

PLAYTrack Research Project:

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

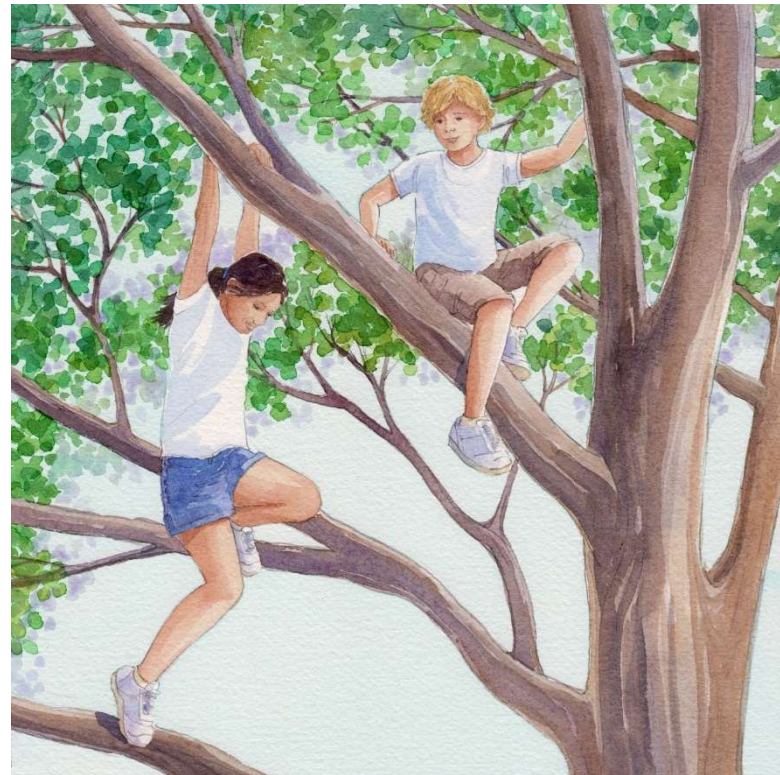
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The **LEGO** Foundation 



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

Physical play
Play with objects
Symbolic play
Pretend play
Games with rules
Contemplation

Skill Development

Emotional skills
Cognitive skills
Physical skills
Social skills
Creative skills

Environmental Types

Urban Amenities
Natural Amenities
Biophilia – love of living organisms
Information Processing
Prospect-refuge
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



Kelly Hart: <http://www.skateboardstory.com/interviews/kelly-hart/>

- Skateboarding, flying, climbing
- High speed, high risk
- Urban landscape



The Lords of Dogtown

- High speed, high risk
- Driving, motorcycle
- Urban landscape



- Skateboarding,
- High speed, high risk
- jumping
- Urban landscape



The Lords of Dogtown

- Skateboarding, flying, High speed, high risk, jumping
- Urban landscape



Bart Simpson – "professional skater"

- Skateboarding, high speed, high risk, jumping
- Urban landscape



Rise of the Guardians

- Sledding, flying, fantasy
- High speed, high risk
- Small town landscape
- winter



The Secret Life of Walter Mitty

- Skateboarding, high speed, high risk
- Open landscape, natural landscape with road



Julian Neel
Loul Laser-Ninja

- Skiing
- Winter
- High speed
- High risk



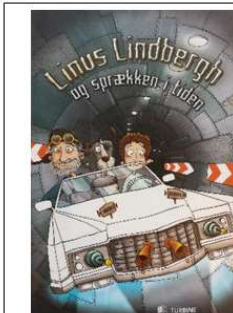
Søren & Morten Ellemose

- Fantasy (flying)
- High speed
- High risk
- skateboarding



Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets

- Games with rules
- High speed, high risk,
- Flying
- Open sports field landscape



Linus Lindbergh
og sprækken i luften

- Fantasy (flying)
- High speed
- High risk
- Driving a car
- Urban (road) setting



- High speed
- High risk
- Riding an animal (wild)
- Biophilia (animals)
- Sublime landscape, natural open landscape

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 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 	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

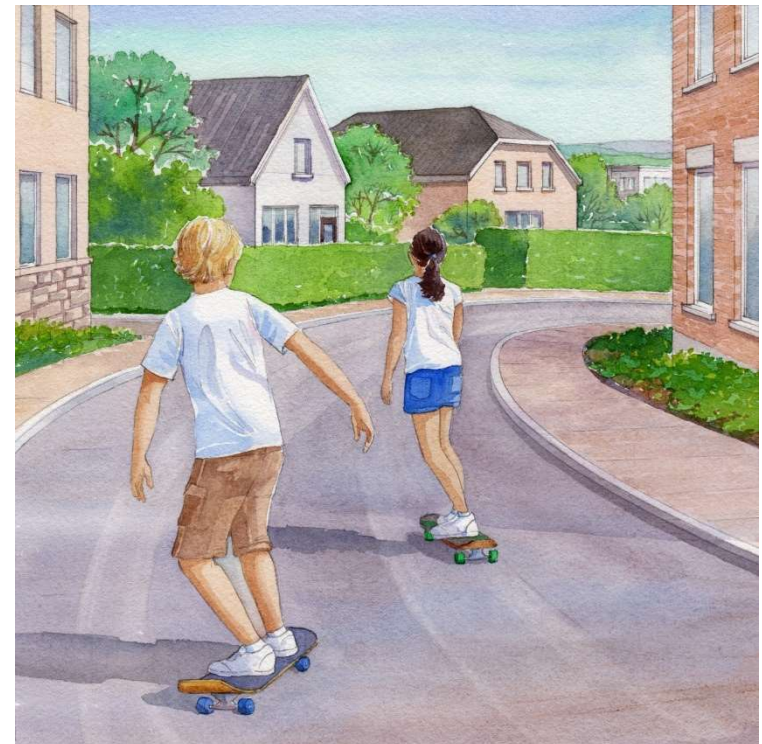
Saturation of concourse:

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

Step 2: Creation of Q-Set

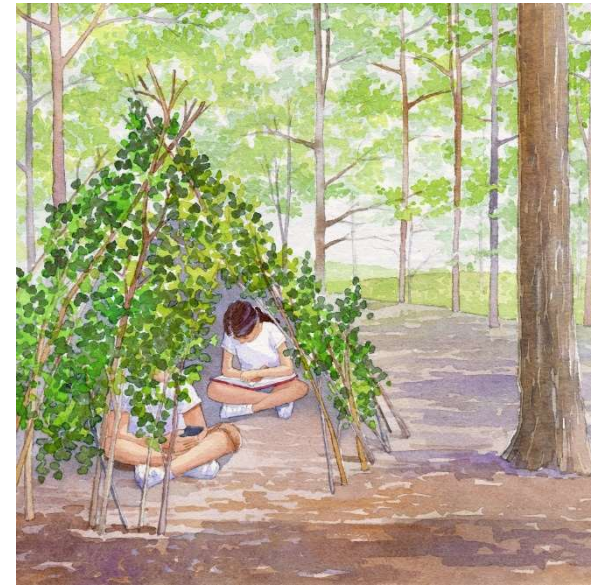
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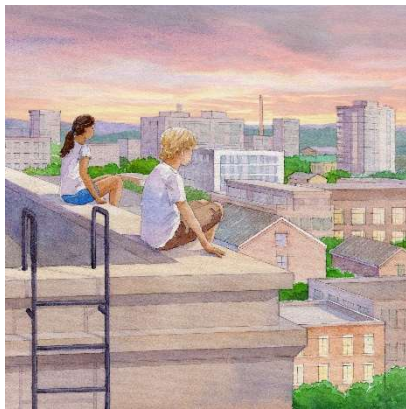
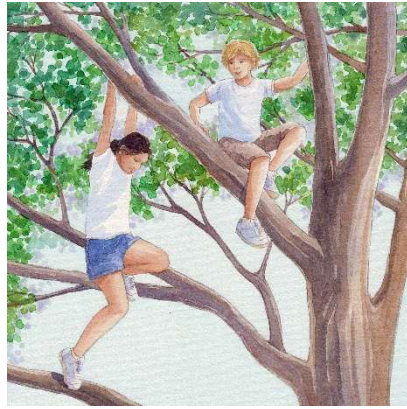
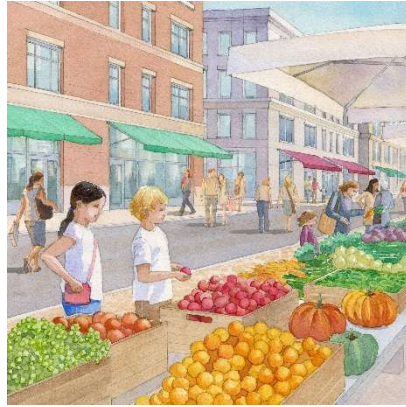
Items in Q-set: “Carpet Tiles” (Watts and Stenner, 2012) to represent the opinion domain

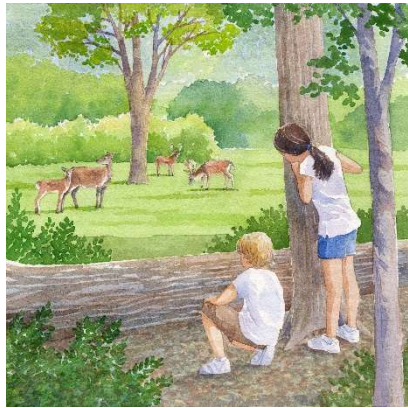
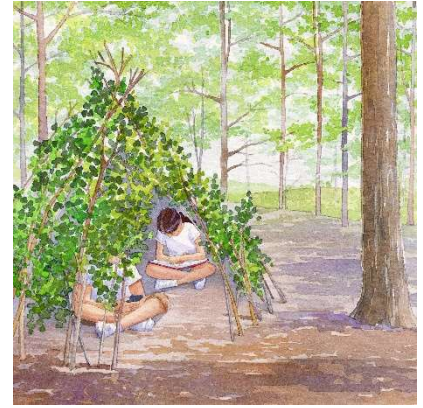
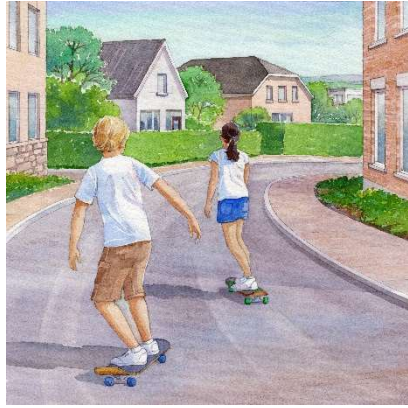


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Step 3: Administration of Q-Sort



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)

S50

29/105

Deltagerinformation (valgfrit)

Alder: 10 Køn: ♀

Bopæl:

Har boet andre steder end i Danmark, hvis det er relevant:
 Ferie 11dgn i Italien
 Tyskland Kørke

Fortæl os om de kort du føler stærkest for:
 Hvorfor foretrak du de landskaber, der er afbildet i felterne +3 og +4?
 Jæ selv til fodbold, sjovt at bruge alle sine
 kræfter & kæmpe om bolden & man får en masse
 gode venner. Jeg kan godt lide dyt yndlingsdyr hat
 & hund (Såne at gå tur med)

Hvorfor kunne du mindst lide dem i felterne -3 og -4?
 kedeligt at plante & vande ting
 det tager lang tid at gøre
 jeg er både tilmodig & ikke tilmodig & bryde der
 Skal man bare en masse ting

Er der nogen udendørs aktiviteter eller miljøer, som du ville ønske havde været med på disse
 billeder?
 Svømme bade i en sø eller pool

Har du noget at tilføje til forskningsemnet?
 De voksne skulle selv være lidt voksne
 lidt mere & være med til lege
 De skulle selv prøve det og se
 hvad sjovt det er at lege.

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”

Factor Matrix with an X Indicating a Defining Sort

Loadings				
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 419Mt	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

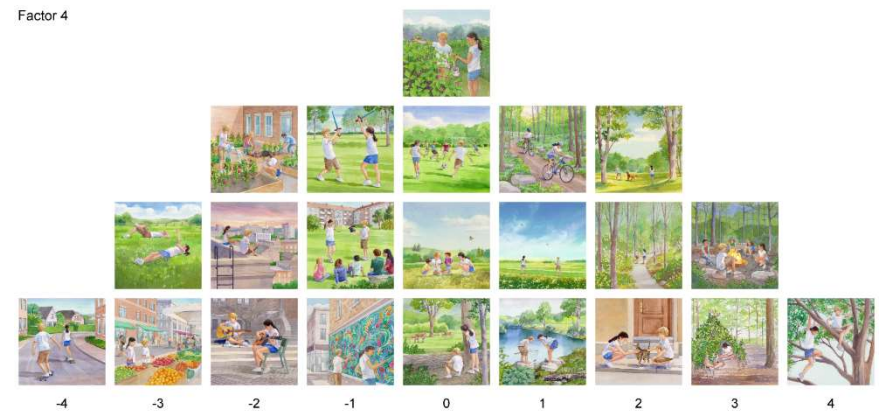
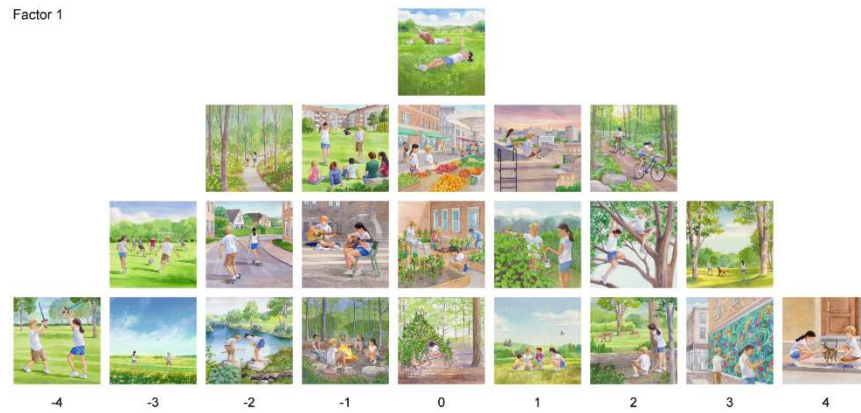
Displaying Factor Arrays

- Factor arrays provided using text to represent images

		Factor Arrays				
No.	Statement	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)



-
- Figure 1 displays 30 illustrations of various outdoor recreation activities, organized into three rows and ten columns. The activities are categorized by a numerical scale from -4 to 4, representing different levels of social interaction or activity intensity. The illustrations show children and adults engaged in a wide range of leisure activities in a park-like environment, including playing sports, playing musical instruments, gardening, reading, and socializing.
- The activities shown are:
- Row 1 (top): A child lying on their back in a grassy field; a group of children sitting on a grassy field; a group of children playing soccer on a grassy field; a group of children playing basketball on a basketball court; a group of children playing tennis on a tennis court; a group of children playing frisbee on a grassy field; a group of children playing baseball on a baseball field; a group of children playing golf on a golf course; a group of children playing in a sandbox; a group of children playing in a water feature.
 - Row 2 (middle): A group of children playing in a sandbox; a group of children playing in a water feature; a group of children playing in a sandbox; a group of children playing in a water feature; a group of children playing in a sandbox; a group of children playing in a water feature; a group of children playing in a sandbox; a group of children playing in a water feature; a group of children playing in a sandbox; a group of children playing in a water feature.
 - Row 3 (bottom): A group of children playing in a sandbox; a group of children playing in a water feature; a group of children playing in a sandbox; a group of children playing in a water feature; a group of children playing in a sandbox; a group of children playing in a water feature; a group of children playing in a sandbox; a group of children playing in a water feature; a group of children playing in a sandbox; a group of children playing in a water feature.
- The numerical scale at the bottom ranges from -4 to 4, with -4 on the left and 4 on the right. The scale is represented by a series of numbers: -4, -3, -2, -1, 0, 1, 2, 3, 4.



0

1

2

3

4

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”)



-4

-3

-2

-1

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



0

1

2

3

4



-4

-3

-2

-1

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



0

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3

4



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-3

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-1

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

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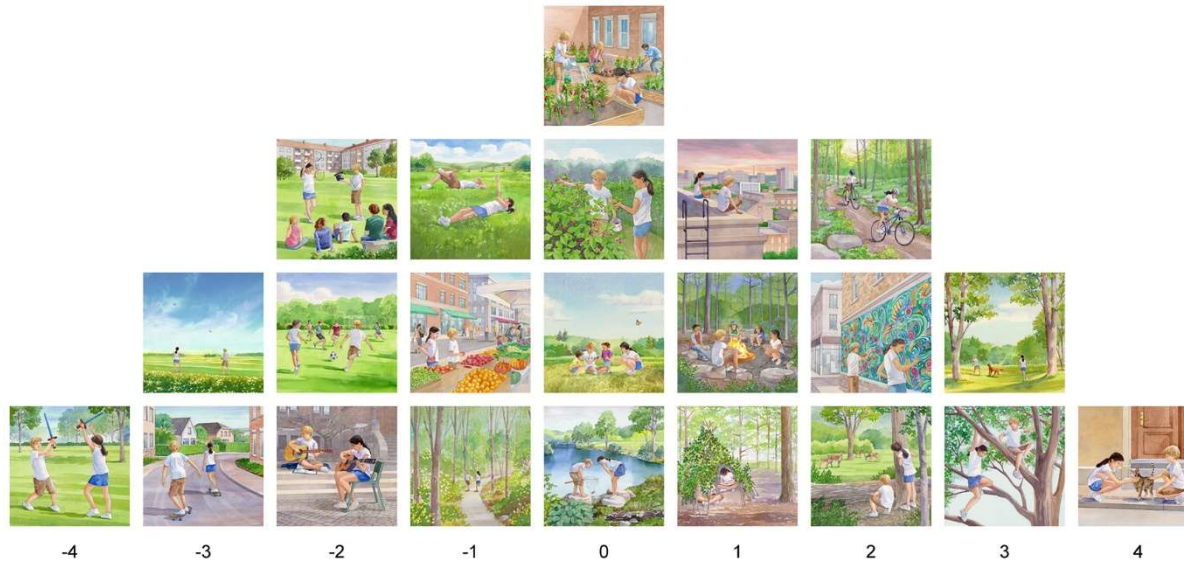
Likes

- 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"

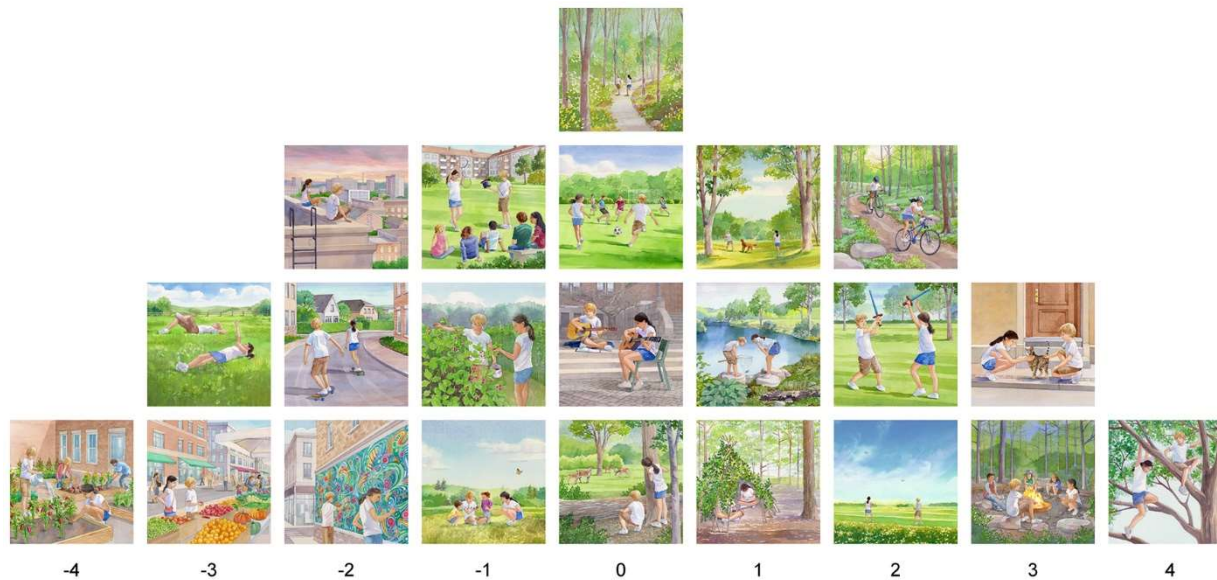
Dislikes

- "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"

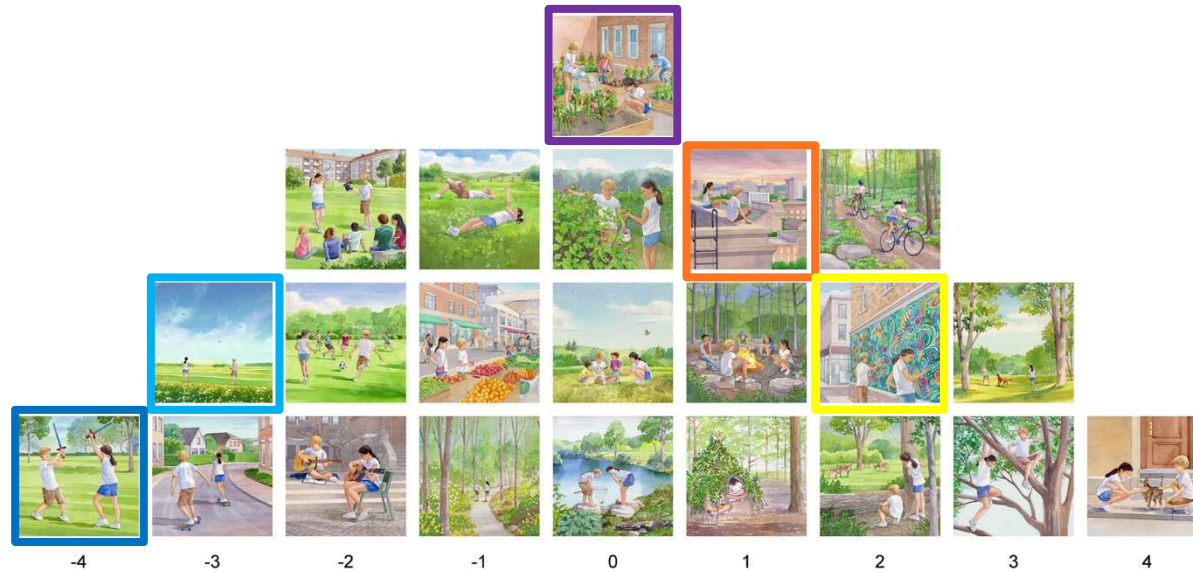
Additional Studies from data set



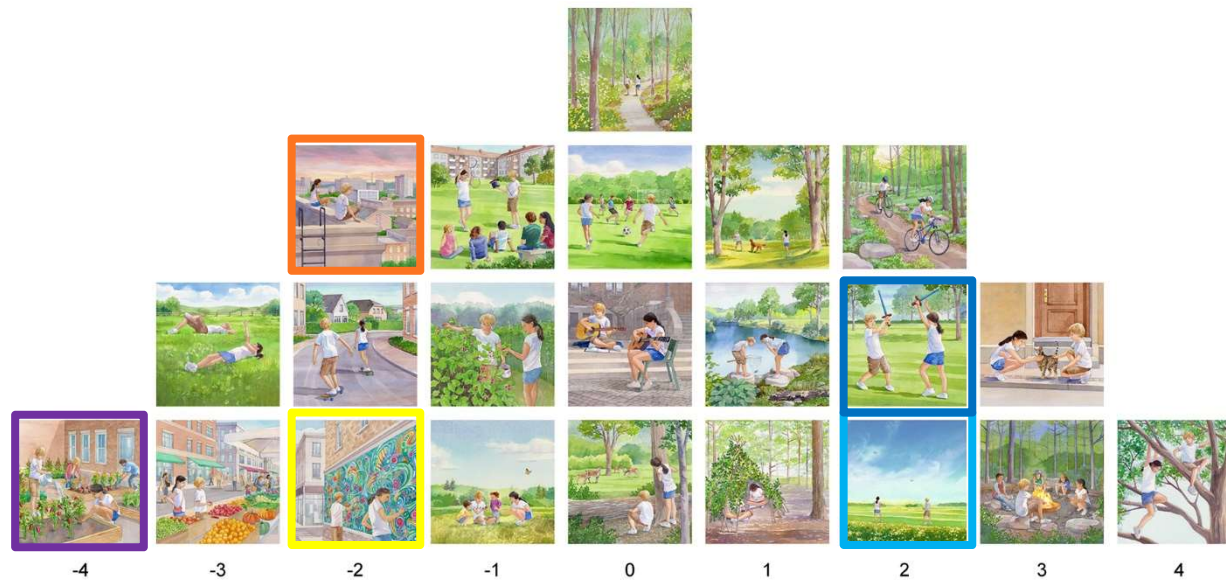
Example:
single factor
comparing
boys with girls



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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Factor 1



Factor 2

02F11A



12M7J



28F6S



34M12M



Factor 3



Factor 4