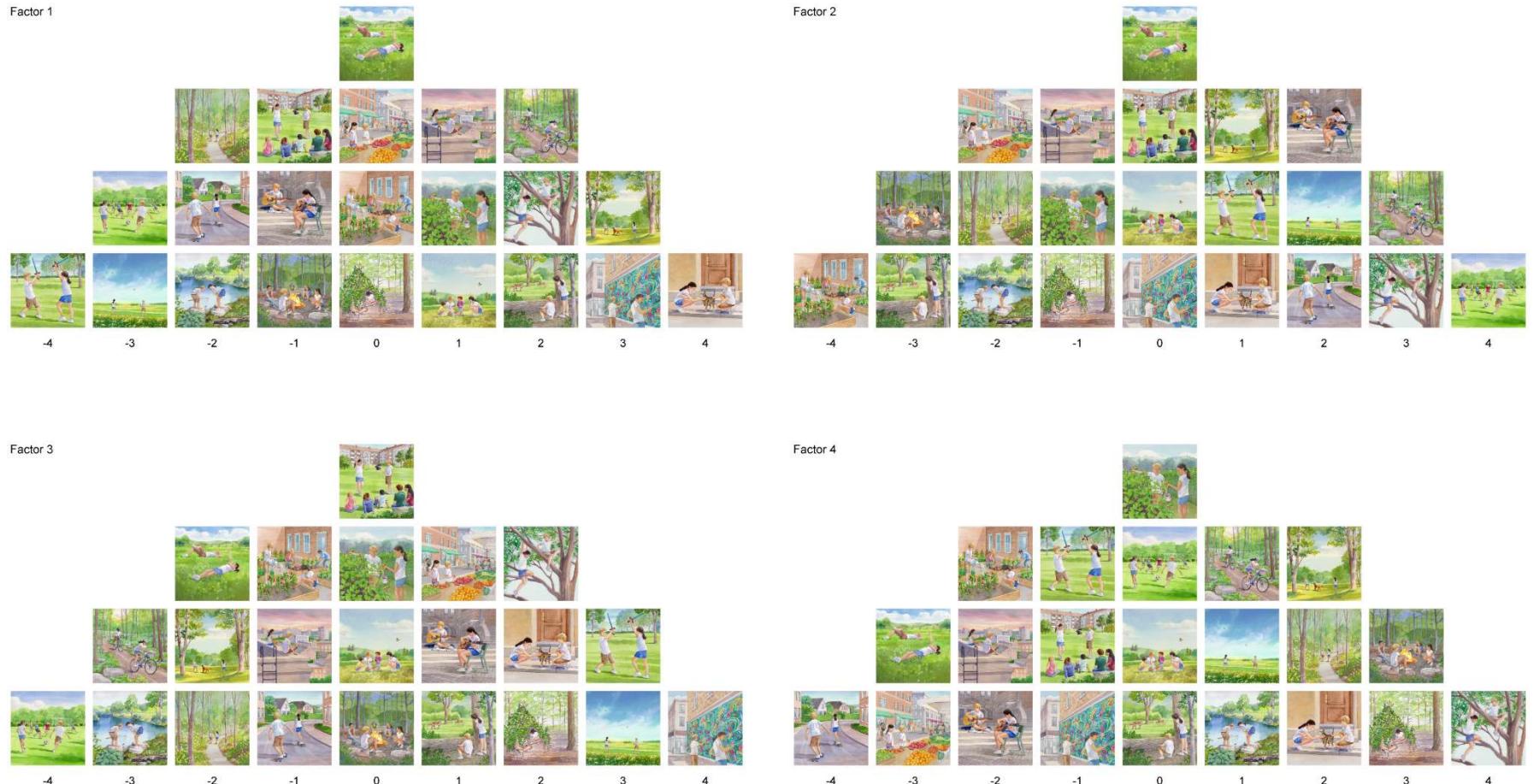
Displaying Factor Arrays

- Factor arrays provided using text to represent images

No.	Statement	Factor Arrays				
		No.	1	2	3	4
1	biking through woods	1	2	3	-3	1
2	lying in meadow	2	0	0	-2	-3
3	shopping at market	3	0	-2	1	-3
4	playing frisbee with dog	4	3	1	-2	2
5	climbing in tree	5	2	3	2	4
6	urban garden	6	0	-4	-1	-2
7	playfighting	7	-4	1	3	-1
8	running through woods	8	-2	-2	-2	2
9	magic show	9	-1	0	0	-1
10	rooftop view	10	1	-1	-1	-2
11	picking raspberries	11	1	-1	0	0
12	playing soccer	12	-3	4	-4	0
13	petting a cat	13	4	1	2	2
14	looking at butterflies	14	1	0	0	0
15	playing guitar	15	-1	2	1	-2
16	playing with drones	16	-3	2	3	1
17	sitting around a campfire	17	-1	-3	0	3
18	skateboarding	18	-2	2	-1	-4
19	exploring by creek	19	-2	-2	-3	1
20	playing inside fort	20	0	-1	2	3
21	street art	21	3	0	4	-1
22	looking at deer	22	2	-3	1	0

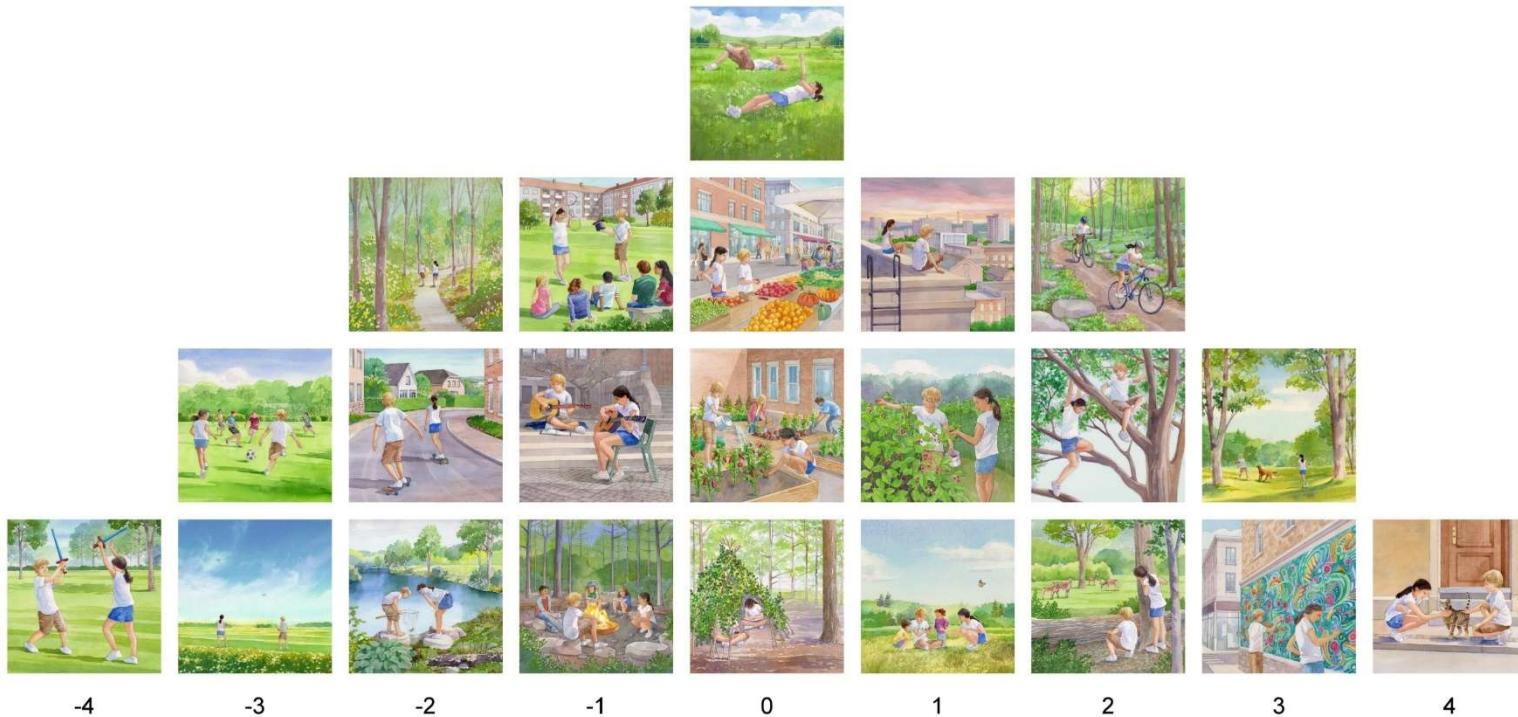
Displaying Factor Arrays

- Program designed to convert arrays to images (courtesy Ralph Hempel)



Step 5: Interpretation of Factors

Group 1 – The Nurturers



- Preference for contemplative, creative, tactile and gentle activities
- Value sentimentality and friendship, display caring and empathy
- Role playing (nurturing adult)
- All are female (7 Danish, 3 non-Danish, born outside Denmark)
- Age range 6-11, average age 8.9



Likes

- Animals (watching or studying) “I have cats at home and I love to pet them”
- Picking berries, growing plants, growing food, shopping at market, examining butterflies with young children - more highly valued than other groups
- Where friendships were perceived in the images, they were more preferred (e.g. rooftop view)
- Likes climbing trees and “touching them”

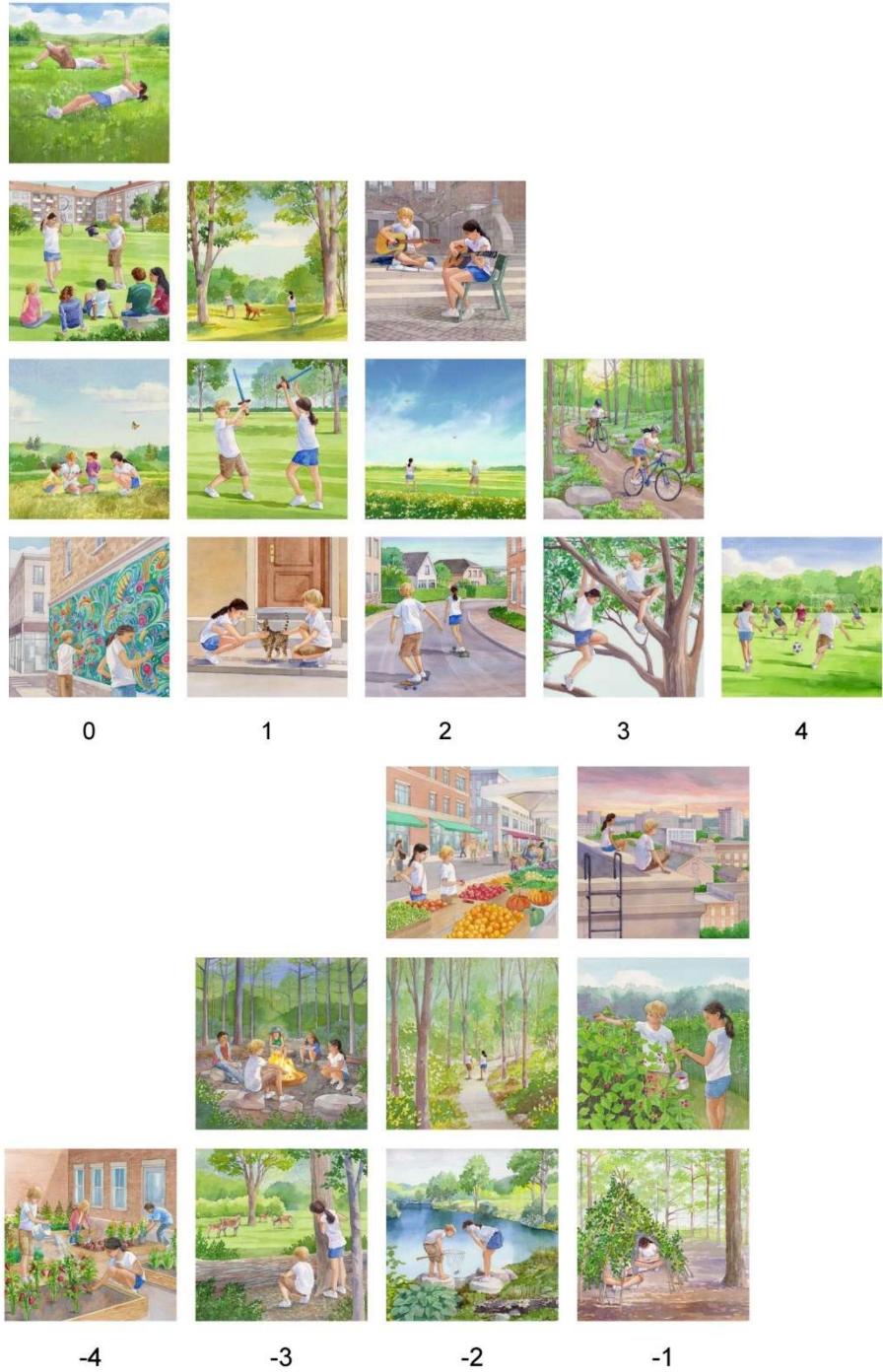
Dislikes

- Activities that appear competitive or harmful
- Where danger is perceived, the image is less preferred (e.g. campfire: “I am afraid of fire”)

Group 2 – The Active Children



- Active children like to move, and play that involves “doing things”
- 6 boys and 3 girls (5 Danish children, 4 immigrant children) All 3 boys from Middle east align with this factor
- Age range 5-11, average age 8.25



Likes

- Climbing, cycling, skateboarding, playing with drones
- Higher risk/ higher speed
- Playing with Objects

Dislikes

- Activities that perceived as dull
- “It’s boring to shop...I don’t like flowers”
- Forest landscapes as less preferred than for other groups
- “plants are a bit boring”
- “I have tried fishing twice and it is really boring and you just waste your time”

Group 3 – The Creators



- Children are imaginative, creative and enjoy fantasy play
- They are visual, and enjoy activities that foster artistic expression
- 2 boys and 2 girls (3 Danish children, 1 Polish child)
- Age range 6-12, average age 9



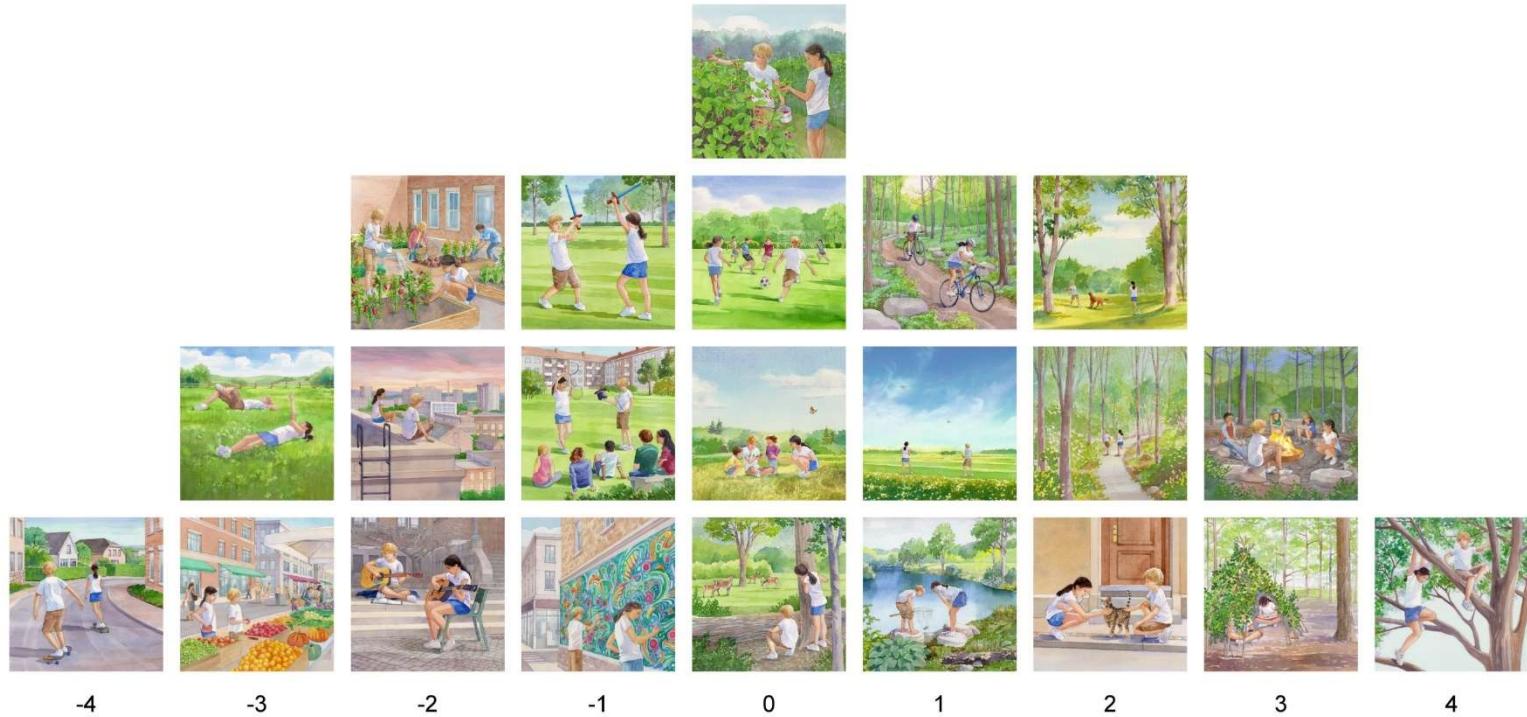
Likes

- Role Playing
- Play fighting – it's fun to imagine you are a warrior and play with weapons”
- Flying drones: “It's fun to see the world from the sky”
- “I like to draw things and I wish there were more places to paint like this”

Dislikes

- Competitive sports: “I really hate football”
- Disliked running/biking scenes where they are perceived as racing

Group 4 – The Forest Children



- Children's perceptions are highly influenced by environment
- They enjoy woodlands, natural landscapes, and animals
- 6 boys and 2 girls (6 Danish children, 2 with a Norwegian parent)
- 4 of the children attend Steiner School
- Age range 6-11, average age 8.12



0

1

2

3

4



-4

-3

-2

-1

Likes

- Being in the woods: “I love camping”
- Animals “I love the cat which is so soft – I am the best friend with all of the cats here”
- The forest: “It is really awful that somebody here has cut down the trees where I live”

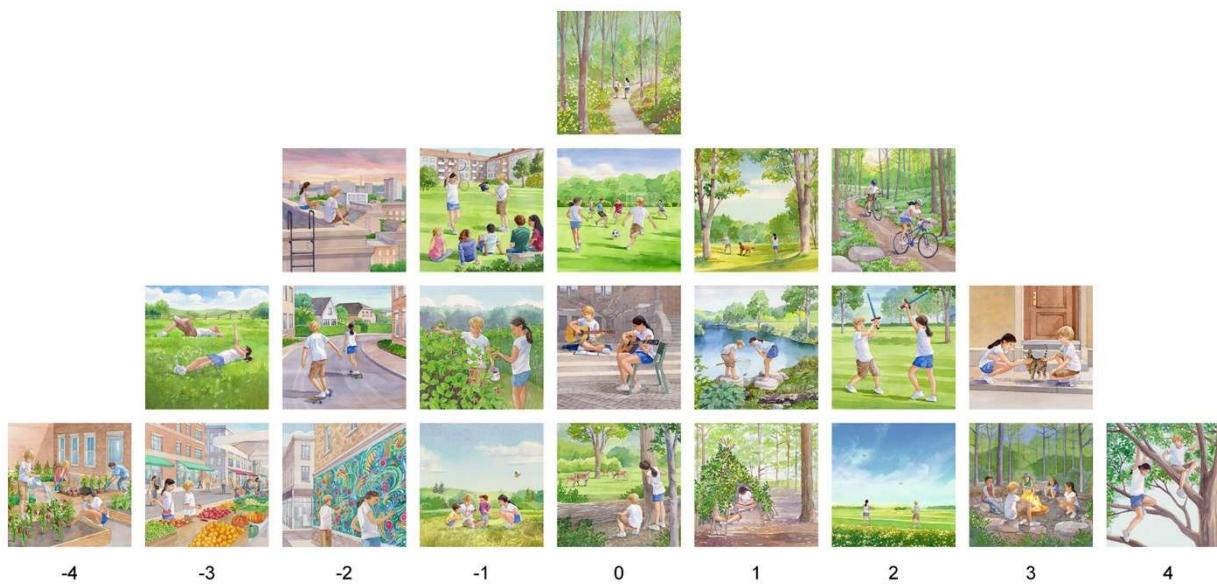
Dislikes

- “I don’t like skateboarding. I have tried it and it hurt a lot”
- Rooftop view – “you can fall down and hurt yourself a lot”
- Urban environments: “I don’t really like shopping”

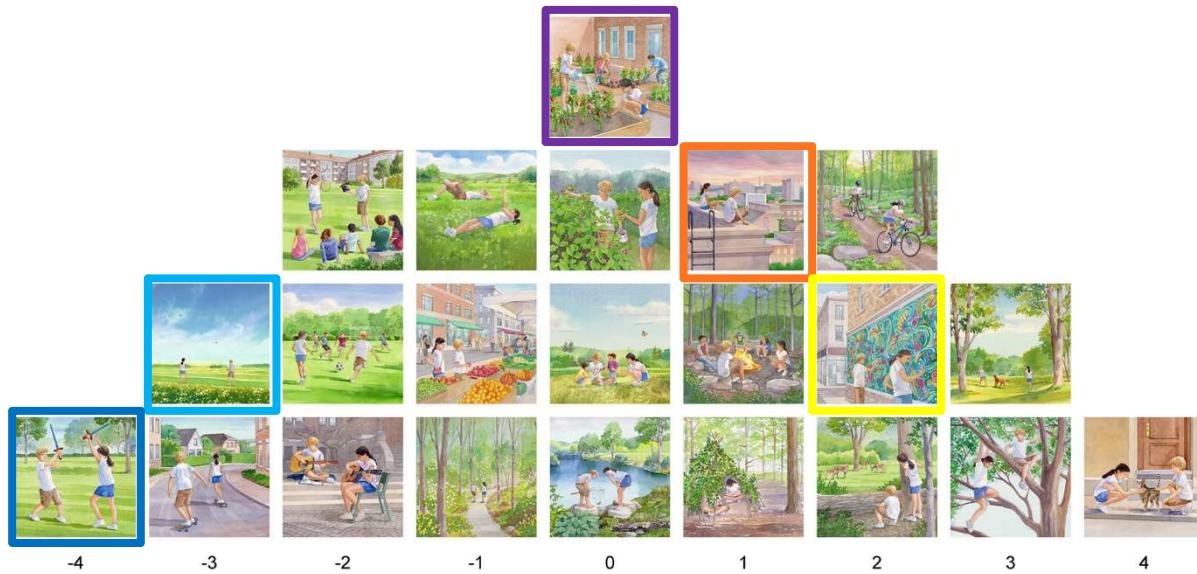
Additional Studies from data set



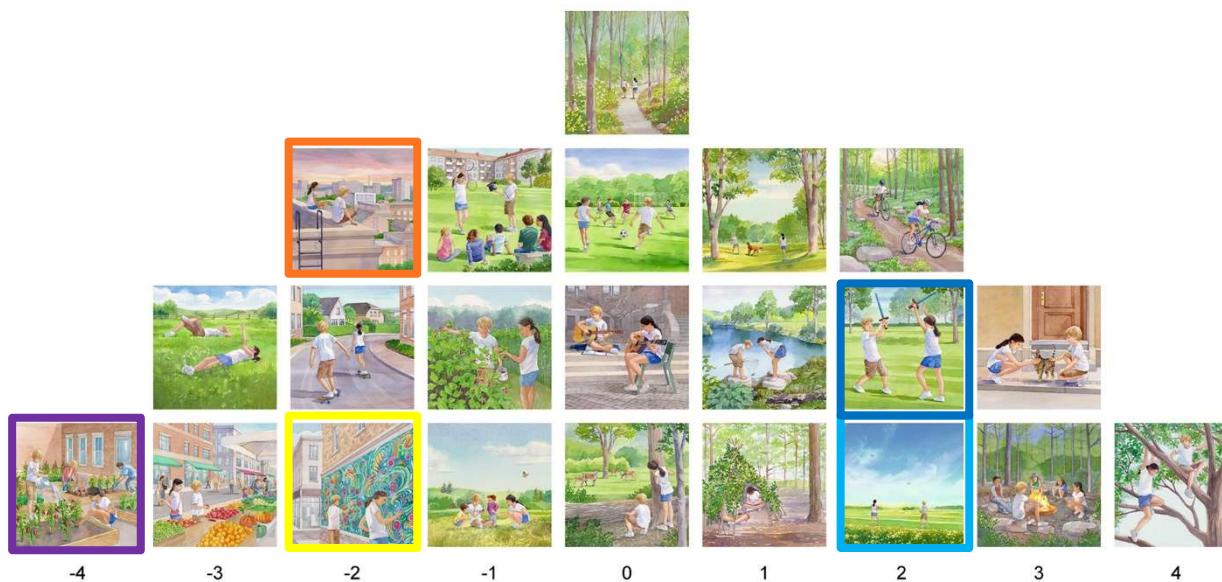
Example:
single factor
comparing
boys with girls



Additional results from same data set



Example:
single factor
comparing
boys with girls



Conclusions

“The adults should themselves be outside a little bit more and participate in the game. They should try it and see how fun it is to play!”

- Visual Q-methodology is highly suited to play research. Children enjoyed the process, the data collection process was efficient, and the results appear robust even with a small sample
- Age did not influence alignment with factors: Each group had a wide range of ages and similar average age
- Cultural differences appear strongly in two of four factors
- Gender differences appear in individual responses, and between
- Play landscape (urban vs. rural) is relevant for 2 factors
- For younger children, preferences may be based on future projections of enjoyment.
- For older children, play preferences are largely based on known experiences, and self-evaluations of competence

Further research

How do cultural influences affect play preferences?

- Children living in other countries
- Children living in Denmark with play experience in other countries
- Children living in Denmark with parents or older siblings who lived/played in other countries

How does gender influence play preference?

- Some play preferences are aligned with gender, and perceptions of the same play experience depending on gender.
- Do very young children display gender-based responses?

How does perception of competence affect children's enjoyment of activities?

- How can play experiences support perceptions of competence?
- How does perception of competence affect other aspects of learning, and at what age?

Toolkit: What practical lessons or guidelines can aid teachers, parents, community developers, or designers of play experiences?

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Thank you



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The LEGO Foundation The logo for The LEGO Foundation, with the word 'LEGO' in its signature red font and a small red heart above the letter 'o'.

08F10S



09F9E



17F9C



18F9E



23F7C



25F8R



36F11A



40F8E



47F9L



49F11J



Factor 1



Factor 2

02F11A



12M7J



28F6S



34M12M



Factor 3

01MBU



03M1S



10M6M



13M9B



15F6J



31M6R



38M9S



44F9E



Factor 4