

## Abstract

JAMES, PENNY ANN. Parental Socialization of Children's Outdoor Play. (Under the direction of Dr. Karla A. Henderson.)

Children spend less time in outdoor play than in former generations. This qualitative comparative case study examines parental socialization influences on children's outdoor play by addressing two research questions. The first question is, "How does parental socialization influence children's outdoor play?" Two theoretical propositions underlie question one: (a) "Direct forms of parental socialization influence children's outdoor play", and (b) "Indirect forms of parental socialization influence children's outdoor play." The theoretical framework is drawn from outdoor play, leisure socialization, and parental socialization literature (i.e., self-determination theory; SDT and expectancy-value theory; EVT). Sensitizing concepts are: (a) role modeling, (b) beliefs and values, (c) autonomy supportiveness of environment, (d) structure, and (e) interpersonal involvement. The second question is, "How do parents differ in the socialization of their children's outdoor play?" Three theoretical propositions underlie question two: (a) "Parents socialize children's outdoor play differently based on the child's gender," (b) "Parents socialize their children's outdoor play differently based on child's age," and (c) "Parents socialize their children's outdoor play differently based on perceptions of environmental factors in their community." Nine of the ten cases were two-parent, middle-class households. Ten mothers and nine fathers ( $M_{\text{age}} = 37.3$  and  $41.7$  respectively) discussed in semi-structured interviews their own childhood experiences and that of their children. All children 8- to 12- years-old participated (i.e., 7 girls and 9 boys,  $M_{\text{age}} = 9.0$  and  $9.5$  respectively) in semi-structured interviews that included varied projective and photo-elicitation techniques. Photographs of play spaces and resources taken during a child-led tour contributed to triangulation of data. A modified analytic induction strategy

guided data collection and analysis. Case narratives derived from the compilation of data were inductively coded in MAXQDA and used to develop worksheets that aided comparative analysis. Question one addresses the process of socialization. Integrating and adapting SDT and EVT in the theoretical framework was effective in identifying socialization constructs and relationships with aspects of children's outdoor play: (a) physical environment; (b) social environment; (c) activities; (d) frequency and duration; and (e) motivations including intrinsic motivation, subjective task value, emotions, and participation. Question two addresses gender, age, and environmental perception differences in socialization. Although gender differences in mothers' and fathers' socializing their children were more prevalent than differences in the outdoor play experiences of their daughters and sons, socialization by omission emerged as contributing to gender differences in children's outdoor play (e.g., fathers not inviting daughters to play sports). Amotivation (i.e., loss or lack of motivation) for outdoor play was more common in older children and accompanied by: (a) a resignation to home range restrictions that often varied little from younger siblings, (b) internalization of parents' fears, and (c) an inability to fulfill psychological needs (i.e., relatedness, competence, autonomy). Parents' childhood recollections shaped perceptions of environmental factors including social dangers. Socialization of outdoor play included the perpetuation of a cycle of fear resulting from an internalization of parents' fears and tacit acceptance of resultant parenting practices (e.g., home range restrictions). Socialization by omission contributed to changes in all aspects of children's outdoor play from that of prior generations (e.g., dare devil play). Potentially detrimental effects for children's psychological development (e.g., inability to fulfill relatedness needs with peers or lack of opportunities to problem solve) resulting from changes in outdoor play, routinely restricted to manicured

yards, were identified. These outdoor play experiences often did not afford sufficient developmentally appropriate and optimally stimulating challenges, particularly for older children. All aspects of outdoor play were influenced by parents' socialization efforts or omissions and patterns of socialization associated with children's high or low motivations for outdoor play were identified.

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Parental Socialization of Children's Outdoor Play

by  
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## **Dedication**

To my husband Bill, the love of my life; my son Christopher and my daughter Heather, the light of my life; my granddaughter Gabrielle and grandson Brycen, the joy in my heart; and my mother Nancy and father Adrian, the foundation of all that I am today.

## **Biography**

Penny James was born and raised in the Finger Lakes Region of Central New York. Growing up in a rural town, county recreation programs provided invaluable experiences and positive role models. Family vacations as a child involved camping in the Catskill or Adirondack mountains. Penny worked in corporate America for several years, taking business courses at night at Onondaga Community College. As a non-traditional student, Penny received her BS in Psychology with a minor in Sociology from the State University of New York College at Cortland (SUNY Cortland). Penny discovered a love of research. Believing people are most genuinely themselves in their recreation and leisure, Penny later returned to SUNY Cortland and received her MS in Recreation and Leisure Studies with concentrations in recreation administration as well as outdoor and environmental education. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected for a field experiment to study the effectiveness of metaphoric processing in challenge course programs as Penny's master's thesis. Penny worked in outdoor recreation as a challenge course facilitator, outdoor and environmental educator, and camp director. University teaching included outdoor education, recreation programming, special event planning, and human resource management. Penny pursued her PhD in Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management at North Carolina State University under the mentorship of Dr. Karla A. Henderson because of their shared interests in gender and outdoor recreation as well as Penny's desire to further develop her qualitative research skills. Believing that outdoor play served an important role in her own development as well as that of her children, and finding it to be a current social concern, Penny chose this as the topic of her dissertation.

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank my faculty mentor Dr. Karla A. Henderson for all she taught me about leisure theory and qualitative research. I would like to thank her for her patience, guidance, and support with my dissertation. I am forever indebted to her for what she has imparted to me about professional writing and presentations. Emerson said, “Life is a journey not a destination.” May your journeys always lead to wonderful adventures and return you safely home. Thank you!

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This study could not have happened without the parents and children who so graciously invited me into their homes and so candidly shared their stories of outdoor play. They did so much to further my own understanding of outdoor play and the role that parents play. Thank you and bless you all!

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

The *nature* of play has changed for children living in industrialized societies like America and the United Kingdom. A major shift has taken place in children's play over the past two decades particularly during middle childhood, away from traditional forms of outdoor play in a child's backyard or neighborhood (Chudacoff, 2007; Frost, 2010; Skår & Krogh, 2009). Today children are increasingly spending their free time in organized activities that are supervised and structured by adults and indoor play (Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001a). The concerns raised by some scholars (e.g., Sobel, 1996) about this shift in children's play gained mainstream attention with the publication of the national best seller, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder* (Louv, 2005; 2008).

Louv's (2008) message resonated with parents and outdoor educators because it tapped into their reminiscences of outdoor play in their youth and the angst that many parents expressed in other studies (Anderson & Todd, 2009; Valentine, 1997b) about their own children are deprived of similar outdoor play experiences. A back-to-nature movement ensued at national, state, and local levels in America with parks and recreation organizations creating a host of programs to get children back into natural environments (e.g., Children in Nature Programs offered by the National Park Service).

I believe that the conversation about changes in children's outdoor play and the back-to-nature movement to date has missed the mark on two critical points. First, replacing children's spontaneous, self-initiated, and self-directed outdoor play in all its many forms with adult-supervised, adult-structured programming is not an equivalent leisure substitution. For purposes of my study, outdoor play is defined as play that occurs in the out of doors

during middle childhood either alone or with peers without immediate adult supervision or involvement, is child-directed, may be either physically active or sedentary, and may or may not involve the use of natural elements (e.g., sticks or water) or manmade toys (e.g., Frisbees or bicycles). Classic examples of outdoor play would include climbing a tree, making mud pies, building a fort, riding a bicycle, or playing a pick-up game of baseball in a vacant lot. Second, and more importantly, the decline in children's outdoor play has been blamed on a host of modern ills such as increased computer or video gaming without acknowledgment that parents remain the primary socializers of children until they reach adolescence. Further, as in the example of media usage, parents may or may not routinely set limits related to children's access to media (Rideout, Roberts, & Foehr, 2005).

A shortage of research remains regarding the influence that parents have on their children's leisure (i.e., play) before adolescence. Research into the socialization of children's leisure during middle childhood has been a recent offshoot of two developmental-psychological theories of parental socialization (i.e., self-determination theory, SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985 and expectancy-value theory, EVT; Eccles, 1983). A study by Hutchinson, Baldwin, and Caldwell (2003) demonstrated that SDT has promise for understanding how parents influence their children's leisure. The purpose of my qualitative comparative case study was to develop an explanation of the potential influence of parental socialization on children's outdoor play. Toward that end, I used a theoretical framework derived from (a) outdoor play literature, (b) leisure socialization literature and (c) two developmental theories of the effects of parental socialization on children's motivations and activity selections (i.e., SDT and EVT).

Evidence suggests that children's outdoor play differs quantitatively and qualitatively from past generations including: (a) amount, (b) types of activities undertaken, (c) distances children are permitted to independently navigate outside of the home, and (d) age at which parental permissions for play outside the home are granted (Beach, 2003; Ferrel Raymund, 1995; Gaster, 1991; Hillman & Adams, 1992). For example, participation in outdoor activities (e.g., riding a bicycle) dropped 11.6% from 2007 to 2008 for children ages 6 to 17 years (Outdoor Foundation, 2008). Empirical findings regarding the reduction in children's time spent in the outdoors have served as a catalyst for the current back-to-nature movement.

Concerns over reductions in children's outdoor activity emanate from findings that children can derive important developmental benefits from these experiences. Children's exposure to nature, irrespective of activity, contributes to their cognitive development and psychological well-being (Faber Taylor, Kuo, & Sullivan, 2002; Mancuso, Rizzitelli, & Azzarello, 2006). Outdoor play contributes to increased physical activity, coordination, dramatic and social play, concentration, and knowledge of local biodiversity (Burdette, Whitaker, & Daniels, 2004; Fjørtoft, 2004; Kirkby, 1989; Pyle, 2002). Childhood in much of the related literature tends to be largely based on stage theories of development whereby a series of distinct incremental changes unfold as the child ages (e.g., Erickson's psycho-social theory, 1968).

However, colloquial definitions of childhood remain largely a social construction, far removed from any specific age-related developmental changes (Chudacoff, 2007; Cunningham, 2006). As has occurred throughout American history, particularly in times of rapid and dramatic technological advances, changes in children's activity have been relegated

to the ill effects of modernity on youth (Paris, 2008; Valentine, 1996; Van Slyck, 2006). The appeal of technology (e.g., electronic games, internet, and other media) has been heralded as leading to reductions in children's time spent in outdoor activities (Pergams & Zaradic, 2006). However, actual research results are mixed (e.g., Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001b; Rideout et al., 2005).

Other researchers have found cultural changes in children's free time use such as the trends toward increasingly scheduled and adult-organized activities (Dunn, Kinney, & Hofferth, 2003; Elkind, 2001). These changes reflect a changing societal perception and valuing of childhood. Children are portrayed as vulnerable and in need of adult protections that will serve them now and guidance that will serve them in their adult lives (Frost, Wortham & Reifel, 2005; Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001a; Valentine, 1996). This shift has been purported to have occurred because some adults, including parents, perceive the world today as rapidly changing, uncertain, and unstable (Frost et al.; Grolnick, 2003; Valentine).

Children, as minors, are legally dependent on their parents or other caregivers (Valentine, 1997b). Parents are not only the *gatekeepers* of children's play and leisure opportunities through the provision of resources (e.g., purchase of toys or equipment), but also serve a foundational role as children's primary socializers until children reach adolescence (Eccles & Harold, 1991; Siegler, Deloache, & Eisenberg, 2006; Welk, Wood & Morss, 2003). Research related to parents' influence on children's outdoor play to date has predominately focused on parental perceptions and concerns regarding their children's safety (i.e., social and environmental dangers; Berg & Medrich, 1980; Hüttenmoser, 1995; Prezza, Alparone, Cristallo, & Luigi, 2005; Valentine & McKendrick, 1997). Early parental

socialization literature surrounding children's outdoor activity participation largely consists of sociological studies of adults surveyed about their own childhood introductions to hunting and fishing (Kelly, 1974; O'Leary, Behrens-Tepper, McGuire, & Dottavio, 1987; Sofranko & Nolan, 1972).

A recent trend in the parental socialization of leisure literature involves qualitative studies related to the *process* by which parents socialize their children toward or away from particular activities. Parents purposefully expose their children to activities that they themselves enjoyed as children or that they believe are valuable to their child's current or future development (Shannon & Shaw, 2008; Shaw & Dawson, 2001). Not only do parents seek to influence their children to participate in certain activities, they will fail to support and often redirect children away from activities that they do not value (Dunn et al., 2003).

Consistent with Louv's (2008) claim that adults are inadvertently sending children the message that the outdoors is not a suitable play space for them, parents actually discouraged their adolescents from participating in unstructured outdoor activities (e.g., skateboarding) and redirected them toward more highly valued adult-directed activities (Dunn et al., 2003). These findings likely occurred because the parents: (a) did not understand and appreciate the immediate and long term developmental benefits of children's unstructured play in the outdoors, and (b) were concerned about teens potentially pursuing deviant forms of leisure in the absence of adult guidance (Frost et al., 2005; Hutchinson, Baldwin, & Caldwell, 2003; Shannon, 2006).

SDT and EVT, therefore, provided the skeletal framework for embarking upon a study of the influence of parental socialization on children's outdoor play as the processes

and constructs drawn from these theories are painted in broad strokes (e.g., provision of resources). These theories have been applied to many domains including leisure and extra-curricular activities of children and adolescents. Imposed upon this skeletal framework were the findings from the outdoor play and leisure socialization literature. Collectively, this theoretical framework provided the foundation for explaining how parents socialized their children's outdoor play. Although furthering an understanding of how parental socialization influences outdoor play, in and of itself, was of interest to furthering knowledge of this topic, the theoretical framework also provided a platform for researching how parents differed in their socialization efforts. As evidenced by the back-to-nature movement, parks and leisure professionals are concerned with addressing the societal issues of children's decline in outdoor play (e.g., failure to develop pro-environmental attitudes and values).

### **Significance of Study**

My study contributes to the leisure literature as it addresses aspects of a contemporary social issue related to children in the outdoors. The outdoor play literature has shown differences in parenting practices, although no research focuses on the interpersonal and reciprocal process of parental socialization (i.e., between parents and their children). My study expands the socialization of children's leisure literature by: (a) focusing on the domain of children's outdoor play within the context of all the children's free-time activities, (b) focusing on children younger than adolescence, (c) linking data from parents and their children within the family unit, (d) using different methodologies and analytic strategies (e.g., comparative case study), and (e) attempting to develop a more comprehensive

theoretical framework that can be used as the basis for further research into the influence of parental socialization on all of children's free-time activities or leisure.

The use of modified analytic induction in a qualitative comparative case study as a methodology for my study provides new knowledge and perspectives of parental socialization. Quantitative approaches to studying parental socialization within SDT and EVT have largely ignored the phenomenological or lived experiences of parents and children (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Eccles, 1983). Participants in this research have been denied a *voice* in the development of these theories. Further, quantitative methods (i.e., surveys) emanating from a positivistic paradigm have limited what can be known about the process of parental socialization, irrespective of domain, largely due to methodologies dictating the identification and development of a very limited number of objectively defined variables.

Although research efforts with SDT and EVT have focused on the generalization of these theories to different domains (e.g., sport and leisure) but only one line of research has investigated differences in parental socialization efforts (e.g., parental control in academics; Grolnick, 2009). However, the use of quantitative methodologies precludes and limits what can be known or verified from parents themselves (Henderson, 2006; Samdahl, 1999). Another reason for performing an in-depth analysis of parental socialization of children's outdoor play was that some of the constructs in SDT and EVT are not easily transferred to the domain of play (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Eccles, 1983). For example, perceived competence is central to both SDT and EVT but how this construct pertains to outdoor play is not clear. Outdoor play is not a domain that easily lends itself to achievement motivation, a central tenet of EVT (Eccles). Although my study focused exclusively upon the domain of children's

outdoor play it is reasonable to expect that findings could be extrapolated to further an understanding of how parental socialization influences children's behavior in other aspects of children's leisure (e.g., extra-curricular activities).

Knowledge of leisure socialization was expanded through my inclusion of the perspective of children. Parental socialization is a reciprocal, inter-personal process. Children are active agents in their lives, not passive recipients of parental socialization efforts (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Children do not merely mimic and mirror their parents' values and behaviors. Further, parents' socialization efforts, especially parenting practices, take into account the perceived unique personalities, interests, and developmental needs of their daughters and sons. Therefore, an investigation into the topic of parental socialization of children's outdoor play should uphold children's perceptions or interpretations as being equally valuable to that of their parents.

At the same time, interviewing parents and children without linking the data within a family unit (i.e., case) would have ignored the social context in which these participants' responses were embedded. Removing qualitative data collected from parents and their children from within the inter-personal context (i.e., their family) could have diluted and inadvertently distorted my findings. It was expected that focusing on parents' and children's lived experiences of parental socialization of children's outdoor play within their family context would further an explanation of the topic not achievable by other methods. A qualitative case study approach provided an appropriate depth of investigation into this topic that had been absent even in recent qualitative inquiry into leisure socialization such as Shannon and Shaw's (2008) study of mothers and daughters.

Understanding how parental beliefs, values, and parenting practices influence children's outdoor play has implications for recreational programs designed to reconnect children with nature. Leisure preferences developed during middle childhood can set youth on a trajectory for adult preferences in leisure activities as well as leisure environments (Scott & Willits, 1998; Simpkins, Fredricks, Davis-Kean, & Eccles, 2006; Ward Thompson, Apsinall & Montarzino, 2008). Leisure values developed during childhood and carried into adulthood are likely to be subsequently transmitted to future generations (Shannon & Shaw, 2008).

Reconnecting children with nature through outdoor play has implications not only for their individual cognitive, emotional, and physical development but also for the larger society and culture in which they live. Outdoor play and outdoor recreation can provide participants with many immediate and long term benefits, especially to one's health and well-being (Chawla, 2003; Kals, Schumacher, & Montada, 1999; Sallis et al., 1993). At a broader global level, trends in the reduction of childhood outdoor play and subsequent adult outdoor recreation patterns bode ill for the environmental health of the planet (e.g., global warming) as evidence exists for a relationship between positive childhood experiences in the outdoors and the development of pro-environmental attitudes (Chawla; Ewert, Place, & Sibthorp, 2005; Wells & Lekies, 2006).

### **Conceptual Framework for Qualitative Case Study**

My explanatory case study was designed for qualitative analysis using a modified analytic induction strategy that was predicated upon: (a) the specification of theoretical propositions and sensitizing concepts derived from existing theory and research in the areas

of parental socialization, children's outdoor play, and leisure socialization to guide initial data collection and analyses; and (b) a multiple-case design where the holistic analysis of each case (i.e., within-case) and the comparisons across cases (i.e., between case) contributed to an in-depth explanation of the influence of parental socialization on children's outdoor play.

Explanatory case studies are appropriate when investigating complex social phenomena like interpersonal processes for which the researcher has little to no control over the phenomena under study and when the context is important (Yin, 2003). My study investigated the interpersonal process of parental socialization through the perspectives of both parents and children (i.e., embedded units of analysis) within the context of the family (i.e., the case). Case studies involve the in-depth investigation of a *case* through multiple methods and perspectives to triangulate data and provide a richer understanding of a phenomenon (Yin). Each case constituted an entire study whereby convergent evidence (i.e., data triangulation) was brought to bear in confirming, repudiating, or refining a theoretical understanding of the parental socialization of children's outdoor play (Creswell, 1998; Yin).

Sampling of cases and comparisons across cases depend upon the purpose of the study (Patton, 2002). Therefore, each case was carefully selected for a specific purpose and to represent either typical or extreme cases. Multiple-child families, with at least one child between the ages 8-12 years, were eligible for consideration as a case for my study. To achieve literal replication there must have been at least two cases that were representative of each d category (e.g., parents of boys only, girls only, or parents of both boys and girls) or outcome (e.g., child perceived to noticeably play outdoors more or less than other children).

The credibility of the findings in a comparative case study is dependent upon the quality of the individual case studies (Patton). Therefore, I sought to fully develop sufficient individual case studies (i.e., family units) for purposes of both literal and theoretical replication in explaining the phenomenon of parental socialization of children's outdoor play. Individual case studies contained qualitative data collected from multiple study participants (e.g., parents and children) embedded within the family context.

Case studies, as an approach, are neither essentially qualitative nor quantitative (Stake, 2005; Yin, 2003). Henderson (2006, p. 138) defined qualitative case studies from an interpretivist paradigm, "Case studies pertain to interpretive studies concerned with the context of the interactions within a chosen setting and that involve systematic data collection from a variety of appropriate sources." What distinguishes case studies from other qualitative approaches is the emphasis on collecting and analyzing in-depth information for each case by collecting data from multiple sources that are rich in context (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002; Stake). Qualitative case studies can also be conducted from within a post-positivist paradigm as in comparative-case study designs (Patton; Stake; Yin).

My qualitative case study emanated from a post-positivist paradigm and employed a modified analytic induction strategy to guide initial data collection and analyses for purposes of explanation building (Yin, 2003). Patton (2002) described *modified analytic-induction* as a strategy whereby inductive analysis (e.g., use of thick descriptions for content analysis of each case) coincides with the quasi-deductive use of sensitizing concepts and theoretical propositions in guiding data collection and multiple-case comparisons in a case study. Theoretical propositions and sensitizing constructs were examined for both their congruence

and divergence from the theoretical framework of my study and modified as the data directed, making them more akin to working hypotheses used in other qualitative approaches (Henderson, 2006; Patton; Yin). Research questions, theoretical propositions, and sensitizing concepts were derived from an integration of two social-psychological theories of parental socialization (i.e., SDT, Deci & Ryan, 1985 and EVT, Eccles, 1983) with the outdoor play and leisure socialization literature.

### **Research Questions and Theoretical Propositions**

Yin (2003) suggested that research questions address the substance of a study (i.e., topic) and the form of a study (i.e., type of questions asked). Case studies are most appropriate for addressing *how* or *why* research questions. Whereas exploratory studies state the purpose of the research project, explanatory case studies use theoretical propositions derived from the literature (Yin). Henderson (2006, p.139) stated, “A good case study makes use of theoretical propositions and case descriptions just like any other study using qualitative data.”

Theoretical propositions direct attention more precisely to what the researcher is looking for within the scope of the study (Yin, 2003). These propositions guide the researcher to where evidence should be sought and helps to keep the case study within “feasible limits” by reducing “the relevant events and information to be sought to manageable proportions” (Yin, p. 23 & p. 59 respectively). Yin’s use of theoretical propositions in case studies is akin to hypothesis testing in traditional quantitative research. He suggested that the conditions under which a phenomenon is expected to be either found or not found should be evident in the proposition. As I employed a strategy of modified analytic

induction for my qualitative study (i.e., a more interpretive approach than that presented by Yin), I based my study on theoretical propositions derived from existing theory and related literature *but* I treated them more akin to working hypotheses typically used in inductive qualitative inquiry (Henderson, 2006; Patton, 2002).

Therefore, I intentionally avoided the use of specific wording or constructs found in the literature when I developed my theoretical propositions. I wanted to avoid pre-maturely or incorrectly restricting my study to a search for evidence related exclusively to these terms or operational definitions, which may or may not have been evident in the data. Rather, I chose to focus on the more global processes of parental socialization and leisure socialization described in the literature that seemed appropriate to an examination of my topic. Taking this approach seemed more in keeping with the process of modified analytic induction that, although it relies on the formulation of theoretical propositions for initiating a case study, takes a more inductive approach to the modification of propositions and the exploration of new themes or constructs that may emerge from the data (Patton, 2002).

My research questions and initial theoretical propositions were derived from a review of the literature related to: (a) two social-psychological theories of parental socialization, namely, SDT and EVT; (b) leisure socialization; and (c) children's outdoor play.

The first research question is, "How does parental socialization influence children's outdoor play?" Two theoretical propositions underlie question one: (a) direct forms of parental socialization influence children's outdoor play, and (b) indirect forms of parental socialization influence children's outdoor play. For purposes of my study, I defined direct forms of parental socialization to be those forms that had bearing on children's outdoor play

without being mediated or moderated by any other factors (e.g., setting rules restricting home range or communicating values related to outdoor play). I defined indirect forms of parental socialization as those forms that did not meet the definition for direct forms of parental socialization as they were mediated or moderated by parenting practices surrounding outdoor play within each family (e.g., parental beliefs that guided formation of outdoor play rules) as well as those parental actions that had an incidental effect on the children's outdoor play (e.g., family relocation). The second research question is, "How do parents differ in the socialization of their children's outdoor play?" Three theoretical propositions underlie question two: (a) parents socialize children's outdoor play differently based on the child's gender, (b) parents socialize their children's outdoor play differently based on child's age, and (c) parents socialize their children's outdoor play differently based on perceptions of environmental factors in their community.

### **Positionality**

Positionality refers to the acknowledgement of *self* as a researcher in conducting a qualitative study (Henderson, 2006). Generally, studies are born of a researcher's interest in a particular topic as was my study. As a child, I loved to play outside and was routinely encouraged to do so. Alone or in the company of friends, the outdoors was my paradise, my inspiration, and routinely my teacher. I grew up in a rural town. The limits of my childhood outdoor play were bounded only by how far I was permitted to roam from home and my imagination. As a parent, I raised my children as I had been raised. My children reached middle childhood in the early 1990s. As a parent, I observed many of the societal changes in children's play in our community that I would later read about in the leisure literature. Many

of those studies are included here in my literature review. It was in reading, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder* by Richard Louv (2005) that I developed an interest in researching the topic of children's outdoor play. This topic resonated with my own experiences, as a child, a parent, and now a leisure researcher. My background in psychology led to my focusing on an unaddressed aspect of this topic (i.e., parental socialization) and adherence to a post-positivistic approach to qualitative inquiry in the methods I employed.

### **Summary**

Research has shown that children are spending less time playing outdoors than in previous generations. Children who do not play outdoors cannot reap the physical and psychological benefits associated with such activity. Children as minors are dependent upon their parents who act as *gatekeepers* of the children's leisure opportunities. Further, parenting practices in the outdoor play literature have been found to differ related to children's gender, children's age, and environmental concerns for children's safety. SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and EVT (Eccles, 1983) have been used to investigate how parents influence children's motivation and participation in a variety of activities including leisure and extra-curricular activities. These theories were used in conjunction with the outdoor play and leisure socialization literature to develop the theoretical framework for my qualitative comparative-case study to explain the influence of parental socialization on children's outdoor play. This study provided a look at the interpersonal process of parental socialization within the home from the perspectives of both parents and children. Data collection and analysis was guided

by a modified analytic induction strategy that sought both convergent and divergent evidence from existing theory for purposes of explanation building in this case study research.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the literature related to examining how parental socialization may influence children's outdoor play. Topics are discussed in the following order: (a) role of literature review for a qualitative study, (b) the social construction of childhood, (c) development in middle childhood, (d) changes in children's leisure, (e) leisure socialization, (f) developmental psychology theories of parental socialization, (g) play theories, (h) potential immediate and long-term outcomes of outdoor play, (i) ontological and epistemological foundations of my study, and finally (j) the theoretical framework for conducting my qualitative comparative case study.

### **Role of Literature Review**

Although I conducted a qualitative case study, the role of the literature review was atypical to that found in inductive qualitative studies. In the latter, literature reviews are generally used to help identify a topic and develop the purpose for the study (Henderson, 2006). My decision to do a comparative case study using a modified induction process to frame data collection and analysis required a more in-depth literature review more akin to that found in quantitative studies.

Consistent with a post-positivist view of case study research, Yin (2003) differentiated case studies from other qualitative approaches such as ethnography or grounded theory. He contended that in case studies, theory development *prior to data collection* is essential for providing "strong guidance in determining what data to collect and the strategies for analyzing the data" (p. 29). Yin's stance was consistent with the process of modified analytic induction (Patton, 2002) employed in my study. My literature review

informed all components of the research design and assisted me in formulating “more insightful” research questions and theoretical propositions (Yin, p. 9). Key definitions derived from previous research, what Patton referred to as sensitizing concepts, were intended to facilitate making analytic generalizations of my findings to the existing literature related to parental socialization, leisure socialization, and children’s outdoor play. As case study designs are emergent, Yin considered existing theory that informed the development of theoretical propositions to be at the level of “substantive theory” not “grand theory” (p. 29). This idea was consistent with the post-positivist shift in the use of analytic induction away from global causal explanations (Patton). Rather, existing theory as presented in my literature review provided a *blueprint* for embarking upon my case studies.

Researchers bring to studies inherent beliefs and biases regarding the topics selected and the methods employed (Samdahl, 1999). In conducting research about children, Zinnecker (2001) stated that researchers also must acknowledge “specific adult-centered perspectives, values, and ideologies” (p. 11). Childhood has been defined in many ways throughout history with children having little say in those definitions or the implications that they inevitably have over children’s lives (e.g., laws requiring bicycle helmets). Some definitions of childhood are relatively static such as Erickson’s psychosocial theory of development. Other definitions are more dynamic and change with the beliefs, values, and politics of the time as in social constructions of childhood (Chudacoff, 2007; Zinnecker, 2001).

Therefore, I believed it was important to introduce my literature review with a discussion of the social construction of childhood and how changing ideals of childhood have

impacted children's outdoor play and as well as how this topic has been researched. The ways in which parental views and values of childhood may influence parenting practices, which in turn may either facilitate or constrain outdoor play opportunities for their children will also be addressed.

### **Childhood as a Social Construct**

In the course of researching the existing literature surrounding my topic, I discovered that many scholars suggested that childhood, a socially constructed concept, was created not only for the purpose of demarcating and differentiating between children and adults regarding inherent physiological and psychological developmental differences but also for differentiating between appropriate leisure experiences (i.e., types of activities and the locations in which they occurred; e.g., Paris, 2008; Valentine, 1996; Van Slyck, 2006). This distinction between adults and children appears to have first developed after the Middle Ages (Valentine). Over the centuries, notions, ideals, and values surrounding children have shifted markedly. As societal structure and values have changed over that past four centuries, so have the expectations placed on children concomitant with prevailing definitions of childhood (Chudacoff, 2007; Cunningham, 2006).

The current dominant Western view of childhood emerged during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and entailed a vision of children as predominantly innocent, vulnerable, and dependent upon adults for their health and wellbeing (Valentine, 1997b; Van Slyck). Within this view, the time of childhood was conceptualized as one of free play far removed from the responsibilities of adulthood. Beginning in the mid-1800s and continuing to the present day, several leading child experts have proposed that children possess an innate interest in the

natural world (e.g., Armitage, 2007; Chudacoff, 2007; Valentine, 1996). In addition, G. Stanley Hall's recapitulation theory posited that children during middle childhood, progress through a developmental stage that recapitulated human evolution during a "savage" period akin to stereotypes of Native Americans during that era (Armitage). The landscape of outdoor play during middle childhood was typically depicted in bucolic settings that reflected the rural idyll, or less commonly in the streets and vacant lots of urban settings (Paris, 2008; Robertson, 2004; Smith & Barker, 2001).

This romantic and idealized portrayal of youth was most consistent with a traditional modernized model of childhood. The traditional modernized view valued lifestyles predating the industrialized world, partially rejected modern culture, and held that children must be protected from the negative influences of modernity (Zinnecker, 2001). Although rarely acknowledged, the traditional modernized model underlies much of the research surrounding children's outdoor play. Concerns over the loss of childhood and concomitant blaming of contemporary problems like childhood obesity on the negative effects of the media (e.g., sedentary activities like video game playing) and decreases in traditional forms of children's unstructured outdoor play were consistent with this traditional modernized perspective (Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001a, 2001b; Louv, 2008).

My study was undertaken with an acknowledgment that I avowed beliefs and values consistent with the traditional modernized view, which presupposed that something developmentally valuable was lost when children did not experience child-initiated play in the outdoors beyond the purviews of immediate adult surveillance and interjection. Parental socialization of children's outdoor play was also affected by parents' views of childhood that

influenced parenting practices that may have either facilitated or constrained their children's outdoor play opportunities and experiences (Hofferth, 2009).

One area of research that received a good deal of attention, although not recently, was children's independent mobility or home range (Gaster, 1991; Hart, 1979; Hillman & Adams, 1992). Home range referred to the distance, and physical locations, that a child was permitted by her or his parents to travel without being accompanied by a supervising adult. Hillman and Adams, for example, found that parents' fear of traffic caused them to place greater restrictions on their children's home range. Intergenerational research demonstrated that home range shrunk in recent generations while concomitantly the age of being granted permissions or licenses to travel away from home without an immediate adult presence rose (Beach, 2003; Gaster). In the past, parents placed greater restrictions on their daughters' mobility compared to their sons' demonstrating how beliefs about childhood—in this case gendered beliefs, impacted upon parenting practices (Hart, 1979; Hillman & Adams). Though children's leisure had changed over time (Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001a), little was still known at the time of this study about whether age and gender differences in home range or independent mobility would follow similar patterns over three decades later.

Societally dominant conceptualizations of childhood were not necessarily shared by children (Valentine, 1997b). Parents and children may have held different perspectives on children's leisure. Most notably, parents often viewed children's leisure as being teleological or purposeful in the development of skills or abilities that will perhaps provide the child with some competitive advantage later in life (Hofferth, 2009; Shannon & Shaw, 2008; Zinnecker,

2001). Grolnick (2009) described this parental viewpoint as a futuristic orientation. However, children focused more on their enjoyment in their leisure experiences.

A study of out-of-school clubs in the United Kingdom revealed that parents conceptualized some adult-lead organized programs as childcare, whereas the children conceptualized them as play environments (Smith & Barker, 2001). Another finding of this study was that some parents purposefully selected out-of-school clubs that advertised opportunities for children to experience nature and interact with farm animals. These programs often cost more and were less conveniently located than other child-care programs nearer to the parents' place of employment. Parents of children in the nature-related program were actually willing to pay a premium in time and money to provide their children with an opportunity to spend time in nature. These actions were consistent with a traditional modern view of childhood that valued forms of children's outdoor play found in previous generations (Zinnecker, 2001).

The families in Smith and Barker's (2001) study lived in rural areas and the parents commuted to urban centers for employment. Thus, ironically, parents were paying a premium in cost and travel to provide their children with an opportunity to experience a commodified version of the rural idyll. Conversely, children who lived in these rural settings depicted the programs as boring, isolated, and deficient in play spaces and opportunities. Nonetheless, the parents' choice of residence and provision of rural idyllic opportunities was consistent with a traditional modernized view that held developmentally appropriate niches must be provided to nurture healthy child development (Hoyt, 1991; Zinnecker, 2001).

## **Developmental Theories of Middle Childhood**

Although my study was predicated upon a theoretical framework of self-determination theory (SDT) and expectancy-value theory (EVT), both contemporary developmental theories related to the psycho-social process of parental socialization which have been addressed elsewhere in Chapters 1 and 2, a brief review of classic child developmental theories in psychology that preceded them was warranted. Perhaps the best known child development psychologist was Piaget who observed children to develop an informational processing theory of cognitive development (Siegler et al., 2006). Although Piaget's early work took into account the social context in which children's learning occurred, something he referred to as social transmission (Thomas, 1996), Piaget considered instruction insufficient to cause cognitive changes in a child. Rather, the maturational developmental level of the child and the child's ability to draw upon experience were required to assimilate what others (e.g., parents) sought to teach them. Piaget believed that adult intervention or imposition on a child's activity impeded development by depriving the child of an opportunity to create or problem-solve themselves (Iso-Ahola, 1980). Although agreeing with Piaget that children were active learners, Vygotsky argued that adult instruction and the social environment were the impetus of children's knowledge acquisition (Seigler et al., 2006). Although Vygotsky has been associated with socio-cultural theories of child development, Lambert and Clyde (2003) argued that contemporary constructivist views were superimposed on Vygotsky's work and that little was known of his original work as much of our knowledge has come from secondary or tertiary sources. For example, Lambert and Clyde discovered in reviewing Vygotsky's original writings that he did not develop the

theory of scaffolding for which he is generally credited. Rather the concept of scaffolding was developed in 1976, well after Vygotsky's death, by Wood, Bruner, and Ross to describe instructional techniques used with preschoolers. It was further argued that withdrawing adult supports over time as a child acquired the ability to self-scaffold was also not developed by Vygotsky.

Whether Vygotsky's work or not, the contemporary perspective on Vygotsky's work had the greatest bearing of all classic child development theories on my study. Like Piaget, Vygotsky was concerned with cognitive development. However scaffolding within what Vygotsky referred to as the zone of proximal development (ZPD) could readily be applied to furthering an understanding of the ways in which parents socialize their children's outdoor play through their interpersonal communications and interactions. The ZPD represented the range of what a child was able to accomplish regarding a given task without any assistance or support and what the child might optimally achieve when appropriately and sufficiently supported (Berger, 2000; Siegler et al., 2006). Siegler and colleagues presented a brief review of research that demonstrated parents' intuitive understanding of ZPD through provision of more concrete instruction with younger children that became increasingly abstract as children grew and became more experienced. Scaffolding was a framework of support for assisting a child in developing a particular skill that involved explaining the goal, demonstrating the task, and helping the child to overcome difficulties and ultimately be successful (Siegler et al.). Berger (2000) outlined six steps in the scaffolding process: (1) arouse interest; (2) simplify the task—also help child think of strategy; (3) scaffold so it is within child's current ability; (4) interpret the activity—so cognitive understanding will

facilitate mastery; (5) solve problems, anticipate mistakes, guide child to avoid or correct them; and (6) teach enthusiasm.

Scaffolding was theorized to expedite the development of task competence compared to what a child could accomplish alone (Stone, 2002). The learning experience was embedded within a relationship of trust and mutuality. Scaffolding could not be imposed upon the child as the child must be involved in the process; otherwise, efforts would be unsuccessful (Berger, 2000). Both parent and child must have been motivated for successful learning to occur. If children lacked motivation they would be inattentive and uncooperative whereas parents were motivated to assist their children acquire the knowledge and skills valued by their culture (i.e., parents' goal orientation; Stone). Hence, parents would be theorized to place greater emphasis and effort on assisting their children to pursue the acquisition of skills needed for participation in free time activities valued at the time. Conversely, parents would be less motivated to facilitate children's pursuits in free time activities deemed less valued by their society, an argument made regarding the purported decline in children's outdoor play (Louv, 2008).

Two additional theories worth mentioning are Bronfenbrenner's (1986) socio-ecological systems theory and Erickson's stage theories of development. Like Vygotsky, Bronfenbrenner theorized that to understand development it was necessary to examine the effects of different environmental influences which were interconnected and included: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. My study focused on the interpersonal processes of socialization that occurred within each family and therefore, was only concerned with the microsystem. Of interest was that Bronfenbrenner included the

neighborhood play area as part of a child's microsystem of environmental influences (Seigler et al.).

Erikson's (1968) stage theory of development proposed that children had to accomplish specific developmental tasks that arose at varying ages to achieve healthy development. The developmental task of middle childhood was initiative versus guilt (Kleiber, 1999). Middle childhood was considered to be a time when children historically moved away from complete dependence upon their parents and pursued skill acquisition or exploration independently or with their friends. During later childhood the developmental task was industry versus inferiority. Here the child wants to be *productive* in being able to demonstrate skills or competencies valued by the larger society (Kleiber). Given the age range of children in my study (i.e., ages 8 to 12 years), conceivably each child's individual development would correspond to one of these stages. Further, these stages corresponded to the autonomy emphasized in SDT as the principle component of my theoretical foundation for the study related to outdoor play.

### **Play Theories**

Piaget and Vygotsky both addressed the role of play in their cognitive development theories, although neither actually developed specific theories of play (Ortega, 2003). Rather, their emphasis was on explaining cognitive development beginning in early childhood. In researching Vygotsky's original works, Lambert and Clyde (2003) found only one paper on the topic of play, "Play and Its Role in the Mental Development of the Child." Vygotsky argued that children's imitative play incorporated children's perceptions of social rules and order, whereas Piaget viewed early childhood play as immature and of little adaptive social

or intellectual value (Kleiber, 1999). Vygotsky seemed most interested in children's play during middle childhood when they became involved in rule-bound games, although he did state that toddler's play contributed to their developmental progress within their ZPD (Lambert & Clyde, 2003). Piaget believed it was not until middle childhood that play contributed to a child's development because then play took on conventional rules (Seigler et al., 2006). Young children initially follow culturally transmitted rules born of a blind obedience to authority only to later in their development realize the *arbitrary and conventional components* of game rules (Ortega, 2003). Children realize they can negotiate and change the rules of games.

Piaget believed play and thought emanated from psychomotor action and the child's development of the ability to use symbols (Ortega, 2003). However, Piaget relegated the sensory-motor schemas for play as of lesser value than serious or intellectual behaviors. Narrowing his theory to cognitive processes of assimilation and adaption left no room for children's interest or motivations for play. This common criticism of cognitive theories spurred Deci and Ryan (1985) to develop SDT.

Vygotsky also developed a cognitive developmental model that emphasized the effect of social context and children's motivations in play (e.g., emotions or maintenance of positive relationships based on trust and mutuality; Ortega, 2003). Rule-bound games were viewed as a contextual backdrop for exploring and making sense of the world. Parents are the primary socializers of children until adolescence (Eccles & Harold, 1991; Siegler, Deloache, & Eisenberg, 2006; Welk, Wood & Morss, 2003) and likely introduce their children to games and activities. Rule-bound games provided a context around which children initially

interacted with adults who wanted to help them succeed in expanding their zone of proximal development (ZPD) in acquiring and internalizing culturally valued skills and knowledge (Ortega, 2003). Later the children would learn to negotiate, accept, and reject, social conventions through their game playing.

Most theories of play adhere to the ideal that, by definition, play must be intrinsically motivated, autotelic, and even self-determined (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Frost, 2010). “Play refers to activities that are pursued for their own sake, without any motivation other than the enjoyment they provide” (Siegler et al., 2006, p. 268). Intrinsically motivated activities including play were often described as being autotelic or performed for the enjoyment of the experience (Csikszentmihalyi; Fredrick & Ryan, 1995). This active tendency to spontaneously engage and interact with the environment was purportedly important to learning, socialization, and development across domains (Fredrick & Ryan).

Although beyond the scope of my study to present a full history of play theory, as written since ancient Greece, several worthy reviews of play theories written across decades, provide insight into the historical and cultural evolution of play theory. Frost (2010) contended that the resurgence of public interest in the topic of children’s outdoor play at the time of my study was reminiscent of child saving movements in the past (e.g., Playground Movement). Definitions of play vary by the discipline from which they have been studied including psychological, sociological, biological, and anthropological. No unifying theories of play bridged these divides presenting a “fractured” view of play (Frost).

In an interview with Randall (2007), Frost said he believed current decreases in play originated in 1970’s due to parental concerns regarding playground safety and increased

litigation. Good play according to Frost involved: (a) physical activity—both fine and gross motor movements; (b) creativity—problem solving, flexibility, imagination, and autonomous thinking; (c) spontaneity; (d) exploration; and (e) social interaction--negotiations. An ideal play setting, according to Frost, afforded children movement where they built their own play structures, learned to take risks, mimicked adult roles, practiced new skills, made mistakes, and developed aesthetic appreciation for natural and manmade creations. Frost contended that scholars had taken play from something innocent and natural, and over complicated it. Play contributed to child development by making children “strong and resilient and develop into thinkers, builders, creators, and explorers” (Frost interview quote in Randall, p. 4) In addition to the immediate developmental benefits children were theorized to derive from play, it also served as the foundation for adult leisure:

Play is the forerunner of much of the leisure behavior that occurs over the life span. Children play well before they come to appreciate leisure (or free time, playtime, recess, and the like) as a province of preferred experience. Developing a concept of leisure involves a certain amount of self-consciousness about such things. (Kleiber, 1999)

Whereas Frost and colleagues (2005) provided the most recent review of play theory examined for my study, the earliest was Neulinger (1974) followed by Iso-Ahola (1980) both nearly 30 years earlier. Reviews of play theory were generally categorized by field of study or type of play. Sutton-Smith (1997) suggested that the play literature could be condensed into seven broad rhetorics consistent with the beliefs and values of each field. Only the rhetoric of progress pertained to my study as play was conceptualized as contributing to

healthy development. Some of the more famous early theories of play were addressed by Neulinger including: (a) surplus energy theory by Schiller, (b) preparation for life theory by Groos, and (c) recapitulation theory by G. Stanley Hall. Ellis (1971) criticized these early theories as not being amenable to research whereas more modern theories, at that time, were more useful in furthering an understanding of play. Beginning in the 1970's play theories shifted from developing specific theories about play to focusing on applying general psychological or motivational theories to various types of play (Ellis). Indeed much of the research related to play followed this pattern, including my study.

A mini-theory within SDT, cognitive evaluation theory (CET), addressed the effects of social influences on intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 1985). SDT purported that children were intrinsically motivated to play whereas CET alleged that internalization of external motivations (e.g., rules) occurred when adults including parents attempted to curtail the children's intrinsically motivated play (Koestner, Ryan, Bernieri & Holt, 1984). Children followed their own interests unless thwarted or redirected by adults (Ryan, Connell & Grolnick, 1992). Although play was considered an adaptive behavior in SDT children were not theorized to play with any conscious awareness that they were fulfilling their intrinsic needs for competence, autonomy, or relationships (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Ellis (1973) was among the first to emphasize the importance of optimal arousal in children's play and incorporated learning and development into his theory:

The child should be given opportunities for exploration and manipulation in the home. He should be able to experience novelty, incongruity, arousal, increasing complexity and control... achieved by providing arousing stimuli... novel enough to

induce exploration and to prompt investigation, responsive to manipulation (Ellis, p. 86)

Iso-Ahola (1980) developed a theory of play similar to SDT in that he believed children were motivated in play to feel like competent human beings. Playmates were theorized to be more stimulating and motivating for children's play than settings or objects as social interactions afforded greater novelty, complexity, and unpredictability (Iso-Ahola).

Pellegrini (2009) presented evolutionary-oriented theories of play from the fields of sociobiology, evolutionary psychology, and behavioral ecology. Much of Pellegrini's research focused on children's play during recess at school including gender differences in types of play. Play was believed to fulfill an adaptive function for the survival of the human species as it did in other species such as primates. The most extensive discussions of the various types of children's play (e.g., dramatic or locomotor) were found in Pellegrini or Frost (2010). Most forms of play were found to follow an inverted "U" pattern across the childhood years, beginning in early childhood, peaking in middle childhood, and waning in adolescence into adulthood (Pellegrini). Specific forms of play are discussed pertaining to playing outdoors elsewhere in this chapter. Therefore, I shift attention back to the principal focus of my study, outdoor play and the benefits that children may derive contributing to healthy development.

### **Benefits of Outdoor Play**

Citing literature from a variety of disciplines, Louv (2005) proposed that unstructured play in nature, which I referred to for purposes of my study as outdoor play, was important to child development. Theory and research were only just beginning to be formulated at the

time of my study regarding this topic so it was too soon to claim that definitive proof existed for Louv's proposition. Over the past decade, an increased emphasis had been placed on the contribution of recreation and leisure experiences to child and youth development (e.g., Witt & Caldwell, 2005). Although few studies directly measured the effects of outdoor play on child development, the following body of literature provides tentative support for Louv's proposition about the benefits of nature for children.

### **Benefits of nature for children.**

Many scholars believed that children's intimate bond with nature was broken prematurely by the negative influences of technology and changing beliefs about childhood in contemporary society (e.g., Sebba, 1991; Wilson, 2008; Zaradic & Pergams, 2007). E. O. Wilson's (1984) theory of biophilia was consistent with this notion that humans are born with an innate biological affinity toward living creatures. Kahn (1997) admitted that biophilia suffered from all of the criticisms of the fields of sociobiology and environmental psychology. To compensate for the weaknesses in biophilia theory, he combined it with the constructivist child development theory of Piaget. Kahn (2001, 2002) proposed a structural-developmental theory of children's affiliation with nature that was beyond the scope of my study for discussion here.

Little of the following literature, however, claimed to be a direct test of biophilia. Many authors referred to the theory and reported significant findings consistent with it. A few studies investigated the benefits of children's contact with nature on children's cognitive development, socio-emotional development, and psychological well-being. Much of this research was focused on children's exposure to nature and improvements in attention and

concentration (Faber Taylor, Kuo, & Sullivan, 2002; Mancuso, Rizzitelli, & Azzarello, 2006).

Mancuso et al. (2006) found that 8 to 10-year-old children paid significantly more attention to a school lesson conducted in a garden setting than did a control group who participated in the same lesson inside a classroom. Children whose families relocated from an urban area with little vegetation to rural areas, higher in vegetation, demonstrated significant increases in their ability to focus attention following the move (Wells, 2000). Although the move itself accounted for half of the variance, the change in the natural environment accounted for an additional 19% of the variance. In another study, parents rated the aftereffects of physical and social contexts of after-school and weekend activities for their child with ADHD symptoms. Outdoor environments significantly reduced symptoms related to a child's ability to focus attention, which led the researchers to claim that time spent in nature could be a treatment for ADHD (Kuo & Faber Taylor, 2004).

Increased knowledge of nature influenced the environmental dispositions of children ages 9-16 years (Bunting & Cousins, 1985). They found age differences in seven of the eight domains of environmental preference measured by their scale, which were attributed to children's age-related cognitive development. The only domain for which age differences were not evident was in the preference for urbanism or pastoralism. This finding was consistent with the later work of Kaplan and Kaplan (1989) on the influence of familiarity on the development of environmental preferences. Views of nature from a family's apartment windows were found to significantly increase three forms of self-discipline (i.e., concentration, inhibition of initial impulses, and delay of gratification) in girls but not boys

(Faber Taylor et al., 2002). The insignificant finding for boys was attributed to the findings of other research studies that boys 7 to 12 years of age spend less time in their home environments than girls (Faber Taylor et al.). Rural children living closer to nearby nature had lower parental ratings of psychological distress and higher self-ratings of self-worth than children not living as close to nature (Wells & Evans, 2003). As expected, children who participated in a cooperative games program outdoors demonstrated more cooperative behaviors toward their peers than children who did not participate in the program (Orlick, 1981). Unexpectedly, the children in the experimental group demonstrated more cooperative behaviors when outdoors as opposed to indoors (Orlick).

Faber Taylor and Kuo (2006) reviewed the literature related to the benefits of children's exposure to nature and cited several problems with research in this area including the confounding of findings with the activities that the children were engaged in, and that the children most often self-selected the natural environments for play. Providing an alternative perspective, Evans (2006) reviewed the literature regarding the negative effects of built environments on children including noise, crowding, housing and neighborhood quality, and school or daycare environments.

However, not all children preferred to spend time in natural areas rather than urban environments and some children were fearful or disgusted by some forms of direct contact with natural elements like dirt (Bixler & Carlisle, 1994; Bixler & Floyd, 1997). Although familiarity with natural environments was associated with environmental preferences and comfort spending time in natural or urban environments, scant evidence showed how

children developed their attitudes and preferences toward the environment, much less to outdoor leisure spaces (Hoyt, 1991; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989).

Surveying children from rural, suburban, and urban areas, Bixler and Floyd (1997) found that fear expectancy, disgust sensitivity, and desire for modern comforts were all significantly related to preferences for indoor and more social types of activities, manicured parks, and a lack of interest in vocations related to the natural environment. Children with low disgust sensitivity were significantly more likely to prefer *hands-on* environmental activities than children with high disgust sensitivity (Bixler & Floyd, 1999). Differences among the areas (i.e., rural, suburban, or urban) in which these children resided were not investigated in either of these studies.

The relationship between play experiences before the age of 10 years and preferences for types of walking paths (e.g., paved or natural), desire for modern comforts, wild land fear expectations, recreation activity preferences, environmental education preferences, and disgust sensitivity were investigated among middle and high school students (Bixler, Floyd, & Hammitt, 2002). Three classifications emerged: (a) wild land adventures, (b) urban adventures, and (c) yard adventures. These findings were consistent with the notion that familiarity, in this case derived through childhood play experiences, contributed to environmental preferences (Bixler et al.; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989). This concludes my review of the literature pertaining to the benefits of nature for children. The following section addresses the literature related to benefits that children may derive from playing outdoors.

### **Immediate benefits of outdoor play for children.**

Unstructured play in outdoor environments has been posited to have a positive impact on children's cognitive development. Studies have shown that the endless stimuli and abundance of loose parts in natural environments afforded children endless opportunities for exploration, experimentation, and imaginative play (Hart, 1979, 1997; Sobel, 1993). Children developed a sense of their own competence and mastery over their environment (Hüttenmoser, 1995; Moore, 1986). Cognitive play in the outdoors allowed children to act on the environment, which led to discovering and understanding relationships through their own behavior (Malone & Tranter, 2003). Children conquered their fears and developed their own interests in nature (Ginsburg, 2007). A sense of competence was derived from experiential learning that engaged children's attention, honed their skills of observation, and promoted reasoning and problem-solving skills (Pyle, 2002; Sobel, 1996).

Research has shown benefits for children's social development resulting from outdoor play. Kirkby (1989) examined the content of preschool children's play (i.e., dramatic/verbal: adventure vs. domestic, nonverbal, or other verbal) in different types of outdoor environments). She found that the highest levels of dramatic/verbal play occurred in naturally sheltered areas compared to artificial sheltered areas. Others found that outdoor play contributed to social development and positive feelings toward playmates (Bixler et al., 2002; Moore, 1996).

Physical development has been positively impacted by outdoor play. Children who played on natural playgrounds (e.g., presence of woods and hills) were significantly higher in balance, coordination, speed of limb movement, distance jumping, trunk strength, running

speed and agility than their peers who played on traditional playgrounds (e.g., playground equipment; Fjørtoft 2004; Fjørtoft & Sageie, 2000). The only non-significant finding related to the children's flexibility. Preschoolers' level of physical activity has been found to be higher when they spent more time playing outdoors (Burdette, Whitaker, & Daniels, 2004; Sallis et al., 1993).

Although many researchers examined children's independent mobility or home range, frequently citing how findings might contribute to child development outcomes, only one study appeared to directly investigate this relationship. Hüttenmoser (1995) concluded that young children, who could not easily play outdoors due to dangerous traffic, exhibited poorer social, behavioral, and motor skills than their peers who had easy access to the outdoors for play. The restricted children also had fewer playmates than did children with easy access to outdoor play space. Children in the more accessible neighborhood played outdoors longer than did their peers in the less accessible neighborhood. This playing was attributed to the parents needing to physically accompany the children in the less accessible neighborhood and that these parents had a tolerance limit of approximately two hours.

Children's direct experiences of nature provided the basis for their development of a personal folkbiology that could serve as the foundation for the integration and assimilation of cognitive learning about the environment throughout their lives (Coley, Solomon, & Shafto, 2002). Chipeniuk (1995) found a significant positive relationship between childhood foraging and increased knowledge of local biodiversity, although the ages during which this unstructured activity had actually occurred were not presented. This increased knowledge of local biodiversity was expected to engender support to protect native species that will carry

into adulthood (Miller, 2005). Children gained environmental knowledge incidentally through their independent exploration and outdoor play experiences in their backyards and neighborhoods (Moore, 1986; Pyle, 1993).

### **Adult outcomes of outdoor play in childhood.**

Studies have consistently shown that positive childhood experiences in natural environments, typically in the form of play, contributed significantly to the development of positive environmental attitudes found in adulthood (Chawla, 1999; Lohr, Pearson-Mims, Tarnai & Dillman, n.d.). Frequency and types of adult participation in outdoor recreation were related to positive environmental attitudes and beliefs (Bjerke, Thrane, & Kleiven, 2006; Tarrant & Green, 1999). Further, most recreational interests and preferences were found to be formed in childhood (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Kelly, 1999).

Adult recollections of childhood outdoor play experiences suggested that children's experimentation, exploration, and feelings of competence in these outdoor play spaces contributed not only to positive environmental attitudes but also to a sense of relationship to the natural world (Chawla, 2003; Cooper Marcus, 1992). Researchers demonstrated that children with positive outdoor experiences may develop place attachments to these outdoor play spaces and generalize these emotional attachments to similar landscapes in adulthood (e.g., find trees to be soothing; Cobb, 1977; Cooper Marcus). These affective attachments can refer to *place dependence*, a functional attachment tied to the affordances of a natural area, or to *place identity*, which relates to an internalization of emotional and affective attachments (Vaske & Kobrin, 2001). Place attachment was found to contribute to pro-environmental behaviors in adulthood (Vaske & Kobrin). Children also developed their sense of

environmental identity through direct experiences with nature (Kals & Ittner, 2003).

Environmental identities originated from interactions with nature and a socially constructed understanding of the self in relation to nature (Clayton, 2003). Therefore, Clayton argued that every person possesses some form of environmental identity whether positive, negative, or ambivalent.

Cobb (1977) found from interviews of highly intelligent, successful, and creative adults that they frequently recalled favorite natural places from their childhood to inspire their creativity. In a replication of Cobb's work with a more diverse sample of adults, Chawla (1986) discovered that about half of the adults studied referred to childhood natural places as sources of calm or strength. Adults in environmental careers cited childhood play experiences in natural environments near their home as significantly contributing to their desire to pursue a career working in and protecting such areas (Chawla, 1988).

Outdoor experiences vary greatly in terms of the level of interaction with the natural environment. Kellert (1997) suggested five types of human interactions with nature based on the level of direct contact, (a) consumptive activities like hunting or fishing, (b) non-consumptive activities like bird watching or hiking, (c) indirect activities such as visiting a zoo or arboretum, (d) vicarious activities such as viewing a documentary film about nature, and (e) abusive activities such as harassing wildlife or chopping down live trees. This research showed that not all experiences in natural environments produced equivalent outcomes. For children to develop positive environmental identities, children required direct experiences in natural settings that were both consumptive and non-consumptive. At times

children may even be abusive as they learn and develop empathy for life in all its many forms (Kellert).

Although beyond the scope of my study, research has been conducted on various types of outdoor recreation, especially appreciative versus consumptive forms of recreation in adults and the effects on environmental beliefs and attitudes (e.g., Bjerke et al., 2006). Of interest here, however, is that appreciative and consumptive activities in childhood were found to significantly predict adult environmental attitudes (Ewert, Place, & Sibthorp, 2005). These findings were consistent with Kellert's theorizations of children's need for direct experiences with nature. Other research has supported his notion that not all forms of contact have the same impact (Wells & Lekies, 2006). For example, participation in *wild nature* such as hiking or playing in the woods was found to be a stronger predictor of adult environmental attitudes than participation in *domesticated nature* such as gardening, which was found to be only marginally significant.

Aldo Leopold wrote, "We can be ethical only in reaction to something we can see, feel, understand, love, or otherwise have faith in" (1966, p.251). The concern has been raised that purported declines in children's direct experiences with nature, inherent to outdoor play, will create a generation of adults that are less concerned and feel less inclined toward stewardship for the earth (Louv, 2005). Chipeniuk (1995) suggested that parents reinforced children's curiosity and connection to natural play environments by praising children's interests and talents as well as keeping the foraged "gifts" (e.g., pinecones, picked wildflowers, pretty stones, bird's nests) that children bestow upon them.

Family experiences with nature during middle childhood significantly influenced adults' emotional motivations for nature-protective behaviors in adulthood (Kals, Schumacher, & Montada, 1999). Increased knowledge of local biodiversity can foster children's interest in and affinity for natural environments, which can in turn engender support to protect local ecosystems in adulthood (Miller, 2005). Pyle (1993) coined the phrase *extinction of experience* to describe a decline in children's knowledge of native plants and animal species in contemporary society as children's play moved increasingly toward indoor or manicured environments under the guise of adult supervision.

A lack of access to natural environments may inhibit environmental preferences for such leisure environments later in life (Ward Thompson, Apsinall, & Montarzino, 2008). The relationship between childhood experiences in nature and adult participation in outdoor recreation was not linear. Not visiting woodlands in childhood was found to be a stronger predictor of not participating in outdoor recreation of any form in woodlands as adults (Ward Thompson et al.).

These findings were consistent with SDT, which purported that adult leisure preferences were for the most part developed in childhood and derived from intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). As people aged the likelihood of engaging in a new leisure activity decreased (Kelly, 1999). For example, undergraduate students were asked to reflect upon their favorite games, toys, activities, and sports throughout middle childhood until the present time (Vaughter, Sath, & Vozzola, 1994). A longitudinal study showed that participation in socializing, creative or artistic, intellectual, or sports activities as well as participation in formal organizations during childhood were found to predict participation in

similar types of activities at 50 and 60 years (Scott & Willits, 1998). Playing sports or other traditionally masculine activities as well as playing within predominately male or mixed gender groups during childhood was related to female undergraduate participation in competitive athletics or recreational sports in college (Giuliano, Popp, & Knight, 2000). This concludes my review of the literature pertaining to the benefits children may derive from outdoor play. In the next section I review the literature related to changes in children's leisure that have been theorized to contribute to declines in children's outdoor play that would preclude their deriving the aforementioned benefits.

### **Changes in Children's Leisure**

As children moved into middle childhood, developmental changes in physical, social, and cognitive abilities contributed to a natural shift away from the pretend and dramatic play of preschoolers toward increased participation in organized games and sports (Frost et al., 2005). However, changes in the social construction of childhood, and even gender, have contributed to an acceleration of placing children in adult-organized activities at earlier ages. In the past, children would have organized their own games and been more likely to play sports in the form of *pick-up* games with other children in the neighborhood (Chudacoff, 2007; Frost et al.). One of the most dramatic changes in children's leisure stemmed from changes related to the amount of time they spent in various locations and activities.

#### **Changes in children's time.**

Using time diaries completed by parents and children, ages 3 to 12 years, collected in 1981 and 1997, Hofferth and Sandberg (2001a) found that children's time had become increasingly structured over the years with a concomitant decrease in unstructured or free

play. Children were spending more time in school and child-care settings, shopping, and participating in organized activities in 1997. In a follow-up study conducted in 2002-2003, Hofferth (2009) found a further, albeit small, decline in children's free time resulting from increased time spent in school and childcare. These changes reflected an increasing emphasis on children's academic achievement that affected the home life of children in the wake of "No Child Left Behind" legislation enacted in 2001. Hofferth's (2009) follow-up study showed a continued increase in adult-directed and supervised activities but not in the area of youth sports. Along with other findings, not bearing directly upon my study, these factors all contributed to a 4% decline in children's free time. Hofferth suggested this decline was dramatic as it occurred over only a 5-year period. The previous 12% decline had occurred over a 16-year period.

#### **Changes in children's activities.**

A larger percentage of children at the time of my study seemed to be spending significantly more time in organized activities, particularly youth sports, than in recent history. For example, Hofferth and Sandberg (2001b) found that between 1981 and 1997 children's participation in sport increased from 21% to 75% of the population. Children's time spent in free play decreased 16% over the same period. Time that children used to spend playing had been replaced with adult supervised and directed activities as well as increased time spent doing homework and reading. Although television and other forms of media were often proffered as leading causes of children's decreased active play and physical activity, Hofferth and Sandberg (2001a) found "Less time is now spent in unstructured activities such as playing and passive activities such as television viewing and more time is spent in

structured activities” (p. 208) In a follow-up study, Hofferth (2009) found that children’s use of computers increased related to game playing as opposed to studying but that time spent in other organized activities and outdoor recreation/play remained roughly the same as in 1997.

A study of media use by children ages 8 to 18 years found that youth spent an average of 6.5 hours a day with some form of media such as listening to music, playing a computer game, social networking, or watching a movie (Rideout, Roberts, & Foehr, 2005). Two-thirds of the children reported coming from a family where the television remained on during meals and had their own television in their bedroom. Half of the children lived in a household where the television was on most of the time. One third of the children had a computer in their bedroom. Not surprisingly, children with greater access to media spent more time using it. Children with a television in their bedroom watched an average of 1.5 more hours than those who did not. Rideout et al. found these differences to hold across age, gender, race, and socio-economic status. Compared to an earlier study by Roberts, Foehr, Rideout, and Brodie in 1999, children’s time with media had not increased significantly. What had changed during that time were the types of media usage corresponding to new technologies like MP3 players and the simultaneous use of multiple forms of media. Contrary to popular belief, children who reported spending the most time with media also reported spending the most time with their parents, being physically active, and pursuing other hobbies (Rideout et al.). Children reported that the majority of parents had few rules about their use of media. Even in families where there were rules, only 20% of children said their parents enforced these rules most of the time.

Pertinent to my study, Hofferth and Sandberg (2001b) included children's outdoor activities of gardening, boating and camping, picnicking, pleasure drives, walking, and hiking. The stated purpose of this study was concerned with examining changes in parental and societal valuing of children's time. Therefore, activities were selected that were believed to be influenced by parents. Unstructured play in the outdoors was not included as a distinct category in Hofferth and Sandberg's study. Rather, outdoor play was relegated to their larger category of free play, rendering it impossible to discern how much of that time might have been spent in outdoor play.

Where a child lives is a potential factor influencing the amount of time children spend playing outdoors. Children in urban and rural areas reported wanting to spend the same or more time outdoors (Anderson & Todd, 2008). Seasonal differences showed that rural children reported spending more time outdoors in the winter and urban children more in the summer. This study addressed only a single aspect of parental socialization, which was parents' expressed encouragement. Rural children reported that their parents provided more encouragement to play outdoors (Anderson & Todd).

Looking at children's participation in outdoor recreation activities, loosely defined as leisure activities taking place in the out of doors, the Outdoor Industry Foundation (OIF; 2007) and Outdoor Foundation (2008) conducted phone surveys of American households. These studies showed a decline in both the number of activities engaged in and the amount of time children spent participating in them. Children's outdoor recreation participation was found in both studies to decrease with age. Only 37% of children ages 6-12 years were found to participate in outdoor activities such as riding a bike, running, or skateboarding at least

twice a week on average (OIF, 2007). The 2007 study demonstrated that children participated more in outdoor activities than either indoor fitness or team ball sports but only one year later children's outdoor recreation participation had decreased an average of 11.6%. For boys, team ball-sport participation equaled their outdoor activity participation. Of children ages 6-12 years, 42% participated in outdoor recreation only 30 times per year or less, which meant not even once per week (Outdoor Foundation, 2008).

### **Changes in children's outdoor play and independent mobility.**

Researchers have consistently shown that children's independent mobility (i.e., the ability with parental permission to travel outside of one's own home and backyard without the accompaniment of an adult) has decreased over generations (Gaster, 1991; Hillman & Adams, 1992; Tandy, 1999), which seems to be related to time spent outdoors. Independent mobility permissions determined a child's home range. Neighborhood or natural play areas for parents in their youth such as fields and woods had been replaced by formal parks and streets as play environments for their children (Ferrel Raymund, 1995). Parents reported that their own childhood outdoor play experiences differed from those of their children because, unlike children around the time of my study, parents back then expected their children to play outside (Anderson & Todd, 2009). Perceived environmental threats contributed to these changes as the parents believed that playing outside was safer and they were allowed greater freedom as children. Parents believed that when they were children a stronger sense of community existed and fewer adult-organized and supervised recreation options were available to them as children (Anderson & Todd). As children, parents were expected to find things to do (i.e., play) on their own.

The ages at which children were granted greater independent mobility or permissions, sometimes referred to in the literature as licenses, corresponded with a child's age and parental perceptions of the child's maturity (Hillman & Adams, 1992). Licenses came at increasingly later ages than in past generations (Gaster, 1991; Hillman & Adams). These findings were consistent across urban, suburban, and rural home settings (Beach, 2003; Gaster; Tandy, 1999).

Several studies showed that adults perceived three factors contributing to differences in outdoor play experiences for children at the time of my study, as compared to similar experiences of past generations. These differences were: (a) diminishing access to outdoor areas for play—due either to construction or increased play restrictions and regulations, (b) increased fears related to children's safety in the outdoors, and (c) increasing parental restrictions such as limits on territorial or home range (Beach, 2003; Gaster, 1991; Hillman & Adams, 1992). Adults in a study of rural children's outdoor play claimed their parents facilitated their outdoor play through the provision of resources and indirect supervision, also parents in past generations spent greater amounts of time themselves in the outdoors around the home (Beach). These adults perceived that parents at the time of Beach's study did less to facilitate their children's outdoor play than in past generations.

Scholars from disciplines including biology, anthropology, sociology, and psychology presented evidence that children possess an innate desire to interact with nature, largely due to curiosity and desires for mastery over the ever changing multitude of stimuli (Kellert & Wilson, 1993; Moore & Young, 1978). Children reported more excitement and a greater desire to spend time outdoors than their parents reported about them (Anderson &

Todd, 2008; 2009). However, children as minors often are a marginalized group related to their own leisure because much of their play behavior is restricted to the knowledge of their own experiences and observations. Parents filtered and selected leisure opportunities and activities for their children, which limited their children's knowledge of leisure choices. Parents continued to influence children's leisure experiences by placing restrictions or granting permissions related to their children's leisure behavior (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Frederick & Eccles, 2005). For example, Hart (1979) found that parents granted different levels of permissions for their children's independent mobility by defining: (a) the limits of the children's freely roamed territory, and (b) acceptable forms of play activities permitted within various outdoor environments.

Perceptions of parental roles in children's outdoor play have been found to differ between adults and children. Children reported that parents spent less time outdoors with them and served as a barrier to desired outdoor play more than their parents reported (Anderson & Todd, 2008; 2009). Parents actually saw themselves as being more involved in facilitating outdoor play experiences than their children perceived them to be. Parents readily admitted that they placed restrictions on their children's outdoor play born of environmental concerns over unsafe or inadequate play spaces and fear of traffic (Kytta, 2004; 2006; Prezza et al., 2005; Veitch, Bagley, Ball, & Salmon, 2006).

Some studies suggested that children were perceived by society to be more vulnerable than in the past (e.g., Prezza et al., 2005; Valentine, 1997b; Valentine & McKendrick, 1997). As a result, parents sought to limit unstructured outdoor play and sanctioned the increased placement of children in adult-supervised activities for the purposes of protecting them from

adults or even older children (i.e., teenagers), who might harm them physically, sexually, or just expose them to unsavory aspects of society such as drug abuse before they have the maturity to deal with such topics.

The influence of media in perpetuating fears through sensationalism and disproportionate coverage of instances where children had been abducted or severely injured had a dramatic impact upon how children were viewed as well as creating a heightened sense of need and urgency to protect them (Hillman & Adams, 1992). Even parents who desired to be less restrictive of their children's leisure stated that they felt compelled to maintain such restrictions out of fear that they would be perceived as bad parents both by their peers and by the media if a tragedy occurred (Hillman & Adams; Valentine, 1997b).

Children, despite their dependence upon parents, were theorized to be active agents in their lives simultaneously acting upon and reacting to social and environmental influences (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Tandy (1999) suggested that the finding that children preferred to play indoors and close to home was more likely a reflection of internalized parental restrictions. Negotiations between children and their parents, as they pressed for expansions of their territorial ranges and permitted outdoor activities, increased as children matured (Hart, 1979; Valentine, 1997b). The negotiation process likely resulted from a combination of developmental changes, increased maturity, and improved negotiation skills in the children.

These changes in children's time and activities, including diminished opportunities for unstructured outdoor play, had implications not only for child development but also for children's adult futures. Leisure activities in middle childhood put children on a trajectory for the development of adult leisure interests and pursuits (Giuliano, Popp, & Knight, 2000;

Lohr, Pearson-Mims, Tarnai, & Dillman, n.d.; Simpkins et al., 2006). Parents, as gatekeepers, played a pivotal role in beginning children on these leisure trajectories.

Children cited their parents as the most important reason for starting an outdoor activity (OIF, 2008). Conversely, 20% of children cited their parents not transporting them to participate in outdoor recreation activities as the primary reason for their non-participation. Although differences in outdoor recreation were found based on ethnicity, in every category approximately 60% or more of all children reported their parents as a leading motivator for their outdoor recreation participation (OIF). Hofferth (2009) found that children's use of time served as an indicator of parental values for their children's learning and development. Parental values played a foundational role in shaping parental socialization efforts (Eccles, 1983).

Given that parents were considered the gatekeepers of children's recreation and leisure experiences, Zaradic and Pergams (2007) and Pergams and Zaradic (2006) suggested that a decline in national park visits was due to adults' increased media usage that they coined as *videophilia*. Videophilia was defined as "the new human tendency to focus on sedentary activities involving electronic media" (Zaradic & Pergams, p. 130). They concluded that if parents were the primary providers of children's outdoor recreation opportunities that children would inherently be receiving less authentic and direct experiences with nature. Thereby, children were missing the developmental benefits associated with such experiences in the natural world.

Despite Zaradic and Pergams (2007) finding a decline in visitation at National Parks, in 1999 Roper Starch found many parents of young children reported spending time in

outdoor recreation at least once a month. This level of parental participation in children's outdoor recreation, however, decreased as children grew older. Sixty-five percent of parents with children ages 0 to 7 years participated in outdoor recreation with their children compared to 59% of parents of older children. The majority of Americans surveyed believed that outdoor recreation benefitted children because it: (a) promoted good health, (b) contributed to family bonding through shared experiences, (c) taught appreciation of nature, (d) contributed to physical development, (e) built self-esteem and contributed to personal growth, and (f) helped children to develop their social and interpersonal skills (Roper Starch). Although the Zaradic and Pergams, and Roper Starch study findings appeared to conflict, neither addressed the typical daily or weekly outdoor activities of children with or without their families. Given documented increases in media usage, it may be that on a daily basis children are spending less time outdoors but parents continue to organize purposeful family recreation experiences in the out of doors at least once per month for younger children (Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001b; Roper Starch), which provides a means for socialization.

### **Children's Leisure Socialization**

A pause from reviewing children's leisure and outdoor recreation research is warranted to define parental socialization and examine two theories that provide a guiding framework for reviewing prior research and the conceptual framework for sensitizing concepts employed in the initial phases of data collection for my study. Parents were deemed the primary socializing agents of their children until adolescence when peers took on greater importance (Eccles & Harold, 1991; Hoyt, 1991). Further, parents served as gatekeepers of their children's leisure experiences (Hüttenmoser, 1995). Research showed parents' differed

in their valuing of some leisure activities (e.g., sports) and their subsequent parenting practices (e.g., encouragement) for their sons and daughters (Fredricks, Simpkins, & Eccles, 2005; Hart, 1979; Valentine, 1997b). These differential parenting practices, in turn, produced gendered differences in children's participation and valuing of leisure choices (Eccles & Harold, 1991).

Socialization was defined as the process through which a person, typically a child, was guided and instructed in the development and acquisition of a particular culture's values, norms, behaviors, and knowledge appropriate for their current and future roles within society (Siegler et al., 2006). Mannell and Kleiber (1997) delineated two forms of leisure socialization. The first was the process of being socialized *into* leisure, "...by which children acquire motives, attitudes, values, and skills that affect their leisure choices, behavior and experiences throughout their lives" (p. 225-226). Secondly, socialization *through* leisure occurred when participation in a given activity was used to communicate and inculcate other skills or values such as environmental appreciation acquired through participation in outdoor recreation activities (Mannell & Kleiber). Children's play often served as the primary vehicle of socialization and enculturation largely through the participation and role modeling of parents (Chick & Barnett, 1995). Leisure socialization also encompassed the environment in which activities occurred and contributed to the development of environmental preferences for the pursuit of future activities in adulthood (Hoyt, 1991; Lohr et al., n.d.).

Kelly (1974) suggested that because socialization processes were complex, the study of leisure socialization should begin with basic questions about *when* and *with whom* one was introduced to a particular leisure activity. Most leisure research in the 1970s emanated from a

sociological perspective and focused on these variables related to outdoor recreation participation. Socioeconomic variables and childhood residence were generally found to be insignificant or overshadowed by the importance of levels of childhood participation in hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreation activities (e.g., Christensen & Yoesting, 1973; Kelly; Sofranko & Nolan, 1972; Yoesting & Burkhead, 1973). A significant relationship was found between age at first hunting experience and levels of adult participation (O'Leary, Behrens-Tepper, McGurire & Dottavio, 1987). Family was found to be an important source of introduction into outdoor recreation (Kelly; OIF, 1998).

Leisure socialization can encompass not only specific activities but also leisure environments. Research has shown consistently that not only do adults continue to pursue activities they were introduced to and enjoyed during childhood (e.g., Giuliano, Popp, & Knight, 2000) but also to prefer and participate within similar environments (e.g., Lohr et al., n.d.). Environmental preference literature dated back to the 1970s and 1980s with some of the most cited work from Kaplan and Kaplan (1989). Important to my study was that parents may have intentionally or inadvertently socialized their children either toward or away from playing in various outdoor environments. For example, Bixler and colleagues (Bixler & Carlisle, 1994; Bixler & Floyd, 1997, 1999) concluded that children's discomfort and fear in outdoor environments likely resulted from parental socialization and children's vicarious learning through the teachings of their parents. However, the studies did not examine this precise relationship.

Parents and grandparents were shown to contribute to the socialization of children's sense of place in a study conducted in rural Northern New Mexico (Derr, 2002). Children in

this study learned from their elders' knowledge. Cultural values related to local outdoor environments were incorporated by the children into their own outdoor play. In one of the most direct studies of parental socialization influences on children's environmental preferences, including leisure environments, Hoyt (1991) found that children's environmental values particularly related to natural environments were significantly related to their mother's values, but their preferences for built environments were significantly related to their father's activity location (i.e., leisure) in addition to their own personal familiarity with these environments.

Louv (2005) expressed concerns that adults unintentionally or inadvertently sent children the message that nature was not an appropriate play environment for children. The prevalence of *Leave No Trace* educational principles and practices in outdoor recreation programming including scouting may have inadvertently communicated to children that nature was to be admired and aesthetically appreciated but not directly engaged (Turner, 2002). These ideas stood in stark contrast to childhood outdoor experiences in the 1950s and 1960s when *woodcraft* was the dominant paradigm for children's outdoor programming and play practices. Boys were encouraged to play at being Davie Crockett or Daniel Boone. Around the time of my study, children's play that could be damaging to the environment was discouraged and could have disrupted children's development of an affinity for nature (Sobel, 1996; Turner).

Similarly, Corbett (2006) suggested that the consumer culture and the commodification of nature had impacted children's leisure by erroneously indoctrinating them to a world view of people's inevitable domination and power to control nature.

Examples of this culture abounded in well-orchestrated simulations of nature in children's rides at Disney World. The media had been criticized as socializing children toward an under appreciation or even a fear of local nature by sensationalizing natural disasters and focusing on sublime nature scenes removed from the daily experiences of the average person (Zaradic & Pergams, 2007). Since the inception of leisure socialization as a research topic, the family and more specifically parents had emerged as the single most important influence on children's leisure activities (Iso-Ahola, 1980; Roper Starch, 1999; Villacorta, Koestner, & Lekes, 2003). Parents played a role in the development of children's expressed leisure interests and preferences through role modeling, provision of opportunities, and feedback about children's performance that continued to shape their leisure choices into adulthood (Barnett & Chick, 1986; Giuliano, Popp, & Knight, 2000; Simpkins et al., 2006).

### **Parental Socialization Theories**

Parents socialized their children in several ways as *direct instructors*, *indirect socializers*, and *social managers* (Park & Buriel as cited in Siegler et al., 2006). Parents may have intentionally or unintentionally influenced their children's valuing and knowledge of leisure opportunities (Shannon, 2006; Shannon & Shaw, 2008). However, discerning the intentionality of parents could have been difficult without pointedly asking them, which could raise concerns around social desirability bias. Therefore, for the purposes of my study, I delineated the various aspects of parental socialization as providing direct or indirect relationships with children's intrinsic motivation for outdoor play.

Parents served as the gatekeepers of children's leisure through the opportunities and support they provided in the form of expenditures of their own time, money, or other

resources (Eccles, 1983). This conceptualization of parental socialization as an interpersonal process was consistent with two theories that have been applied to studies of children's motivation and performance in sports, physical activity, and extra-curricular activities. These theories are self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985) and expectancy-value theory (EVT; Eccles, 1983).

### **Self-Determination theory.**

SDT is a theory of human motivation that posits people are active agents responding to and acting upon social and physical aspects of their environment in their pursuit to fulfill three innate needs for: (a) self-determination, (b) competence, and (c) interpersonal relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Intrinsic motivation is posited to energize behavior. Children are theorized to be intrinsically motivated by the spontaneous enjoyment and satisfaction (i.e., feelings of effectance and autonomy) they receive from exploring and attempting to master their environment during play (Deci & Ryan; Ryan 1992). Through a desire for interpersonal relatedness, socialization occurs as children internalize the external regulations of significant others such as parents. When a child comes to accept a parent's rule about not playing in the street, not because the parent said so or out of fear of discipline, but because the child appreciates the relevance of avoiding traffic dangers for her or his own safety, an internalization or self-acceptance of what were at one time merely the admonishments of the parent is demonstrated. The child comes to accept parental rules and values emanating from her or his self (i.e., self-determination).

Though the focus of most SDT research has been on those processes that enhance or thwart intrinsic motivation in academics, several studies have applied the theory in the

domains of sport participation and most recently computer game playing (Frederick & Ryan, 1995; Ryan, Rigby & Przybylski, 2006). In a qualitative study of parental socialization of adolescents' free time leisure, Hutchinson and colleagues (2003) used SDT as a conceptual framework. They identified specific parenting practices related to the constructs of autonomy support, involvement, and structure that were purported by SDT to be essential to fostering children's intrinsic motivation. Although this study made an important contribution to the parental socialization of children's leisure literature, the role of parental valuing of activities found in other studies (e.g., Fredricks and Eccles, 2005) was inadvertently omitted due to reliance on a single theoretical framework that did not incorporate this construct.

### **Expectancy-Value theory.**

EVT (Eccles, 1983) was developed to explain individual differences not only in motivation but also in the identification, evaluation, and selection of alternatives in choice situations. This theory posits that gender is a major contributing factor for differential treatment by socializing agents (Fredricks & Eccles, 2005). Predictors for choice behaviors include expectations for success (e.g., competency beliefs based on experience or feedback) and subjective task value (i.e., how valuable a choice was perceived to be in fulfilling a given motivation such as enjoyment). Socialization is theorized to occur when children internalize the intentional or unintentional messages (e.g., parents' feedback and interpretation of the child's experience) and example set by the socializing agents themselves, (e.g., parental role modeling; Simpkins et al., 2006).

The inclusion of EVT (Eccles, 1983), and more specifically the construct of subjective-task value, was appropriate for my study based not only on findings of the

significance of this variable in Eccles and colleagues research, but also because it was found to be statistically identical with measures of intrinsic motivation in SDT (Katz, Assor, & Kanat-Maymon, 2008). The SDT literature posited that intrinsic motivation played a central role in children's choice of activities. Participation in leisure activities was the most commonly used measure of intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Although SDT addressed the socialization process by which children internalized their parents' values, it did not relate this process to intrinsic motivation. Rather, behavior was seen as *either* intrinsically motivated *or* extrinsically motivated. Conversely, in the EVT framework, subjective task value assessed intrinsic values *concurrently* with extrinsic values such as the costs of participation (e.g., missed opportunities to participate in an alternative activity that may be deemed to have more value; Eccles, 1983). My study was consistent with Eccles' presupposition that children's activity choices were influenced simultaneously by multiple motivations. This conceptualization was also consistent with other motivational theories in leisure (e.g., Moore & Driver, 2005; Walker & Virden, 2005).

A central premise of cognitive evaluation theory, a sub-theory of SDT focused exclusively on intrinsic motivation, posited that autonomy supportive environments enhanced intrinsic motivation. Thus, people's behavior was considered to be simultaneously motivated by both intrinsic and extrinsic forces (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Based on existing research, two forms of parental values regarding their child's general autonomy were evident: (a) irrespective of context for their child's participation in outdoor play (i.e., a global value), and (b) a domain or context-specific value. Both the global and domain specific valuing of children's autonomy were believed to directly affect parenting practices (Deci & Ryan;

Eccles, 1983). These parental values subsequently influenced their child's valuing of, and in turn, their intrinsic motivation for outdoor play. Thus, both parental values have been included as sensitizing concepts for my study.

EVT has been applied to parental socialization influences on children's sport participation, playing instrumental music, and physical activity during middle childhood (Eccles & Harold, 1991; Kimiecik, Horn, & Shurin, 1996; Simpkins et al., 2006). Pertinent findings from research based on EVT along with research based on SDT and other leisure research examples related to specific parental socialization constructs are discussed under the heading of Theoretical Framework. However, as the emphasis of my study was related to children's outdoor play, it is useful to predicate a discussion of that topic with a general review of play theory and research.

### **Ontology and Epistemology**

Henderson (2006) suggested that recreation and leisure researchers could not make informed decisions regarding the selection of specific research methodologies unless they fully understand the worldviews and epistemological assumptions upon which quantitative and qualitative approaches are predicated. Ontology and epistemology influenced all aspects of the research process from selection of the topic to be studied to the presentation of findings (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Henderson; Samdahl, 1999). Worldviews or paradigms provided the philosophical rationale for choosing a research approach (Henderson, 2006; 2011). Ontology relates to the source of knowledge whereas epistemology represents the processes by which knowledge is obtained (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). I have observed that research ontology and epistemology are seldom discussed or debated in the field of

psychology, which stands in stark contrast to the widespread interest and discussion of these issues related to leisure research. *Meanings* have long been important to understanding leisure, largely because some definitions of leisure were predicated upon self-definitions of leisure (i.e., in the eye of the beholder; Mannell, 1999; Mannell & Kleiber, 1997). What one person may *experience* as leisure, another person may not. Positivist methodologies have been criticized for not being able to access and incorporate the meanings people associate with their leisure and “often are not capable of representing the nature and complexity of leisure behavior” (Henderson, 2011, p. 343). The ongoing discussion and debate over the merits of interpretive qualitative research for furthering our understandings of leisure have led, over the past 20 years, to their increased acceptance and usage (Henderson, 2006, 2011; Samdahl, 1999).

My study emanated from a post-positive paradigm that originated during my undergraduate studies in the field of psychology. Post-positivism allowed for dualism of beliefs regarding the source of knowledge (Creswell, 2003). Reality was believed to consist simultaneously of both a singular, external, physical reality coupled with the multiple social realities of individuals (Creswell; Kelly, 1997). As social psychology developed as a unique branch of psychology in the 1900’s, some researchers have more stringently adhered to the tenets of a positivist paradigm in keeping with traditions of research in the field of psychology (Ray, 1993; Thibaut & Kelley, 2007). “The assumptions of positivism are that truth is an independent part of a whole, theory should be deductive and a priori, rational cause and effect is possible, and that scientific research is objective/value-free” (Henderson, 2011, p. 341).

Other social psychology researchers heralded social constructivism and phenomenology as foundational to an understanding of interpersonal processes but maintained that these constructs are amenable to traditional social-psychological inquiry (e.g., experiments; Brown, 2006; Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996; Ray, 1993). This view was inconsistent with qualitative research texts, which maintained that the tenets of social constructivism and phenomenology were related to the philosophies inherent to interpretive paradigms (Creswell, 1998; Henderson, 2006). Samdahl (1999) suggested that much of the research conducted in North America under the guise of qualitative research emanated in reality from a positivist rather than interpretivist worldview. Therefore, she categorized this research as post-positivist.

My qualitative study emanates from a post-positivist worldview in the acceptance of the duality of reality, as well as in the acknowledgement and attempt to overcome many of the legitimate criticisms of positivistic paradigms and their inherent quantitative epistemologies (e.g., elimination of bias and definitive claims of causality; Creswell, 2003). As my study digressed from traditional psychological research by employing a qualitative epistemology to guide data collection and analysis, understanding the criticisms of traditional (i.e., quantitative) research and the merits of a qualitative approach that lead to my choice of research design is important.

Quantitative and qualitative represented broad epistemological categories of research (Henderson, 2006). The terms quantitative and qualitative were used to describe approaches to research as well as specific methodologies, although methods in and of themselves were neither one nor the other. The manner in which methods were employed by a researcher in

answering a research question determined whether they were quantitative or qualitative. Samdahl (1999) criticized the reliance of traditional science on quantification, which may wrongly have conferred legitimacy to ideas that were not amenable to statistical analysis. She asserted that positivism reified quantitative measurement without examining the theoretical assumptions upon which it was predicated. Henderson suggested that, “Little statistical variance has been explained related to most variables studied” in quantitative leisure research (p. 16). This oversight was likely due to the inherent difficulties of identifying and operationally defining variables (e.g., play) that would sufficiently capture the intricacies of larger constructs. Later in this chapter under the heading Theoretical Framework, I address the difficulties experienced with my study in attempting to relate operationally defined variables from two developmental psychological theories of parental socialization to a new domain (i.e., children’s outdoor play).

Quantitative research has also been criticized for ignoring the larger context in which phenomenon occur (e.g., controlled laboratory experiments). Henderson (2006) suggested that separating research from its natural context has contributed to a gap between researchers and practitioners. Participants’ subjective experiences and the meanings they ascribed to those experiences were inconsistent with positivist epistemology, which limited what could be known (Samdahl, 1999). Further, a reliance on observable behavior presumed that all participants’ experiences possessed the same individual interpretations and meanings, ignoring the ideal of multiple perspectives (Samdahl).

The theoretical framework for my study was predicated upon two developmental-psychological theories of parental socialization (i.e., SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985 and EVT;

Eccles, 1983) that sought to explain the impact parents had on their children's motivation and participation in a variety of domains including academics, sport, and leisure. These theories were deeply rooted in Positivist traditions that led to the development and testing of these theories through exclusively quantitative means. Both theories have been developed and revised through a reliance on earlier theories of human motivation (e.g., White's effectance motivation theory) and employment of traditional scientific methods (i.e., surveys) that were amenable to statistical analyses. I found no qualitative or inductive approaches in either the SDT or EVT literature to suggest that any effort was undertaken to acknowledge or understand: (a) the lived experiences of parents and children in these studies; (b) the context in which parental socialization occurred; or (c) whether any additional variables, beyond those derived from previous research, were of interest or importance to the phenomena (Deci & Ryan; Eccles).

Qualitative research, by contrast, is not reductionistic. Multiple perspectives are sought through an emergent process that is flexible seeking to develop new theory (Samdahl, 1999). Researchers attempt to consider as many variables as possible (Henderson, 2006). Whereas quantitative research tended to emphasize statistical analysis, qualitative research consisted primarily of content analysis—analyzing the words and views of individual participants to create a holistic picture of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 1998). Data collection, data analysis, and theory development are dynamic, ongoing processes throughout a qualitative research project (Henderson). Natural contexts and understanding an individual's social realities through the expression of their own voices is fundamental to

qualitative research (Patton, 2002). Human behavior is viewed “as a product of how people define their world” not as observable and quantifiable actions (Henderson, p. 26).

The different traditions of qualitative inquiry possess some basic similarities. Qualitative studies employ naturalistic inquiry, emergent designs, purposeful sampling, the collection and analysis of qualitative data, an emphasis on personal experience, mindfulness of participants’ and researchers’ bias or perspective, and an appreciation for dynamic social systems (Henderson, 2006; Patton, 2002). Analyses of qualitative data generally includes: (a) a unique case orientation; (b) inductive analysis; (c) creativity; (d) holistic perspective; (e) sensitivity to the context, voice, and perspective of others; and (f) reflexivity of ones’ own subjective experience and potential bias (Patton).

Post-positivists took a pragmatic view of the qualitative/quantitative debate believing that these were not epistemologies but rather mere tools available to the researcher (Henderson, 2011; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This perspective seemed consistent with some social psychologists. Despite the acceptance of social constructivism and phenomenological inquiry, strong adherence to many of the major tenets of quantitative epistemologies remained including: (a) the importance of operationally defined variables (i.e., independent, dependent, confounding); (b) striving for empirical rigor (i.e., reliability and validity); and (c) seeking to generalize findings beyond the confines of the study itself (Brown, 2006; Thibaut & Kelley, 2007).

My study was based on a qualitative epistemology within a post-positivist paradigm. Although I employed a qualitative approach in the collection and analysis of qualitative data, my study was not wholly consistent with an interpretivist paradigm. Consistent with the

tenets of social constructivism and phenomenology from an interpretivist viewpoint, I sought to understand the phenomenon of parental socialization of children's outdoor play through the lived experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of parents and children within the context of their family (i.e., a case). A recent trend at the time of my study in the parental socialization of leisure literature involved similar qualitative studies related to the process by which parents socialized their children toward or away from particular activities (e.g., Hutchinson, Baldwin, & Caldwell, 2003; Shannon & Shaw, 2008).

Inconsistent with an interpretivist paradigm, but well within the scope of a post-positivist paradigm, my qualitative case study employed a comparative-case design and used analytic techniques aimed at examining and explaining the inter-personal process of parental socialization for the purposes of theoretical generalization (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2003). Two developmental psychological theories of parental socialization (i.e., SDT and EVT) provided the theoretical framework for the modified analytic-induction techniques employed in my study.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for my study was derived from (a) outdoor play literature, (b) leisure socialization literature and (c) two developmental theories of the effects of parental socialization on children's motivations and activity selections (i.e., self-determination theory or SDT; Ryan & Deci, 1985 and expectancy-value theory or EVT; Eccles, 1983). My study employed a modified analytic-induction approach to data collection and analysis where the purpose of the theoretical framework was to provide the theoretically derived sensitizing concepts and theoretical propositions that guided my initial inquiry

(Patton, 2002). Patton described the beginning of a modified analytic-induction strategy as being quasi-inductive while an attempt was made to confirm the presence of existing constructs from the literature and increasingly moving toward a more inductive approach. A researcher did not end a study at the confirmation or disconfirmation of a priori constructs and theoretical propositions as in quantitative research. Rather, the researcher continued the study seeking to modify or identify new constructs or themes as they emerged from the qualitative data (Patton). This section provides a brief overview of the literature that provided the theoretical framework for the sensitizing concepts and theoretical propositions used to guide my initial inquiry.

Parental socialization has been studied extensively within the context of two developmental psychological theories (i.e., SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985 and EVT; Eccles, 1983). I found no evidence that either theory had been applied to the influences of parental socialization on children's outdoor play, although both theories have been applied to research in related domains (e.g., sports and extracurricular activities; Frederick & Ryan, 1995; Simpkins et al., 2006). Further, neither theory was deemed sufficient in and of itself to capture the influence of parental socialization on children's outdoor play, so my theoretical framework incorporated elements derived from both theories.

Wigfield and Eccles (2002) described EVT in its broadest sense as an explanation of children's performance and choice of tasks that could be predicted by the children's expectations for success and upon their subjective values regarding the task. Children's values and expectancies for success were influenced by the child's experiences of success or failure and the child's interpretation of socializing agents' (e.g., parents') beliefs and values.

Another line of research based upon SDT focused on those parental socialization processes that enhanced or thwarted children's intrinsic motivation, a construct deemed essential to many definitions of play (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 1992; Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci, 1991; Ryan, 1992). SDT emphasized people as active agents in their lives who were driven (i.e., intrinsically motivated) by innate needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, that were mediated by the social context in which they occurred (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan).

Many of the constructs related to parenting practices overlapped with various parental socialization theories (Grolnick, 2009). For example, the construct of provision of resources in EVT was subsumed as a component of parental involvement in SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Eccles, 1983). However, key differences remained between these theories. EVT asserted perceived competence was domain specific whereas SDT viewed the construct of perceived competence more globally (Deci & Ryan; Eccles). Subjective task value, a construct not incorporated into SDT, was considered integral to children's activity choices in EVT (Wigfield & Eccles, 2002).

Parental socialization purportedly occurred through a child's acquisition of the parents' subjective task values of the activity and parents' beliefs about the child's competencies, although EVT did not elucidate how this process occurred (Eccles, 1983; Wigfield & Eccles, 2002). SDT described the socialization process by which children internalized their parents' values (i.e., extrinsic motivation) as evolving over time, through several stages of deeper acceptance, until children had taken these values to be their own (i.e., intrinsically motivated). Behavior was seen as *either* intrinsically motivated *or* extrinsically motivated (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Conversely, EVT and some leisure motivation

theories purported that behavior was energized by multiple motivators, both internal and external (Eccles; Moore & Driver, 2005; Walker & Virden, 2005). In these theories, intrinsic motivation could drive behavior *concurrently* with extrinsic. My theoretical framework was consistent with this latter presupposition that children's activity choices were influenced simultaneously by multiple motivations.

### **Sensitizing concepts.**

Sensitizing concepts for my study were derived from a review of the literature related to: (a) developmental psychological theories of parental socialization, (b) leisure socialization, and (c) outdoor play. Throughout my review of the literature related to children's performance and participation in academics, sports, physical activity, and extra-curricular activities, several parental socialization constructs consistently emerged that either were derived from or consistent with those of SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and EVT (Eccles, 1983). For ease of presentation, all of the constructs from the literature were subsumed under the major parental socialization constructs from these two theories.

The majority of the guiding concepts for my study were derived from SDT, and more specifically, the work of Grolnick and colleagues (2003; 2009). The constructs of *intrinsic motivation* and *autonomy* were essential in defining outdoor play for purposes of my study. The construct related to *parenting practices* was consistent with Grolnick's contention that although researchers tended to label parenting behaviors differently, all of these constructs could be classified into three dimensions: (a) *autonomy support* as opposed to a controlling environment, (b) *interpersonal involvement*, and (c) *structure*. Constructs related to *beliefs and values* were derived from both SDT and EVT: (a) valuing children's autonomy, (b)

subjective task value, and (c) perceptions of child's competence. Constructs related to specific parenting practices identified in the outdoor play and leisure socialization literature were subsumed under these categories derived from SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and EVT (Eccles, 1983).

These constructs served as the sensitizing concepts for embarking on an investigation of the influence of parental socialization on children's outdoor play. An emergent research design using the process of modified analytic-induction allowed for the inclusion and incorporation of evidence both convergent with, and divergent from, my initial theoretical framework, including sensitizing concepts (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2003). As my study aimed to examine how parents influenced their children's outdoor play rather than simply testing the utility of SDT or EVT in explaining this phenomenon, sensitizing concepts could have been added, modified, or omitted as appropriate at any time throughout the course of my study. The following section begins my review of the sensitizing concepts beginning with beliefs and values.

### ***Beliefs and values.***

Beliefs and values were theorized in both SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and EVT (Eccles, 1983) to affect the behavior of parents and children. Specific constructs derived from the outdoor play and leisure socialization literature were used to refine parental socialization constructs drawn from these theories to better align them with an investigation of their effect on the domain of children's outdoor play: (a) parental valuing of the child's autonomy during free-time; (b) parents' subjective task values for outdoor play, which might include perceived physical risks to the child, parents' futuristic orientation, or perceived

utility of outdoor play for the child (i.e., benefits to the child both now and in the future); and (c) beliefs related to the child's competency for playing independently outdoors, which might include way finding, risk assessment, and the ability to amuse oneself constructively.

*Valuing children's autonomy.*

The construct of valuing children's autonomy represented the extent to which parents valued their children's autonomy over the child's blind obedience and conformity where parents viewed autonomy as a goal for healthy child development (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989). Of importance was not only the parents' expressed valuing of their children's autonomy, but also the children's perceptions of their parents' valuing of their autonomy. Valuing of autonomy was subsumed under the construct of autonomy support in the SDT literature (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Grolnick, Weiss, McKenzie, & Wrightman, 1996). Although I found no instances where this construct has previously been isolated from the larger construct of autonomy support in self-determination research, I deemed parental values for purposes of my study to be separate constructs distinct from and directly influential upon parenting practices as theorized in EVT (Eccles, 1983). Therefore, parental values related to children's autonomy particularly in the form of independent mobility and opportunities for choice in selecting outdoor play locations and activities, were examined independently from other forms of autonomy support within my study.

*Subjective task values.*

Another value found in the parental socialization literature that stemmed from EVT was subjective task value (STV; Eccles, 1983). The STV construct was theorized as the basis upon which people made decisions in selecting between alternatives. This construct was

comprised of four dimensions: (a) intrinsic value, variably assessed as interest or enjoyment; (b) utility value, generally equated with usefulness; (c) attainment value, important for fulfilling personal values and needs; and (d) perceived cost, generally expressed as “missed” opportunities for participation in an alternative activity (Eccles, 1983; Eccles & Harold, 1991; Wigfield & Eccles, 2002). Only one study incorporated measures of all four dimensions, although the researchers used single items for each construct and found that the items failed to yield a single subjective task value factor (Eccles & Harold). This finding may have occurred because the breadth of the STV construct and its variable importance across different domains and more specifically across different types of activities (e.g., STV assessed as importance). Unlike their parents, utility was not found to motivate the moderate-to-vigorous physical activity of children ages 11 to 15 years suggesting that the children’s motivations differed from adults (Kimiecik et al., 1996). The children were motivated by intrinsic motivation. Kimiecik and colleagues argued, therefore, that utility or cost in STV was more appropriate for adult models of motivation.

Eccles and colleagues’ research of the STV construct at the time of my study had focused primarily upon intrinsic value, utility value, and attainment value. EVT (Eccles, 1983) had not been applied to the study of socialization influences on children’s outdoor play. Rather, it had been applied to extracurricular activities during middle childhood in the areas of sport, instrumental music, and physical activity (Fredricks & Eccles, 2005). The most commonly measured STV appearing in the sport and physical activity literature was intrinsic and attainment with the latter often defined as importance (Eccles & Harold, 1991; Katz et al., 2008; Kimiecik et al., 1996). Pertinent to my study, parents’ subjective task value

had significantly influenced children's valuing of, and participation in, sport (Fredricks & Eccles). Parents had also differed significantly in their perceptions of the importance of sports for boys and girls (Eccles, 1992).

Wigfield and Eccles (2002) maintained that intrinsic value (e.g., interest and importance) differed from intrinsic motivation in comparing EVT (Eccles, 1983) to SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985). However, Katz and colleagues found that STV as measured by items related to intrinsic value (i.e., interest and fun) and importance (i.e., attainment value) were correlated .78 with a SDT measure of intrinsic motivation. Therefore, intrinsic value, for purposes of my study, was considered equivalent to intrinsic motivation and was excluded from evaluation of the STV construct.

Two components of STV were particularly relevant to my study of children's outdoor play: utility value and cost. The leisure socialization literature was consistent with Kimiecik and colleagues' (1996) suggestion that utility value and cost components of STV were consistent with an adult perspective rather than that of a child. Parents of adolescents valued their children's participation in some leisure activities over others as a means toward some future end (Shannon, 2006). Consistent with this conceptual model, Hutchinson, Baldwin, and Caldwell (2003) found that although families did not differ dramatically in terms of the parental values for some forms of leisure over others, they did differ in the extent of their parenting strategies and practices to influence their children's leisure participation. In a study of pre-adolescent children, parents valued not only perceived current health and fitness benefits of their children's leisure within a family context, but also its contribution to

learning activities that would benefit them throughout their adult lives (Shaw & Dawson, 2001).

Evidence that children become socialized into their parents' differential valuing of leisure opportunities was found by Shannon (2006). Interviews with 12<sup>th</sup> graders revealed they understood that although leisure experiences should be enjoyable, they should also be balanced. Most importantly to my study, these teenagers understood that some leisure activities were more highly valued for the perceived future benefit of acquiring certain skill sets. Some adolescents selected specific leisure activities over available alternatives as a *means toward an end* such as college or employment.

In addition to a perception of some leisure activities being more valued from a future orientation, other perceived costs of children's outdoor play have been related to parental fears of social and environmental dangers to children (Hillman & Adams, 1992; Hüttenmoser, 1995; Prezza et al., 2005). Maternal perceptions of threat made parents more controlling and restrictive of their children, which in turn reduced children's intrinsic motivation for education (Gurland & Grolnick, 2005). The extent to which children's STV related to their parents' subjective task values was interpreted as evidence of successful socialization of the parents' values. Internalized STVs impacted children's choice of activities. In my study, these values would be expected to reflect decreases in the child's intrinsic motivation for outdoor play, which would be consistent with SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Wigfield & Eccles, 2002).

Parents' STV had been the strongest predictor of children's STV related to instrumental music and sport (Fredricks et al., 2005). The gendered STV beliefs of boys and

girls regarding children's participation in sport were significantly related to their perceptions of their parents' STV (Eccles & Harold, 1991). Boys and girls significantly differed in their valuing of sport, which contributed to gender disparities in actual sport participation (Eccles & Harold, 1991; Fredricks & Eccles, 2005). STV for academics and playing instrumental music, generally measured as interest and importance, had decreased as children age, but not so for sport (Eccles, Wigfield, Harold & Blumenfeld, 1993). This finding corresponded to an increased emphasis on organized games in middle childhood (Frost et al., 2005). I found no research that addressed the potential influence of children's STV on their outdoor play. As extrinsic motivations (i.e., parental valuing of activities with long-term outcomes like sport scholarships above activities that are intrinsically rewarding and enjoyable but perceived to hold no future benefit, like free play) were increasingly internalized children's intrinsic motivation for outdoor play would be expected to correspondingly diminish.

*Perceptions of child's competence.*

Irrespective of theoretical orientation, the majority of parental socialization studies included measures of children's perceived competence including assessment of the parents' perceptions of a child's competence within a given domain. Parents' competency perceptions were measured either through parental reports or through children's perceptions of their parents beliefs about the child's competency in a given domain or activity. Perceptions of competence encompassed beliefs about the child's ability to perform successfully those skills required of a given activity (Dweck, 2002). For example, parents commonly placed restrictions on their children's home range based on judgments about their child's competence to navigate independently and safely throughout the neighborhood (i.e., perceive

and avoid dangerous environmental situations so as to avert injury; Valentine, 1997b). Perceptions of competence were important in SDT for selecting from alternatives as well as persisting at a task or activity (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Children were theorized to be intrinsically motivated to pursue activities and actively engage environments where they believed they would be successful.

In a study of family involvement in children's youth soccer participation, Green and Chalip (1997) found that parental expectations of a child's potential and expectations for improvement significantly predicted children's perceived competence in his or her own soccer abilities. Parental encouragement was not found to significantly affect children's perceived competence. Children's self-perceptions of competence for physical activity were both directly and indirectly predicted by gender with the latter having been mediated by levels of parental encouragement (Brustad, 1993). In turn, children's perceptions of competence influenced all measures of their attraction to physical activity as assessed by items consistent with the constructs of STV and intrinsic motivation.

Children's perceptions of their parents' beliefs about the child's competence were significantly related to children's self-perceptions of competence for moderately vigorous physical activity (MVPA; Kimiecik et al., 1996). These self-perceptions also significantly predicted children's actual participation in MVPA, which moderated the influence of parental beliefs on children's actual participation. These findings were consistent with other studies demonstrating children's internalization of parental beliefs of children's competency. Competencies for outdoor play have not been studied but would be expected to include the abilities to safely navigate outdoor spaces and avoid danger (Valentine, 1997a; Valentine &

McKendrick, 1997). Surveying the outdoor play literature indicated that social competencies and the ability to amuse oneself could be important competencies for children's independent outdoor play.

*Parenting practices.*

Not surprisingly, parents' behaviors also influence children's values and performance related to sport, music, and academics (Eccles, 1992; Fredricks & Eccles, 2005). The influence of parental socialization on children's leisure during middle childhood was theorized to set children on a path that would influence not only current activity choice and participation but future leisure pursuits as well (Simpkins et al., 2006). Grolnick (2009) contended that although researchers often categorized parenting practices differently across theories of parental socialization, all parenting practices could be subsumed by these SDT categories: (a) autonomy support, (b) interpersonal involvement, and (c) structure.

Exploring parenting practices using this SDT framework, Hutchinson and colleagues (2003) conducted a study of the parental socialization of adolescents' leisure. Parenting practices were identified as consistent with each of Grolnick's (2009) categories. The Hutchison et al. study provided the impetus for exploring whether a similar framework could inform an investigation into the influence of parental socialization on children's outdoor play. Specific constructs derived from the outdoor play and leisure socialization literature were used to refine these parental socialization constructs to be consistent with an investigation of their effect on the domain of children's outdoor play: (a) parenting practices related to autonomy support (e.g., degree to which a child had the ability to decide how to spend her or his free time), (b) parenting practices related to parental involvement (e.g.,

provision of resources for outdoor play), and (c) parenting practices related to structure (e.g., rules restricting a child's independent mobility or home range).

*Autonomy support.*

Environments that were autonomy supportive provided opportunities for children to take initiative, solve their own problems, and participate in decisions that affected them (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989). Frost and colleagues (2005) described effective parents as consistent with providing autonomy support. Parents who were theorized to be autonomy supportive tended to reason with their children as well as provided rationales and justifications for decisions and limit setting that impacted the child's activities (Grolnick et al., 1996). Autonomy supportive parents also acknowledged the child's perspective and feelings when discussing or limiting behaviors (Grolnick, Deci, & Ryan, 1997). Conversely, controlling environments pressured children to conform and behave obediently (Grolnick, Farkas, Sohmer, Michaels, & Valsiner, 2007). Controlling environments were characterized by parents dictating outcomes and motivating children through punitive, power-assertive disciplinary methods or manipulative use of rewards and threats (Grolnick & Ryan; Grolnick et al., 1996).

Autonomy supportive environments helped children to experience themselves as active agents in their choices and behaviors, which fostered an increased sense of responsibility (Grolnick, 2009). Whereas autonomy supportive environments seemed to enhance intrinsic motivation and internalization of extrinsic motivations (e.g., values or behavioral restrictions), controlling environments had the inverse negative effect on these motivational processes (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Autonomy support was

required to match the developmental level of the child to be effective (Grolnick, Gurland, Jacob, & Decourcey, 2002). These findings were replicated in both school and sport settings (e.g., Fredrick & Ryan, 1995; Grolnick et al., 2007). Ryan and Deci defined autonomy as choice rather than independence. Relatedness was consistent with autonomy supportive environments and established the emotional bonds that facilitated the transmission of social values (Ryan & Deci).

One common concern that parents had regarding their children's outdoor play was that of social and environmental dangers (Hillman & Adams, 1992; Prezza et al., 2005). Parental fears were related to more controlling parenting practices (Gurland & Grolnick, 2005). However, Grolnick (2003) found that limit setting when handled in a manner that provided children with choices involved discussion with the child, and acknowledged the child's perspective actually contributed to children's well-being even in high-risk neighborhoods. This conclusion was consistent with other SDT research that demonstrated limit setting need not negatively impact a child's intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

In a study of parental influences on adolescents' leisure, Hutchinson and colleagues (2003) found that parents who valued their children's autonomy facilitated its development by providing choices for leisure activities and encouraging self-management. Just how much autonomy to encourage was a source of uncertainty and anxiety for some parents, which was consistent with the findings of other scholars. For example, Valentine (1997b) found that parents sometimes placed greater restrictions on their children's outdoor play than they believed was necessary because of peer pressure from other parents. Parents who redirected

their children away from outdoor play and into adult-supervised organized activities may inadvertently be undermining their children's autonomy (Frost et al., 2005; Shannon, 2006).

*Structure.*

Structure within SDT referred to what children generally comprehended as their parents' *rules* and *permissions*. Structure was therefore anticipated to be the most salient parenting practice for children as it served to facilitate or constrain their leisure activities (Grolnick, Deci, & Ryan, 1997; Raymore, 2002). At the time of my study, children routinely used phrases such as "My parents don't allow me to..." or "I need to ask my parents if I can..." Both the communication of rules and permissions as well as the accompanying parenting practices that supported their enforcement comprised the construct of structure within SDT (Grolnick, 2009). Structure included: (a) parents' expectations for their children's behavior; (b) guidelines for acceptable behavior, including the provision of a rationale; (c) providing informational feedback about their children's compliance or noncompliance with expectations; (d) providing specific rules of acceptable behavior; (e) delineating the consequences for noncompliance with behavioral expectations; (f) monitoring the child's behavior; and (g) implementing consequences (Grolnick; Grolnick & Ryan, 1989). These parenting practices also related to the provision of information to the child (i.e., feedback) and to the consistency with which guidelines and rules were enforced (e.g., stringent versus laissez-faire). Expectations for behavior, as well as the manner of their communication, were required to be developmentally appropriate and optimally challenging for children so that they understood how to be successful in meeting their parents'

expectations (Grolnick, 2009; Grolnick, Deci, & Ryan, 1997; Pomerantz, Grolnick, & Price, 2005).

Parental structure alone was insufficient for assessing parental socialization as it could be either autonomy supportive or controlling, with the former being more conducive to children's internalization of parental values and behavioral regulations (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989). This duality may account for structure having not been studied as much as autonomy support and involvement. Although closely related to autonomy support, structure was found to constitute a separate construct (Grolnick & Ryan; Grolnick et al., 1996). Grolnick and Farkas (2008, as cited in Grolnick, 2009) attempted to delineate the construct further by suggesting six components of structure: "1. clear and consistent rules, guidelines, and expectations, 2. opportunity to meet or exceed expectations, 3. predictability, 4. informational feedback, 5. provision of rationales, and 6. authority" (Grolnick, 2009, p. 168). Provision of structure influenced children's *understandings* of what they needed to do to be successful in school as well as in their *actual academic performance* (Grolnick & Ryan). Mothers' negative and positive childhood experiences were related to the level of structure they imposed upon their adolescent children in a given domain, although not true for fathers (Grolnick et al.). Relevant to my study, Grolnick and colleagues suggested that if parents had either negative outdoor play experiences, or fewer opportunities for unstructured play in the outdoors as suggested by studies on intergenerational changes in independent mobility (e.g., Gaster, 1991), that they would likely socialize their children through the imposition of rules and restrictions away from outdoor play experiences.

In a qualitative investigation of parental influences on adolescents' leisure by Hutchinson and colleagues (2003), they found themes consistent with the SDT construct of parental structure: (a) communication of rules and expectations, including rationale and limit setting; (b) monitoring, including provision of feedback and redirection of child's activities to meet expectations; and (c) enforcement of rules and expectations. In addition to the relationship of this construct to autonomy support, structure was also related to parental values about leisure. Parents communicated to their children that some leisure activities were more valuable than others were. Even more pertinent to understanding the influence of parental structure within the context of my study's focus on outdoor play, parents often redirected their adolescents away from unstructured activities (Hutchinson et al.). Similar findings occurred in another study where parents valued and redirected their children's activity away from unstructured outdoor play (e.g., skateboarding; Shannon, 2006).

A study of physical activity in preschool children found that children had a higher level of physical activity if they spent more time outdoors (Sallis et al., 1993). However, cultural differences were found between Mexican-American and Anglo-American families in the amount of time that children spent playing outdoors. A significantly contributing factor was that Mexican-American parents imposed more outdoor play rules than Anglo-American parents on their children. This study provided evidence of early parental socialization influences on children's outdoor play through familial variations in the parental structure construct.

The influence of parental structure on children's outdoor play was particularly evident in the research related to children's home range (Hart, 1979; Moore, 1986). The

degree to which children were allowed to negotiate expansions, or licenses, of these ranges was consistent with parents' autonomy support versus control. Negotiations of home range were shown to differ by gender and age (Hart; Valentine, 1997b). Parents not only set limits on children's outdoor play regarding geographical territory but also often required that children return home or "check in" at predetermined times enabling parents to monitor children's safety without being constantly present (Vadala, Bixler, & James, 2007).

*Interpersonal involvement.*

The third component of parenting practices that positively supported children's autonomy within a SDT framework was parental involvement (Grolnick et al., 1997). Although involvement encompassed tangible acts such as the provision of time, money, transportation, participation, and instruction or coaching, it also encompassed intangible aspects such as nurturance, warmth, caring, and taking an interest in children's activities (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Grolnick et al., 1991). Grolnick and Ryan delineated the components of involvement as: (a) parental knowledge, awareness of both the psychological and behavioral aspects of their children's lives; (b) enjoyment of relating to the child; and (c) time involvement with the child. These dimensions were not conceptualized as domain specific. Later, Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) addressed the multidimensional nature of the involvement construct suggesting that it should be viewed not only from a general perspective but also as domain specific. In their study of parental influences on children's motivation and performance in school, these researchers found that involvement was comprised of three dimensions: (a) behavior (e.g., participation or instruction); (b) personal, affective experience of child (e.g., encouragement); and (c) cognitive, knowledge related to

the specific activity (Grolnick & Slowiaczek). These scholars stressed that the phenomenological perspective of the child was fundamental to assessing parental involvement as they theorized children must experience the resources, encouragement, and so forth for them to have an influence on the child. Positive parental involvement was purportedly conducive to the creation of an environment that fostered a willingness of children to accept and internalize the values of their parents, which was the crux of successful socialization (Grolnick, 2009; Ryan, 1992).

Parental involvement research conducted within a SDT framework focused almost exclusively on children's motivation and performance in academics at the time of my study. Involvement had predicted children's perceptions of competence and autonomy as well as internalization of parental values of academics (Grolnick et al., 1991). Parental involvement had been associated with children's academic achievement and feelings of competence (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). In a study of parental influences on adolescent's academics, Grolnick and colleagues (1996) found that levels of involvement were higher for parents when they perceived that their child was having academic difficulties. Mothers' involvement was associated with child and teacher rated competence, academic achievement, and well-adjusted behavior (Grolnick & Ryan). No studies were found that investigated parental involvement from a SDT framework within the domain of children's leisure.

Parenting practices consistent with the construct of parental involvement had been studied within the theoretical framework of EVT (Eccles, 1983). All aspects of parenting practices studied within Eccles' framework could have been subsumed by the parental

involvement construct within SDT. However, EVT itself extended beyond the confines of the involvement construct. Parental socialization within an EVT framework had been studied in the domains of math, reading, sport, and playing a musical instrument (Fredricks, Simpkins, & Eccles, 2005). Fredricks and Eccles (2005) contended that parents *afforded* children opportunities through enrolling them in programs, providing transportation, taking time to teach or practice skills, and volunteering (e.g., coaching). For example, parental involvement in the form of mothers' purchasing of equipment and fathers' coaching was significantly related to children's perception of their sports competence (Fredricks & Eccles).

The time parents' spent with their children was found to differ significantly for sons and daughters based on all four items used to assess parental sport involvement (i.e., playing sport with child, taking child to sport event, encouraging child to play sport, and encouraging child to watch sport; Eccles, 1992). These findings were later replicated and expanded to include the provision of equipment and coaching (Fredricks & Eccles, 2005). As the children's participation in sport did not directly involve parents (i.e., they did not participate in organized sports with their child), which was consistent with the unstructured and unsupervised domain of children's outdoor play, the insignificant findings of parents' time involvement and role modeling on children's participation in sport and physical activity was expected to apply as readily to children's outdoor play (Fredricks & Eccles; Kimiecik et al., 1996).

Parental involvement irrespective of theoretical orientation received the most attention in the literature related to parental influences on children's leisure activities. Mothers were found to screen children's opportunities to participate in organized recreation

programs by only consulting the child when the final purchase decision was made (Howard & Madrigal, 1990). Expanding upon the literature related to parental involvement in selecting and registering children for youth sports, Green and Chalip (1998) found that parental concerns related to adult impositions on the children's experience (e.g., emphasizing competition) and consistency with their perceived values or outcomes of their child's participation significantly influenced the purchase decision involvement of the parents. Serving as gatekeepers of their children's leisure, parents who were more concerned with their children's activities perpetuating their own leisure values and outcome expectations were more involved in making the decisions about participation in leisure programs for their children. Within this study, purchase decisions were related to selection between several alternative programs (Green & Chalip).

Parental facilitation, defined as playing with the child, also provided greater influence upon children's attraction to, perceived competence in, and participation in MVPA than parental encouragement, parental role modeling, and parental involvement (Welk, Wood, & Morss, 2003). Parents' provision of opportunities and passive support (e.g., transportation) were the measures of parental facilitation. Parental encouragement was also a significant contributing factor for all children's MVPA variables with attraction and perceived competence respectively having the strongest relationship. Parental role modeling was a significant predictor but explained less than 1% of the variance, which suggested role modeling had a less significant role in the parental socialization of children's MVPA (Welk et al).

One of the concerns related to the purported demise in children's outdoor play was that parents had become over involved in their children's leisure as evidenced by the increasing provision of adult-initiated, adult-organized, and adult-supervised activities (e.g., organized sports; Frost et al., 2005; Louv, 2005). In a study of children's extracurricular activities, Dunn, Kinney, and Hofferth (2003) found that children's participation in virtually any activity required parental involvement in the form of scheduling, transportation, or providing financial support. Shaw and Dawson (2001) suggested that parents facilitated children's physical activities through organizing experiences, providing transportation, providing refreshments, and keeping track of children's personal belongings. Parents helped their children because they saw it as a means of fulfilling the responsibilities of their parental role in achieving short-term and long-term goals for their children that included enjoyment, physical activity, and the development of valued and specialized skills. Shaw and Dawson concluded that their findings reflected current cultural ideologies about the role of parents and childhood.

Cultural differences were found between the parental socialization efforts of Mexican-American and Anglo-American parents on preschoolers' physical activity including outdoor play (Sallis et al., 1993). Mexican-American parents took their children to fewer outdoor play spaces and offered fewer prompts for their children to be physically active than did the Anglo-American parents. Mexican-American children also participated in fewer organized activities and watched more television. Conversely, Mexican-American children made fewer requests of their parents to participate in physical activity. These findings were consistent with the conclusions of Hofferth and Sandberg (2001a) who concluded that the

differences in parental socialization likely reflected different cultural values related to children's leisure.

Just as parents could be expected to guide or redirect their children's leisure through the imposition of restrictions (i.e., structure) emanating from the parent's childhood experiences, parents also could be expected to seek out opportunities to introduce and foster children's enjoyment and participation in leisure activities that the parents enjoyed when they were children. Mothers selected opportunities for their daughters and participated in educating them and assisting them in developing the skills that would build their perceptions of competence, especially when it came to non-traditional skill sets such as fishing (Shannon & Shaw, 2008). Also evident was that parents often communicated unintended messages through their comments and actions (e.g., daughters receiving conflicting messages from their mothers about the value and importance of leisure for women). Parents of school-aged children intentionally reverted to childhood leisure pursuits and suspended post-marriage leisure activities instead introducing their children to the activities they enjoyed as children (Horna, 1989). Such role modeling behaviors influenced children's play behaviors from an early age as preschoolers mimic parental behaviors (Barnett & Chick, 1986). This early learning appeared to lay the foundation for leisure values, activity choice, and participation throughout one's life.

Relevant to my study, outdoor recreation participation had declined over recent years for adults, presumably many of whom were parents. Further, time spent indoors with technology had increased and parents were placing children increasingly in adult-supervised and organized activities (Louv, 2008; Pergams & Zaradic, 2008; Roper Starch, 1999).

Adolescents' definition of free-time had evolved to include time away from participation in extra-curricular activities (Shannon, 2006). Previously, free time had been defined as time away from school, employment, or household chores. As Louv suggested, parents, teachers, and other socializing agents may inadvertently have sent a message to children that they did not belong outside and that unstructured play was not a valued childhood experience worthy of their time and energies.

I found no research that examined the role of parental involvement on children's outdoor play. Given my definition of outdoor play as occurring without the presence or intervention of adults, parental involvement may have appeared inappropriate to a study of outdoor play. Evidence suggested, however, that parental involvement would reasonably be expected to influence children's outdoor play. A study of children's outdoor physical activity (OPA) demonstrated that although there was no difference in the overall weekly OPA related to the child's gender, mothers and fathers parental involvement differentially affected the OPA of sons and daughter (Beets, Vogel, Chapman, Pitetti, & Cardinal, 2007). Mothers' use of *outdoor play* as a form of family recreation during the week significantly increased girls' OPA levels. Fathers' participation in OPA with their sons on the weekend (e.g., playing catch) significantly increased the boys' OPA levels. Beach (2003) interviewed adults living in the same communities they grew up in as children and found they believed a decrease in parental support was a major contributing factor to declines in children's outdoor play at that time. They asserted that parents were more involved in children's outdoor play in past generations by providing resources for play (e.g., hammer & nails) and spending more time

outdoors themselves (e.g., gardening, landscaping). This finding concurred with adult recollections of childhood play experiences in another study (Vadala et al., 2007).

One area in which parental support of outdoor play had increased was in the purchase of outdoor toys and equipment (e.g., bicycles; Hillman & Adams, 1992). However, the territory in which children were permitted to use them had shrunk and become more closely supervised (e.g., parks rather than neighborhood streets). Parents often reminisced about their own childhood experiences and relayed them to their children through telling stories and comparing experiences with their children, which would be expected to correspond to enjoyment in relating to the child in SDT (Louv, 2008). In addition to monitoring children's behavior (i.e., parental structure), parents commonly inquired about what their children did, with whom, and whether or not they enjoyed the experience. Parents sought to be knowledgeable of their children's activities (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Vadala et al., 2007). Sometimes encouragement to play outdoors came in the form of insisting that children get out of the house, likely born of a parental belief that it was somehow better for the child than playing indoors on a beautiful day (Mannell & Kleiber, 1997; Shannon, 2006).

### ***Children's intrinsic motivation for outdoor play.***

Sensitizing concepts related to children's outdoor play focused on the child's intrinsic motivation as defined by SDT (i.e., the child's expressed interest, enjoyment, and participation in outdoor play; Deci & Ryan, 1985). Most theories of play adhered to the ideal that by its definition play must be intrinsically motivated, autotelic, and even self-determined (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Frost, 2010). "Play refers to activities that are pursued for their own sake, without any motivation other than the enjoyment they provide"

(Siegler et al., 2006, p. 268). SDT posited that intrinsic motivation had a central role in children's choice of activities (Deci & Ryan). Participation in leisure activities was the most commonly used measure of intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan). Thus, these three constructs (i.e., interest, enjoyment, and participation) derived from SDT served as sensitizing concepts for embarking upon an investigation of the influence of parental socialization upon children's outdoor play (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2003).

However, unlike those constructs presented under the categories of values and beliefs or parenting practices, I found it difficult to extricate from the literature, in any meaningful way, the sensitizing concepts of interest, enjoyment, and participation from the category of intrinsic motivation. This was ironic given that I anticipated when designing my study that the specific constructs of interest, enjoyment, and participation to be familiar terms that participants routinely used to describe their leisure, whereas intrinsic motivation was a more esoteric term commonly found in scholarly writing and research.

Intrinsically motivated activities were theorized to be an expression of an individuals' natural propensity to engage their physical and social environments, perform tasks that were of interest to them, and pursued optimal challenges to fulfill basic psychological needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Grolnick et al., 1997). These interactions may or may not produce secondary benefits to the individual (e.g., increased health due to physical activity). "Through continually taking on new challenges and working to master them, children not only experience spontaneous, intrinsic satisfactions, they also develop skills that allow them to function more effectively and autonomously" (Deci & Ryan, 1992, p. 9). STV within EVT (Eccles, 1983) contained a dimension related to intrinsic

value that correlated with intrinsic motivation within a SDT framework (Katz et al., 2008). Therefore, intrinsic value for purposes of my study was subsumed by the intrinsic motivation construct rather than included as a component of STV.

Intrinsic motivation was theorized to manifest as curiosity, exploration, or interest (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Grolnick et al., 1997). Intrinsically motivated activities required no external reinforcements or constraints to induce participation and persistence in the pursuit of an activity (Grolnick et al.). Consistent with some definitions of leisure, participation in freely chosen activities for the sheer enjoyment or psychological satisfactions they provided implied intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan; Grolnick et al.; Mannell & Kleiber, 1997). Intrinsically motivated activities including play were often described as being autotelic or performed merely for the enjoyment of the experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Fredrick & Ryan, 1995). This active tendency to spontaneously engage and interact with the environment was purportedly important to learning, socialization, and development across domains (Fredrick & Ryan). According to SDT, intrinsically motivated activities did not require internalization because of their innate and spontaneous nature (Grolnick et al.). However, this interpretation ignored the many ways that environmental influences, particularly socializing agents, could impinge upon or restrict the expression of intrinsic desires to experience an activity in a particular way. Socializing agents could influence children's intrinsic motivation for outdoor play in many ways. Parents could say and do things that supported or discouraged children's outdoor play, which was consistent with parents' beliefs and values related to their child or to leisure. Although play itself may have been theorized to be intrinsically motivated, those external regulations parents placed upon

children's expression of play (e.g., rules and permissions) and the parental values associated with them were subject to processes of internalization (Grolnick, 2009). Therefore, my study posited, similar to EVT (Eccles, 1983) that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations came to bear on children's outdoor play. I also maintained, however, that without intrinsic motivation the child's activity could not be considered play.

SDT proposed that people as social beings must learn to live together. People adhered to social conventions while serving the greater good of their family, community, or society, which may have run contrary to one's intrinsic motivation (Ryan, 1995). These motivations were, at least initially, theorized to be extrinsic to the person. Over time people were generally able to transform some of these imposed regulations or constraints on their behaviors, to varying degrees, into their own personal attitudes, beliefs, and values (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan, 1992). Grolnick, Deci, and Ryan (1997) described this form of internalized motivation as acquired motivations. Extrinsic motivations encompassed the reasons why a person did a behavior that was not intrinsically motivated as well as how she or he came to incorporate values that originated in external social agents.

SDT had been employed in the explanation of goals and values. It was theorized that people held many values that impacted their behavior. Likewise, people often had multiple and sometimes conflicting goals for their choices of activities and their behavior in the pursuit and execution of those activities (Gurland & Grolnick, 2005). Some values and goals perhaps were more intrinsic than were others (e.g., improved health versus physical appearance; Ryan, 1995). Ryan (1992) described the internalized expectations of others as *shoulds* or *have tos* and suggested that they were as powerful, if not more so, than external

forces in shaping behavior. Yet, little research had been conducted regarding the internalization process by which children acquired and internalized values or external behavioral regulations (Gurland & Grolnick; Ryan & Connell, 1989). Autonomy supportive environments provided developmentally appropriate structure within a context that was warm and nurturing, which enhanced intrinsic motivation and facilitated the internalization of external values or behavioral regulations (Deci & Ryan; Grolnick et al., 1991).

Despite the centrality of intrinsic motivation to most definitions of play, a dearth of research exists in this area (Iso-Ahola, 1980; Kleiber, 1999; Mannell & Kleiber, 1997). An implicit assumption has been made that enjoyment, interest, and participation in freely chosen activities evidenced the existence of intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Mannell & Kleiber). However, a few studies demonstrated that children reported their motivations for play, sport, and physical activity to be intrinsically motivated (e.g., Frederick & Ryan, 1995; Ryan & Connell, 1989). Children's satisfaction with participating in a soccer program, measured by items consistent with intrinsic motivation, were significantly predicted by their perceptions of competence at soccer. The children's perceptions of soccer competence mediated the relationship between children's satisfaction and parental perceptions of the child's current soccer skills and abilities as well as expectations for the child's improvement through participation in the soccer program (Green & Chalip, 1997). Measures of children's attraction to physical activity, akin to their intrinsic motivation, were more strongly predicted by the child's perceived competence than measures related to children's STV (Brustad, 1993). In a later study, gender differences were found between boys' and girls' attraction to physical activity and parental encouragement and parental

enjoyment of physical activity contributed to higher levels of children's own enjoyment of participating in physical activity (Brustad, 1996).

One line of SDT research had been the investigation of those external influences that diminished children's intrinsic motivation in the fields of academics, sports, and physical activity (Grolnick, 2003, 2009; Hagger & Chatzisarantis, 2007). Pertinent to my study, limit setting was not necessarily detrimental to intrinsic motivation especially when feedback was perceived to be informational rather than controlling (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Grolnick, 2009). Therefore, the imposition of rules and permissions on children's outdoor play would not necessarily diminish the children's intrinsic motivation in this domain.

Many scholars believed that children possess an intimate and unique bond with nature. Concern had been expressed in recent years that this bond was being broken prematurely by the negative influences of technology, increased fears of social and environmental dangers, and concomitantly changing beliefs about childhood (Chawla, 2003; Sebba, 1991; Wilson, 2008; Zaradic & Pergams, 2007). The conceptual framework for my study was predicated upon the assumption that children were intrinsically motivated to play outdoors, in all the many forms in which such play may have been manifested, and that this intrinsic motivation may have been either supported or thwarted by parental socialization influences. Similar to these scholars, my study emanated from a traditional modern perspective that was supported by evidence that children's experiences in nature, including outdoor play, contributed in diverse ways to their healthy development (Frost et al., 2005; Zinnecker, 2001). These sensitizing concepts were used to gather data for my qualitative

comparative case study. The next section reviews the methodology and provides a rationale for my use of this research design.

### **Summary**

This chapter provided a review of the pertinent literature for embarking upon an investigation of how parental socialization influenced children's outdoor play. First, childhood as an ever changing social construct was discussed. Changing ideals of childhood had influenced parenting practices that restricted children's access to outdoor play more so than in prior generations. These same ideals influenced how research was conducted and evaluated with children. Children's leisure socialization was largely influenced by parents who often serve as gatekeepers by restricting children's exposure to leisure opportunities and pro-offering or withholding financial or emotional supports. Classic theories of child development as they pertained to middle childhood were reviewed with an emphasis on the socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky. Parental use of scaffolding within a child's zone of proximal development (ZPD) for specific outdoor play experiences was anticipated in the data based on the outdoor play and leisure socialization literature. Theories of play were briefly reviewed, from early theories of play to modern theories that emphasize the application of psychological and motivational theories to the topic of play. Consistent with these modern conceptualizations of play research, the process of parental socialization was discussed within the context of two developmental psychology theories: (a) SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and (b) EVT (Eccles, 1983). Research using these theories relating to children's participation in academics, sport, and extra-curricular activities was reviewed. The role of

children's positive outdoor play experiences in child development (i.e., immediate potential benefits) and adult outcomes (i.e., long-term potential benefits) were presented.

Ontological and epistemological foundations underlying my research design including selection of topic, development of research questions, and selection of approach were discussed. My qualitative comparative case study was conducted within a post-positivist paradigm that utilized a modified analytic induction process for data collection and analysis. The theoretical framework was derived from (a) outdoor play literature, (b) leisure socialization literature and (c) two developmental theories of the effects of parental socialization on children's motivations and activity selections (i.e., self-determination theory or SDT; Ryan & Deci, 1985 and expectancy-value theory or EVT; Eccles, 1983).

The construct of *intrinsic motivation* was used to examine the interest, enjoyment, and participation of the children in outdoor play. The construct related to *parenting practices* included three dimensions: (a) *autonomy support*, (b) *interpersonal involvement*, and (c) *structure*. Sensitizing concepts related to the construct of *beliefs and values* were: (a) valuing children's autonomy, (b) subjective task value, and (c) perceptions of child's competence. Constructs derived from SDT and EVT were refined relevant to children's outdoor play and serve as sensitizing concepts for my qualitative case study investigation of parental socialization and children's outdoor play.

### Chapter 3: Methodology

My qualitative comparative case study emanates from a post-positivist paradigm using quasi-inductive qualitative methods in the collection and analyses of qualitative data. A modified analytic induction strategy guided data collection and analyses for individual and comparative cases. Five theoretical propositions underlie two research questions. The first question is, How does parental socialization influence children's outdoor play? (1) Theoretical Proposition 1: *Direct* forms of parental socialization influence children's outdoor play, and (2) Theoretical Proposition 2: *Indirect* forms of parental socialization influence children's outdoor play. The second question is, How do parents differ in the socialization of their children's outdoor play? (1) Theoretical Proposition 3: Parents socialize children's outdoor play differently based on the child's *gender*, (2) Theoretical Proposition 4: Parents socialize their children's outdoor play differently based on child's *age*, and (3) Theoretical Proposition 5: Parents socialize their children's outdoor play differently based on *perceptions of environmental factors in their community*.

The rationale for my research design and procedures and how they were implemented in conducting this study are presented in this chapter. Descriptions of participating families and the community in which they lived are also included to afford readers a contextual understanding of the findings. The chapter is organized as follows: (a) qualitative comparative case study research, (b) ethical considerations, (c) sampling rationale and procedures, (d) data collection strategy and implementation, (e) data analysis strategy and implementation, and (f) trustworthiness (i.e., empirical rigor within an emergent design).

## **Qualitative Comparative Case Study Research**

This section provides the rationale for my research design and methodologies employed as they were derived from a review of the literature. Case studies could be especially useful when the topic related to a contemporary phenomenon where investigators have little or no control over events or variables, and the context was essential to, or inseparable from the phenomenon (Yin, 2003). What distinguished case studies from other approaches was the emphasis on collecting and analyzing in-depth information for each case by collecting data from multiple sources that were rich in context (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002; Stake, 2005). The use of multiple methods in case studies facilitated an in-depth analysis of an interpersonal process (i.e., parental socialization) and triangulation of data strengthened the research design (Henderson, 2006; Stake, 2005). Case studies were also useful when there were more variables (e.g., independent or dependent) than data points (i.e., units of analysis) and when they were used to generate or test theory (Patton; Yin). The term *case study* could be used to describe the process or product of this approach (Patton).

I chose a qualitative case study approach as parental socialization was an interpersonal process that occurred between children and parents within the social context of the immediate family. This methodology provided many advantages in furthering knowledge about this topic. Although the term parental socialization drew attention to the role of parents as socializing agents, children were viewed as active agents in their lives, not passive recipients of their parents' socialization efforts (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Children did not merely mimic and reflect their parents' values and behaviors.

Parental socialization had been studied extensively within the context of two developmental psychological theories (i.e., SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985 and EVT; Eccles, 1983). However, the reliance on quantitative methodologies had largely ignored the phenomenological or lived experiences of parents and children. Participants in this research had been denied a *voice* in the development of these theories (Henderson, 2006). Further, quantitative methods (i.e., surveys) emanating from a positivistic paradigm limited what could be known about the process of parental socialization, irrespective of domain, largely due to the limited number of objectively defined variables.

Some of the constructs in SDT and EVT were not easily transferred to the domain of play. For example perceived competence, central to both SDT and EVT, was difficult to delineate as it related to the varied environments and activities of outdoor play (e.g., way finding or agility). Conducting a qualitative case study enabled me to not only examine the utility of these constructs in explaining the phenomenon of parental socialization and children's outdoor play but also to expand upon or modify constructs or theoretical relationships.

Interviewing parents and children without linking the data within a family unit (i.e., case) would have ignored the social context in which these participants' responses were embedded. For example, researchers demonstrated that parents and children negotiated the rules and restrictions placed on the child's outdoor play but little was known about this interpersonal process from the perspective of either parents or children (Hart, 1979; Hillman & Adams, 1992; Valentine, 1997b). My qualitative case study provided an in-depth examination of parental socialization influences on children's leisure that supplemented other

qualitative studies of leisure socialization such as Shannon and Shaw's (2008) study of mothers and daughters.

Case studies can be qualitative or quantitative (Stake, 2005; Yin, 2003). Books on qualitative methodology presented case studies as one tradition or approach emanating from an interpretive paradigm (Creswell, 1998; Henderson, 2006). However, qualitative case studies could also be conducted within a post-positivist paradigm as in comparative-case studies (Patton, 2002; Stake; Yin). Stemming from my background in psychology, I adhered to a post-positivist worldview. Acknowledging the merits of conducting a qualitative case study that involved the holistic in-depth analysis of the lived experiences parents and children embedded within each family (i.e., case) within an emergent research design, I also held to the tenets of empirical rigor and strove for theoretical generalization and explanation building through the use of a comparative-case design (Patton; Yin). The employment of an analytic-induction strategy to guide data collection and analysis in case studies facilitated both a holistic investigation of individual cases (i.e., within-case) and the comparisons of a multiple-case design (i.e., between-case; Patton).

#### **Modified analytic induction.**

A *modified analytic-induction* strategy guided data collection and analyses for my qualitative case study. This strategy differed from traditional inductive approaches (e.g., grounded theory) to data collection and analyses in conducting qualitative case studies (Creswell, 1998; Henderson, 2006; Patton, 2002). Analytic induction as a primary strategy for guiding data collection and analyses in qualitative comparative-case studies was not purely inductive but rather more akin to the post-positivist paradigm that underlie my study

(Patton). Consistent with Yin's (2003) use of theoretical propositions and key definitions to focus a case study, my modified analytic induction strategy began with a process that appeared more deductive than inductive at the outset but became increasingly inductive as a study progressed:

The analyst begins by examining the data in terms of theory-derived sensitizing concepts or applying a theoretical framework developed by someone else (e.g., testing Piaget's development theory on case studies of children). After or alongside this deductive phase of analysis, the researcher strives to look at the data afresh for undiscovered patterns and emergent understandings (Patton, 2002, p. 454).

I employed what Patton (2002) described as a *modified analytic-induction* strategy whereby inductive analysis (e.g., use of thick descriptions for content analysis of each case) coincided with the quasi-deductive use of sensitizing concepts and theoretical propositions in guiding data collection and multiple-case comparisons. Theoretical propositions and sensitizing constructs were examined for both their congruence and divergence from the theoretical framework of my study and modified as the data direct, making them more akin to working hypotheses used in other qualitative approaches (Henderson, 2006; Patton; Yin, 2003). This approach was consistent with the post-positivist shift in the use of analytic induction away from developing "universal causal generalizations" toward a "strategy for engaging in qualitative inquiry and comparative case analysis that includes examining preconceived hypotheses, that is, without the pretense of the mental blank slate advocated in purer forms of phenomenological inquiry and grounded theory" (Patton, 2002, p. 493). Thus,

modified analytic induction served as a tool in guiding the development of individual cases and comparative-case analyses.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Researchers must always be cognizant of their responsibilities to study participants. As a student at North Carolina State University, my research proposal was subject to review and approval by (a) my dissertation committee and (b) an Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the explicit purpose of protecting the rights and assuring the safety of human participants (Appendices A1-A4). Despite the inclusion of minors in my study, the IRB did not require a full review as they were satisfied with my submission of all lines of questioning and examples of specific methodologies to be used to focus discussions with the children. My procedures regarding participants' anonymity (i.e., personal identification associated with responses in data) and confidentiality (i.e., personal contact information will not be shared without the person's consent; Ray, 1993) were also accepted by the IRB. The only modification required by the IRB was to highlight under the risks heading, "A portion of the interviews will address family interactions and rules. You and your child are free to skip any questions that you don't want to answer."

I maintained the anonymity of all participants' responses (i.e., parents and children) by using pseudonyms to identify them in transcriptions of interviews and writing of individual and comparative case studies (see Table 3.1, p. 103). Pseudonyms were chosen by the participants. Computer files of raw data (e.g., digital recordings of interviews, digital photographs of physical artifacts) and transcriptions were stored on my computer and an external hard drive.

Table 3.1

Case Family Member Pseudonyms

Case	Mother	Father	Eldest Child	Middle Child	Youngest Child	Non-Participating Siblings
1	Sophie	Eric	Robin	N/A	N/A	Bluebird
2	Anne	Cole	Conrad	Curtis	Bob	N/A
3	Maxwell	George	Tin Tin	Candy	N/A	Legos
4	Christine	James	Morgan	N/A	N/A	Jackson, Johnny, Beth & Fritz
5	Cassidy	Butch	James	Jessie	N/A	Mario
6	Gopen	Slak	Ditto	N/A	N/A	Maggie
7	Sue	N/A	Emily	N/A	N/A	Darling
8	Samantha	Thomas	Ryan	N/A	N/A	Jean, PJ, Dale & Maria
9	Pam	Kevin	Duane	Ray Ray	N/A	N/A

Note. Non-Participating Siblings are listed in age descending order

Access to these files was password protected, as was access to my computer to ensure participant anonymity. The external hard drive was kept in a locked firebox in my home. A list linking participants' names and contact information with their pseudonyms was securely stored on my computer and backed up on an external hard drive where only I had access to assure confidentiality of participants' personal information. Hard copies of transcripts or other supporting data were stored in a case study database file in a locked firebox in my home. After my study was completed, all identifying information including participant names and contact information was destroyed to protect participants' confidentiality by deleting files and shredding hard copies before disposal.

Responsibilities to all study participants also included honest and open communication from initial contact through completion of the study (Henderson, 2006). My study necessitated multiple family contacts. Parents were made aware of what would be asked of them and their children for the duration of the study by either phone or email when they contacted me expressing interest in the study and repeated at an initial meeting with each individual family to ensure all family members were aware and comfortable making the commitment to the study.

Parents received a copy of an informed consent form (see Appendix B1) that outlined their rights and procedures for data handling to review prior to participating in my study. Contact information for myself (i.e., cell phone number and personal email address), my dissertation committee chair (i.e., office phone and business email address), and the North Carolina State University IRB board (i.e., business phone, business email, and mailing address) was provided to participants on the informed consent form.

Given the nature of my study, especially the face to face interviews with parents, it was possible that once a rapport has been established that a parent might ask me my opinion or personal advice related to the topic or to something else (Henderson, 2006). This situation did arise on a few occasions during parent sessions. I was honest with the parents that I was not a child expert, merely a researcher interested in this topic due to my own personal and professional experiences. When a parent asked me for information about an aspect of the study that I could share with them, I offered to do so after my data collection had concluded. I did not design my study as an action-research project. Further, as all parents expressed interest in viewing the study findings, they were provided, via email, a link to my electronic dissertation via the NC State website.

Conducting research with children added special ethical considerations to my study that had to be addressed. The children were also asked to sign an assent form agreeing to participate in my study (see Appendix B2). These forms were provided for parents and children to review and sign prior to data collection. Signed copies of the assent forms were securely stored as outlined above for parent informed consent forms.

To address concerns regarding the inclusion of children in my study, I scheduled an initial meeting with the entire family to introduce myself, the purpose, and procedures for the study, and answer any questions or concerns that the parents or children had. This meeting enabled me to begin to establish a rapport with the child in the safety of having his or her parent or parents present.

When a child does not know the researcher, issues have to be addressed related to the establishment and maintenance of trust as a child may feel insecure or vulnerable (Garbarino

et al., 1992). The power differential between an adult researcher and a child may create a situation where children attempt to modify their answers to conform to what they perceive are acceptable answers. Children may provide what they perceive to be socially desirable answers in response to the presence of the researcher, other adults, or other children who were either present or believed by the child to have access to the child's responses. Children are found to be more easily led than adults in their responses by the language and actions of the researcher, some of which the researcher may not even be aware (e.g., facial expressions or gestures; Epstein, Stevens, McKeever, Baruchel, & Jones, 2008; Garbarino et al.). Even the physical positioning of the researcher, such as sitting across from a child in a chair, could highlight power differentials between adult researchers and child participants.

Interviewing is an adult form of inquiry that assumed linguistic, cognitive, and social competence (Garbarino et al., 1992). Interview strategies with children were shown to fall upon a continuum with unstructured interviews being most successful and structured interviews being least successful (Garbarino et al.). Children had shorter attention spans than adults had and were more likely to *open up* and share more information if the researcher is not perceived as a stranger or authority figure (Garbarino et al., 1992). The use of props (e.g., drawing materials) is common in conducting interviews with children as they provide a fun way to ease into a topic (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Using props and allowing off topic tangents allows the child to exercise some control in the interview situation (Garbarino et al.). The approach I used for interviewing children from an ethical perspective is described in more detail in the subsection related to Child Interviews.

## **Sampling Rationale and Procedures**

This section addresses the rationale for my sample and the procedures used to recruit and select case families for participation in the study. My use of a purposeful sample is discussed first followed by my sampling strategy. Within the sampling strategy, I discuss selection criteria, provide context information for the area from which families were drawn, and discuss the participating families.

### **Purposeful sample.**

My study relied on a purposeful sample. In qualitative research, purposeful sampling could be used to demonstrate either ordinary or differing perspectives about a topic or phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). Purposeful sampling in comparative case studies generally required the selection of cases for the anticipated purpose of either: (a) producing similar results to previous cases (i.e., replication logic), or (b) producing contrasting results but for explainable reasons (i.e., theoretical replication; Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996; Yin, 2003). Yin suggested that cases should be randomly selected from populations. However, Stake (2005) suggested that in conducting qualitative case studies, cases should be selected that afford a researcher the greatest opportunities for learning.

Depending upon the breadth of the definition of a case and the prevalence of the phenomenon of interest, there could be a large population of theoretically valuable cases for a study. My study had many potential cases. Many American families have multiple children with at least one of them being between the ages of 8 and 12 years. However, purposeful sampling as employed in conducting actual studies tended to be drawn not only from cases that were theoretically relevant but that were also accessible to the researcher (Stake, 2005).

Purposeful sampling in case study research was important when the goal was to conduct an in-depth investigation of a phenomenon within the natural context in which it occurred.

Accessible cases afforded researchers greater opportunities to learn from the participants of a study because the researcher could spend more time with them (Stake).

### **Sampling strategy.**

Sampling strategies for selecting cases depended upon the purpose of the study including facilitation of cross-case comparisons (Patton, 2002). Comparative-case research designs were more robust than single case studies when the goal of the research was theory development (Yin, 2003). Multiple case studies were akin to the results of multiple experiments for purposes of replication and analytic generalization. As the intent of cross-case comparison in my study was to generalize to theoretical propositions and not to populations as in statistical research, random selection was not necessary. Explanation building in case study research required either theory development through methods such as grounded theory, a reliance upon an existing theory (e.g., SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985 and EVT; Eccles, 1983), or both as in the modified analytic induction strategy used for my study (Patton; Yin).

Outdoor play research had focused on middle childhood for many reasons but most important for my study was that during this period children were shown to have: (a) an interest in playing outdoors (e.g., Anderson & Todd, 2008), (b) parents who had granted children in this age range permission to play outdoors without immediate adult supervision (e.g., Hart, 1979), and (c) children in this age range had been observed playing outdoors (e.g., Beach, 2003). By the time children reached this age, they had become accustomed to

people asking them questions (e.g., teachers), were better able to focus attention, and could answer questions about their routines and actual experiences (Garbarino, Stott, and the Faculty of the Erickson Institute, 1992). Children under the age of eight were found to not always be able to provide reliable answers on a survey instrument (Kals & Ittner, 2003).

### *Cases.*

Each case constituted an entire study whereby convergent evidence (i.e., data triangulation) was brought to bear in confirming, repudiating, or refining a theory (Creswell, 1998; Yin, 2003). The credibility of findings in my comparative case study was dependent upon the quality of the individual case studies (Patton, 2002). Therefore, I sought to fully develop sufficient individual case studies for purposes of (a) literal replication, (b) theoretical replication, and (c) theory development (i.e., grounded theory) in explaining the phenomenon of parental socialization of children's outdoor play. If my study was limited to the examination of SDT and EVT in explaining parental socialization of children's outdoor play, as few as two cases would have been sufficient to demonstrate literal replication. To demonstrate not only literal but also theoretical replication related to parental socialization that fostered or constrained children's outdoor play I needed to examine multiple cases with differing characteristics (e.g., elder son and younger daughter or residing in a housing development.) It was also necessary to include contrasting cases (e.g., isolated rural residence) to examine what components of theoretical development remained the same or were altered by the contrasting contextual characteristic.

Yin (2003) suggested that anonymity was not desirable in case study research unless a controversial issue existed. My study involved asking parents to invite me into their home

for purposes of disclosing to me details about their parenting practices, beliefs, and values related to their children's outdoor play. These topics appeared on their surface to be relatively innocuous topics but Valentine (1997b) found that parents felt social pressure and insecurities related to other's perceptions of them as being a *fit* parent.

Cases, as the unit of analysis, were derived from the initial research questions to be addressed (Yin, 2003). Case definitions were consistent with the level of analysis in the research literature as analytic generalization was a goal of the study. Embedded case studies were more appropriate to the investigation of interpersonal processes like parental socialization as they kept data collection from becoming abstract or drifting from the initial topic (Yin). Data were collected directly from the lived experiences of the people engaged in the phenomenon of parental socialization (i.e., parents as socializing agents and children as active agents in the receipt and internalization of parental socialization efforts; Eccles, 1983; Deci & Ryan, 1985).

***Case selection criteria.***

My study relied on a purposeful sample that sought families who collectively reflected the spectrum of children's outdoor play from boys and girls who played outdoors often to those who rarely played outdoors. An attempt was also made to select families that reflected the community in which these families lived. Yin (2003) advocated for discarding cases and starting over in the face of evidence that causes a researcher to revise initial theoretical propositions. As I conducted a qualitative case study that employed an inductive strategy for analysis, I instead re-opened my analysis into earlier cases in light of emergent discoveries and revised case study reports and cross-case analyses as appropriate.

For purposes of my study, I defined a case as a multiple-child family residing within a household where parental figures and children ages 8-12 years represented the embedded units of analysis. These family members were directly involved in the interpersonal process of parental socialization within a given household. Eligibility for consideration as a case for my study was not restricted to traditional, two-parent households. Parental figures did not need to be the biological parents of the targeted child. Foster parents or guardians who resided with the child and for all intents and purposes fulfilled the role of the child's parent (e.g., establishing rules or permissions for playing outdoors) may have been included in my study.

To address whether or not there were differences in parental socialization efforts in relation to a child's age or gender required the presence of siblings. There were 13,403 households with children between the ages of 5-14 years in 2000 in the small metro county in the Midwest from which families were recruited (US Census Bureau, 2010). Potential cases from the area were identified and screened through questioning people knowledgeable about an eligible child and his or her family (Yin, 2003). This approach included inquiries of local non-profit professionals who worked with children ages 8-12 years. I also considered referrals from parents or children included in my study.

In addition to ensuring cases adhered to my definitions of cases and embedded units of analysis, cases were screened for their anticipated value in furthering the study by contributing to (a) literal replication, (b) theoretical replication, or (c) theory development (i.e., grounded theory). Each family was selected from a pool of area families that contacted me expressing interest in the study based on meeting the evolving sampling needs of the

study (e.g., a family with a son and a daughter). Each participating family received an incentive for their involvement in my study in the form of two \$50 Wal-Mart gift cards for a total value of \$100 per family.

Selection of the first few cases relied heavily upon youth agency referrals as I identified families who would be willing to spend more time with me as I worked out procedural issues. Parents and children in these early cases served as informants in the process of the research as well as in addressing the substantive topic of parental socialization and outdoor play. This process was akin to conducting a pilot test in that it was formative in refining procedures and interview questions, provided insight into logistical issues, and culminated in memoranda that outlined what was discovered and the ways in which data collection in future cases would differ (Yin, 2003).

However, unlike a pilot study, substantive data were analyzed and included in my qualitative case study findings. The Case 1 family was selected to participate first in my study because of their willingness to spend more time with me and to discuss and assist with procedural issues. As the study progressed, less time and effort was required for addressing procedural issues with each family. Although, all children and parents were debriefed about their research experience and solicited for recommendations for improvement from the participants' perspective. These recommendations were taken into consideration and some of them implemented (e.g., conducting partial or full interviews with each child during a single session where more than one child participated in a family) in subsequent data collection.

As anticipated, multiple contacts were required to achieve literal and theoretical replication that formed a cohesive picture of the process of parental socialization of

children's outdoor play and how socialization differed related to children's age, children's gender, and parental perceptions of their neighborhood environments. Therefore, consistent with Stake (2005), cases for my study were drawn from families living in and around the urban center of a small metro county in the Midwest where I was located at the time.

In answering my research questions and addressing my theoretical propositions, I aimed to modify or expand upon the theoretical framework of my study of parental socialization. Therefore, my sampling strategy also strove to achieve saturation for any new theoretical developments that emerged throughout the course of the study (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Predetermining exactly how many cases were needed to accomplish the goals of my study was not possible. It was estimated that between 8-10 cases would be sufficient to accommodate cross-case comparisons and theoretical saturation related to divergent data that could modify or expand upon the initial theoretical foundation of my study. Qualitative data for each case was derived from multiple methods (e.g., interviews and observations) and perspectives (i.e., parents and children) within the family context.

*Sample context.*

The collective population of this urban center in the Midwest was 132,000 (54,000 town and 78,000 city; US Census, 2010). According to the US Census Bureau, people residing in this urban center comprised of an adjoining town and city within a small metro county in the Midwest from which data were collected for my study were predominately Caucasian (82% town and 75% city), had at least a high school education (94% town and 93% city) and almost half held bachelor's degrees (47% and 45% respectively). The median household income in 2010 was \$50,500 in the town and \$59,000 in the city. Approximately

24% of the population in the town lived below the poverty line and 11% in the city. Although the urban center was surrounded by primarily large commercial corn and soy bean farming, five colleges and universities as well as the national headquarters for two corporations were located in the community. These demographics may have accounted for the higher levels of education and median incomes compared to the state as whole.

The city managed 40 municipal parks and facilities including a zoo, an indoor ice arena and two golf courses. Two of the city parks included splash parks that were free to the public. The adjoining town managed 10 parks plus a golf course, children's museum, and multiple sport fields. The town also had two designated natural areas. Two of the town pools provided water park slides. Virtually all city and town parks had some form of playground facilities and/or recreational sport fields. A few of the parks had hiking trails and natural areas. Admission to all park facilities within the city and town with the exception of the zoo, children's discovery museum, and golf courses was free. There was a nominal fee charged for the use of the city or town's several public in ground pools.

In addition to conventional park facilities, both towns had at least one dog park. A greenway is a joint venture between the city and town that provided a series of multi-use trails for pedestrians. Finally, there was a corporate park located within the city to which only employees and their families were permitted. As this corporation was the largest employer in the city, many area families visited this park, including seven families in my study. The private corporate park had all of the amenities of the local parks in terms of playground equipment, recreational sport fields, and a year-round indoor pool.

Discussion of children's home ranges and parental permissions that allowed or prohibited the children from visiting local parks independently or with friends or siblings raised the question as to whether or not these local parks departments had any rules or regulations regarding the age at which the children were permitted by local government to do so. In response to my enquiries, the park directors of both the town and city indicated that there was no legal age at which children were permitted to visit area parks without being accompanied by their parents (personal communication, October 2, 2012). An enquiry was also made of the city police department regarding this matter. A public relations officer shared with me a copy of the state law that provided legal guidelines for officers to respond to calls from concerned citizens (personal communication, October 2, 2012). Officers must take into account on purported child abuse or neglect claims (a) the child's age, (b) the length of time the child was unsupervised by adults, and (c) whether there was disregard for a child's safety, mental or physical health, or welfare.

Evidence suggested that some of the children had climbed trees in the local park either in the presence of parents or during visits with area youth organizations. Enquiries to both the town and city park departments found that neither placed any restrictions on children's climbing trees (personal communication, October 2, 2012). However, the city park department did post rules for use on playground equipment such as not climbing up a slide. Both climbing trees and children playing independently in neighborhoods or parks were discussed by Louv (2008) as having become increasingly restricted or off limits in municipalities.

The small metro county in which this urban center was located had a population of 172,000 with a population spread of 143 persons/sq. mile (US Census, 2010; USDA Economic Research Service, 2003). The topology of the county was described as smooth plains per the USDA Economic Research Service (2008). According to the state's Department of Natural Resources, this county was the largest by acreage and had the largest acreage devoted to farm crops in the state. These farms were located throughout the county. The urban center in this county was located within a two hour drive of three major metropolitan cities in the Midwest.

In 2010, the rate of homeownership was 68% (US Census). The majority of the counties residents (75%) lived in the same house over the last year compared to 87% statewide (US Census, 2010). This difference may have reflected the rapid construction of new subdivisions in and around this urban center described by many parents in the study, many of whom had relocated within their children's lifetimes although remaining in the area. This urban center was described on the conventions and visitors' bureau website as located in the heart of the state where the people "exemplify the values of the Midwest and our remarkable quality of life." (retrieved June 28, 2013 from convention visitors' bureau website).

There was one county park, located approximately 12 miles from the urban center (retrieved June 28, 2013 from county government website). The park provided opportunities for fishing, boating, hiking, picnicking, and camping. There was one state park located within the county, approximately 15 miles from the urban center. This park offered similar outdoor recreation opportunities as the county park, although lifeguards were not provided at the

beach. Admittance to both of these parks was free of charge although there was a nominal fee for swimming.

In examining the context in which children's outdoor play occurred, one line of interview questioning addressed participation in adult-lead organized activities. All parents including two who grew up themselves in this urban center discussed the abundance of opportunities provided by the town and city park departments, other youth organizations, and private venues. Every parent agreed that there were more opportunities for their children than those afforded to them as children. Some viewed this as due to changes in society and others the difference between urban and rural life. Having resided in communities all along the rural-urban spectrum, I had never before seen such abundance in adult-lead organized activity offerings for children.

Both the city and town recreation departments published seasonal brochures depicting all of their public program offerings. All area residents received hard copies of these brochures in the mail as well as their being available online. Both departments' program guides exceeded 50 pages each season and included a variety of programming related to youth sports, after-school programs, summer day camps, and the arts (e.g., dance and theatre) for children ages 8 to 12 years. Programs for younger children, teens, families, and seniors are also provided but are not discussed further here because they are not as relevant to my study.

In addition to government programs in the area, the YMCA and YWCA agencies, among others, published their own parallel program offerings. Parents in the study described the parks and recreation youth sport programs as being introductory with enrollment in other

league sports as a child aged. Examples of these organizations included the PONY Baseball League and the Prairie Soccer League. Finally, most of the universities in the area offer some programming for children and families, particularly over the summer months. The community college actually publishes and distributes a program guide akin to that of the parks and recreation departments.

***Participating families.***

Ten families participated in my study. No parents or children withdrew from my study after beginning the interview process. Six families that expressed an interest in the study were not selected because they did not meet the emerging needs of the sample (e.g., homeschooled, only sons or child loved to play outdoors and did so often but families with those characteristics had already been sufficiently included) as well as the families ultimately included. One family was excluded prior to any data collection for failing to keep two separately scheduled meetings. Nine families were two-parent households and the last was a single-parent household with the children being raised by their mother. Seven of the families were referred to participate in my study by local agencies working with children with the remaining three families referred by parents of participating families.

An unintended consequence of the sample was that all of the mothers in the study either did not work outside of the home or worked part-time enabling them to be home when the children were out of school and over the summer months. The over inclusion of this family demographic may have been the result of self-selection in volunteering based on family's perceptions of the level of involvement and time commitment to the study. However, all participating parents agreed that the mother's presence at home afforded their

children free-time opportunities that would be prohibitive on the family if these mothers worked full time. Parents applied this rationale equally to the children's involvement in adult-lead organized activities as well as time available at home for playing outdoors.

Most families in the study resided in subdivisions located in and around this urban center in the Midwest. However, Case Family 7 and Case Family 10 provided contrasting residential cases with the former residing in an urban housing development and the later residing in a rural area beyond town limits. Seven of the families resided within less than one mile of public green space, most typically in the form of a public park (see Table 3.2, p. 120). All parents in the 10 families volunteered to participate in the study. Parents in four of the families (i.e., Cases 2, 5, 7 & 9) felt that their children did not play outdoors as frequently as other children did whereas parents in six families (i.e., Cases 1, 3, 4, 6, 8 & 10) believed their children loved playing outdoors and therefore did so much more often than most children.

The make-up of children within the families in terms of ages, gender, and birth order are depicted in Table 3.2 on page 120. Most families had both sons and daughters with contrast cases being Cases 1 and 2 that had only sons and Case 7 that had only daughters. The eldest child in each of the families was within the specified age range of 8 to 12 years. All children in these families whose ages fell within the specified range volunteered to participate in the study. Only siblings under 8 years of age were excluded from data collection. However, information regarding these siblings collected from parents and participating children during interviews as well as my own observations during visits to the home was included in the data for analysis.

Table 3.2  
Family Characteristics

Case	Age		Education		Participating Children			Other Siblings	Ethnicity	SES	Neighborhood	Nearest Public Green Space
	M	F	M	F	Eldest	Middle	Youngest					
1	38	43	BS	MS	M, 8 yrs.	N/A	N/A	M, 5 yrs.	Caucasian	Middle Class	Rural Town	< 1 mile
2	42	46	BS	MS	M, 12 yrs.	M, 10 yrs.	M, 8 yrs.	N/A	Mom & Boys Caucasian, Dad Asian American	Upper Middle Class	Rural Subdivision	> 1 mile
3	37	41	BA	MBA	F, 9 yrs.	F, 8 yrs.	N/A	M, 6 yrs.	Caucasian	Upper Middle Class	Urban Subdivision	< 1 mile
4	36	38	MA	MA	F, 9 yrs.	N/A	N/A	M, 7 yrs. M, 3 yrs. F, 2 yrs. F, 8 mos.	Caucasian	Upper Middle Class	Urban Subdivision	< 1 mile
5	39	45	MS	BS	M, 12 yrs.	F, 8 yrs.	N/A	M, 3 yrs.	Caucasian	Lower Middle Class	Urban	> 1 mile
6	40	39	AS	BS	M, 8 yrs.	N/A	N/A	F, 5 yrs.	Caucasian	Middle Class	Urban Subdivision	< 1 mile
7	27	N/A	AS	N/A	F, 9 yrs.	N/A	N/A	F, 5 yrs.	African American	Working Class	Urban	< 1 mile
8	32	40	BS	BS	M, 8 yrs.	N/A	N/A	F, 7 yrs. M, 5 yrs. F, 3 yrs. F, 6 mos.	Caucasian	Middle Class	Urban Subdivision	< 1 mile
9	42	42	BS	MS	M, 12 yrs.	N/A	F, 10 yrs.	N/A	Caucasian	Upper Middle Class	Urban Subdivision	< 1 mile
10	40	41	BS	PhD	F, 10 yrs.	M, 8 yrs.	N/A	M, 6 yrs.	Caucasian	Upper Middle Class	Rural	> 1 mile

Note. For Age & Education M = Mother, F = Father; For Participating Children & Other Siblings M = Male, F = Female

## **Data Collection Strategy and Implementation**

In this section, I describe my strategy for data collection and the implementation of all data collection procedures. Implementation discussion includes my case study protocol, interview guides for parent and child interviews, multiple methods employed during child interviews, child-led tour, and my own records (i.e., field notes and memos).

### **Strategy.**

Data collection for my qualitative comparative case study was guided by a modified analytic induction strategy that sought confirming and disconfirming evidence related to my initial theoretical framework. Case study investigation required that I remain flexible and adaptive in light of new or disconfirming information, seeing them as opportunities to be explored (Yin, 2003). My inquiry could be viewed as a funnel with early questions designed to broadly address the topic and allow parents and children to share in their own words their understandings and experiences of parent-child interactions related to outdoor play in their home. My data collection strategy necessitated that data analysis, both within and between cases, coincided with and informed my ongoing data collection.

Triangulation of data was one of the advantages of conducting qualitative case study research (Henderson, 2006; Patton, 2002). I used multiple methods, perspectives, and data sources in my study. Triangulation permitted a broader examination of my topic (Patton). Convergence of triangulated data enhanced the empirical rigor of my case study (Yin, 2003). Data analysis was an ongoing process that coincided with data collection (Yin). As my case study design required that I had a basis for cross-case comparisons, I strove to ensure continuity in the data collected from parents and children across sites.

Therefore, the best interview strategy for my study was the interview guide approach. Using an interview guide provided me with cues to ensure that all necessary topics were discussed in the course of an interview without dictating the placement or formulation of specific questions (Henderson, 2006). My goal was to strike a balance between fostering parents and children's spontaneous responses to broad questions about the topic as would be warranted in an exploratory or descriptive case study and probing for confirming or disconfirming evidence related to my initial theoretical framework. Participant responses often touched upon other areas for inquiry resulting in all of the interviews with parents and children following their own unique path but covering most or all of the topics.

As my qualitative data collection strategy was quasi-inductive in terms of investigating the utility of SDT and EVT in providing a theoretical framework for investigating parental socialization of children's outdoor play, evidence of the sensitizing concepts and theoretical propositions not discovered through spontaneous recall was followed by probes. Theory development related to new or disconfirming evidence was consistent with traditional interpretive qualitative inquiry.

I conducted face-to-face interviews with parents and children to garner their unique perspectives. Conducting observations and interviews in the families' homes was expected to make participants feel more comfortable. I envisioned my role throughout the data collection process as that of a privileged guest as I sought to establish and further develop rapport and trust with parents and children. I anticipated that this would better be accomplished through more than one visit to a families' home. Finally, after the parent and child interviews were

conducted I visited the family one last time to clarify data, revisit any insufficiently covered topics, and debrief family members about their experience participating in the study.

Case study protocols facilitated continuity in data collection and ongoing comparative-case analyses (Yin, 2003). The protocol outlined the procedures for conducting individual case studies and served to ensure that subsequent studies were comparable for purposes of literal and theoretical replication rather than being concerned with making cross-case comparisons. It was necessary that the same types of data and sources were collected at each site (Henderson, 2006). Included in the protocol were the instruments to be used in the study (e.g., child interview guide), as well as the procedures that were followed.

After the first case study was completed, cross-case comparisons accompanied the individual case studies in the analysis. Keeping the purpose of my qualitative case study in mind was important to focus analyses (Yin, 2003). Explanation building was a special case of pattern matching that involved continually reviewing data in light of theoretical propositions, revising propositions if necessary, and comparing previous cases and new cases against the revised propositions. This process differed from pattern matching in that my final explanations were ultimately derived from the data rather than being rigidly stipulated at the outset (Yin). Strauss and Corbin (2006) pointed out that explanation building was not inconsistent with theorizing, as in grounded theory, because both analytic strategies involved interplay between inductive and deductive processes.

Analytic induction differed from grounded theory in that it began with theorized propositions but similarly used thick description and coding for content analysis of the individual cases. I used interpretive qualitative coding strategies (i.e., open, axial, and

selective; Strauss & Corbin, 2006). Selective coding was expected to elucidate data that conformed to my initial theoretical framework and identify areas for further theoretical development. In this way, I allowed the data to speak for themselves before superimposing my theoretical frame upon it. Data that did not conform to the theoretical frame were further investigated and developed (Strauss & Corbin).

Yin (2003) suggested that an exemplary multiple-case study would involve revelations or new discoveries within individual cases but when replicated with other cases would culminate in a significant theoretical breakthrough. Although I did not set aspirations for my study quite that high, I did anticipate that my comparative-case analyses would further what was already known about parental socialization and children's leisure by expanding current research and revealing new constructs and theoretical relationships for further research. The remainder of this section is devoted to presenting the specific details involved in each of the aforementioned aspects of my data collection.

### **Implementation.**

In this section, I describe communication procedures for working with case families, the case study protocol to ensure uniformity of data collection across cases, parent and child interview guides, child-led tour, and my own records (i.e., field notes and memos). Specifics are given regarding the selection and development of multiple methods to focus the children's attention and reduce power differentials during interviews.

#### ***Communication procedures for working with families.***

I identified myself in all verbal and written communication as a PhD candidate of the Parks, Recreation, & Tourism Management Department at North Carolina State University

(NC State). I presented my valid NC State student ID to the parent(s) at our first meeting. Contact information for myself (i.e., cell phone number and personal email address), my dissertation committee chair (i.e., office phone and business email address), and the North Carolina State University IRB board (i.e., business phone, business email, and mailing address) was provided to participants via the family's copies of the parents' informed consent forms.

At the initial meeting, I asked parents for their street address, home phone number, cell phone number(s), and email address(es) as well as their contact preference to be recorded on a Demographic Information Sheet (see Appendix C3). I contacted parents via their preferred method. Children were never directly contacted. There was no contact with any member of the family via social media such as Facebook or Twitter.

Data collection for each case (i.e., family) occurred over the course of approximately one week with 60 minute parent interview(s) occurring at least two days before the first of two 30 minute interviews or single 60 minute interview with the targeted child. Attempts were made to schedule interviews early enough in the day that there was adequate time for data clarification, elaboration, and evaluation (Patton, 2002) although due to father's employment schedules their interviews were often conducted in the evening. A 60-minute wrap up meeting provided an opportunity to address any topics not adequately covered during interviews or to clarify information the parents or children had previously shared. All visits including interviews and the wrap up meeting were scheduled during my preliminary meeting with the family. In most cases, I was able to schedule interviews no less than two weeks in advance.

I contacted parent(s) a few days prior to our scheduled data collection sessions to confirm. Fortunately, no families were unable to meet with me during the pre-arranged week, as it would likely have necessitated my replacing them, depending upon the scheduling of other cases and the families' revised availability (e.g., family available the following week but I already had data collection with another family scheduled). It would not have been possible methodologically or logistically to collect data from more than one family at a time.

It was rarely necessary to contact parents to clarify information they or their child(ren) shared or to ask new questions that arose in talking to other families later on in the study. All follow-up inquiries were handled by a brief phone inquiry (e.g., missed recording a parent's age on the demographic form) or email if of a more comprehensive nature (e.g., clarifying a child's involvement in an adult-lead organized activity). This extra measure was not considered prohibitive because parents' responses were always voluntary and I always explained to them that they had already fulfilled their obligation to the study. Further, the wrap up meeting and any subsequent contacts with parents to follow up indicated that I took their family members' responses seriously and cared about the accuracy of what each person shared (Patton, 2002).

#### *Case study protocol.*

To assist me in providing consistency in data collection across cases, specific procedural details of my study were incorporated into a case study protocol. Case study protocols facilitate continuity in data collection and ongoing comparative-case analyses (Yin, 2003). My protocol outlined the procedures for conducting individual case studies and served to ensure that subsequent studies were comparable for purposes of literal and theoretical

replication. Although interviews could maintain unique flows of conversation and not all methodologies would be employed with all children, the continuity in collecting the same types of data from similar sources (i.e., parent and child interviews, walking tour, and other observations) were required to be consistent at each site (Henderson, 2006).

My case study protocol (see Appendix C1) included (a) an overview of my study including the theoretical foundation for the topic of study and rationale for implementing the various methodological procedures, (b) goals of the study, (c) field procedures including presentation of credentials, communication with participants about the study, and logistics of conducting the study, (d) parent and child interview guides, (e) procedures for maintaining case study databases, (f) a guide for writing the individual case study reports, and (g) procedures for conducting the comparative analyses (Yin, 2003). Whereas the case study report will be discussed under Data Analyses and other components of the protocol are self-evident, I have not yet discussed case study databases.

The case study databases served to organize the raw data collected from interviews, my field notes, and memos that would enable other researchers to examine the evidence without the interpretation inherent in a case study report (Yin, 2003). All data including written field notes, demographic sheets, and the children's outdoor play stories, maps, and journals were digitally recorded in a case study database for that family within MAXQDA. The case study database also included a narrative compilation of all data collected for a given family. The writing of this narrative was an optional step not intended for outside audiences that focused on constructing the case rather than being concerned with presentation (Patton, 2002). Case study narratives told the story of children's outdoor play within that family and

assisted me in developing a comprehensive picture derived from the many and varied sources of qualitative data. Thick descriptions of the data incorporated emic (i.e., participant) and etic (i.e., researcher) perspectives that were used to describe the case and present evidence for later analysis regarding research questions, theoretical propositions, and sensitizing concepts (Henderson, 2006). This narrative served as the basis for writing the individual case studies and conducting cross-case comparisons (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2003). From the narratives, a worksheet addressing each research question and supporting theoretical proposition was completed. This case worksheet was used for conducting the comparative analysis depicting the convergence or divergence of data from the research questions and theoretical propositions of my study (Stake, 2006).

In addition to providing a review of the theoretical foundation and procedures for the collection of data during site visits, the protocol included procedures that helped to ensure that I was prepared for fulfilling those procedures. Additional procedures within the protocol related to preparation for visits included written driving directions to backup GPS navigation; checking and packing of digital equipment (i.e., recorders, camera, and phone timer; packing of interview kit and all child interview activities including reminders to restock any coloring pages that previous children had kept from the outdoor activities binder. To minimize error and make preparations more efficient, I devised a site visit checklist (see Appendix C2).

*Prior to visiting families' homes.*

The case study protocol was reviewed prior to each site visit (Yin, 2003; see Appendix C1). Case study narratives that encapsulated the comprehensive data contained within the case study databases from prior cases were reviewed. Relying upon the narratives

made the review of data more efficient. Any data collected from the current family in terms of interviews, field notes, and memos prior to the next scheduled data collection session were reviewed (Henderson, 2006). Where digital recordings had not yet been transcribed, actual interview and field note recordings were played back at an accelerated speed (e.g., 150%).

Parent interviews were reviewed and whenever possible transcribed prior to conducting child interviews. Parents were able to provide insights into their child that enabled me to better establish rapport, trust, and ask more informed questions to which the child could respond in greater detail (Garbarino et al., 1992). This data collection sequencing had the added advantage of assisting in the triangulation of data by corroborating parents' data or garnering the different perspective of the child. As case study protocols require some elucidation and encompass all procedural aspects of the study methodology, the following is a brief description of the format and purpose of this instrument. Actual data collection methodologies will follow under the heading, *During the Visit*.

*During visits to families' homes.*

I was able to make an initial visit with each family to obtain signed forms, discuss the logistics of the study, schedule visits for interviews—separately for parents and children and a wrap up meeting, as well as to answer any questions regarding the topic or procedures of my study. I requested permission at the initial visit to digitally record all interviews and photograph artifacts. I made efforts to begin establishing a positive rapport with the family and especially the children at this initial meeting. I ensured parental consent and child assent forms were signed and a copy of these forms was returned to the parents when I returned for the first parent interview. Parent and child interviews occurred separately in the family home.

These sessions occurred on weekdays, weekday evenings, and weekend days to accommodate the busy schedules of each family.

***Interview guides.***

Using an interview guide provided me with cues to ensure that all necessary topics were discussed in the course of an interview without dictating the placement or formulation of specific questions (Henderson, 2006). My goal was to strike a balance between fostering parents and children's spontaneous responses to broad questions about the topic as would be warranted in an exploratory or descriptive case study and probing for confirming or disconfirming evidence related to my initial theoretical framework. Given the breadth of the scope of my topic and lines of questioning, the fully developed interview guides were too cumbersome to be used effectively during the conducting of interviews. Therefore bulleted topic lists were used for conducting parent and child interviews. The parent interview guide can be found in Appendix D1 and the child interview guide in Appendix D2.

***Parent interviews.***

Parent interviews were scheduled for one hour and conducted prior to interviewing the child(ren). I was able to schedule separate interviews with each parent. During interviews, I tried to remain cognizant of my body language to ensure that the parent felt that all of her or his responses were accepted. I also routinely made validating utterances, gestures, or comments for each of a parent's responses (e.g., nodding affirmatively or communicating "um hmm" or "sure." Where I was not clear on a response for any reason, I mirrored the parent's response for clarification, followed by the same validation. There were very few instances where this stance was difficult to maintain, such as when a parent

discussed a tangential topic such as their use of corporal punishment (i.e., spanking) with their children in the past. However, I strove to remain non-judgmental and refrained from commenting. Generally redirecting a parent back to the topic of children's outdoor play or the specific question being addressed was a sufficient response to put the interview back on track.

Parents provided insights into their child that enabled me to better establish rapport, trust, and ask more informed questions to which the child could respond in greater detail (Garbarino et al., 1992). If insufficient time elapsed between parent and child interviews for the former to be transcribed, they were listened to at an accelerated rate (e.g., 150%) prior to meeting with any of the children for interviews.

#### *Child interviews.*

Again, the child's verbal assent was obtained before I conducted the interview. All interviews were semi-structured based on the incorporation of activities to encourage and focus discussion of a child's outdoor play. Care was taken to make phrasing of questions appropriate for children's developmental level and to ensure neutrality so children's responses would not be led by the framing of the question itself. Sometimes it was necessary to clarify that a child understood what I was asking. I strove to not be seen by the child as an authority figure.

School-age children can feel that adults tend to ask them questions that the adult already knows the answer to. Asking broad spontaneous recall questions first and following up with open-ended probes helped me reduce positive valence (i.e., adult power dominance over the child; Garbarino et al., 1992). I tried to remain aware and diligent in my body

language to ensure that the child felt that all of her or his responses were accepted. I also attempted to make validating utterances, gestures, or comments for each of a child's responses (e.g., nodding affirmatively or communicating "um hmm" or "sure.") Where I was not sure that I was clear on a response because it seemed incongruent with other data, I mirrored the child's response for clarification, followed by the same validation.

Interviews took place in the children's homes in a shared and visible living space like the living room or family room where family members were close by but not directly present to influence the child's responses. Only on two occasions did a parent remain during a portion of the child interview process (i.e., Cases 1 and 4 during wrap ups). Any interjections by the parents were included on digital recordings, transcriptions, and coded with the remainder of the data as possibly having influenced children's responses.

I tried, with relative success, to position myself at the child's level during interview sessions. Sometimes this involved sitting next to or adjacent to the child at a table, beside them on a couch, or and sometimes on the floor. The only time I sat across from a child facing them was when we were on the floor as this afforded a more casual atmosphere for the interview and activities.

Although I intended to keep interviews shorter for children if needed, that never occurred. However, I did often scheduled two interview sessions to progress at the child's comfort level in an effort to avoid overwhelming them. Initially child interviews were planned to be conducted over the course of one 60 minute or two visits of approximately 30 minutes each. Interview schedules with the children varied with some children being able to remain interested and engaged for a single one-hour session, whereas others were split into

two 30 minute sessions. In families where more than one child participated and more than one meeting was necessary, I conducted half of the interview with each child at each session. Topics covered during the interview sessions were the same for the siblings so that if conversation ensued before the next session it would not confound the children's responses at the second portion of the interview.

As children have shorter attention spans than adults and are more likely to *open up* and share more information if the researcher is not perceived as a stranger or authority figure (Garbarino et al., 1992), I took care to project a non-threatening and friendly demeanor, in addition to addressing the concerns already discussed regarding the positioning of an adult researcher in child interviews.

The use of props (e.g., drawing materials) is common in conducting interviews with children as they can provide a fun way to ease into a topic (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Using props and allowing off topic tangents allows the child to exercise some control in the interview situation (Garbarino et al, 1992.). I employed both of these techniques only refocusing the child if a tangent became time prohibitive to collecting further data. To put the children at ease and keep the conversation on topic, I employed multiple resources. The goal was to use a myriad of research methodologies that would further my understanding of children's outdoor play, particularly from the children's perspective. All children with the exception of one 12-year-old boy were receptive to all of the methods. After sensing that this young man was experiencing some discomfort, I offered to conduct his interview more akin to the structure of the parent interviews. He elected the latter and was visibly more at ease and forthcoming in talking about his outdoor play experiences.

*Interview kit.*

I took an interview kit that contained crayons, markers, drawing paper and a variety of small toys with me to each child interview. The children were offered a brief opportunity to use these objects for free play before I attempted to redirect the child's attention to discussing their outdoor play experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). This transition incorporated the activity in a manner that served as a prompt for further discussion and elaboration such as asking the child to draw a picture of children playing outside. However, none of the children spontaneously played with the toys in a manner that elicited data for analysis. Rather the coloring materials were used by some children to create a map of their outdoor play spaces at my request.

Instructions for conducting each of these child interview activities were incorporated into the case study protocol to ensure consistency in their implementation with all of the children both within and across families. Further, a child could have elected not to do any or all of these activities preferring a more traditional question and answer format as occurred with one 12-year-old boy. Also, due to time constraints and the unique developmental needs of each child it was not feasible that all activities be performed with all children. The intent was to provide a platform for eliciting and focusing children's discussion of their outdoor play experiences. The following discussion addresses the rationale for selecting these specific techniques, their development, and their implementation.

*Photo-Elicitation techniques.*

Photo elicitation interviews (PEI) involve the use of photos to focus discussion (Harper, 2002). Epstein, Stevens, McKeever, and Baruchel (2006) used this technique in a

study of camper perspectives of a camp for children with cancer. In this study, the researchers took the photos that were referred to during the interview. Wilson Outley and Floyd (2002) had teenagers take photos of their urban neighborhoods and keep journals about the photos that they took. This methodology has also been used with adults in outdoor recreation settings (Andersson Cederholm, 2004; Loeffler, 2004). It appeared that an advantage of having participants take the photos was that they are more meaningful to them and likely to elicit richer data but this was at the expense of a researcher's control over the content of the photos. Therefore, having the children in my study take their own pictures was deemed inappropriate for the needs of the study. Photo-elicitation procedures were used to encourage children's recall and sharing of their outdoor play experiences. These techniques also afforded another opportunity for triangulation of data both within the child's interview as well as with other family evidence.

*Play activities and environments.*

A binder containing coloring pages of a wide variety of outdoor play activities and photographs of different potential outdoor play environments was browsed with each child (see Appendix D5). This photo-elicitation technique encouraged children's recall and discussion of their experiences with various outdoor play activities and play environments. As much of the data were collected with children over the colder seasons of the year (i.e., January-March), this method served to provoke the children's memories of warmer weather experiences.

Coloring pages of children's outdoor play activities were downloaded from a variety of free coloring page websites. An effort was made to include activities across the spectrum

of outdoor play including nature-related, sport-related, playground-related, and toy-related. Ninety coloring pages were included and viewed by all children in the study. The children were asked to share whether or not they had ever participated in the activities. Sometimes children spontaneously elaborated or shared stories of their experiences of some of the activities or their affective responses demonstrating their intrinsic motivation with comments such as “love it” or “hate it.” At other times, children were asked to share more about their experiences. However, scheduling and children’s attention spans prohibited discussing all activities. Therefore, I only enquired when the child made a comment or gesture that appeared fruitful for further development of the data.

All children including younger siblings were offered the option of taking as many of the coloring pages as they would like. As I had extra copies and they were numbered in the binder, I was also able to track which children took which pictures. This information also was incorporated into the data. For example, whereas an 8-year-old boy decided not to take any pictures, his 5-year-old sister did. In this family, children played outdoors often. She chose pictures of girls playing outdoors and pictures of mothers and children participating in outdoor activities. Conversely, in a family where the two daughters ages 5 and 9 years rarely played outdoors, between them they took almost every coloring page in the set. These observations were just one more component in an effort to form a comprehensive picture of children’s outdoor play.

Photographs of outdoor play environments encompassed patches of urban green space as well as rural fields and forest areas. Examples of landscaped or domesticated nature spaces were included as well as wild nature spaces. An area nature center, approximately 12 miles

from the urban center in and around which families were recruited had a unique outdoor play area that many area children, including those in the study, had visited on at least one occasion. Photos of the natural play area were included not only for the children to discuss their specific experiences, but also to elicit discussion as to whether or not the children had ever engaged in those types of activities there or elsewhere (e.g., climbed a tree, built a stick fort, or played in a creek). There were 10 pages with four photographs per page for a total of 40 play environment pictures. This was a sample demonstrating the range of environments.

*Outdoor play map.*

Finally children were asked, if deemed appropriate, to draw a map of their outdoor play spaces that could be used to discuss the child's experiences playing in those areas depicted as well as serving as a guide for the walking tour depending upon sequencing of these activities (see Appendix D7). This methodology was included because of its success in previous research in providing additional sources of data and triangulation. Moore (1986) included observations in a multi-method approach that also involved children's drawings of favorite play spaces in their neighborhoods (i.e., cognitive maps) with interviews and child guided *field trips* to see these places in person. Derr (2002) used a similar approach but also included essays written by the children describing their favorite places. Others have employed cognitive maps alone (Andrews, 1973). This method has an advantage over observation for learning about children's secret or special places in nature (Sobel, 1993). However, cognitive maps alone tell nothing of children's experiences, thoughts, or emotions related to outdoor play unless they are used, as in my study, to focus discussion during an

interview. Not all children were asked to draw the map due to either time constraints or their play having been stated as being restricted to their backyard.

The purpose of the child's map was to serve as an additional photo-elicitation technique to encourage and focus children's discussion of their outdoor play experiences including play spaces and activities. Depending upon the timing of the walking tour of the children's outdoor play spaces, the map served as a double check to ensure that all activities and play spaces previously mentioned on the map were included and discussed on the tour. This procedure also contributed to triangulation of the children's data. Children were given a blank, unlined sheet of paper with their choice of crayons, colored pencils, or markers. The children were asked to draw a picture of their outdoor play spaces and the only requirement was that they had to include their house on the map.

*Feelings flashcards.*

All children were also asked to respond to a set of feeling flash cards developed by Parry (2010; see Appendix D6). Little is known about children's affective experiences related to outdoor play. On one hand, outdoor play has been painted as an experience of bucolic bliss (Paris, 2008; Van Slyck, 2006). On the other hand, researchers have speculated that parents likely play a role in the socialization of children's emotions in the outdoors (Bixler et al., 2002). This flashcard method provided a means of comparing children's affective responses to playing outdoors with those of their parents. Enjoyment also is a key component of intrinsic motivation.

This photo-elicitation technique encouraged children to share the affective dimension of their outdoor play recollections. Children were asked to think about how they usually felt

when they played outside and to respond to each of the 20 cards. The dichotomous pairings on the cards were: cheerful/cranky, proud/ashamed, comfortable/uncomfortable, peaceful/angry, confident/shy, serious/silly, disappointed/excited, happy/sad, scared/brave, cuddly/lonely, carefree/worried, tired/ants in my pants, left out/included, disgusted/delighted, overjoyed/annoyed, calm/nervous, friendly/mean, safe/frightened, loud/quiet, and busy/bored. The cards were presented to each child in no particular order. The children either chose one of the dichotomous options represented by the card, denied that they ever typically felt either option or felt that it did not really apply to their outdoor experiences, or shared that they recalled feeling both of the dichotomous emotions at one time or another when playing outdoors.

Children's spontaneous discussion of their recollections or associations of these emotions with their outdoor play experiences was encouraged. Sometimes young children interpreted several emotions to mean the same thing such as nervous, scared, and frightened. In those instances, the various cards served more as a form of triangulation rather than generating any new data. This activity also afforded me the opportunity to ask questions about what children felt good at (i.e., feelings of competence) when they played outdoors. Although this particular card set was originally designed for use in play therapy settings, it was selected for my study because of its appropriateness for use with diverse racial and ethnic groups as well as the applicability of most of the cards to a child's outdoor play experiences.

*Projective technique: outdoor play story.*

Another activity designed to enhance the child's recall of their outdoor play experiences, and to perhaps provide insights the child might not share if directly questioned, was creating a story of a child playing outdoors. Particularly with younger children, play including storytelling and puppetry seem to be useful for focusing children's attention and soliciting information from their perspective in a less biased way than through interviewing alone. Evans, Brauchle, Haq, Stecker, Wong, and Shapiro (2007) developed a children's version of the New Ecological Paradigm that involves playing games rather than completing a survey. Ahn and Filipenko (2006) employed multiple methods familiar to kindergarteners including storyboards, arts and crafts projects, and puppetry in their effort to understand how young children create meaning about their worlds. Given the logistic issues regarding my study and what else was included in the interview kits, different colored monkey finger puppets and a few "character" soft, throwable objects were generally chosen by the children to represent characters in their stories.

This projective technique for younger children involved following a storyboard (see Appendix D3) to create their own personal story, which then could be acted out with toy props if the child desired. The storyboard map was adapted from free resources available to educators of middle school children on the Education World website (<http://www.educationworld.com/>, retrieved September 7, 2011). To expedite the process and enable children to devote all of their energies to creating their stories, I played the role of "secretary" and wrote their responses on the story map. The child and I reviewed what appeared on the story map to ensure that I had understood and captured their story. These

conversations occurred within the context of the digitally recorded interviews and were coded the same as other data.

For older children, a TAT-like (i.e., Thematic Apperception Test) activity involved the child looking at a picture of a face peering out a door and to verbally relay the story of a child going outdoors to play (see Appendix D8). This methodology was adapted from that used by Katz and colleagues (2008) in a study of children's intrinsic motivation. I intended that older children would be given the choice of which version of the projective activity to do. In actuality, all of the children were given the choice. All but one 12-year-old boy elected to do the story map version and act out or put on a "play" of their outdoor play story.

#### *Activity journals.*

Writing and drawing are common grade school activities for children ages 8 to 12 years. Increasingly they have become used in youth programming including outdoor and environmental education programs as a means to assist children in reflecting upon their experiences being in natural environments (e.g., Texas Parks and Wildlife "Get Out" Journal downloadable in pocket, small, and large PDF formats (<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/publications/kids/index.phtml>, retrieved September 7, 2011).

This journal along with modified event map templates and journal pages from Educationworld.com and Prek-8.com (<http://www.educationworld.com/>, retrieved September 7, 2011; <http://prek-8.com/>, retrieved September 7, 2011) were incorporated into a voluntarily completed activity journal. Clip art for the journal was taken from a free website by artist Phillip Martin (<http://www.phillipmartin.info>, retrieved September 19, 2011). There were two designs with one journal being designed for younger children by requesting less

writing and providing more opportunities for drawing (see Appendix D9). The older child journal provided a variety of methods for written expression and fewer pages for drawing (see Appendix D10). Over the course of data collection with various families rather than prescribing an *appropriate* journal format based on the child's age, children in later cases were allowed to choose their preference of format. No evidence suggested that this change either negatively or positively impacted completion as there was no perceptible change in the completion rates.

Both activity journals included time diary elements to capture the child's free time activities including how much time was spent in outdoor play. The time diary component was designed to accompany a parent time diary developed but not implemented for this study because of concerns families would shy away from participating if too much was asked of them over the course of the one to one and a half week data collection period. Even without that additional measure, the journal served as another source for triangulating data and for encouraging recall and sharing of the children's outdoor play experiences. As most data collection occurred during the winter months, pages in the journal asked children to draw or write about their favorite activities outdoors during all four seasons.

Out of concerns that families would see the requirements of participation as prohibitive, it was stressed on the parent consent form and re-iterated at the initial meeting that the children's completion of these journals was not required but intended to help children be more comfortable in talking to a stranger about their outdoor play experiences through describing what they had completed in their journal. Each child session was begun by asking the child whether they had completed any of the pages in their journal. Whatever had been

completed was discussed and became a part of the interview recording and transcript for inclusion in the data. All journals were collected from the children at the last child interview session, digitally scanned, and returned to the child for them to keep at the wrap up meeting.

Given the efforts to stress that this journal activity was voluntary, few children completed the entire journal, citing time constraints due to homework and participation in organized activities throughout the week. Most children completed about one-third of the journal with some focusing on the brief time diary components and others on drawing pictures of their seasonally favorite activities. Completion appeared to vary with each child's interests. Two children completed the entire journal. Only one 8-year-old boy did not complete any of the journal and his 10-year-old sister completed only a single drawing. Unfortunately, their mother had misplaced the journals. They eventually were found, scanned, and returned as with the others.

#### *Observations of physical artifacts.*

Archival evidence in the form of photographs taken during a child lead tour was used to supplement and triangulate interview data. In addition to the walking tour of children's outdoor play environments and resources at home, I completed an observation checklist during each visit to a family's home.

#### *Child-Led tour.*

Although interview data in case studies is commonly substantiated with archival data, I decided that requesting sales receipts for purchases supporting a child's outdoor play would be too cumbersome and invasive. I was also concerned that requesting archival data could deter some families from volunteering to participate in my study. Therefore, I decided that

observations would provide sufficient corroborating evidence of children's outdoor play activities, spaces, and resources.

Efforts to observe toys or play spaces during the walking tour were conducted under what I refer to as the *rule of threes*, a child protection measure commonly utilized in youth organizations working with minors. The rule of threes dictated that at least three people were to be involved in any interaction. At no time was I alone with a child beyond earshot of the child's parent or parents. During the Case 4 and Case 6 walking tours where only a single child participated, no parent accompanied us outdoors; however, at all times the children and I was observable from within the home. The only parent to accompany us during a walking tour was in Case 1. Information shared by the mother in Case 1 was recorded in my field notes for inclusion in the data just as with the children in the study. In all other cases, at least one other sibling accompanied us on the walking tour. Typically, this occurred because the sibling participated in the study as well. The rule of threes served to afford protection of the child as well as for myself against any allegations of inappropriate or unethical behavior.

Observations of physical artifacts such as toys, sport equipment, or play spaces (e.g., backyard jungle gyms or swing sets) used by a child for outdoor play were recorded by digital photograph, with the parents' and child's permission, during a walking tour led by the child. No identifying information related to the family was included in the photographs (e.g., house numbers, license plates, or inclusion of any family member). As anticipated participants were encouraged to provide additional information and insights in sharing their stories about the artifacts as we came across them. The children often shared stories related to their experiences with particular resources or outdoor play settings. As conversations during

the walking tour were not recorded due to logistical difficulties, detailed written field notes were essential to record at the time. Field notes recorded during walking tours included my observations and impressions that were later coded and analyzed as part of the case study database (Henderson, 2006). The use of walking tours as another method for triangulating data within a case was predicated upon the success of previous research conducted over the past four decades in using this technique (e.g., Derr, 2002; Hart, 1979, Moore, 1986, & Sobel, 1993).

*Observation checklist.*

Conducting interviews in the families' homes facilitated my making initial observations and requesting to see and record the presence of relevant artifacts within the home including such items as indoor/outdoor toys and displayed photographs depicting family members outdoors. I designed an observation sheet so that I could record not only observed artifacts but also parent-child interactions related to the child's and siblings' free time activities including outdoor play (see Appendix C10). I loosely based the design for my observation sheet on the Behaviors of Eating and Activity for Children's Health Evaluation System (BEACHES) designed by McKenzie and colleagues (1991; McKenzie 2009).

Adapted for the topic of outdoor play within the context of a child's free time activity, I looked at the activities the child and his or her siblings participated in during my visit, whether or not the motivations for engaging or disengaging in an activity appeared to be intrinsically motivated by the child or externally influenced by other family members, as well as any specific parental interactions with the child related to that activity. Observations of what family members were at home during a visit and whether they spent their time indoors,

outdoors, or some combination of both was also noted. The observation sheet was designed along with the children's activity journals to correspond to a parent time diary that was developed but not implemented for this study.

Finally, on page one, notes were recorded regarding the setting during a given site visit including such items as the weather, or the presence or absence of children's footprints in the snow in the yard. On the second page of the observation sheet I noted my observations of any play resources inside or outside of the house that could be related to outdoor play (e.g., use of cars and trucks as indoor/outdoor toys). The observation checklist provided an additional means of triangulating data within a case as well as serving to remind me to look for all evidence related directly or indirectly to a child's outdoor play.

#### **Field notes during visits to families' homes.**

Jotting some notes to jog my memory should not have been a distraction during interviews (Henderson, 2006). However, minimal notes were jotted on the interview or observation sheets. Written notes or discussion in digital field notes related to nonverbal behaviors and gestures during interviews that were important because, unlike long pauses or tone of voice, they could not be picked up in the digital recording of the interview. Although written notes could serve as a backup should the digital recorder have failed (Patton, 2002), I elected to minimize note taking during interviews to allow me to direct my full attention to the participant and to maintain a conversational atmosphere. I relied upon the use of two recorders, one digital and the other cassette, so that if one failed there was still a recording of the interview. Further, because of the placement of the recorders, sometimes one recorder captured a comment more clearly for later transcription. Therefore backup cassette

recordings were not destroyed until the transcription of digital recordings was complete and included in the case study database in MAXQDA.

Whereas written field notes typically consist of key phrases, list major points made by parent or child during interview, significant direct quotes, and the use of standardized abbreviations or shorthand for efficiency, my digitally recorded field notes followed a different course. Because of the conversational nature of my recorded field notes, I had to clearly distinguish between facts and my own interpretations and impressions.

### **Field notes following visits to families' homes.**

Field notes included my observations and impressions for coding and analysis as part of the case study database (Henderson, 2006). Notes described who was present, what transpired or was discussed, when this happened, and where the observation or interview took place. Descriptions of the setting included the physical and social context (Patton, 2002). It was important to indicate whether a note expressed a fact or my own interpretation or impression (Henderson). I strove to provide concrete descriptions with specific details and avoid vague, evaluative, or interpretive words in describing observations and facts (Patton). If noting a conversation not recorded during an interview, I provided exact quotes to the extent possible in notes jotted either on site or in digital field notes immediately following the visit (Henderson). Field notes included my own feelings, insights, and hunches with clear identification as such. Pseudonyms were used to identify all participants in the transcription of my field notes. Additional notes and memos were later routinely added to the transcribed field notes in MAXQDA. I included notes about things that I may not have understood at the time in relation to a specific case or as it related collectively to the ongoing

comparative case analyses as this was a better alternative rather than omitting potentially relevant data and could help identify areas for further clarification and investigation (Henderson).

All field notes were digitally recorded on the drive home or as soon as possible thereafter. Checking recordings was important because if it failed, rerecording or writing field notes immediately took on greater urgency (Patton, 2002). In clearing the digital recorder for further sessions, field notes for a single day in two different cases were deleted in error without having yet been copied into the MAXQDA case study databases for those families. Once this issue was discovered, I created a new digital file recounting as best as I could recall the circumstances and events of those sessions.

No further data were collected until my field notes had been recorded to avoid confounding recall from more than one visit as well as to provide a foundation for future data collection (Henderson, 2006). Details about my observations of the setting and circumstances of the interview were included (Patton, 2002). I also included notes regarding how well I thought the interview went, the quality of the rapport, and the perceived responsiveness or willingness of the participant regarding the interview lines of questioning and procedures used. Reflection upon the quality of the data collected in achieving the desired data assisted me in planning for the wrap up meeting with the family or in modifying questions or procedures with future participants. I analyzed any problems and attempted to modify procedures to improve the quality of the data collected. I also reviewed my interview and observation notes to make sure they made sense both at the time and would again later when I coded them (Patton). All field notes were transcribed into MAXQDA and included in the

data for coding and analysis. Written field notes scribbled on interview sheets or written during walking tours were digitally scanned and added to the case study database.

### **Memos.**

Memos included my reactions, reflections, or thoughts in reviewing field notes or other data (Henderson, 2006). Memos could include directions for data analysis or products of analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Unlike field notes, my memo types included theoretical notes, coding notes, and operational notes. Memos “grow in complexity, density, clarity, and accuracy as the research progresses” (Strauss & Corbin, p. 218). Later memos often built upon, modified, or negated earlier memos. Memos helped me, as the researcher, to gain analytical distance from the data.

All memos were created in MAXQDA where the software clearly identified them as such. MAXQDA provided flexibility in developing useful headings that denoted concepts or categories (e.g., coding, interpretation, or theoretical memos). My memos never contained direct quotes as they were linked to specific interview data within MAXQDA. An advantage of recording interviews was that the questions were recorded with their responses and transcribed as such in MAXQDA to provide the context (Patton, 2002) as well as to identify any possible researcher bias in the phrasing of a question that may have influenced the response. Therefore, I was able to add procedural memos cautioning me to seek triangulation from other sources in those instances. Likewise, it enabled me to make memos of effective question phrasing for use in future data collection.

Memos could have been modified in light of new evidence but I rather elected to add additional memos to leave an audit trail of my developing insights and interpretations. This

also afforded me the opportunity to revisit original and revised memos later to ensure my thinking had not changed. Notes on saturation for specific constructs typically occurred within my field notes only for those that emerged from the data as given the nature of my research questions and theoretical propositions they pertained to all families (e.g., all parents had rules about their children playing outdoors). Saturation was sought more for the variations in the expression of the sensitizing concepts between families (e.g., home range boundaries for independent outdoor play). Saturation in the form of triangulation of data was sought within families resulting in memos that identified confirming or disconfirming evidence. As suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998), my memos differed throughout the research process. Memos during open coding were of unlimited variety whereas during axial coding, memos helped me to relate the data to categories. Memos during selective coding highlighted gaps in theory development and purposive sampling. These memos tended to focus more on theoretical and operational notes (Strauss & Corbin).

### **Data Analysis Strategy and Implementation**

Data analysis was an ongoing process that coincided with data collection (Yin, 2003). Each individual case had to be fully developed before moving on to the next case. All case family data were included in a case study database. A case study narrative was compiled that told each family's story of outdoor play from the case study database. Case study narratives were copied into a separate MAXQDA file for individual and comparative coding and analysis.

I used qualitative coding strategies (i.e., open, axial, and selective; Strauss & Corbin, 2006). The final data coding scheme in MAXQDA contained 12,149 codes. Selective coding

elucidated how the data conformed to my initial theoretical framework and identified areas for further theoretical development. In this way, I was able to allow the data speak for themselves before superimposing my theoretical frame upon it. Data that did not conform to the theoretical frame were further investigated and developed as the comparative case study progressed.

Addressing my second research question, How do parents differ in parental socialization of their children's outdoor play? added another dimension to my study by looking at differences found in the outdoor play literature (i.e., child's gender, child's age, and perceptions of environmental factors such as crime) in light of the interpersonal process of parental socialization. Before, I could employ my modified analytic induction strategy to addressing this question, I had to first establish that differences actually existed or this question would have been rendered groundless. Children's data were analyzed for evidence that the child has observed or experienced (a) differences in parenting practices; (b) heard parents express values or beliefs consistent with different practices; or (c) observed other parent behaviors (e.g., nonverbal communication) consistent with different practices related to a child's age, gender or perception of environmental factors. Evidence was sought through parent interviews, child interviews, and my observations related to the presence or absence of differential parental socialization related to a child's age, gender, or perception of environmental factors. This included both direct and indirect forms of parental socialization.

#### **Individual case study analyses.**

All data from within a family were compiled into a case record from which a case narrative was written in the format of telling that family's story of outdoor play. Narratives

served as the basis for open, axial, and selective coding in MAXQDA. Narratives and coding were used to create a comparative analysis worksheet (Stake, 2006). These worksheets contained sections related to: (a) summarizing the case including identification of any unique characteristics that distinguished that family from the other cases and may therefore have affected the data, (b) convergent or divergent findings related to the first research question and associated theoretical propositions, (c) convergent and divergent findings related to the second research question and associated theoretical propositions (i.e., differences in parental socialization related to a child's age, child's gender, or perceptions of environmental factors), (d) convergence or divergence of findings with the theoretical framework and sensitizing concepts, and finally (e) refinement of case selection criteria for future cases based on topics not sufficiently addressed by this and previous cases or to further develop emergent findings from this case. These worksheets were used in lieu of individual case reports as they were organized to demonstrate how each case demonstrated or failed to demonstrate each theoretical proposition as Yin (2003) stated should be addressed in individual case reports. The use of thick description typically found in individual reports was reserved for the comparative analysis as that was the focus of my study. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of all participants. These individual case study worksheets also served as the basis for cross-case analyses.

### **Comparative case analysis.**

Coinciding with analysis and development of the case narratives, coding and individual comparative analysis worksheets was a separate comparative-case analysis that focused collectively on all cases included in my study. Replication logic (i.e., literal or

theoretical) was addressed in comparing and contrasting the findings of individual case studies (Yin, 2003). Comparative case analyses involved analyzing the comparative case worksheets across cases to demonstrate how patterns in the overall data related to the questions and theoretical propositions posed by my study (Yin). My Chapter 4 Findings and Chapter 5 Discussion constituted the comparative case report. These chapters are organized as responses to each research question and proposition.

The primary audience for my comparative case study report was my dissertation. Thus, my comparative case study report, as presented in Chapter 5 Discussion, emphasized connections of my findings to previous theory and research, including modifications or expansions upon my theoretical framework in light of the data. Although my overall dissertation follows a linear-analytic structure, thick descriptions are used in both individual and comparative case reports in presenting findings and contributions to the analyses of theory-building structures (Yin, 2003). Although no theoretical propositions were revised from those proposed at the outset of my study, the manifestation of some of the sensitizing constructs were revised (e.g., parental involvement). Findings substantiating these revisions were also presented.

Unlike the individual case reports, the comparative report related the overall findings to the existing literature in the areas of (a) outdoor play, (b) leisure socialization, and (c) parental socialization. Recommendations for future research were also made.

### **Trustworthiness**

Quantitative research literature generally depicted efforts at empirical rigor in terms of the reliability and validity of data (Gall et al., 1996). Interpretive researchers use the term

trustworthiness rather than reliability or validity to describe attempts to minimize unknown bias in conducting qualitative studies (Henderson, 2006). They strive to identify and reflect upon biases to minimize inappropriately interpreting participants intended meanings and strive for empirical rigor just as researchers using quantitative approaches. The difference is that criteria for assessing rigor in a quantitative study may not have been appropriate in qualitative research (Henderson). In designing my case study, I drew heavily from Yin (2003), who used the constructs of reliability or validity to describe empirical rigor in case study research. Although it was more appropriate for my qualitative case study to discuss empirical rigor in terms of trustworthiness, I included comparisons to the quantitative counterparts. Having been schooled extensively in the latter, I found that comparing and contrasting them side by side facilitated my own understanding and appropriate use of the qualitative constructs. Trustworthiness in qualitative research was comprised of: (a) confirmability, (b) credibility, (c) transferability, and (d) dependability (Henderson). For each of these subheadings I present the rationale behind them followed by how I addressed them in implementing my study.

### **Confirmability.**

Confirmability is akin to construct validity. Yin (2003) suggested that construct validity was problematic in case study research requiring the development of operationally defined measures as in quantitative research. However, Yin also suggested that the use of multiple sources, establishing a chain of evidence, and using key informants could strengthen a study. Yin depicted construct validity as originating with the researcher. Conversely, confirmability, the qualitative counterpart of construct validity, addresses the extent to which

findings were reflective of the qualitative data and “not a product of the researcher’s biases and prejudices” (Henderson, 2006, p. 188). Qualitative research must be reported in a manner that gives readers access to those involved in the study by positioning the researcher in the study and using direct quotes from participants. The use of key informants and peer review could help guard against researcher bias (Henderson; Yin). Henderson suggested that a researcher could test for tolerance of contrary findings by engaging a couple of critical colleagues in reviewing initial findings and offering alternative explanations. However, Yin suggested that although informants or peers should not be able to dispute factual information of a case, a researcher should not automatically incorporate reinterpretations as researchers are entitled to their own interpretations. When no objective truth existed as in the different perspectives of participants, procedures identified those perspectives that should be included in a case study (Yin).

To address confirmability, I included the perspectives of parents and children across 10 families. I conducted this multiple-case study for purposes of literal and theoretical replication. Regarding the definition of terms for purposes of credibility, I find that my study was a hybrid of Henderson’s (2006) interpretive approach and Yin’s (2003) positivist approach. I used sensitizing concepts derived from the literature for my theoretical framework. However, unlike Yin, I did not operationally define these concepts. Rather I relied on the participants to define the concepts as they perceived them and as they pertained to my study of parental socialization of children’s outdoor play. Further, I did not restrict data to the sensitizing concepts and theoretical propositions of my initial theoretical framework. I used several parents as informants and the review of my dissertation committee

to guard against bias. The use of key informants, also referred to as member checks, involved asking some parents to review their family's case study narrative for my interpretations of the data collected in paraphrasing or portraying participant's intended meaning or perceptions for accuracy (Henderson; Yin).

### **Credibility.**

Credibility is akin to internal validity in that it is concerned with valid inferences drawn from the data (Ray, 1993). Inferences are made whenever data could not be directly observed (Yin, 2003). The truthfulness of findings is more evident when emerging theory can be directly related to the qualitative data (e.g., use of direct quotations in reporting findings; Henderson, 2006). Reflexivity and positionality of the researcher must be addressed regarding how it may have influenced interpretation of data and drawing of conclusions. Triangulation of data contributed to credibility by corroborating evidence collected from multiple sources or perspectives (Yin).

To address credibility, I triangulated data, methods, and sources. Explanation building was the analytic strategy I used, which strengthens credibility in a case study (Yin, 2003). Data collection and analyses for my study were guided by a modified analytic induction strategy based on a theoretical framework for purposes of explanation building. My field notes were included in the data. Collecting data in the families' home contributed to placing parents and children at ease and minimizing the influence of my presence as a researcher. I strove to maintain neutrality in my interviews, including non-verbal communication and avoidance of evaluative comments to minimize socially desirable responses. I conducted member checks with parents in several families

### **Transferability.**

Transferability is like external validity or generalization of findings. Analytic generalization is a goal of case study research where findings are sought to generalize to some broader theory whether existing (e.g., SDT) or grounded theory that emerged from the data (Yin, 2003). Multiple cases serve the same role as multiple experiments for demonstrating theoretical replication. In qualitative case studies, the goal was not to generalize to populations or universes (Yin). Transferability is “the most important aspect of what might be uncovered in a qualitative study” (Henderson, 2006, p. 190). To address transferability, I used my theoretical propositions as working hypotheses and used thick description in developing case study narratives, individual case study reports, and the comparative case study report.

### **Dependability.**

Dependability is similar to reliability or whether or not one would be able to achieve the same results if the same procedures and circumstances were applied. In case study research, dependability is demonstrated when the same findings are replicated within more than one case study (Yin, 2003). There remains debate as to whether reliability can ever be achieved in qualitative research, although Henderson (2006) contends that it remains a goal. Consistency in procedures was important to achieving dependability in my case study research. Triangulation could also contribute to dependability in qualitative research (Henderson).

To address dependability in my study, I used my case study protocol and interview guide to increase dependability in the form of literal replication through consistency in data

collection. My case study narrative and case study reports reflected my chain of evidence from initial research questions and theoretical propositions, through documentation of any modifications to my initial theoretical framework or procedures, to conclusions for individual cases and my comparative-case analysis report (Yin, 2003). My case study database included detailed field notes including the date, time, and circumstances under which the data were collected. There was evidence that my procedures as employed corresponded to my case study protocol and any deviations were recorded in field notes and memos. Henderson (2006) described documentation of procedures (e.g., memos) as leaving an audit trail that someone else should be able to follow. In addition to memos, I also coded for methods and procedures.

### **Summary**

My qualitative case study used a modified analytic induction strategy that guided data collection and analysis to address two research questions: (1) How does parental socialization influence children's outdoor play?, and (b) How do parents differ in their socialization of children's outdoor play? This quasi-inductive approach allowed for the inductive investigation of disconfirming or new information more akin to theory development using grounded theory. I used a purposeful sample for my study in the selection of cases for inclusion. A case was defined as a multiple-child family with parents and children as embedded units of analysis. Conducting research with children created additional ethical concerns related to power and trust. How I addressed methodological issues of conducting interviews with children were discussed such as comprehension and social desirability. Garbarino and colleagues (1992) claimed unstructured interviews worked best with children, but the lack of structure would have made it impossible for me to collect similar data across

cases. However, I needed to triangulate data both within and across cases. Therefore, I used a variety of photo-elicitation, projective, journaling and walking tours to focus children's attention and discussion during the interview process.

My comparative case design dictated that I include multiple cases in my study for purposes of literal or theoretical replication. The use of a case study protocol and interview guide assisted me with consistency in collecting qualitative data across families. Case study databases included all data related to a case such as interviews, observations, and photographs of physical artifacts. Case narratives were written and included in the case study database that served as the basis for writing individual case study worksheets and making cross-case comparisons. Finally, maintaining empirical rigor in my qualitative case study was discussed based on the four components of trustworthiness (a) confirmability, (b) credibility, (c) transferability, and (d) dependability.

## Chapter 4: Findings

### Introduction

The findings of this qualitative comparative case study were based on data collected from all parents and their children between the ages of 8 and 12 years residing within 10 households in the urban center of a county in the Mid-West. Whereas most qualitative research in the recreation and leisure field is mostly inductive, my study emanated from a post-positivist paradigm using quasi-inductive qualitative approaches in the collection and analyses of qualitative data. A modified analytic induction strategy guided data collection and analyses for individual and comparative cases to address two research questions and five underlying theoretical propositions: (1) How does parental socialization influence children's outdoor play? (a) *direct* forms of parental socialization influence children's outdoor play, and (b) *indirect* forms of parental socialization influence children's outdoor play; (2) How do parents differ in the socialization of their children's outdoor play? (a) parents socialize children's outdoor play differently based on the child's *gender*, (b) parents socialize their children's outdoor play differently based on child's age, and (c) parents socialize their children's outdoor play differently based on perceptions of *environmental factors* in their community.

Though the focus of my study was outdoor play, this topic was embedded within the larger context of the children's free time. Therefore families' experiences of the children's outdoor play were compared and contrasted with other free time alternatives identified in the literature as competing with outdoor play (e.g., video games or organized activities). Parents' childhood outdoor play experiences were also examined for comparison to their children's

experiences as well as for their potential influence on parental beliefs and practices related to their sons' and daughters' outdoor play.

In addition to interviews, data were gathered through recorded observations of family interactions, free time behaviors, and free time resources during interviews and the child-led tours. Finally, photographs were taken of the children's outdoor play spaces and resources for inclusion in the case records. Data that were incongruent or could not be explained as evidence of a legitimate difference in perspective (e.g., between a parent and their child) were excluded from these findings to minimize social desirability bias. Given the scope of the study and the semi-structured nature of the interviews, some topics were discussed at greater length whereas other topics may have been omitted or skimmed over in an effort to capture each family's unique experience of outdoor play. The dynamic nature of data collection resulted in some variations in the data between families despite efforts to ensure consistencies for comparative analysis. Therefore, it could not be assumed that the absence of evidence in a given family necessarily meant that a socialization construct or concomitant relationship of that construct to aspects of children's outdoor play did not exist. Although that may have been the case, it remained equally plausible that the pattern or socialization construct existed but no evidence was captured to support drawing such a conclusion. For example, as patterns emerged in the data, they were pursued with greater vigilance in discussions with family members of later cases.

Although patterns emerged between socialization constructs and aspects of children's outdoor play in the comparative analysis across families, the constructs themselves were often manifested differently, or were absent altogether within a given family. Also, parental

socialization constructs sometimes had differing relationships with aspects of children's outdoor play. For example, whether a parenting practice was perceived as autonomy supportive or controlling by a child could theoretically have had opposite effects on the child's motivations for outdoor play. The differential effects of autonomy supportive environments were evident across families as discussed throughout this chapter. Therefore contrasting evidence was also presented where deemed important to further an understanding of how parental socialization influenced children's outdoor play in these families. The intent of this explanatory comparative case study was not to imply causation between demonstrated constructs of parental socialization posited by theory and the children's outdoor play that coincided with them. Rather patterns in the data were presented and associations drawn based upon the theoretical foundation of the study.

Each major section of this chapter, addressing one of the five theoretical propositions, follows the same organization as the presentation of sensitizing concepts in Chapter 2: Literature Review to facilitate comparisons across socialization constructs and with the other theoretical propositions that follow. The presentation of findings for Theoretical Proposition 1 varied from all other theoretical propositions in that Role Modeling was excluded because it was most highly associated with the indirect only socialization construct. For Theoretical Propositions 2 through 5, Role Modeling was discussed first. From there the organization for all theoretical propositions presented evidence related to parental socialization constructs in the following order: (a) Beliefs and Values, (b) Autonomy Supportiveness, (c) Structure, and (d) Interpersonal Involvement. Within the discussion of these parental socialization constructs examples were provided demonstrating how each pertained, if at all, to aspects of

children's outdoor play: (a) physical play environment;(b) social play environment;(c) play activities;(d) frequency and duration of play; and (e) a motivations construct that included play emotions, intrinsic motivation (IM), and subjective-task value (STV).

The patterns between the manifested socialization constructs and aspects of children's outdoor play depicted the *process* of parental socialization of children's outdoor play. The data also presented patterns of socialization associated with perceptions of children's motivations for outdoor play being higher or lower than that of siblings or peers. Finally, other data were consistent with the research literature upon which this study was based though inconsistent with either of the other two aforementioned categories of findings. Findings are presented here collectively for all three categories of findings but further delineated in Chapter 5.

The category of physical environment was derived from parents' and children's responses that portrayed where the children played. The category of social environment was derived from evidence pertaining to the children's play with siblings or friends. The category of frequency and duration was derived from evidence of how often or how long the children played outdoors. Children's outdoor play activities were derived from parents' and children's discussions of the children's interests and what they played, as well as children's responses to the binder activity that depicted a wide range of outdoor play activities (e.g., nature-related, sport, dramatic).

The categories for motivations were derived of the children's play emotions, IM, and STV for playing outdoors. The category of emotions was derived from parents and children's responses that encompassed the children's affective responses to playing outdoors as well as

from the feeling flashcard exercise the children completed. Parents' affective responses were also examined for their potential in influencing parenting practices and role modeling to their children. Although frequency and duration could have been included within the category of IM, they were not because that category transcended a discussion of IM alone. Therefore, the category of IM was based upon data evidencing interest, enjoyment, or the three psychological needs purported in SDT (i.e., competency, relatedness, autonomy). STV was based on evidence of attainment values, utility values, or perceived costs by children or parents as it related to outdoor play.

In analyzing the data, children's emotions, IM, and STV for outdoor play seemed to coincide. Evidence also was often clear for some but not all three motivational sub-categories. Sometimes STV was often not clearly evidenced in the children's data, although the theory of EVT posited that choices between activities were predicated on its existence. Given that EVT is a widely accepted theory that is supported by a plethora of research, the most likely explanation was that I failed to adequately capture evidence of the STV construct and its underlying components. Also, other researchers found that aspects of STV including utility values and perceived costs were *adult concepts* that did not enter into children's intrinsically motivated behaviors. For example, all children played outdoors because it was *fun*, whereas all parents valued their children's outdoor play because it was *physically active*. Thus, these categories were collapsed into the single construct of motivations as presented here and in Chapter 5.

Included in the next major section, Theoretical Proposition 1 is a discussion of *direct* parental socialization constructs and their relationships to aspects of children's outdoor play

(i.e., patterns). Although the demarcation between a parent facilitating a child's independent outdoor play through teaching them a skill (e.g., kickball) and playing with the child for enjoyment overlapped in the recounting of parents and children alike, for purposes of my study the latter were designated as family leisure that by virtue of the parents' participation rendered it inconsistent with my definition of children's outdoor play. The parents' facilitation of skill acquisition was considered to have a *direct* relationship with a child's ability to play a particular activity or be comfortable spending time in a given play environment at some other time of the child's choosing with his or her peers rather than parents.

One final note to assist readers relates to the identification of family members. For ease of identifying, comparing, or contrasting findings among the families, throughout this chapter references to the families were denoted by an upper-case letter "C" with the number that corresponded to that family's case record. Where reference was made to specific family members, the person's pseudonym was followed by label corresponding to the identification of their family. For example, "Eric (C1)" would refer to the father in the Case 1 family (see Table 3.1, p. 103). In addition to identifying mothers and fathers in the study, children were identified along with their ages.

## **Theoretical Proposition 1**

### **Introduction.**

This section addresses Theoretical Proposition 1, "*Direct* forms of parental socialization influence children's outdoor play," that underlies research question 1, "How does parental socialization influence children's outdoor play?" For purposes of my study,

direct forms of socialization were defined mutually exclusively from indirect forms. Direct forms of socialization were those parenting practices targeted specifically at children's outdoor play (e.g., outdoor play rules and parents' efforts to monitor their children's compliance). *Indirect* forms of socialization were those constructs that were mediated or moderated by parenting practices surrounding outdoor play within each family (e.g., parental beliefs that guided formation of outdoor play rules) as well as those parental actions that had an incidental effect on the children's outdoor play (e.g., family relocation). This section followed the same organization as the presentation of sensitizing concepts in Chapter 2: Literature Review to facilitate comparisons across socialization constructs, and with the other theoretical propositions that follow. First, Beliefs and Values related to outdoor play that had been communicated to the child were examined. The three socialization constructs related to parenting practices: (a) Autonomy Supportive Environment, (b) Structure, and (c) Interpersonal Involvement were then examined for evidence of relationships with children's outdoor play. In addition, each discussion of demonstrated parental socialization constructs included examples aspects of children's outdoor play: (a) physical play environment, (b) social play environment, (c) play activities, (d) frequency and duration of play, (e) play emotions, (f) child's IM, and (g) child's STV.

### **Beliefs and values.**

For parental beliefs or values to be deemed to have a direct relationship with children's outdoor play, evidence was required that a parent had expressed them to their child. These beliefs and values were focused only on outdoor play and were the values communicated to children including competency perceptions.

Evidence did not show that this socialization construct had any relationship to the physical or social environments of outdoor play. Children in all families expressed their belief that their parents wanted them to play outdoors to “be active” or for “exercise.” Parents’ expression of these beliefs typically accompanied their suggesting or sending their children outdoors, associating it with the frequency or duration of their children’s outdoor play. Parents’ believed physical activity was a benefit of outdoor play for their children. For example, Pam (C9) valued her 10-year-old daughter Ray Ray and 12-year-old son Duane spending time outdoors playing “...because it's so good for you. It's exercise. It's something to do to keep active.” When asked why he thought his parents liked he and his sister to spend time playing outdoors Duane responded, “I think they like...I’m getting exercise and I’m keeping my body healthy and working off some of the food I’ve eaten things like that.” Ray Ray and Duane had also come to associate their parents’ requests to “do something productive” with playing outdoors, especially on “nice” days.

The expression of parents’ competency beliefs about their child’s abilities regarding a given outdoor play activity was related to children’s outdoor play emotions, IM, and STV for that activity, by affecting the child’s competency beliefs. For example, 8-year-old Robin’s (C1) favorite thing to do outdoors was to run. Sophie noted that “He loves just running.” Robin expressed that he was good at running, an opinion he believed his parents shared, “My mom said that... and my dad said I'm very good at running.” Running seemed to be the only outdoor play activity that evoked a feeling of pride for Robin, “I've been proud when I run a race,” although Robin added, “I’m very good at swinging.” Laughing Robin shared that his mom had recently told him, “That I was good at swinging and I...might end up in the tree.” It

appeared that Robin's parents' communication of their competency beliefs regarding Robin's skill at running and swinging bolstered his competency perceptions and associated positive emotions, IM, and STV for running and swinging.

Parents in most families complemented their children on their creativity in outdoor play, which were competency beliefs that the children shared (C2, C3, C4, C6, C8, C10). For example, Morgan (C4), age 9 years, discussed her enjoyment and competency at creativity in her play, whether indoors or outdoors. Christine, Morgan's mother, and Morgan both reported that Christine had complemented Morgan on multiple occasions regarding her creativity playing outdoors with her younger siblings. Morgan and Christine shared the same story of a time when Morgan had devised costumes and the children pretended to be pioneers living on the prairie. Here Christine's reinforcement of Morgan's competency beliefs contributed not just to a specific activity but rather a characteristic of Morgan's play that permeated much of her play activities. Morgan's positive emotions, IM and STV were bolstered by her parents' communication of their competency beliefs.

Although most parents expressed competency beliefs related to their children's conduct in playing well with siblings outdoors, there was scant evidence that it affected aspects of the children's outdoor play. However, Jean (C10) often complemented and rewarded her children for "being kind" and taking care of each other including during outdoor play. Her 8-year-old son Gabe said he was not only *good at* but also felt *brave*, "Helping my little brother... like cross a log or something."

The only parent to express a negative competency belief was Sue (C7). Emily, age 9 years, responded during her interview that no one had ever told her she was good at

something playing outdoors. Being present at the time, Sue added, “She’s a little uncoordinated sometimes [laugh].” However, the only physically active outdoor play Emily did at home was jump roping. Emily stated she also jump roped with her friends during recess at school and felt proud “...like finishing 100 jumps or something” suggesting that either her mother had not previously shared negative competency perceptions with Emily or that her mother’s perceptions were overcome through her direct experiences.

No evidence seemed to suggest that parents had shared with their children any beliefs or values regarding outdoor play that related to the fulfillment of autonomy needs concerning IM. As discussed above, parents’ communication of their competency beliefs were related to children’s competency needs for sustaining or enhancing their IM for outdoor play in general or for specific activities. Parents’ validation of the children’s competency beliefs might also be expected to contribute to meeting children’s relatedness needs with their parents although no evidence was collected in this study that either supported or refuted that relationship.

Attainment value in STV is related to a child’s sense of self. Therefore, parents’ shared competency beliefs would be expected to affect this construct. However, only two children, 8-year-olds Robin (C1) and Ditto (C6), demonstrated attainment values, which suggested that more than parents’ compliments were required for a child to develop a sense of self related to playing outdoors. Children’s internalization of their parents’ stated valuing of outdoor play for the physical activity it afforded, as described in the C9 family above, was consistent with the development of utility values in children for outdoor play.

Children in all families understood that their parents had established home range rules and monitored the children’s outdoor play for the children’s safety. As discussed in greater

detail under Interpersonal Involvement, parents in some families went to great lengths to instill fear in their children regarding the possibility of child abductions (C9, C10) whereas other parents stated they tried to avoid frightening their children despite their own concerns (C2, C4, C6, C8). Noteworthy was that although parental concern and worry was consistent with a perceived cost to the parents for their children playing outdoors, and all of the children demonstrated at least some awareness, this cost was not internalized by the children. All of the children believed they were safe playing outdoors at home and therefore did not perceive a cost that could have diminished their STV for outdoor play.

#### **Autonomy supportive environment.**

Autonomy supportive environment is associated with a continuum between autonomy support and controlling parenting practices. One important aspect relates to home range. Home range has historically been researched regarding the geography of children's outdoor play. I discuss this topic as the physical environment of children's outdoor play. The affordance of varying play environments (e.g., wild versus domesticated nature) seemed to have no consequence to children or their parents regarding home range expansions in my study. Home range was the most affected aspect of children's outdoor play related to whether or not parenting practices were autonomy supportive or controlling. As discussed in greater detail under Theoretical Proposition 4 regarding differences in parental socialization related to age, in families where home ranges were expanded in a manner that matched the child's age and developmental level, children's social outdoor play environment, emotions, IM, and STV were enhanced (C1, C3, C4, C6, C8, C9, C10). Conversely, when children's home

ranges were not sufficiently expanded these same aspects of outdoor play were negatively impacted (C2, C5, C7).

Although the home range restriction was consistent with controlling parenting practices and demonstrated relationships with children's outdoor play that corresponded to the theoretical foundation of the study, not all in the study perceived their parents' restrictions on their home range as controlling. Rather than producing rebellion or challenging of boundaries as occurred with some of the fathers in the study when they were children (C2, C4, C6, C8), amotivation for outdoor play was evident for 12-year-olds Conrad (C2) and James (C5). Further relatedness needs for James (C5) and 9-year-old Emily (C7) went unfulfilled in their outdoor play because home range restrictions rendered neighborhood playmates inaccessible on a routine basis.

The only controlling behaviors discussed related to the social environment of children's outdoor play occurred in the C1 and C4 families. Sophie and Eric (C1) did not permit their 5-year-old son Bluebird and 8-year-old son Robin to play at all with some neighbor children and placed restrictions on others. Robin depicted his understanding and compliance with these rules in his outdoor play story. Robin was described as enjoying playing outdoors and doing so more frequently than most of the children in the study. However, perhaps because he was home schooled, Robin also experienced negative emotions associated with feeling lonely when there was no one to play with. To fulfill his relatedness needs in outdoor play, Robin also sometimes forsook playing what he really wanted (i.e., fulfilling interest in IM) to accommodate playmates and ensure their playing with him (i.e., fulfilling relatedness in IM). In addition to restricting Robin's opportunities to play with

some neighbors, Sophie (C1) spoke of monitoring her sons' outdoor play conversations and intervening if she overheard something "not going the way it should."

James and Christine (C4) also monitored their children's outdoor play conversations, more closely than any other family. Parents in the C1 and C4 families attributed their diligence to a lack of guidance in their own childhoods. Morgan, age 9 years, and her brother Jackson, age 7 years, were monitored through screened windows or doors when they played with neighboring children at home, which was not atypical. What differed from other families, however, was the degree to which James and Christine monitored their children's conversations. Christine stressed their close verbal monitoring was due in part to ensuring the children were not using "potty words." James described an instance of Jackson having been persuaded, as the youngest boy in the neighborhood, to behave inappropriately by his elder peers. James first overheard the boys' conversation, which led to his going outdoors to check on the boys' behavior. Jackson was caught by his father urinating in a rain barrel. Despite the seemingly controlling (i.e., excessive compared to other families) parenting practices in the C1 and C4 families, none of their children perceived their parents' monitoring or intervention as controlling. Further, there was no negative impact on the children's emotions, IM, or STV due to the C1 or C4 parents' practices regarding the social environments of their children's outdoor play.

At the other extreme of the autonomy supportive—controlling spectrum, Gopen (C6) described her intentional lack of involvement in her 5-year-old daughter Maggie's and 8-year-old son Ditto's playing with neighbor friends by telling them to "work it out" when they complained to her about disputes that arose while playing outdoors. All of the other families

(C2, C3, C5, C7, C8, C9, C10) ranged somewhere in the middle of the continuum with parents not listening to every word but periodically checking and intervening when they believed it was necessary.

Regarding outdoor play activities, most parents emphasized that they strove to provide a sufficient variety of toys and equipment to afford their children choices in what to play outdoors and then left them to it (C2, C3, C4, C5, C6, C8, C9). Such attitudes and practices were consistent with these parents being autonomy supportive. Only Sophie (C1) and Jean (C10) mentioned directing their children to play with particular toys at any given time. Sophie shared about her 5- and 8-year old sons, “When they're out they for the most part decide... sometimes boys need...more guidance... ‘Well let’s go play with this now.’ But I don't... set up a whole bunch of rules about how... we're going to play with it.” Rather than playing with her children, Jean indicated that she sometimes redirected her children, ages 6, 8, and 10 years, toward infrequently used toys or equipment:

“Do whatever you want out there.” ...sometimes though I say, “Now you’ve been doing that for a while I want you to get up here and get a basketball and start shooting the basketball. Here’s badminton and some birdies. Why do we never use any of this stuff? Get your rollerblades on.” “Oh yeah, there’s rollerblades.” I’m like, “Go rollerblade around for a little bit... take your skateboards and you can slide down the hill on the skateboard.” No one ever goes out and uses any of that stuff in the shed. “That’s boring.” But once you get it out... somehow it’s fun. So almost like it’s forced play [laughs] but in a good way.

Neither the children in the C1 or C10 families provided any evidence that their outdoor play emotions, IM, or STV had been negatively impacted by their mother's impositions of expectations for playing particular activities at a given time, despite their loss of autonomy in choosing what to play themselves. In both families, the evidence strongly suggested that neither Sophie nor Jean routinely interfered in their children's autonomous outdoor play, which may explain the absence of an impact. None of their children mentioned their mother redirecting them to play a different activity, suggesting it was not a salient memory for them. Further, it was possible that Sophie and Jean's behaviors were consistent with limit setting as neither mother dictated how the children played the activities. The children's autonomy within the outdoor play activity was maintained, which perhaps countered the seemingly controlling behavior of the mothers' by eliminating the children's ability to choose what to play.

Many parents *sent* their children out to play, especially on "nice days," an expression used by all parents to differentiate ideal weather conditions. Some mothers acknowledged that though their intent was to "encourage" outdoor play, sending their children out to play might be inconsistent with the literal definition of encouragement (C6, C9, C10). Maxwell (C3) stated like other mothers that although she believed her 7-year-old son Legos, 8-year-old daughter Candy, and 9-year-old daughter Tin Tin typically went outdoors to play of their own accord sometimes circumstances dictated giving them a nudge,

If it's been hot consecutive days in a row, they just don't want to go outside... during the summer we make them go outside unless it gets really humid... we turn on the

sprinkler or involve water in some way then they're more apt to go outside... There are times that I... have to push them out.

As with most other children in the study, Candy and Tin Tin did not perceive their parents' instructions as a directive but more as a suggestion. All parents believed their children were "fine" and enjoyed playing outdoors once they were there. Thus, the hurdle appeared to be children's interest and not their enjoyment of outdoor play that required their parents' intervention to overcome the inertia of remaining indoors.

However, Anne (C2) and Christine (C4) stressed that they would never make their children go out to play if they did not want to. The only mention of being made to play outdoors as a child was by Sophie (C1) who expressed resentment for her parents having made her go outside but failing to provide her with opportunities for choice in her activities due to a lack of resources. However, none of the children in the study perceived their parents suggesting or sending them outdoors to play as controlling, even when their autonomy in choosing whether or not to play outdoors was removed. Children's emotions, IM, and STV for outdoor play did not appear negatively impacted by parents' seemingly controlling behaviors. Therefore, parents sending their children outdoors to play appeared consistent with limit setting, which had been shown in previous research not to necessarily diminish children's IM or detract from their free time experiences. Because children maintained autonomy in what they played outdoors appeared to offset having been required to go outside.

Evidence did not suggest that parents' autonomy supportive or controlling behaviors impacted children's attainment or utility value components of STV for outdoor play. Despite

Sophie (C1) and Gopen (C6) being at opposing ends of the autonomy supportive—controlling continuum when it came to their direct involvement in their 8-year-old son’s social environments for outdoor play, both Robin (C1) and Ditto (C6) demonstrated attainment values related to playing outdoors. The autonomy supportive commonalities between the C1 and C6 families outweighed the controlling differences in parenting practices. Parents in both families were very demonstrative of their interest and encouragement of the boys’ outdoor play interests.

Regarding perceived costs to parents, Sophie (C1) and Sue (C7) both discussed their discomfort in sitting for long periods to provide supervision for their children’s outdoor play. Emily (C7), age 9 years, expressed resentment because she perceived that her mother made excuses so Emily could not play with her friends on the playground immediately behind, and visible from within, their apartment, “She would say she was sick or something.” Alternatively, Sophie relaxed Robin’s (C1), age 8 years, home range restrictions permitting him to play alone in the backyard as well as in approved neighbor’s backyards without his mother or father accompanying him outdoors. Whereas Emily’s outdoor play emotions, IM, and STV for outdoor play were negatively affected, these constructs were sustained in Robin’s experiences. Given his age and limited home range, there was no evidence that Robin associated this expansion with competency or autonomy needs. However, it was Robin’s ability to fulfill his relatedness needs and Emily’s concomitant inability that seemed to make the greatest difference in their perceptions of outdoor play experiences.

### **Structure.**

In addition to the home range rules evident in every family, children's physical outdoor play environment was related to parental expectations resulting in rules about landscape features and the communication and enforcement of those rules. The rules pertained to home range as previously discussed, landscape use, weather/seasonal, social interactions, and strangers.

Landscape beds were one aspect of the structural rules. For example, Ray Ray (C9), age 10 years, shared "I'm not really allowed to pick our flowers." However, just as effective as rules prohibiting play in landscape beds was parents' socialization through omission as their children had no knowledge that other children did so. It just never occurred to children in some families (C2, C3) to play with landscape features. Therefore it was more often parents' granting of permissions that impacted children's picking flowers, leaves, branches or berries (C4, C6, C10) or digging in landscape beds (C6). Fathers often restricted their children's playing in muddy areas out of concerns for damage to the lawn (C2, C4). Sophie (C1) enacted a rule of no "whacking" trees with shovels after 5-year-old Bluebird and 8-year-old Robin had gotten caught one day. Many children were permitted to climb trees in their yards (C4, C5, C6, C8, C10). Children in the C2 and C8 families were permitted to climb trees at public parks.

Children and parents in several families (C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C8, C9) discussed rules and expectations related to children's playing with siblings or playmates (i.e., the social environment). Sometimes rules pertained to not fighting as described by 8-year-old Candy (C3), "No biting. Like no harm... Nothing that can hurt somebody." Maxwell, Candy's

mother, corroborated having rules related to the children fighting and provided insights into their play disputes, “No fighting. No being bossy. They all tend to want to be in charge... So it's more of, ‘You know what, you gotta take turns. Everyone's input is valuable... no hitting. No spitting.’” Candy and her father George both discussed rules and expectations for the children when they played at the neighbors. Ringing the doorbell and asking if the children could play rather than just running into their yard without the parents knowing was another rule salient to Candy. George added, “We just expect them... obviously if they go over there that they're polite and nice and proper manners.” Parents in the C4 and C8 families shared their expectations that their children follow the same rules and expectations for their behavior away from home.

Parents in most families had rules pertaining to strangers that they had communicated with their children (C1, C2, C3, C5, C6, C8, C9, C10). Sue (C7) had not discussed what to do if approached by a stranger with her 5-year-old daughter Darling and 9-year-old daughter Emily. The reason for this was that the girls were never allowed to play beyond their front yard without their mother, who could hear the girls playing just outside the apartment. Sue stated she had no concerns about Emily as she believed Emily would not go willingly with a stranger partly because of her personality and partly because she believed Emily learned about “stranger danger” at school “Um I know they do...they do at school... you know programs at school but I probably should emphasize that but ... I don't want them to be necessarily afraid.” Darling was more of a concern to her mother because of her “friendly” personality as much as her age, “She'll walk up to a stranger... she's 5 ...I don't know if she really knows ‘Stranger Danger.’ ...I don't want her to be afraid...” Given Darling's age, she

was just learning the difference between a stranger and someone known to her and her family. Sue said, “She’ll be like ‘I know who that is cause I just saw them.’ And I’m like ‘No. You don’t know who that is. That’s not someone that we know.’”

Morgan (C4), age 9 years, and her brother Jackson, age 7 years, were the only children in their household permitted to play in the front yard or in their adjoining neighbors’ back yards. As these children were home schooled, they did not learn about strangers through school programs. James and Christine had not spoken to their children about strangers. Although Morgan’s outdoor play story that I asked her to write during the interview was largely a fantasy, demonstrating more about her creative imagination than her play at home, it included a young girl accepting the assistance, food, and drinks from different strangers. When asked if her parents had ever discussed stranger rules with her Morgan replied, “If someone just said ‘Hi’ I’d probably just say ‘Hi’ but if someone started like actually talking to me... I don’t know... I know you should never like do something...maybe be alone with a stranger if you’re a kid.” Concurring with his wife Christine and acknowledging that most parents talk to their children about strangers, James stated, “I think it doesn’t occur to us that our kids would see strangers without us just because they’re not ever anywhere [laughs] without us.”

Most children in the study stated that they were to run into the house and inform their parents if a stranger came into the yard or approached the children to speak to them (C1, C2, C3, C5, C6, C8, C9, C10). Children were expected to run indoors and tell their parents even if someone they knew came into their yard in the C1 and C10 families. Ray (C10) suggested this was sometimes to the point of embarrassment as once his children, ages 6, 8, and 10

years, “freaked out” because a neighbor came over. Sophie (C1) expected her 5- and 8-year old sons to inform her if a child came into their yard as well. She required the boys to gain permission before having playmates over, “You know one kid showed up one day and we had no idea who he was or where he came from. We know he doesn't live on this block... Some of the neighbor boys I think knew him.” Samantha (C8) described teaching her children, ages 3 to 8 years, to scream for help as they ran home if they were playing down the street. Pam (C9) described teaching her 10 year-old daughter Ray Ray and 12-year-old son Duane to turn their bikes around and ride in the other direction around the block to come home because they could turn around faster than a car. Slak (C6) described quizzing his 8-year-old son Ditto seasonally each spring, as a refresher, about what to do if approached by strangers or even someone he knew who tried to convince him to go with them without his parents’ knowledge. Jean (C10) and Slak (C6) role played different scenarios with their children in an effort to make their children less vulnerable to being tricked by an adult to accompany them.

In addition to previously discussed home range rules that could preclude a child’s participation in an activity not available at home or a landscape rule that would preclude an activity such as climbing trees or digging, many parents also discussed rules for using, caring for, or storing toys and other outdoor play resources. Parents in all families expected their children to put their toys away when they were finished with them. Several fathers mentioned this as a lawn mowing concern. Likely an expectation in many families although not discussed, Anne (C2) stated she expected her sons, ages 8, 10, and 12 years, to turn off the hose after they had finished using it to fill water balloons as an outdoor play rule. Gabe

(C10), age 8 years, explained that his 6-year-old brother Spider was no longer allowed to use tools without asking because he left them out. All parents had rules pertaining to what toys were allowed to be used indoors, outdoors, or both. Storage of these toys were in designated areas of the garage, basement, or home as well.

Independent access to outdoor play toys was not discussed with parents and children during interviews but the photographic record of children's toys showed that often at least some toys were stored beyond the physical abilities of a child to access and retrieve them independently. However, storage was only considered here if it was considered to have a direct relationship to children's outdoor play. Therefore, parents storing items out of a child's independent reach for safety or punitive reasons would be consistent with structure as a direct socialization construct. For example, Sophie (C1) mentioned taking footballs away from her 5- and 8- year-old sons because they fought over them. A football was seen on a shelf, beyond the reach of the boys in their garage.

Children in all families had rules that required them to at least inform their parents they were going outdoors in their yards to play. It was difficult to ascertain whether the children were required to gain their parents' permission to play outdoors. Some children stated they were required to ask but evidence suggested this request was simply a means to inform. On the one hand, children often stated that they just had to let their parents know. On the other hand, parents made comments suggesting the granting of permission, such as Sue (C7) who said she, "usually let them." Some parents were not content just knowing the child was going outdoors as shared by Sophie (C1), "I make sure I know who he's going to be with, what they're going to be doing..."

Parents in all families made the determination about when outdoor play ended whether at home or when the children played at friends' houses. Children in all families were called home when it was time for a meal as well as in the evening because it was "late," "dark out" or it interfered with the families schedule such as bath or bedtimes. The only child required to keep track of time on his own was 12-year-old Duane (C9), who depicted having forgotten his watch in his outdoor play story. Kevin and Pam also described their son Duane as having to keep track of time and return home at a certain time. Duane used his cell phone to call or text his parents. Duane was also expected to call or text when arriving or leaving a friends' house so that his parents knew he was enroute between locations. No other children in the study had such extensive home range permissions and concomitant responsibilities as Duane.

In addition to the effects of rules and home range restrictions on children's outdoor play emotions previously discussed, there were only two other mentions of parents' rules having been received negatively. Emily (C7), age 9 years, complained about being expected to help her 5-year-old sister Darling pick up her toys and bring them indoors because Darling "brought out everything" and Emily did not typically play with her younger sister. Despite Jean (C10) being somewhat controlling or overinvolved in her children's outdoor play on the one hand and the autonomy supportiveness of the children's typical routine play in the woods on the other hand, the one rule that 8-year-old Gabe rejected was related to his favorite outdoor play activity—the trampoline. Jean's rule was, "Only two jumpers on the trampoline... They all freak out and friends come over and they come in and test me every time. 'That's the dumbest rule. Seriously?'" Gabe overheard his mother's response and

added, “I don’t get it.” However, there was no evidence that not being allowed to have more people on the trampoline at a time had detracted in any way from Gabe’s IM or STV for jumping on the trampoline.

Rules are by their nature external motivators to constrain behavior and children do not always have positive emotional reactions to parental expectations and rules. For example, Feather (C10), age 10 years, responded that if she could change anything about their outdoor play rules it would be, “I wish we could play outside as long as we wanted but sometimes we have to come in for dinner and stuff...” The relationship of parent rules and expectations had implications children’s IM for outdoor play. Rules served to steer children away from unwanted behaviors except where children’s IM and their ability to resist impulses had not yet caught up with parents’ expectations. For example, James, Christine, and their 9-year-old daughter Morgan (C4) all described the toddlers, 2-year-old Beth and 3-year-old Johnny, as needing to continually be reminded not to throw sticks, rocks, or other objects into the small koi pond in the backyard. Similarly, Sue (C7) expressed exasperation over her 5-year-old daughter Darling repeatedly digging in ant holes with her fingers in their front lawn. Whether or not children’s relatedness needs were met within their home range limitations depended upon whether or not the child was satisfied playing with only siblings or had access to other neighborhood playmates as already discussed.

Autonomy needs were not always met when children were denied the ability to negotiate a larger home range (C2, C5, C7). Similarly, competency needs were more likely to be met if children experienced home range expansions consistent with their age. For example, Ryan (C8) said he felt a sense of adventure “...when I ride my bike around the

circle.” However, the positive sense of adventure Ryan felt was accompanied by the challenge of coping with feelings of uncertainty and insecurity, “I feel safe when I’m in my yard or where... my parents are watching. But sometimes... riding home from the park I feel like someone’s like going to jump out with a bag and like kidnap me or something.”

Despite imposing on children’s IM for outdoor play, rules seemed to have no relationship with children’s attainment value in outdoor play. However, the establishment of rules, particularly home range rules, contributed to parents’ sense of self in fulfilling their perceived parental role as protectors of their children’s safety. All children and parents expressed the belief that the children were safe playing in their back yards at home. Whereas children’s perceptions did not change until they had left their yard, parents concerns and diligence increased as play moved to the front yard. There was no evidence of a relationship between utility values or perceived costs and parents’ outdoor play rules and expectations.

#### **Interpersonal involvement.**

Interpersonal involvement was also related to the autonomy supportive continuum as well as the provision of resources by parents, the ways that children learned from their parents, and the communication that parents had with their children’s affective experience in the outdoors. All children had resources such as green lawn space at home to play, including the C7 family that lived in an apartment complex. Children in every family except C7 had access to play equipment at home in the form of a play set (C1, C2, C4, C5, C6, C8, C9) or trampoline (C3, C10). Play sets and trampolines were not only sources of play activities but served as focal points of much of the children’s outdoor play. In addition to providing

physical activity in the form of swinging, sliding, or jumping, play equipment at home doubled as forts or houses in dramatic play (C2, C3, C4, C8).

Mothers spoke more than fathers did of playing a role in introducing their children to resources in their physical play environments including the backyard, neighborhood and local parks (C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6, C8, C9, C10). Several mothers spoke of introducing their children to seasonal play as toddlers such as when Pam (C9) spoke of bringing snow indoors when she believed it was too cold for Duane and Ray Ray to play outdoors. Samantha (C8) described having her eldest son Ryan, now 8-years-old, outdoors in a “bouncy seat” covered with netting to keep the bugs away when he was just three or four days old. Recently Samantha had been able to take her youngest child, Maria, age six months, outdoors because she was finally strong enough that the wind did not “take her breath away.”

Only a few mothers spoke of introducing their children to wild nature as an environmental resource for play (C1, C8, C10). Sophie (C1) had nurtured her children’s involvement by taking classes and playing in the nature play area of a local nature center as had many other families (C2, C3, C6, C10). The C8 family was one of the few families not referred to my study by staff at the local nature center or zoo. None of the C8 children had been involved with those programs. Rather Ryan (C8), age 8 years, and his siblings ranging in age from 7 years to 6 months, were introduced to playing outdoors by their mother Samantha during visits to her childhood home. Samantha (C8) described her 3-year-old daughter Dale as having demonstrated fear of the woods during a recent visit, catching Samantha off guard because she had never been aware that her children required assistance to

be comfortable in a wooded setting. With the three siblings that were older than Dale, their adjustment to playing in nature had seemed effortless to Samantha.

Although Jean's (C10) 10-year-old daughter Feather, 8-year-old son Gabe, and 6-year-old son Spider, were first introduced to playing in wild nature at the local nature center, this appeared as with other families as a matter of circumstances given that they resided in a subdivision on the outskirts of "town" at the time. The C10 family was the only family where the children were introduced to unstructured play in a wild environment during their middle childhood years. Having moved to the country for the explicit purpose of facilitating the children's outdoor play, Jean described walking through the woods teaching her children where it was safe to play, pointing out landmarks the children were to use as property or boundary markers, and providing encouragement and instruction about ways to play in wild nature. Jean suggested that her children demonstrated some apprehension for the "bouncy log" that the children shared with me as a favored activity during their tour, Jean also communicated to her children that it was acceptable and sometimes enjoyable to take risks when playing outdoors, which her children did readily at the time of data collection with their family.

Away from home, all parents took their children to area park resources although frequencies varied along a continuum of rarely (C7) to more than once per week during the summer (C8). All parents had taken their children to area splash parks located within the town and city public parks with varying frequencies. The family that appeared to visit these parks most often was C7, as Sue described enjoying the experience as much or more than did her 5-year-old daughter Darling and 9-year-old daughter Emily. Some families reported

visiting local parks to swim in the outdoor pools (C3, C5, C6, C7, C9). Children in three families had visited a private corporate park having exclusive membership through their father's employment (C2, C3, C9). None of the children in these families reportedly played outdoors on the playground equipment or sport fields, but rather all swam in the indoor pool.

Children's social play environments were affected by the presence of parents participating in play with their children. However, although parents and children alike enjoyed these experiences and regarded them as play, they were considered indirect forms of parental socialization and will be discussed further under Theoretical Proposition 2 as family leisure. Parents' direct involvement in teaching an outdoor play activity that the child could later choose to participate in with siblings or playmates as a result of having developed the necessary skills and competencies are considered here. Although often described as "playing with" the child, the involvement of parents was typically associated, especially from the perspective of the parent, as teaching the child basic skills. For example, when the child participated in an organized sport, outdoor play of the same sport at home with a parent, typically the father, evolved from play to "practice" (C2, C6, C8, C9).

Parents' physical presence for monitoring their children's play for safety rather than rule enforcement purposes was also considered a direct form of interpersonal involvement in the child's outdoor play. Although children showed no noticeable difference in their perceptions regarding why parents were monitoring their outdoor play, parents appeared to relax monitoring for rule enforcement beginning around 9 years of age, whereas monitoring to ensure the children were still *safe* from strangers continued through age 12 years. As

discussed under Structure, none of the children's outdoor play emotions, IM, or STV were negatively affected by their parents' monitoring efforts.

Perhaps the most universal and obvious way that parents socialized their children's outdoor play was through resources such as the purchase or provision of toys or other play resources. Based on the photographic record taken during the child led tours, outdoor activity resources were classified as: (a) indoor/outdoor toys, (b) outdoor only toys, (c) nature observation and collection toys, and (d) non-toy resources. Nature-related books and magazines were recorded as well although they did not appear related to the children's outdoor play other than supporting some of the children's interest in insects like 8-year-olds Bob (C2) and Ditto (C6).

Children's toys in each family were quite varied. Families C3, C6, and C10 did not have indoor/outdoor toys rather relegating toys to one play environment or the other. Indoor/outdoor toys consisted of Nerf weapons; toy vehicles, playground balls, and toddler play sets that were moved into basements during the winter months. All families had outdoor toys. However, not all had age-appropriate sport toys (C5, C7). Every family had bubbles and sidewalk chalk no matter the children's ages. Although it was unclear whether the parents taught the children alternative uses for sidewalk chalk, 10-year-old Ray Ray (C9) and 10-year-old Feather (C10) described drawing "tracks" on their driveways to be followed on scooters or bicycles. Not all of the children had nature observation or collection toys (C5, C7, C8). The C4 children had binoculars but 9-year-old Morgan explained that they only used them when they went to the zoo.

Mothers typically introduced and scaffolded their toddler's learning of playground equipment whereas fathers' involvement increased as the children reached middle childhood and acquired the physical coordination and cognitive ability to focus attention required for playing sports. Several mothers described teaching their children to swing, beginning as babies in specialized swings, to learning to hold on and pump their legs, to being able to swing independently (C1, C2, C3, C4, C6, C8, C9). Samantha (C8) and Jean (C10) taught their children how to climb trees (C8, C10). Fathers more frequently mentioned teaching their children how to ride a bicycle (C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C8, C10). Sport skills fathers taught their children included throwing and catching a baseball (C1, C2, C3, C6, C8, C9) or football (C1, C2, C3, C4, C8), shooting hoops or playing basketball (C2, C3, C6), or kicking a soccer ball (C1, C3, C6).

There did not appear to be a relationship between parents' interpersonal involvement and the frequency and duration of children's outdoor play beyond those discussed under Structure. Parents sent their children out to play on nice days, which although done with the intent of encouraging their children's play, may have been handled in a manner inconsistent with the construct. However, as discussed above, the children often perceived that they had a choice regarding whether or not to play outdoors even when their parents told them to go out and play. Also, whether or not parents accommodated their children's outdoor play by providing the required direct supervision affected the frequency and duration of children's outdoor play. Sometimes it was specific locations that were off limits without the presence of a parent such as the front yard (C5, C8) or visiting a local park (all families except C9).

Negative outdoor play emotions were recalled by Sophie (C1) and James (C4) from their childhoods because they were denied desired toy resources. Sophie did not specify but rather stated she “did not have many choices growing up” because of a lack of toys or “nothing to do.” James (C4) recalled being denied a skateboard and BB gun by his parents. None of the children in the study expressed negative emotions or a desire for more or different toy or non-toy outdoor play resources except 8-year-old Jessie (C5), “Well I’m OK with our slides... but it’d be a little bit funner if they were a little bit wavier. Cause they’re just like straight you’re done.” and 9-year-old Emily (C7) “The playground...um it like broke kind a.” Emily’s mother Sue had also described the apartment complex playground as in need of repairs, “The equipment is pretty old. It’s not really like I’d say stable equipment. Anybody could get hurt...” Some parents described their children’s negative emotions such as frustration when learning a new outdoor play skill such as 8-year-old Robin’s (C1) or 5-year-old PJ’s struggle to ride a bicycle. Robin stated when he felt frustrated, he would “walk away” from trying to do an activity, consistent with his parents’ perceptions. Eric was, however, trying to teach Robin to be persistent in overcoming his frustrations but stated riding a bike was “no big deal” if Robin did not want to pursue it.

Children in all families expressed more positive than negative emotions playing outdoors. Enjoyment for all children was related to the outdoor play activities the children were interested in and having someone with whom to share them. In those families where children reportedly self-initiated and played outdoors the most (C1, C3, C6, C8, C10) parents demonstrated a greater interest and knowledge of their children’s affective experiences of outdoor play. Although much of these parents’ knowledge was gained during playing with

their children—to be addressed under Theoretical Proposition 2, these parents routinely asked their children about their play experiences. Children’s competency beliefs were enhanced and supported by feedback from their parents in conjunction with their direct experiences playing alone or with peers (C1, C3, C4, C6, C8, C10). Conversely, 12-year-old James stated he and his 8-year-old sister Jessie never talked to their parents about what they did playing outdoors, “Usually it’s *nothing special* [emphasis] like just like messing around on the swing.” James’ sentiments were consistent with those shared by his mother Cassidy and father Butch who described growing up playing in wild nature on the farm.

The outdoor play resources made available to the children were largely consistent with those their parents had played with as children, were knowingly denied as children, or were not available when the parents were children (e.g., Plasma Cars). By all accounts, the children in the study were exposed to fewer playmates and neighborhood families than their parents. Therefore, the children were only aware of the toys provided by their parents. Most of the children in the study were restricted from watching network television, which limited somewhat the media ads to which they were exposed. Anne (C2) complained about toy ads in the National Geographic Kids magazines her sons received.

Although discussed in more detail regarding the children’s organized activity participation, to be addressed under Theoretical Proposition 2, the same principles applied to all of the children’s interests including outdoor play. Parents described being led by their children’s interest in terms of whether or not they pursued teaching them skills associated with a particular activity such as riding a bike or playing a sport. However, as parents began purchasing toys from the time these children were infants and toddlers and progressing with

the children's abilities and interests to the accumulation of toys they had at the time of the study, the parents made their initial decisions to provide some toys and not others without any input from the children. Children in most families admitted they did not play with all of the toys that were stored in their garages (C2, C3, C5, C6, C8, C9, C10) with less frequently used toys sinking to the bottom of the large Rubbermaid tote bins in which they were stored. Toys did not appear to be discarded but rather recycled with younger siblings as they were deemed appropriate to the developmental needs of the children.

Little evidence supported that the provision of toy resources was related to fulfillment of the children's relatedness needs in IM. However, this lack may have been an artifact of data collection. Sophie (C1) described wanting to purchase toys for her sons because it made them "happy." Most parents described wanting their children to be happy. It would be plausible that the purchase of a desired toy contributed to the fulfillment of a child's relatedness needs by acknowledging the interests and affective responses of the child. However, Eric (C1) stressed teaching 5-year-old Bluebird and 8-year-old Robin to value memories and experiences over material possessions. Autonomy needs were facilitated through the provision of outdoor play toys as it afforded the children choices of what to play, and alternatives for when they became bored with any one activity as most children described occurring after a time (C2, C3, C5, C7, C8, C9, C10).

Competency needs for children under the age of 10 years appeared to be met by play activities and resources available to them at home. Whether or not the children felt a sense of challenge or adventure in their outdoor play was a topic that emerged and received greater attention in families C8, C9, C10 although it was addressed to varying degrees in all families.

Feather (C10), age 10 years, and her brother Gabe, age 8 years, felt adventure in their outdoor play only because their family had moved to the country and they had five acres of land including woods to play in. Many children expressed only feeling challenge playing outdoors at home in the form of sport (C2, C6, C9) or not at all (C1, C3, C4, C7, C10). Only 8-year-old Ryan (C8) felt challenge when he climbed trees “I always try to break my records in the trees except that one over there [pointing] I never can seem to beat because [laughs] the branches get too skinny,” and he felt adventure “when I ride my bike around the circle.” Jessie (C5), age 8 years, felt challenge jumping off the “bridge” of her play set whereas her 12-year-old brother James felt no challenge in his outdoor play at home.

Having a sense of adventure seemed to relate to the children’s competency needs as well as their interest in outdoor play in wild environments. The only children to express feeling a sense of adventure playing outdoors at home were 10-year-old Feather (C10), her 8-year-old brother Gabe, and 8-year-old Ryan (C8). Several children described having a sense of adventure playing in wooded environments away from home such as the local nature center or visits to family or friends’ homes (C1, C2, C3, C6, C8). Interestingly, although 8-year-old Jessie and 12-year-old James had played in the woods on their father’s childhood farm with their cousins, neither child expressed feeling a sense of adventure. Conversely, Butch (C5) spoke extensively about his own sense of adventure playing in the woods along the creekside. Other parents recounted their own stories of adventure in outdoor play (C1, C2, C3, C4, C6, C8, C9, C10). Sometimes this sense of adventure was attributed to “dumb” things, especially by fathers (C4, C5, C8, C9). It appeared that children in the study were not exposed to the possibility of doing dumb things because they were not exposed to older

siblings or neighborhood children nor did their parents share stories with them of the dumb things they did as children. Socialization through omission contributed to the lack of adventure in some children's outdoor play compared to that of their parents.

As discussed previously, the only children to demonstrate attainment values related to their outdoor play were 8-year-olds Robin (C1) and Ditto (C6). Their parents routinely demonstrated encouragement and interest in the boys' outdoor play, which appeared to enhance the boys' positive emotions, IM and attainment values for playing outdoors. For "outdoor boy" Robin, it was running and swinging whereas for Ditto, "the insect whisperer," it was related to his interest and pursuit of insects. The evidence suggested that the purchase of toys or provision of transportation to parks or wild nature contributed to parents' attainment values via their perceived parental role as the provider of experiences. Particularly mothers discussed these roles (C1, C2, C6, C7, C8, C9, C10). Sophie (C1) believed it was important to intentionally provide opportunities for children to play outdoors as it did not happen without parents providing the resources and instruction enabling the children to have those experiences to "climb or slide down." Jean (C10) discussed her provision of a variety of experiences for her three children, ages 6 to 10 years, as having been inspired by her grandmother, a teacher. Fathers spoke of their role in teaching values alongside outdoor play skill development (C1, C6, C9) consistent with attainment values for parental roles.

Children did not perceive utility values for their outdoor play related to their parents' interpersonal involvement. Several parents related their children's learning outdoor play skills that they could continue as lifelong leisure pursuits (C2, C3, C4, C6, C8, C9, C10) such as riding a bike or walking in the woods. All parents emphasized the development of positive

childhood memories of outdoor play as they experienced and desired for their children. This finding was consistent with utility values although it did not appear the parents' necessarily perceived the long-term value in having them—rather they just expressed appreciation. No perceived costs for the children were related to their parents' interpersonal involvement in their outdoor play. Not one parent discussed the cost of providing outdoor play toys for their children. The C10 parents did discuss a neighbor's play set that they perceived as an excessive purchase. Apparently, the neighbor had shared the cost with Jean and Ray, stating it was over \$3000. Sue (C7) spoke often of money being an obstacle to providing experiences for her 5-year-old daughter Darling and 9-year-old daughter Emily. However, despite being a single mother both of the girls had bicycles and Sue had been given one by the local Boys and Girls Club. Although a shortage of disposable income would explain the girls having few toys to play with outdoors, it did not explain the infrequency of Sue taking the girls bike riding or playing at the complex playground or local parks. As with all parents, as the cost to provide outdoor play opportunities for their children increased in terms of parents' time and transportation (e.g., take children to an area park or the local nature center 12 miles outside of town) the frequency with which these experiences occurred diminished.

**Theoretical proposition 1 summary.**

Parents' expressed beliefs related to their children's outdoor play as well as parenting practices aimed at the children's outdoor play were considered direct forms of parental socialization. The beliefs parents most often shared with their children were related to the perceived utility value of outdoor play for providing exercise. Some parents also shared competency beliefs with their children related to their outdoor play. Where parents expressed

positive competency perceptions to their child, the child's positive emotions, IM, and STV for that activity increased

Parenting practices varied along a continuum of autonomy supportive—controlling environments related to the children's outdoor play. The provision of resources provided the children with autonomy by affording them choices in what to play outdoors. Home range rules that expanded to meet the changing developmental needs of the children were consistent with autonomy supportive environments whereas those that did not were consistent with controlling environments. All children understood the reason parents established these home range rules was for their protection. Therefore, unlike the rebellious testing of limits expressed during parents' childhood recollections of testing boundaries, the children demonstrated amotivation for outdoor play in controlling environments where needs for relatedness and competency were not met.

Children did not perceive their parents' involvement in monitoring and intervening in their social interactions during play as controlling but appeared to accept them in a manner consistent with limit setting. The same held true regarding instances where parents demonstrated seemingly controlling behaviors in dictating what activities children engaged in. Finally, parents sending their children out to play were rarely perceived by the children as controlling. Rather the children appeared to accept it in the spirit in which parents stated they intended (i.e., encouragement). There appeared to be a hurdle related to overcoming children's lack of interest in playing outdoors sometimes. However, the children's IM for outdoor play was restored once engaged as enjoyment for activities took hold. When children

perceived their parents actions as limit setting rather than controlling, there were appeared to be no negative impacts on the children's outdoor play emotions, IM, and STV.

Structure encompassed parents' outdoor play rules and expectations. Parents had rules related to children's home range, social interactions with siblings and playmates, and strangers as well as the use, care, and storage of toys and non-toy resources for playing outdoors. Children's emotions, IM, and STV for outdoor play were influenced positively or negatively dependent upon their home range expansions. The greatest reason seemed to be that home range expansions afforded access to playmates besides siblings. Landscape permissions more than restrictions affected the children's nature play as some children expressed surprise at the thought of playing with landscape features in their yards. All parents expected their children to care for and put away their toys.

Parents' interpersonal involvement was considered a form of direct socialization if it pertained to the purchase of outdoor play resources, the teaching or scaffolding of outdoor play skills, or the expressed encouragement or interest in their children's affective experiences of playing outdoors. Children's positive competency beliefs, emotions, IM, and STV were influenced by their parents' involvement and feedback regarding their performance in specific outdoor play activities. However, not all parents demonstrated such interest and children in those families were self-reported as demonstrating less interest and frequency in initiating outdoor play.

## Theoretical Proposition 2

### Introduction.

This section addresses Theoretical Proposition 2, “Indirect forms of parental socialization influence children’s outdoor play,” that underlies research question 1, “How does parental socialization influence children’s outdoor play?” For purposes of my study, indirect forms of socialization were defined mutually exclusively from direct forms.

Although the theoretical proposition itself was not modified during data collection and comparative analysis, the definition was expanded to accommodate data patterns related to incidental effects on children’s outdoor play. Thus, *indirect* forms of socialization were considered to be forms that were *mediated* or *moderated* by parenting practices surrounding outdoor play within each family (e.g., parental beliefs that guided formation of outdoor play rules) as well as those that had an *incidental effect* on the children’s outdoor play (e.g., family relocation).

This section followed the same organization as Theoretical Propositions 3, 4, and 5 to facilitate comparisons across socialization constructs, including those that were used as sensitizing concepts during interviews. Following the presentation of those constructs that were obviously indirect, the organization of this section followed Theoretical Proposition 1. First, Role Modeling was examined by its nature as an indirect form of socialization. Next, parent Beliefs and Values related to outdoor play for which there was no evidence they had been communicated to the child or that addressed a topic other than outdoor play (e.g., valuing of organized activity as free time alternative for the child) were discussed. The

remaining three constructs examined were derived from SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985): (a) Autonomy Supportive Environment, (b) Structure, and (c) Interpersonal Involvement.

Within the discussion of these parental socialization constructs examples were provided demonstrating how each pertained, if at all, to aspects of children's outdoor play: (a) physical play environment, (b) social play environment, (c) play activities, (d) frequency and duration of play, (e) play emotions, (f) child's IM, and (g) child's STV. Although these findings related to patterns that emerged in the comparative analysis across families, the constructs themselves were often manifested differently, or absent altogether within a given family.

### **Role modeling.**

Parents role modeled their preferences for physical environments in playing and recreating outdoors through their personal and family leisure participation. As discussed in further detail under Theoretical Propositions 3 and 5, related to gender and parents' perceptions of the environment respectively, parents often provided opportunities for their children to play in environments that were consistent with play environments they enjoyed as children. For example, only parents where at least one parent recalled playing in wild nature themselves as a child, provided opportunities for their children to play in wooded areas. Most of these parents provided these opportunities through taking the time and making the effort to plan family outings, and transport their children to organized programs (e.g., at local nature center or zoo; C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6, C8, C10), family leisure outings hiking in state parks (C3, C4, C5, C6, C9) or visiting family or friends homes that afforded opportunities for independent play in wild nature (C2, C4, C5, C8). Ray and Jean (C10) presented an extreme

case of role modeling parents' valuing of wild nature when they relocated the family to the country several years ago. The reason was because they desired for their children to have similar outdoor play experiences that they had enjoyed as children.

Parents who played sports at home in their neighborhoods as children also role modeled their valuing of domesticated nature at home to their children through playing sports with their children at home (C1, C2, C3, C4, C6, C8, C9, C10) and their own personal leisure spending time outdoors at home (C1, C3, C5, C6, C8, C9, C10) or in their communities. An example of parents' role modeling personal recreation in their communities would be Cole (C2) and Kevin (C9) who golfed regularly and whose children, especially their sons, developed an interest in pursuing this activity. Further, 10-year-old Ray Ray and her 12-year-old brother Duane (C9) as well as the eldest son in the C2 family, 12-year-old Conrad, expressed no interest in playing in wild nature.

Parents' participation in playing with their children was considered an indirect form of role modeling and socialization that was theorized to be associated with children's outdoor play. Although parents and children described their enjoyment of playing together, there was no acknowledgement by parents or children regarding how the parents' participation influenced the social environment of the children's play. Although parents and children in all families mentioned playing together, only Robin (C1) and Ditto (C6) included their fathers in the boys' depictions of their routine outdoor play without being specifically asked about their parents' playing with them outdoors. None of the children spontaneously included their mothers. This finding suggested that most of the children perceived their playing with parents to be different from their independent play experiences with siblings or playmates.

Parents and children also described how parents intervened or re-directed the children's outdoor play behaviors when social disputes arose between siblings or with playmates. Although this intervention was generally discussed with parents relative to monitoring or teaching their children, from the children's perspective there was no mention of the rationale behind a parents' presence. Therefore, I would expect that parents' presence would alter the social dynamics of the outdoor play environment as much if not more when the parents' played with the children. Finally, only Thomas (C8) stated that his children suggested activities to play before he did and that he accommodated their requests. However, children did ask their parents to push them on swings if they needed assistance or sometimes asked their parents to play a sport with them. No evidence of parents being invited to participate in dramatic play occurred even where it was described as the most routine form of play (C2, C3, C4, C8, C10). Further, fathers reported initiating playing or practicing a sport with their children less often than their children perceived their fathers initiated it (C2, C6, C9). Cumulatively the evidence suggested that children and parents both perceived differences in what activities were to be played between parent and child and which were not.

As discussed under Theoretical Proposition 3 related to gender, differences were evident between those activities mothers and fathers participated in with their children at home and elsewhere. Whereas mothers reported teaching their children playground equipment, fathers sometimes described these experiences as "spending time" with their children as shared by James (C4) and Thomas (C8). Conversely, fathers were more involved in not only teaching, a direct form of socialization, but also playing or practicing a sport with

their children. Some mothers were described as attempting to play sports with their sons but were described by themselves or their children as less capable than were their spouses

Parents did not always recognize their role modeling influence. For example, Sue (C7) viewed her 5-year-old daughter, Darling, as her “mini-me” because her daughter’s creativity and imagination in outdoor play were reminiscent of Sue’s experiences as a child. Sue did not believe, however, that she had done anything intentionally as a mother to promote or foster her youngest daughter’s behavior. By all accounts, Sue’s 9-year-old daughter Emily’s interests were largely focused on indoor play and organized activities, which Sue attributed to personality differences between the girls. However, Emily had been reared primarily by her maternal grandmother until the age of 6 years, who according to Sue did not play with her as a child. This evidence was consistent with Darling learning and adopting more of her mother’s childhood interests and behaviors through role modeling and greater involvement of Sue in Darling’s play experiences.

In addition to playing with their children at home in the yard or taking their family hiking as described above, many parents routinely took their children on family bike rides throughout their communities (C3, C5, C6, C8, C9, C10). Parents’ participation in this activity originated in their outdoor play, which they now role modeled their enjoyment as a lifelong leisure pursuit to their children. With children’s experience and development, family bike rides progressed from riding up and down their street, to around the block, to destinations such as parks, to get ice cream, or in the C3 family, to visit the local video store. Jean (C10) discussed that family bike rides afforded parents the opportunity to assess

children's competency and readiness to be able to ride their bikes away from home independently.

Less than half of the parents were perceived by their children to spend time outdoors at home. Those parents perceived to enjoy spending time outdoors at home and who did so frequently were Eric (C1), George and Maxwell (C3), Butch (C5), Gopen and Slak (C6), Thomas and Samantha (C8), and Ray (C10). As discussed further under Theoretical Proposition 4, related to age changes, many children as they aged increasingly retreated indoors during their free time consistent with the behaviors of their parents (C2, C4, C5, C7, C9, C10). The evidence suggested that parents' role modeling in terms of how they spent their own leisure time contributed to a decline in outdoor play for children in these families as they matured. For example, 12-year-old James (C5) often took a book outdoors with him, sat on the patio, and read, while supervising the outdoor play of his younger sister Jessie, age 8 years, and brother Mario, age 3 years. This behavior was reminiscent of his father Butch as depicted by all family members.

Parents' role modeling of their negative and positive affective responses to spending time outdoors was perceived by their children. Disgust and fear related to insects or discomfort associated with hot or cold temperatures were described by mothers in more than half of the families (C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C7) whereas fathers typically only mentioned discomfort with exceptionally warm temperatures as impediments to their spending time outdoors at home (C1, C3, C4, C8). These differences were discussed further under Theoretical Proposition 3, related to gender

Regardless of the role modeling, all children generally expressed enjoyment for playing outdoors, regardless of whether their parents did or not. James (C2), age 12 years, and Emily (C7), age 9 years, demonstrated the flattest affect (i.e., more neutral emotional responses to feeling flashcards as well as throughout interview responses) of all children in the study. As Anne (C2) and Sue (C7) likewise were reported to spend the least amounts of time outdoors and enjoyed it least, it was plausible that parental role modeling contributed to their children's outdoor play emotions. Conversely, in families where at least one parent was reported to enjoy spending time outdoors themselves whether for family or personal leisure, their children demonstrated predominately positive emotions (C1, C3, C5, C6, C8, C9, C10) as well as greater IM and STV for outdoor play. Maxwell (C3) believed that the children spending time outdoors with her and her husband George contributed to their children's positive attitudes or "willingness to try it... pick up bugs and rocks... get dirty." Although this was generally true of children age 8 and younger across all families, 9-year old Tin Tin (C3), 10-year-old Ray Ray (C9) and her 12-year-old brother Duane as well as 10-year-old Feather (C10) continued to demonstrate greater IM and STV for outdoor play than their similarly aged peers.

Older children's' outdoor play interests corresponded to activities they engaged in with their parents such as sports although as they aged they left other activities that parents did not participate in such as dramatic play behind. Children's interest in playing outdoors in general declined somewhat for all children as they aged but to a lesser degree for Ray Ray (C10), Duane (C10), and Feather (C10). Interests in specific outdoor play activities appeared to coalesce into fewer and increasingly focused or structured activities as the children aged as

discussed further under Theoretical Proposition 4 regarding age changes. Perhaps parental role modeling could be associated with children's interest in specific outdoor play activities as they perceived themselves to be maturing.

Parents' role modeling met children's relatedness needs through providing opportunities for positive engagement between parents and children during family leisure whether in the form of playing in the yard, riding bicycles in the neighborhood, or hiking at a state park. All children and parents described their experiences playing together positively. Robin (C1) believed his father Eric's enjoyment of playing outdoors was derived from "playing with us." Robin made repeated references to enjoying playing with his father throughout data collection. However, Robin's father Eric also repeatedly expressed his enjoyment of playing with Robin and his 5-year-old brother Bluebird outdoors.

Pertaining to autonomy needs, parents and children were not asked whether the children had any input into family leisure away from home but children sometimes initiated or chose outdoor play activities to participate in with their parents such as when 8-year-old Ditto (C6) would ask his father Slak if he wanted to shoot basketballs with him. Therefore, latitude was found within some of the time parents and children spent in outdoor play for choice. Another example within the C6 family was that 5-year-old Maggie sometimes tired of playing soccer with Slak and Ditto and would choose to discontinue playing and watch instead. Parent role modeling through their expressions and gestures during family leisure could demonstrate parents' unexpressed competency beliefs about the child's ability to perform specific outdoor play skills. As discussed under direct forms of socialization, children's perceptions of their parents' competency beliefs affected a child's competency

beliefs, emotions, IM, and STV for specific outdoor play activities. In the cases of 8-year-olds Robin (C1) and Ditto (C6), the same would be true for these boys having developed attainment values related to their outdoor play activities.

Children did not express utility values for outdoor play beyond those expressed by their parents and discussed under direct forms of socialization under Theoretical Proposition 1. However, parent role modeling of riding bicycles, teaching their children sport skills, or participating in outdoor recreation personally or during family leisure as adults could be construed as a utility value in that what originated as children's play activities led to lifelong leisure pursuits. Parents role modeled their perceived costs of spending time outdoors for their own personal or family leisure through expressions of emotion, expenditures of their own time and energy, or conversely their choices not to do so. For example, many parents chose to stay indoors to avoid the costs associated with emotions of disgust, fear, or discomfort (C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C7, C9). Likewise, as the costs associated with planning and facilitating family leisure away from home increased for parents, the frequency of those experiences declined. No evidence suggested that children comprehended the increased costs to their parents for family leisure away from home. None of the children indicate that they lost a valued free-time alternative by spending time with their parents at home or elsewhere.

### **Beliefs and values.**

Parent beliefs or values related to outdoor play with no evidence that they had been expressed to their children were considered indirect forms of socialization. These beliefs and values likely influenced parenting practices. Additionally, parents' beliefs or values related to children's free-time alternative activities (e.g., electronic gaming or organized activities)

whether shared with the child or not were considered indirect socialization influences that could have precluded participation in outdoor play. Evidence of both forms of parental beliefs and values were found to affect aspects of their children's outdoor play.

Parents often expressed beliefs and values related to the physical environment with no evidence of having shared them with their children. Parents' childhoods affected their beliefs and values related to outdoor play environments as discussed in further detail under Theoretical Proposition 5 pertaining to parents' perceptions of the environment. There was no evidence, for example, that Butch (C5) who demonstrated attainment values (i.e., sense of self) related to his play in wild nature environments as a child had shared stories of his experiences or expressed his deeply held valuing of them with his children. James (C5), age 12 years, and his sister Jessie, age 8 years, demonstrated no such valuing for playing in wild nature themselves. However, as with other parents who played outdoors as children, Butch did take his family hiking at nearby parks a few times each year and family vacations generally involved spending time in nature.

In another example, Cole (C2) described looking for a partially wooded lot upon which to build a new home when the family relocated six years earlier as he believed himself that it was more attractive than being "surrounded by cornfields" as he described their yard. Had Cole and Anne been able to afford such a property, Cole believed his sons, ages 8, 10, and 12 years, would have had greater interest in playing outdoors. There was no evidence that Cole or Anne had shared these desires or beliefs with their sons, although Anne did facilitate the boys' play in wild nature through participation in classes at a local nature center and rare visits to family friends' homes where the boys could play in the woods.

Related to the social environment of children's outdoor play, several parents expressed concerns over potentially negative peer influences from playmates or children in their neighborhood (C1, C2, C3, C6, C7). Parents evidently had not shared these negative perceptions with their children. Although no details were given, Gopen (C6) was thankful her family did not live next door to some children at the further end of the block, "We've talked about it... 'Oh that family's got some kids that I would not like my kids playing with... I'm so thankful we didn't move to that side of the block because we would have been gone.' [laugh]" Parents' unexpressed concerns related to negative peers and strangers were discussed in more detail under Theoretical Proposition 5 regarding perceptions of the environment.

As discussed under Theoretical Proposition 1, parents and children alike demonstrated no evidence of contemplating the potential influences of parents' involvement in the children's outdoor play. However, several parents expressed beliefs that their involvement through playing with their children was beneficial to their children. Some parents played with their children because they wished they had more positive memories of playing with their own parents as children (C1, C3, C8, C10). Samantha (C8) described her mother as cleaning house all the time and never involving herself in the children's play whereas Samantha felt differently, "I'm more involved... I like to play with my kids more than clean my house... But my kids love to play with me...I would have loved to play with her [mother] too." Sophie (C1) suggested her or her husband Eric's involvement enhanced 5-year-old Bluebird and 8-year-old Robin's outdoor play, "If you're going to let your boys play

outside and... really let them *get everything out of it* [emphasis] you have to have the energy to keep up with them.”

Parents did not describe specifically valuing certain outdoor play activities over others for their children. However, parent responses to interview questions were consistent with valuing activities differently. Where these differences were related to characteristics of the child such as a child’s gender or age, they were discussed under Theoretical Propositions 3 and 4 respectively. At other times, unexpressed values would be anticipated to accompany the parents’ participation in playing some activities with their children but not others (e.g., fathers playing more sports). Parents’ responses throughout their interviews indicated that they believed they valued all outdoor play activities equally for their children. As children within families typically participated in at least some different activities from one another, this finding could also have been associated with the parents’ desire not to show favoritism.

Indirect influences on the frequency and duration of children’s outdoor play were derived from parents’ valuing of free-time alternatives such as participating in organized programs or playing electronic games indoors. All parents described the weather as a seasonal impediment to their spending time outdoors as well as their children, although conversations between parents and children on the subject were not evident. For example, George (C3) who grew up in this city shared, “I love being outside... That's our only gripe with living in [Midwest] is it's just you can't be outside enough...” Parents perceived differences in their children’s free time compared to their own childhood recollections, as discussed in more detail under Theoretical Proposition 5, regarding perceptions of the environment. Most parents valued outdoor play as affording physical activity in comparison

to children's sedentary activity in playing electronic games (C1, C2, C3, C5, C6, C8, C9, C10). However, when indoor sedentary activity was related to a child's cognitive development in the form of acquiring knowledge (e.g., reading a book or doing internet research), those activities were valued above outdoor play.

Parents in many families placed limits to varying degrees on their children's use of electronics but not their time spent playing outdoors (C2, C3, C5, C6, C9, C10). As an extreme example, Jean (C10) who moved to the country so her children could play in wild nature, used a behavior management system based on 10-year-old Feather, 8-year-old Gabe, and 6-year-old Spider earned rewards or were penalized. Jean rewarded the children for reading with 2 pennies, double the reward for other positive behaviors, and the only free-time behavior for which the children earned any reward at all. On the contrary, playing outdoors did not cost the children in the C10 family a penny, but each half hour playing electronic games did. The children could potentially have earned rewards for playing well together although Jean would be less likely to know about this during the children's independent outdoor play than their indoor play.

As discussed in further detail under Theoretical Proposition 5 regarding perceptions of the environment, most children in the study participated in at least one organized activity per season (see table 4.3 on p. 333). All parents expressed appreciation for the extensive offerings available to their children through the local park and recreation or non-profit agencies in their communities. Some parents valued their children's participation in organized programs as equal to or in the instances of Cassidy (C5) and Sue (C7) more important than outdoor play.

Noteworthy here was that it was easier for parents to spontaneously describe perceived long-term benefits to their children (i.e., utility values) for participating in organized activities, most commonly sport, than outdoor play. Parents struggled to identify utility values for outdoor play even when the question was reframed to determine what they believed they themselves had derived as adults from their own childhood outdoor play. Most parents believed they had created fond memories and developed skills for continued outdoor recreation (e.g., riding a bike) or an enjoyment of spending time outdoors or in particular environments. Samantha discussed the lasting impact of playing outdoors as children with her husband George (C3), “Well you still like to be outside though too... in summer that's what we do...we sit outside.”

When describing long-term benefits for sport programs all parents spoke routinely of teamwork, something not one parent attributed to being potentially developed in outdoor play. Although parents perceived the potential of outdoor play for furthering children's development of creativity (C1, C3, C6, C8, C9, C10) or at the very least creating an alternative venue for the expression of creativity (C2, C4, C7), they associated cognitive development with the acquisition of knowledge. Parents valued their children's participation in educational programs whether related to the outdoors as with the local nature center or zoo (C1, C2, C3, C5, C6, C9, C10) or through programs targeting academic skills such as math or reading (C3, C5, C6, C7, C9). Several parents valued their children's participation in music, which was also associated with cognitive development (C2, C4, C5, C8, C9, C10).

The only relationship between parents' beliefs and values for outdoor play and the emotional experiences of their children in outdoor play seemed to be through the parents'

desire to foster positive outdoor play memories for their children. However, little evidence of conversations between parents and children about the development of memories existed.

Rather, memories were an unspoken motivation for many parents. Eric (C1) shared, “...building positive memories... who can't remember back... all those memories of playing outside as a kid... or at least something pretty pleasurable from it. Catching lightning bugs in the yard on a June night or something like that.” In addition, many parents had positive memories of playing sports as children and they too wanted their children to experience sports as shared by Maxwell (C3), “I had such positive memories of soccer and I think that's kind of why we were encouraging the kids then to play soccer.”

As parent beliefs and values related to outdoor play were not expressed to their children, they could only be associated with the child's IM and STV for outdoor play through manifestations of the parents' beliefs and values in the form of parenting practices. Potentially, parents' expressed beliefs and values for free-time alternatives could diminish children's IM and STV for outdoor play while simultaneously enhancing their IM and STV for adult led organized activity participation.

Parents' expressed beliefs and values for free time alternatives would be expected to influence their children's STV for the activity itself as well as in comparison to outdoor play. However, no evidence was found that parent' perceptions of cost in the form of missing out on a more valued alternative activity (i.e., physical activity) when the children used electronics in the home was internalized by their children. All children expressed enjoyment for playing electronic games, except the C1 family where neither the family nor children had electronic systems. As discussed further under Theoretical Proposition 4, as children aged

they increasingly came to value organized activity participation over many forms of outdoor play that they had previously enjoyed. Few parents discussed the cost to themselves or their families for their children's beneficial participation in organized activities especially local parks and recreation programs (C3, C5, C6, C8, C9, C10). This evidence suggested that parents' perceived value for their children's participation matched or exceeded their expenditures in terms of fees, time, and transportation.

**Autonomy supportive environment.**

Indirect socialization influences related to the physical environment of children's outdoor play occurred when there was an incidental effect on the children's play. As noted under Theoretical Proposition 1, no evidence existed that children perceived their parents' involvement in playing with them as controlling related to the social environment of their play, their play activities, the frequency and duration of their play, play emotions, IM, or STV for outdoor play.

Although parenting practices toward children's participation in organized activities appeared controlling in that parents often chose activities, particularly at young ages, or required a child's participation in a certain number or type of activities, not one child perceived these as controlling behaviors on the part of their parents. However, some children perceived their parents' practices related to limiting electronic gaming as controlling (C2, C5, C10). Overall, children in my study only perceived their parents' to be controlling when rules and restrictions impinged on an activity for which the children had a strong interest in pursuing such as electronic games or outdoor play.

### **Structure.**

Indirect socialization occurred relative to the physical environment of children's outdoor play when parents' actions were not aimed at the children's outdoor play but nonetheless altered their children's experiences. A recurring example was when families relocated (C2, C3, C4, C6, C8, C9, C10). Play sets, for example, served not only as activities but also as focal points for the children's play. Sometimes play sets were not moved with the family (C2, C3, C10). George (C3) shared his decision not to move his children's play set when the family moved two years ago, "They weren't playing on it as much...it was too big to try to move... I think too it was too much of a pain to move." Legos, Candy, and Tin Tin would have been ages 5, 6, and 7 years, respectively, at the time of the move. Candy incorporated a play set and swinging into her outdoor play story suggesting that she may have missed having the opportunity to participate in that activity routinely at home.

Children's outdoor play was also disrupted by construction projects in the C5 and C10 families. Curtis (C2), age 10 years, and Gabe (C10), age 8 years, shared that they used to be able to go sledding at their previous residences but that their current homes had no hills for sledding. James' (C5), age 12 years, described having had a special place that was inadvertently destroyed when his father Butch trimmed a pine tree to ease mowing around it. Butch apparently was unaware that a hollow space in the branches served as a special place in the children's play

The social environment of children's outdoor play was negatively impacted in several families due to the loss of playmates (C2, C3, C6, C10) because of the family moving. Ditto's (C6), age 8 years, best friends had moved just weeks before the family participated in

the study. Gopen and Slak, Ditto's parents both spoke of making an effort for the boys to maintain their friendship and continue playing outdoors, which was where they played together most of the time. In addition to arranging play dates for the boys, Gopen and Slak considered ways to scaffold Ditto's home range expansion to permit him to ride his bicycle to his friends' house. Slak discussed possibly seeking permission from a couple of neighbors that would afford Ditto the ability to walk to his friends' by cutting across a couple of back yards. His friends only lived a couple of blocks away and he would not have to negotiate a street crossing.

The age of children at the time of a family's relocation mitigated the impact on the children's outdoor play. Cole (C2) was the only family member to mention that there were more playmates in their previous neighborhood. As the C2 family relocated six years ago Bob, Curtis, and Conrad would have been ages 2, 4, and 6 years respectively. Therefore, it would be unlikely that any of the boys other than Conrad had any memory of playing with those children. Also, the presence of multiple siblings minimized the impact of losing neighborhood playmates. When Bob, Curtis, and Conrad were asked if they wished anything were different about their outdoor play opportunities, not one child mentioned playmates.

The social environment of children's outdoor play was influenced by their participation in pre-planned activities. Many parents and children described difficulties in the children connecting with valued playmates to play outdoors because both children's schedules were so "busy." Samantha (C8) described the difficulty for 8-year-old Ryan to play with a friend around the block. Pam (C9) described the difficulties for 10-year-old Ray Ray to connect with one of the few girls her age in their neighborhood because of the girls'

conflicting schedules. Given most of the children's involvement in other organized activities coupled with their restricted home ranges, many of the children's friends did not live near them requiring the arrangement of play dates to spend time playing together outdoors. Candy (C3), age 8 years, and her elder sister Tin Tin, age 9 years, both had friends from school and organized activities that lived beyond their home ranges. George and Samantha discussed transporting the girls back and forth. Although acknowledging that Tin Tin was approaching an age where they would feel comfortable expanding her home range, a four lane road would need to be crossed, which made George and Maxwell somewhat ambivalent about permitting Tin Tin to attempt this journey independently.

Children's outdoor play activities and emotions were impacted by family relocation positively by the affordance of new activities such as the C10 children's increased accessibility to climbing trees, or negatively such as new constraints like the loss of hills that afforded convenient opportunities to sled at home (C2, C10). Although the children expressed disappointment for lost activities or appreciation for new ones, their overall emotions, IM, and STV for outdoor play did not appear to be impacted. There was no evidence that the children's IM or STV for those activities lost were diminished but rather that perhaps opportunities to participate in them on occasion were more valued. For example, when Maxwell and George took 7-year-old Legos, 8-year-old Candy, and 9-year-old Tin Tin to playgrounds at area parks, all three children played on the equipment.

The frequency and duration of children's outdoor play were impacted by family schedules, particularly as they related to school and organized activities. Parents' expectations related to school work reduced the time available in most households for the

children to play outdoors or participate in other free time alternatives. All parents expected their children to complete their school work including homework before pursuing any free-time activities with the exception of C9 and C10. Pam (C9) said regarding her 12-year-old son Duane, “But when he comes home from school he's pretty much shot. He needs at least a half an hour of down time... I usually just let him watch a half hour of TV and then start in on your homework or whatever you need to do.” Jean (C10) gave her children a snack when they came home from school, which the children generally ate outdoors as evidenced by the bag of snack crackers in the children’s self-constructed fort during the tour. After school was one of the routine times Jean stated she sent her children out to play despite their resistance, “...just got home... tired... want some time just to sit in the house... I’ll say, ‘Did you not go out at school?’ ‘No they wouldn’t let us out.’ ...annoying... I make them go out and they usually have a blast.”

Parents’ expectations, indirect socialization, and subsequent limit setting related to their children’s use of electronics served to increase the time available to children in choosing to play outdoors or not. Often parents sent their children outdoors to play after bouts of sedentary activity watching television or playing games (C2, C3, C6, C9, C10). Although they had no formal rules, nor perceived their 5-year-old Maggie’s’ or 8-year-old Ditto’s electronic use including their personal DS gaming systems to be problematic, Slak shared, “If it’s like the weekend and you’ve been like cooped up all morning watching TV, it’s like, ‘OK... We’ve had the TV on since you had breakfast so go outside.’” Conversely, parents’ expectations for their children’s participation in organized activities detracted from a child’s time available to choose whether to play outdoors (C2, C3, C5, C6, C7, C8, C9).

Jessie (C5), age 8 years, described playing outdoors one day after school in her activity journal until she had to get ready to leave for dance class.

Children's emotions related to outdoor play were negatively or positively affected by removal or affordance of opportunities to choose and independently pursue desired activities whenever the children were interested in participating in them. As discussed above, the addition or deletion of specific environments, playmates, and activities did not appear sufficient, especially before the age of 10 years, to diminish children's overall IM and STV for outdoor play (see Theoretical Proposition 4). Rather, the children all demonstrated resiliency by adapting their outdoor play to their current circumstances. Further, none of the children or their parents suggested that the loss of outdoor play opportunities due to their participation in organized activities was perceived as a cost in the form of the loss of a valued alternative in EVT.

Specifically in terms of IM, as discussed above children's interest in pursuing a previously available outdoor play activity did not appear to diminish. Rather the children resigned themselves to continuing to participate in other outdoor play activities they were interested in or pursuing new activities afforded by their current circumstances, (e.g., relocation or schedule change). As discussed further under Theoretical Proposition 4 related to age changes, older children's relatedness needs were more deeply affected by the loss or gain of playmates compared to their younger siblings.

No evidence supported that structure impacted children's attainment value, utility value, or perceived costs related to outdoor play. However, there was evidence that children in the C2 family considered playing outdoors as the loss of an opportunity to play electronics,

which was a more valued free time alternative. The data did not indicate that children valued outdoor play any less with their increased participation in organized programs as they aged (see Theoretical Proposition 4). Rather, it appeared that the children's STV for organized activities increased, effectively tipping the scale in preference of organized activities over outdoor play. However, in the C5 family 12-year-old James and 10-year-old Jessie did not perceive their organized activity participation as free time. Similar sentiments were expressed by Feather (C10) related to her soccer league.

### **Interpersonal involvement.**

Just as children's interest and enjoyment of playing outdoors (i.e., IM) could be enhanced for outdoor play through parents' direct socialization in time spent teaching children the competencies and fostering the development of their feeling safe and comfortable playing independently outdoors, family leisure afforded the same influence as a means for indirect socialization. Children's relatedness needs would be met through their positive interactions and enjoyment of playing with their parents during family leisure, more so than when parents served as teachers and their children as students, which increased the saliency of the power dynamic in the relationship. Further, although some competency expectations or pressure likely remained, they possibly would be substantially reduced from those incurred when parents provided instruction. The scope of this study precluded delving into this subject further so additional research would be required before drawing any conclusions.

Indirect socialization also occurred through parents' providing resources, encouragement, and teaching skills related to children's alternative activities of using

electronics indoors or participating in organized activities away from home. Although parents expressed a “love/hate” relationship with electronics as shared by Gopen (C6), all children except those in the C1 family had access to television and electronic gaming in their home. The only children known to have a television in their rooms were 5-year-old Darling and 9-year-old Emily in the C7 household. Children in half of the families had their own personal electronic gaming device (C3, C5, C6, C7, C9). There was no evidence of parents encouraging their children’s use of electronics except in the C7 household, where Sue valued Emily’s abilities on the computer and expressed higher STV for electronics than spending time outdoors herself. There was no evidence that parents’ interpersonal involvement enhanced children’s emotions, IM, or STV for indoor electronics use in their free time.

Older children became increasingly involved in organized sports as discussed further under Theoretical Proposition 4 regarding age changes. Parents not only provided these experiences in the form of paying registration fees but also in their own time, and provision of transportation to and from these adult led programs. Samantha (C8) described the lengths that some mothers would go to register their children in highly desired programs, “They stay up until midnight and they register their kids when it first opens so they can get in what they want and the slots that they want.” As children continued their participation in organized sports, progressing from introductory programs to increasingly competitive leagues, outdoor family leisure with their parents, especially fathers, increasingly involved practicing these sports (C2, C3, C6, C8, C9). Organized activity participation also fostered children’s relatedness needs with their parents by providing a shared interest, especially with organized sports where parents could practice with the child, attend games and practices, and even

coach (C2, C3, C4, C6, C8, C9, C10). Children's competency needs were often met through their participation in organized sports as shared by 8-year-old Ryan (C8) "My top two sports are baseball and wrestling. Baseball I'm the best at and I've been playing for like I think maybe almost 5 years now... And wrestling... last year was my second season... I'm really good at it too." When asked if his parents had ever told him he was good at something, Ryan responded, "Baseball. Yeah dad told me that I'm really good at it."

An important finding was that from the children's perspective, their parents complimented them (i.e., expressed their competency beliefs of the child) on their performance in organized activities more than they did their outdoor play (C2, C5, C6, C7, C8, C9, C10). Parents, however, perceived they complimented their children's outdoor play skill development, especially certain activities (e.g., riding a bike), equally to that of their organized activity skills (C2, C3, C6, C8, C9, C10). This evidence suggested that parents' competency beliefs associated with the children's organized activity participation was more salient to them for some reason. Further research would be required to determine why.

As indirect socialization related to children's alternative free time activities, no evidence was anticipated related to the physical or social environments of the children's outdoor play. Participation in organized sports increased children's playing or practicing those sports at home as discussed further under Theoretical Proposition 5 regarding parents' perceptions of the environment. Participation in organized activities or use of indoor electronics precluded children's time spent in outdoor play. There was no evidence that parents' interpersonal involvement related to children's electronics use or participation in organized programs contributed to children's emotions, IM, or STV for outdoor play beyond

affording alternative free time activities that were sometimes perceived as more interesting or desirable for the children to spend some of their free time.

**Theoretical proposition 2 summary.**

Indirect socialization influences were those incidentally related to children's outdoor play such as family leisure or relocation as well as socialization directed at alternative free time activities such as indoor electronics or participation in organized activities.

Role modeling was a significant indirect form of socialization by which children observed their parents' affective responses and valuing of spending time outdoors for personal or family leisure. Parents provided opportunities for their children to participate in environments and activities that they, themselves, often recalled fondly. These outdoor experiences were facilitated by parents arranging trips to the homes of friends or family with partially wooded properties or by enrolling their children in organized programs at an area nature center. Parents role modeled their own enjoyment or discomfort in domesticated nature during their own leisure. Some children had picked up on the negative emotions expressed by some of their parents such as disgust or fear related to insects and discomfort with temperature variations. Conversely, children in families where parents frequently spent time outdoors and role modeled positive affective responses to spending time outdoors at home continued to enjoy spending time outdoors beyond that of their same-age peers. Children also increasingly spent more time indoors as they aged, consistent with the behavior role modeled by their parents.

Neither parents nor children acknowledged that parents' physical presence during outdoor play altered the social environment. However, no evidence was shared by parents or

children that the children ever played with friends at the same time they played with one or both parents. Parents and some children described the parents intervening and sometimes redirecting the children's play as the result of something the parents observed. Although it was not specified whether these parenting practices took place during teaching activities (i.e., direct socialization) or playing with the children (i.e., indirect socialization), parents likely enforced their own rules or expectations under either circumstance.

Children perceived that their fathers initiated playing or practicing sports together more than the children themselves did. However, fathers perceived that their children, typically sons, initiated playing sports with their fathers either equally as often as or more so than the father did. Parents also participated in only specific types of outdoor play such as sport or riding bicycles but never dramatic play. This evidence suggested that the involvement of a parent in play dictated the range of possible outdoor play activity choices even when the children were permitted to choose what the parent played with them. As children aged, their range of play activities narrowed typically encompassing those activities they observed their parents doing with them.

Although any outdoor play experience need not meet all three of a child's psychological needs as proposed by SDT, the theory posited that to be intrinsically motivating it must address at least one. Children's needs for relatedness with their parents would be fulfilled during positive experiences of family leisure and play. Autonomy needs could potentially be met if the child retained opportunities for exercising choice during these family leisure experiences playing outdoors. Children's attainment values pertaining to outdoor play could be reinforced through parents' expressions and gestures during family

leisure. Parents role modeled their utility values for outdoor play in the form of lifelong leisure pursuits that the parents continued to participate in as adults (e.g., riding bicycle). Knowingly or not, parents also role modeled to their children that as the perceived costs associated with providing outdoor play opportunities increased, the frequency with which they occurred diminished.

Parenting practices ranged from autonomy supportive to controlling just as they did with direct socialization. Half of the parents demonstrated attainment values related to playing in wild nature as children, which led to their providing similar experiences for their children. Several parents expressed negative perceptions of other children in their neighborhoods. Parents' negative perceptions of the children's peers were never shared with the children but resulted in parents either monitoring their children's interactions with those children more closely or establishing rules that restricted the children's permission to play with those children. Parents believed their playing with their children was good for their children as it fostered positive memories of shared experiences.

Though parents' actions belied a different scenario, all evidence suggested that the parents believed they valued all outdoor play activities equally for their children. Parents' responses were related to their children's interest and enjoyment of various activities and acknowledgement that activity choices varied among their children. Valuing of children's free time alternatives by parents demonstrated that as perceived costs (e.g., excessive temperatures) increased so did the valuing of spending free time indoors presumably for the children's safety. Parents always had a higher STV for outdoor play than for children's indoor use of electronics but a lower STV when compared to a presumably cognitively

developmental choice like reading. Most parents stated that they valued outdoor play equally to their children's participation in organized activities with many making comments that it contributed to children being "well rounded."

Most parents easily stated utility values for organized activities, particularly sports or educational programs than it was for outdoor play. This observation held true even when parents were asked to reflect on their own long-term benefits derived from having played outdoors as children. In addition to utility values previously discussed, parents believed spending time outdoors as children contributed to their enjoyment of spending time outdoors as adults although they may now be participating in different activities (e.g., read on the patio). The first utility value mentioned for organized sports by all parents was teamwork. Not a single parent expressed teamwork as a utility value of outdoor play. However, some parents did discuss the development of social skills including problem-solving and the negotiation of rules. This suggested that perhaps parents perceived teamwork as not IM but as a set of skills and values that required the instruction of an adult, presumably an expert as parents did not appear to fit the bill. This area would require further research before any definitive conclusions could be drawn.

Creativity was a utility value many parents perceived to be afforded by children's outdoor play whereas the acquisition of knowledge was a utility value attributed to children's participation in organized activities. Parents were motivated by their elevated STVs for activities they had enjoyed themselves as children whether they occurred in outdoor play or organized activities. None of the parents discussed holding such STVs for children's electronic gaming despite several of the fathers having recalled playing them as children.

Parents' responses did not acknowledge any perceived costs financially with providing their children toys and equipment for playing outdoors nor for their enrollment in adult led organized activities. Although parents did not discuss their perceived value in terms of their investment in their children's outdoor toys and equipment, most of which was reused by later born children, several parents discussed their perceptions of value associated with their children's participation in local parks and recreation programs. Parents expressed their beliefs that the financial costs for these adult led programs were reasonable for the experiences they afforded their children.

Regarding autonomy supportive or controlling environments, there was no evidence that children perceived their parents' actions, consistent with indirect socialization, to be controlling in any manner that would negatively affect the children's experiences of outdoor play. Even where parents' behaviors appeared seemingly controlling related to indoor electronics usage or participation in organized programs, the children's lack of negative reaction suggested they were perceived more akin to limit setting. When handled in a non-controlling manner, limit setting could be done in a manner that preserved an otherwise autonomy supportive environment as demonstrated by previous SDT research.

Parents' rules and expectations for electronics use and participation in adult led programs were associated with the free time children had available to choose outdoor play. Participation in organized activities was not perceived by children or their parents as a perceived cost (i.e., the loss of a valued alternative activity) in relation to outdoor play. Although all children enjoyed their participation in these adult led programs, sometimes the children perceived that their participation in organized activities was not free time at all.

Family relocation affected all aspects of children's outdoor play through the disruptions they created and the affordances lost or gained for specific activities. Many of the families had relocated during the middle childhood years of at least one of their children. Often play sets and friends were left behind. However, children were resilient in that they adapted their outdoor play to their new surroundings. Other activities around the home, such as construction projects, disrupted children's outdoor play rendering specific areas and sometimes activities off limits.

A child's age at the time of the relocation mitigated the impact on the social environment of children's play with the sting being felt more keenly by older children. Younger children, having smaller home ranges, typically played with parents and siblings so their social environment for outdoor play experienced minimal disruption. The number of siblings available for outdoor play also mitigated the impact of relocation on the provision of sufficient playmates. Finally, social environments for outdoor play were associated with children's organized activity participation as several families discussed the difficulty of neighborhood friends getting together for outdoor play because of conflicting commitments. The friends that children made during their participation in organized activities did not live in their neighborhoods making arrangements for play more challenging.

Parents' playing with their children outdoors for family leisure contributed to fulfilling children's needs for relatedness with their parents. The provision of electronics and organized activities, and parents' encouragement of the latter, affected the children's valuing of those free time alternatives, which detracted from time spent and valuing of outdoor play. Children perceived that their parents shared their competency beliefs about the child, in the

form of compliments, more often related to the child's participation in organized activities than outdoor play. Parents perceived that they complemented their children's outdoor play as much as they did in any other aspect of the children's lives. This evidence suggested that perhaps parents competency perceptions for organized activity participation was more salient to the children. Further research would be required to verify this and determine the reason behind it.

### **Theoretical Proposition 3**

#### **Introduction.**

This section addresses Theoretical Proposition 3, "Parents socialize their children's outdoor play differently based on the gender of their children," that underlies research question 2, "How do parents differ in the socialization of their children's outdoor play?" The gender of the parents emerged in the data as being equally, often more pertinent, to differences in parental socialization of outdoor play. Therefore, the theoretical proposition was revised to reflect this change, "Socialization of children's outdoor play differs based on the gender of the children or the parents." All families in the study with the exception of Cases 1, 2, and 7 had both sons and daughters residing within the household. An unintended outcome of the study sample was that all parents in the study conformed to traditional gender roles such that mothers were homemakers and fathers were employed outside the home.

This section followed the same organization as Theoretical Propositions 2, 4, and 5 to facilitate comparisons across socialization constructs, including those that were used as sensitizing concepts during interviews. First, Role Modeling was examined as an indirect form of socialization. Second, parent Beliefs and Values were addressed both as a direct form

of socialization when related to outdoor play and communicated to the child and as an indirect form where it either was not communicated to the child or addressed a topic other than outdoor play (e.g., valuing of organized activity as free time alternative for the child). The remaining three constructs examined were derived from SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985): (a) Autonomy Supportive Environment, (b) Structure, and (c) Interpersonal Involvement.

Within the discussion of these gender-based parental socialization constructs examples were provided demonstrating how each pertained to various aspects of children's outdoor play: (a) physical play environment, (b) social play environment, (c) play activities, (d) frequency and duration of play, (e) play emotions, (f) child's IM, and (g) child's STV.

### **Role modeling.**

The relationships between parents' gender role modeling and their children's outdoor play were addressed in this section. Examined further were relationships of either the parents' or the children's gender with the children's outdoor play. Parents' gender beliefs were also examined for indirect relationships to their children's outdoor play.

Parents served as gender role models related to the physical environment of children's outdoor play. Role modeling of playing or recreating in wild nature by mothers and fathers alike was generally restricted to family hikes in the woods (C1, C3, C4, C5, C6). Eric (C1) also played with his 5- and 8-year-old sons Bluebird and Robin in the woods while they hiked or visited the nature play area at the local nature center. No other fathers were described as having done so. Sophie (C1) and Jean (C10) supervised and played with their children in the nature play area at the local nature center. Although several parents had taken their children to their childhood homes for family visits, only Samantha (C8) described

showing her four children—being before her infant daughter Maria was born, 3-year-old daughter Dale, 5-year-old son PJ, 7-year-old daughter Jean, and 8-year-old son Ryan where Samantha had played in a wooded hedgerow and river flood plain. Sophie (C1) described having recently led a hike in the woods of her childhood farmstead with her 5- and 8-year-old sons and husband. Although the C5 family often visited the farm upon which Butch grew up, there was no evidence to suggest that Butch had ever accompanied the children as they played in the woods with their cousins. Maxwell (C3) was the only parent to take her three children, 7-year-old son Legos, 8-year-old daughter Candy, and 9-year-old daughter Tin Tin camping. Although Maxwell did not often play in wild environments with her children at home, their paternal grandmother often took all three children to the nature play area at the local nature center, providing the children with two female role models for outdoor recreation and play.

Slak (C6) was the only parent to describe having taken his 5-year-old daughter Maggie and 8-year-old son Ditto to visit a public park where he had played at as a child. Most fathers role modeled the use of domesticated nature as a backdrop for participating in sports both at home (C2, C3, C4, C6, C8, C9) and in their own leisure pursuits away from home playing golf (C2, C9) or basketball (C3). Only one mother to pursue independent outdoor recreation was Pam (C9) who rode her bike or scooter with friends on occasion. Mothers and fathers in several families walked or jogged outdoors without their children (C3, C4, C8, C9, C10). Although no correspondence to gender was apparent, not one family with either all sons or all daughters rode bikes together or walked together whereas all families

with both sons and daughters participated in either walking or biking to local parks (C3, C4, C5, C6, C8, C9).

As discussed under Theoretical Propositions 1 and 2 parents' presence during their children's play altered the social environment. The C10 family presented a perspective on the role modeling of an interviewee's father in shaping parenting practices of their adult children regarding outdoor play. Jean (C10), rather than her husband Ray, had been influenced by her father to play sports with their children at home. Although Ray had described playing pick-up games with his neighbors there was no evidence that his father had been involved. However, Jean continued to view playing sports with his children as a father's parental responsibility. Therefore, Jean insisted that Ray, at least on occasion, play sports with both their two sons and their daughter:

Ray doesn't like it but I force him and he gets mad cause he thinks I'm saying he's a bad father... We did baseball all the time with my dad.... He ought to be doing sports but his dad never did.

Jean sometimes played baseball with her children because she "felt guilty" that Spider, Gabe, and Feather, ages 6, 8, and 10 respectively, were not having the same experiences with their father as Jean had with hers. Although Ray (C10) believed his children were content structuring their own outdoor play, there were times he acquiesced to Jean's requests that he, as their father, play a group game or sport with his children, "...She would force me to do that... You know they would just run around and be nuts for hours but she wanted it to be more organized. So she'd make me go out there and start a kickball game."

Other fathers had been influenced by their own fathers having coached them in organized sports as children. Thomas' (C8) and James' (C4) fathers coached them in baseball as children. James felt his 7-year-old son Jackson's playing sports had been put on hold because James, as a father, felt obligated to assist his wife with all of their five children, "When they do start playing sports I'd really want to be involved... hard to think about 'Jackson and I are going to practice three nights a week or whatever [To wife Christine] And leaving you here after you've been here all day with the babies.'" James' father had also played sports with James and his friends in the neighborhood growing up, acting as "all the time quarterback." James was now the quarterback every time he played football in the backyard with Jackson and his 9-year-old sister Morgan. How they played football with their father was explained by Morgan, "...play football with our dad... there's a way to play it with just me and Jackson and dad... Dad's like the quarterback... one of us is the offence and one of us is the defense."

Pam (C9) shared her perspective regarding the age changes in her experiences playing with her son and daughter in recent years during a wrap up discussion with her and her husband Kevin:

I used to play more with Duane too but now as he's gotten older he's gotten bigger and stronger and I can't as much anymore. I used to play catch with him, baseball. I always tried to pitch to him and things but it's gotten dangerous [husband Kevin laughs]. I can't do it anymore. It's just fear for my life [laughs] And even basketball and those kind of things he has to play down to me [laughs] so that I don't get hurt.

So it's a little bit different whereas her [Ray Ray's] things are still just a little bit calmer, safer [husband Kevin snickers].

The activities Pam (C9) now engaged in with Ray Ray outdoors at home included playing catch, scootering, shooting hoops and playing Four Square. Apparently, although Ray Ray declined to play catch with her father and brother, she continued to enjoy playing catch with her mother.

There was also evidence to support a gender role modeling relationship with the social environment of children's outdoor play through children's observations of their parents. Mothers, never fathers, were described as being more social with other parents during children's outdoor play (C8) or in communicating with parents of their children's friends (C2, C6, C8, C9, C10). Similarly, daughters were described as having social personalities that permeated their outdoor play (C3, C7, C8, C9, C10). As stay-at-home mothers, these women all shared that their children often looked to them for suggestions or solutions to alleviate boredom. This theme was recurrent in the C3 family where 8-year-old Candy and 10-year-old Tin Tin were described as continually looking to their mother and father for suggestions of things to do, whereas their 7-year-old brother Legos was described as being more independent in amusing himself. Candy's depiction of how these scenarios played out in her outdoor play story confirmed the descriptions of her father and mother. At the time of the study, Tin Tin was fulfilling a similar role to that of her mother in her own outdoor play, as Candy and their younger neighbors looked to Tin Tin to create the make-believe games they played.

Although this may also have been attributable to age, none of the eldest boys in the study were reported to fulfill similar roles. For example, 12-year-old Conrad (C2) did not believe that being the eldest held any sway with his brothers at all in determining what games or activities they played or how they were structured. It appeared that as mothers were the primary caregivers, they assumed greater responsibilities not for entertaining their children all the time but for making suggestions or providing alternative opportunities like transporting the children to a park. Somewhat surprisingly, the mother who structured her children's time the most was the same mother who so valued children's outdoor play that her family relocated to the country. Jean (C10) was described by herself and her husband Ray as possibly over structuring her children's time, something which Jean herself admitted. When asked if it was important to Jean that her children have choices in their free time she replied:

I don't know... I'm pretty structured... this is what they'll do, computer or DS... If I say, "Go do anything you want" it would always be electronics. So then I have to say, "OK after your half hour then go outside." ... maybe their structured time off is... I mean their free time off is maybe too structured but not really. I'll just say, "This is outside. Do whatever you want out there." ...And then sometimes though I say, "Now you've been doing that for a while I want you to get up here and get a basketball and start shooting the basketball. Here's badminton and some birdies. Why do we never use any of this stuff? Get your rollerblades on." "Oh yeah, there's rollerblades." I'm like, "Go rollerblade around for a little bit. You can take your skateboards and you can slide down the hill on the skateboard." No one ever goes out uses any of that stuff

in the shed. “That’s boring.” But once you get it out, somehow it’s fun. So almost like it’s forced play [laughs] but in a good way.

Although Jean’s daughter Feather’s (C10) nurturing behaviors elicited toward her 6-year-old brother Spider and 8-year-old brother Gabe were observed repeatedly over the course of several visits to the family’s home during data collection, not one family member mentioned how closely Feather’s behavior and verbal expressions mimicked that of her mother. Although Jean and Ray acknowledged and appreciated their 10-year-old daughter Feather as being a “good leader” in coming up with games and activities for her younger siblings, especially Spider to play. Jean shared that after a time typically Gabe would complain of Feather, “She’s too bossy! [laugh]” Feather expressed similar sentiments regarding her mother when asked how rules were made in their home, stating sharply that Jean made up rules all the time to get the children to “do whatever she wants.” Thus, it appeared that Feather was emulating the structuring behaviors role modeled by her mother during Feather’s own outdoor play with her siblings.

Role modeling of play activities typically coincided with differences between mothers and fathers regarding their involvement in playing with or teaching their sons and daughters outdoor play skills. Fathers tended to encourage their sons in typically male activities. For example, Butch (C5) described trying to foster a shared interest with his 12-year-old son James in target shooting with a BB gun during a visit to Butch’s childhood farm, “He tried it. But he wasn’t like, ‘Wow. Cool. I want to do this. Oooh gun.’ He’s not interested in... anything violent... like you know when I was a kid I just wanted to watch James Bond... John Wayne.” Consistent with Butch having attempted “to put more sports in front of” James

but not his 8 year-old daughter Jessie suggested that Butch had not considered the possibilities for his daughter. Jessie said her father Butch played “hand slap games” with her while he sat on the patio. However, during the wrap up meeting James and Jessie indicated that Butch played the same activities with both of them outdoors with Jessie referring to her father’s attempts to engage her in playing Frisbee, which was an activity Jessie disliked because she was afraid of getting hit in the face.

Mothers and fathers differed in how they role modeled the interaction about activities. Discussed in more detail under Interpersonal Involvement, there was a split between fathers who initiated playing sports with their sons more than their daughters (C6, C8, C9) and those fathers who played sports equally with all children (C3, C4). Approximately half of the mothers discussed playing or teaching sport skills with their sons or daughters (C3, C6, C8, C9, C10) compared to all of the fathers. Conversely, all mothers seemed to be more involved in providing general supervision and scaffolding introductions to outdoor play environments and activities such as sandboxes, swings, and slides with only about half of the fathers discussing their involvement with these activities (C1, C4, C6, C8). Samantha (C8) described herself as a “tomboy” growing up for having played in the woods and described her 7-year-old daughter Jean as one as well for always having skinned knees or bruises from her “rough” outdoor play activities.

Birth order and ages of the children, as discussed under Theoretical Proposition 4, appeared to have more of a relationship with the frequency and duration of children’s outdoor play than gender. Fathers were reported to spend more time outdoors at home (C1, C2, C5, C6, C10) than mothers in about half of the families. However, the role modeling of

mothers, as the primary caregivers, appeared to influence both sons and daughters as evidenced in the C2 family where all three of Anne's sons, ages 8, 10, and 12 years, spent less time outdoors and displayed similar emotions such as disgust, discomfort, and fear.

The fears expressed by parents seemed to reflect negative role modeling. For example, Anne (C2) discussed that her fear of bugs may have influenced all three of the boys outdoor play:

Compared to some kids they're a little more afraid of bugs... they get it from me. I try not to influence them but it's hard... I freak out when there's a bug... I'm running in the house... I tell them how ridiculous... does kind of prevent them from going outside sometimes... things that sting... They worry... If they see one, they're in. They're done. Can't really blame them but... they're not going to run away from a butterfly like I do.

Like Anne, other mothers were described by themselves or others as role modeling similar negative emotions outdoors (C1, C4, C5, C7). Cole (C2) expressed concern that his sons were being influenced by his wife's dislike and discomfort of spending time outdoors at home. Like Cole, other fathers described trying to provide a calming influence when it came to their children's reactions to insects or wildlife as shared by George (C3) regarding his children's discovery of wildlife in the basement window wells, "We've found frogs and rabbits... They're freaking out and screaming and I'm like, 'Just sit there and watch them for a little bit while I go get a bucket and see if I can catch them and get them out.'"

Parents' attitude toward weather also had gender implications for role modeling. Although George's wife Maxwell (C3) had a strong affinity for wild environments, she did

not enjoy spending time outdoors in the heat or cold of the Midwest seasons. Having grown up in a region of the country with a more moderate climate, Maxwell suggested she had never acclimated to the weather here. Maxwell described staying indoors with 7-year-old Legos while her husband George played with their 8- and 10 year-old daughters in the snow. Fathers were also the only parent reported to play with the children in snow in the C1 and C4 families. Mothers were never mentioned during the interviews as having participated in snowball fights with the children in any family.

Although there was evidence of gender pattern role modeling differences between the behaviors of mothers and fathers that would have been observed by their children, it was often difficult to ascertain their relationship, if any, to the children's IM and STV for outdoor play environments (i.e., physical or social). However, there was evidence that 10-year-old Ray Ray and her 12-year-old brother Duane (C9) differed in their IM and STV for specific activities, which were consistent with behaviors and beliefs expressed by their father Kevin. Golf was Kevin's favorite outdoor recreation activity. Although each family member had his or her own set of real golf clubs, participation consisted routinely of Kevin and Duane. Kevin believed that Duane valued golf more for the shared father-son bonding than the activity itself. This may have been projection on Kevin's part because similar sentiments were not expressed by Duane or other family members.

Kevin (C9) described his 10-year-old daughter Ray Ray's lack of interest when Kevin first introduced his children to playing golf when Duane was 5 or 6 years of age, "Ray Ray got clubs as well... She wasn't really that much interested... The club was heavy and she didn't have the upper body strength to control it real well... She'll humor me... but she's not

real crazy about it.” Given Duane’s age when he received his first golf clubs, Ray Ray would have been 3- or 4-years-old. Kevin attributed Ray Ray’s lack of interest to insufficient upper body strength, a physiological characteristic generally associated with gender differences, rather than to her young age. Ray Ray (C9) did not mention golf as an interest. Her now 12-year-old brother Duane (C9) on the other hand attributed his interest in golf to his father “My dad he really likes golf so. I think he got me a set of clubs and I really liked it.”

Although both Kevin and Pam (C9) denied doing anything consciously to influence the children’s free time activities based on gender, Pam acknowledged gender had been a motive for introducing Ray Ray to golfing, “We thought, ‘Not a lot of girls play. It’d be kind of a neat thing for you to get into.’” Pam and Kevin acknowledged that Duane and Ray Ray’s outdoor play and alternative free time interests and activities fell along traditional gender lines

Another example of gender role modeling being associated with a child’s IM and STV for participating in an outdoor activity was evident in the C6 family. Although 5-year-old Maggie (C6) did not shoot hoops with her father Slak and 8-year-old brother Ditto, she sometimes played soccer with them. However, it appeared from the parents’ responses that Maggie’s interest in playing soccer at home was greater when her mother participated. Gopen said of Maggie’s sport interests at home, “[Maggie] isn’t as interested in basketball but she was all about soccer when we all went out to play.”

Although the C2 family children were all boys, they seemed to have been influenced by their father Cole’s attitudes regarding the value of competition in free time pursuits. Cole emphasized repeatedly that he valued competition, which originated with his participation in

youth sports as a child and in his adult recreational pursuits as when he shared, “I don't enjoy hiking because there's no competition in it.” Like other fathers, Cole had spent time teaching his three sons, 8-year-old Bob, 10-year-old Curtis, and 12-year-old Conrad sport skills, although he was the only father to divulge his concerns in promoting perfection and competition, “How to throw... without going too much into the mechanics... as much as I would like to teach them to throw a perfect baseball or throw a perfect spiral... ‘Let's get the success of it first.’” Cole believed his wife Anne did not appreciate competition, although he felt he may not have encouraged his three sons enough as it pertained to participating in organized sports, “I thrive too much on the competition... one of my biggest fears... I was going to make my kids competition oriented... pulled back to the wrong end of ‘OK you know I'm not going to push you into anything.’” The two older sons, Curtis and Conrad, had picked up on their father's valuing of competition. Neither of the boys believed a person could be *good at* playing outdoors, as when Conrad responded “not a sport really.”

### **Beliefs and values.**

Presented in this section were differences between the beliefs and values of mothers and fathers as well as gender beliefs shared by either parent. Related to the physical environment of children's outdoor play, mothers expressed greater concerns for their children's safety and correspondingly imposed greater restrictions on their children's home ranges than did fathers (C2, C4, C5, C7, C10). Consistent with traditional gender stereotypes children's interest or play in nature was often espoused by parents as the realm of boys. For example, George (C3) appreciated what he perceived to be his 10-year-old daughter Tin Tin's interest in nature, “But it's really kind of neat to see her get some interest in that you

know...especially for a girl... to like learning about rocks and things like that. That's not your typical you know 9-, 10-year-old girl.”

Sophie (C1) and Cole (C2) as parents of only sons, ages 8, 10, and 12 years, believed wild nature play was important for boys. Although Cole (C2) had not mentioned climbing a tree as a child, his wife Anne had. Cole shared his opinion that climbing trees was part of the childhood experience of “being a boy.” James (C4), the father of five children, including 9-year-old Morgan spoke of taking his family to visit a family friend with wooded property. However, in recounting the details, James only mentioned his 7-year-old son Jackson’s experience, “They had 40 something acres and Jackson and the boy were the same age and they were running around and climbing on big logs and piles of stuff.”

Other parents with both sons and daughters generally expressed an equal valuing of wild nature experiences for all of their children, such as those surrounding their children’s enrollment in programs at the nature center or zoo (C3, C5, C6, C9, C10). Parents made no gender distinctions related to any domesticated outdoor play environments for boys and girls whether at home, area parks, or sport fields in any family.

Although parents generally acknowledged that all children wanted to spend increasing amounts of time with friends as they aged, references to being “social” were made only in reference to daughters (C3, C6, C7, C9, C10). For example, Kevin (C9) described his 10-year-old daughter Ray Ray’s interests, “She enjoys spending time with her friends... spending time with her family. She’s more a social kid... than Duane is sometimes.” Whenever any parent discussed the presence or absence of neighborhood playmates for their child, they always referred to them as being the same gender and age as their child. The only

evidence of mixed gender play not attributable to the incorporation of siblings was at the C3 family's previous residence as mentioned by Maxwell, the mother of 7-year-old Legos, 8-year-old Candy, and 9-year-old Tin Tin. Finally, Sophie (C1) and James (C4) expressed their beliefs that boys required more parental guidance than girls did, whereas Anne (C2) and Christine (C4) described their efforts to learn to accept boys' risk-taking behaviors and refrain from imposing their fears upon their sons' play by restricting or redirecting their behavior.

All parents whether they had only sons, only daughters or both sons and daughters made comments indicating that they believed, in general, that boys and girls played differently outdoors. Children were less likely to share their perceptions that boys and girls, in general, played differently (C5, C8, C9, C10). Jessie (C5) stated that she rejected gender stereotypes because she did not like the color pink, had never played with dolls, and did not participate in any form of dramatic play. All of these were behaviors she associated with the girls she knew from school. Other children's behaviors were sometimes inconsistent with gender stereotypes such as Tin Tin's (C3) interest in nature and Gabe's (C10) enjoyment and initiative for nature crafts.

Although all parents made generalized comments regarding differences between the play of boys and girls outdoors, parents often attributed differences in their own sons' and daughters' outdoor play interests, activities, and preferences to each child's age or personality (C3, C5, C6, C10). Christine and James (C4) as well as their 8-year-old daughter Morgan acknowledged gender differences in the outdoor play of brothers and sisters within their household, as did Thomas, Samantha and 8-year-old Ryan (C8). Kevin (C9) and his 12-

year-old son Duane acknowledged gender differences in outdoor play but 10-year-old Ray Ray attributed differences between her and her brother's play more to age changes in Duane's play behavior in recent years. This suggested a potential age by gender interaction whereby Duane's outdoor play interests and behaviors transformed more as he aged than those of his sister Ray Ray. Additionally, Ray Ray saw few differences between her and her brother's outdoor play because she learned to "play like a boy" as was also discussed in the C6 and C10 families regarding 5-year-old Maggie (C6) and 10-year-old Feather (C10). Whereas Maggie and Ray Ray could be perceived to be following in their older brothers' footsteps, Feather was the eldest child in her family. Therefore, suggesting a double standard in terms of girls being allowed or even expected to play like their brothers but not their brothers playing like their sisters.

Parents' gendered perspectives on outdoor play had implications for the strength and risk-taking associated with being outdoors. Christine (C4) spoke of talking to her sons, 3-year-old Johnny and 7-year-old Jackson about roughhousing, "Boys you're really strong and your energy is for protecting girls... doing the right thing, not for aggression." Her husband James equated this expected behavior of their sons to "being heroes." Most mothers and just under half of the fathers in the study shared their beliefs that either boys in general, or their own sons, were more physical or active in their outdoor play than girls. Christine (C4) described the differences in outdoor play behaviors between her 8-year-old daughter Morgan and her younger brother Jackson, "Morgan... not a risk taker... She's not gonna... put herself in physical danger... When [Jackson] plays outside he's very athletic... climb a tree or climb to the top of our play set... taking risks... more in danger, very physical."

According to Christine (C4), 3-year-old Johnny was emulating his older brother Jackson's, age 7 years, outdoor play behaviors, "Outside he likes to try to try to be physical like Jackson. Not as risk taking... but likes to see how high he can swing as opposed to Jackson trying to do flips on everything." Christine described an incident that occurred last summer that stretched both her and Jackson's comfort levels with physical risks in outdoor play:

He got himself stuck on top of our play set... really high off the ground. I couldn't even reach him. He got scared and needed to come down. I was very pregnant and there was no way I could do anything to help him... felt like God gave me this moment where he said, "Jackson really needs to learn right now..." kind of how to be a man you know like, "Jackson has to learn how to get out of this situation." ...It had a pretty profound effect on his confidence and his ability and... mine too.

During the wrap up meeting, James (C4) and Christine discussed the differences in their comfort with the children's physical prowess playing independently outdoors. James, "If [Jackson's] in a tree I don't mind. If I saw Morgan in a tree yeah I..." Christine interrupted, "Would run out there." "[Laughs] I'd run... just to make sure I was there," James concluded.

Sophie (C1) and Anne (C2) as mothers of only sons expressed a lower tolerance for mischief or risk taking than their husbands. Anne shared that her tolerance for risk taking was lower than Coles, "Mine's probably lower than yours [Cole] but *I try to be better* cause I *know how important it is for boys...* [emphasis] so I try not to think about all the horrible things that could happen...if they fall or slip or something."

Anne (C2) also shared that she and other home school mothers consulted with each other related to the boys' risk taking during outdoor play, "Having three boys I have to think about that a lot... noticed too that other moms with boys... you hit an age where you're like, 'Is that not OK?' You see them roughhousing ... hit an age where we're not really sure what's right." The difference in perspective between mothers and sons was not attributed to that of parent and child but to male and female, (Anne) "I've read things so I try to back off and let things go... You know because...girls we think about the potential for injury. Boys think 'Well it never happened before.'" Anne stressed that she did not want to impart her nervousness in watching any of her sons, ages 8, 10, and 12 years, climb either play equipment or trees.

There was no evidence of gender differences in beliefs and values related to the frequency and duration of children's outdoor play. Nor was there any evidence of gender differences in the frequency and duration of the boys and girls in alternative free time activities such as indoor electronics usage or participation in adult-led organized programs. Kevin (C9) believed that his 12-year-old son Duane played outdoors more than his 10-year-old daughter Ray Ray but included Duane's participation in organized sport leagues as time spent in outdoor play.

As discussed under Role Modeling, some mothers displayed discomfort, disgust, or fear related to outdoor play environments (C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C7). Some of the children, both sons and daughters, had developed similar affective responses, like 9-year-old Morgan's (C4) or 12-year-old James' (C5) discomfort with temperatures and disgust related to insects. There was no evidence to support gender influences on positive emotions as the presence of

either a mother or father who enjoyed spending time outdoors at home and playing with the children was related to expressions of positive emotions by both sons and daughters.

Limited evidence indicated that parents' or children's gender beliefs and values were associated with the children's IM or STV for outdoor play activities or environments. For example, Christine (C4) perceived her sons and daughters possessed different competencies playing outdoors, which might have contributed to differences in 7-year-old Jackson and his 8-year-old sister Morgan's IM for risk-taking behaviors, "I know their physical prowess... the boys are more athletic than the girls sometimes... know what a particular person can handle... I know Jackson can handle a lot."

Parents believed their sons were more interested in playing outdoors than their daughters (C4, C6, C8, C9, C10). Although Thomas and Samantha (C9) portrayed their eldest son Ryan, age 8 years, as playing outdoors the most, Ryan described himself as a "50/50 indoor/outdoor kid" and his 7-year-old sister Jean as a "25/75 indoor/outdoor kid." Tin Tin (C3), age 9 years, Candy (C3), age 8 years, and Jessie (C5) were all described as having played outdoors more than their brothers.

Some parents appeared to attach labels to the gendered play of their children. Although none of the girls in the study demonstrated attainment values related to their outdoor play, Samantha (C8) described herself as a "tomboy" when she was a child. Parents in several families referred to their daughters as being tomboys' in their outdoor play or described their behavior as being consistent with this label (C4, C5, C6, C8, C10). No such labels were used to depict their sons' outdoor play suggesting there was nothing perceived as atypical in their sons' play but there was in their daughters'. Christine (C4) believed 7-year-

old Jackson was more interested in taking risks playing outdoors than his 8-year-old sister Morgan, “She would be afraid to climb the top of the [play set]... She has done it [laughs] but Jackson just enjoys being risky and then challenging his body even seeing what he can do physically.” Thomas (C8) believed all children needed to test their boundaries as he recalled he had done as a child. However, only fathers mentioned testing boundaries as children (C2, C6, C8). There was evidence of boys and girls under the age of 9 years leaving their home range boundaries due to impulsivity (C1, C2, C6, C7) but not testing boundaries in the upper range of middle childhood as had been discussed by Thomas, Cole (C2), and Slak (C6).

Mothers emphasized the utility value of children’s learning from nature through observation or interaction with the environment (with the exception of C7) whereas few fathers did (C1, C3, C6). Parents demonstrated gendered beliefs related to their children’s participation in organized activities, however. Several parents expressed beliefs that boys “needed” to participate in sports whereas no parent mentioned similar beliefs for girls (C2, C6, C8, C9, M10). Although usually encouraging and supporting his sons’ demonstrated interests in organized activities, Cole (C2) believed there was an area where the long-term benefits outweighed his sons’ lack of interest:

I was talking about getting them involved with Jiu Jitsu or wrestling. None of them are interested in it but... the older they get... I always tried to avoid the fight when I could but... boys get silly around girls too so... but I want them to have that confidence that if they had to defend their mother or their girlfriend... they had the confidence to do so.

In contrast to Cole, parents in the Case 5 and Case 10 families believed that all of their children, irrespective of gender, should learn the utility of how to defend themselves. Jessie and James (C5) had both taken Tae Kwon Do for several years, in part because their mother Cassidy grew up in a culture where all children learned martial arts. Butch spoke of continuing to practice with his 8-year-old daughter Jessie to ensure that she maintained sufficient skills to ward off an attacker and get away. Jean (C10) had not enrolled any of her children in self-defense but when sharing her own discomfort at letting her 10-year-old daughter, Feather, ride her bike beyond their yard for fear of child abduction stated, “I just feel like...like if I could teach her Karate then I’d be OK with it.”

#### **Autonomy supportive environment.**

The autonomy support deemed valuable also showed gendered dimensions for both parents and children. Some mothers were more concerned about social dangers, and to a much lesser degree traffic dangers, than fathers were when their children played outdoors. As a result, these mothers placed the greatest restrictions on their children’s outdoor play (C2, C5, C7). No gender differences in home ranges related to the children’s gender, however, were found. Where eldest children were daughters, they had home ranges larger than their siblings did just as was true with eldest sons. Conversely, the home ranges of boys even in families with all sons were as constrained as that of girls. No parent or child believed a home range difference was due to gender. Mothers were also more likely to discuss concerns related to negative playmates and communicate expectations for appropriate conduct or cessation of play (C1, C2, C3, C6, C7).

There was no evidence that the frequency or duration of the children's outdoor play nor their emotions, IM, or STV were related to gender differences in parenting practices that could be considered controlling versus autonomous. Although differences existed between parents as described in this section, any parent communications or parenting practices were directed at all children equally irrespective of the child's gender.

**Structure.**

As described under Autonomy Supportive Environment, mothers and fathers sometimes differed in their home range permissions for all children irrespective of the children's gender (C2, C5). Beyond that, no gender differences in parent expectations or rules that affected any other aspect of the children's outdoor play seemed to emerge. The same rules and expectations applied to sons and daughters within any given family.

Structure also pertained to family roles. All parents believed that the mothers, as stay-at-home moms, afforded increased their children opportunities for outdoor play as well as participation in organized activities. Parents described their own mothers and fathers as involved in chores around the house when they were at home as Samantha (C8) shared, "My mom seemed to be perpetually doing that [cleaning house]... My dad was the basic go to work early come home late... disciplinarian, 'You wait till your father gets home' ...Kind of classic." Fathers in the study played similar roles to that of their own fathers with the exception that they had largely relinquished the responsibilities for establishing rules and disciplining the children to their wives.

Kevin (C9) and Ray (C10) credited their wives with being more adept at matching expectations and rules with the children's personalities and developmental needs. However,

several fathers mentioned that their ability to be supportive was sometimes difficult because they were not always aware of the rules that the mothers had established. Kevin laughed when he shared how rules were made in the C9 family, “Yeah, it’s not a democracy. If mom says it then it goes. So it’s usually when mom sets the rules and dad is generally there to support the rules. Unfortunately dad doesn’t always know all the rules.”

In contrast, the C4 family adhered to more traditional gender roles than the other families regarding establishing rules and discipline. As Christine shared when discussing her deferment to her husband’s judgment when Jackson wanted to ride his bike further than she herself was comfortable permitting, “Every once in a while he’ll let Jackson like run around the block by himself but I’m not as comfortable but I know James has a plan if he needs to go get Jackson [nervous laugh].” James relayed the same story stating that although Christine “generally followed” his lead in terms of establishing rules and boundaries for the children, James took steps to bridge the gap if Christine was really concerned. For example, James remained in the front yard while he allowed Jackson to ride his bike around the block. Morgan, their eldest child at 9-years-of-age stated that she would not ride around the block even if granted permission although her younger brother Jackson, age 7 years, would. Morgan’s perspective was consistent with the internalization of her mother’s fearfulness or concern but could also have been attributed to Morgan’s describing herself as less competent at riding her bicycle than her brother.

Mothers in the study took on greater involvement in scheduling their children’s free time in the form of organized activities than their own mothers had done, largely because of the increased opportunities available to children today. Whereas many parents in the study

had participated in no organized activities as children or those that had participated in only one or two activities per year (see Table 4.4 on p. 335), most children in the study were engaged in more than one organized activity each season (C2, C3, C5, C6, C7, C8, C9, C10) taking into account extracurricular activities such as music lessons.

The selection of these activities also seemed to reflect some gender expectations. Just over half of the fathers in the study believed they had any input into the selection of their children's organized activities. Fathers' involvement was typically in the form of suggesting either a sport or a particular league for their sons' participation. Thomas (C8) described his influencing his son Ryan's participation in baseball from a young age, "... pushed by me just because I was involved in it. That was one of the few things that we had when I was growing up... myself and my dad probably pushed Ryan to be in baseball." In contrast, Ray (C10) believed that he had influenced his children's participation in playing the piano whereas his wife, Jean, had "instituted" and "organized" the children's participation in sports. Several fathers deferred to their wives' knowledge of their children's participation in various organized activities as when George (C3) shared regarding his daughters' involvement in organized camping, "You know I'm sorry I can't remember... And she'll [wife Maxwell] know so... She'll have the answers."

### **Interpersonal involvement.**

Little evidence showed that the physical environment of children's outdoor play differed by the gender of the child or the parent. This finding was true for the children in the study as well as the childhood recollections of their parents. Some fathers discussed playing in wild environments as children (C4, C5, C6, C10), although most elaborated more on their

playing of sports in domesticated nature settings in their neighborhood (C1, C2, C3, C4, C8, C9, C10). The prevalence of outdoor play environments for mothers was the inverse of that of the fathers with more mothers having played in wild nature settings (C1, C2, C3, C6, C8, C9, C10) than had played pick-up sports at home or in their neighborhoods (C2, C3, C9, C10).

Boys and girls within each of the 10 families were afforded the same opportunities to play in their yards, neighborhoods, or parks by their mothers and fathers. Parents were as likely to sign their daughters up for organized activities in wild environments as they were their sons (C3, 6, C9, C10). What differed between the childhood experiences of the parents and their children were the presence of female role models (see Role Modeling). Not one parent described family leisure with their mother in wild nature environments other than Sophie (C1) who camped with her entire family. Mothers in a few families participated in wild nature play, or at least introduced their children to it (C1, C8, C10) and half facilitated their children's experiences by providing transportation (C1, C2, C6, C8, C10).

Gender differences related to the social environment of children's outdoor play related to the involvement of their mothers and fathers was also discussed in further detail under Role Modeling. However, James (C4) and Ray (C10) were the only fathers to admit that they treated their sons and daughters differently although not during outdoor play. Morgan (C4), age 9 years, played football and wrestled with her father just as her 3- and 7-year old brothers did. Yet James and Christine (C4) admitted routinely using phrases such as "man up" or "take it like a man" with their 7-year-old Jackson during play or otherwise. James said he did not mind that Morgan was "girly" although his wife Christine was quick to

add, “But we don't want any of them boys or girls to be... weak... be able to defend themselves... try to achieve something physically that they can do it... being able to persevere even when things are tough.” Ray’s involvement in the children’s outdoor play was most commonly stated by all family members to be gender neutral as he often jumped on the trampoline with all three children or pulled the children on their sleds with the family ATV in the winter. When his wife Jean seemingly guilted him into it, Ray also played kickball or baseball with all three of their children.

Gender also seemed to be apparent in the interests of children. A third of the fathers attributed playing a sport with their sons at home but not their daughters to a lack of interest demonstrated by their daughters (C6, C8, C9). Slak (C6) stated that 5-year-old Maggie was not interested in shooting hoops and would often decline or quit playing soccer with her 8-year-old brother Ditto and father. Thomas (C8) and Kevin (C9) both indicated that they had “given up” on getting their daughters, 7-year old Jean (C8) and 10-year-old Ray Ray (C9) to play catch. However, both Ray Ray and her mother Pam discussed playing catch together outdoors. Further, none of the father’s in the study discussed participating in activities suggested by their daughters whether sport related or not.

How interpersonal involvement in families contributed to gender segregation in activities outside the family was not evident. The prevalence of same gender playmate selection by the children in all families suggested some form of socialization but no evidence was captured in this study that parents were involved. Neither parents nor their children were directly asked if the parents had contributed to the child’s selection of same gender playmates

as delving further into this topic was beyond the scope of my study. Further research would need to be conducted in this area before conclusions could be drawn.

Providing resources for outdoor play was one way that parents influenced their children's gendered outdoor play activities. Parents purchased outdoor play toys and equipment or transported their children to places where the children had access to outdoor play resources and equipment they did not have at home. Sometimes the resources themselves were gendered by being a stereotypical color or activity. For example, Butch (C5) mentioned golf as an activity that he believed he had done more to encourage his son James, now 12 years, than he had his daughter Jessie, now 8 years, "Like I remember we gave James like the little plastic golf clubs and things like that. And I have to say that with Jessie we haven't." Butch's wife Cassidy corrected him that both children had received toy golf clubs. Further discussion revealed that James' golf clubs were more realistic in appearance compared to Jessie's that were more childish being in the design of an alligator. Butch saw this distinction as consistent with his acknowledgment of having made more of an effort to identify and encourage James' participation in any kind of sport because he was a boy.

Some toys purchased seemed to be gender directed. Parents in a few families had purchased war or weapon themed toys for their sons, with Nerf guns being the most common (C2, C4, C8, C9). None of the girls in the study were reported to play with these items with the exception of 7-year-old Jean who played Army with her 8-year-old brother Ryan and 5-year-old brother PJ. The purchase of baseballs and footballs appeared to coincide with either firstborn sons or younger sons, not daughters, reaching an age and developmental level to participate in playing these sports (C3, C4, C10). Boys also had trucks, cars, tractors, or

construction vehicles in most families (C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C8). None of the girls in the study were reported to own or play with vehicles. There was one notable exception as the C10 family had a pink motorized toddler car whereas in other families these items were gender neutral colors (i.e., red or black; C2, C6, C8).

The motorized or foot-powered toddler cars were but one example of a gender neutral toy that was gendered by color. Bicycles, scooters, roller skates, hula hoops, jump ropes, and lawn games were found across families in colors generally associated with females (i.e., pink or purple). Feather's (C10), age 10 years, soccer ball was pink and white rather than the traditional black and white. Although colors like yellow and green have long been considered neutral colors for children's clothing, toys, and nurseries; it appeared that blue had become gender neutral as many toys, even play sets were at least partially that color. However, often girls' bicycles, scooters, roller skates and the like were a light blue or sky blue.

Although it was beyond the scope of my study to ascertain the motivation for parents' purchasing gender colored outdoor play resources for their children, there was no evidence that it impacted the children's play activities. Kevin (C9) discussed how his wife Pam had written letters to the makers of Legos requesting that they create a line of pink Legos for girls. Pam's intent was to encourage girls to play with Legos. Although it could be argued that gendered colors implied some difference between the appropriateness or experience of an outdoor play activity for boys or girls, there was no evidence from the parents' interviews of such intent. Finally, gendered colors tended to be a purchase consideration for eldest children, but as toys were passed down and used by younger siblings, they lost their gendered meaning. For example, the C3 family had a light blue bouncing ball toy with a handle that

had been passed down and was used by 7-year-old Legos the only boy in the family.

Although light blue may even have been considered gender neutral, there was a picture of a Disney princess on the side of the ball that although the image had faded was still discernible. The same was true of 6-year-old Spider and 8-year-old Gabe, Feather's brothers of playing with the pink motorized toddler Jeep.

Mothers and fathers also influenced their children's outdoor play by introducing them to activities and teaching them the required skills for participation. As discussed under Role Modeling, mothers tended to describe instructing and fostering their children's independent usage of the playground whereas fathers discussed teaching their children sport skills or riding bicycles. Fathers depicted their assisting their young children with playground equipment as "spending time with" their children consistent with family leisure (C4, C8).

Most fathers believed they had equally encouraged their sons and daughters to play catch, shoot hoops, or the like but that their daughters had not expressed the same level of interest as their sons. When asked what he did with his children outdoors at home, Kevin (C9) shared, "Duane and I will play catch or practice hitting or practice pitching. So we do a lot of those kinds of things." Kevin responded when asked if he ever invited his daughter Ray Ray to play catch with he and Duane, "We have yeah... as much...no. She typically says, 'No' so we've kind of given up on that." When going through the activity binder exercise, Ray Ray, age 10 years, said in response to a picture of a girl with a softball glove, "I like to play catch." This was an activity that she sometimes did with her mother as family leisure but there was no evidence that Ray Ray ever played catch with other children including her brother.

Although some mothers were not adept at sports, several had talked about climbing trees. Mothers were sometimes portrayed by themselves or others as not having the knowledge or skills to play sports with their sons. Sophie (C1), Anne (C2), and Christine (C4) were described by themselves and other family members as not athletic compared to the children's fathers. Duane (C9) said of playing catch with his mother, "I can't play baseball with her [mom] anymore because I hurt her I guess [embarrassed laugh]... Yeah I used to have her catch for me pitching [laughs]. That didn't work too well. "Counter to traditional gender stereotypes only mothers discussed climbing trees as children. Maxwell's (C3) 9-year-old daughter Tin Tin, Samantha's (C8) 7-year-old daughter Jean and her 5- and 8-year old sons PJ and Ryan, and Jean's (C10) 10-year-old daughter Feather and her 6- and 8-year old sons Spider and Gabe all climbed trees. Samantha (C8) and Jean (C10) described teaching their children how to climb trees and play outdoors in wild environments.

Parent knowledge or demonstrated interest in their children's outdoor play was another form of interpersonal involvement that sometimes differed by gender. Although parents in almost half of the families appeared to have equivalent knowledge or expressed interest in their children's outdoor play (C3, C5, C6, C8), mothers appeared more knowledgeable and interested in the outdoor of their children than fathers (C4, C9, C10). This could have been an artifact of the mothers being at home more with the children but that would not explain the greater knowledge of fathers in other families where the mothers also did not work outside the home.

Even where parents were knowledgeable of their children's outdoor play, gender may have influenced the saliency of their children's interests and outdoor play activities. For

example, Jean's (C8), age 7 years, participation in playing Army was omitted from her mother and father's discussions of the children's outdoor play as was her 5-year-old brother PJ's involvement in playing house. As Thomas and Samantha both demonstrated substantial knowledge related to the content of their children's play, these omissions of gender atypical play could be explained as either unconscious gendered stereotypes that influenced the salience of the children's various play activities or the desire to project a desired image of their family. Given the spontaneity and candor displayed throughout the study, the former might be a more plausible explanation of Thomas and Samantha's responses. Finally, despite the evidence that fathers and mothers played differently with their sons and daughters no parents or children presented evidence that a parent's enjoyment of spending time with their child was associated with gender.

The greatest differences between boys and girls in the study for which there was no evidence of direct parental socialization occurred in their dramatic role play. This role play amongst the daughters and younger male siblings at the time of the study was typically related to playing some variation of *house*. Tin Tin (C3), Candy, and their younger brother Legos, ages 9, 8 and 7 years respectively, often played a hybrid version of house that incorporated elements of fantasy. Candy described their play as "house like wizards and stuff." Their father George described the changing nature of his children's house play, "Or sometimes they're just... playing this mish mash of house and *Ghost Busters* or house and *Pokémon* and whatever they're doing that day." When asked if children today played house, after not having mentioned it as an interest himself, 8-year-old Ryan (C8) expressed annoyance when he shared, "My sister and my brother...all the time. Yes, house... Oh and

Dale too... sometimes [they] use a baby doll for the baby or sometimes... they'll use Maria [his 6-month-old sister].”

In several cases, gender socialization was contrasted in how boys seemed to view an outdoor structure compared to girls. For example, Tin Tin (C3) spoke of sometimes constructing their house by leaning cornstalks from a local field against their trampoline to form walls. Like the C3 children, other girls in the study tended to treat forts as houses. Feather's (C10) contribution to the children's self-constructed fort was to lay grass on the dirt floor as a rug, which she pointed out during the child-led tour. Similarly, Morgan (C4), age 9 years, discussed and pointed out her efforts to decorate the fort on the family's play set with natural materials and a mosaic garden stone during her tour of outdoor play spaces. In contrast, boys generally described forts most often as places to hang out or as protection in games of war as in C2 and C8 families.

Whereas girls and younger male siblings often played house, all boys in the C2 and C8 families routinely played outdoors at *war*. Ryan (C8) made a gender distinction when sharing that his 7-year-old sister sometimes played Army with he and his brother, “Jean plays a girl in the Army.” Ryan's comment demonstrated an understanding that both men and women served in the military but concomitantly suggested that he felt the need to differentiate his sister's role from that of him and his brother. Although no daughters in the C2 family, all three sons, ages 8-, 10-, and 12-years-old, participated in playing war games. Playing war was one of the boys most common outdoor play activities and continued year round. The eldest son Conrad's (C2) greatest free time interest was playing a fantasy military strategy game on the computer. Although never assuming the role of any specific characters,

the war play of Conrad and his brothers imitated the fighters in this computer game. For example, Curtis constructed bows from branches and string as well as quivers for arrows from construction paper that were employed in these battles. However, modern weaponry constituted most of the boys' (C2) fighting in the form of Nerf guns of various sizes and Nerf darts. Having more Nerf guns than any other family in the study, they filled a cardboard grocery store box in the family's basement, in addition to the several *stray* guns strewn throughout storage bins in the garage.

Jackson (C4), age 7 years, and his younger brother Johnny, age 3 years, also used sticks as weapons or tools as shared by their father James, "Jackson was trying to make a weapon and he was trying to make an ax." James said the boys were always picking up sticks and bringing them home when they went on walks resulting in a permanent pile by their garage. During the C10 family child-led tour a photo was taken of a small oddly shaped root or branch that according to his older sister Feather, 6-year-old Spider used as a sledge hammer. Spider used a crook in a low branch on a tree by the fort as the "holder" for storing his hammer. Eric (C1) divulged remnants of his mischievous nature from childhood in discussing he shared his sons', 8-year-old Robin and 5-year-old Bluebird, desire to pick up sticks and play with them by swinging them in the air.

The only family in which a daughter was mentioned as participating in playing with sticks was the C5 family. Butch (C5) discussed that his children enjoyment of "whacking each other" with branches fallen from trees in their backyard had become such a problem when one of the children would get hurt that he and his wife Cassidy purchased foam pool noodles for the children to whack each other with instead. Their 8-year-old daughter, Jessie,

confirmed they were only allowed to whack people with the noodles but disclosed during the walking tour that she still played with fallen pine branches using them to whack “stuff” like tree trunks and her play set.

I will mention several other gender differences related to the children’s outdoor play activities briefly to demonstrate the range of evidence beyond what has already been discussed. For example, related to the children’s nature collections, “pretty” rocks or leaves were associated with responses or discussions of girls but not boys (C3, C4, C5, C8). Boys and girls both jump roped but girls were more likely to participate in double dutch forms of the activity (C3, C7, C9). Boys appeared to make greater efforts, mostly through mischief, to add adventure or novelty to their play (C1, C2, C4, C8, C10). Jessie (C5), age 8 years, shared of her unconventional use of her new play set equipment, “I like to swing on the ropes on the slide. [laugh] One time I fell off and hit the tree.” Ray Ray (C9), age 10 years, told a story about how she and her brother Duane played “circus” or “3 Musketeers” on their play set. These games involved swinging elements of the play set at each other. Overall, girls played more make-believe games in the outdoors than boys (C3, C4, C8, C9, C10) irrespective of content.

Girls playing like boys in the outdoors were noted in several cases. Slak (C6) described 5-year-old Maggie as being able to keep up with her brother and his friends playing outdoors. Ray Ray (C9), age 10 years, and Feather (C10), age 10 years, also discussed learning to play like the boys. Not one parent or child referred to a boy in the study as learning how to get along or play like the girls. Parents (C2, C3, C4, C5) expressed beliefs that boys played more aggressively (i.e., rough house) than girls. Although none of the boys

outdoor play ran counter to traditional gender stereotypes, some of the girls' play behavior did. Jessie (C5), age 8 years, played no dramatic play at all. Indeed the C5 family was the only case in which no gender differences were found in outdoor play between siblings at all. Tin Tin (C3), age 9 years and Ray Ray (C9), age 10 years, captured insects in outdoor play but their brothers Legos (C3), age 7 years, and Duane (C9), age 12 years, did not.

Most parents attested they supported their children's interests whether or not they were gender stereotypical. However, gender stereotypic play or other differences between brothers and sisters were evident in all families related to the children's alternative free time contexts. Most notably a child's organized sports participation, which potentially detracted from the frequency and duration of children's outdoor play was evident between boys and girls. Time spent in organized sports or other alternative free time activities precluded the children's opportunity for participation in outdoor play. The data indicated that although acts of omission, (e.g., expectation for son to participate in organized sport but not daughter; C6, C8, C9) gender stereotypic free time behaviors were reinforced.

Although more fathers than mothers participated in organized activities as children (see Table 4.4, p. 335), typically sports, gender did not appear to be a factor in parents' decisions to begin enrolling their sons and daughters up for adult-led programs from the age of 4 years (C3, C4, C6, C8, C9, C10). However, the programs the children participated in were gender segregated and sometimes gender stereotypical. In the C8 and C9 family's only sons participated in organized sports. Daughters in several families participated in sports, typically soccer (C3, C6, C10) although in C3 the girls played basketball also. Girls in the C3, C6, C9, and C10 families participated in programs related to dolls, arts and crafts, or

dance. Maggie (C6), age 5 years, had recently completed a Zumba class at the time of the study that Gopen likened to more of a dance than exercise class. James (C5), age 12 years, was the only boy to have participated in a dance class because he thought sports were “stupid.” Tin Tin (C3), age 9 years, and her sister Candy, age 8 years, had participated in a cooking class. Only girls had taken horseback riding lessons (C3, C6, C8), which in previous generations would not have been considered gender stereotypical as evidenced by Butch’s (C5) desire to be John Wayne, a famous movie cowboy, as a child. Boys typically participated in baseball (C6, C8, C9), basketball (C2, C3, C6, C9, C10) or soccer (C6, C10). More daughters (C3, C5, C7, C9) than sons (C5, C6) were involved or had been involved at some point in scouting. James (C5) may have been the only boy to have had time to participate in scouting when he was younger as he participated in no sports. With the exception of the C5 family, mothers pushed their children’s scout involvement in either Girl Scouts or 4H.

Some father’s not only appeared to value organized sports more than outdoor play (C2, C3, C9) but were also the only parent to be involved with their children’s sport participation (C2, C6, C8, C9). The C3 family was an exception, possibly because their eldest children were 9-year-old Tin Tin and her 8-year-old sister Candy, with their 7-year-old brother Legos being the youngest. Also, the girls’ mother Maxwell had played on an organized soccer league as a child. Jean (C10) spoke of 10-year-old Feather’s participation in organized soccer and that her 8-year-old brother Gabe had recently begun the sport following in his elder sister’s footsteps. The children’s father Ray was not involved with the children’s organized sports.

There was no evidence of any children having negative emotions associated with any aspect of outdoor play because of differential treatment by mothers or fathers. There was evidence that children's enjoyment, IM and STV for particular activities varied with the participation of same gendered parents. For example, 5-year-old Maggie (C6) was more inclined to play soccer when her mother Gopen participated. Likewise, Ray Ray (C9), age 10 years, enjoyed playing catch with her mother but declined to play catch with her father. Although parents' interpersonal involvement whether teaching skills or playing with their child contributed to meeting the children's relatedness needs, there appeared to be a deeper connection formed between these fathers and sons around sport than occurred between parents and children and any other form of outdoor play. The fathers did not demonstrate the same depth of connection to their daughters, nor did mothers and daughters appear to form similar bonds around their shared interest or involvement in any outdoor play activities.

No evidence was found to suggest that children's ability to fulfill their autonomy needs in the outdoors differed by gender. Most boys but no girls related their competency perceptions to sport when asked what they were good at playing outdoors (C2, C6, C8, C9). Robin (C1), age 8 years, and James (C5), age 12-years, did not relate their competencies to sport. Neither Robin's or James' families emphasized sports at home nor did these boys participate in any organized sports. Similarly, many boys linked their competency beliefs to winning or performing sport skills or playing by the rules of a sport (C2, C8, C9). Twelve-year-olds Conrad (C2) and Duane (C9) could not conceive of the idea that a child could be good at playing anything outdoors that was not a sport. None of the girls related their outdoor play competencies to sports or the concept of winning.

Regarding STV for outdoor play, there was no evidence that gender played a role in children's attainment values. For example, 8-year-olds Robin's (C1) and Ditto's (C6) mothers and fathers were equally involved in participating, encouraging, and supporting the boys outdoor play activities. There appeared to be no gender differences in the children's utility values for outdoor play as most of them had internalized the perspectives shared by mothers and fathers that outdoor play was good for them because it was active (see Beliefs and Values under Theoretical Proposition 1). However, mothers and fathers appeared to differ in some perceptions of utility values such as mothers discussing the potential for learning about nature whereas few fathers expressed a similar valuing of outdoor play (C3, C6).

Mothers and fathers also differed in their valuing of adult-led organized activity participation for their child. Fathers were more likely to discuss teamwork or competition whereas mothers valued the socialization organized activities afforded their child (see Beliefs and Values). There were notable exceptions where children were described as shy such as 12-year-old Conrad (C2), 9-year-old Tin Tin (C3), and 8-year-old Ditto (C6) where both mothers and fathers valued these adult-led opportunities for their children to meet other children with similar interests. Conversely, most parents had expressed fulfilling these relatedness needs during outdoor play in their neighborhoods as children.

**Theoretical proposition 3 summary.**

Outdoor play was gendered in a number of ways. In some cases, the role modeling, beliefs and values, autonomy support, structure, and interpersonal interactions shown by parents was gendered. Mothers and fathers had different perceptions of what children should

play in the outdoors. Although most parents indicated that boys and girls should be treated equitably, the data showed that these ideas were not always evident in the parenting practices or the ways that children played in the outdoors. Most children were unaware of gender implications in their play, but their stories indicated that gendered play in the outdoors was common.

Mothers and fathers role modeled gendered outdoor play through differences in their own recreation, family leisure, and interactions with their children in the outdoors. Mothers and fathers equally role modeled enjoyment of wild environments through family hiking at local, state, or national parks. Fathers role modeled more sports in domesticated nature settings for personal recreation. Fathers role modeled spending more time outdoors than mothers did generally, even in households where mothers reportedly spent a good deal of time outdoors. Mothers and fathers, however, equally participated in family bike rides.

Mothers inadvertently demonstrated more negative emotions such as fear, disgust, or discomfort outdoors than did fathers. Both sons and daughters picked up on some of their mother's fears and avoidance behaviors. Fathers attempted to counter mothers' negative affective role model related to insects or wildlife. Mothers also expressed greater fears of child abduction or the influence of negative peers related to the outdoors.

The nature of outdoor activities indicated that some parents saw aspects of the outdoors as gendered. Parents suggested that wild nature play was typical for girls but unusual for boys, consistent with the labeling of daughters as tomboys. Boys were also believed by many parents to be more aggressive, physical, active, and risk-taking than girls in their outdoor activities. Some mothers discussed having to make a concerted effort to

overcome their fears and discomfort with their sons' risk-taking or aggressive play behaviors whereas other parents, mothers and fathers alike, suggested their sons required more parental guidance than did their daughters. In families that expressed more stereotypical gender beliefs, parents believed their sons were more interested in playing outdoors than their daughters. However, the children's perspective often differed.

Although ample evidence of gender differences in the children's play, children and parents alike did not attribute these differences to parents interacting differently with their sons and daughters. Most parents and children did not believe that the parents held any different expectations for their sons and daughters outdoor play. Parents believed that in general boys and girls typically played differently outdoors but when applied to their own children seemingly gender differences were described as age or personality differences that merely fell along gender lines.

Mothers emphasized the educational value of learning about nature through direct observations while playing, which was not mentioned by fathers. Fathers tended to emphasize their sons' learning how to fight or defend females whereas mothers emphasized the value of all children being strong and able to defend themselves. This contributed to parents' STV for enrolling their children in martial arts programs. Fathers valued the development of activity specific competencies that could lead to lifelong leisure pursuits.

Mothers STV for their children's participation in organized seemed to be related to socialization whereas for fathers it was learning teamwork and functioning in a competitive environment. Mothers and fathers equally valued physical activity in organized sports. When children were shy, mothers and fathers equally valued organized activity participation in any

adult-led program. No parents acknowledged the difference between the social environment of organized activity participation and outdoor play. Parents did acknowledge and value children having another adult role model besides their parents, particularly adults with the expertise that parents could not provide.

As a result of parent fears, some mothers restricted the home ranges of their children to the point that they were developmentally inappropriate, resulting in these children having been unable to fulfill their psychological needs for autonomy, competency, and relatedness. I uncovered no evidence to suggest that children's STV for outdoor play was affected.

The children's opportunities for participating in outdoor play or other free-time alternative activities were more abundant possibly, because not all of the mothers in the study worked outside the home. Many mothers were described as "the ride" whereas fathers were more involved with their sons' sports. Where eldest children were girls, fathers were equally involved in their sports leagues. Compared to several fathers having had their own father coach them as children, only one parent had acted as a coach for their own children. That family had three sons participating in the same sports.

Parents recalled their mothers and fathers as fulfilling traditional gender roles, which tended to shape their beliefs about parental roles. These experiences in turn shaped parenting practices related to outdoor play for their own children. Many parents recalled their fathers playing with them outdoors or coaching organized sports which seemed to lead to the belief that fathers should play sports with children at home or coach organized teams. Mothers performed domestic chores related to cooking and cleaning, which was consistent with the mothers in the study. Changes in traditional gendered parental roles, however, were evident.

Mothers were more involved in playing with their children, scheduling children's time, and providing transportation to friends', parks, or organized activities than their mothers were. Unlike their own mothers, these mothers served as role models to their children in wild nature environments.

Younger siblings tended to emulate the outdoor play behaviors of their older siblings of the same gender. Only sons or only daughters tended to play independently more than those children who had same gendered siblings in their family except when older sisters structured their younger siblings' play. Although there was no evidence of parental influence, girls were portrayed in several families as playing like their brothers. Depictions of playing like boys included sports, rough and tumble play, or physical challenges.

Gender differences in the home range rules established for all sons and daughters within a household did not seem to exist. Most parents did not recall any gender differences in the home range boundaries for themselves or their siblings. As a result of parents' restricting their children's home ranges compared to their own in childhood, the children appeared to have fewer neighborhood playmates. This home range restriction also decreased mixed gender play beyond that of siblings.

In families where at least one parent spent time outdoors, whether a mother or a father, their children demonstrated more positive emotions, IM, and STV for outdoor play. Mothers and fathers had inverse relationship in terms of what they taught children to play outdoors. Although both mothers and fathers participated at least occasionally in all forms of outdoor play with their children, mothers introduced children to outdoor play environments

and activities such as playground equipment whereas fathers taught their children to ride bicycles and play sports.

Mothers typically played gender neutral activities with all of their children. This persisted with girls after boys had moved on to sports (e.g., sidewalk chalk). Fathers and sons bonded around shared interests in sports but there was no such outdoor play activity around which mothers and daughters bonded. Mothers but never fathers expressed that they sometimes played with their children to make up for a perceived lack of playmates.

Only a few fathers acknowledged treating their sons and daughters differently whereas no mothers did. Fathers often claimed they “gave up” on asking daughters to play catch or shoot baskets because of a lack of interest on their daughters’ part. Daughters were more likely to play and enjoy sports with mom than dad and brothers. This difference appeared to be related to fathers’ emphasis on competition and performance whereas mothers’ play was more relaxed or just for fun. Sons but not daughters appeared to internalize fathers’ valuing of competition.

Older boys did not perceive that they could be “good at” playing anything outdoors because not a sport. All boys who played an organized sport regardless of age related their outdoor play competencies to those sports. Boys who did not play organized sports related outdoor play competencies to non-sport activities as did all of the girls. Boys attempted to add novelty, challenge, and adventure to their outdoor play more often than did the girls. This generally occurred through mischief and the inappropriate use of toys or play equipment. The label of “tomboy” was attached to girls but no concomitant label for boys’ outdoor play was evidenced. Girls were considered exceptional if they participated in some outdoor play

activities whereas participation was considered typical for their brothers. Parents attempted to introduce and encourage daughters' participation in stereotypically male organized activities (e.g., basketball, soccer, golf).

There were no gender differences in the play environments made available to children. Parents purchased gendered toys in the forms of construction vehicles, weapons and certain sports equipment (e.g., footballs, baseballs, basketball hoops) for their sons. Some toys that were gender neutral (e.g., bicycles, scooters, hula hoops, soccer balls) were gendered by colors such as pink or light blue. Pastel colors have been traditionally stereotypically associated with girls and primary colors with boys. All outdoor play sets included primary colors of blue, red, or green but no pastel colors. No evidence that parents intended to indicate differences between play spaces and activities for their sons and daughters related to the color of outdoor play toys and equipment. The only time sons played with pink toys was where the eldest daughter was a child and toys were handed down to younger siblings.

Mothers in most families expressed greater interest and knowledge related to their children's affective experiences of their outdoor play activities. Although none of the mothers worked outside the home, only fathers in a few families demonstrated significant knowledge or showed interest in their children's outdoor play activities besides sports. However, even in families where parents demonstrated substantial knowledge of their children's outdoor play interests and activities, they often omitted non-stereotypical activities from their discussions of their children's outdoor play. When daughters' activities were discussed as falling outside of gender stereotypes, they generally involved interactions with

their fathers. Therefore, gender may have influenced the saliency of children's interests in parents' efforts to recall them from memory.

#### **Theoretical Proposition 4**

##### **Introduction.**

This section addresses Theoretical Proposition 4, "Parents socialize their children differently based on the age of their children," that underlies research question 2, "How do parents differ in the socialization of their children's outdoor play?" Patterns emerged consistent with both direct and indirect forms of socialization.

This section followed the same organization as Theoretical Propositions 2, 3, and 5 to facilitate comparisons across socialization constructs, including those that were used as sensitizing concepts during interviews. First, Role Modeling was examined as an indirect form of socialization. Beliefs and Values were addressed both as a direct form of socialization when related to outdoor play and communicated to the child and as an indirect form where it either was not communicated to the child or addressed a topic other than outdoor play (e.g., valuing of organized activity as free time alternative for the child). The remaining three constructs examined were derived from SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985): (a) Autonomy Supportive Environment, (b) Structure, and (c) Interpersonal Involvement.

Within the discussion of these parental socialization and age, examples were provided of how each pertained, if at all, to various aspects of children's outdoor play: (a) physical play environment, (b) social play environment, (c) play activities, (d) frequency and duration of play, (e) play emotions, (f) child's IM, and (g) child's STV.

### **Role modeling.**

Parents' role modeling through their own outdoor leisure, family leisure, and affective responses to spending time outdoors was not found to be a prominent theme in terms of differing with children's ages. There was no evidence that parents' role modeling had differing influences on children's physical or social outdoor play environments based on age. There was evidence that as children aged, their outdoor play activities typically shifted away from the "puttering" of childhood as Pam (C9) described it to "more structured" or "productive" activity as her husband Kevin described their 12-year-old son Duane's and their 10-year-old daughter Ray Ray's play today.

Some evidence showed that children's IM and STV for outdoor play activities and environments changed over the years being somewhat consistent with their parents' role modeling of their own outdoor leisure behaviors and values. Older children tended to be less interactive and engaged with the natural environment, viewing the outdoors as a backdrop to their activity—typically sports. Cole, for example, expressed aesthetic appreciation for nature as a backdrop to golf. Similarly, as also occurred in the C2 and C5 families, older children who were described, by themselves and others, as preferring to be indoors were found to have at least one parent who rarely or in some cases never spent time outdoors at home for their own leisure enjoyment.

Conversely, younger children in all families, regardless of their parents' role modeling, were reported to initiate, enjoy, and spend significant amounts of time playing outdoors. Role modeling also appeared to play a role in young children's dramatic play as when Feather (C10), age 10 years, pretended to set up an animal triage in the children's fort

according to her mother Jean. Ray, Feather's father, was a veterinarian. The most common role modeling of an adult occupation in outdoor play amongst children in most families was that of daughters playing house and pretending to be mothers. Ryan (C8), age 8 years, described his 7-year-old sister Jean as having used their 6-month-old sister Maria as the baby when she played house with his 5-year-old brother PJ and 3-year-old sister Dale. Christine (C4) described her 2-year-old daughter, "Beth is just precious... She just wants to be a mommy so bad. She does everything to be a mommy. Taking care of babies and she loves to take care of her baby brother."

The ages of children in the household were repeatedly mentioned as impacting parents' ability to spend time outdoors with their older children or the types of family outings and vacations they could take (C3, C4, C5, C8, C10). For example, Thomas and Samantha (C8) both enjoyed spending time outdoors with their children and riding bikes as a family. However, the recent birth of their 6 month-old daughter, Maria, made it difficult for Samantha to spend time outdoors because as an infant Maria was just on the verge of no longer having her "breath taken away" by the wind. George (C3) expressed that although he and his wife Maxwell enjoyed day hiking with their children, something especially enjoyed by their 9-year-old daughter Tin Tin, that doing so was logistically difficult to do when Legos, age 7 years at the time of the study, was younger because he would get tired and need to be carried. Role modeling through family leisure as depicted in these cases would be anticipated to relate primarily to children's IM and STV for outdoor play environments through the children's exposure to and development of comfort in various domesticated or wild nature settings. The children did not make a distinction between outdoor play and

outdoor recreation as evidenced by 9-year-old Tin Tin's outdoor play story being a recounting of tubing on a lake during the family's vacation the previous summer.

**Beliefs and values.**

Whereas role modeling could only be considered an indirect form of parental socialization, parents' beliefs and values could have been either direct or indirect depending upon whether or not they were expressed to the child and whether or not they pertained to the child's outdoor play. Although parents shared beliefs and values related to outdoor play that had to do with children's ages during their interviews, there was no evidence to suggest that these thoughts were ever shared with their children. Therefore, the following discussion focuses on beliefs and values as indirect forms of socialization. These beliefs and values influenced the parenting practices that follow under Structure and Interpersonal Involvement.

Regardless of their children's ages, all parents expressed valuing children's autonomy within reasonable limits and as it pertained to the ability of the child to choose what the child did in their free time. However, many mothers believed that infants and toddlers required parents' assistance to learn where they could play and what they could do in their free time both in terms of safety and developmental abilities (M1, M2, M4, M5, M9, M10) before they could play independently outdoors as they did in middle childhood. Only one parent expressed a contrasting valuing of autonomy. Sue (C7) said of her 9-year-old daughter Emily's desire to play in the neighborhood like other peers her age, "She's only 9. I'm like, 9-year-olds shouldn't just be out just doing whatever she wants to do all day long with no supervision." It should be noted that conversely Sue highly valued her 5- and 9-year-olds'

autonomy in choosing activities to do at home or through their participation in the local Boys and Girls Club.

Many parents' STV for facilitating their children's outdoor play varied with the age of their child from birth through middle childhood. Although children's intrinsic interest, a component of SVT in EVT, was not considered as a distinct construct apart from the children's IM for this study, parents' intrinsic interest emerged as an important consideration in their facilitation of their children's outdoor play experiences. The following discussion addresses patterns in the data that reflected how each component (attainment value, utility value, and perceived cost) of SVT related to age changes, birth order, or the number of children within these families. Finally, parents' STV for their child's outdoor play compared to other free time alternatives was examined to determine if it varied due to children's ages, birth order or number of children.

A parents' intrinsic value for facilitating their child's outdoor play experiences was considered to relate to expressions of a parents' personal enjoyment. Parents expressed enjoyment apart from being involved in actual playing with their child. For example, parents in several families appreciated being able to step back and just enjoy observing their older children's play without having to provide assistance or instruction (C1, C3, C4, C8). There was an inverse gender difference between mothers' and fathers' intrinsic interest by their children's ages. Mothers tended to express greater enjoyment in exposing their young children to different outdoor play environments (C1, C8, C9, C10) whereas most fathers expressed greater enjoyment in playing with their older children (D1, D2, D3, D4, D8, D9, D10). As their children were better able to play independently as they grew older, some

mothers enjoyed the opportunity to socialize with other mothers while the children played (C2, C6, C8).

Parents' attainment value for facilitating their children's outdoor play was most closely related to their perceptions of themselves in fulfilling their parental role as providers of a variety of experiences. When looking at age changes, mothers' identities were associated with providing varied opportunities and experiences for their children (M1, M6, M8, M9, M10). Sophie (C1) shared, "I think it's important to give the kids the opportunity to learn how to... learn how to climb, learn how to slide down..." Jean (C10) attributed her drive to provide a variety of experiences for her children, 6-year-old Spider, 8-year-old Gabe, and 10-year-old Feather to advice she received from a teacher regarding children's IM to interact and learn about the world.

All parents' viewed themselves as protectors of their children in terms of perceived potential social dangers, which did not diminish as their children aged. Although all parents acknowledged increased capabilities in their older children corresponding with demonstrated trustworthiness for following parents' rules, not one parent viewed their parental role of protector as having diminished from when their children were toddlers. Even parents who reported monitoring their children's play less frequently or not as closely as when their child was younger persisted in their parental role as protector.

Parents' utility value for facilitating their children's outdoor play included parents' facilitation of their children's development of independence in outdoor play. Many mothers expressed this in terms of learning to use playground equipment independently (C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6, C8, C9, C10) or developing the ability to amuse or entertain oneself during

outdoor play (C1, C8, C9, C10). Mostly fathers saw value in teaching their children life lessons through their interactions with their children in teaching them outdoor play skills like sports or riding a bike (C1, C2, C4, C6, C8, C9). Many parents discussed the utility of children's development of social skills in outdoor play (C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6, C8, C9, C10) as when Gopen (C6) shared, "When they started hanging out more with the neighbor boys... they'd come in... and 'Miss Gopen Blah, blah, blah' and I'm like, 'You guys just need to go work it out. I'm not coming out there to referee...'" All parents valued their children's learning how to cooperate and "get along" with siblings and later friends during outdoor play, given that as children aged parental monitoring and involvement decreased.

The perceived costs to parents in facilitating their children's outdoor play varied over time and seemed to be associated with a parent weighing the costs of their own time, efforts, and financial expenditures against the aforementioned utility values for themselves as parents and for their children. Costs associated with facilitating family outings or vacations were higher for families with toddlers in the household as described by several parents (C1, C3, C4, C6, C8). James (C4) shared his intolerance for the children getting muddy playing in their backyard was related to the challenges of parenting five children ranging in age from 9-year-old Morgan to 8-month-old Fritz, "I can't keep track of everybody... frazzled from trying to change a diaper... realize Johnny's... got mud on his shoes on the carpet... depends... Do we have time for them to get cleaned up and change clothes?"

As children aged and were perceived to require less direct monitoring for compliance with outdoor play rules and appropriate social interactions, parents who did not enjoy spending time outdoors themselves due to temperature and insects retreated indoors. Anne

(C2) said, “As they've gotten older it's more me being in here... because I can and there's always so many things to do in the house... I'm not a big outdoor person... so I stay in.” For older children, parents’ provision of outdoor play experiences seemed to shift from taking the children to outdoor play spaces to purchasing a greater variety of outdoor play toys for use at home (C2, C5, C6, C8, C9, C10).

Parents’ STV for outdoor play compared to children’s free time alternative of playing indoors appeared to follow an inverted “U” pattern such that outdoor play peaked during middle childhood. Parents perceived young children were developmentally unable to play independently outdoors so parents scaffolded their children’s outdoor play competencies. During their middle childhood years, their children played outdoors independently, so parental direct involvement declined. Later parents resigned themselves to older children’s interest in playing outdoors having been supplanted by more mature interests (e.g., reading) or electronics (e.g., video games).

Out of concerns for the safety of their children, physically when they were very young and socially when approaching adolescence, all parents to varying degrees supported their children’s indoor leisure. Indoor play that was creative (e.g., Legos) or educational (e.g., reading) were equally valued to outdoor play by all parents regardless of a child’s age. However, at ages 7 to 10 years, parents valued children’s playing outdoors because it afforded greater opportunities for physical activity. During this same period in children’s lives, many parents expressed appreciation for outdoor play opportunities as “different” from indoor opportunities especially as it related to the ability to play with natural elements like water or dirt, with the exception of C7.

The only aspect of children's indoor play that was valued less than outdoor play was any form of electronic gaming whether it be on a family system (e.g., Wii), computer, or personal gaming system (e.g., DS or I-pod Touch). Pam (C9) described using the computer as a learning tool when 12-year-old Duane and 10-year-old Ray Ray were toddlers but regarding the children's gaming today, "...can get pretty zombie like... It drives me crazy just to see them sit there with their little electronics in their lap... They're not interacting. They're not talking to people. They're not up doing something." Only parents with at least one child over the age of 9 years described the children's gaming interest or playing frequency as problematic (C2, C5, C9, C10).

Few children had access to social media and parents in those families did not state it as problematic largely because the parents required the children to use a computer within the parents view and to use specially designed programs for children. For example, only within the past year had 10-year-old Feather (C10) been permitted to play HOWRSE a combination game and email that was introduced to her by an older cousin. The only other children permitted access to equipment or programs that would accommodate social media were in C5 and C9. Again, this would pertain to children ages 10 years and above.

Parents in all families limited their children's television viewing to some extent and none reported this as a problem although again it was always valued less than outdoor play. As only the C7 children had televisions in their bedrooms, the presence of young children in the home often resulted in all the family's viewing being age appropriate to the youngest family member (C2, C3, C4, C5, C6, C8, C10).

Parents' STV for their child's outdoor play compared to participation in adult-led organized activities varied with age, birth order, and number of children in the home. At least one child in each of the 10 families had participated in an organized program before the age of 5 years. In some instances, this was related to mother-child programs at an area nature center or local zoo (C1, C2, C3, C6, C10). Other children participated in a sport as soon as the child was eligible by age, typically around 4 years old (C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6, C8, C9). Virtually all parents emphasized helping their children identify interests from an early age as the reason for their child's activity participation. However only Jean (C10) believed that children needed more organized activities as toddlers than they did during their middle childhood years,

I did a lot more parks and rec stuff in town but they were younger and I think they needed to do stuff... Parks and Rec's like little, dabbling stuff like intro to soccer but they're just running around or like a little Painting Dora class. So now that they're bigger they don't really need all that little stuff.

Most parents increasingly valued their children's organized activity participation as they aged more than outdoor play (C2, C3, C4, C5, C6, C7, C8, C9). In contrast to their own childhood experiences of playing with neighborhood friends, parents valued organized activity participation over outdoor play as providing greater opportunities for socialization for their children and the development of friendships (C2, C3, C5, C6, C7, C9). Home schooling played an important role in Anne and Cole's (C2) motivations for having the boys participate in organized activities in addition to outdoor activities. Cole suggested that participation provided opportunities for his sons to be more like other kids, "One of the

things that we do try to keep with them is that they have to do some organized activity during the year... Other kids do play... basketball, football whatever.”

Paradoxically although virtually all parents associated greater physical activity with outdoor play, most stated their motivation for their children participating in more organized activities as they aged—particularly sport or martial arts was due to a need for their children to be less sedentary and more physically active. At younger ages parents’ valuing of organized activity for providing physical activity appeared to be associated with perceptions that their child had reached an age where he or she needed or desired to be more active (C2, C3, C8, C9, C10). When children were older, parents valued the physical activity that organized program participation provided because of a perception of their children’s increased sedentary activity indoors (e.g., electronics) and decreased motivation to play outdoors at home (C2, C5, C9, C10).

Finally parents’ competency beliefs about their children, in part attributed to developmental changes and in part attributed to their children’s personalities, played into their valuing of outdoor play compared to free-time alternatives for their children—both indoor or organized. Activities parents perceived as educational were always valued more highly than those that were not. Although acknowledging that creativity was educational (C1, C2, C3, C4, C8, C9, C10), most parents emphasized their children’s cognitive acquisition of knowledge as being of greater value than any other free-time activity when they were younger.

Children’s competencies in extracurricular activities were also highly valued by many parents because of the opportunities they afforded compared to the outdoors. Parents valued

their children's competencies in sports, primarily for elevating their child's self-esteem or self-confidence (C3, C6, C8, C9, C10). Gopen (C6) shared regarding her 8-year-old son Ditto, "The organized sports I think as more like self-confidence... It's definitely got him out there and helped." The discussion with Slak and Gopen led to an increased emphasis in conversations with parents in the C6, C8, C9, and C10 families regarding whether playing outdoors could contribute to a child's development of self-confidence. Slak and Gopen (C6) affirmed that outdoor play had the potential for providing opportunities for children to develop self-confidence in an environment where the pressure of social comparisons was not as strong as in school, or sports. Slak thought this might be due to outdoor play being less pre-defined and afforded children more flexibility and control over their experiences:

Outdoor play is more abstract... maybe I'm climbing a tree but I could climb a tree any way I want to... or I'm going to stop here because I got too high. Maybe next time I'll climb higher... It's more up to you... It's my time so I chose to be out here and I chose to do this and I chose to stop and now I'm gonna go do this. So there's a freedom there.

This discussion with Gopen and Slak brought up another recurring theme parents often spoke about suggested that at least some of their children expressed a fear of failure or sense of perfectionism that transcended structured environments like school or sports (C1, C2, C3, C5, C6, C7, C9). Theoretically, this finding could be consistent with the children experiencing a reduced sense of self-efficacy or locus of control in more structured situations than they felt with outdoor play. However, delving further into the topic was beyond the

scope of my study and further research that incorporated the children's perspective would be required before any conclusions could be drawn.

Parents struggled to think of general outdoor play competencies children might develop to enable them to play outdoors independently. All parents discussed the development of creativity or the ability to amuse oneself in outdoor play. Parents in many families emphasized a child's development of an appreciation of danger or undesirable consequences (C1, C2, C4, C8, C9, C10). The maturity to overcome potentially dangerous impulses (e.g., running into the street to retrieve a ball without checking for traffic) was also mentioned by parents in all families. The development of activity specific or skill competencies were valued by parents principally for their value in affording the pursuit of lifelong leisure interests like hiking, riding a bicycle, or playing golf (with the exception of C7).

When directly asked what their own child was *good at* playing outdoors, most parents were able to arrive at a response or two but none carried the enthusiasm or emotion displayed when they described their child's academic or extracurricular competencies. One exception was where the children's organized sport and outdoor play overlapped (C2, C6, C8, C9). Parents' competency perceptions always included the status of their child in mastering riding a bicycle without training wheels—generally if under the age of 9 years, or safely crossing intersections if 10 years of age or older. Parents often viewed their children's creativity outdoors to be a carryover from the creativity they displayed indoors (C1, C2, C3, C4, C7, C8, C10).

Given that parents valued the outdoors for affording different opportunities for play than indoors, some parents did perceive their child as being competent at something related to playing with or interacting with the natural environment. This was most typically climbing trees (C2, C4, C9, C10). Jean (C10) valued 8-year-old Gabe's creativity and skill at making jewelry and art from natural elements found in their yard, "He had taken a piece of grass and woven it through the leaf up and down like 10 times without it crumbling... He made me a dandelion bracelet... wove it around... stuck a violet in that hole."

### **Autonomy supportive environment.**

Whether or not a family environment is autonomy supportive or controlling related to not only parenting practices directed at outdoor play but also to parenting practices in general which might have an indirect relationship with children's outdoor play. As the Structure and Interpersonal Involvement sections that follow also address parenting practices, an effort was made to minimize replication by only addressing here whether certain parenting practices conformed to either the tenets of an autonomy supportive or controlling environment and how that related to age. Autonomy supportive environments were theorized to provide opportunities for a child to exercise choice, take initiative, participate in decisions, and solve their own problems. Each of these concepts was examined for how it affected the various aspects of children's outdoor play.

Across all families and within the more global context of children's free time, older children were given greater opportunities to exercise choice during their free time especially as it related to playing either indoors or outdoors at home. Coinciding with that choice was the ability of the child to initiate participation in the indoor or outdoor play activity of his or

her choosing. However, children sometimes lost their autonomy to choose playing indoors. Gopen (C6) said although she never needed to send 8-year-old Ditto out to play because he usually initiated it, his younger sister 5-year-old Maggie was sometimes a different story, “Maggie's the one, ‘I don't want to go out.’ I'm like, ‘It's not a choice, you need to go outside for a while.’ And then she's fine when she gets out there.” Pam and Kevin (C9) as well as Cassidy and Butch (C5) shared similar sentiments regarding their children 10-year-old Ray Ray (C9), 12-year-old Duane (C9), and 12-year-old James (C5). Cassidy described James as sometimes requiring a “nudge” to play outdoors but also stated that he was fine once out there.

Similarly, Jean (C10) shared that her children, ages 6, 8, and 10 years, were sometimes reluctant, “Sometimes I'll say, ‘Guys we're going out.’ ‘Nooooo!!!’ Everybody freaks out... sometimes they'll go out and sometimes it's like nobody wants to go out and I push them out the door and they'll be out there for two hours.” Conversely Anne (C2) and Christine (C4) stated that they never made their children go out to play if they did not want to although in the latter case Christine shared that was not usually a problem as someone amongst her five children, ranging in age from 8 months to 9 years of age, generally suggested it. Gopen (C6) acknowledged that although 5-year-old Maggie and 8-year-old Ditto enjoyed playing out once there, their autonomy in terms of choice was diminished, “So yeah I don't know if that's really encouraging when you tell them it's not a choice.” Her sentiment like that of the other parents was that she believed she was doing something good for her daughter and that there was no detriment due to denying her daughter the choice of where to play at that time. So although the children did not always retain their autonomy in

choosing an outdoor play environment, they regained autonomy over most of their activities as long as they were conducted within their parents' preset limits as to the use of toy and non-toy resources.

Parents were more controlling with their children when they were young, laying the foundation for the children's learning parents' expectations and rules that would later afford them the ability to play independently outdoors. By middle childhood, all parents and children agreed they had a good understanding of what their parents' expectations and rules were, although occasionally sometimes new outdoor play rules were created after a child had done something that a parent did not like. Children of varying ages described being the impetus for such modifications of rules as shared by 8-year-old Bob (C2) and 12-year-old Duane (C9). Duane shared, "They tell us and I kind of just figure it out like by trial and error. If I do something and then they don't like that then I know for next time."

Children's ability to choose an activity was sometimes at the discretion of a parent particularly for younger children. This was particularly true of kiddie pools or sprinklers where mothers typically made the decision to get them out and set them up (C1, C2, C4, C5, C8, C10). Sometimes resources for activities were not independently accessible to children rendering their choice dependent upon the assistance of an adult, such as 8-year-old Robin's (C1) bicycle or 8-year-old Ditto's (C6) soccer goals. It was not that the children could not choose these activities per se but rather that they lost their independence in being able to pursue them at will and could not use them if a parent did not provide the necessary assistance.

The ability to exercise choice in outdoor play often diminished when other aspects of outdoor play were considered such as playing with friends or leaving the yard. All parents felt their children were most safe playing outdoors when they played at home, typically in the backyard, with only siblings; although as children aged their desire for playmates and expanded home ranges collided with parents' perceptions of their parental role to keep their children safe. Children in all families were not permitted to take the initiative to play at a friend's house, invite a friend over, or otherwise leave their yard without at least one parent's, typically their mother's. In addition to requiring the permission of their own parent, the children also required the permission of the playmates' parents. Having that in common, families did vary in their autonomy supportiveness. In some families the shared expectation was that the children *inform* their parents rather than being required to *ask permission* (C3, C6, C8, C9 & C10 at their previous residence "in town") if they chose to play outdoors. Informing was consistent with a more autonomy supportive approach by the parents. This seemed more a characteristic of the family than a product of the children's ages because children in these families ranged in age from 7 to 12 years.

When it came to playing with peers, three families demonstrated more controlling behaviors than the others regarding younger children (C1, C4, C7). Although not the only parents to mention concerns about negative peer influences, parents in these families discussed age related concerns that resulted in their efforts to monitor their children's play interactions more closely. Sophie and Eric (C1) required their 8-year-old son Robin to request permission for a friend to play at his house or to go play in the friends' backyard despite being visible from within the C1 family home. Permissions differed by playmate with

some requests being denied until Eric returned from work and could be physically present to supervise his sons' outdoor play with certain friends.

Further, James and Christine (C4) monitored their children's outdoor play so closely that they admitted listening to their 7-year-old son Jackson's and 9-year-old Morgan's conversations with playmates. As the youngest boy in the neighborhood, James was concerned that Jackson was especially vulnerable to peer influences as when he shared a story of catching his son conducting himself in an inappropriate manner, although not terribly surprising for his age—urinating in a rain barrel. Christine emphasized monitoring the children to ensure that no one was using “potty words.”

Although neither Robin (C1), age 8 years, nor Morgan (C4), age 9 years, demonstrated any resentment or resistance to their parents' expectations, rules, or monitoring, Emily (C7), age 9 years, presented a different story. Emily expressed not feeling she had a choice to play with friends very often because she was not permitted to leave her front yard without her mother yet she perceived her mother rarely spent time outdoors so that she could see her friends, particularly as they played on the playground immediately behind the C7 apartment. Her mother Sue attributed her restrictions to Emily having left the yard without telling her when Emily was 4 years old—five years earlier. When asked what she wished were different about her outdoor play opportunities, if anything, Emily shared, “It's bad that nobody can watch me outside because she wants to stay inside...” If playmates came into the yard while Emily and her 5-year-old sister Emily were playing, Sue generally permitted them to stay because she “felt bad” for Emily knowing that she most enjoyed outdoor play with her friends.

Most of the conflict between Emily's (C7) interest in playing with her friends and Sue's need to protect her daughter relate to Emily's having the most restricted home range in the study. Emily's home range was no different from that of her 5-year-old sister Darling. Such was the case in many families, where at least one parent—typically the mother, restricted the home range of all children to that of the youngest member of the household capable of outdoor play—that is excluding infants (C1, C2, C5, C7, C10). James (C5), age 12 years, described his desire to be allowed to ride his bike “to a destination” rather than “laps” around the family's circular driveway. His father Butch did permit James with the accompaniment of his 8-year-old sister Jessie to ride on a multi-use trail in front of their house for several blocks but did not entail them having to cross any traffic intersections. In other families there were age differences and progressions in the children's home ranges such that older children were afforded greater geographic freedom, which was often more about having access to playmates than anything else (C3, C4, C6, C8, C9). For example, the C3 and C6 families had designations for bike riding boundaries such as “big block” for older children.

To provide a full accounting of free time alternatives to outdoor play related to age, organized activity selection was important. Children's ability to exercise choice shifted from more controlling (i.e., parents' select) to autonomous regarding their participation in organized programs. Many parents stated their young children would not be aware of what was available to them until they had been exposed to it, whereas later on most children became more aware of what was available through their peers at school and ability to read local parks and recreation brochures independently (C2, C3, C4, C5, C6, C8, C9, C10).

However even young children were often permitted to participate in activities they discovered on their own as when 5-year-old Maggie (C6) and 8-year-old Candy learned about Girl Scouts at school.

One of the aspects of children's outdoor play that had changed the most from what parents recalled of their own childhood outdoor play was the children's lack of opportunities to solve their own problems in outdoor play. Although parents in all families wanted their children to be autonomous in terms of being able to amuse themselves, that is solving their own boredom, increased parental involvement had greatly altered the social environment of children's play where most problem solving occurred in the form of negotiating rules or "getting along" with siblings and play mates. Parents spoke of intervening on their children's behalf as when Gopen (C6) sent a neighbor girl home when 5-year-old Maggie did not want to play with her or Sophie (C1) or James (C4) spoke of getting involved when social interactions did not go smoothly. Indeed Robin (C1), age 8 years, spoke of his parents as "helping me" when he had a disagreement or problem with a peer or his 5-year-old brother Bluebird. Given that most of the children's outdoor play was restricted to their own yards, there was little problem solving that the children needed to do related to strangers. Most of the children knew that they were to at the very least run indoors and alert a parent. Ray (C10) described his children's reaction, ages 6, 8, and 10 years, "If a stranger came here they would... run in before the stranger was 80 feet away. They'd be flying in, 'Mom somebody's out here.' Almost to a point of embarrassment like, 'It's OK. It's a neighbor you know. Relax.'"

The concerns about stranger danger in outdoor play were reinforced to children at an early age and most parents hoped that children would be conscious of danger as they got older. Jean (C10) and Kevin (C9) shared their use of current events to bring to life the reality of what could potentially happen to children should they be abducted by strangers, although at what age this practice began was unclear. Jean (C10) spoke of pointing to the wall of missing children in the entrance to an area Walmart store and telling her children, ages 6, 8, and 10 years, that bad things could happen to them and they would not get to come home anymore. The impression was given that Jean had been doing this for some time, initially as a means of persuading her children to remain by her side in public. Both examples could be categorized as manipulative or controlling, however none of the children perceived them to be such but rather just to ensure their safety.

Like the C2 family, most parents limited formally through rules or informally through their perception, the children had played electronic games “long enough.” However, only two families discussed using formal reward systems for outdoor play (C9 & C10). Although no longer used, Pam distributed cards Duane and Ray Ray could submit to either parent for ½ hour of computer play time or television when the children were younger. Only Jean (C10) continued to use such a system at the time of the study. Spider, age 6, Gabe, age 8, and Feather, age 10, earned pennies for good behaviors such as helping around the house, doing homework, or being kind to a family member or guest.

The only rules parents expressed related to organized activities were expectations for behaviors (e.g., polite or mind their manners) or expectations that the children participate in a certain number or type of program (C2, C3, C5, C6, C7, C8, C9, C10). Samantha (C8) spoke

of her embarrassment when Ryan, now 8 years old, first began playing tee ball around the age of 4 years demonstrating how early children pick up on cues from the adults around them, “He’d been watching too much Cardinal’s baseball with his grandfather... he yelled... ‘My grandma could have hit that ball.’ ...It was his own team mate...everybody’s laughing... I’m trying not to just scream at him from across the field.”

Parents and children in all families concurred that rules in their households were made by the parents without much, if any, input from the children. Most parents felt justified in their unilateral imposition of rules as they were designed for their children’s safety. Some parents acknowledged that as their children aged they anticipated the need to include their children more in the decision making process to get them to “buy in” to the rules or expectations (C3, C7). Again, what seemed to matter most was whether or not the children perceived their parents’ rules to be controlling or manipulative and what effect if any it had on the children’s outdoor play.

Conrad (C2) , age 12 years, Bob (C2), age 8 years, James (C5), age 12 years, Emily (C7), age 9 years, and Feather (C10), age 10 years, all expressed some degree of dissatisfaction with their parents’ rules. For Conrad and Bob this was not related to outdoor play but rather to their preferred indoor play on the computer. James’ and Emily’s dissatisfaction was related to their severely restricted home ranges that limited their access to playmates. Feather (C10) wanted more time to play outdoors now that her family lived in the country, feeling there was “more to do” when playing outdoors compared to her experiences as the family’s previous residence in a subdivision. Unlike James and Emily, Feather appeared content with her home range restrictions and the impact on the social environment

of her outdoor play. Feather played daily with her brothers and somewhat regularly with friends who came to visit. Jean's mother sometimes provided round-trip transportation to facilitate her children's friends being able to visit and play outdoors with Feather as well as her 6-year-old brother Spider or 8-year-old brother Gabe.

### **Structure.**

Parents' rules in most families adapted to varying degrees as a child aged, matured, and demonstrated knowledge and trustworthiness for following parents' rules and expectations. Concomitantly parents' rules related to requiring a parents' physical presence for monitoring eased and home ranges expanded (with the exception of C7). Rules related to home range and parents' monitoring for rule compliance dictated the play environments available to their children, their access to playmates apart from siblings, and for older children their IM and STV for outdoor play. Parents used landmarks to communicate permitted boundaries. For example, 8-year-old Bob knew he was not permitted to pass the fire hydrant in his back yard as he approached the adjacent road. Many parents used sidewalks in front yards to demarcate boundaries for toddlers (C8, C9, C10), or in almost half of the families for all children irrespective of age (C4, C5, C6, C7). Home ranges generally expanded from backyards to neighboring yards where no street crossings were required (C1, C4, C5, C6, C8, C9, C10).

In many cases, home ranges never expanded beyond the point that a child would be permitted to cross an intersection regardless of a child's age, maturity, or demonstrated trustworthiness at following parents' rules or demonstrated an appreciation of traffic or social dangers (C2, C4, C5, C6, C7, C10). As few children had playmates residing in adjacent

properties (C1, C4, C5), parents sometimes permitted their children to cross through neighbors' backyards (C6), or permitted their children to cross the street but only after the parent had scaffolded these experiences to ensure the child's safety (C1, C3, C8, C9).

To accommodate children's riding bikes parents generally began teaching their children in driveways or on sidewalks in front of the family home (C3, C4, C5, C6, C7, C8, C9, C10). Later some parents permitted their children to ride in the street, often around the block without crossing intersections (C2, C4, C5, C6, C8, C9). Few parents permitted their eldest child to eventually ride their bikes across intersections. One exception was the C3 family where they lived on the "large" block, which was considered too far for the children to learn to ride alone. Across the street there was a "small" block where George and Maxwell could observe their children most of the way around due to not all construction in their subdivision having been completed. Tin Tin, now 9-years-old, began riding her bike independently there and had been granted permission to ride around the big block. Her 8-year-old sister Candy was only permitted to ride the small block alone. Their 7-year-old brother Legos had not yet received permission to ride beyond the family's driveway and sidewalk.

Ryan (C8), age 8 years, had begun riding his bicycle to a park on the outskirts of the subdivision in which the family resided, about two blocks away. He had been permitted to ride his bike around his own block, including going play with friends from school that lived in the subdivision for some time. Samantha (C8) would transport the other children in the van and meet Ryan at the park or at home. Jean (C8), age 7 years, had been permitted recently to accompany her brother in riding bicycles to the park. The only child permitted to ride

bicycles, or walk, to an area park without a parent was 12-year-old Duane (C9). As occurred with many families, his 10-year-old sister Ray Ray's (C9) home range expanded if she accompanied Duane to the park.

In addition to affecting children's physical and social play environments, home range rules were related to older children's IM and STV for outdoor play. Although all of the children in the study, including those reported to rarely or reluctantly play outdoors, stated that they enjoyed playing outdoors, most became less interested as they got older if they were not allowed more home range. Children ages 9 years and older whose home ranges expanded with age, and were not truncated to that of younger siblings, demonstrated greater interest and enjoyment of playing outdoors (C3, C6, C8, C9) whereas the opposite was evident for those whose home ranges did not expand (C2, C5, C7).

Parents also had rules related to the use, care, and storage of both play and non-play resources that changed as children aged. As with home range, these equated to a balance between greater permissions and greater responsibilities placed on the child. For example, as children aged and matured they were generally given more freedom to use tools. Gabe, (C10) age 8, relayed a story about why his 6-year-old brother Spider was not allowed to play with tools unsupervised but he felt that either himself or his 10-year-old sister Feather would be allowed. Apparently, Spider had a habit of leaving things lying around, like when he thought he would fix a scooter. When their father Ray (C10) backed out of the driveway, he apparently ran over the scooter and tools. Jean (C10) also described an incident where Gabe and Spider were shoveling and not paying attention to how close they were to each other, with Spider ultimately "whacking" Gabe in the head. Older children in all families were

increasingly responsible for caring for, using appropriately, and putting away their outdoor play toys or other non-toy items.

Rules pertaining to toy or non-toy use did not appear to have a significant relationship to children's outdoor play beyond the activity itself. However, as with home range and other earned permissions increased responsibility could contribute to a child's sense of competence as well and enhancing interest through novel experiences. For example, 12-year-old Conrad (C2), 12-year-old James (C5), 8-year-old Ryan—just learning with his father Thomas' supervision (C8) and 12-year-old Duane (C9) either made a point themselves, or it was made by a seemingly envious younger sibling, of their being the only child in the family, presumably as the eldest, to ride the lawnmower. As evidenced in relation to outdoor recreation, most of the children did not draw distinctions between outdoor play and their other outdoor experiences. However, by the age of 12 the boys saw this as something other than play but still “fun.”

As children in all families aged, parents shifted from expectations of obedience or compliance with rules to ensuring that the children understood the rationale behind the rules. Parents believed that their children from as young as 5 years old understood what the rules were, although impulsivity sometimes caused temporary lapses in judgment as shared by Sue (C7) in discussing Darling's openness and friendliness with strangers. Parents communicated rules to children less as they aged because there was a shared sense that the children understood and typically followed parents' rules and expectations.

However, even with older children, parents sometimes seasonally reminded their children of the rules as with Anne (C2) reiterating to the boys in the spring that neighbors are

“not used to kids on bikes.” Gopen (C6) also spoke of reminding 5-year-old Maggie and 8-year-old Ditto seasonally of the rules, “Now that the weather's nicer I probably need to remind them at least once that if you leave the yard you need to come and tell me where you're going. So at least once a season we need to have that reminder.”

Eric (C1) highlighted the differences in communicating rules to his youngest son 5-year-old Bluebird compared to his 8-year-old brother Robin stating that it was often a challenge to ensure he had Bluebird's full attention. This was especially true if Bluebird was excited about the prospects of playing outdoors, which led to developmentally appropriate challenges with impulsivity. The manner in which parents communicated rules, rationales, or consequences mattered to outdoor play only in whether it was done in a manner that was autonomy supportive or controlling with respect to their age.

Feedback, redirection, and monitoring related to parental rules and expectations and the age of children were consistent with structure in SDT, the theoretical framework upon which the study was based. Parental monitoring as described by all parents, but particularly mothers, shifted from being within arm's reach of their children as toddlers to sitting outdoors, hanging laundry, or reading while simultaneously observing and supervising their children's play until the eldest child reached the age of 7 to 8 years. Generally, from that age parents permitted their children to play in the backyard while both parents remained indoors. Families varied on their rules or permissions for playing in the front yard with some becoming less restrictive as the child aged (C3, C4, C6, C9) whereas others did not (C2, C5, C7, C8). Another age change related to monitoring was that parents expected their eldest children to monitor the behavior of younger siblings, remind them of the rules, and inform

the parents if there were a problem. Eric and Sophie (C1) spoke of trying to teach their 8-year-old son Robin the difference between tattling and when he should tell his parents something that his 5-year-old brother Bluebird did while playing outdoors with him.

### **Interpersonal involvement.**

Parents' toy purchases varied with the child's age. In some families, all outdoor toys were expected to be shared amongst all siblings (C1, C2, C5, C7) whereas in other families the children had a combination of shared and personal outdoor play toys (C3, C4, C6, C8, C9, C10). Size dependent items were always the possession of a single child such as bicycles, roller skates, or roller blades. Younger children in some families received hand me downs of these items as 12-year-old James (C5) and his 8-year-old sister Jessie explained the process of James as the eldest having received a new bike, his sister Jessie receiving his and their 3-year-old brother Mario would ride Jessie's old bike as soon as he was big enough. Parents purchased what they perceived to be age appropriate toys for their children although with younger siblings in the house not one family ceased to have an abundant supply of bubbles and sidewalk chalk. As children aged and were developmentally ready for playing sports or lawn games, parents' purchases of these items increased. When parents perceived that their children's interest in outdoor play was diminishing they often purchased novel toys such as when Pam and Kevin (C9) purchased 12-year-old Duane a Ripstik. Children in several other families had Plasma cars suggesting that in addition to traditional outdoor toys parents enticed their children to play outdoors with novel and currently popular toys. In some families, fathers rebuilt or expanded upon the children's play sets to provide age appropriate challenges (C2, C5, C8).

Parents also purchased children's registration for participation in organized programs which consumed children's free time that may have otherwise been spent, at least in part, on playing outdoors—as recalled by many of the parents regarding their own childhoods. Age changes related to organized activities existed such that in most families as children aged they became involved in more organized programs. The majority of these programs involved sports for both boys and girls from the earliest eligible age of approximately 4 years, as discussed related to their parents' valuing of organized activities in a previous section. In half of the families the children were also enrolled in educational programming related to academics (C2, C3, C5, C7, C9) and most children had taken part in educational programs at the local zoo or area nature center (C1, C2, C3, C5, C6, C9, C10).

As the mother of younger children, Gopen (C6) reviewed the seasonal parks and recreation brochures and made suggestions because she felt 8-year-old Ditto and 5-year-old Maggie “would never have been aware” of the variety of opportunities available to them. Pam (C9) continued to register her 10-year-old daughter Ray Ray and 12-year-old son Duane for programs but described the transition as her children aged, “I probably still look through and sought things that I thought would be good for them... but now I give them the brochure ‘Anything you're interested in? Anything you want to try?’”

Parents' knowledge and interest in children's outdoor play as they aged varied by family as much as the age of the child. Some parents remained knowledgeable of their children's activities and affective experiences playing away from home with friends because they demonstrated interest and asked the child about their experiences (C1, C3, C6, C8, C9,

C10). Jean (C10) described the interplay with her children as they described their play in the woods:

Yeah they tell me and actually I make them tell me because sometimes they don't want to talk or "We're fine." I'm like, "No, I want to know what you're doing." "It's just a tee pee." I go, "Well what's in it...what you got here?" I'm prying. I said, "You're lucky I'm interested. There's some people who don't even care. You're lucky that your mom cares."

For other families, children's outdoor play experiences were a topic of dinner conversation as Gopen and Slak (C6) described having to ask their 8-year-old son Ditto about his experiences because he was not always "forthcoming" either. Without further probing, most parents indicated that children's initial responses were typically, "nothing" or "I don't know" in describing their outdoor play.

Children who were self-described or described by siblings and parents as having a greater interest in playing outdoors, enjoying playing outdoors, and spending more time playing outdoors were members of families where parents demonstrated a strong interest in their children's outdoor play (C1, C3, C6, C8, C9, C10). Although the same age patterns related to decreased interest in spending time outdoors as older children became interested in electronics and participated in organized programs, the children in these families demonstrated higher IM and STV for outdoor play than their same-aged peers in other families. For example, 12-year-old Duane (C9) spent more time playing outdoors than either Conrad (C2) or James (C5) even if most of that time was practicing sports at home or playing pick-up sports at a friends' house. Coinciding with parents' knowledge and interest was that

parents in these same families also spent more time themselves playing outdoors with their children for the enjoyment of all family members during family leisure.

Most children indicated that they enjoyed playing outdoors with their peers. Both Emily (C7) and James (C5) acknowledged that their children enjoyed playing outdoors more when they had same-aged peers. The relevance of having same aged peers was highlighted by 8-year-old Ryan (C8) who was allowed to play at friends' houses even if he had to ride his bike around the block to get there. Ryan's response was in reference to the question, "Are some ways of spending free time better than others?" Ryan shared:

When I get to play with a friend it's usually better... than just having to play with like my brothers and sisters in my back yard. Cause I know they're... younger than me and they don't have as much capabilities as me... And then with my friends... They have a little more capabilities than my brothers and sisters and they can like climb really high in trees with me. They can play baseball as good as me or maybe even better.

What mattered was that Samantha and Thomas (C8) not only recognized Ryan's need to play with same-aged peers but also found a solution that balanced his outdoor play needs with their rules and expectations for keeping Ryan safe.

All parents stated that they believed they encouraged their children of all ages to play outdoors, particularly on "nice days" described as the sun shining and not "too cold" nor "too hot." Older children were reported as requiring more encouragement from their parents like 12-year-old Conrad (C2), 12-year-old James (C5), as well as 10-year-old Ray Ray and her 12-year-old brother Duane (C9). Sometimes parental encouragement to go outdoors also took

the form of removing a valued alternative such as electronics for older children (C2, C5, C6, C7, C9, C10), which served to increase children's interest in playing outdoors rather than being "bored" indoors.

Age related to parents' scaffolding or teaching of outdoor play skills. Prior to middle childhood parents, primarily mothers taught their children where and what they could play safely. Learning to use play objects at this age, in all families, was generally related to playground equipment like swings, slides, and sandboxes as well as what parents perceived as age appropriate toys like bubbles, sidewalk chalk, and large plastic balls for learning to kick or throw. Samantha (C8) provided the most detailed description of teaching her younger children:

Had the baby swings... I've taught my kids how to hold and where to hold and how to sit upright in the swing. We've always been, "OK now you do this. Now you do that." ... that's the way we kind of learn most things whether it be hula hooping or riding a bike or whatever just... "You put this left foot here... You put your right foot and you get it on the thing and you're holding here" ... I taught... how to climb trees... how to do steps very measured... About the size of the branches and which ones would support them and how to move one hand and one foot at a time... and then coming back down how to move one foot at a time... Dale has been trying to learn how to do [climbing bars at park] and so I've been trying to teach her deliberately how to do it one at a time. And then she'll get up and say, "I'm stuck. Get me down. Get me down." I'll talk her down instead of physically just taking her down. Teaching her how to do it herself.

Parents also introduced their young children to various play environments such as seasonal play with snow or leaves, domesticated nature in their yard or local park, or wild nature at the parents' family home or area nature center. Samantha (C9) also described not having consciously been aware of the need for her children to be introduced to playing in wild nature environments because it had always just happened naturally until 3-year-old Dale demonstrated fear of the woods during a visit to Samantha's childhood home during the past summer.

By middle childhood, all of the children with the exception of the C7 and C9 families had been exposed to playing in a wild play environment. The C10 family children had played many times at the local nature center's natural play area but their mother Jean described having to walk her 6-year-old son Spider, 8-year-old son Gabe, and 10-year-old daughter Feather around their property after they moved to the country. Jean spoke of teaching the children not to put anything they found in the woods, including any form of berry, into their mouth without checking with her first. She also spoke of teaching her children to check tree branches for strength, a lesson Feather was reminded of the hard way after a branch broke causing her to fall and scrape her leg.

As most of the children had been exposed to organized sports beginning as early as 4 years of age, parents were also scaffolding and teaching them sport specific skills at home. Fathers reported becoming increasingly involved in playing with and teaching their children outdoor play skills when the children were developmentally ready and demonstrated an interest in sports and riding bikes. Although they did not perceive themselves to be a "sport family" Butch (C5) had tried to teach his eldest son James to play tee ball and placed him on

a league as a toddler. The only family that none of the children had been exposed to sport was C7 where 5-year-old Darling and 9-year-old Emily did not choose to participate in any of the sport clubs offered through their participation with the local Boys and Girls Club. As a single mother, Sue spoke of throwing and catching or kicking balls with the girls outdoors but there was no evidence of the progression to sport skills as seen with the other families.

As children aged, parents also spoke of incorporating life lessons into their interactions with their children while teaching them outdoor play skills, which often overlapped with the children's organized sport participation. For those parents with children in organized sports, these life lessons were usually more salient to them in the organized setting rather than outdoor play. Parents discussed facilitating their children's social skill development from an early age when parents intervened and taught their children how to resolve disagreements or learn how to share. Parents also emphasized cooperation and negotiating with playmates as their children entered middle childhood. In all families with the exception of C1 and C7 where the children did not play sports, most parents emphasized learning through adult-led organized activity participation rather than outdoor play.

**Theoretical proposition 4 summary.**

The relationship between parental socialization constructs and aspects of children's outdoor play were found to vary with children's ages. Role modeling appeared to relate to older children's physical environments of outdoor play in that as children aged their outdoor play in wild environments as did playing in forts and play sets. Rather, the outdoor play of children ages 10 and above increasingly resembled their parents, including the locations in which activities occurred. This included retreating indoors and spending less time outside at

home. No evidence indicated that the social environment of children's outdoor play as children aged was associated with parents' role modeling. Some evidence showed that it related to children's outdoor play activities as well as their IM and STV for outdoor play as children aged, with behaviors and attitudes increasingly reflecting that of one or both parents. Having more children with a greater age span had some implications for affective responses, IM, and STV for outdoor play environments.

Parents' beliefs and values were discussed as having an indirect effect on all aspects of children's outdoor play as they were the basis for parenting practices. Autonomy, within limits, was valued by parents in terms of their children's free-time ability to choose between a variety of activities especially as the children got older. Parents' own IM and STV for providing outdoor play opportunities influenced their parenting practices. Mothers enjoyed introducing their infants and toddlers to outdoor play environments and activities, whereas fathers expressed greater enjoyment teaching and playing sports with older children. All parents expressed appreciation of being able to "step back" and watch their children play rather than being directly involved in teaching and ensuring safety as the children got older. Mothers of older children appreciated that they could socialize with other mothers while their older children played together.

Parents' attainment values in STV for outdoor play were related to their parental role perceptions such as provider of a variety of experiences and protector of their children that varied with their children's ages. Parents expressed utility values for their children's outdoor play related to: (a) learning to play independently and amuse oneself, (b) life lessons such as dealing with disappointment or frustration, and (c) development of social skills. Parents

appeared to weigh perceived costs to themselves against the benefits to their child or the family in sort of a cost-benefit analysis when making decisions to facilitate children's outdoor play or family leisure based on the children's ages. An example of an age change in these cost-benefit analyses related to parents taking younger children to play at area parks more often than they did when the children were older. Parents who disliked spending time outdoors retreated indoors after their children were capable of independent play—consistent with changes in the parents' perceptions of their protector roles. As children aged, toy purchases increased to accommodate children's independent play and autonomy—consistent with changes in parents' perceptions of their roles as providers of varied experiences.

Parents' STV for outdoor play and indoor play appeared to be inverse "U" shaped such that indoor play was perceived as safer for young and older children. Young children were impulsive and prone to danger without a parent present and older children were perceived as increasingly desiring to spend time indoors. Either way parent perceived their involvement was lowest during the early middle childhood years when children had the ability to play independently outdoors and the IM to do so without parental encouragement (i.e., send out to play). Parents also valued outdoor play because it was physically active. All parents valued outdoor play over their children's electronics usage but less than knowledge acquisition (e.g., reading) at any age.

Although parents valued outdoor play for affording opportunities for their children to be physically active, parents perceived that enrolling their children in organized sports provided more opportunities for physical activity. Parents believed young children needed to be introduced to sports to identify interests, gain control over their bodies, and burn off

excess energy. At the upper range of middle childhood, parents again valued organized sports for providing opportunities for their children to be active as a counterbalance to the children's increased sedentary activities (e.g., electronic gaming).

During middle childhood, many parents valued any organized activity participation sport or otherwise for providing socialization opportunities for their children. Organized sports were also valued for providing opportunities for children to develop self-confidence. Opportunities to parents for children to derive similar benefits of socialization with same-age peers or the development of self-confidence in outdoor play were not as salient to parents (i.e., not spontaneously shared).

Autonomy supportive environments were present in homes where parents valued and permitted their children to exercise not only choice as they aged but also the ability to take initiative such as going outdoors without requiring permission or the presence of a parent. As older children took less initiative to play outdoors on their own, parents sent their children out to play, although parents and children alike interpreted these actions as encouragement rather than being controlling. The children retained choices in what they played once outdoors, making their parents' sending them outdoors more akin to limit setting. Storing children's outdoor toys where they could independently access them was also autonomy supportive and changed with a child's physical development making older children less dependent upon the assistance of their parents.

Related to structure, there was no evidence that the children had much input into play set designs, locations, or in the case of relocations, whether or not play sets moved with the family. Whether or not home range rules were autonomy supportive or controlling were only

related to children's IM or STV for outdoor play not their physical play environments or activities. Further children were more likely to perceive their parents' home range, or other rules as controlling if one or more of their psychological needs was not fulfilled in outdoor play (i.e., autonomy, competency, relatedness). Children's ability to fulfill relatedness needs was associated with children's home range permissions. Children were less likely to perceive their parents' rules as controlling if they knew the reasons for their parents' establishment of the rule (e.g., child's safety). Requiring older siblings to participate in monitoring younger siblings was sometimes portrayed as controlling but in most cases did not seem to have a negative effect on the children's IM or STV for outdoor play.

Parents shifted from more controlling behaviors to autonomy supportive by permitting their children increased autonomy (i.e., choice) and initiative in organized sports as the children aged. Programs were chosen or recommended by parents when children were too young to read program brochures or otherwise know what options were available to them. Although parents often continued to make suggestions for organized activities with their older children, the children were able to read the brochure, identify programs that were of interest to them, and discontinue participation in an organized program if they were dissatisfied.

Structure encompassed parents rules related to outdoor play including communication of reasons, consequences, and monitoring for compliance. As children aged, parents typically retreated from always being present to occasionally checking on the children by looking out a window. Parents used landmarks to delimit outdoor play boundaries that evolved with the child's age and established trustworthiness. Parents' rules generally relaxed as children aged

and they were given increased permission to use non-toy objects as they demonstrated trustworthiness and sound judgment. Being granted increased responsibility and permissions contributed to children's feelings of competence that often distinguished older siblings from their younger brothers and sisters. Younger children's home range expansions were accelerated by the presence of an older sibling. It became increasingly difficult for older children to experience a sense of adventure or fulfill competency needs within their home ranges.

Parents discussed age-related changes to their methods for communicating outdoor play rules. Younger children required gaining their attention and repeating rules every time the children played outdoors. As children aged, demonstrated greater impulse control, and knowledge of parents' rules, parents reverted to seasonal reminders. Monitoring for enforcement also progressed from within arm's reach for toddlers to occasional checking on children by listening or looking out of a window by about the age of 8 years in most families. The presence of a sibling age 8 years or above accommodated younger children playing in their yards without parents.

Interpersonal involvement included the purchase of toys that varied with the age and development of the children. Parents often used the term "age appropriate" to describe toys and equipment. Some outdoor toys were considered the individual possession of a child whereas other toys were expected to be shared amongst siblings. Toys purchased for first-born children were typically "handed down" and used by younger siblings. As children aged, parents often purchased novel toys in an attempt to maintain a child's interest in playing

outdoors. Similarly, play sets were expanded, replaced, or redesigned to meet the children's continuing developmental needs for novel experiences that would challenge them.

Interpersonal involvement also included parents' demonstrated interest and knowledge of their children's affective experiences of outdoor play and alternative free time activities regardless of age. In families where parents demonstrated greater interest and knowledge of their children's outdoor play experiences, usually through persistence in enquiring when not there and frequently playing with the child; those children tended to play outdoors more than did their same-aged peers. This trend continued for children ages 10 and above when outdoor play was seen to decline to varying extents in all families. Parent knowledge of a child's unmet psychological need in outdoor play was insufficient to maintain a child's IM for outdoor play if no actions were taken by the parent to remedy the deficit. Only a few families with children over the age of 8 years had found a balance between children's needs for expanded home ranges that afforded them opportunities to play with neighborhood children and what parents' felt compelled to do in an effort to protect the safety and innocence of their children.

Interpersonal involvement involved changes in the provision of resources as children aged, which mostly was attributed to parent attempts to provide age-appropriate toys or play equipment. Parents' knowledge of their children's outdoor play was insufficient without demonstrated interest and continued enjoyment in playing with their child to sustain a child's IM and STV for outdoor play. Scaffolding of learning occurred related to children's physical and social play environments and outdoor play activities. Parents also used outdoor play as a venue for teaching life lessons like persistence or trying one's best at all ages.

Sport skills were scaffolded in outdoor play such that toddlers were taught to kick, throw, and catch balls. Specific sport skills were further developed during middle childhood. Around the age of 10 years, children began to focus on performing the skills and following the rules of a sport “right” than on playing for fun in their outdoor play.

### **Theoretical Proposition 5**

#### **Introduction.**

This section addresses Theoretical Proposition 5, “Parents socialize their children’s outdoor play differently based on perceptions of environmental factors in their community,” that underlies research question 2, “How do parents differ in the socialization of their children’s outdoor play?” Although the theoretical proposition itself was not revised throughout the course of the study, the definition of environment was expanded to encompass not only traffic or stranger dangers as described in the outdoor literature but also cultural changes parents’ perceived regarding an increase in social threats to children, increased organized activities for youth, and increased parental involvement in children’s free time compared to their recollections of their own childhood experiences. Parents typically drew comparisons to their own childhood experiences which served to provide a frame of reference. Patterns emerged consistent with both direct and indirect forms of socialization.

This section followed the same organization as Theoretical Propositions 2, 3, and 4 to facilitate comparisons across socialization constructs, including those that were used as sensitizing concepts during interviews. Role Modeling was examined, by nature an indirect form of socialization. Beliefs and Values were addressed both as a direct form of socialization when related to outdoor play and communicated to the child and as an indirect

form where it either was not communicated to the child or addressed a topic other than outdoor play (e.g., valuing of organized activity as free time alternative for the child). The remaining three constructs examined were derived from SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985): (a) Autonomy Supportive Environment, (b) Structure, and (c) Interpersonal Involvement.

Within the discussion of these parental socialization constructs examples were provided demonstrating how each pertained, if at all, to various aspects of children's outdoor play: (a) physical play environment, (b) social play environment, (c) play activities, (d) frequency and duration of play, (e) play emotions, (f) child's IM, and (g) child's STV.

### **Role modeling.**

As parental role modeling within the families was addressed under Theoretical Proposition 2, related to indirect parental socialization constructs; that information will not be replicated here. Rather it was parents' reflections on their own parents' behaviors that shaped the beliefs and parenting practices for parents in this study. Therefore, the effects of role modeling of the grandparents to the parents will be subsumed in the following discussions.

### **Beliefs and values.**

Home range was the largest determinant of children's geographical outdoor play spaces at home and in their neighborhoods. Parents' beliefs pertaining to the relative safety of these communities were based on comparisons with their own childhood neighborhoods and perceptions of similarities and differences. As children, virtually all parents, with the exceptions of Sophie (C1) and possibly Cassidy (C5) had larger home ranges and many parents believed this opportunity was due to a sense of community that they found lacking

today (C1, C2, C3, C4, C7, C8). Eric (C1) described front porches as the “social media” of his childhood as parents and children alike were routinely seen outside, a sentiment echoed by many parents who grew up in cities, suburbs, or rural towns. James (C4) recounted a story of having been assisted by neighbors when he was stung by wasps playing in the nearby woods. Samantha (C8) recalled her parents receiving a phone call for picking a flower in a neighbor’s garden. Most parents recalled knowing and being known by not just their immediate neighbors but throughout the neighborhood and felt their parents would have been contacted if they were observed doing anything they should not be doing (C1, C2, C3, C4, C6, C8).

Many parents in my study felt they knew their immediate neighbors and that they would be alerted if one of them either observed the children doing something that they were concerned they should not be doing or if they witnessed strangers in the area of the children (all families with the exception of C7). However, few parents described actually taking steps to get to know neighbors beyond recognition, waving, and simple hellos. Most parents met their children’s neighboring friends’ parents so that they were comfortable with their child playing at someone else’s home without being able to monitor them from their own home (i.e., adjoining backyards with an unobstructed view). When the C8 family relocated to their current neighborhood several years ago, Samantha (C8) described putting up an inflatable bounce house in the driveway to invite neighbors with children over. C8 family’s neighborhood was the only one to be described as the childhood neighborhoods of the parents. Samantha and the neighboring mothers sat out front of their homes, in lawn chairs, often together, to observe the children’s play while they visit. Gopen (C6) and Slak had

formed a friendship with the parents of their 8-year-old son Ditto's best friends, who lived two houses down the street. These relationships afforded the C8 and C6 children larger home ranges in terms of playing at neighboring children's homes at younger ages. In contrast, Sue (C7) stressed not letting her 9-year-old daughter Emily play out of her own front yard because she did not know any of the neighbors despite having resided at their current residence for six years.

Parents' comparisons of the safety of their childhood communities as compared to their current neighborhoods was also related to whether the parents grew up urban, suburban, or rural. Those parents who grew up rural (see Table 4.2 on p.329) perceived living in the urban center of this Midwestern county to be more dangerous because they believed a larger population resulted in higher crime. In contrast parents who grew up urban such as Cole (C2) or Cassidy (C5) perceived there to be greater dangers living "spread out" as there were fewer neighbors to witness or assist if there should be a problem while their children were playing outdoors. Sophie (C1) described feeling alone in watching her home schooled boys during the week because there were no other stay-at-home mothers in their neighborhood.

Other parental beliefs that related to outdoor play environments involved perceptions of their parental role derived from their recollections of their own parents. Some parents saw their parental responsibility to provide their children with exposure to experiences they had as a child such as when Samantha (C8) took her children camping in wild nature or Cassidy (C5) took her children to the zoo. Although many parents reported playing in area parks without a parent as children (C1, C2, C3, C6, C7, C8), due to increased perceptions of social danger (C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6, C7, C8, C10) the only time their children played at even

neighborhood parks was in the presence of at least one parent. The exception was the C9 family and playing alone had only occurred within the past couple of years because of the increased ages of their children, Duane, now age 12 years, and his sister Ray Ray, now 10 years.

Parents' beliefs related to perceived social dangers were the principal cause for restricting their children's home ranges and increasing parental monitoring. Whereas parental monitoring for rule enforcement generally ceased or was greatly diminished around the age of 8 or 9 years, parental monitoring due to safety concerns persisted even with parents of the 12-year-old children in the study (C2, C5, C9). This monitoring was necessary due to a perceived cultural change in parents' responsibility for protecting their children from potential social dangers such as child abduction as well as perceptions of increased threats in general.

Not all parents believed there were more child predators today than there were when they were children. Most parents believed that it was more a matter of parents having greater knowledge of the dangers. Many parents cited knowledge of alleged child abduction attempts in the community (C1, C2, C3, C4, C9, C10), because they had received alerts through emails from their children's schools. These messages often made their way into circulation within the home school community as well (C1, C2, C4). Given that child abduction was such a concern for all parents, there was a pattern in families where parents had expressed the highest concern having the most restrictive home ranges compared to other children their age in the study (C2, C7, C10), I contacted the local police to determine whether crimes against children had actually risen in the area over the past 20 years. Although detailed records did

not go back that far, the public relations officer stated that crimes had increased only as they related to population growth in the area and that few of the alleged abduction attempts reported to them were founded (personal communication, October 2, 2012).

In addition to parents' perceived threats to their children from strangers, several parents also shared concerns about the potential for negative peer influences (C1, C2, C3, C4, C6, C7). Children in these families were always portrayed as the recipients of negative peer influences and never as perpetrators or even equal participants. Parents expressed concerns that other families may not have similar values (C1, C3, C4, C8), thus permitting their children to behave in ways or participate in activities that they did not allow at home. One of the dangers in letting children play at their friends' homes was the discovery that not all families had the same rules, as shared by 8-year-old Ryan (C8), "I usually like to follow the neighbor's rules and mom's rules... Cause sometimes we're like allowed to play in the front yard without anybody watching us [at his friends' house]."

Several fathers recalled mischief from their childhood outdoor play that some even described as "crazy" or "dumb," that they "could not imagine" their own children doing today (C1, C2, C4, C5, C8, C9). Although these fathers did not always choose to elaborate on these experiences, those discussed sometimes involved the use of fire crackers or other fireworks (C4, C5, C8), motorized vehicles like ATVs or Go Carts (C8, C10), or in one instance evading local teenage "riff raff" (C2). Parents believed these incidents occurred because they were not as closely monitored by their parents as they monitored their own children today. Parents often described themselves as "lucky" that nothing bad happened to them or their friends due to questionable decisions they made in outdoor play. Some parents

believed they were not given sufficient guidance by their parents, when they were children (C1, C4, C7), something they saw as their responsibility to correct in raising their own children. James (C4) attributed his parents' lack of guidance to their being naive about cultural changes and that there was greater disparity between his parents' childhood and his own than that of he and his children's generations.

Thus, compared to their own childhoods parents perceived that there were many cultural changes regarding the availability and participation in organized activities for their own children. Most parents expressed appreciation for the amount and variety of programs offered through local parks and recreation agencies as well as groups like the YMCA, YWCA, and Boys and Girls Club (all except C1). In addition, as older children demonstrated competency in sports other private organizations were esteemed such as PONY Baseball or Prairie League Soccer (C8, C9, C10). All parents valued the opportunity for their children to participate in educational programming. Kevin (C9) discussed his perceived parental responsibility to "push" 12-year-old Duane and 10-year-old Ray Ray to achieve their full cognitive potential because he felt not having been pushed himself as a child was to his detriment as an adult.

All parents valued organized activities as an avenue to assist their child to discover interests and talents. No parent, however, made any reference to outdoor play as an avenue to discovering interests except as it pertained to developing skills for lifelong leisure pursuits such as bicycle riding or an enjoyment or interest in nature (C1, C2, C3, C5, C6, C8, C9, C10). For some parents' their children's participation in organized activities was valued because it related directly (e.g., same sport) to the parents' childhood experiences or

indirectly (e.g., parent grew up rural and child took classes at area nature center). For other parents, their children's participation in organized sports was valued because it either had been denied to them as children (e.g., C6) or was simply not available.

Another perceived cultural change that influenced children's lives and their outdoor play discussed by all parents was children's increased access and use of electronic entertainment. Although many fathers described watching television or playing video games as children (C1, C2, C5, C8, C9), most parents perceived their own children's participation in these activities as sedentary and the least valued of all free time alternatives. Butch (C5) empathized with his 8-year-old daughter Jessie's and 12-year-old son James' interest in playing electronic games stating sometimes parents' need to "think like a kid" and this was what kids were doing today to amuse themselves. Sue (C7) described the allure of the computer and increased television programming for her 9-year-old daughter Emily and 5-year-old daughter Darling, suggesting Sue too saw it as more entertaining than playing outdoors for her daughters.

Parental beliefs and values related to outdoor play emotions were expressed only in that parents wanted their children to enjoy playing outdoors as much as they did when they were children. Some parents wanted their children to enjoy not only the activities but also to develop a comfort in and appreciation for wilder play environments (C1, C3, C4, C6, C8, C10). Several fathers discussed wanting their sons to "learn to love" sports that they played as children either as organized leagues or as pick-up games (C1, C2, C4, C8, C9).

It was difficult to evaluate how parents' beliefs and values related to either the parents' IM for facilitating their children's outdoor play experiences or the IM of their

children for outdoor play in regard to parents' perceptions of the environment. Most of the perceived environmental changes from parents' own childhoods would detract from their IM to provide their children with outdoor play experiences. What stood out was parents' positive memories of their own childhood outdoor play experiences that fostered the parents' enjoyment of spending time outdoors and their desire to share those cherished childhood experiences with their children (i.e., relatedness needs).

Parents' STV for facilitating outdoor play as affected by their perceptions of the environment were largely skewed towards expressions of concerns or potential dangers (i.e., costs) to the child or the parent, as when Jean (C10) told her children she could tolerate their getting hurt playing in the woods but "I can't lose you," as could occur in child abduction. Virtually all of the perceived costs for a child playing outdoors either were related to the potential for social danger in the form of abductions or, to a much lesser degree, negative peer influences. Only parents who grew up in rural areas saw any attainment value in outdoor play from their childhoods, identifying themselves as *country* people as opposed to *city* people (C5, C6, C10.) However, only Jean and Ray (C10) sought to foster similar attainment values in their children, 6-year-old Spider, 8-year-old Gabe, and 10-year-old Feather. Butch (C5) had resigned himself to the fact that not all children grow up rural and he wanted to spare his children the feelings of rural isolation he experienced as a child. Gopen (C6) wanted to move back to the country but seemed content to facilitate her children's wild outdoor play through classes at the local nature center.

Gopen's (C6) ambivalence about raising her children rural seemed to relate to the convenience of living in town and the affordance of many organized activities available to 8-

year-old Ditto and his 5-year-old sister Maggie. Like other parents, even those with a strong affinity for outdoor play and a desire for their children to experience the same, utility values associated with their children's participation in organized activities was more salient to parents than for outdoor play. This ambivalence was also true despite that most of the parents viewed themselves as focused on the "here and now" of "being a kid" versus "future oriented" when it came to their children. The parents being future that admitted being future oriented or to have demonstrated such an attitude through their interview responses were Anne and Cole (C2), James (C4), Cassidy (C5), Slak (C6), and Kevin (C9). There were only two families where parents expressed greater valuing of outdoor play than of their children's participation in organized activities (C1 & C10). For most families outdoor play and organized activities were stated as being equally valued. All parents stated that they saw more utility value in outdoor play than their children's use of electronics with the emphasis being that the former was not sedentary.

#### **Autonomy supportive environment.**

Whereas autonomy supportive versus controlling parenting appeared to be related to parenting style as parents recalled their own childhoods, parents' perceptions of the environment played a much larger role related to parenting practices specific to outdoor play. Parents described their own parents as largely unconcerned about potential dangers posed by strangers or negative peers. Getting injured while playing outdoors was just part of a child's development via "learning from experience" as elaborated upon by Butch (C5) and Jean (C10). The only parents whose own parents were described by themselves or their spouses as controlling were Sophie (C1) and Anne (C2). Evidence also suggested that due to having

grown up in a different culture that valued formal education and extracurricular activities, Cassidy's (C5) parents may have been controlling when it came to her lack of outdoor play resources. The home ranges of Sophie, Anne, and Cassidy as children were all described as limited compared to the other parents in the study.

How the parents' freedom or limitations affected their own children's outdoor play was evident in that Anne (C2) and Cassidy (C5) had set some of the most restricted home ranges for their own children. Conversely, Sophie (C1) criticized her own parents and sought to provide her son greater autonomy that she was painfully aware other children had but she was denied as a child. In addition to physical play environment, Sophie described her parents being very controlling when it came to denying her permission to play with neighbor children. There was insufficient evidence to explain why these parents reacted so differently in relation to their own childhood experiences.

Most parents of children over the age of 8 years described their childhood home ranges as larger than that of their own children with the exception of the C9 family. All parents stated that their home range restrictions for their children were based on perceptions of social danger that either their own parents had been unaware of or that some perceived were more abundant today. Decreased home ranges seemed to have an effect on the social environment of children's outdoor play because the children in my study did not have the same unfettered access to each other that parents described having themselves as children. Further detracting from children's social environment in outdoor play was that most parents enrolled their children in multiple organized activities because as Maxwell shared, "They're bored." Most parent stories of their own childhood play acknowledged the affordances of

abundant playmates in their neighborhood for playing group games or sports (C1, C2, C3, C4, C6, C8, C9, C10). Sophie (C1) and Butch (C5) stated the lack of access to sufficient playmates had a negative impact on their outdoor play experiences.

Two parents described their own parents as being controlling when it came to outdoor play activities—both related to a denial of resources. Sophie (C1) stated that she was provided with few outdoor play resources and no parental guidance or instruction of what she and her sister could play outdoors. Therefore, Sophie made a conscious effort to provide an adequate number of toys “the boys are interested in” and began teaching her children as toddlers what they could do to play outdoors. However, Sophie stressed that she also strove to teach her sons to be independent in their outdoor play. James (C4) was denied having a skateboard as a child because of his parents’ concerns for physical injury. Jackson, James’ 7-year-old son has a skateboard, along with a helmet and pads for his protection.

Although not described as controlling, Jean (C10) expressed resentment for her mother’s lack of interest in Jean’s free time including outdoor play. Jean also discussed being influenced by her grandmother, who was a teacher, regarding her parenting practices aimed at teaching her children and exposing them to a variety of activities and environments. All family accounts depicted Jean as what turned out to be the most “structured” mother in the study. In addition to Jean’s behavior management system described elsewhere and despite having relocated their family back to the country so her children would grow up with the experience of playing in nature, Jean did not afford her 6-year-old son Spider, 8-year-old son Gabe, and 10-year-old daughter Feather with “free time” to play outdoors without her. Ray (C10), Jean’s husband, expressed that he did not think his children really had the opportunity

to play outdoors any more than kids in town because Jean always structured their time or had them in the van running into town for one reason or another. There was no evidence of parents in any other family having exhibited controlling behaviors related to their children's outdoor play activities, frequency, or duration of outdoor play.

As described above or under Theoretical Proposition 4 related to age changes, parents negative or neutral emotions related to play were typically related to their parents having been depicted as controlling when it came to their outdoor play (C1, C2, C4, C5).

Autonomous parenting practices related to outdoor play (e.g., no monitoring) were received positively except where something was suggested regarding the quality of the relationship between a parent and child as occurred with Sophie (C1) and Jean (C10). In these two cases, their parents' lack of involvement was seen as neglectful rather than autonomy supportive.

Very little can be stated here that was not covered under Autonomy Supportive Environment within the other theoretical propositions of this study. An unanticipated finding was that the restricted home ranges of the children and subsequent lack of access playmates compared to their own parents produced not rebellion or a challenge to parental restrictions but rather amotivation for outdoor play (C2, C5, C7). All of the children in the study viewed their parents' restrictions on home range as essential for their safety making questioning them inconceivable as evidenced by comments such as 12- year-old Conrad's response to what might be a consequence of breaking one of his parents' outdoor play rules, "I don't know. Might get run over by a car... Not really much of a rule that we can't go past the street. It's just we don't do that anyway." This explanation stood in contrast to fathers who recalled pushing their childhood home range limits, riding bicycles beyond their parents'

established boundaries, including Conrad's own father Cole (C2), "I remember riding my bike all the time with my friends... we'd sneak off... most of the time I wasn't supposed to do that but I did anyway."

Breaking parents' rules could be related to attainment value in STV by parents having established an independent sense of self through their childhood rebellions or other mischievous activities that their own children were not experiencing (C1, C2, C4, C5, C6, C8, C9, C10). However, more research would be required before conclusions could be drawn. There was no evidence that parent's perceptions of the environment and their concomitant autonomy supportive or controlling behavior influenced either the parents' or their children's utility values for outdoor play. Parents' perceived costs again pertained almost exclusively to concerns about child abductions and the efforts they made to protect their children. Not knowing anything different, growing up in a generation where everyone else's parents also restricted home ranges and enrolling their children in organized activities as a matter of course, none of the children perceived there were costs associated with the restrictions their parents put on their outdoor play. Further, all children expressed that they felt safe when they played outdoors at home. The only cost to children was that some of them would rather have played electronics than play outdoors sometimes but were denied by their parents controlling behaviors directed at that free time alternative (C2, C5, C9).

### **Structure.**

The result of heightened parental fears of child abduction resulted in those rules and expectations that restricted their children's home range in all families. Whereas parents' home ranges as children were described as expanding for blocks within their neighborhoods (C1, C2, C3, C4, C6, C7, C9), children in all families except two (C8 & C9) restricted all of their children's outdoor play to within one block of home on a daily basis (see Tables 4.1 on p. 327 and 4.2 on p. 329). Home range expansions were sometimes granted with the proviso that a parent needed to be present (e.g., in the front yard) requiring the child to request permission and gain parents' cooperation each time a child desired to play there. For example, 12-year-old James and 8-year-old Jessie (C5) could ride their bikes further on the multi-use trail in front of their home if Butch was performing yard work in front of the house.

Parents who had expressed concerns that they had not received sufficient monitoring and guidance from their own parents as children tended to monitor their children's play interactions both with siblings and playmates more closely (C1, C4, C7). The only parent to describe being denied permission to play with playmates as a child was Sophie (C1), although it was a general rule and did not pertain to any particular children. Parents described dealing with negative playmate behaviors through educating them as when Pam (C9) explained to a young boy that they did not slide down the banisters at their house, sending a child home as when Sophie (C1) thought a neighbor boy played "too rough". Many times parents required their presence when their children played with a peer posing a potentially negative influence.

Table 4.1

## Children's Outdoor Play

Case	Child	Pseudonym	Residence	Nearest Public Green Space	Home Range-w/o Parents or Older Sibling	Outdoor Play Environments	Nature Play Categorization	Dirt or Sand Play
1	M, 8 yrs.	Robin	Rural Town	< 1 mile	< Neighborhood	D & W	A & C	Dirt
1	M, 5 yrs.	Bluebird	Rural Town	< 1 mile	< Neighborhood	D & W	A & C	Dirt
2	M, 12 yrs.	Conrad	Rural Subdivision	> 1 mile	< Neighborhood	D & W	A, C & M	Sand
2	M, 10 yrs.	Curtis	Rural Subdivision	> 1 mile	Street	D & W	A, C & M	Dirt & Sand
2	M, 8 yrs.	Bob	Rural Subdivision	> 1 mile	Street	D & W	A, C & M	Dirt & Sand
3	F, 9 yrs.	Tin Tin	Urban Subdivision	< 1 mile	Neighborhood	D & W	A & C	Dirt & Sand
3	F, 8 yrs.	Candy	Urban Subdivision	< 1 mile	< Neighborhood	D & W	A & C	Dirt & Sand
3	M, 6 yrs.	Legos	Urban Subdivision	< 1 mile	< Neighborhood	D & W	A & C	Dirt & Sand
4	F, 9 yrs.	Morgan	Urban Subdivision	< 1 mile	< Neighborhood	D & W	A & C	Sand
4	M, 7 yrs.	Jackson	Urban Subdivision	< 1 mile	< Neighborhood	D & W	A & C	Sand
5	M, 12 yrs.	James	Urban	> 1 mile	< Neighborhood	D & W	A	Sand
5	F, 8 yrs.	Jessie	Urban	> 1 mile	< Neighborhood	D & W	A & C	Dirt & Sand
6	M, 8 yrs.	Ditto	Urban Subdivision	< 1 mile	< Neighborhood	D & W	A, C & M	Dirt & Sand
6	F, 5 yrs.	Maggie	Urban Subdivision	< 1 mile	Yard	D & W	A, C & M	Dirt & Sand
7	F, 9 yrs.	Emily	Urban	< 1 mile	Yard	D	A	Sand
7	F, 5 yrs.	Darling	Urban	< 1 mile	Yard	D	A & C	Dirt & Sand
8	M, 8 yrs.	Ryan	Urban Subdivision	< 1 mile	< Neighborhood	D & W	A & C	Dirt
8	F, 7 yrs.	Jean	Urban Subdivision	< 1 mile	< Neighborhood	D & W	A & C	N.E.
8	M, 5 yrs.	PJ	Urban Subdivision	< 1 mile	< Neighborhood	D & W	A & C	Dirt
9	M, 12 yrs.	Duane	Urban Subdivision	< 1 mile	< Neighborhood	D	A	Sand
9	F, 10 yrs.	Ray Ray	Urban Subdivision	< 1 mile	< Neighborhood	D	A	Sand
10	F, 10 yrs.	Feather	Rural	> 1 mile	Yard	D & W	A, C & M	Dirt & Sand
10	M, 8 yrs.	Gabe	Rural	> 1 mile	Yard	D & W	A, C & M	Dirt & Sand
10	M, 6 yrs.	Spider	Rural	> 1 mile	Yard	D & W	A, C & M	Dirt & Sand

Note. D = Domesticated; W = Wild; A = Appreciative; C = Consumptive; M = Motorized; N.E. = No Evidence

Table 4.1 (continued)

Case	Child	Pseudonym	Natural Water Play	Domestic Water Play	Self-Propelled Wheeled Toys	Dramatic Play or Make Believe
1	M, 8 yrs.	Robin	Creek	Kiddie Pool	Bike	
1	M, 5 yrs.	Bluebird	Creek	Kiddie Pool	Bike	
2	M, 12 yrs.	Conrad	N.E.	H <sub>2</sub> O Toys	Bike & Scooter	X
2	M, 10 yrs.	Curtis	Creek	H <sub>2</sub> O Toys	Bike, Scooter & Skateboard	X
2	M, 8 yrs.	Bob	Creek	H <sub>2</sub> O Toys	Bike & Scooter	X
3	F, 9 yrs.	Tin Tin	Pond & Creek	Kiddie Pool, Spray & H <sub>2</sub> O Toys	Bike, Scooter, Skates & Plasma Car	X
3	F, 8 yrs.	Candy	Pond	Kiddie Pool, Spray & H <sub>2</sub> O Toys	Bike, Scooter, Skates & Plasma Car	X
3	M, 6 yrs.	Legos	N.E.	Kiddie Pool, Spray & H <sub>2</sub> O Toys	Bike, Scooter & Plasma Car	X
4	F, 9 yrs.	Morgan	N.E.	Kiddie Pool & Spray	Bike & Skates	X
4	M, 7 yrs.	Jackson	N.E.	Kiddie Pool & Spray	Bike & Skateboard	X
5	M, 12 yrs.	James	N.E.	Kiddie Pool & Spray	Bike, Scooter & Skates	
5	F, 8 yrs.	Jessie	Creek	Kiddie Pool & Spray	Bike & Scooter	
6	M, 8 yrs.	Ditto	Creek	Kiddie Pool & H <sub>2</sub> O Toys	Bike & Skateboard	
6	F, 5 yrs.	Maggie	Creek	Kiddie Pool & H <sub>2</sub> O Toys	Bike	N.E.
7	F, 9 yrs.	Emily	N.E.		Bike	X
7	F, 5 yrs.	Darling	N.E.		Bike	X
8	M, 8 yrs.	Ryan	Creek	Kiddie Pool, Spray & H <sub>2</sub> O Toys	Bike & Scooter	X
8	F, 7 yrs.	Jean	Creek	Kiddie Pool, Spray & H <sub>2</sub> O Toys	Bike, Scooter & Skates	X
8	M, 5 yrs.	PJ	Creek	Kiddie Pool, Spray & H <sub>2</sub> O Toys	Bike	X
9	M, 12 yrs.	Duane	Pond	Kiddie Pool & Spray	Bike, Scooter, Skateboard, Skates, Ripstik	X
9	F, 10 yrs.	Ray Ray	N.E.	Kiddie Pool & Hose Spray	Bike, Scooter, Skateboard & Skates	X
10	F, 10 yrs.	Feather	Creek	Hose Spray/Sprinkler	Bike, Scooter & Mini-Bike	X
10	M, 8 yrs.	Gabe	Creek	Hose Spray/Sprinkler	Bike, Scooter & Mini-Bike	X
10	M, 6 yrs.	Spider	Creek	Hose Spray/Sprinkler	Bike, Scooter & Mini-Bike	X

Note. N.E. = No Evidence

Table 4.2

## Parents' Childhood Outdoor Play

Case	Parent	Pseudonym	Childhood Residence	Nearest Public Green Space	Home Range w/o Parents or Older Sibling	Admitted Venture Beyond Boundaries	Outdoor Play Environments	Nature Play Categorization	Felt Adventure or Challenge in Outdoor Play
1	Mother	Sophie	Rural-Farm	> 1 mi.	Yard		D & W	A	X
1	Father	Eric	Urban	< 1 mi.	Neighborhood	X	D	A & C	X
2	Mother	Anne	Suburban	< 1 mi.	Neighborhood		D & W	A & C	X
2	Father	Cole	Urban	< 1 mi.	< Neighborhood	X	D	N.E.	
3	Mother	Maxwell	Urban	< 1 mi.	Neighborhood		D & W	A	X
3	Father	George	Urban*	< 1 mi.	Neighborhood		D	N.E.	
4	Mother	Christine	Rural	> 1 mi.	Neighborhood		D	N.E.	
4	Father	James	Rural-Town	> 1 mi.	Neighborhood		D & W	A & C	X
5	Mother	Cassidy	Urban	> 1 mi.	Neighborhood		D	A	
5	Father	Butch	Rural-Farm	> 1 mi.	Neighborhood		D & W	A & C	X
6	Mother	Gopen	Rural-Farm	> 1 mi.	Neighborhood		D & W	A	X
6	Father	Slak	Rural-Town	< 1 mi.	Neighborhood	X	D & W	A & C	X
7	Mother	Sue	Urban*	< 1 mi.	Neighborhood		D	N.E.	
8	Mother	Samantha	Suburban	> 1 mi.	Neighborhood		D & W	A & C	X
8	Father	Thomas	Rural-	> 1 mi.	Neighborhood	X	D & W	C & M	X
9	Mother	Pam	Rural	> 1 mi.	Neighborhood		D & W	A & C	X
9	Father	Kevin	Rural-	> 1 mi.	Neighborhood		D	N.E.	
10	Mother	Jean	Rural-Farm	> 1 mi.	Neighborhood		D & W	A, C & M	X
10	Father	Ray	Rural-Town	> 1 mi.	Neighborhood		D & W	A, C & M	X

Note. D = Domesticated; W = Wild; A = Appreciative; C = Consumptive; M = Motorized; N.E. = No Evidence

Table 4.2 (continued)

Case	Parent	Pseudonym	Bicycling	Dramatic Play or Make Believe	Lawn Games	Group Gams-Not Sport Related	Physical Activity Not Sport Related	Playground/ Play set	Sport- Related Play	Swimming
1	Mother	Sophie								
1	Father	Eric	X			X	X		X	
2	Mother	Anne				X		X	X	
2	Father	Cole	X						X	X
3	Mother	Maxwell	X						X	X
3	Father	George	X						X	
4	Mother	Christine	X				X		X	X
4	Father	James	X	X			X		X	
5	Mother	Cassidy	X							
5	Father	Butch	X	X			X			
6	Mother	Gopen	X							
6	Father	Slak	X					X		
7	Mother	Sue	X	X				X		
8	Mother	Samantha	X							
8	Father	Thomas	X						X	
9	Mother	Pam	X	X	X	X	X		X	
9	Father	Kevin	X						X	
10	Mother	Jean	X				X			
10	Father	Ray	X						X	X

Candy (C3), age 8 years, described a situation where a playmate had behaved inappropriately and potentially dangerously at the friends' house. Maxwell, Candy's mother, described educating all three of her children about when they were expected to come home if a bad situation arose away from home and that they were expected to tell their parents.

The lack of abundant playmates was attributed to the neighborhoods where these families lived, which lacked an abundance of children the age of those children in these families. Therefore, parents described their own childhoods as "fortunate" when there were sufficient playmates and their children's lack of outdoor playmates as "unfortunate." This situation suggested that neither parents nor their children saw it as the parents' responsibility to ensure sufficient playmates but rather a condition of the environment, which would be consistent with the parental construct of structure.

What stood out between the experiences of children today compared to that of the parents' childhood recollections was the scope and scale of social comparisons. Thomas (C8) recalled hanging out with friends at the local park or pool with friends and "looking up to" older kids in the neighborhood:

I always was watching whatever they did... big metal equipment... if you could climb and get up on top of that then you were like... 6<sup>th</sup> grade. [laughs] You were huge... 8-, 9-years-old and like you're old enough to go out and do... Cause you always wanted to be doing what the older and cooler kids were doing at the time... the first person to be able to do something that the older kids were able to do... You know things were progressing.

Pam (C9) described vying for leadership with peers in addition to the sense of accomplishment children felt to be the first of his or her peers to accomplish some task even if it was as seemingly unimportant as a cartwheel. Whether perceived as controlling or not, parents' increased restrictions on home ranges were preventing most of the children in this study from having comparable experiences on a regular basis (C2, C5, C7). Although all children in the study were evidenced to have friends over to play or go play outdoors at a friends' house on occasion, only about half of the families had neighboring playmates (C1, C3, C4, C6, C8) and they were typically the same age as only one of the children in the study. The stories relayed by Thomas (C8) and Pam (C9) suggested a sense of security in trying and failing with friends who through numerous and routine interaction had developed a mutual trust and respect not found in the stories of the children in my study.

There was no evidence in my data to suggest that parents perceptions of the environment and the rules and expectations subsequently imposed affected the children's outdoor play activity. Frequency and duration of outdoor play were impacted in most families by the children's participation in organized programming, upon which many parents had placed expectations for seasonal participation (C2, C3, C5, C6, C8, C9; see Table 4.3, p. 333). Comparatively few parents participated in organized sports as children nor did any parent mention that his or her own parents expected or required their participation in an adult-led program (See Table 4.4, p. 335). Conversely the frequency of children's outdoor play was increased as a byproduct of parental rules limiting the children's use of electronics (C2, C3, C5, C6, C7, C9, C10).

Table 4.3

## Children's Adult-Lead Organized Activities

Case	Child	Pseudonym	Academic	Church Youth Group	Dance	Martial Arts	Music	Nature	4 H or Scouting
1	M, 8 yrs.	Robin						X	
1	M, 5 yrs.	Bluebird						X	
2	M, 12 yrs.	Conrad		X			X	X	X
2	M, 10 yrs.	Curtis					X	X	X
2	M, 8 yrs.	Bob					X	X	X
3	F, 9 yrs.	Tin Tin	X	X				X	X
3	F, 8 yrs.	Candy	X	X				X	X
3	M, 6 yrs.	Legos	X					X	
4	F, 9 yrs.	Morgan					X		
4	M, 7 yrs.	Jackson					X		
5	M, 12 yrs.	James	X		X	X	X	X	X
5	F, 8 yrs.	Jessie			X	X	X		X
6	M, 8 yrs.	Ditto		X				X	X
6	F, 5 yrs.	Maggie			X			X	
7	F, 9 yrs.	Emily					X		X
7	F, 5 yrs.	Darling							
8	M, 8 yrs.	Ryan							
8	F, 7 yrs.	Jean							
8	M, 5 yrs.	PJ							
9	M, 12 yrs.	Duane	X			X	X	X	
9	F, 10 yrs.	Ray Ray	X				X		X
10	F, 10 yrs.	Feather					X	X	
10	M, 8 yrs.	Gabe					X	X	
10	M, 6 yrs.	Spider					X	X	

Table 4.3 (continued)

Case	Child	Pseudonym	Sport	Summer Day Camp	Swim Lessons	Other
1	M, 8 yrs.	Robin				
1	M, 5 yrs.	Bluebird				
2	M, 12 yrs.	Conrad	X	X	X	
2	M, 10 yrs.	Curtis	X	X	X	
2	M, 8 yrs.	Bob	X	X	X	
3	F, 9 yrs.	Tin Tin	X	X	X	Horseback Riding, Art, Cooking & Climbing
3	F, 8 yrs.	Candy	X	X	X	Horseback Riding, Art & Cooking
3	M, 6 yrs.	Legos	X	X	X	
4	F, 9 yrs.	Morgan	X		X	
4	M, 7 yrs.	Jackson	X		X	
5	M, 12 yrs.	James			X	
5	F, 8 yrs.	Jessie			X	
6	M, 8 yrs.	Ditto	X		X	
6	F, 5 yrs.	Maggie	X		X	
7	F, 9 yrs.	Emily		X	X	Knitting, Sewing
7	F, 5 yrs.	Darling		X	X	
8	M, 8 yrs.	Ryan	X			
8	F, 7 yrs.	Jean	X			Horseback Riding
8	M, 5 yrs.	PJ	X			
9	M, 12 yrs.	Duane	X			
9	F, 10 yrs.	Ray Ray	X			American Doll
10	F, 10 yrs.	Feather	X			Art
10	M, 8 yrs.	Gabe	X			
10	M, 6 yrs.	Spider	X			

Table 4.4

## Parents' Childhood Adult-Lead Organized Activities

Case	Parent	Pseudonym	None	Music	4H or Scouting	Sport	Swim Lessons
1	Mother	Sophie	X				
1	Father	Eric				X	
2	Mother	Anne	X				
2	Father	Cole			X	X	
3	Mother	Maxwell			X	X	
3	Father	George	X				
4	Mother	Christine				X	No
4	Father	James		X		X	
5	Mother	Cassidy		X			
5	Father	Butch	X				
6	Mother	Gopen	X				
6	Father	Slak	X				
7	Mother	Sue		X			
8	Mother	Samantha			X		
8	Father	Thomas	X				
9	Mother	Pam	X				No
9	Father	Kevin				X	
10	Mother	Jean			X		
10	Father	Ray	X				

The only parent to recall being subject to limits with electronics was Butch (C5) who expressed disappointment that his father denied his ability to watch television as much as Butch had wanted to do. Consistent across generations, parents' expectations for outdoor play increased on "nice days" with parents either suggesting or "sending" their children out to play for all families.

The only outdoor play emotion related to parent rules or expectations resulting from their perceptions of the environment was boredom. Despite parents and children agreeing that parents placed few restrictions on outdoor play activities in the yard, the occasional purchase of new and novel toys was insufficient to overcome the lack of novelty, challenge, and adventure in the children's outdoor play as compared to that expressed by their parents. As children's psychological needs were not met, their IM for outdoor play appeared to begin diminishing around the age of 9 years (C2, C3, C5, C7, C9, C10).

Relatedness needs were potentially not met due to insufficient playmates. Competency needs were not met possibly due to insufficient challenges. Autonomy needs were not met likely because of limited activities within a restricted home range. From the age of 9 years, children began fulfilling their needs for competency, challenge, and adventure through participation in organized sports or electronic games (C2, C3, C5, C7, C8, C9, C10) instead. In the case of 10-year-old Feather (C10), she also fulfilled her relatedness needs by playing an online game with her cousin (i.e., social media). Now that the C10 family lived in the country, Feather had no daily playmates except her younger brothers, 6-year-old Spider and 8-year-old Gabe.

There was no evidence that parents' perceptions of the environment and their resultant rules affected the children's STV for outdoor play. The parents' perceived costs for facilitating their children's outdoor play were reduced by the imposition of rules that restricted the children's home range and eased their efforts to monitor the children's safety. Gopen (C6) and Jean (C10) discussed disliking neighborhood children playing at their house, not because they disliked the children but because they perceived it disrupted their privacy. Both mothers had grown up on farms without many neighbor children coming over routinely to play. By all accounts, the constancy of the neighbor children at the C10 family home when they lived "in town" contributed to the family's move to the country. Ray (C10) felt bad for his children that they no longer had other children to play with but appreciated their newfound opportunity for solitary play, something that 8-year-old Gabe seemed to do when he did not feel like playing with his younger brother and older sister. There was no evidence that attainment or utility values were affected for either parents or children.

#### **Interpersonal involvement.**

Parents took their children to environments they enjoyed themselves as children during family leisure, through visits to the partially wooded properties of family friends, or registering their children for organized programs at the area zoo or nature center. Wild environments were perceived as safe by parents who had played in similar settings themselves as children (C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6, C8, C10) and, were facilitated.

A second theme that emerged was related to parents emphasizing teaching their children to respect neighbor's privacy and property including the avoidance of trespassing (C2, C5, C7, C9, C10). Parents themselves often described playing in vacant lots or on

property that was not their own as children, having no awareness of property lines or sense of land ownership (C2, C4, C6, C8, C9). During family leisure, several parents expressed a desire to share similar environments or experiences that they recalled from their own childhoods. For example, Maxwell (C3) took her children camping at Yosemite National Park for the first time last summer with their aunt and cousins. This annual trip was one that Maxwell and her sister made with their father as children. Maxwell described the difference in perspective of these experiences as an adult based on comparisons of her own childhood recollections and observances of her own children, "...sitting on their DS's... I'm saying, 'Look at the mountains...' It hit me... I was probably the same way when my dad took me saying, 'Turn off the DVD kids. Look out the window. Nature! You're missing this beauty.'" Cassidy (C5) had grown up visiting parks and zoos with her parents and now that was often incorporated into family outings and vacations. Although these experiences related to family leisure, neither the children nor their parents when recounting their childhood memories, drew any distinctions between their outdoor play and outdoor recreation experiences.

Although all parents in the study made occasional accommodation for the lack of neighborhood playmates typically by facilitating play dates, one of the other most striking differences from their own childhood recollections was that most parents perceived themselves to be much more directly involved in playing with their children including outdoors (C1, C3, C6, C8, C9, C10). George and Maxwell (C3) as well as Gopen and Slak (C6) believed they spent more time outdoors than did other parents in their neighborhoods whether watching their children play or participating. Samantha (C8) stated she would rather play with her children than clean house like her mother had. None of the parents perceived

that their physical presence or participation could detract from the social environment of their children's outdoor play despite their having played without their parents as children.

Sometimes parents suggested outdoor play activities that they enjoyed as children, often teaching the children skills as when George (C3) discussed teaching his children dodge ball, an activity from his childhood often banned today in public schools.

Parents were more likely to facilitate or accommodate their children's outdoor play activity if it matched with the parents' own IM for the activity from childhood. For example, parents purchased toys that they had played with as children such as hula hoops, Frisbees, jump ropes, or bicycles. Sophie and Eric (C1) even handed down Matchbox cars that 5-year-old Bluebird and 8-year-old Robin played with indoors and outdoors. All children enrolled in an educational program at the area nature center, which incorporated supervised free time in their nature play area had at least one parent who played in wild nature as a child (C1, C2, C3, C6, C10).

At the same time parents also provided outdoor play resources they perceived to be the cultural norm. Whereas several parents grew up with swimming pools (C2, C3, C10), every family in the study with the exception of C7, where the family resided in an apartment complex with a playground immediately outside their back door, had owned a play set during at least some of their children's middle childhood years. Parents also described their children as having more toys for outdoor play than they had themselves as children. For example, most families had at least one garage bay in which no vehicle could be parked because it served as storage for the children's outdoor play toys and all family members' bicycles (C1,

C2, C3, C4, C5, C6, C8, C10). None of the parents described having such an abundance of toys as children.

Children's outdoor play activities further were associated with what I refer to as parental socialization through omission. Children were unaware of the "dumb" stuff their parents did as these recollections were omitted when parents shared stories of their outdoor play (C1, C2, C4, C5, C8, C9). During their interviews, each child was asked if they had ever done stunts on their bicycles. All but 8-year-old Ryan (C8) stated that they never had. Many were confused by the suggestion of bicycle stunts as an activity with several children indicating it was silly idea because of the potential for injury. Unlike their parents, these children did not have older neighborhood children to watch and emulate in their outdoor play behaviors. So activities that had been observed and passed down through generations of outdoor play in neighborhoods seemed to have vanished, despite many of their parents having done it themselves (C1, C4, C6, C8, C9). Likewise, parents did not introduce their children to activities the parents themselves disliked or had not learned as children.

There was no evidence that parents' perceptions of the environment or their related interpersonal involvement affected the frequency or duration of children's outdoor play beyond their provision of alternative free time resources (e.g., registering their children in adult-led organized activities or electronic gaming systems). For example, many parents expressed, as Gopen (C6) described, "a love/hate relationship" with their children's electronics. On the one hand, parents disapproved of the solitary and sedentary activity with gaming but on the other hand, their children were well behaved and safe indoors when they played them. All parents expressed always knowing where their children were when they

were indoors playing their electronic games because the children were “mesmerized” as Ray (C10) described his 6-year-old son, Spider, 8-year-old son Gabe, and 10-year-old daughter Feather.

Children’s positive outdoor play emotions, IM, and STV for outdoor play all were related to their parents’ knowledge and interest in the children’s experiences. Much of this was divined through parents’ playing with their children outdoors and displaying their enjoyment of spending time with their children (C1, C3, C4, C6, C8, C9, C10). Relatedness needs for parents and children alike in these families were fulfilled through their shared positive experiences. For example, consistent with the egocentric attitude of an 8-year-old, Robin (C1) believed his father’s enjoyment in spending time outdoors was solely related to playing with him. Robin’s father Eric concurred that he enjoyed playing with his sons outdoors but also enjoyed just sitting outside and reading while they played.

Attainment values in STV were sometimes supported in children as when Sophie (C1) registered her “outdoor boy” Robin, age 8 years, or Gopen (C6) her “insect whisperer” Ditto, age 8 years, for classes at the local nature center. The same was true for 9-year-old Tin Tin (C3); although her parents acknowledged and appreciated her interest in nature and playing outdoors had not devised a family nickname for her. Conversely, children in families where the parents did not express a strong interest nor participate regularly in their children’s outdoor play tended to have fewer positive emotions, a diminished IM, and weakened STV for outdoor play as they aged (C2, C5, C7).

Parents’ STV was related to their perceptions of the environment in that playing outdoors was the only time they perceived their children to be vulnerable to strangers. This

sentiment was expressed to some extent in all families. Parents were able to mitigate the cost to some extent, in terms of their own worry, through interpersonal involvement in purchasing a greater number and variety of toys to keep their children interested in playing outdoors within a more restricted home range than they themselves had experienced and with fewer playmates. Many parents discussed the challenge in keeping their children's interest in outdoor play and associated it with toy purchases (C2, C3, C5, C8, C9), but either the parents did not perceive or did not admit that this interest may at least in part be related to their children's home range.

**Theoretical proposition 5 summary.**

Parents' perceptions of the environment related primarily to the potential for social harm to their children when playing outdoors, especially away from home and the protection of their own parents as well as cultural changes parents perceived related to their children's increase in organized activities and electronic gaming. The childhood experiences of the parents served as the basis of comparison for parents' assessments of the communities in which they lived and the experiences of their own children. These memories of their parents' practices helped shape parenting practices related to outdoor play for the children in the study. Most parents expressed a lost sense of community in comparison to their childhood neighborhoods where adults and children were frequently encountered outdoors. Several parents shared stories of neighbor's rendering assistance or contacting parents if they were seen doing something the neighbors believed they should not be doing. Today few parents knew of neighbors beyond adjacent properties and rarely socialized. Where parents made an effort to know neighbors and children's friends' parents, their children's outdoor play more

closely resembled that of their parents' childhoods. Where no effort was made to know neighbors, the children's home ranges were the most restrictive in the study.

Parent's perceptions of the safety of their communities were also related to whether parents had grown up rural, suburban, or urban. Rural upbringings contributed to a sense of increased crime because of the larger population in this urban center. Conversely, urban upbringings in major metropolitan cities contributed to a sense of isolation for parents that increased perceptions of danger for their children. Cultural changes were perceived related to parental roles their own parents had not played: (a) protector, (b) provider of experiences, and (c) direct involvement.

Although most parents believed the world posed no greater risk than it had when they themselves were children, all parents agreed that parents today were more aware of the potential dangers and their need to be protectors. Continual reminders from various media both locally and nationally served to make parents vigilant in protecting their children. Parents adapted their children's outdoor play from that of their own experiences by restricting their home range to ease parental monitoring to ensure the children's safety, playing with their children more than their own parents had done, and purchasing a greater number and wider variety of outdoor play toys in an attempt to maintain their children's outdoor play interests. Parents also expressed concerns over negative peer influences although their own children were never portrayed as perpetrators or equal participants. Children did not perceive their parents' expectations or actions to be controlling but rather as necessary precautions for their safety.

Parents perceived a cultural change related to their parental role as the providers of a variety of experiences for their children that contributed to their provision of resources and encouragement for their children's participation in organized activities and even their electronic gaming. Most parents expressed appreciation of the range of choices available to their children for organized programming and the financial value of local parks and recreation programs specifically. Parents valued organized activities as a way for children to identify interests. Conversely, parents saw outdoor play as an avenue to identifying lifelong outdoor recreation interests like riding a bicycle or fostering an enjoyment or interest in nature. Parents wanted their children to be comfortable spending time outdoors and to enjoy it as much as they did when they were children.

Parents said they valued outdoor play more than their children's sedentary electronic gaming, and equal to organized activity participation. Most parents saw children's participation in all these varied activities as making them "well rounded." However, parent's behaviors often belied a higher STV for organized sports or educational programs than outdoor play. Parents valued their children's participation in organized sports they enjoyed as children or that they felt denied an opportunity to participate. The only parents to evidence attainment values were those parents who grew up rural playing most days in wild nature environments. However, several also expressed a sense of social isolation they did not want their children to experience. It was easier for parents to identify utility values for organized activities than outdoor play even when asked how they themselves had benefited from playing outdoors as children. There was no difference in the lack of salience for utility values

in outdoor play whether parents claimed to be focused on the here and now (e.g., be a kid) or future oriented (e.g., college scholarships).

Parents also perceived a cultural change related to parents' teaching and playing with their children. Few parents recalled their own parents playing with them outdoors as children. The lack of parent involvement was recalled as autonomy supportive with children following their IM for outdoor play activities that fulfilled their needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence. The only parents who recalled their parents' lack of involvement negatively were those with unfulfilled relatedness needs in their outdoor play. However, several parents wished they had more positive memories of playing with their parents especially as some of them had passed away. By comparison, most parents in the study believed they were more involved in playing with their children than their own parents had been. There were a few families where the parents did not perceive it as their role to play with their children after the children were of an age and developmental level that they were capable of independent play outdoors. Parents also believed that their participation in playing with their children was beneficial to their child. Neither parents nor children acknowledged the potential for a parents' presence to negatively impact the social environment of the children's outdoor play.

Parenting practices were influenced by parents' recollections of unmet psychological needs (i.e., recalled own parents' practices as controlling). Parents who were denied desired outdoor play toys or sufficient toys intentionally ensured their children did not have similar experiences. Where parents had grown up with restricted home ranges in comparison to their peers, their children now had the most restricted home ranges in the study. Children in the study did not perceive their parents' home range restrictions as controlling because they

believed they were necessary measures to ensure the children's safety playing outdoors. All children believed they were safe playing outdoors at home. Thus, the children did not perceive the cost to their parents of the children's outdoor play in terms of worrying about child abductions.

Home ranges were smaller for children than they had been for their parents resulting in fewer neighborhood playmates. Although parents acknowledged the presence of an abundance of playmates as a resource in their own childhood recollections, this experience was perceived to be "fortunate" and their children's lack of playmates "unfortunate" rather than perceiving that playmates fell under the umbrella of the provision of resources. Parents acknowledged having playmates increased their interest, enjoyment, and valuing of outdoor play.

There was a socialization of omission in the children's outdoor play that further contributed to the absence of novelty, challenge, and adventure in the children's outdoor play. Parents had not included in stories of their childhoods the mischief, adventure, or traveling beyond home range permissions with their children. Restricted home ranges removed opportunities for children to observe and emulate the play of older children in their neighborhoods as discussed during parents' childhood recollections. This restriction resulted in few opportunities for many of the children to make social comparisons with similarly aged peers as siblings were often several years younger than were the eldest children in the household. Similarly, children today did not have to vie for leadership in mixed age and gender groups in their neighborhoods as their parents had done.

Interpersonal involvement included introducing children to activities and environments. Parents who played in wild nature themselves as children believed that this was a safe environment for their children to play, more so than in domesticated nature settings where stranger concerns were heightened. Further, compared to their own childhoods, parents emphasized teaching their children to respect people's privacy, possessions, and avoid trespassing.

Parents repeated outdoor family recreation experiences with their children that they themselves had enjoyed as children whether visiting urban or state parks, or vacations that involved spending time in nature. Neither children nor parents in their recollections differentiated between childhood outdoor play and recreation. Parents provided toys and taught skills associated with outdoor play activities they enjoyed as children and omitted those they did not enjoy or were not exposed to themselves as children. Parents also purchased novel toys and those perceived as culturally the norm.

Today parents registered their children for organized activities so they did not have to listen to their children complain that they were "bored" at home. This impacted the frequency and duration of children's outdoor play as time spent in adult-led programs precluded the children's opportunity to choose to play outdoors at home. Children's positive or negative emotions were consistent with the fulfillment of psychological needs for autonomy, competency, and relatedness in outdoor play while pursuing activities the children were interested in and enjoyed. Children's IM and STV for outdoor play competed with children's IM and STV for indoor electronics usage as well as organized activity participation.

## **Comprehensive Findings Summary**

Given the scope of my study in addressing two research questions and five underlying theoretical propositions, I elected to present a comprehensive summary of the findings here in an alternative format more commensurate with the existing literature upon which this study was based. This organization was also more consistent with the Discussion chapter that follows this section. Each of the five theoretical propositions is again presented as a discussion of the relationships between manifested parental socialization constructs and aspects of children's outdoor play (i.e., environments, activities, or motivations). However, distinctions were drawn between those households where at least one child demonstrated higher IM or STV for outdoor play than siblings or peers (i.e., interest, enjoyment, participation, or valuing) and those where at least one child's IM or STV was demonstrated to be lower than that of siblings or peers. The former was theoretically consistent with sustaining or enhancing IM in SDT whereas the latter was consistent with thwarting IM.

Though the purpose of this qualitative comparative case study was to explain the relationship between parental socialization and outdoor play, causality could not be determined by the evidence collected. Rather the existence of relationships or associations between socialization constructs and aspects of children's outdoor play that differed amongst the 10 families were presented. Finally, before proceeding to address the next theoretical proposition other important findings unrelated to evidence of children's playing outdoors more or less than siblings and peers were addressed. These findings related to the theoretical framework but did not pertain to differences amongst families or there was simply insufficient evidence to draw such conclusions.

### **Research question 1.**

The first research question is, “How does parental socialization influence children’s outdoor play?” Two theoretical propositions underlie question one: (a) direct forms of parental socialization influence children’s outdoor play, and (b) indirect forms of parental socialization influence children’s outdoor play. Mutually exclusive definitions were used to distinguish direct from indirect forms of parental socialization.

#### ***Theoretical proposition 1.***

In households where at least one child demonstrated higher IM or STV for outdoor play, several conclusions about the direct socialization to the outdoors could be drawn related to competency perceptions, home range, safety, and outdoor rules. Parents shared positive competency perceptions with their child regarding the child’s outdoor play activities. These parents not only routinely encouraged their children playing outdoors but also the children’s pursuit of specific outdoor play interests. Many of these parents demonstrated an interest and knowledge of their children’s outdoor play experiences by initiating conversations with their children on the topic. Parents in these households provided sufficient outdoor play resources to maintain children’s interest through novelty and choice among a range of activities. Resources were not only material (e.g., toys) but also included the knowledge these children acquired through their parents’ scaffolding and teaching of outdoor play activities, and someone to play with (e.g., neighborhood playmates or play dates). Parents presented evidence that their children’s IM or STV for playing in wild nature environments (e.g., wooded lot) was not innate but rather had required introduction and scaffolding on the part of parents to increase the children’s emotional comfort and competencies not required for

playing in their yards (e.g., identification of physical dangers associated with flora and fauna). The evidence suggested children in these households were able to meet at least one, and often all, of their psychological needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy in their routine outdoor play experiences.

Children's IM and STV for outdoor play was lower than siblings or peers in households where a child's home range was not sufficiently expanded to meet the evolving developmental needs of the child. Although restricted home ranges reduced opportunities for novelty, adventure, or challenge that could have theoretically sustained the child's interest in outdoor play, the lack of access to playmates had the greatest impact in discouraging them from playing outdoors. Few families had achieved a balance between the children's developmental need for an expanded home range concomitant with the child's abilities or psychological needs on the one hand and parents' conflicting need to fulfill their parental role in protecting their children on the other hand.

A finding that transcended all families was an illusion of safety evident in the discussions of children and parents. All family members portrayed the children as being most safe indoors, slightly less safe playing in their own backyards under the supervision of a parent, and lesser still when parents no longer accompanied the child outdoors. However, a marked distinction was found between the level of safety that parents and children felt when children left their own yards and ventured to play at a neighbors' house. None of the children were permitted to play within their neighborhoods beyond a specified and approved playmate's yard. Most parents had rules against their children entering the homes of neighborhood playmates. Parents in two households had not discussed "stranger danger" with

even their eldest children because of perceptions that the child was never out of the parents' eyesight or earshot. In addition to fears related to social dangers, another major hurdle to developmentally appropriate home range expansions emerged when access to friends or desired activities required children to independently cross intersections. Although parents' traffic concerns within their neighborhoods were nominal, consistent with none of the children permitted to play in the street, parents' concerns greatly increased when their children were required to cross traffic irrespective of the number of lanes.

Another pertinent finding related to parents' rules (i.e., structure) that transcended families was the difference between children's perceptions of their parents' rules as controlling (i.e., theoretically consistent with thwarting IM) or limit setting (i.e., theoretically neutral although could be executed in either an autonomy supportive or controlling manner). Children perceived that their parents' home range rules were necessary for their safety. Therefore, even in families where the evidence demonstrated the children's diminished IM or STV for outdoor play, their parents' restrictions were not perceived as controlling. Hence, the children's typical responses to unfulfilled needs in outdoor play were consistent with amotivation rather than rebellion. Parents had rules and expectations related to various aspects of the children's outdoor play: (a) physical environment, (b) social environment, (c) activities, and (d) frequency and duration. Children appeared to accept their parents' rules and expectations as limit setting when the children were able to meet at least one of their basic psychological needs and understood their parents' rationale for the rule. Children's IM and STV for outdoor play were not diminished under these circumstances.

***Theoretical proposition 2.***

In households where at least one child demonstrated higher IM or STV for outdoor play than their siblings or peers, indirect socialization included role modeling and alternative uses of free time including beliefs about play and its value, the value in relation to other organized activities, and the opportunities for challenge. The first related to how parents role modeled their enjoyment of spending time outdoors for their own recreation and leisure. These parents perceived they spent more time outdoors than did other parents in their communities. Apart from the teaching of skills discussed under Theoretical Proposition 1, parents in these households often played with their children outdoors for the pleasure of spending time together and shared enjoyment of the activity itself. These family play experiences provided opportunities for parents to express positive competency beliefs, encouragement, and interest in their children's outdoor play. Parents were also able to observe their children and assess their competencies in consideration of relaxing rules, particularly home range expansions. Spending time together as a family in shared activities contributed to the fulfillment of both parents' and children's relatedness needs whether playing in the yard or during other family leisure.

Not all parents role modeled enjoyment of spending time outdoors. In households where one or more of the children were portrayed as having less IM or a lower STV for outdoor play, at least one parent routinely demonstrated negative affective reactions to spending time outdoors (e.g., fear of insects). These parents also avoided spending time outdoors at home for their own recreation or leisure. The most commonly mentioned deterrents to parents spending time outdoors were discomfort with temperatures that were not

“ideal” and disgust or fear of insects. Children in many of these households were not only aware of their parent’s negative affective reactions but demonstrated successful socialization in that they too had come to exhibit them.

Outdoor play was indirectly affected by parental socialization efforts aimed at the children’s alternative free-time activities (e.g., electronics usage and organized activity participation). Evidence did not indicate that the children’s IM for outdoor play was thwarted as a result, although their STV was sometimes higher for preferred alternative activities. Despite many parents expressing a “love-hate” relationship with electronics, children in most households had routine access, within limits, to television and electronic gaming systems. On the one hand, children were perceived to be safe indoors, yet on the other hand were considered by parents to be sedentary and non-social when using electronics. In several families, in addition to limiting time spent using electronics, parents *sent* their children outdoors to play in an effort to offset the children’s sedentary activities. Thus, parental socialization directed at the children’s electronics usage was associated with increases and potentially decreases in the frequency and duration of their children’s outdoor play.

Like electronic gaming, children’s participation in organized activities precluded opportunities for the children to play outdoors but appeared to have a stronger impact. Unlike electronics usage, parental socialization appeared to be one-sided in that the children’s participation was always encouraged and sometimes expected by their parents. Conversely, expectations related to outdoor play were virtually non-existent. Children in many households were required to participate in at least one activity, typically a sport, per season. Participation in organized activities also affected children’s ability to meet their relatedness

needs in outdoor play. Often children had difficulty finding opportunities to play with neighborhood children because of conflicting organized program schedules. Unfortunately, friends made during participation in organized programs rarely lived in the same neighborhoods requiring the arrangement of play dates.

Parents inadvertently affected their children's outdoor play through mostly unrecognized disruptive activities. For example, most of the families in my study had relocated during the middle childhood years of at least one of their children, sometimes more than once. These relocations disrupted the children's relatedness needs in playing with established friends. Affordances for specific activities were lost or gained each time a family moved (e.g., from a paved to a gravel street). Often play sets were not moved with the families. Further evidence suggested that parents' yard work or construction projects disrupted children's outdoor play activities. For example, trimming a tree to ease lawn mowing resulted in the eradication of one child's *special place*. Whereas the parents perceived this space as a nuisance, the child perceived it as a natural affordance that held personal meaning. There was no evidence that the parents were aware of the difference in their perspectives or the disruption to their children's outdoor play. Children's IM for disrupted activities was not diminished per se, as they stated they would enjoy participating in the activities again given the opportunity. However, in some families a children's interest in playing outdoors at all was diminished, especially following numerous disruptions.

Other findings regarding the theoretical foundation of my study were subsumed under my definition of indirect socialization although they could not be linked to playing outdoors more or less than siblings and peers. These findings were related to parents' beliefs and

values for their children's outdoor play and alternative free-time activities. Parents' personal IM and STV for teaching or participating in an outdoor play activity or environment were related to the opportunities they provided for their children. For example, environments or activities not enjoyed by the parents were less often shared with their children, if at all.

Parents perceived that playing with their children was "good for" their children because parents and children alike demonstrated enjoyment of these shared experiences. Neither parents nor children provided evidence that they perceived any potential for negative impacts of parents' direct participation in their children's outdoor play. However, not one child was reported to play with peers when playing with a parent. Likewise, power dynamics did not appear to be salient to any family members, although consistent evidence showed that parents often chose or delimited the activities in which they would participate with their children. Although apparently rarely discussed with their children, many parents expressed concerns over potentially negative peer influences. Parents tried to "fill in" for a lack of available or suitable playmates and sought to foster positive memories for their children of playing together outdoors.

When directly asked, most parents stated that they valued equally all of their children's free time activities with the exception of excessive electronics usage. However, throughout parent interviews and their responses to other lines of questioning, parents often demonstrated a higher STV for their children's organized activity participation than playing outdoors. Utility values for organized activities were more salient to parents than for outdoor play even when questioning was reframed to ask what they had derived from their own outdoor play experiences as children. Parents often discussed their valuing of their children's

organized activity participation in a monetary sense such that they perceived their children derived much from these experiences that exceeded any financial costs for registration or transportation. Similar comments related to expenditures for outdoor play were rare, as were expressions of valuing outdoor play activities in which no monetary costs were incurred (e.g., running in the yard).

The evidence also suggested a salience to parents' valuing of organized activities over that of outdoor play. Parents typically valued organized activities as a means to assist their children in identifying interests, developing self-confidence, learning to work as a member of a team—including leadership, or acquiring cognitive knowledge. In addition to physical activity, most parents valued outdoor play for fostering their children's creativity. When asked if those valued aspects of organized activity participation were achievable in outdoor play, many parents were able to make some connections with the exception of teamwork. Although not delved into further because of the scope of the study, this finding was consistent because most of the children in the study did not have access to a sufficient number of neighborhood playmates to facilitate playing group games or sports. Finally, although parents believed they complemented their children equally on their performance in organized activities and outdoor play, the children overwhelmingly recalled their parents complimenting them more on their organized activities than on their outdoor play. In the case of youth sports practiced at home, these compliments overlapped. However, when children elaborated on their parents' compliments they described events that had taken place during their youth sport participation.

Just as organized activity participation afforded these children opportunities for participation in group sports; it also provided the children with opportunities for challenge unmet in their outdoor play. Children were sometimes better able to fulfill their competency needs through their participation in youth sports rather than playing outdoors at home. Similarly, many children felt no adventure in their outdoor play, particularly activities that occurred at home on a routine basis. Most children associated feelings of adventure in outdoor play only with those infrequent occasions they played in wild nature environments. Another finding that emerged over the course of speaking with older children in my study was that many of them only felt a sense of adventure in their free time when they played video games.

### **Research question 2.**

The second research question is, “How do parents differ in the socialization of their children’s outdoor play?” Three theoretical propositions underlie question two: (a) parents socialize children’s outdoor play differently based on the child’s gender, (b) parents socialize their children’s outdoor play differently based on child’s age, and (c) parents socialize their children’s outdoor play differently based on perceptions of environmental factors in their community.

### ***Theoretical proposition 3.***

Many gender differences in both socialization constructs and aspects of the children’s outdoor play were evidenced, but often data were insufficient data to draw conclusions about specific relationships among them. Therefore, following the presentation of findings for which associations were able to be drawn, other important gender findings were described. In

depicting gender differences, contrasting topics that sustained, enhanced, or thwarted of a child's IM or STV were discussed together by topic, unlike the organization of the other theoretical propositions.

The outdoor play of sons and daughters usually was consistent with the role modeling or participation of mothers. Conversely, fathers' role modeling or participation was more consistent with the independent play of their sons than daughters. Daughters were more likely to play sports during family leisure if their mother participated. Coinciding with this finding related to mothers' emphasis on *fun* in playing or practicing sports, contrasted with fathers' emphasis on *performance* and *competition*. Whereas sons' IM and STV for playing sports outdoors at home appeared to be sustained or enhanced by their father's involvement, the same could not be said for their daughters. Many of these boys related their outdoor play competencies to their performance in sports.

Many fathers stated they had "given up" on inviting their daughters to play sports whereas they continued to do sports with their sons. However, in these families mothers generally were portrayed by themselves, their spouses, or their sons as less knowledgeable or competent at the sport than either the fathers or the boys' youth sport coaches. Therefore, inadequate competency perceptions could also have contributed to the daughters' lack of continued interest and participation in playing sports with her family or friends. Delving deeper into that topic was beyond the scope of my study so although this alternative theoretical association remained plausible, insufficient data did not allow me to draw such a conclusion. Further, fathers and sons bonded over their shared sports participation at home,

whereas no concomitant activity seemed to occur around mothers and daughters bonding in outdoor play.

Girls were often described by themselves or their parents as “playing like the boys” outdoors at home. Parents expressed pride when describing their daughters “tomboyish” interests or behaviors. Alternatively, parents either had or suggested they would have had concerns if their sons chose not to pursue youth sports, which typically overlapped with the boys’ outdoor play. In families where daughters were the first born, there was often evidence that particular sporting equipment such as footballs or basketball hoops were not purchased until their younger brothers had achieved an age and developmental level affording them the ability to participate. Similarly, there was no evidence that construction toys had been purchased for any of the girls in the study.

Mothers’ and fathers’ role modeling and involvement influenced their sons and daughters did fathers. However, fathers were more likely to spend time outdoors and play with their children in the snow. Fathers also role modeled spending more time in domesticated nature for their personal leisure and recreation than mothers. No evidence indicated that sons or daughters outdoor play differed as a result.

Just as mothers’ role modeling and playing of outdoor activities was consistent with their sons’ and daughters’ outdoor play, the mothers’ expressed fears and discomforts outdoors were also consistent. Particularly at younger ages, there appeared to be no gender differences in the successful socialization of children picking up their mother’s fears. These negative affective reactions were typically related to temperature or insects. Mothers’ fears of

child abduction often exceeded their husbands' fears, which resulted in greater home range restrictions enforced mothers than by fathers.

Mothers typically demonstrated a greater knowledge of and interest in their children's outdoor play activities than fathers. Although this finding appeared at first to be an artifact of an unintended sampling bias with stay-at-home mothers, there were families where fathers had made an effort to be equally engaging and encouraging of their children's outdoor play. Mothers and fathers alike expressed more gendered beliefs in families where children were of a single sex. Although all parents generally believed that boys and girls generally played differently outdoors, they attributed gender differences between their own sons' and daughters' play to age or personality differences. Girl children were more likely to agree with their parents' portrayal than boy children, who often attributed the differences to their sisters' playing "girly" make-believe games or not being interested in sports. Only a few fathers and none of the mothers admitted to interacting differently with their sons and daughters during family leisure playing outdoors at home. All children in the study perceived that their mothers and fathers treated them and their siblings equally irrespective of gender.

Although there were gender differences evident in these families, equally notable was where gender differences did not seem to occur. Perhaps resulting from a sampling bias with most families having been recruited through a local nature center and zoo, and with mothers' as the primary decision makers regarding their children's organized activities, there were no gender differences between boys and girls being signed up for participation in programs that incorporated opportunities to play in wild nature. Unlike gendered differences in the toys provided to sons and daughters, all children were afforded the same opportunities to play in a

variety of domesticated- and wild-nature outdoor play environments. In addition, no gender differences were found in any of the rules or expectations parents had for their children's outdoor play, including home range.

Most outdoor play activities with the exceptions of construction play, sport play, or continued dramatic play beyond the age of 9 years were discussed as being unrelated to a child's gender. However, parents often introduced gender into the activity by purchasing gendered colored items such as pink bikes or soccer balls. There was no evidence that parents' intention was to suggest a difference in the experience of boys and girls in playing any activities. Although blue appeared to have been a common color in seemingly gender-free equipment such as trampolines or play sets there was no concomitant progression with pastels or colors typically associated with girls such as pink or purple. This finding was reminiscent of parents' and children's comments about girls learning to play like boys. Although girls' bicycles, scooters, and hula hoops were sometimes sky blue, outdoor equipment was always of primary colors of green, red, or even navy blue.

Finally, gender differences that theoretically fit with socialization seemed to have influence but no evidence supported direct involvement of the parents. Boys in the study more than girls evidenced efforts to increase their interest in playing outdoors by introducing novelty, challenge, or adventure into their outdoor play. These behaviors were most often accomplished in boys recreating dramatic roles of warriors from their electronic games or using toys in an unconventional way (e.g., jumping into a moving wagon as it rolled down an inclined driveway). Conversely, girls said they routinely played house or veterinarian—dramatic play unassociated with electronic games. There was little evidence of girls using

toys unconventionally. Boys used forts as shelter for their war games whereas they served as homes for their sisters' dramatic play. Playmates beyond siblings were usually the same gender as the child, unless they were friends of a sibling and the children were all playing together.

***Theoretical proposition 4.***

Differentiations were drawn between children who demonstrated higher or lower IM and STV than their siblings or peers for outdoor play based on age. Although there was evidence of a general decline in children's interest in outdoor play as they aged, consistent with the literature, there were differences in the patterns between socialization constructs and children's interest, initiative, and participation in outdoor play.

In households where at least one child demonstrated higher IM or STV for outdoor play, the manifestations of parental socialization constructs were theoretically consistent with sustaining or enhancing their children's interest in playing outdoors by providing resources resulting in numerous play options to choose from (i.e., autonomy) and that were novel or challenging to the child (i.e., interest). Parents increased their purchases of age-appropriate outdoor play toys particularly during the early middle childhood years as children embarked on independent outdoor play. However, toys could not meet a child's relatedness needs at any age. As older children mastered their outdoor play toys they ceased to meet children's competency needs (i.e., boring).

Although children ages 7- to 9-years-of-age initiated outdoor play frequently, consistent with having a high IM and STV for outdoor play, a hurdle in interest developed. Stating that older children were "harder to amuse" in playing outdoors, many parents

purchased novel toys or expanded play sets when eldest children were approximately 10-years old. Older children continued to enjoy playing outdoors but seemed to be less self-motivated to go outdoors in the first place. As children aged and developed increased physical capabilities, especially coordination, strength, and arm reach, they gained greater independence from their parents in initiating desired outdoor play activities.

Home ranges were also expanded with age to varying degrees in all families. Expansions of home ranges were made in accordance with parents' perceptions of the child's demonstrated competencies and trustworthiness such as through demonstrating knowledge and sound judgment related to potential environmental or social hazards. Younger children's home ranges and other outdoor play permissions were expedited by the presence of an elder sibling who served as a role model, somewhat replacing the parents, and assisted with monitoring.

Older children in families where at least one parent was perceived as enjoying and spending more time outdoors than other parents, demonstrated higher IM and STV for playing outdoors than their same-aged peers in the study. Whether this finding was associated with the children's ability to meet relatedness needs with their parents or an outcome derived from observing their parents' as role models was not clear. Family relocations impacted older children's outdoor play more deeply than it did their younger siblings because of the loss of access to friends or favored activities. Younger children's home ranges were limited to their own yards and their playmates typically consisted of only their parents and siblings—rendering disruptions to outdoor play minimal. Similarly, having

siblings for play appeared to mitigate the lack of neighborhood playmates for all children when age differences were small and developmental levels closely approximated each other.

Differences in ages and developmental levels between siblings were found in some families to be associated with evidence that eldest children's IM or STV for outdoor play was diminished more than it was for their same-age peers. Most often decline occurred when eldest children's home ranges and permissions to participate in developmentally appropriate outdoor play activities were restricted to the level of the youngest sibling in the family. Parents expressed concerns that youngest siblings were at greater risk for incurring physical injuries if they attempted to copy the behaviors of their elder siblings. Therefore, elder siblings were often denied opportunities to pursue intrinsically motivating outdoor play activities or locations when younger siblings were present. Additionally, elder children often were required to monitor their younger siblings' outdoor play behaviors by intervening or seeking parental involvement when necessary for the children's safety.

Mothers' involvement with their children's outdoor play was greatest before first-born children acquired an age and developmental level deemed adequate to permit the child to play outdoors independently. In these early years, mothers introduced their children to play environments, activities, and equipment. As children reached middle childhood and had the physical development to participate in sports and the ability to focus their attention long enough to learn sport skills, fathers became increasingly involved in their children's outdoor play. However, both mothers and fathers expressed relief that they could "step back" and observe their children's play without having to guard against the children's impulsivity leading them to do something that could cause them physical injury. Parents who did not

enjoy spending time outdoors themselves often retreated indoors after their eldest child was considered to be a sufficient monitor of the child's own or possibly younger sibling's outdoor play.

The presence of numerous children in a family complicated matters sometimes because of the difficulties in orchestrating outings away from home, especially when youngest children had not yet acquired an age to play independently. This difficulty resulted in differential experiences between siblings at the same age. For example, eldest children may have been afforded opportunities to play in wild nature that their younger siblings may never have or at least could not experience until later in their lives than had their elder sibling. Given that parents sought developmentally appropriate activities for their children, later-born children may not have been introduced to outdoor play environments or activities at a time consistent with the children's IM. Given that older children's IM and STV for outdoor play diminished in later middle childhood, a window of opportunity may have been lost for these children.

Some parental involvement patterns associated with children's IM and STV for outdoor play were unclear. Several parents shared that they were more protective of their first-born children out of their own insecurities and inexperience as parents, later easing back on their physical proximity in monitoring later-born children or relaxing outdoor play activity restrictions (e.g., climbing on play set) on them. Older children often drew attention to age-distinct permissions their younger siblings were denied, which suggested some level of pride or prestige, but no evidence indicated that older children were disgruntled by their younger siblings' outdoor play permissions having been expedited.

Parents also differentiated the manner in which they communicated rules with their children as they aged. They shifted from demands for obedience or compliance as toddlers to increasingly ensuring their children understood their reasoning for rules or expectations. Theoretically, these changes in structure were consistent with autonomy supportive environments that permitted the children to be successfully socialized (i.e., internalize) into their parents' beliefs and values. Older children seemed to internalize rules to a greater extent than did younger children in the study.

Many parents expressed beliefs that park playgrounds were for younger children and that their older children became less interested in them as a play environment as they aged. Older children spoke of physically outgrowing playground. Older children's play activities and environments narrowed to encompass only those areas in which their parents had participated with them or their parents pursued for their own personal recreation and leisure. This change included not only playing outdoors but also increasingly spending time indoors as they aged.

Whereas none of the children in the study had achieved an age where parents let them contribute to outdoor play decisions, children were granted greater autonomy in family decision making related to organized activity participation as soon as they were able to read program brochures and identify their own interests. As children aged, their parents increasingly supported their participation in a greater number of organized activities. Parents also purchased more electronics for their children as they aged, typically in the form of family or individual, portable gaming units. However, none of the children were permitted to play with their electronic games outdoors. Whereas outdoor play toys tended to be purchased

new for first-born children and handed down to younger siblings, alternative-free time resources were more akin to the expediting of outdoor play rules. Younger siblings acquired access to electronics or participation in organized programs at earlier ages than had their eldest brother or sister. Parents often associated these expenditures with not wanting to listen to their children complain that they were bored at home. Many of these age changes differed from those of their parents during their childhoods due to the parents' perceptions of environmental changes since that time as discussed in the next section.

***Theoretical proposition 5.***

Parents' perceptions of the environment whether related to social or traffic dangers or cultural norms were always rooted in comparisons with the parents' childhood experiences. Therefore, parents' recollections of their childhood outdoor play experiences were compared and contrasted with that of their children. Parents' recollections of their own parents' practices related to outdoor play or alternative free-time activities clearly influenced parenting practices in my study. For example, parents were found to replicate parenting practices of their parents when those practices had not been perceived to be controlling. As topics in this chapter overlapped with those of the other four theoretical propositions, there was little to add in the way of association of constructs with the children's IM and outdoor play. Therefore except where noted otherwise, discussion of IM and STV relate to the parents' for facilitating their children's outdoor play experiences.

Parents were more likely to facilitate their children's outdoor play in environments and activities, consistent with higher IM and STV, that the parents enjoyed themselves as children. This facilitation encompassed toy purchases, activities introduced and skills taught,

and opportunities to play in both domesticated and wild nature. For example, parents who played in wild nature as children perceived those environments to be safe for their children to play whereas parents who did not expressed concern or fear regarding their children's attempts to play with nature. All parents wanted their children to feel as comfortable playing and spending time outdoors as they had as children.

All parents who grew up in towns, suburbs, or cities recalled being enticed to play outdoors because "that's where all the other kids were." Parents contrasted their experiences to that of their children such that parents perceived they had all been "fortunate" to have had an abundance of neighborhood playmates. They perceived their own children as "unfortunate" because these opportunities were not available. Although parents acknowledged the affordances of abundant playmates for playing group games and sports during their childhoods, few parents acknowledged their own children's inability to experience these forms of play outside of school or adult-led organized program participation. Parents recalled observing and emulating the behaviors of older children in their neighborhoods. Fathers also discussed testing boundary limits and getting into mischief in later middle-childhood, although these stories had never been shared with their children. Forms of outdoor play had added novelty, challenge, and adventure to the parents' play as children, and yet the children in my study seemed to have limited experiences compared to their parents.

Parents purchased toys for their children that were enjoyed by themselves as children, especially until children were old enough to demonstrate their own special interests. In addition, parents purchased toys that were perceived to be novel (e.g., Ripstik) or the new

cultural norm. For example, many parents described spending much of their summers swimming and playing in backyard pools but had to visit local parks to play on playground equipment. Their children had the inverse experience such that nearly all of them had a play set in their backyard at some point during their middle childhood years, but were transported to a park by their parents for swimming.

Though electronics could be viewed as thwarting outdoor play by competing for children's time and attention, there was evidence that it played a role in both parents' childhood outdoor play and that of their children. Fathers were able to play pick-up sports because of an abundance of playmates and they reported emulating professional athletes watched on television in their outdoor play. Most of the outdoor play in my families was not influenced by television viewing. Boys' dramatic outdoor play revolved around "war" or strategic military video games. Girls' dramatic outdoor play was derived from reading books.

Parents perceived that with the increased use of electronics by their children, compared to that of their own childhoods, they also sent their children outdoors to offset sedentary activities. Being sedentary was something with which no parent believed his or her own parents had been concerned. Unlike the children in the study whose mothers did not work outside the home, many of the parents discussed being "latch-key kids." Having less parental supervision after school, the parents believed they had more autonomy in their outdoor play in choosing to go outdoors, where to go, who to play with, and what to do.

Home range was a major difference between parents and their children's outdoor play. Parents' perceptions of being more aware of the potential for social harm (e.g., child abduction or negative peer influences) than their own parents had been, having received

insufficient parental guidance as children, increased traffic hazards due to larger population densities, and less of a sense of community than experienced as children all contributed to changes in their children's outdoor play. Although home range has been discussed repeatedly, it was worth noting here that not one parent shared any perception that having a more limited home range than that experienced by the parents as children could potentially have negative effects for the children. Parents did not acknowledge that home range restrictions could possibly have contributed to making outdoor play a less appealing free-time activity for children, particularly as they aged. Rather than testing boundaries as their parents had, the children in the study demonstrated amotivation for outdoor play beginning around 10-years-of-age. This amotivation seemed to result from the children internalizing their parents' beliefs that the child's safety depended upon home range restrictions. Encompassed within home range restrictions was a cultural change whereby parents in the study stressed not disturbing neighbors, respecting property rights, and especially not trespassing. This lack of home range negated the children's ability to play in those urban spaces where wild nature was most abundant such as vacant lots or hedgerows between housing developments, where parents had played.

Urban wild-nature spaces were also the environments that parents associated with novelty, challenge, and adventure that was absent in the play of their own children. A related form of autonomy that was lost to the children in the study was opportunities to problem solve in their outdoor play. Parents discussed problem solving in activities (e.g., designing and building forts), social situations (e.g., negotiate group game rules), and neighborhood navigation (e.g., avoiding "riff raff"). The only problem solving evident with their children

occurred in rare opportunities to play in wild nature. Unlike their parents who had daily access to wild play environments, opportunities presented themselves just a few times per year for most of the children in the study and for some, not at all.

Just as parents' IM and STV for outdoor play environments and activities motivated them to provide opportunities for their children, so too did low IM or STV in electing not to introduce or scaffold an experience for their children. Further, if parents had insufficient knowledge or experience in an environment or with an activity, they did not socialize their children into those experiences. Either inexperience or lack of enjoyment with environments or activities often resulted in socialization by omission, such that the children would never have an opportunity to experience and decide for themselves whether they enjoyed them.

Where parents felt denied as children, whether an outdoor play toy, environment, or alternative free-time activity, those parents rebuffed their parents' practices and accommodated those opportunities for their children. Parents also facilitated their children's participation in organized activities for which the parent had a high IM and STV resulting from the mother's or father's participation as a child. Although this pattern was evident for both outdoor play and organized activity participation, it was not evident for the use of electronics. Parents recalled being bored as children but their parents were not compelled to resolve this condition, the parents just sent the children outdoors. In contrast, parents in the study gave it as at least one consideration in registering their children for organized activities away from home.

Parental role perceptions expressed by parents that differed from their portrayals of their own parents included: (a) protector, (b) provider of experience, and (c) direct

involvement in teaching or playing with the children. Parents recalled their fathers playing sports outdoors with them as children and mothers and fathers expressed beliefs that playing sports with his children was part of a father's parental role in providing a variety of experiences for the children. Mothers' roles had also changed in that these mothers spent more time playing with their children, scheduling and providing transportation for organized activity participation; role modeled or introduced their children to wild nature play, and assumed disciplinary roles that had been the domain of their fathers. Fathers had also taken on a new role in children's outdoor play unrelated to sport. Whereas fathers discussed designing and building forts with their friends as children, these same father now built from scratch, or assembled from a kit, large play sets that included a canvas covered "fort." Only a few sons, and no daughters, had provided minimal assistance to their fathers with most not having learned how to use tools independently. Only children in one family, where a son participated in the construction of a tree house, played with tools during independent play—as did his older sister and younger brother.

Parents' recollections of their parents' lack of involvement were described as consistent with autonomy supportive environments that would be expected to enhance children's IM and STV for outdoor play. However, these same parents described the parents of children who "roamed" the neighborhood without supervision today as neglectful. Although some parents expressed feeling they did not receive sufficient guidance from their parents, or that their parents had not been as aware of potential dangers as these parents were today, it seemed insufficient to explain this pattern.

Evidence suggested that gender was not a factor in the establishment of home ranges for the parents as children, which could have contributed to no gender differences in home ranges for their children. Although differences in the outdoor play experiences of parents and children could largely be explained by reductions in home ranges, none of the parents discussed the potentially negative impacts that resulted including: (a) decreased access to playmates, (b) lack of mixed age and gender play in the absence of adult supervision, and (c) opportunities for social comparisons with same-aged or older children in a non-threatening environment.

Changes in home ranges for the children of these parents were accompanied by: (a) increased outdoor play toy and equipment purchases, (b) increased play participation by parents, (c) increased organized activity participation, and (d) increased electronics usage. Again, these changes were consistent with parent sentiments about not wanting to hear their children complain they were bored, which was a much different approach from that of their own parents.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

### Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative comparative case study with 10 families in and around the urban center of a county in the Midwest was to explain the influence of parental socialization on children's outdoor play. A quasi-inductive strategy was applied to data collection and analysis based upon a theoretical framework derived from (a) outdoor play literature, (b) leisure socialization literature and (c) two developmental theories of the effects of parental socialization on children's *motivations* for selecting which activities to participate in during their free time (i.e., self-determination theory or SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985 and expectancy-value theory or EVT; Eccles, 1983).

Five theoretical propositions underlie two research questions. The first question is, How does parental socialization influence children's outdoor play? (1) Theoretical Proposition 1: *Direct* forms of parental socialization influence children's outdoor play, and (2) Theoretical Proposition 2: *Indirect* forms of parental socialization influence children's outdoor play. The second question is, How do parents differ in the socialization of their children's outdoor play? (1) Theoretical Proposition 3: Parents socialize children's outdoor play differently based on the child's *gender*, (2) Theoretical Proposition 4: Parents socialize their children's outdoor play differently based on child's *age*, and (3) Theoretical Proposition 5: Parents socialize their children's outdoor play differently based on *perceptions of environmental factors in their community*.

The intent of this explanatory comparative case study is not to imply causation between demonstrated constructs of parental socialization posited by theory and aspects of

children's outdoor play that coincided with them. Rather patterns in the data are presented and associations drawn based upon the theoretical foundation of the study. For example, only children with parents who expressed an interest in their child's affective experience of outdoor play (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) demonstrated attainment values (i.e., sense of self; i.e., *motivations*) related to outdoor play. Although theory supported the positing of a relationship between these constructs, it would not have been possible to surmise from the data whether the parents' behavior led to or followed from their child's incorporation of playing outdoors into the child's identity.

This chapter is organized as follows: (a) modifications to original constructs resulting from data analyses (b) embedding findings in the existing literature related to outdoor play, leisure socialization, and parental socialization; (c) major findings, (d) strengths and limitations of my study; (e) practical and theoretical implications of my study; and (f) recommendations for future research including suggested modifications to my methodology and topics for further inquiry. The chapter ends with my final conclusions regarding this dissertation study. To aid readers in following the presentation of socialization constructs, they appear in italics throughout this chapter. Where a construct is identified in lay terms or as a component of the construct, the construct appeared in italics within parentheses.

### **Modification of Constructs Resulting from Data Analysis**

Original constructs used as sensitizing concepts for my study were: (a) *role modeling*, (b) *beliefs and values*, (c) *autonomy supportiveness of environment*, (d) *structure*, and (e) *interpersonal involvement*. These constructs were sometimes modified whereas others were added that emerged from the data. *Role modeling* as a construct was not altered but rather

shifted focus in Theoretical Proposition 5. Rather than relating to parent *role modeling* to their child, it focused on parents' recollections of their own parents (i.e., parenting practices).

*Beliefs and values* of parents encompassed (a) valuing of children's autonomy, (b) perceptions of child's competence and (c) STVs. All parents in my study expressed valuing their children's interests, which was not posited by the theoretical framework. Thus valuing children's interest was added as a construct that evolved from the data. Perceived costs as a component of STV included: (a) amount of effort required, (b) loss of time or resources for a valued alternative, or (c) psychological meaning of failure (Eccles, 1983). Although all applicable to the domain of outdoor play, expanding on cost by incorporating other factors such as discomfort with spending time outdoors was useful. A parallel with constraint theory may clarify. Cost in STV according to Eccles' theory could be re-interpreted by drawing parallels with constraint theory (Crawford & Godbey, 1987). Amount of time required and loss of resources are consistent with structural constraints. Psychological meaning of failure is consistent with an intra-personal constraint. I merely expanded cost to include other constraints (e.g., discomfort outdoors as another form of intrapersonal constraint).

Constructs related to parenting practices were: (a) *autonomy supportive environment*, (b) *structure*, and (c) *interpersonal involvement*. Although the continuum of autonomy supportive to controlling environments was posited to be a global construct related to parenting practices within the home, I found that it was easier to conceive, and hence more useful, to associate the level of autonomy supportiveness with data regarding children's perceptions of specific parenting practices (i.e., *structure* or *interpersonal involvement* constructs). In researching play, or as would be anticipated in any other form of leisure, there

appeared to be greater autonomy supportiveness overall in parenting practices in this domain compared to other domains such as school work or domestic chores. Hutchinson et al. (2003) found that autonomy supportiveness was “difficult to tease out” (p. 417) because they did not include children’s interpretation of their parents’ general parenting practices.

I found that parents differed in their levels of autonomy supportive to controlling behaviors as they related to specific aspects of children’s outdoor play. For example, parents insisting that children go outdoors to play or participate in a specific activity at any given time were consistent with controlling behavior. Conversely, parents who made no such impositions on their children’s outdoor play were consistent with autonomy supportive practices. The children’s perception of their parents practices were found in my study to be the determining factor in whether or not the practices had a positive, neutral, or negative impact on the children’s *motivations* for outdoor play. Further elaboration of the impact of autonomy supportive-controlling parenting practices will be incorporated with those parental socialization constructs to which they were evidenced (i.e., *structure* or *interpersonal involvement*).

*Structure* in SDT included parents’ rules and expectations as well as how they were communicated, monitored, and enforced (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Therefore, I disagreed with Hutchinson and colleague’s (2003) interpretation of SDT when they separated parents’ expectations from *structure*, rather placing them with *beliefs and values*. I found parents beliefs (e.g., fear of child abduction) could lead to parental expectations or rules (e.g., do not talk to strangers) making these distinct constructs. Based on SDT and my findings, it was

more plausible that parents' beliefs motivated (i.e., energized) parents' formation and communication of rules and expectations (i.e., *structure*).

Monitoring was relegated to *structure* in SDT as it was conceived to encompass parents' supervision and assurance of children's compliance with expectations and rules (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Hutchinson and colleagues (2003) found that parents' monitoring of adolescents was related to enforcement and ensuring compliance with parents' rules and expectations. However, my study indicated that by middle childhood monitoring for this purpose had subsided and been replaced by a primary focus on monitoring for the children's safety—particularly from child abduction (Harden 2000; Valentine, 2004). Therefore I found parents' monitoring (e.g., looking out the window) to be more consistent with *interpersonal involvement* discussed later in this section as this monitoring had more to do with knowledge of the child's experiences and relating to or caring about the child's wellbeing.

Interpretive analysis resulted in melding emotions, intrinsic motivation (IM), and subjective task values (STV) into a single *motivations* construct for children. Children's IM for outdoor play encompassed: (a) interest, (b) enjoyment, and (c) participation. STV for parents or children encompassed: (a) attainment values, (b) utility values, and (c) perceived costs. Although considering parents' STV was useful as a construct distinct from IM, differentiating the two constructs was difficult with children. SDT and EVT both addressed children's competency perceptions, affective responses, and activity choices. Therefore, these constructs melded into a single construct in the analyses when looking at children's data. This finding with Katz et al. (2008) who found STV, measured as an indicator variable comprised of intrinsic interest and utility values, to be statistically equivalent to IM in SDT.

## **Embedding Findings within Context of Related Literature**

Patton (2002) described the outcome of a qualitative case study using a modified-analytic induction strategy as going beyond confirmation or disconfirmation of apriori constructs (e.g., sensitizing constructs) and theoretical propositions to modification of constructs and propositions and the identification of patterns or themes that emerged from the data. The use of *themes* was deemed confusing so rather I identified the third category as *other pertinent topics*. Discussion of my findings consistent with Patton's organization resulted in: (a) manifestation of parental socialization constructs based upon the theoretical framework and their associations with aspects of outdoor play, (b) patterns of socialization and playing outdoors and (c) other pertinent topics that were deemed important to furthering an understanding of current trends in outdoor play, given the current body of knowledge and the role played by parents in fostering and perpetuating these trends.

The impetus for embarking upon this study was the body of research that purported declines in children's *unstructured* outdoor play and raised concerns for the potentially deleterious effects of this trend on children's healthy development. I sought to expand upon this body of research by explaining parents' roles in socializing their children's outdoor play. Therefore, it was insufficient to simply present evidence of the socialization constructs as they were manifested in these families.

The nature of my study enabled me to look at patterns between the constructs in ways not found in the outdoor play or socialization literature. Whereas other research using SDT and EVT had only been linked to outcomes such as performance, persistence, or motivation for engaging in academic or extracurricular activities, I found that my topic lent itself to

linking constructs from SDT and EVT to aspects of children's outdoor play: (a) physical environment, (b) social environment, (c) activities, (d) frequency and duration, as well as (e) *motivations*. As *motivations* were inextricably linked to activity choices and participation, they, too, were subsumed under that category.

Given the current body of literature related to declines in outdoor play, I sought to not only understand the role parents played in socializing their children in ways that contributed to the decline, but I wanted to identify ways that parents socialized their children that either sustained or increased children's *motivations* in outdoor play. Children were described or portrayed in my study as being outdoor *children* or *not* compared to their siblings and peers as has been found in other research (Veitch et al., 2006). Karsten (2005) used qualitative data to distinguish between what she referred to as "outdoor," "indoor," and "backseat" children (p. 283). For purposes of my study, I believed it was sufficient to distinguish between the families where at least one child was perceived to play outdoors noticeably *more* or *less* than siblings and peers (see Patterns of Socialization and Playing Outdoors within each proposition). Finally, other pertinent topics emerged from my data related to each of the five theoretical propositions that resonated with, expanded upon, or contrasted with, lines of research (e.g., illusion of safety) and the body of knowledge surrounding the current understanding of children's outdoor play (see Other Pertinent Topics within each proposition).

Therefore, organizing the integration of my findings with the existing literature into these subheadings was useful for each theoretical proposition: (a) Manifestation of Parental Socialization Constructs and Associations with Aspects of Outdoor Play, (b) Patterns of

Socialization and Playing Outdoors and (c) Other Pertinent Topics. An experiential education analogy depicting differences between these subsections may aid readability. Manifestation of Parental Socialization Constructs and Associations with Aspects of Outdoor Play was intended to be the *What* of my findings with emphasis placed more on the mechanics of the socialization process whereas Patterns of Socialization and Playing Outdoors and Pertinent Topics that Emerged from the Data together equate to the *So What* (Borton, 1970). *Now What* is addressed under the headings Practical Implications and Theoretical Implications later in this chapter. Although the data overlapped, particularly between propositions addressing the first or second research question, and sometimes within subheadings within a proposition, an effort was made to minimize redundancy and to elaborate only on pertinent differences in these three areas.

**Theoretical proposition 1.**

This section addresses Theoretical Proposition 1, “*Direct* forms of parental socialization influence children’s outdoor play,” that underlies the first research question, “How does parental socialization influence children’s outdoor play?” For purposes of my study, direct forms of socialization are defined as mutually exclusive from indirect forms. Direct forms of socialization were considered those parenting practices targeted specifically at children’s outdoor play (e.g., outdoor play rules and parents’ efforts to monitor their children’s compliance).

***Manifestation of constructs and aspects of outdoor play.***

The emphasis of this section was to demonstrate the consistency of my findings with SDT and EVT, two well-supported developmental psychological theories related to parental

socialization with secondary consideration given to linking findings to outdoor play and leisure socialization literature. That is, I delved deeper into psychological theory than under other headings to demonstrate the *What* of how parents socialize their children's outdoor play (Borton, 1970).

Parental *beliefs and values* were only considered a direct form of socialization in my study if they pertained to outdoor play and had been shared with the children. The only parental *beliefs or values* shared with the children in my study were related to competency perceptions for specific outdoor play activities or STV for outdoor play in general or for specific activities. Positive competency perceptions, important in both SDT and EVT (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Eccles, 1983) were shared in the form of compliments (e.g., telling children they were *good at* riding a bicycle without training wheels). No evidence showed that parents shared negative competency perceptions with their children. Rather, when children expressed frustration with learning an outdoor play skill, parents provided encouragement and emphasized that practice and persistence would lead to mastering the skill. Children externalized their causal attributions for their perceived lack of competency by attributing them to task difficulty rather than a lack of ability. Therefore, when parents' feedback was non-evaluative, children's *motivations* for the activity was not diminished (Koestner et al., 1984).

Although there was no evidence parents' expressed valuing of autonomy (i.e., *beliefs and values*) to their children, parents' STV for outdoor play (i.e., *beliefs and values*) was shared with the children making it consistent with my definition for direct forms of socialization. All children were aware that their parents valued the children's playing

outdoors because it afforded opportunities to *get exercise* or *be active* (i.e., *beliefs and values*). Children seemed to have internalized their parents' valuing of outdoor play for this purpose to varying degrees (i.e., introjected *shoulds* or identification *wants* as posited by SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985). Parents' discussions of physical activity in outdoor play were tied to health, which is a long-term benefit consistent with utility values as a component of STV (Eccles; i.e., *beliefs and values*). Parents in only a few families had expressed sentiments to their child consistent with attainment values in STV (i.e., pertained to a child's sense of self; i.e., *beliefs and values*). The only evidence of perceived costs, another component of STV, having been shared with the children pertained to parents' rationale for outdoor play rules and expectations (i.e., child abduction or *stranger danger*) or for not playing outdoors (e.g., excessive heat; i.e., *beliefs and values*). These costs could be thought of as consistent with an interpersonal constraint and a structural constraint, respectively.

*Structure* as a direct form of socialization encompassed parents' outdoor play rules. Parents had rules and expectations related to various aspects of the children's outdoor play: (a) physical environment (i.e., home range, landscape use, play in weather conditions), (b) social environment (i.e., social interactions with siblings, playmates, and strangers), (c) activities (i.e., toy, non-toy, and equipment use, care, and storage), and (d) frequency and duration (i.e., when play commenced and ended). Although little would be gained by elaborating on specific rules, what was important was that no aspect of children's outdoor play was unbounded by parents (i.e., *structure*).

Some overlap was found with other studies (e.g., Dunn et al., 2003; Hutchinson et al., 2003) regarding parents' imposition on children's social interactions with peers perceived to

potentially have a negative impact on the child or delimiting time for unstructured activities (i.e., *structure*). However, most of my findings were unrelated to previous research given the dearth of outdoor play literature from a socialization perspective. No literature was found related to my theoretical framework that examined parents' rules as they pertained to a single domain as thoroughly as I examined them in this study. Rules and expectations (i.e., *structure*) were included in Hutchinson et al.'s study but the content provided a cursory explanation, with greater emphasis placed on communication between parents and teens.

None of the related literature had heretofore incorporated the perspective of children regarding their parents' expectations and rules (i.e., *structure*). Children in my study appeared to accept their parents' rules and expectations as limit setting when the children were able to meet at least one of their basic psychological needs and understood their parents' rationale for the rule. These findings are theoretically consistent with SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Children's *motivations* for outdoor play were not diminished under these circumstances. Even when children were *sent* outdoors to play by their parents, they perceived their parents' intent to be one of encouragement. Further, the children retained choice amongst a range of enjoyable outdoor play activities once outdoors (i.e., *autonomy supportive environment*).

By their very nature, however, rules were formulated to constrain children's IM behaviors that posed a danger or unacceptable outcome for themselves or others. The evidence suggested that the children perceived their parents' rules and expectations as limit setting rather than controlling because three conditions proposed by Koestner, Ryan, Bernieri, and Holt (1984) were met. First, although the parents' set the parameters for

outdoor play experiences, the children retained the ability to choose whether to participate in an outdoor play activity or play environment within those bounded conditions or choose to do another outdoor play activity or no outdoor play activity at all (i.e., choosing an alternate free-time activity). Hutchinson and colleagues (2003) found that adolescents in their study were granted autonomy in their free time within pre-established parameters set by their parents (i.e., *structure*). Second, the children's self-esteem was never called into question. Rules and expectations when created as the result of an unacceptable incident or accident were handled in a manner that did not blame the child. For example, parents told their children how frightened they were when the children left the yard without the parents' knowledge—placing the emphasis on the affective reaction of the parent not the misbehavior of the child. Children received this non-evaluative feedback that whatever had occurred was unacceptable and understood that they were not to repeat the circumstances in the future, but without any threat to the child's self-esteem. Finally, parents acknowledged their children's feelings and desires to do something of which the parents either did not approve (e.g., throw rocks in the pond) or felt they could not permit for the child's safety (e.g., ride bicycle in the neighborhood). I would add that parents in my study stressed explaining the rationale for establishing the rule or expectation that parents perceived outweighed the children's IM, which was consistent with autonomy supportive behaviors.

Where monitoring was consistent with *structure*, parents in my study were more likely to rely on hearing their children yelling, or tattling by a sibling for ensuring compliance with outdoor play rules and expectations. Parents, however, did monitor their

children's outdoor play more closely when playing with a peer that was perceived to be a negative influence on their child (Hutchinson et al., 2003; Valentine, 1996).

Enforcement of parents' rules and expectations was consistent with the *structure* construct. Assessing the consistency with which parents enforced their outdoor play rules and expectations or whether it had any bearing at all on children's *motivations* for outdoor play was difficult. Parents and children generally agreed that children knew and typically played within the parameters the parents had established for outdoor play. However, as discussed above, new rules were formed *as needed* when an event occurred of which the parents had not previously conceived a rule would be necessary to ensure their children's safety (e.g., do not jump off the fort roof) or the protection of property (e.g., do not throw balls at the siding on the house).

I found that parents' redirection of children's outdoor play in my study was consistent with *structure* as did Hutchinson and colleagues (2003) with their study of adolescent leisure. However, I would categorize this redirection as a form of consequence rather than *guidance*. Parents differed in their autonomy supportive-controlling consequences for outdoor play infractions. Most parents imposed consequences directly related to the event such as taking away a toy or making the child *sit out* or return indoors for some length of time. Many parents were autonomy supportive in that they explained their rationale to the children to help the child gain understanding and appreciation for why his or her behavior was unacceptable to the parent (Deci & Ryan, 1985). A few parents used role playing or asked their children to think about how they might have behaved differently or more appropriately

for *next time*. The manner in which these parents dealt with outdoor play infractions was consistent with autonomy supportive parenting (Deci & Ryan).

In a couple of households, parents' consequences were unrelated to the children's outdoor play but rather directed at a more highly valued free-time activity of the child (e.g., electronics). The children in these families perceived their parents' use of consequences to be controlling. However, this finding generally coincided with children who were perceived not to play outdoors as much as siblings or other similarly aged peers. In these instances, the parents did not want to do anything that reduced the time their children spent playing outdoors. As these children already demonstrated reduced *motivations* for outdoor play, it was not possible to determine if their parents' use of controlling punishments had contributed to the children's attitudes and experiences of outdoor play.

*Interpersonal involvement* in SDT encompassed (a) time spent with the child, (b) the provision of resources, (c) knowledge and interest about children's affective experiences related to outdoor play, and (d) enjoyment relating to the child (Deci & Ryan, 1985). I considered only time spent with the child in introducing, scaffolding, and teaching the children outdoor play skills to be consistent with direct socialization. Therefore, time spent in *playing with* the child was addressed under Theoretical Proposition 2. Grolnick and colleagues (2002) theorized that the Vygotskian concept of scaffolding children's learning experiences within a child's zone of proximal development was consistent with *structure* rather than *interpersonal involvement*. Grolnick theorized that *interpersonal involvement* did not affect a child through skill development but rather through influencing the child's

attitudes and *motivations*. However, Grolnick's work focused on the domain of academics not play.

The transmission of leisure or recreational skills, particularly in outdoor recreation, was the origin of socialization research in the recreation field (e.g., Christensen & Yoesting, 1973; Kelly, 1974). Therefore, in a study of parental socialization in the domain of outdoor play I deemed it more appropriate to include scaffolding with instruction and concomitant outcomes of the skill acquisition under *interpersonal involvement*. The evidence supported this decision as patterns between outdoor play activities parents taught their children (e.g., swinging) and their children's later participating in those activities alone or with siblings or friends were found as discussed under the next subheading. Focusing on scaffolding as *structure* by isolating the *means* from the *end* result would have contributed nothing to furthering an understanding of outdoor play.

Shannon and Shaw (2008) described teaching (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) as "deliberate" (p. 3) socialization consistent with my definition as a direct form of parental socialization. They used the concept to describe mothers' socialization *through* leisure as well as *into* leisure consistent with differentiations made by Mannell and Kleiber (1997). Parents in my study acknowledged that in addition to teaching (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) their children specific outdoor play skills they sometimes imparted *life lessons* such as how to deal with disappointment, frustration, or disagreements with siblings and peers.

Parents introduced, scaffolded, and instructed (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) their children on outdoor play in a variety of environments. By middle childhood, children had

been familiarized with their yards and local park playgrounds. During middle childhood, some parents had scaffolded their children's independence in navigating their neighborhoods (e.g., riding their bicycle around the block) and, in rare instances, how to safely cross the street. Although some children had been exposed to wild nature environments (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) before they reached middle childhood, none were permitted to play independently until they or a sibling had reached the age of 9 years or older (i.e., *structure*). These findings were generally consistent with the body of literature related to children's play in nature (e.g., Moore, 1986; Sobel, 1993).

Children were taught basic outdoor play skills (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) such as the use of playground equipment and sport skills such as tossing, catching, and kicking before they reached middle childhood. Parents taught their young children how to play at make believe, a skill children transferred to the outdoors. During middle childhood, children learned to ride their bicycles without training wheels, developed specific sport skills, or learned to climb trees with the help of their parents (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*). I found no comparable studies with which to evaluate my findings related to parents' introduction, scaffolding, or instruction of children's outdoor play.

Provision of resources (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) as a component of *interpersonal involvement* related specifically to the domain in which they had been studied (i.e., academics and extracurricular activities.) Therefore, provision of resources for outdoor play differed substantially from those required in other domains. Hutchinson and colleagues (2003) found determining whether parents' provision of resources was consistent with autonomy supportive parenting to be difficult. Although I conceived a priori that the

provision of resources was inherently consistent with autonomy supportive parenting in that it afforded choices of outdoor play activities, evidence in my study supported this conceptualization. Children expressed their sense of having options to choose from when playing outdoors, consistent with autonomy supportive parenting practices. Conversely, two parents recalled being denied a desired play object or feeling a lack of resources in outdoor play (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*), which was consistent with controlling parenting practices.

Given that survey items in research with SDT and EVT included parents' provision of books or magazines associated with a domain (e.g., youth sports), I inquired about nature-related books or magazines available in the home for the children (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*). Every family had fiction and non-fiction reading materials that incorporated elements of nature. There was no evidence to suggest that the presence of these materials was associated with the children's outdoor play (i.e., *motivations*) although children sometimes used them as a reference for discoveries made playing outdoors (e.g., identification of a bird or insect).

Parents provided a variety of outdoor play resources (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) for their children including: (a) toys, (b) non-toy resources, and (c) play environments. Although the number and variety of toys varied by family, they could be categorized as specific forms of play: (a) nature-related, (b) sport-related, (c) physically active non-sport related, (d) dramatic play, (e) creative play. Although nothing would be gained by elaborating on each type of outdoor play resource, what was evident was that children in most of these families had abundant material resources for playing outdoors. Beach (2003)

found children played outdoors with toys that would be consistent with these categories. When looking at non-toy resources Beach included outdoor recreation equipment such as fishing poles in her study of rural outdoor play. Evidence in my study demonstrated that children made no distinctions between outdoor play and outdoor recreation and perceived them to be equivalent experiences both affectively and practically. Unlike Beach (2003), I found that children's use of commercial toys dramatically exceeded their use of natural objects. Hutchinson et al. (2003) did not include outdoor play resources in their study of parents' socialization of adolescent leisure, which was the most comparable to my study.

Play spaces afforded specific outdoor play opportunities consistent with the provision of resources in *interpersonal involvement*. Like Derr (2002) and unlike Sebba (1991) I found that many children used nature as a backdrop for their outdoor play experiences. I included play sets and trampolines under the category of play spaces provided by parents because this equipment was used as "children's space" for more than its designed purpose (Karsten, 2005, p.275). Although time and transportation were considered as a form of parents' provision of resources in SDT and EVT (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Eccles, 1983), they had been discussed only as pertained to tutoring or extracurricular activities, neither of which required parents to remain for the duration of these experiences. Parents in my study took their children to parks, an area nature center, or the property of friends or family to facilitate outdoor play (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*). Unlike Loukaitou-Sideris and Sideris (2010) who found that 20% of children were not allowed to attend local parks without the accompaniment of a parent (i.e., *structure*), only one 12-year-old child in my study was permitted to do so.

Therefore, it was important to include parents' facilitation of outdoor play away from home under *interpersonal involvement* (i.e., provision of resources).

*Interpersonal involvement* encompassed parents' knowledge and interest in their children's outdoor play. For knowledge and interest to be considered a direct form of socialization, the children had to be aware of this component of *interpersonal involvement*. Many parents discussed asking their children about their outdoor play experiences when unaccompanied by a parent, typically over dinner. Parents' enthusiasm and sincerity consistent with warmth of relating to the child, a component of *interpersonal involvement* and a gauge of autonomy supportive parenting (Deci & Ryan, 1985), contributed to the impact on children's *motivations* for outdoor play. Family differences related to knowledge and interest of the children's outdoor play experiences (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*), more than any other socialization construct, stood out as a distinguishing characteristic related to children's level of motivation for outdoor play. Although not surprising, evidence demonstrated that parents enjoyed relating to their children in outdoor play (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) even when interactions focused on introducing, scaffolding, or instructing related to activities and environments consistent with direct socialization.

#### ***Patterns of socialization and playing outdoors.***

Given concerns over the demise of children's outdoor play, distinguishing patterns of socialization was important among families where at least one child demonstrated evidence of stronger *motivations* for outdoor play than siblings or peers and those who conversely demonstrated less *motivations*. I was able to describe these patterns given that my purposeful sample included a range of children's interests and participation in outdoor play. Unlike the

previous section, emphasis was placed on relating findings to outdoor play and leisure socialization literature, the *So What* (Borton, 1970), with a secondary emphasis placed on the means of socialization (i.e., less esoteric psychology terminology). After all, this study was designed to explain relationships between parents' socialization and their children's outdoor play, not a test of either SDT or EVT (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Eccles, 1983). Therefore, where attempts at ordering constructs interfered with depicting the phenomenon such ordering was abandoned. Constructs continued to be identified by italics for readability.

In households where at least one child demonstrated higher *motivations* for outdoor play, parents shared positive competency perceptions (i.e., *beliefs and values*) with their child regarding the child's outdoor play activities. Parents' expressed competency beliefs and valuing of fitness (i.e., *beliefs and values*) contributed to those of their children and ultimately the children's level of physical activity (Kimiack et al., 1996; i.e., *motivations*). Parents in my study not only routinely encouraged their children playing outdoors (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) but the children's pursuit of specific outdoor play interests. This finding was consistent with Brustad (1996) who concluded that parents' encouragement (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) was significantly related to children's physical activity orientations (i.e., *motivations*). Many of the parents in my study demonstrated an interest and knowledge of their children's outdoor play experiences (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) by initiating conversations with their children on the topic, which was theoretically consistent with autonomy supportive parenting practices that support or enhance children's *motivations* (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Parents in these households provided sufficient outdoor play resources (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) to maintain children's interest (i.e., *motivations*) through novelty and choice among a range of activities, which was consistent with autonomy supportive parenting (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Resources were not only material (e.g., toys) but included the knowledge these children acquired through their parents' scaffolding and teaching of outdoor play activities, and having someone to play with (e.g., neighborhood playmates or play dates). The evidence suggested children in these households were able to meet at least one, and often all, of their psychological needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy in their routine outdoor play experiences (Deci & Ryan; i.e., *motivations*). No outdoor or leisure socialization literature was found that corresponded to these findings.

Children's *motivations* for outdoor play were perceived to be noticeably lower than siblings or peers in households where a child's home range (i.e., *structure*) was not sufficiently expanded to meet the evolving developmental needs of the child (e.g., relatedness; *motivations*). Prezza, Pilloni, Morabito, Alparone, and Giuliani (2001) found that children with greater levels of independent mobility (i.e., *structure*) spent more time with neighborhood friends, including playing outdoors. Few families had achieved a balance between the children's developmental need for an expanded home range (i.e., *structure*) concomitant with the child's abilities or psychological needs on the one hand and parents' conflicting need to fulfill their parental role in protecting their children on the other hand (i.e., *beliefs and values*). These findings were consistent with those of other studies related to parents' concerns (i.e., *beliefs and values*) and home range restrictions (i.e., *structure*; e.g., Harden, 2000; Valentine, 1997b). Unlike the parents in those studies, parents in my study

framed their responses in a way that did not suggest they perceived their children to be incompetent to handle dangers associated with strangers (i.e., *beliefs and values*). Rather the parents in my study perceived their responsibility was to ensure the children were never placed in situations that would require such competencies (i.e., *beliefs and values*).

***Other pertinent topics.***

Topics in this section related to either those that I could not make clear distinctions between children perceived to play outdoors noticeably more or less than other children, or that seemed somehow of greater magnitude in furthering an understanding of children's outdoor play and the role of parents. Three pertinent topics emerged from analysis of the data when addressing Theoretical Proposition 1: (a) *illusion of safety*; (b) parents perceived playing in wild nature was not innate but rather required parental introduction, scaffolding , and instruction; (c) lack of access to peers resulting from home range restrictions.

Findings for each of these topics are situated within the context of the current literature by comparing and contrasting them to other relevant studies. As with the previous section, emphasis was placed on relating findings to outdoor play and leisure socialization literature, the *So What* (Borton, 1970), with a secondary emphasis placed on the means of socialization (i.e., less esoteric psychology terminology). Therefore, where attempts at ordering constructs interfered with depicting the phenomenon such ordering was abandoned. Constructs continued to be identified by italics for readability.

The first pertinent finding related to what I described as *the illusion of safety*. Parental concerns or fears (i.e., *beliefs and values*) as they relate to child abduction or traffic and their subsequent influence on restricting children's independent mobility or home range (i.e.,

*structure*) have received attention in the research literature. My study added to this body of knowledge the perspective of the children who are affected by parents' home range restrictions. Children perceived that their parents' home range rules were necessary for their safety (i.e., demonstrated successful socialization of parents' *beliefs and values*).

Therefore, even in families where the evidence demonstrated the children's diminished *motivations* for outdoor play, parents' home range restrictions (i.e., *structure*) were not perceived as controlling. Hence, the children's typical responses to unfulfilled needs in outdoor play were consistent with amotivation rather than rebellion (Deci & Ryan, 1985; i.e., *motivations*). I found none of the negotiation or pushing of boundaries described in other studies (e.g., Harden, 2000; Hutchinson, 2003; Valentine 1997b, 2004). Even with additional probing, the eldest children in the study at 12-years-of-age denied asking their parents to expand their home range boundaries and had no current desire to do so. However, parents did not likely spontaneously expanded children's home range boundaries without some impetus from the children. What was important was that no evidence of children in my study indicated they attempted to negotiate with their parents because (a) they had been successfully socialized into accepting their parents' interpretations of the dangers (e.g., child abduction; i.e., *beliefs and values*) and that their parents could keep them safe so long as they remained within earshot or eyesight of their parents (i.e., *beliefs and values*), and (b) neither the children nor parents indicated that being able to safely navigate one's neighborhood including the ability to avoid or deal with *stranger danger* was a competency the children possessed or were expected to develop (i.e., *beliefs and values*).

All family members portrayed the children as being most safe indoors, slightly less safe playing in their own backyards under the supervision of a parent, and lesser still when parents no longer accompanied the child outdoors (i.e., *beliefs and values*). Children's assessment of risk in the UK was categorized as private, local, and public (Harden, 2000). Children in my study as well as Harden's perceived (i.e., *beliefs and values*) that the home was a safe haven against crime (i.e., private). However a marked distinction occurred between the level of safety parents and children felt (i.e., *motivations*) when the child left their own yards and ventured to play at a neighbors' house (i.e., local). None of the children were permitted to play within their neighborhoods beyond a specified and approved playmate's yard (i.e., *structure*). Most parents had rules against their children entering the homes of neighborhood playmates. Parents in two households had not discussed *stranger danger* (i.e., *structure*) with even their eldest children because of perceptions that the child was never out of the parents' eyesight or earshot (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*).

Children in Harden's study (2000) felt safer (i.e., *motivations*) in their neighborhoods (i.e., local) than public spaces (e.g., park) because they had developed familiarity with places and people. This description was reminiscent of parents' recollections of childhood neighborhoods but not of the current experiences of children in my study. For most of the children in my study, neighborhoods were conceived as public spaces (i.e., *beliefs and values*) holding no comfort born of familiarity for parents or children (i.e., *motivations*).

In addition to parents' fears related to social dangers (i.e., *beliefs and values*), another major hurdle to developmentally appropriate home range expansions (i.e., *structure*) emerged when access to friends or desired activities required children to independently cross

intersections. Although parents' traffic concerns within their neighborhoods (i.e., *beliefs and values*) were nominal, consistent with almost none of the children being permitted to play in the street (i.e., *structure*), parents' concerns greatly increased when their children were required to cross traffic irrespective of the number of lanes. This pattern was consistent with other independent mobility or home range research (e.g., Hillman & Adams, 1992). The majority of children in my study had home range restrictions (i.e., *structure*) that exceeded those found in other studies. Most studies demonstrated home range expansions (i.e., *structure*) by the age of 9 years into the children's neighborhoods (e.g., Beach, 2003, Veitch et al., 2006).

The second pertinent finding uncovered in analyzing data for Theoretical Proposition 1 was that parents believed that their children's *motivations* for playing in wild nature environments (e.g., wooded lot) was not innate but rather had required introduction and scaffolding (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) on the part of parents to increase the children's emotional comfort and unique competencies not required for playing in their yards (e.g., identification of physical dangers associated with flora and fauna). Much had been written about children and the importance of their spending time in nature (see Lester & Maudsley, 2006; Muñoz, 2009; and Thomas & Thomas, 2004 for reviews of the literature). This research focused on the benefits of play (e.g., Barnett, 1990) and experiences in nature (e.g., Kellert, 2005) for healthy child development. The impetus for conducting this study was the body of literature purporting children's decreased play in nature was deleterious.

Although much of this body of research was not a direct test of Wilson's (1984) biophilia hypothesis, findings were reported to be consistent with it. There was no evidence

in my study to contradict young children's innate interest in living things (i.e., *motivations*). Many parents spoke of the need to be diligent when their children were young to prevent the children being harmed by following their impulses in outdoor environments (e.g., enter pond to touch fish; i.e., *motivations*). No one has suggested that parents' limit setting (i.e., *structure*) by establishing parameters for safely spending time in natural environments has diminished children's innate bond with nature (i.e., *motivations*)—nor am I now.

What had been suggested in the literature was that children's changes in how they spent their free time including reductions in playing in wild nature environments (i.e., *motivations*) was disconnecting them from the world in which they lived in ways purported to negatively affect their development (e.g., Louv, 2008). None of the children in my study grew up surrounded by wild nature (i.e., *structure*). For most of the children in my study these experiences were sporadic (i.e., a few times per year; i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) and of significantly constrained duration (i.e., generally no more than an hour; i.e., *structure*). Research suggests that exposure leads to familiarity and the ability to feel comfortable and ultimately develop preferences (i.e., *motivations*) for spending time in natural environments (e.g., Derr, 2002; Ferrel Raymund, 1995; Kytta, 2004). None of the children in my study demonstrated exploration as found in other research (e.g., Derr; Sobel, 1993). Adults in Beach's (2003) study of outdoor play perceived a dramatic decrease in children's exploration play in their community based on their recollections from having lived there all their lives. When most children in my study spent time in wild nature environments (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*), the evidence demonstrated they were focused on specific activities (e.g., digging a hole, climbing a tree, or catching crawdads in a creek; i.e., *motivations*). It is likely

that these children did not explore because they did not spend enough time (i.e., *interpersonal involvement* and *structure*) in wild environments to get bored with their initial activities (i.e., *motivations*).

One mother in my study relayed a story about her surprise (i.e., *beliefs and values*) that her toddler was fearful of a wooded area in which the mother had played daily as a child and the toddler's older siblings played during occasional family visits to the mother's childhood home (i.e., *interpersonal involvement* and *motivations*). It was the first time this mother was cognizant that she must have done more with her older children to make them comfortable in that environment (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*). Many parents in my study described teaching (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) their children how to play in wild nature environments (e.g., climb a tree). The need for introduction, scaffolding, and instruction (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) was consistent with the socialization parents had performed with their children for playing in domesticated nature (i.e., their backyards).

A unique case in my study involved a family who moved from a housing development on the outskirts of town to the country (i.e., *structure*) for the explicit purpose of affording their children opportunities to play in wild nature (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*). The mother in this case walked the woods, pointing out not only hazards but encouraging the children's unique play using natural elements (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*). Her children would not likely have conceived on their own (i.e., *motivations*) that they could climb on a tree that was growing sideways out of the ground but was solid enough to bounce on. The mother drew upon her own childhood experiences of playing in wild nature in showing her children (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) what they could do.

This mother needed to help her children overcome their fearfulness of getting injured playing on the log (i.e., *motivations*) because of their unfamiliarity and lack of comfort with this type of outdoor play activity. Again, this was reminiscent of the majority of children playing in domesticated nature being less likely to play (i.e., *motivations*) with elements of the landscape (e.g., bushes) unless their parents had taught and encouraged it (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*).

An important finding of my study was that only parents who had played in wild nature themselves perceived this to be a safe environment for their children to play (i.e., *beliefs and values*). These parents facilitated (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*), albeit sporadically, their children's opportunities to experience wild nature based on their own recollections of enjoyment from childhood (i.e., *beliefs and values*). Another important finding not addressed in the current literature surrounding children's outdoor play in nature was that these parents, who had so enjoyed playing outdoors as children, were less tolerant of temperature extremes and insects than they had been in childhood (i.e., perceived costs in *beliefs and values*). Although not surprising, their children spent more time in wild environments with paid staff at the local nature center (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) than they did with the parents themselves. This finding was consistent with parents in England registering their children for out of school care programs with a nature emphasis (Smith & Barker, 2001; i.e., *interpersonal involvement*). Children's only sustained outdoor play experiences in wild nature (i.e., *motivations*) occurred when the parents did not participate (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*)—consistent with the childhood experiences of their parents. Again, I was unable to locate any related research with which to compare my findings.

The third pertinent finding from my analysis of Theoretical Proposition 1 was children's reductions in independent mobility or home range (i.e., *structure*) had the greatest negative impact not on children's geography but on their ability to fulfill their psychological need for relatedness with peers (Deci & Ryan, 1985; i.e., *motivations*). Although restricted home ranges reduced opportunities for novelty, adventure, or challenge that could have theoretically sustained the child's interest in outdoor play (i.e., *motivations*), the lack of access to playmates had the greatest impact in reducing interest in playing outdoors (i.e., *motivations*). Many parents stated that it was easier to get their children to play outdoors (i.e., *beliefs and values*) when they were able to play with friends (i.e., contributed to *motivations*). The most common issue children wished they could change about their outdoor play experiences was to have more playmates (i.e., *motivations*). Few of the children in my study had experience with playing group games other than at school where their interactions were age segregated and gender segregated for physical education classes.

### **Theoretical proposition 2.**

This section addresses Theoretical Proposition 2, "*Indirect* forms of parental socialization influence children's outdoor play," that underlies the first research question, "How does parental socialization influence children's outdoor play." For purposes of my study, indirect forms of socialization are defined as mutually exclusive from direct forms. Indirect forms of socialization are considered to be constructs mediated or moderated by parenting practices surrounding outdoor play within each family (e.g., parental beliefs that guided formation of outdoor play rules) as well as parental actions that had an incidental effect on the children's outdoor play (e.g., family relocation). Socialization constructs used as

sensitizing concepts were: (a) *role modeling*, (b) *beliefs and values*, (c) *structure*, and (d) *interpersonal involvement*. Discussion of autonomy supportiveness was subsumed under parenting practice constructs (i.e., *structure* and *interpersonal involvement*).

***Manifestation of constructs and aspects of outdoor play.***

In addition to the parental socialization constructs introduced under Theoretical Proposition 1, *role modeling* was added. *Role modeling* could only be considered an indirect form of socialization in my study because it encompassed only parents' activities not pertaining to outdoor play. *Role modeling* was manifested in my data as evidence of the children's having observed their parents outdoors in either personal leisure or family leisure experiences or what Hutchinson and colleagues referred to as "shared family activities" (2003, p.406).

Consistent with my interpretation of *role modeling* as an indirect form of socialization, Shannon and Shaw (2008) referred to *role modeling* as an informal method of socialization that often conveyed unintended messages as well as intended. Children witnessed their parents' preferences for leisure environments and activities in the choices that parents made among available alternatives. Parents *role modeled* their utility values, a component of STV, for outdoor play in the form of lifelong leisure pursuits that the parents continued to participate in as adults (e.g., riding bicycle). Children observed their parents' weighing of options (i.e., STV) for alternatives such as overhearing parents' discussions and planning surrounding family outings. Knowingly or not, parents *role modeled* to their children that as the perceived costs associated with providing outdoor play opportunities

increased (e.g., the distance and time needed to provide transportation and supervision for the children to play at a park), the frequency with which they occurred diminished.

Children's perceptions of their family's valuing of nature were shown to have a strong influence on children's connection to nature (Chen-Hsuan Cheng & Monroe, 2012). No evidence in my study indicated that parents' discussed their valuing of spending time in nature with their children. This finding would be consistent with children's deriving their perceptions of their family's valuing of spending time in nature through *role modeling*. Drawing conclusions about their parents' or family values based on observations of their parents' behaviors was consistent with Louv's (2008) contention that well-meaning adults may inadvertently be communicating to children that particular areas or activities that had traditionally been the purview of childhood play were no longer a culturally accepted place for children. Chen-Hsuan Chen and Monroe discovered that children's perceptions of family valuing of nature experiences had a stronger impact on the children's affective connection to nature than did the children's direct experiences.

Parents *role modeled* their own enjoyment or discomfort (i.e., perceived cost within *beliefs and values*) in spending time outdoors whether in domesticated or wild nature settings. Evidence showed that some children in my study had been socialized into the negative emotions (i.e., *motivations*) expressed by at least one of their parents such as fear related to insects or discomfort with temperature variations. Findings of children's disgust, sensitivity, and fear of natural elements and environments (i.e., *motivations*) had been suspected of originating in socialization by parents (e.g., Bixler & Floyd, 1997, 1999; Bixler et al., 2002). My findings supported Bixler and colleagues conclusions that by 8<sup>th</sup> grade

children's preferences for environments (e.g., domesticated or wild nature; i.e., *motivations*) had already been formulated. Conversely, in families where parents frequently spent time outdoors and *role modeled* positive affective responses, their children did so as well (i.e., *motivations*). These findings were consistent with Brustad (1996) who demonstrated that parents' *role modeling* of enjoyment was a significant influence on children's physical activity. Parents' *role modeling* may be as important as children's direct experiences (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) in the formulation of environmental preferences (i.e., *motivations*) for outdoor play and leisure. Fredricks, Simpkins, and Eccles (2005) concluded that children's experiences by middle childhood set them on a trajectory for adult leisure experiences. Whereas *role modeling* is not addressed by SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985), it is encompassed within EVT (Eccles, 1983) as a socialization construct.

Socialization in EVT was theorized to occur when children internalized the intentional or unintentional messages (e.g., parents' feedback and interpretation of the child's experience) and examples set by the socializing agents themselves, (e.g., parental *role modeling*; Simpkins et al., 2006). *Role modeling* has long been accepted as a means of socializing children into leisure by shaping their interests and preferences (i.e., *motivations*; e.g., Barnett & Chick, 1986; Chick & Barnett, 1995; Giuliano, et al., 2000). However, *role modeling* was not found to be a significant predictor of children's participation in youth sports (Eccles, 1992; Fredricks & Eccles, 2005).

Children's participation in sport (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) that did not directly involve parents (i.e., they did not participate in organized sports with their child; Fredricks & Eccles, 2005; Kimiecik et al., 1996), rendering youth sports consistent with the *unstructured*

and unsupervised domain of children's outdoor play in this regard. This may have explained the limited findings of parents' time *involvement* and *role modeling* on children's outdoor play. With the exception of age changes discussed under Theoretical Proposition 4, no evidence indicated that parents' *role modeling* was associated with aspects of outdoor play beyond affective reactions and preferences for spending time outdoors (i.e., *motivations*).

My findings were somewhat consistent with those of Welk, Wood, and Morss (2003) in their study of parental socialization and children's moderate to vigorous physical activity (MVPA). Parental *role modeling* was a significant predictor of children's MVPA but explained less than one percent of the variance. This suggested *role modeling* played a less significant role in the parental socialization of children's MVPA than other forms of parental socialization; rather, active parents provided more encouragement and did more to facilitate their children's MVPA experiences (i.e., *motivations*). Parents in my study who enjoyed spending time outdoors for personal and family leisure, as well as playing with their children in the yard (i.e., *beliefs and values*), provided more encouragement and demonstrated greater knowledge and interest in their children's outdoor play experiences (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*).

Constructs related to *beliefs and values* used as sensitizing concepts in my study were: (a) valuing of children's IM, (b) valuing children's autonomy, (c) subjective task value (STV), and (d) perceptions of child's competence. These constructs were considered indirect forms of socialization when no evidence was found that they had been communicated with the children or where they pertained to topics other than outdoor play. Parents' valuing of their children's interests (i.e., *beliefs and values*) were a rationale for parents' provision of

outdoor play and alternative free time resources (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*). Although all parents claimed to value their children's autonomy in their free time within limits (i.e., *beliefs and values*), consistent with the findings of Hutchinson and colleagues (2003), once children reached middle childhood parents claimed it was their children's expressed interests (i.e., *motivations*) that guided outdoor play and alternative free time options.

The only evidence of parents having negative competency perceptions (i.e., *beliefs and values*) related to the children's learning how to ride a bicycle without training wheels. However, feedback was given to these children in such a way that it appeared not to influence the children's self-esteem negatively (Koestner et al., 1984). , whereas parents provided encouragement to their children (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) to persist and master riding a bicycle less stress was placed on the child than in other domains. Parents expressed no concerns that their children would be negatively impacted if they failed to master an outdoor play activity. Children's competency perceptions were generally influenced by their parents (e.g., Bois, Sarrazin, Brustad, Trouilloud, and Cury, 2005; Green & Chalip, 1997). No research was found that addressed negative competency perceptions related to children's free time outdoor activities.

Consistent with perceived costs as a component of STV (i.e., *beliefs and values*), several parents expressed negative perceptions of other children in their neighborhoods. These findings were consistent with Valentine's (1996) where parents tended to portray their own children as angels and demonize the presumed *misbehavior* of children of other parents (i.e., *beliefs and values*). Parents' negative perceptions of the children's peers were not shared with the children but resulted in parents either monitoring their children's interactions

with those children more closely or establishing rules that restricted the children's permission to play with those children at all (i.e., *structure*). Other researchers have found that parental monitoring increased when adolescents were perceived to be interacting with peers parents did not trust (Dunn et al., 2003; Hutchinson et al., 2003).

Although parents' actions sometimes belied a different scenario, parents believed they valued all outdoor play activities equally for their children (i.e., *beliefs and values*). Parents' attributed differences in their children's free-time activities to the children's *unique* personality and interests (i.e., *motivation*) not parental influences. Addressed further under Theoretical Propositions 3 and 4 related to gender and age, respectively, parents did not facilitate (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) all forms of outdoor play equally. Studies of adolescent leisure have shown that parents provided more encouragement and supported their children's participation in activities (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) that were more highly valued by the parents (Hutchinson et al., 2003). As parents' perceived costs increased so did the valuing of spending free time indoors. Harden (2000) found this was presumably for the children's safety. Parents in my study made comments consistent with Harden's interpretation. Parents expressed a higher STV (i.e., *beliefs and values*) for outdoor play than for children's indoor use of electronics but a lower STV when compared to an activity associated with cognitive developmental like reading. Most parents stated that they valued outdoor play equally to their children's participation in organized activities with many making comments that it contributed to children being *well rounded*.

Consistent with attainment values (i.e., sense of self; i.e., *beliefs and values*) in the fulfillment of perceived parental roles, parents' actions were consistent with: (a) protector,

(b) provider of a variety of experiences, and (c) direct involvement (i.e., playing with the child). Parents shared their beliefs about their parental role as protectors of their children as discussed under Theoretical Proposition 1. No evidence was uncovered that parents had discussed the other two parental role perceptions with their children. Thus, provider and involvement were conceptualized as indirect forms of socialization. Parents provided a variety of experiences in the form of buying commercial toys, facilitating their children's outdoor play in environments away from home, encouraging family leisure (e.g., day hikes or vacations), facilitating organized activities, and purchasing electronics (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*).

The prevalence of organized activity participation (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) in my study may have been an artifact of middle-class privilege. Vincent and Ball (2007) found that working class families relied on *natural cultivation* in raising children and believed that loving children and providing for their needs was sufficient. Children in working class families were found to play outdoors (i.e., *motivations*) and have greater independent mobility and less supervision (i.e., *structure*). Middle-class families demonstrated patterns similar to those in my study with increased organized activity participation, increased parental monitoring, and increased parental involvement (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*). Vincent and Ball characterized the parenting in these middle-class households as *concerted cultivation* focused on perpetuating and ensuring their children's success in retaining middle-class status or upward mobility in adulthood (i.e., *beliefs and values*). Parents' efforts in these families (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) suggested that in addition to meeting children's

developmental needs, they were compelled to afford their children every developmental advantage possible (i.e., *beliefs and values*; Vincent & Ball).

Vincent and Ball (2007) raised another point about perceptions of *good parenting* that arose in my study regarding enrollment of children into organized activities. Did the fact that parks and recreations agencies, as a branch of local government, by providing such a variety and large number of organized activity options for children imply that enrolling children in organized activities was what parents should do? I wondered if parents perceived the provision of organized activities by publicly funded park and recreation agencies as indicative of government sanctioning. Vincent and Ball referred to this as “The state and the market are offering up versions of ‘good’ and ‘necessary’ parenting which insert themselves into the private choices and decisions of middle-class families” (p. 1074). Parents in my study had not thought of these organized program offerings as anything other than a benefit to the community that they appreciated (i.e., *beliefs and values*).

Grolnick (2009) suggested that parents are affronted from all sides regarding cultural messages about what parents should do for their children. However, most parents in my study believed that they should provide opportunities for their children’s participation in organized activities (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) because they had the means to provide for their children’s varied experiences and identification of interests. Means were not just financial but contributed to stay-at-home moms. Parents provided a variety of experiences for their children because of perceptions of parental roles rather than thinking about cultural norms (i.e., *beliefs and values*). Discussed further under Other Pertinent Topics that Emerged from the Data, parents played with their children regularly in most households (i.e., *interpersonal*

*involvement*). Differences were found in parenting beliefs related to their roles or responsibilities in participating in their children's play.

Indirect forms of the *structure* included: (a) family residence location, (b) family relocation, (c) family schedule or routine chores, and (d) parents' expectations or rules for children's alternative free time activities (i.e., electronics and organized activities). The only manifestations consistent with SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985) were family schedule and rules and expectations. The other manifestations emerged from my data. Given that prior research with SDT and EVT did not focus on outdoor environments, it was not surprising that these manifestations were not found in the literature.

Family residence, like other demographic characteristics, was consistent with *structure* in SDT. In only one family was outdoor play a major consideration in a family's home purchase. Most families in my study had relocated during a child's middle childhood years and sometimes more than once. These relocations disrupted the children's relatedness needs in playing with established friends (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Prezza et al., 2001; i.e., *motivations*). Affordances for specific activities were lost or gained each time a family moved (e.g., from a paved to a gravel street; Kyttä, 2004). Often play sets were not moved with the families.

Family schedules including chores were consistent with *structure*. Parents' yard work or construction projects sometimes disrupted children's outdoor play activities (Sobel, 1993). Although parents may perceive an outdoor space as a nuisance, a child may perceive it as a natural affordance (e.g., low branches in a tree). Parents did not seem to be aware of the difference in their perspectives from that of their children. Sometimes parents were unaware

of disruptions to their children's outdoor play. These findings were consistent with other research related to differences in the perceptions of children and parents regarding environmental affordances (e.g., Kyttä, 2004; Rasmussen, 2004).

Children's *motivations* for disrupted activities were not diminished as they would still enjoy participating in the activities again given the opportunity. However, in some families a child's interest in playing outdoors at all was diminished, especially following numerous disruptions. These findings were consistent with a child's developing amotivation for outdoor play due to a lack of control over their circumstances (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Overall, most children were resilient in that they adapted their outdoor play to new surroundings or circumstances.

*Structure* encompassed parents' rules and expectations for alternative free time activities. No evidence showed that children perceived their parents' rules or expectations to be controlling even where parents' restricted the use of electronics, except as a manipulative punishment for outdoor play infractions, or required participation in organized programs. The children's lack of negative perception suggested that like rules and expectations for outdoor play as addressed under Theoretical Proposition 1, children interpreted their parents' rules and expectations as limit setting (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Parents' rules and expectations for electronics use and participation in organized activities (i.e., *structure*) were associated with the free time children had available to choose outdoor play as participation in alternative free-time activities precluded the ability to play outdoors.

Conversely, expectations related to spending time in outdoor play (i.e., *structure*) were virtually non-existent. When parents held expectations for outdoor play, they served to

establish parameters or constrain children's outdoor play as discussed under Theoretical Proposition 1. Children in many households were required to participate in at least one activity, typically a sport, per season (i.e., *structure*). No literature was found that indicated parents required their children's participation in outdoor play. Although these parenting practices were consistent with a controlling environment in SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985), children did not perceive their parents' actions as anything other than limit setting. The children enjoyed their participation in the programs (i.e., *motivations*) and were afforded some autonomy in choosing to participate or continue the pursuit of specific activities. Participation in organized activities was not perceived by children or their parents as a cost (i.e., the loss of a valued alternative activity; i.e., *beliefs and values*) in relation to outdoor play. Although all children enjoyed their participation in organized activities (i.e., *motivations*), some children conceived of their participation in organized activities that it was not free time.

The location of a family's residence (e.g., rural, suburban, or urban) and relocation of the family (i.e., *structure*) impacted the social environment of children's outdoor play. Parents sometimes made an effort to accommodate their children's maintenance of established friendships when families relocated (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*). Sometimes families relocated no more than a few blocks from their previous residence and home range expansions (i.e., *structure*) facilitated bridging the gap for their children's outdoor play to continue. Further distances required the arrangement and provision of transportation for play dates (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*; e.g., Karsten, 2005; Skår & Krogh, 2009). A child's age at the time of the relocation mitigated the impact on the social environment of children's

play with the influence felt most by older children. Younger children, having smaller home ranges, typically played with parents and siblings so their social environment for outdoor play experienced minimal disruption. The number of siblings (i.e., *structure*) available for outdoor play mitigated the impact of relocation on access to sufficient playmates.

Although other literature bemoaned electronics as contributing to children's decline in outdoor play (e.g., Frost, 2010; Wen, Kite, Merom, & Rissel, 2009), my data suggested electronics use did not contribute in any significant way to children's time spent in outdoor play but only because these parents established parameters for their use. More than three-quarters of the mothers in Clements (2004) study believed that electronics was the number one reason for the decline in their children's outdoor play (i.e., *beliefs and values*). In Rideout and colleagues' (2005) study of children's media use children reported their parents did not set limits (i.e., *structure*) on their electronics use. A large percentage of children in that study had personal media (e.g., television in bedroom or hand held gaming device; i.e., *interpersonal involvement*), which was not the case for children in my study. Although parents may have attempted to project a positive image of their parenting and their children's free-time activities, parents in almost every household of parents placed limits on their children's electronics use (i.e., *structure*). Parents sent their children outdoors to play when parents felt children had spent too much time playing games or watching television (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*). Clements' suggestion that children were choosing electronics over playing outdoors ignored parents' role in setting parameters for their children's free-time activities as demonstrated in other studies (e.g., Hutchinson et al., 2003).

*Interpersonal involvement* as an indirect form of parental socialization included the provision of resources for free-time activities other than outdoor play. Outdoor play was indirectly affected by these parenting practices. Parental socialization directed at the children's electronics use as an alternative free-time activity was associated with increases (e.g., send child out to play following sedentary activity) and decreases (i.e., in the event a child choose electronics over outdoor play) in the frequency and duration of their children's outdoor play. No evidence indicated that the children's *motivations* for outdoor play were thwarted because of using electronics although their STV was sometimes higher for electronics than outdoor play. EVT posits that children choose to participate in activities for which they have a higher STV (Eccles, 1983). Despite many parents expressing a *love-hate* relationship with electronics (i.e., *beliefs and values*), children in most households had routine access within limits to television and electronic gaming systems (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*). Children were perceived to be safe indoors (e.g., Valentine, 2004; i.e., *beliefs and values*), yet were considered by parents to be sedentary and non-social when using electronics (e.g., Clements, 2004; i.e., *beliefs and values*). Parents were more tolerant of their children's use of electronics on days that the weather was not *nice* (i.e., *beliefs and values*).

Organized activities were another alternative to outdoor play for which parents provided resources (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*). Like electronic gaming, children's participation organized activities precluded opportunities for them to play outdoors. Unlike electronics usage, parental socialization appeared to be very one-sided in that the children's participation was always encouraged (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) and sometimes expected by their parents (i.e., *structure*).

Social environments for outdoor play were associated with children's organized activity participation. The only study of children's organized activity participation as contributing to decreased outdoor play did not address my finding of the impact on children's friendships (Skår & Krogh, 2009). Participation in organized activities (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) affected children's ability to meet their relatedness needs in outdoor play (i.e., *motivations*). Often it was difficult for children to find opportunities to play with neighborhood children because of conflicting organized activity schedules (i.e., *structure*). Conversely, friends made during participation in organized programs rarely lived in the same neighborhoods (i.e., *structure*), requiring the arrangement of play dates (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*). Although children's independent mobility had been examined as impacting children's peer relationships (e.g., Prezza et al., 2001), no literature was uncovered that examined the influence of organized activity participation on friendships. Although I could find no literature addressing the topic, it seemed unlikely that children's community friendships and organized activity friendships would not qualitatively differ. Children in my study generally spoke more about their community friends when discussing outdoor play.

### ***Patterns of socialization and playing outdoors.***

This section addressed patterns of parental socialization that appeared to either sustain or enhance children's *motivations* for outdoor play or thwart them as evidenced by differences in perceptions of noticeable differences between *motivations* children demonstrated for playing outdoors. *Role modeling* in households where at least one child demonstrated higher *motivations* for outdoor play than their siblings or peers, included parents' demonstrations of enjoyment in spending time outdoors for their own recreation and

leisure. These parents perceived they spent more time outdoors than did other parents in their communities (i.e., *beliefs and values*). Parents in these households often played with their children outdoors for the pleasure of spending time together (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) and shared enjoyment of the activity itself (i.e., *motivations*). These family play experiences provided opportunities for parents to express positive competency beliefs, encouragement, and interest in their children's outdoor play (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*). Parents observed their children and assessed their competencies in consideration of relaxing rules, particularly home range expansions (i.e., *structure*). Spending time together as a family in shared activities (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) contributed to the fulfillment of both parents' and children's relatedness needs (i.e., *motivations*) whether playing in the yard or during other family leisure.

Parental socialization may have a negative relationship with children's *motivations* for playing outdoors. Not all parents *role modeled* enjoyment of spending time outdoors. In households where one or more of the children were noticeably perceived to have lower *motivations* for outdoor play, at least one parent routinely demonstrated negative affective reactions to spending time outdoors (e.g., fear of insects). These parents avoided spending time outdoors at home for their own recreation or leisure (i.e., *role modeling*). The most commonly mentioned deterrents to parents spending time outdoors were discomfort with temperatures that were not *ideal* and disgust or fear of insects (i.e., *beliefs and values*). Children in many of these households demonstrated successful socialization in that they too had come to exhibit negative affective reactions to spending time outdoors to such a degree that it reduced their *motivations* for playing outdoors. No literature was found that addressed

parents' *role modeling* of fear, disgust, or discomfort negatively affected children's outdoor play.

Identifying the role of *beliefs and values* in differentiating between households where children noticeably played outdoors more or less than siblings and peers proved more elusive. Exceptions were found for every pattern. Not all parents demonstrating attainment values for outdoor play in wild nature environments (i.e., *beliefs and values*) facilitated more frequent opportunities for their children's play in wild nature (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) than parents who demonstrated no attainment values for wild nature. Having parents who demonstrated valuing organized activity participation over outdoor play (i.e., *beliefs and values*) did not generally equate to children participating in outdoor play (i.e., *motivations*) less than did other children. No literature was found that compared parents' valuing of these free-time activities or their effect on children's participation in organized activities or outdoor play.

*Structure* was more difficult to identify as contributing to patterns of children's low or high outdoor play *motivations*. Parents' expectations for children's alternative free-time activities (i.e., *structure*) emanated from their *beliefs and values*. Without having collected frequency data (e.g., time diaries), no evidence demonstrated that children in those families where parents expected or required their children to participate in organized activities (i.e., *structure*) actually played outdoors substantially less than did other children (i.e., *motivations*). There was insufficient evidence that even children owning personal gaming devices, played substantially less outdoors than siblings or same-aged peers (i.e., *motivations*).

Finally, *interpersonal involvement* was the most difficult to discern any patterns at all between children who noticeably played outdoors more or less than did other children. Although it was apparent that parents' provision of alternative free-time resources (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) was related to the frequency and duration of all children's outdoor play by competing with it, insufficient evidence was available to propose that either contributed to children playing outdoors substantially more or less than other children (i.e., *motivations*).

***Other pertinent topics.***

Three topics appeared most important in understanding of outdoor play and the role of parents: (a) parents expressed a personal form of IM and STV that contributed to their direct involvement with their children's outdoor play without demonstrating any concomitant consideration for the possible consequences, (b) children perceived more challenge or adventure in electronic games and organized activities than in their outdoor play, and (c) parents' values associated with organized activity participation were more salient than values for outdoor play.

The first topic related to parents expression of a form of IM and STV not anticipated that contributed to their direct involvement with their children (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*). Although I anticipated finding parents' perceptions of their children's *motivations* for outdoor play (e.g., interest) and parents' motivations for fulfilling their parental roles (e.g., utility values) was consistent with the literature (e.g., Hutchinson et al., 2003), a third form of parents' IM and STV emerged from the data. Parents' personal IM and STV (e.g., enjoyment of experiencing an activity or environment) were related to the

opportunities they provided for their children (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*). Environments or activities not enjoyed by the parents were less often shared with their children.

Conversely, half of the parents in my study demonstrated attainment values related to having played in wild nature themselves as children that led to their providing similar experiences for their children (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*). Parents played with their children outdoors because they enjoyed relating to their children (Deci & Ryan, 1985; i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) and enjoyed the activities they played together (e.g., basketball). Most parents believed that playing with their children was *good for* their children because parents and their children demonstrated enjoyment of these shared experiences. Parents wanted to foster shared memories of playing together outdoors (i.e., *beliefs and values*). I found no literature related to parents' involvement in their children's play resulting from beliefs it benefited their children. However, parents in Shaw and Dawson's (2001) study used family leisure for strengthening bonds consistent with meeting relatedness needs (Deci & Ryan).

No evidence demonstrated that parents or children perceived any potential for negative impacts of parents' direct participation in their children's outdoor play (i.e., *beliefs and values*). However, not one child was reported to play with peers when playing with a parent. Acknowledging a lack of available or suitable playmates, some parents tried to *fill in* as a substitute playmate (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*). Power dynamics did not appear to be salient to any family members although evidence showed that parents often chose or delimited the activities in which they would participate with their children (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*). Parents and children often described the parents intervening and sometimes

redirecting the children's play as the result of a parents' observation of outdoor play (i.e., *structure*). Although it was not specified whether these parenting practices took place during teaching activities (i.e., *interpersonal involvement* consistent with direct socialization) or playing with the children (i.e., *interpersonal involvement* consistent with indirect socialization), parents would be expected to enforce their own rules or expectations under either circumstance (i.e., *structure*).

Parental involvement in outdoor play reduced children's autonomy in choosing specific outdoor play activities (Deci & Ryan, 1985; i.e., *motivations*). Children perceived that their fathers initiated playing or practicing sports together more than the children did. However, fathers perceived that their children, typically sons, initiated playing sports with their fathers either equally as often as or more so than the father did. Parents participated in only specific types of outdoor play such as sport or riding bicycles but never dramatic play (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*). Parents' involvement in outdoor play dictated the range of possible outdoor play activity choices even were the children permitted to choose what the parent played with them. Ginsberg (2007) stated that children acquiesce to adults in play situations thereby losing opportunities for decision making, moving at the child's own pace, discovering own innate interests, and fully engaging in activities that are IM for the child (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Parent involvement could interfere with children's development of *friendship with place* (Chatterjee, 2005) as children and adults perceive and use environmental spaces differently (e.g., Rasmussen, 2004). Lester and Maudsley (2006) called on all adults to provide opportunities for children's "unadulterated" (p. 75) play in nature (i.e., child-initiated and child-directed).

Although any outdoor play experience need not meet all three of a child's psychological needs, SDT posited that to be IM it must address at least one or the child would not choose it (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Children's needs for relatedness with their parents could be met during positive experiences of family leisure and play (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*). Attainment values pertaining to children's outdoor play could be reinforced through parents' verbal expressions and gestures during family leisure (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) including sharing positive competency perceptions (i.e., *beliefs and values*). A program in Italy was designed to reduce urban children's presumed isolation due to a lack of independent mobility and therefore capacity to meet up with and play with friends (Prezza et al., 2001). The premise behind this program was that children's social development was stunted because children could not initiate, organize, and participate in group games where rules are often made up and modified by the children who play them.

The only literature I located that addressed the potential for differences between parent-child interactions and peer-child interactions was related to attachment versus friendship. Hinde (1976) posited eight dimensions that characterized relationships, highlighting qualitative differences between attachment and friendship. In an attachment relationship, a child seeks security that the attachment figure (i.e., the parent) provides. Alternatively, friendships have many dimensions that vary with the age and development of the child. Friendships are reciprocal in nature whereas attachment is a complementary relationship (Hinde). The roles of attachment figures and playmates are distinct (Bowlby, 1982). Hartrup (1991) posited that friendships provide emotional resources, cognitive resources, and social resources that differ from those provided in attachment relationships.

Despite parents well-meaning intentions, the equality and mutuality inherent in peer friendships cannot be replicated or replaced by parent-child interactions even in outdoor play.

A second pertinent finding that emerged from my study was that children beyond the age of 8 years, typically perceived experiencing little or no challenge or adventure in their routine outdoor play experiences at home. SDT posited that children had an innate interest in engaging and mastering their worlds (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The literature demonstrated that the limited home ranges or lack of independent mobility (e.g., Prezza et al., 2005; i.e., *structure*) and lack of affordances found in manicured middle-class subdivision yards (e.g., Kytta, 2004; i.e., *structure*) undermined children's opportunities to fulfill competency and autonomy needs in their routine outdoor play (i.e., *motivations*).

Just as organized activity participation (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) afforded these children opportunities for participation in group activities they were unable to do at home due to a lack of access to peers (e.g., sports), organized activities provided the children with opportunities for challenge unmet in their outdoor play (i.e., *motivations*). Challenge depicted in outdoor play at home generally involved sports. Thus, children were sometimes better able to fulfill their competency needs (i.e., *motivations*) through their participation in youth sports, typically meeting multiple times per week, rather than playing outdoors at home.

Many children beyond the age of 8- or 9-years of age expressed feeling a sense of adventure (i.e., *motivations*) in their free time only when they played video games (e.g., strategic war themes). The only children in my study to feel adventure in their routine outdoor play at home on a regular basis were those in a family that had relocated to the

country on property that was partially wooded (i.e., *structure*). Most children associated feelings of adventure in outdoor play only with those infrequent occasions they played in wild nature environments (e.g., local nature center visits; i.e., *interpersonal involvement*). Although not a component of daily play, children were able to invoke a sense of challenge or adventure in their outdoor play through the unintended use of toys or play equipment (i.e., *motivations*). The children were generally prohibited from initiating and engaging in these forms of play (i.e., *structure*). Children's attempts to add novelty, challenge, and adventure to their play rarely occurred when parents were present (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*).

Although much of the literature alluded to children's loss of adventure in outdoor play due to decreased interactions with nature (e.g., Louv, 2008), the allure of electronics (e.g., Clements), or parents' interference (e.g., Lester & Maudsley, 2006), I found no research related to children's *motivations* and choice to participate in alternative free-time activities rather than outdoor play. Further, children's voice or perspective had not been included these areas of research.

A topic that emerged was that parents' perceived values (e.g., short- or long-term benefits) for their children's organized activity participation was more salient than for outdoor play. Creativity was a utility value many parents perceived to be afforded by children's outdoor play but there was no evidence they had communicated it to their children, consistent with indirect socialization. Parents believed spending time outdoors as children contributed to their enjoyment of spending time outdoors as adults although they may now be participating in different activities (e.g., read on the patio). These findings were consistent with the adult outcomes of childhood experiences in nature literature. Frequency and types of

adult participation in outdoor recreation were related to positive environmental attitudes and beliefs (Bjerke et al., 2006; Tarrant & Green, 1999). Further, most recreational interests and preferences were found to be formed in childhood (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Kelly, 1999).

Parents' did not discuss the financial costs for providing their children toys and equipment for playing outdoors nor for their enrollment in organized activities. Although parents did not discuss their perceived values in terms of their investment in their children's outdoor toys and equipment, several parents discussed their perceptions of value associated with their children's participation in organized activities, particularly those offered through local parks and recreation programs. Parents expressed their beliefs that the financial costs for these organized activities were reasonable for the experiences they afforded their children.

When directly asked, most parents stated that they valued all of their children's free time activities, with the exception of excessive electronics usage, equally. However, parents' responses to other lines of questioning, often demonstrated a higher STV (i.e., perceived benefits outweighed perceived costs to their child) for organized activity participation than playing outdoors. Utility values for organized activities, particularly youth sports or educational programs, were more salient to parents than for outdoor play even when questioning was reframed to ask what parents had derived from their own outdoor play experiences as children. Unlike Dunn and colleagues (2003), parents in my study valued children's identification of interests and spoke nothing of achieving independence or autonomy through participation in organized activities. None of the parents in my study expressed a futuristic orientation (Grolnick, 2009) as found in in other research (e.g., Dunn et

al.). Nor did parents refer to their children's participation in organized activities as an investment as found by Hutchinson and colleagues (2003).

Parents often discussed their valuing of their children's organized activity participation in financial terms, such that they perceived their children derived much from these experiences that exceeded any monetary costs for registration or transportation. Similar comments related to expenditures for outdoor play were rare, as were expressions of valuing outdoor play activities in which no monetary costs were incurred (e.g., running in the yard). Parents spend money on those activities and experiences they valued for their children (Hofferth, 2009). Some mothers in a study by Shannon and Shaw (2008) expressed that they hoped their children would perceive that their parents valued activities based on the time and money the parents invested in them. As in the study by Hutchinson and colleagues (2003), parents in my study did not pay for activities they did not value. This begs the question, *Does paying for a child's free-time experience add perceived value over alternatives that are free, like outdoor play?*

Green and Chalip (1998) demonstrated that parents' decisions related to their children's participation in youth sports was based on the parents' beliefs about the benefits their children would derive. They found parents researched all program options to determine which was *best* for their child. Parents valued organized activities because they were led by adults. In agreement with other studies, I found parents' concerns were not just about the quality of the coaches for teaching their children skills they perceived themselves not able to teach their children themselves (Hutchinson et al., 2003; Shannon & Shaw, 2008) but for

teaching or reinforcing values held by the parents when the parents were unable to be present (Dunn et al., 2003).

Parents typically valued organized activities as a means to assist their children in identifying interests, developing self-confidence, for learning to work as a member of a team—including leadership, or for the acquisition of cognitive knowledge. Not a single parent expressed teamwork as a utility value of outdoor play, although some parents did discuss the development of social skills such as the negotiation of rules. This suggested that perhaps parents perceived teamwork as not being intrinsically motivated but as a set of skills and values developed under the guidance of an adult (i.e., rather than kids being able to just *figure it out*). When asked if those valued aspects of organized activity participation were achievable in outdoor play, many parents were able to make some connections with the exception of teamwork. Other studies have demonstrated parents' enrollment and support for organized activities due to perceived benefits related to physical activity, self-esteem, teamwork, and leadership (Dunn et al., 2003) or the identification of interests (Shannon & Shaw, 2008). Parents' inability to conceive that children could learn teamwork in their outdoor play was consistent with most of the children in the study not having access to a sufficient number of neighborhood playmates to facilitate playing group games or sports.

Although parents believed they complimented their children equally on their performance in organized activities and outdoor play, the children mostly recalled their parents complimenting them more on their organized activity performance. In the case of youth sports practiced at home, these compliments overlapped. However, when children elaborated on their parents' compliments they described events that had taken place during

their youth sport participation. This evidence suggested that perhaps parents' competency perceptions for organized activity participation were more salient to the children than were those related to outdoor. Differential expressions of competency perceptions shared with children across domains could be one way that parents' valuing of organized activities over outdoor play was socialized as found in age changes discussed under Theoretical Proposition 4.

Parents still encouraged and facilitated their children's outdoor play despite not being able to articulate many values and beliefs of benefits their children derived from it beyond enjoyment. This finding was consistent with parents' valuing of physical activity not being significantly related to the parents' efforts to facilitate opportunities for being active in a study by Brustad (2003). My findings contradicted Clements (2004) where mothers responded to a survey by indicating their agreement or disagreement with a set of pre-determined benefits children could potentially derive from outdoor play. Mothers in that study were cued by the items in the survey rather than drawing from memory unprompted. Therefore, I concluded that benefits for outdoor play were much less salient to parents than claimed by Clements.

### **Theoretical proposition 3.**

This section addresses Theoretical Proposition 3, "Parents socialize their children's outdoor play differently based on the *gender* of their children," that underlies the second research question, "How do parents differ in the socialization of their children's outdoor play?" Gender differences were found between mothers and fathers that are included in these findings. Presentation of this section focuses on highlighting gender differences that emerged

in the data rather than defining specific socialization constructs (see Theoretical Proposition 1 & 2).

***Manifestation of constructs and aspects of outdoor play.***

This chapter is not organized by constructs but rather by topic: (a) differences in mothers' and fathers' involvement, (b) mothers role model fear and discomfort more than fathers, (c) girls play like boys, (d) mothers showed greater knowledge and interest of children's free-time activities including outdoor play, and (e) denial of parent influence in observed gender differences of children's free-time activities including outdoor play.

The outdoor play of sons and daughters was consistent with the participation of mothers (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*). Boys and girls both played activities with their friends that they played with their mothers. Conversely, fathers' participation was more consistent with the independent play of their sons than that of their daughters. The example of sports is presented in the next section is an example of this pattern. Mothers' and fathers' involvement influenced their sons and daughters equally when it came to physical outdoor play environments. Mothers introduced and scaffolded their children's outdoor play in both wild and domesticated nature settings more so than fathers. However, fathers were more likely to spend time outdoors and play with their children in the snow.

Mothers role modeled negative affective responses to spending time outdoors than fathers (e.g., fear or discomfort). Particularly at younger ages, no gender differences existed in the successful socialization of children to internalize their mothers' fears. Mothers' fears of child abduction often exceeded that of their husbands, resulting in greater home range restrictions than those enforced by fathers.

Girls were often described by themselves or their parents as *playing like the boys* outdoors at home. Parents expressed pride when describing their daughters' *tomboyish* interests or behaviors. Alternatively, parents either had or suggested they would have had concerns if their sons chose not to pursue youth sports, which typically overlapped with the boys' outdoor play. In families where daughters were the first born, there was often evidence that particular sporting equipment such as footballs or basketball hoops were not purchased until their younger brothers had achieved an age and developmental level affording them the ability to participate. Similarly, there was no evidence that construction toys had been purchased for any of the girls in the study.

Mothers typically demonstrated a greater knowledge of and interest in their children's outdoor play activities than fathers. Although this finding at first appeared to have been an artifact of an unintended sampling bias with stay-at-home mothers, in some families, fathers were evidenced to have made an effort to be equally knowledgeable and encourage their children's outdoor play.

Though all parents believed that boys and girls generally played differently outdoors, they attributed gender differences between their own sons' and daughters' play to age or personality differences. Daughters were more likely to agree with their parents' portrayal than sons, who often attributed the differences to their sisters' playing *girly* make-believe games or not being interested in sports. Only a few fathers and none of the mothers admitted to interacting differently with their sons and daughters during family leisure playing outdoors at home. All children in the study perceived that their mothers and fathers treated them and their siblings equally irrespective of gender. Mothers and fathers expressed more gendered

beliefs in families with either all sons or all daughters (e.g., boys were stronger or girls were more mature). Shaw and Dawson (2001) found that parents did not talk about gender differences in their discourse on family leisure. I found that only those parents of all boys or all girls spontaneously shared gender beliefs without my prompting as a line of questioning in the study. I found no literature related to parents' and children's denial of parental socialization influences related to gender and children's free-time activities.

***Patterns of socialization and playing outdoors.***

Differences between the outdoor play of sons and daughters in playing sports was the only topic addressed in this section. *Role modeling* and *interpersonal involvement* differences between mothers and fathers contributed to boys playing sports during their outdoor play more than did the girls. Daughters were more likely to play sports during family leisure if their mothers participated (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*). Coinciding with this finding was another related to mothers' emphasis on *fun* in playing or practicing sports, contrasted with fathers' emphasis on *performance* and *competition*.

Whereas a son's *motivations* for playing sports outdoors at home appeared to be sustained or enhanced by his father's participation (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*), the same could not be said for daughters. Many of these boys related their outdoor play competencies to their performance in youth sports. Several fathers stated they had *given up* on inviting their daughters to play sports whereas they continued to do so with their sons. Mothers were generally portrayed by themselves, their spouses, or their sons as less knowledgeable or competent at the sport than either the fathers or the boys' youth sport coaches (i.e., *role modeling*). Therefore, seeing their mothers portrayed as incompetent at sport, may contribute

to the development of competency perceptions that they too, as females, were incompetent at sport. I could not rule this out as contributing to the daughters' lack of continued interest and participation in playing sports with her family or friends as evidenced in my study. Bois and colleagues (2005) found that fathers' perceptions of their children's competency had a direct effect on the physical activity of children whereas children's own competency perceptions were mediated by those of their mother. Finally, fathers and sons bonded over their shared sports participation whereas there was no concomitant activity where mothers and daughters generally bonded in outdoor play.

***Other pertinent topics.***

In analyzing the data for Theoretical Proposition 3, two topics emerged: (a) gender differences consistent with socialization literature but without evidence of parent's role and (b) absence of gender differences in children's outdoor play. First, some gender differences theoretically fit with socialization influences but no evidence supported involvement of the parents. Boys more than girls increased their interest in playing outdoors by introducing novelty, challenge, or adventure into their outdoor play, which was often accomplished in recreating dramatic roles of warriors from their electronic games or using toys in an unconventional way. Conversely, girls routinely played house or veterinarian unassociated with electronic games. The girls were more likely to enact in dramatic play characters from books. Girls generally did not use toys unconventionally. Boys used forts as shelter for their war games, whereas they served as homes for girl's dramatic play. Girls' contribution to forts was often to decorate them in some way. Girls only played war with their brothers and boys

only played house with their sisters. Playmates beyond siblings were usually the same gender as the child, unless they were friends of a sibling and the children were all playing together.

A second topic was that although gender differences were evident in these families, equally notable was where they did not occur. Perhaps resulting from a sampling bias with most families having been recruited through a local nature center and zoo, and with mothers as the primary decision makers regarding their children's organized activities, no gender differences were evident between boys and girls being signed up for participation in programs that incorporated opportunities to play in wild nature. Unlike gendered differences in the toys provided to sons and daughters, all children in my study were afforded the same opportunities to play in a variety of domesticated and wild nature outdoor play environments.

I found no evidence that parents took sons to parks more than they did their daughters. Taking organized activities into consideration, Loukaitou-Sideris and Sideris (2010) found that boys used the park more than did girls, not only in frequency but also in space. Karsten (2003) found that girls played on playground equipment more than did boys. None of the children in my study reported playing on sport fields at parks, suggesting that boys did not seem to consider that time to be outdoor play. All evidence suggested that the reason parents in my study took their children to parks was for the explicit purpose of using the playground equipment. The only gender difference I found related to park visitation was that mothers more than fathers took their children to play at the park. My findings were consistent with other research that demonstrated fathers were more involved in playing with their children at home (Beets et al., 2007).

No gender differences were found in the rules or expectations parents had for their children's outdoor play, including home range consistent with the findings of Valentine (2004) and contradictory to those of Hillman and Adams (1992). Other research had shown that boys and girls were socialized differently about stranger and traffic risks (Carver, Timperio, & Crawford, 2012), but I found no apparent differences.

Most outdoor play activities with the exceptions of construction play, sport play, or dramatic play beyond the age of 9 years were unrelated to a child's gender. However, parents often introduced gender into the activity by purchasing gendered colored items such as pink bikes or soccer balls. Yuen and Shaw (2003) proposed that gender colored toys accentuated gender differences. Parents' intention did not appear to be related to perceived differences in the experience of boys and girls in playing any activities. Blue appeared to have been a common color in seemingly gender-free equipment such as trampolines or play sets, no concomitant colors typically associated with girls such as pastels, pinks or purples were observed. This finding was reminiscent of parents' and children's comments about girls learning to play like boys. Although girls' bicycles, scooters, and hula hoops were sometimes sky blue, outdoor equipment was generally of primary colors of green, red, or even navy blue.

As a closing comment on this proposition, I would like to add that I found a dearth in the literature related to parental socialization, gender, and children's play and leisure. Much of the psychology literature I reviewed addressed gender socialization and play with infants and toddlers. Research with gender and leisure had focused primarily on adults at the time of

my study. Therefore, it was difficult to embed these findings within the existing, or seemingly non-existent literature.

#### **Theoretical proposition 4.**

This section addresses Theoretical Proposition 4, “Parents socialize their children’s outdoor play differently based on the *age* of their children,” that underlies the second research question, “How do parents differ in the socialization of their children’s outdoor play?” Presentation of this section focused on highlighting age differences that emerged in the data rather than defining specific socialization constructs (see Theoretical Proposition 1 & 2).

#### ***Manifestation of constructs and aspects of outdoor play.***

This section discusses age changes found in the analyses of Theoretical Proposition 4 in the associations of constructs to aspects of outdoor play. These differences are organized by constructs and addressed in the following order: (a) role modeling, (b) beliefs and values, (c) structure, and (d) interpersonal involvement. First, parents’ *role modeling* differed with children’s age only in that visits to wild nature areas increased as children’s development afforded the child’s independent participation. Often parents spoke of the difficulties inherent in trying to hike with toddlers or infants who needed to be carried for long distances. The only *beliefs or values* associated with children’s age were related to parents feeling they could trust their older children after a demonstrated history of following parents’ rules and expectations. Parents’ evaluation of trustworthiness had been shown in other studies to guide parents’ decisions on rule changes (Hutchinson et al., 2003).

*Structure* was the construct that evolved the most as children aged. Home ranges were expanded with age to varying degrees in all families. Unlike other research on home range, I found that children's home range expansion even at 12-years-of-age typically did not permit crossing intersections (e.g., Hillman & Adams, 1992; Skår & Krogh, 2009). Expansions of home ranges or relaxation of other rules were made in accordance with parents' perceptions of the child's demonstrated competencies and trustworthiness as found in other studies (e.g., Hutchinson, 2003). For example, demonstrating knowledge and sound judgment related to potential environmental or social hazards. Younger children's home ranges and other outdoor play permissions were expedited by the presence of an elder sibling who served as a role model, somewhat replacing the parents by assisting with monitoring. Valentine (2004) suggested that unlike past generations, elder siblings were no longer trusted by parents to supervise younger siblings in outdoor play. However, I found that parents relied on elder siblings, although only within the confines of the family's yard or adjacent playmates' homes. Although older children often drew attention to age-distinct permissions their younger siblings were denied, which suggested some level of pride or prestige, evidence did not show that older children were disgruntled by their younger siblings' outdoor play permissions having been expedited.

Home range restrictions for older children appeared to contribute to children's decreased interest in playing outdoors because they were unable to meet their needs for autonomy and competence (e.g., Kytta, 2004) and relatedness with peers (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Prezza et al., 2001). As children age, socialization with peers takes on greater developmental importance (Frost, 2010). Family relocations impacted older children's

outdoor play more deeply than it did their younger siblings because of the loss of access to friends or favored activities. Younger children's home ranges were limited to their own yards and their playmates typically consisted of only their parents and siblings, which rendered disruptions to outdoor play minimal because of relocating. Similarly, having siblings to play with appeared to mitigate the lack of neighborhood playmates for all children when age differences were small and developmental levels closely approximated each other.

Storage of toy and non-toy resources was consistent with *structure* in SDT and especially affected younger children. Given the volume of toys most of these children had for playing outdoors, they were stored on shelves that exceeded younger children's grasp. As children aged and developed increased physical capabilities such as coordination, strength, and arm reach, they gained greater independence from their parents in initiating desired outdoor play activities. Parents indicated that they were more likely to permit non-toy use (e.g., shovels) by older children because they could understand the potential risks inherent in using them. I found no literature that addressed children's autonomous access to free-time resources including outdoor play.

Parents differentiated the manner in which they communicated rules with their children as they aged. The rules shifted from demands for obedience or compliance as toddlers to increasingly ensuring their children understood their reasoning for rules or expectations. Theoretically, these changes in *structure* were consistent with autonomy supportive environments that permit children to be successfully socialized (i.e., internalize) into their parents' *beliefs and values* (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Many older children had internalized rules to a greater extent than younger children in my study. These findings were

consistent with Shannon (2006) where 12<sup>th</sup> graders demonstrated successful socialization of their parents' values regarding *better* uses of free time. Although all children in my study had been socialized to accept that electronics was not a good use of their free time, beginning around age 10 years children demonstrated some evidence of identification with their parents' valuing of some free-time activities over others.

Whereas none of the children in my study had achieved an age where parents let them contribute to outdoor play decisions (e.g., negotiating home range restrictions), children were granted greater autonomy in family decision-making related to organized activity participation as soon as they were able to read program brochures and identify their own interests. These findings demonstrated parents' perceived cost (i.e., fear of child abduction) for permitting their children greater independent mobility in their neighborhoods was greater than any financial costs or inconvenience associated with organized activity participation where children were under the supervision of another adult. In all the literature I reviewed related to outdoor play and organized activities, I found nothing that addressed children's role in decision-making other than that mothers generally made purchase decisions for their children's organized activities (Green & Chalip, 1997).

*Interpersonal involvement* changed in the form of direct socialization through either teaching or playing with the children as they aged, parents' provision of resources, and encouragement of outdoor play. Encouragement and provision resource of alternative free-time activities represented indirect forms of socialization. Parent's introduction, scaffolding, and instruction pertaining to outdoor play changed as children aged. By the time children reached middle childhood, parents had already introduced and scaffolded their children's

experiences related to various outdoor play environments and activities. Parents began exposing their children to domesticated nature (e.g., backyard or parks) and weather from infancy. Children learned how to use playground equipment safely. Basic sport skills of throwing, catching, and kicking were practiced and mastered. Mothers' involvement with their children's outdoor play was greatest when children were toddlers. Although none of the literature addressed age changes in parental involvement in outdoor play, much of the nature play literature addressed the need for parents to facilitate their young children's experience to foster affective connections to nature (see reviews Lester & Maudsley, 2006; Louv, 2008; Muñoz, 2009).

As children reached middle childhood and had the physical development to participate in sports and the ability to focus their attention long enough to learn sport skills, fathers became increasingly involved in teaching and playing with their children outdoors. However, both mothers and fathers expressed relief that they could *step back* and observe their children's play without having to guard against the children's impulsivity leading them to do something that could cause them physical injury. Parents who did not enjoy spending time outdoors themselves often retreated indoors after their eldest child was considered to be a sufficient monitor of the child's own or possibly younger sibling's outdoor play.

Parents' provision of resources changed as children aged. Parents increased their purchases of age-appropriate outdoor play toys particularly during the early middle childhood years as children embarked on independent outdoor play. Wridt (2004) described this trend towards increased commercial toy purchases as the privatization of play. As children aged, some parents purchased novel toys in an effort to maintain their older child's

interest in playing outdoors. As older children mastered their outdoor play toys, they ceased to meet children's competency needs (i.e., boring). Although toys contributed to meeting children's needs for autonomy as they aged, they were less able to fulfill children's competency needs. Children's relatedness needs could not be met through toys.

Parents' encouragement and provision of resources for alternative free-time activities changed as children aged. As children aged, their parents increasingly supported their participation in a greater number of organized activities where children had the opportunity to play with peers. Parents purchased more electronics for their children as they aged, typically in the form of family or individual hand-held gaming units. Younger siblings acquired access to electronics or participation in organized programs at earlier ages than had their eldest brother or sister. Parents often associated these expenditures with not wanting to listen to their children complain that they were bored at home. As discussed under Theoretical Proposition 2, participation in organized activities and playing electronic games appeared to contribute to the fulfillment of children's needs for challenge and adventure after the age of 9 years in ways that playing in their landscaped yards could not.

***Patterns of socialization and playing outdoors.***

Differentiations were drawn between children who were perceived to noticeably demonstrate either higher or lower *motivations* than their siblings or peers for outdoor play. Although a general decline in children's interest in outdoor play as they aged was evidenced, consistent with the literature, there were differences in the patterns between socialization constructs and children's *motivations*. Findings are ordered in their presentation in this

section by their correspondence with socialization constructs: (a) role modeling, (b) beliefs and values, (c) structure, and (d) interpersonal involvement.

Consistent with *role modeling*, older children in families where at least one parent was perceived as enjoying and spending more time outdoors, children demonstrated higher *motivations* for playing outdoors than their same-aged peers in the study. However, I could not rule out the children's ability to meet relatedness needs with their parents (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) as an alternative explanation. Even when parents and children did not directly interact outdoors, having enjoyment of spending time in nature seemed to serve as a common bond between parents and children.

Many parents expressed *beliefs and values* that park playgrounds were for younger children and that their older children became less interested in this play environment as they aged. Correspondingly, parents took children to parks (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) with decreasing frequency as they aged. Older children spoke of physically outgrowing playground equipment. Loukaitou-Sideris and Sideris (2010) concluded that playgrounds offered children beyond the age of 9 years little in the way of challenge. The lack of challenge decreased children's motivations for playing at playgrounds consistent with parents' perceptions (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

The composition of the family was consistent with *structure*. Differences in ages and developmental levels between siblings were found in some families to be associated with evidence that eldest children's *motivations* for outdoor play were diminished more so than their same-age peers. Most often, this decline occurred when eldest children's home ranges and permissions to participate in developmentally appropriate outdoor play activities were

restricted to the level of the youngest sibling in the family. Parents expressed concerns that youngest siblings were at greater risk for incurring physical injuries if they attempted to copy the behaviors of their elder siblings. Therefore, elder siblings were often denied opportunities to pursue intrinsically motivating outdoor play activities or locations when younger siblings were present. Additionally, elder children sometimes were required to monitor their younger siblings' outdoor play behaviors by intervening or seeking parental involvement when necessary for the children's safety.

Parents' provision of resources for outdoor play was consistent with *interpersonal involvement*. In households where at least one child was perceived to demonstrate noticeably higher *motivations* for outdoor play, the manifestations of parental socialization constructs were theoretically consistent with sustaining or enhancing their children's interest in playing outdoors by providing resources resulting in numerous play options to choose from (i.e., autonomy) that were novel or challenging to the child (i.e., interest). Although children ages 7- to 9-years-of-age initiated outdoor play frequently, consistent with having high *motivations* for outdoor play, a hurdle in interest developed by age. Stating that older children were *harder to amuse* in playing outdoors, many parents purchased novel toys or expanded play sets when eldest children were approximately 10-years-of-age. However, parents reported these older children often had to be *nudged* or told to go outdoors to play. Older children stated that they continued to enjoy playing outdoors despite evidence that they were less self-motivated to go outdoors in the first place.

As a closing note on this section, again I found a dearth of literature related to age changes and parental socialization of children's free-time activities in any form with which to

compare my findings. Research on children's free-time activities has focused on adolescence. Although outdoor play has included children ranging from toddlers to adolescence, none examined age changes.

***Other pertinent topics.***

In analyzing the data for Theoretical Proposition 4, two topics emerged that I believed further an understanding of outdoor play and the role of parents: (a) as children aged their outdoor play increasingly narrowed and resembled the leisure behaviors of their parents, and (b) older boys did not believe that a child could be considered *good at* any outdoor play activity that were not a sport. Findings are presented in that order.

As children aged their play activities and environments (i.e., *motivations*) seemed to narrow to encompass only those in which their parents had participated with them (i.e., *interpersonal involvement*) or their parents pursued for their own personal recreation and leisure (i.e., *role modeling*). This narrowing included spending more time indoors as they aged. Adult recollections of childhood outdoor play indicated that children's outdoor play activities increased in number as children aged (Skår & Krogh, 2009). Evidence from my study would be consistent with an inverted "U" pattern across the childhood years, beginning in early childhood, peaking in early middle childhood, and waning as children approached adolescence as Pellegrini (2009) found with most forms of play.

A finding that emerged from my data were that older boys believed a child could not be *good at* (i.e., positive competency perception) an outdoor activity unless it was a sport. Evidence supported this was a socialized belief because girls and younger boys did not subscribe to it. As children aged they increased participation in organized activities (i.e.,

*interpersonal involvement, structure, and motivations*) as demonstrated in other studies (e.g., Dunn et al., 2003). Youth sports have been studied extensively within a framework of achievement motivation (e.g., Brustad, 1992; Eccles & Harold, 1991). Discussions with parents and children revealed that children often felt more pressure to perform in sport as well as being more cognizant of their performance being evaluated and compared to that of team mates. Although children made social comparisons related to their performance in outdoor play activities (e.g., how high could climb in a tree) there was no evidence that the children felt pressured to perform nor suffered any consequences to their self-esteem resulting from outdoor play. I uncovered no literature that addressed children feeling pressure in free-time activities other than youth sports with which to compare my findings.

**Theoretical proposition 5.**

This section addresses Theoretical Proposition 5, “Parents socialize their children’s outdoor play differently based on perceptions of environmental factors in their community,” that underlies the second research question, “How do parents differ in the socialization of their children’s outdoor play? Although the theoretical proposition itself was not revised throughout the course of the study, the definition of environmental factors was expanded to encompass not only traffic or stranger dangers as described in the literature (e.g., independent mobility) but cultural changes. Parents typically drew comparisons to their own childhood experiences which served to provide a frame of reference for their perceptions of environmental factors and parenting practices.

Presentation of this section focuses on highlighting differences that emerged in the data rather than defining specific socialization constructs (see Theoretical Proposition 1 & 2).

The heading, Patterns of Socialization and Playing Outdoors, was removed from this theoretical proposition as it did not seem to add to addressing this topic. There was no evidence to support drawing differences between children who were perceived to demonstrate noticeably higher or lower *motivations* for outdoor play that had not already been addressed under other theoretical propositions.

***Manifestation of constructs and aspects of outdoor play.***

This section addresses differences in parents' perceptions of environmental factors in their communities found in the analyses of Theoretical Proposition 5. Organization of this section is consistent with the constructs: (a) role modeling, (b) beliefs and values, (c) structure, and (d) interpersonal involvement.

*Role modeling* within this proposition was conceived to entail not the parents' *role modeling* to their children, already addressed under other propositions, but rather the influence of parents' recollections of observing their own parents during childhood. Parents' recollections of their own parents' practices related to outdoor play or alternative free-time activities influenced parenting practices at the time of the study as found in other studies (e.g., Shannon & Shaw, 2008). For example, parents tended to replicate parenting practices of their parents when those practices had not been perceived to be controlling.

*Role modeling* influenced parenting practices concerning *structure*. Parents believed they were emulating their own parents' behaviors when they sent their children outdoors to play because the children complained either they were bored indoors or parents wanted to put space between family members because they were *getting on each other's nerves*. Parents who grew up with home ranges more restrictive than that of their peers repeated the same

parenting practices and communicated the same fears as their own parents had done, when those home range restrictions were not perceived as controlling but necessary. Extrapolating this finding would suggest that the children in the study will likely perpetuate this cycle of fear by raising their own children with similar or increasingly restricted home ranges. In despite of having felt controlled or manipulated as a child, parents repeated those practices when they were perceived to be necessary for protecting their child.

*Role modeling* influenced parenting practices related to *interpersonal involvement*. Where parents felt denied as children, whether an outdoor play toy, environment, or alternative free-time activity, those parents appeared to rebuff their parents' practices and accommodated those opportunities for their children. Parents recalled their fathers playing sports outdoors with them as children and mothers and fathers expressed beliefs that playing sports with children was part of a father's parental role in providing a variety of experiences for the children.

Parents' perceptions of environmental factors were consistent with *beliefs and values*. Whether related to social or traffic dangers or cultural norms parents' perceptions were always rooted in comparisons with their own childhood experiences. *Structure* was influenced by parents' childhood recollections. Parents' perceptions indicated more awareness of the potential for social harm (e.g., child abduction or negative peer influences), having received insufficient parental guidance as children, increased traffic hazards due to larger population densities, and less of a sense of community than experienced as children. These perceptions contributed to the greatest difference between the childhood outdoor play of parents and that of their children (i.e., home range). Parents' perceptions of neighborhood

safety was related to where they grew up (i.e., rural, suburban, or urban), which was often related to differences in population density (i.e., larger populations equated to increased crime or more rural locations equated to a lack of assistance). Valentine (2004) found that parents who grew up in more populated areas and moved to the country considered themselves more *worldly wise* than rural parents. Those parents believed that rural parents let their children roam more freely because they did not understand and appreciate the threat that these *new comers* to rural life did. This notion of parents being worldly wise was consistent with my finding that parents maintained their children's home range restrictions after moving to less populated areas (e.g., rural towns or isolated).

Rural parents, having grown up with play dates due to their social isolation, disliked having large groups of children at their home, particularly indoors. This dislike contributed not only to the children playing outdoors at their homes but these parents projecting their need for privacy to other parents. This parental belief contributed to expectations that their children not enter the homes of friends, even those with whom parents were comfortable, without their parental permission.

Differences in *structure* between generations of parenting were evident. Unlike the children in the study whose mothers did not work outside the home, many of the parents I interviewed discussed being *latch-key kids*. Having less parental supervision after school, the parents believed they had more autonomy in their outdoor play in choosing to go outdoors, where to go, who to play with, and what to do. Although home range has been discussed repeatedly across theoretical propositions, not one parent shared any perception that having a more limited home range than they had as children could have potentially deleterious effects

for the children. Parents did not acknowledge that home range restrictions could have contributed to making outdoor play a less appealing free-time activity for children, particularly as they aged.

Encompassed within home range restrictions was a cultural change whereby parents in my study stressed not disturbing neighbors by respecting property rights (e.g., not trespassing). The children were only permitted to leave their yards to go to a specific destination, which was usually another friends' house. None were allowed to go to parks. This restriction negated the children's ability to play in those urban spaces where wild nature was most abundant such as vacant lots or hedgerows between housing developments (Pyle, 1993). Ironically, those places were where parents reported often playing as children, including having forts or tree houses. A final note on home ranges across generations was that gender had not been recalled as a factor in the establishment of home ranges for the parents as children, which could have contributed to apparently no gender differences in home ranges for their children. These findings are consistent with Valentine (2004) that parents were equally concerned for their sons' and daughters' safety. However, other studies reported gender differences in home ranges at a time some of these parents were children (e.g., Hillman & Adams 1992).

Parents' recollections of childhood influenced parenting practices related to *interpersonal involvement*. Parents were more likely to facilitate their children's outdoor play in environments and activities that the parents enjoyed themselves as children. This facilitation encompassed toy purchases, activities introduced and skills taught, and opportunities to play in both domesticated and wild nature. Parents who played in wild nature

perceived that environment to be safe for their children to play, whereas other parents expressed concern or fear regarding their children's attempts to play in or with nature. All parents wanted their children to feel as comfortable playing and spending time outdoors as they had as children. These findings were consistent with the literature that demonstrated familiarity breeds comfort in natural environments (e.g., Kals et al., 1999; Lohr et al., n.d.). A lack of access to natural environments may inhibit environmental preferences for such. Not visiting woodlands in childhood was found to be a stronger predictor of not participating in outdoor recreation of any form in woodlands as adults in a study by Ward Thompson and colleagues (2008).

Parents purchased toys for their children that they had enjoyed as children, especially until children were old enough to demonstrate their own special interests. In addition, parents purchased toys that were perceived to be novel (e.g., a Ripstik) or the new cultural norm. For example, many parents described spending much of their summers swimming and playing in backyard pools and visiting local parks to play on playground equipment. Their children had the inverse experience such that nearly all had a play set in their backyard at some point during their middle childhood years, but were transported to a park by their parents for swimming.

Recollections of childhood converged with perceived cultural norms in influencing parents' provision of participation in organized activities. Parents described their own parents as generally less willing to spend money or provide transportation for organized activities even when they were available. Parents who had participated, typically in a youth sport or scouting, facilitated their children's participation in organized activities for which the parent

recalled fondly. This pattern was evident for both outdoor play and organized activity participation, but not evident for the use of electronics. Parents recalled being bored as children but their parents were not compelled to resolve this condition, rather it was perceived to be part of the experience of childhood. In contrast, parents in my study registered their children for organized activities because they did not want to hear their children complain of boredom.

The roles of parents seemed to have changed generationally. Mothers' roles related to *interpersonal involvement* had changed in that the mothers in my study spent more time playing with their children, scheduling and providing transportation for organized activity participation, and *role modeling* or introducing their children to wild nature play. Fathers had taken on a new role in children's outdoor play unrelated to sport. Whereas fathers discussed designing and building forts with their friends as children, these same fathers now built from scratch, or assembled from a kit, large play sets that included a canvas covered *fort*. Only a few sons, and no daughters, provided minimal assistance to their fathers with most not having learned how to use tools independently.

Parents' recollections of their parents' lack of involvement were described as consistent with autonomy supportive environments that would be expected to enhance children's *motivations* for outdoor play. However, these same parents described the parents of children who roamed the neighborhood without supervision today as neglectful. Although some parents expressed feeling they did not receive sufficient guidance from their parents, or that their parents had not been as aware of potential dangers as these parents were today, it

seemed insufficient to explain the degree to which these parents were involved in their children's outdoor play.

***Other pertinent topics.***

In analyzing the data for Theoretical Proposition 5, two topics stood out as furthering an understanding of outdoor play across generations: (a) socialization by omission, and (b) generational changes in the activities and environments of outdoor play.

I concluded with Theoretical Proposition 5 more so than the others that *socialization by omission* was a form of parental socialization despite Grolnick and Slowiaczek's (1994) theorizing that children's perceptions of parenting practices (e.g., provision of resources) were required. This omission related to Kahn's (2002) concept of *intergenerational amnesia* such that children do not know anything different than what they had been exposed to—just as their parents made comparisons to their known experiences in childhood. Although Kahn related intergenerational amnesia to environmental perceptions, the concept may be equally applicable to other cultural changes including outdoor play.

All parents who grew up in towns, suburbs, or cities (i.e., *structure*) recalled being enticed to play outdoors (i.e., *motivations*) because that was where children played at that time. Parents contrasted their experiences to their own children indicating that they had been fortunate to have had an abundance of neighborhood playmates whereas their own children, unfortunately, did not. Although parents acknowledged the affordances of abundant playmates for playing group games and sports during their childhoods, few parents acknowledged their children's inability to experience these forms of play outside of school or organized program participation.

Parents often recalled observing and emulating the behaviors of older children in their neighborhoods. Fathers discussed testing boundary limits and getting into mischief in later middle-childhood, although these stories had never been shared with their children. Without older children as role models due to all children's home ranges being truncated (i.e., *structure*) and no cultural transmission by the parents via storytelling, some forms of outdoor play had disappeared especially related to risk-taking. Several fathers described forms of *daredevil play* (Beach, 2003) that they experienced as children. These forms of outdoor play had added novelty, challenge, and adventure to their play (i.e., *motivations*) and yet, the children I interviewed remained largely unaware due to their limited experiences.

Finally, if parents had insufficient knowledge or experience in an environment or with an activity, they generally did not socialize their children into those experiences. Either inexperience or lack of enjoyment with environments or activities (i.e., *beliefs and values*) often resulted in socialization by omission, such that the children would never have an opportunity to experience and decide for themselves whether they enjoyed them. Skår and Krogh (2009) referred to this likelihood as the cycle of fear whereby decreased direct experiences in nature precluded the development of familiarity and comfort in natural environments. I concluded that the cycle of fear affected not only direct experiences of nature but also children's direct experiences of their immediate surroundings (i.e., their neighborhoods).

The contribution of electronics to the presumed demise of outdoor play had received much attention (e.g., Clements, 2004; Mainella, Agate, & Clark, 2011; Rideout et al., 2005). Although electronics could be viewed as thwarting outdoor play by competing for children's

time and attention, my findings indicated that television and games played a role in both parents' childhood outdoor play and that of their children. Fathers, able to play pick-up sports because of an abundance of playmates, reported emulating professional athletes watched on television in their outdoor play. A father having grown up rural and isolated described pretending to be action movie characters in his dramatic play. As most children's electronics usage was limited, something discussed by only one parent as a childhood recollection, their outdoor play was not influenced by television viewing. Boys' dramatic outdoor play revolved around strategic military video games whereas their sister's dramatic outdoor play was derived from reading books.

Another form of autonomy that was lost to the children in the study was opportunities to problem solve in their outdoor play. Parents discussed problem solving in activities (e.g., designing and building forts), social situations (e.g., negotiate group game rules), and neighborhood navigation (e.g., avoiding *riff raff*). The only problem solving evident with their children occurred in rare opportunities to play in wild nature. Unlike their parents who had daily access to wild play environments, opportunities presented themselves just a few times per year for most of the children in my study and for some, not at all. Problem solving was a form of autonomy in SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985) that had been diminished in the outdoor play of children in my study

Although differences in the outdoor play experiences of parents and children could largely be explained by reductions in home ranges (i.e., *structure*), none of the parents discussed the potentially negative impacts that resulted including: (a) decreased access to playmates, (b) lack of mixed age and gender play in the absence of adult supervision, and (c)

opportunities for social comparisons with same-aged or older children in a non-threatening environment. Other researchers such as Veitch and colleagues (2010) found that children with access to larger numbers of playmates spent more time playing outdoors. Children in later middle childhood, ages 10 and 11 years, appreciated the affordances of playing outdoors as *neutral ground* for different groups to come together that were normally segregated by adults (e.g., age and gender; Thomas & Thomas, 2004).

Children's home ranges (i.e., *structure*) in Veitch and colleagues (2010) study varied with parents' perceptions of environmental dangers (i.e., *beliefs and values*). I found no differences between children's home ranges based on differing perceptions of neighborhood safety. All parents were equally concerned about the potential for child abduction despite expressing that they generally felt their neighborhoods were safe, which was consistent with Valentine (1997b; 2004). Similarly, parents in my study perceived that all public spaces posed a threat to children's safety (Harden, 2000; Valentine).

Parents in my study talked about the changes in neighborhoods (i.e., *beliefs and values*). Valentine (2004) proposed that the decline of community contributed to parents' perceptions of danger. Tranter and Pawson (2001) concluded that parents are caught in a social trap by the need to protect their children on the one hand and their contributing to the decline of community by retreating themselves and their children into their own yards and homes and driving their children across town to participate in organized activities. Parents' home range restrictions have been found to be consistent with avoidance strategies rather than defensive strategies such as scaffolding children's competencies for independently and safely navigating their neighborhoods (Carver et al., 2008). Avoidance strategies were

consistent with higher perceptions of danger but I found my parents only used defensive strategies related to their children's outdoor play in their backyards (e.g., monitoring). Many parents in my study wished that their children's outdoor play could be more like their own (i.e., *beliefs and values*) but they did not demonstrate making the effort to make their children more street wise and facilitate their independent mobility for spending time playing in their neighborhoods. Parents in Jenkins' (2006) study were more cognizant of the negative impacts of limited home ranges than were parents in my study demonstrated.

Reductions in home ranges for the children of the parents in my study were accompanied by: (a) increased outdoor play toy and equipment purchases, (b) increased play participation by parents, (c) increased organized activity participation, (d) increased electronics usage, and (e) time constraints. These changes were consistent with parent sentiments about not wanting to hear their children complain they were bored, which was a different approach from that of their own parents. Wridt (2004) conducted a study of generational changes in home range finding that over three generations outdoor play had moved first from streets to parks, and now from parks to yards with increased time spent indoors and in organized programs. My findings were consistent with Wridt.

Karsten (2005) concluded that parents were compensating their children for their loss of outdoor play. Parents wished their children could experience the childhood that they had, but could not because of parents' perceptions of environmental factors in their communities. This finding was consistent with parents in my study enrolling their children in programs at a local nature center that incorporated children's outdoor play in nature. Parents who grew up rural wanted their children to experience outdoor play in wild nature without experiencing

the social isolation of living rural similar consistent with what Matthews, Taylor, Sherwood, Tucker, and Limb (2000) found. Valentine (2004) referred to these trends as the privatization of children's outdoor play.

Children in my study routinely mentioned *time* in discussing their outdoor play with many wishing they had more. These children demonstrated the motivation to play outdoors but that their schedules did not permit doing so. As discussed throughout this chapter, parents as gatekeepers of children's experiences not only enrolled their children in organized activities but also in some families placed expectations on their children's participation in the quantity or type of organized program. Declines in children's outdoor play had been attributed by some scholars (e.g., Mainella et al., 2011) to children not choosing to play outdoors. I found that such claims ignored the role of parents as demonstrated in Theoretical Proposition 2. Parents in my study never expressed feeling rushed or limited in their time playing outdoors, quite the contrary, as found in other studies of generational changes in outdoor play (e.g., Beach, 2003). There was no evidence that any of the parents were expected to participate in organized activities as children. Over generations, children have lost some of their autonomy in choosing how to spend their free time including outdoor play. This change alongside home range restrictions limiting children to playing in manicured yards could explain why so few of the children in my study described having a special place (Ferrel Raymund, 1995; Sobel, 1993).

### **Major findings.**

The five major findings were: (1) integrating and adapting SDT and EVT in the theoretical framework was effective in identifying socialization constructs and relationships

with aspects of children's outdoor play; (2) socialization by omission emerged as contributing to differences in children's outdoor play today and changes from that of prior generations; (3) amotivation for outdoor play in older children was accompanied by a resignation to home range restrictions, internalization of parents' fears, and inability to fulfill psychological needs; (4) socialization of outdoor play perpetuated a cycle of fear; and (5) potentially detrimental effects for older children's psychological development (i.e., affective, cognitive, social, and personality) due to changes in routine outdoor play were identified that had not been addressed in the outdoor play literature.

Integrating and adapting SDT and EVT in my theoretical framework was effective in identifying socialization constructs and relationships with aspects of children's outdoor play. Adapting perceived costs, a component of STV in EVT, conceived as intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural constraints increased the usefulness of this construct. Findings were consistent with both theories and all constructs derived from SDT and EVT, although neither theory in isolation could explain all findings. For example, transportation by parents related to SDT was a form of interpersonal involvement (i.e., provision of resources) whereas within EVT, transportation could be viewed similarly but also as a constraint (i.e., perceived cost) to children's independent participation in outdoor play away from home. SDT did not address constraints or costs to participation in activities. Conversely, EVT did not explain the evidence pertaining to children's ability to fulfill their relatedness needs as posited by SDT.

I was able to associate constructs with aspects of children's outdoor play because of my inductive coding procedures. Prior research with SDT and EVT in academics, youth sports, and physical activity focused on participation, performance, or persistence in those

domains. Evidence of children meeting the three psychological needs posited by SDT (i.e., relatedness, competency, and autonomy) had not been addressed in any of the research I read despite SDT positing that children would choose to pursue activities in which they were able to fulfill at least one of these needs. My qualitative examination of outdoor play was embedded within the context of all the children's free time activities; therefore, I was able to ask children what they derived from playing outdoors, playing electronic games, or participating in organized activities and associate their responses with these psychological needs.

Socialization by omission emerged as contributing to differences in children's outdoor play today contrasted to prior generations. Grolnick (2003) proposed that children must be aware of parents' socialization efforts. Yet, I found that much of children's outdoor play socialization involved acts of omission in terms of which opportunities parents chose not to introduce or facilitate for their children. An example of gender socialization was fathers not inviting their daughters to play sports in the yard. Parents rarely shared stories of their childhood outdoor play, especially as it pertained to "dumb stuff" or daredevil play (Beach, 2003). Finally, home range restrictions set by parents prohibited traditional neighborhood play, which precluded children's ability to learn outdoor play activities not taught by their parents.

Amotivation for outdoor play in older children was accompanied by a resignation to home range restrictions, internalization of parents' fears, and inability to fulfill psychological needs. In children ages 9 years or older, decreases in self-initiation of outdoor play were more prevalent by age. Parents' described needing to "nudge" children outdoors to play.

Some older children's home ranges and activities were restricted to the developmental level of younger siblings because of parents' fears that younger children would be endangered by emulating older siblings' behaviors. Finally, children's psychological needs appeared to be unmet because they were unable to play with peers (i.e., relatedness), nor find optimally stimulating challenges in the confinement of their manicured lawns (i.e., competency or autonomy).

Socialization of outdoor play perpetuated a cycle of fear. This cycle resulted from children's internalization of parents' fears and tacit acceptance of resultant parenting practices. Although all parents believed they were more aware of potential social dangers, (e.g., particularly child abduction) than their parents, some parents discussed their own parents' fears and concomitant restrictions on their outdoor play that they now repeated with their own children. In response to societal changes in perceptions of social dangers to children, parents generally restricted the play of all children to their yards, encouraged or required participation in organized activities typically as a form of physical activity that parents derived in neighborhood play in their own youth, and tolerated use of electronic games in the home because they knew where their children were and that they were safe. Children were successfully socialized into believing playing at home was safe whereas playing in the neighborhood was dangerous. Lack of familiarity with their neighbors and the neighborhood landscape also contributed to the perpetuation of children's and parents' fears.

Potentially detrimental effects for older children's psychological development (i.e., affective, cognitive, social, and personality) due to changes in routine outdoor play at home had not been addressed in the outdoor play literature. Older children were often unable to

meet relatedness needs with peers or independently engage the world beyond the confines of their yards to develop a sense of competence or autonomy. These needs are theorized to be important to children's healthy development in SDT. In past generations, children, including their parents, routinely met their relatedness needs playing with other children in the neighborhood. Today home range restrictions and organized activity commitments hampered children's ability to play with neighborhood children. Parents also described feeling challenge and adventure in their outdoor play as children, particularly related to their self-initiated, self-directed, play that often led to exploration and nature play. Children appeared to experience these feelings more often in their electronic games and organized activity participation. Exploration play was posited by SDT to be intrinsically motivating because it fulfilled children's needs for autonomy and competency.

Children were afforded few opportunities to problem solve in their everyday experiences of outdoor play. Problem solving is a form of cognitive development theorized in SDT to relate to a person's psychological need for autonomy. For example, although fort building had been theorized to be a developmentally beneficial form of play (Sobel, 2002) that many of the fathers participated in as children, today the fathers built play sets or forts with little to no input or assistance from their children. Children only mentioned problem solving in relation to their play in nature, which unlike the experiences of their parents were more structured, supervised, and of limited duration. Another potentially detrimental effect on children's psychological development related to outdoor play was the socialization of affective responses to play environments and activities by their parents. Affect was an element of psychological development not addressed by SDT or EVT. Some children had

been successfully socialized into their parents' fear or disgust with insects, dirt and mud, or discomfort with temperatures.

The back-to-nature movement has brought attention to and spurred research related to children's nature play and the potential benefits children derive from direct experiences in nature. However, children's opportunities for nature play were isolated, sporadic experiences. I did uncover no research that addressed how children's routine forms of play today in the confines of their manicured lawns under the close supervision of adults, may affect the children's healthy psychological development in any form (e.g., cognitive, social, affective, personality).

Along a similar vein as the back-to-nature movement, societal concerns about childhood obesity have spurred research and brought attention to decreases in children's level of physical activity. My concern is that obesity is more easily observed and easier to identify and address than children's psychological health and wellbeing. The potential detrimental effects of children's unfulfilled psychological needs as posited in SDT or other forms of unhealthy psychological development (e.g., unrealistic fears or learned helplessness) may not be evident for many years. A third socially relevant topic, pertinent to my study was *hovering* or *helicopter* parents. However, I found no literature that related this concept to children's outdoor play or lack of independent mobility. The psychological effects of changes in routine outdoor play for children today could have long range implications not only for these children as individuals but also for society. As these children grow up and assume adult roles in their communities they may not be as prepared to function independently and productively in society as occurred in previous generations where children routinely played unsupervised

and unstructured in their neighborhoods. In traditional outdoor play, children had opportunities to explore and develop familiarity and comfort with their surroundings, and make discoveries about themselves (e.g., strengths and weaknesses). The next section shifts from examining my findings to addressing the strengths and weaknesses of my study.

### **Strengths and Limitations of the Study**

This section addressed the strengths and limitations of my study. Strengths of my dissertation research were: (a) purposive sample, (b) examined within context of all children's free-time activities, (c) theoretical framework, (d) multiple sources and methods, and (e) time devoted to analysis and refinement of methodology. Limitations of my study included: (a) homogeneity of sample demographic characteristics, (b) achievement of literal replication questionable, (c) scope and methodological need for consistency among cases constrained depth to which emerging ideas could be pursued, (d) timing of data collection, (e) limited success in capturing and demonstrating STV construct, and (f) potential for researcher bias. Strengths will now be discussed followed by limitations.

#### **Strengths.**

My purposive sample was at once both a strength and limitation of the study. Children in these families were more likely to have been afforded opportunities to choose to play outdoors in their free time than most children in the general population because (a) their mothers were stay-at-home moms, (b) most of them lived in upper-class neighborhoods with low crime rates, and (c) their families had the financial means to provide a variety of outdoor play resources and experiences. Recruitment of this purposive sample was initiated with the assistance of staff members from a local nature center and zoo, which assured that those

parents and children had an interest in the child spending time in outdoor environments. Further, I was able to achieve a good balance along the continuum of parents' valuing and efforts to provide outdoor play experiences for their children. Contrasting cases strengthened theoretical generalizations with the inclusion of a family that was lower SES, a single parent, families living in the heart of the city, and a family that relocated to the country for the purpose of affording their children outdoor play opportunities. Families fell along a continuum of controlling to autonomy supportive parenting practices related to outdoor play that provided further contrasts among cases.

At the same time, my sample was balanced by children's ages, gender, and level of participation in organized activities, with the latter likely detracting from children's outdoor play by reducing the frequency or duration. The referrals by professionals known to the parents helped me to establish rapport, which was furthered upon meeting them by my limited personal disclosures that drew attention to the similarities in our own experiences of having played outdoors as children, as well as in parenting. Establishing rapport and trust with the children was easier than I had anticipated because many of them had seen me as a volunteer at the local nature center. I credit my years of experience working with children in recreation programs, and focusing child interviews around a variety of playful and engaging activities, for facilitating my ability to rapidly establish rapport with the children.

Another strength of my study was that this examination of parental socialization and outdoor play was deeply embedded within the context of children's alternative free-time activities. The literature had supported declines in children's outdoor play with concomitant increases in electronics usage and organized activity participation. Therefore, I believed it

was important to gain insight about these changes and the role that parental socialization played in producing them. Lines of questioning related to these free-time alternative activities to outdoor play were asked of both parents and their children. Especially fruitful were discussions with parents about their *beliefs and values* surrounding their children's outdoor play and alternative free-time activities. Probing often revealed ambivalence or conflict related to parents' initial perceptions of valuing all of their children's free-time activities equally. These later revelations were more consistent with parents' actual practices such as the provision of alternative free-time resources.

The theoretical framework was a strength of my study and the findings can be as relevant to the field of psychology as they are to recreation and leisure research. All of the socialization constructs (i.e., sensitizing concepts) derived from SDT and EVT were evident in all families. However, differences in the manifestations of these constructs occurred across families as well. As these theories had most often been applied to academics or extracurricular activities and not to forms of recreation or leisure, many of the socialization constructs were manifested in ways not described in the literature. For example, family relocation or the storage of outdoor play resources were consistent with *structure* although neither was relevant to past applications of these theories with academic or extra-curricular performance. Given the qualitative nature of my study, I was able to relate these socialization constructs to a variety, and sometimes multiple, aspects of children's outdoor play. Previous research had not attempted to relate SDT or EVT to aspects of children's experiences beyond IM or performance. Similarly, although EVT was posited as an explanation for choices

between activities, I found no research that actually investigated children's choices between different alternatives.

The use of multiple sources and multiple methods was a strength of this study as was including the perspectives of parents and children. Triangulation was achieved through these multiple sources and methods. As children's reliability and potential for social desirability bias was a greater concern than that of parents, the redundancy in the children's interview methods improved my confidence in their responses. The use of photographs during the child-led tour not only corroborated interview data from parents and children but provided evidence difficult to obtain during an interview (e.g., storage and a child's ability to independently access toys).

Methods developed for the children's interview were successful at focusing children's attention and conversation as well as reducing power relationships inherent in interviewer-interviewee relationships. Although parents sometimes made comments alluding to their perceptions of me as an *expert* because I was pursuing an advanced degree, and for which I always graciously disavowed, not one of the children evidenced drawing such notions. I was generally successful at positioning myself at the child's level, often sitting side by side on the couch or floor, which reduced perceptions of power differences between the children and me. Adding the children's assent form, verbally reminding them of their autonomy in choosing whether to do an activity or how they chose to do it (e.g., outdoor play story) during interviews, and indulging minor tangents all further empowered the children during interviews.

Although wrap up meetings were conceived to be for meeting with family members individually to address areas insufficiently covered or for which I felt I had not acquired an accurate depiction, during the first case study I realized that the practicality of this approach would be difficult and would exceed the one hour time commitment allotted. Adjusting parent discussions from individual to couples had the unanticipated result of strengthening my data collection with parents. Through the initial individual parent interviews, I was able to maintain triangulation and avoid the distraction or disruption of cross-conversations that would have prohibited my covering all of the topics within the scope of my study. I needed to maintain, as best I could, continuity in data collection across families for later comparative analysis. Lengthy tangents or side conversations would have precluded my ability to sufficiently address all topics. Individual parent interviews resulted in parents sharing information that they would not have likely expressed in the presence of their spouse (i.e., social desirability bias). Conversely, the inclusion of both parents at the wrap up permitted a give and take that sometimes spurred additional reflection, thought, and conversation on topics for which a clear picture had not been evident from the initial individual parent interviews.

Qualitative research in the recreation and leisure field has typically been exploratory research. A small contingent of dedicated qualitative researchers in our field, advocated for decades for recognition of qualitative research as equally valuable to furthering the knowledge of recreation and leisure, particularly as a lived experience (e.g., Dr. Karla A. Henderson and Dr. Diane Samdahl). Despite the numerous issues I encountered in adapting and refining my methodology for use in our field, I hope that the utility of my study will

contribute to an appreciation of qualitative research as a valuable and viable alternative to quantitative methodologies. I believe my study demonstrates that qualitative methodologies common in other disciplines can successfully be adapted for use in our field.

Finally, an unanticipated strength of my study resulted from the inordinate amount of time I was able to use to thoroughly and repeatedly analyze the data while refining my methodology. I was able to spend more time in reviewing and reflecting upon this data than most qualitative researchers would have been afforded even had they been a member of a research team focusing on only a specified portion of the data. This time afforded me opportunities to reflectively evaluate my own perspectives and potential biases in analyzing the data (e.g., my traditional modern view of childhood). This time spurred me toward greater diligence to ensure the data were speaking to me rather than my deriving from the data what I wanted to hear.

### **Limitations.**

As a qualitative study, the intent was not statistical generalization to a population. However, although my purposive sample was useful for addressing my research questions, it was not representative of the majority of families because of the lack of (a) minority groups (i.e., only three parents identified with an ethnic minority), (b) lower socio-economic status (i.e., only one family self-identified as working class), (c) single-parent households (i.e., only one family), (d) housing classification (i.e., only one family rented an apartment whereas the rest owned their own single-family homes), (e) residential classification (i.e., most families lived in upper-class housing developments on the edges of this Midwestern urban center, and (f) geographic region (i.e., all data collected in the same Midwestern county). Many parents

and children discussed the local climate in terms of temperatures as a constraint to playing outdoors, which would be expected to have less of an impact in more temperate regions of the country. Finally, none of the families involved both parents working outside the home. Many families were biased toward outdoor play, especially those families recruited through the local nature center and zoo.

Qualitative comparative case studies are designed to afford theoretical and literal replication across the purposive sample. Although I am confident that theoretical replication was achieved through the use of contrasting cases, it was somewhat questionable how well I was able to achieve literal replication given the number of possible constellations of factors related to the children's ages, genders, and birth orders. Looking at Table 3.1 on page 103, it can be seen that sometimes eldest children were sons and in other families daughters. However, the eldest age for any boy participating in the study was 12 years, whereas it was only 10 years for girls. No attempts were made to hold the number of siblings constant beyond the required presence of at least one brother or sister. Nor was the age of siblings an original concern. However, as the study progressed, families with multiple children within the age range of the study, ages 8 to 12 years, were given priority unless a family contributed a significantly different perspective on children's outdoor play. For example, the C8 family was referred by two families that participated in the study rather than the nature center or zoo staff. Further, the C8 family was identified as having children that played outdoors a great deal without being involved in organized programs involving nature. No family volunteering for the study had children above the age of 12 years so no comparisons could be drawn regarding later-born children during the later years of middle childhood.

Most of the limitations of my study related to data collection. First, the comprehensive scope of my study precluded delving deeper into the manifestation of the socialization constructs and their patterns with aspects of outdoor play than what has been presented. As unique and interesting patterns or themes emerged during data collection, assessments had to be made as to their value in furthering knowledge on the topic of parental socialization and children's outdoor play and whether or not I could introduce further questioning on that theme in the time allotted without losing the data that I required for cross-case comparisons with all cases. This resulted in compromise by capturing what data I could and drawing tentative interpretations in Chapter 4 with the caveat that further research in those areas would be required.

The timing of my data collection was a limitation of the study as much of it was collected during the coldest months of the year when children and parents agreed all family members spent the least amount of time outdoors. Anticipating that children's recollections would be facilitated by methodologies such as photo-elicitation, it seemed that the impact of this seasonal limitation was minimized as best as could be expected regarding the children's experiences of outdoor play. However, only a few of the coloring pages in the binder activity included adults in the pictures, limiting assistance in recall for the children related to their parents' time spent outdoors for personal leisure or interacting with the children. Triangulation of data between the parents and children showed little discrepancies related to parents' time spent outdoors, especially in general terms. For example, when children described their parents as not enjoying spending time outdoors or vice versa, the parents concurred.

The construct that ultimately presented the greatest challenge in the analyses was STV and my success in demonstrating it, particularly with the children, was limited. EVT posited that choices between activities or courses of action were based on a person's STV for each alternative. Previous research with youth sports and physical activity demonstrated that children generally chose or participated in activities for their enjoyment. These findings were consistent with IM and most generic definitions of play. Therefore, parents were asked a line of questioning related to STV, with emphasis on utility values and perceived costs for their children's outdoor play and organized activity participation. Data collected in these areas for children were derived from their spontaneous responses to other lines of questioning. However, evidence indicated that particularly older children saw utility values besides physical activity, as socialized by their parents, in at least some of their outdoor play activities. For example, practicing youth sport skills at home to improve their contribution to their team.

Some data suggested that parents simultaneously held multiple STVs for their children's free-time activity options (i.e., one related to themselves as individuals and parents and another for their child. For example, a parent that enjoyed outdoor play in wild nature as a child but no longer enjoyed such experiences as an adult (i.e., personal STV in form of perceived cost), believed providing transportation and paying registration fees for their child to experience wild nature play in classes at the nature center fulfilled their parental role responsibility for providing their children a variety of experiences (i.e., personal STV in form of attainment value). These wild nature experiences were facilitated because the parents believed they were important for their child (i.e., child STV related to either attainment or

utility values). When considering whether this experience would be best for their child, the parents weighed the benefits they believed their child would derive from the experience against costs to the child (e.g., shy and not knowing anyone) as well as the financial costs to the family. So although theoretically according to EVT the choice of one activity over another would be consistent with having a higher STV at that time and under those circumstances for the selected activity, success in capturing this phenomenon in my study was limited and requires further research.

Finally, this study was conducted from a post-positivist world view so I cannot ignore concerns about researcher bias despite my noted efforts to counter, or at least acknowledge, their potential existence. This study produced an inordinate amount of data to wade through and given my background in psychology and coursework in cognition, I am deeply aware that as human beings our brains take shortcuts to integrate and assimilate new information, which could contribute to researcher bias. The use of my theoretical framework did much to keep my attention focused. Had I not had the inordinate amount of time that I did to work out issues with my methodology and be as thorough as I have been fortunate enough to have been, I would not have felt confident in my ability to minimize my bias. Having said that, I must once again acknowledge that from inception through data analysis, my life experiences as an outdoor educator, recreation programmer, mother, and grandmother are the lenses through which I viewed, and ultimately interpreted, this subject matter.

### **Practical Implications of the Study**

My study highlighted several areas where park and recreation professionals could contribute to children's healthy development through outdoor play in their neighborhoods

and local parks including changes related to (a) facility planning, (b) organized program offerings, (c) informing and educating parents and children about the benefits of outdoor play, and (d) community building. Over time, playgrounds have been redesigned to reduce safety concerns. Challenge and risk, both actual and perceived, go hand in hand. Playground elements that afforded children in later middle childhood, roughly ages 10- to 12-years of age, during past generations opportunities to test their physical and mental capabilities have been removed. Natural materials have been replaced with synthetic materials including state of the art rubberized padding at one of the local parks many of the children in this study had played. However, virtually all of the children in this study had play sets with swings, slides, and gliders in their backyards. Loukaitou-Sideris and Sideris (2010) found that inner city parks were used more than parks in neighborhoods comprised primarily of single-family homes. This research would be consistent with children without yards or play sets being unable to participate in these activities at home. Parents in my study did not install protective padding under these play sets and all parents acknowledged that scraped knees and bruises were acceptable injuries in their children's outdoor play. Perhaps parks and recreation officials need to reconsider how best to use their limited funding in promoting and facilitating children's use of park equipment and natural spaces (e.g., greater variety of playground equipment to meet the developmental needs of older children and nature play areas for children of all ages).

Challenge had substantially diminished in children's use of local parks by middle childhood. In the community in which this study was conducted, plaques were placed on equipment in some parks dictating their "acceptable" use. For example, a plaque on a slide

stated that children were only to climb up the stairs and not the slide. After a child mastered using a slide correctly, at about the age of 6- or 7-years-of-age in these families, all novelty and therefore interest began to wear off. Older children spoke of physically outgrowing conventional playground equipment around the age of 9 years. Parents in these families did not take their children to local parks for reasons other than using the playground. One step that parks and recreation professionals could take to increase usage of local parks while simultaneously meeting children's developmental needs, would be to provide separate playground equipment that afforded more developmentally appropriate stimulation and challenge for children beyond the age of 8 years. Other researchers have drawn similar conclusions (e.g., Herrington & Studtmann, 1998; Loukaitou-Sideris & Sideris, 2010).

Children in my study above the age of 8 years did not feel a sense of adventure in their outdoor play whether at home or at local parks. They did, however, feel adventure playing in wild nature environments including a nature play area at a local nature center, at least for those children whose parents valued these experiences for their children enough that they transported their children over 10 miles for the experience. Although not affording the unsupervised and unstructured play of children living in rural environments, akin to their own parents' childhood experiences with ready access to woods, fields, and streams; outdoor play activities at the nature center were designed to be interactive and creative. Consumptive forms of outdoor play such as digging or building shelters with fallen tree branches were not only permitted but also encouraged. When the "Dig to China" hole became too deep, making entrance and egress difficult, what dirt could be recovered was replaced and additional dirt shipped in. Pots and pans among other loose part items were provided for the children to use

as they wished, whether for pretending to cook (i.e., the items designed purpose) or digging in the earth or creek bed. One 10-year-old boy described fashioning a device for retrieving water from the stream for his dramatic play. In addition to being open and free to the public as are public parks, this nature center incorporated time for children in their environmental education camps and classes to play on the nature playground. This type of playing and engaging in nature was what Louv (2008) and the back to nature movement has been calling for.

Parents who played in wild nature as children perceived wooded areas to be a safe place for their children to play more so than in their own neighborhoods. Perceptions of physical risks were more palatable to these parents than their fears of child abductions outside their doors. However, parents who did not play in wild nature as children did not facilitate such play experiences for their children. One mother even discouraged her daughter's curiosity in playing with dirt or insects because she did not know "what was safe." Only one mother expressed awareness of a national initiative to encourage children's outdoor play in wild nature (i.e., National Wildlife Federation's "Green Hour"). The only mother to have played in wild nature growing up but not facilitating such experiences for her children now lived in a different region of the country from where her childhood experiences had taken place. There was no evidence that she had spent time in wild nature in the Mid-West herself. As environmental hazards vary from region to region (e.g., species of snakes or the presence of poison ivy) possibly the comfort other parents derived from their own wild nature play experiences had been diminished.

Therefore, national, state, and local parks and recreation professionals should continue to provide family programs that introduce and educate parents and children to the natural world in which they reside. Outdoor play in wild nature served as the basis for developing a comfort spending time in natural environments that contributed to adult outdoor recreation with their children. This finding was consistent with other outdoor recreation research regarding childhood experiences (e.g., Kals et al., 1999; Lohr et al., n.d.). Chen-Hsuan Cheng and Monroe (2012) found stronger correlations between 4<sup>th</sup> grade children's affective connection to nature and their perceptions of their family's values for nature than for children's direct experiences.

Perhaps the traditional focus of park and recreation agencies on programs aimed at promoting outdoor recreation may be missing an important opportunity to promote children's play in wild nature. The local nature center attended by many of the families in my study held regularly scheduled family nature exploration days that were open to the public. Family leisure in any wild nature environment was more infrequent than trips to local parks in all families in my study as the former often required greater commitments to time and transportation. Therefore, if facilitating children's direct experience of wild nature is a goal of parks and recreation agencies, more needs to be done to encourage and facilitate these experiences in neighborhood parks.

More remains to be done at a local level to promote family programs in wild nature including collaborations between environmental education organizations and city parks and recreation departments. Bringing nature education to families where they live could reduce parents' perceived costs related to time and transportation as well as better accommodating

the busy lifestyles of families today. Parents in my study demonstrated their valuing of educational programs for their children, which though likely higher than the average parent given recruitment biases, would still suggest these programs could be a successful entrée for families and children to spending time and playing in the outdoors. Finally, as family leisure was not considered an equivalent leisure replacement for children's independent outdoor play in my study, parents should be educated about the benefits to their children and resources provided for facilitating those opportunities for their children as an outcome of these programs.

Each generation fewer children had access to wild nature through visits to family farms. Cultural relationships with nature seemed to be lost in my study, which was consistent with work by Derr (2002). Parents in my study expressed making greater efforts to educate their children about personal property rights and restricted them from trespassing or expressing concerns that they and their children not disturb their neighbors. Rarely were such concerns expressed in the childhood recollections of the parents. Although this difference may have been an artifact of recollections being more salient when attached to strong emotion, and therefore not recalled here, this generational change was consistent with the findings of other studies (e.g., Beach, 2003). Discussions with some parents resonated with my own experiences as a child not having been cognizant of property rights and boundaries on what seemed like unused, open natural areas that afforded a variety of play opportunities. In urban areas, these opportunities included vacant lots or hedgerows between housing developments in parents' recollections just as described by Pyle (2002). The places their

parents experienced wild nature in their communities were the ones the children were discouraged by their parents to avoid trespassing.

Therefore, local parks should include natural play areas where all forms of outdoor play, including consumptive activities were encouraged. Herrington and Studtmann (1998) found that traditional playgrounds only addressed children's physical development, whereas incorporating natural play elements contributed to social, emotional, and cognitive as well as physical development in children. Acknowledging the need to sustainably manage our parks, parents and children in the study who had not made affective connections to nature during the early years of middle childhood, roughly 7- to 9-years-of-age, never did. Parents discussed the impacts of their nature play experiences on their environmental actions and beliefs as adults (e.g., recycling) and as parents (e.g., facilitate wild nature play for their children). Local parks and recreation facilities and programs that facilitated children's direct experiences playing in wild nature, therefore, would not only contribute to the children's healthy development but to their actions later in life. The cost of failing to facilitate children's play in wild nature would plausibly be an extension of Kahn's (2002) *intergenerational amnesia*. Parents' point of reference in making decisions as parents for their children's outdoor play was always their own childhood experiences--as will be the case for the progeny of these children.

Parents made clear that they deeply enjoyed and held fond memories of playing outdoors at home in their yards or in nearby wild nature as children and had been relatively oblivious to temperatures, weather, and insects, but that was no longer the case for them as adults. Despite demonstrating high valuing of outdoor play in wild nature for their children,

more parents paid for their children to experience it under the supervision of professional staff than participated themselves. Playground supervisors are employed in Europe and provide one possible model for facilitating children's outdoor play (Lester & Maudsley, 2006; Thomas & Thomas, 2004).

I was reminded that although I grew up in a rural town, during summer recess different adults specializing in an activity (e.g., archery) would come to the only local playground and provide free programs for all children who were present. The program was sponsored by the county parks and recreation department. Recently, a variety of non-profit organizations have sprung up at local and national levels around the organization and supervision of neighborhood youth sports (e.g., baseball, basketball, and soccer). Perhaps this is a model that park and recreation agencies could follow to facilitate both children's play in nature and group games that the children are presently unable to experience because of a lack of access to peers (e.g., home range restrictions and organized activities that were not organized by neighborhoods but rather by economy of provision through offerings being restricted to one or two parks within the city).

Providing more amenities for parents at local parks would reduce the perceived costs mentioned by parents in my study about spending time outdoors to fulfill their self-imposed requirements for supervision of their children's outdoor play. Benches or picnic tables were located near playgrounds at all parks in this community. However, quantities would only accommodate a handful of parents at a time. Parents in my study expressed concerns about not being able to see their children at all times, especially where there were larger jungle gym play sets that obstructed views. This same equipment often afforded taller slides or enclosed

slides to add novelty and challenge to the experience of older children. Unfortunately, no seating was integrated into the design of the playground itself and rarely was any protection from the sun or from insects available for parents as they observed their children's use of public park playgrounds or splash parks. The greatest deterrent to parents spending time outdoors in my study was related to discomfort from temperatures and insects. I suggest that shaded or screened accommodations to increase parents' comfort while affording them the ability to observe their children would likely contribute to their not only taking their children to the park more frequently but in prolonging the duration of their visits.

Park and recreation agencies may have unwittingly contributed to the demise of parents' and children's sense of community that afforded children in past generations the comfort and freedom to play in their neighborhoods. Rather than building community by organizing program offerings (e.g., youth sports) by neighborhoods, children in my study were often transported away from their neighborhoods to parks located in other parts of the city consistent with Karsten's (2005) concept of *backseat* kids. Almost all of the children in the study and their siblings ages 4 years or older participated in at least one organized activity. Participation for these youngest children was typically through introductory youth sport programs offered by local park and recreation agencies. In visiting family homes, I often witnessed families rushing in or out of their homes and piling all family members in or out of vehicles, to make sure that one or more of the children arrived at the destination of an organized activity on time.

The current *structure* of organized recreation program offerings afforded little opportunity for parents and children to get to know, and therefore become comfortable with,

other families in their neighborhoods. Further, many parents shared their concerns about their children being shut out of programs because of insufficient openings to meet city-wide demands. If some programs were restructured in accordance with the results of neighborhood needs assessments, park and recreation agencies could better meet the needs of their constituencies while strengthening families and providing children with opportunities to make friends and play with their neighborhood peers. Veitch and colleagues (2010) drew similar conclusions, “It may be important to develop and foster social networks within the neighborhood so that families and children can establish links for active free-play. This may involve developing community family days or other social events where community families have opportunities to interact” (p. 8). This recommendation was based on similar findings of a dearth of children’s outdoor play within their neighborhoods due to parental fears for the children’s safety, just as found in my study.

Few parents in my study took the initiative to meet their neighbors, let alone get to know them, beyond those neighbors immediately adjacent to their home. Parks and recreation agencies could facilitate the rebuilding of communities by sponsoring community events, rotating throughout all of the parks in their district. Invitations and marketing could be targeted to reach only members of neighborhoods corresponding to event locations. All members of these communities should be encouraged to attend including not just families with children but also all residents. Many parents recalled older neighbors being at home and serving as watchful eyes that reported to their parents if their child was up to mischief. Despite increases in the older adult population in this country, parents did not view them as a resource to assist in the rearing of their own children. Public events that facilitated bringing

all residents out of their homes and getting to know each other would do more for their communities than provide a safer environment for children to play outdoors with other children in their neighborhoods. This would help to alleviate the social traps that parents fell into that perpetuated the decline of community (Carver et al., 2008) by driving their children elsewhere or restricting them to their own yards to play.

Further, it was clear from conversations with parents that they were largely unaware of the benefits their children could potentially derive simply from playing outdoors. My findings were in stark contrast to Clements (2004) although her results were based on parent responses to a survey that presented potential benefits with which parents could indicate whether they resonated with the parents' beliefs. Benefits to outdoor play were not so salient to parents without prompts. Physical activity and creativity were the only benefits to outdoor play that were salient to most parents in my study.

At the time of this study, concerns about obesity had spurred national initiatives such as the federal government's "Let's Move" and American Heart Association's "Get Moving" campaigns. Even NFL football had launched a campaign called "Play 60." All of these programs advocated for children to spend one hour a day outdoors in moderate to vigorous play. At the same time there were national program to promote children's outdoor play in wild nature. Parents were largely unaware of the many ways their children could benefit from their outdoor play experiences in their own yards and neighborhoods. Further, television commercials promoting current national initiatives projected images of outdoor play that were wholly inconsistent with the play experiences of children in the study. Playing pick-up sports would have required a larger number of playmates than these children had access to

(e.g., football). Consumptive play was never portrayed in commercials promoting children's direct experiences with wild nature.

Though not necessarily within the realm of park and recreation professionals, parents lacked realistic knowledge of the potential for child abductions or other social threats to their children's safety and wellbeing, consistent with other studies (e.g., Valentine, 2004). Park and recreation professionals could work with local law enforcement to develop initiatives to educate parents about the reality of these dangers and how to protect their children.

What evolved from conversations with parents and children that was most concerning to me was the illusion of safety that parents and children shared. Harden (2000) found this illusion was consistent with parents making differentiations in risk assessment between public and private spaces. Parents perceived that if the children followed the parents' rules and remained close to home, no harm would or could befall them. These parents had no special skills or training that could protect their children from a determined assailant. Nor was it realistic that parents could see or hear every moment of their children's outdoor play even when the children remained in the yard. Some parents spoke of "safety in numbers" playing with their peers in the neighborhoods of their childhoods, an artifact of prior generations' outdoor play. Most of the children in this study had no concept of playing with multiple playmates or how to safely navigate their own neighborhoods. They were what Karsten (2005) referred to as *backseat kids*.

Finally, parents need to be made aware of how their parenting practices affect their children's healthy psychological development (e.g., cognitive, affective, social, personality). All of the mothers and fathers in my study were well intentioned parents who loved their

children and wanted only what was best for them just as parents found in other studies (e.g., Hutchinson et al., 2003; Skår & Krogh, 2009). However, parents in my study did not have information to draw upon when it came to their children's free time. Few parents acknowledged reading parenting books. Those that were read related to discipline or gender (e.g., raising sons). Parents were wholly unaware of the impact their parenting practices related to outdoor play had on their children such as overly restrictive home ranges, perceived as necessary for the child's protection. Parks and recreation professionals can address not only the potential benefits to children of playing outdoors but educate parents on the potentially negative consequences of not doing so. Unfortunately, psychological consequences are typically not as obvious as obesity to parents or children. Chatterjee (2005) suggested that child-friendly places that promote children's outdoor play were "not an absolute developmental necessity but rather a developmental advantage for children" (p. 20). I would argue that we do not know enough about children's outdoor play in any environment, domesticated or wild, to draw such definitive distinctions. In either case, parents would be more likely to facilitate their children's outdoor play if they received as much information about the benefits to their child as they did with alternatives such as youth sports.

### **Theoretical Implications of the Study**

My study has theoretical implications for the study of socialization and motivation in not only the field of recreation and leisure but for the field of psychology. In focusing on the phenomenon of outdoor play rather than testing a single socialization theory, I was able to integrate elements from both SDT and EVT that were deemed pertinent to an examination of parental socialization in this domain. SDT had been applied to the study of leisure behaviors,

but never outdoor play. Core elements of SDT were abundant in the stories of these parents and children such as the contribution of novelty, challenge, and adventure to a child's level of interest in an activity as well as children's ability to fulfill their three basic psychological needs for competency, relatedness, and autonomy in outdoor play.

Although choice of activity was a central tenet of EVT, it was evident that children often sacrificed participating in an activity that was IM for them to fulfill other psychological needs. This sacrifice most often occurred when children played what a friend, sibling, or parent wanted to play. Fulfilling relatedness needs, thus dictated activity choice. Although SDT provided a framework for integration of parents' values through the process of socialization, most of the literature related to values and goals remained theoretical at the time of this study. Deci and Ryan (2000) proposed that goal pursuit and the attainment of valued outcomes coincided with satisfaction of one's psychological needs for competence, autonomy, or relatedness. Children were theorized to pursue goals in any domain including outdoor play that afforded their ability for need satisfaction. My study suggested that the constructs associated with IM in SDT were demonstrated concurrently with components of STV in EVT. For example, a child establishing a goal of climbing higher in a tree, as discussed by a 9-year-old in my study demonstrated his ability to achieve need satisfaction related to both competency and autonomy. Parent recollections even suggested that peer comparisons in outdoor play could contribute to relatedness need fulfillment by establishing "respect" for challenging or adventurous accomplishments.

STV, a central tenet of EVT, was shown to effect performance in academics and extra-curricular activities (e.g., Eccles & Harold, 1991; Fredricks & Eccles, 2005). Although

EVT was an achievement motivation theory, my study demonstrated that it held equal potential for explaining choice and persistence in the domain of outdoor play. No research was found with EVT that actually examined a person's choices between two or more activities, although theoretically this was an important tenet of the theory. Evidence from my study suggested that parents' and children's weighing of costs and benefits could easily be conceptualized within perceived costs in STV by viewing them as intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural constraints (Crawford & Godbey, 1987). Eccles (1983) proposed that costs included: (a) amount of effort required, (b) loss of time or resources for a valued alternative, or (c) psychological meaning of failure. Although these costs were all applicable to the domain of outdoor play, expanding upon cost by incorporating other factors such as discomfort with spending time outdoors was useful.

However, like SDT, EVT in isolation had shortcomings for investigating socialization and outdoor play. EVT did not address those elements of SDT discussed above that were clearly present (e.g., children's drive to fulfill their psychological need for relatedness in outdoor play). Rather, the only component of IM addressed by EVT was intrinsic interest, a construct theorized to be related yet distinct from IM in SDT. I found that SDT was more useful for explaining children's interest as it related to the ability to fulfill psychological needs through experiences that were novel, challenging, or adventurous. Although a full elucidation of the differences between these theories was beyond the scope of my dissertation, interested readers should review applicable sections in my Literature Review for comparisons and contrasts.

My study had other theoretical implications. I proposed, unlike Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994), that children need not be cognizant of parents' beliefs, values, or practices to be socialized by them. I described my findings as *socialization by omission*, a means by which parents chose not to introduce their children to outdoor play activities or environments. Sometimes these actions were intentional as when a parent disliked an activity as a child and thus, elected not to introduce or teach that activity to their child. At other times, the socialization of omission appeared more akin to Kahn's (2002) concept of *intergenerational amnesia*. When parents were not exposed to an outdoor play environment or activity, they generally did not introduce or educate their child in that area. The best example was related to parents who never played in wild nature. These parents did not provide experiences for their children to play in wild nature unless it was promoted or facilitated by their spouse, who had played in wild nature.

Louv (2008) expressed concerns that children picked-up on unintended or indirect messages that playing in nature was not for them. Similarly, when children became aware that children in other families played in different environments or participated in different free-time activities, including outdoor play, than the child had been socialized into by his or her parents, at least to some degree, viewed those experiences as *not me or not my family*. Such sentiments were often discussed by the children as social comparisons to other children of their gender or age especially when distinguishing themselves as different from the majority of their peers. Parents made social comparisons in relation to the amount of time they spent outdoors at home compared to their neighbors.

I intended in this study to expand the discussion of children's outdoor play beyond wild nature experiences and physical activity. The routine outdoor play of the children in this study fell into neither of those categories, despite the prominence they held in theory and research at the time I conducted my study. Children's development encompasses more than just a child's physical health. Just as the function of academics was to develop children's cognitive abilities and athletics their physical abilities, so too must children's psychological health (e.g., affective, social, personality) be provided for in theories, research, and resulting programmatic implementations in parks, recreation, and leisure.

Children's ability to develop into healthy autonomous adults is contingent upon their having had opportunities for social development, emotional development, and real-life problem solving. For example, not one of these children ever mentioned a situation where they would have needed to learn how to address or cope with another topic receiving national attention at the time of this study (i.e., bullying). Most parents expected their children, particularly in the early years of middle childhood, to involve them if there was a disagreement they could not resolve in playing with siblings or peers. Only a few of the children in these families had ever played in groups outdoors, but most engaged in one-on-one peer interactions. Karsten (2005) found that kids typically played in dyads rather than groups with many of these experiences being scheduled play dates. Therefore, if they did not get along with a peer the child could just choose not to play with that person again. In organized programs, adults *structured* and supervised the experiences, which often rendered nil children's opportunities to engage in and successfully resolve social disputes independently.

Finally, much had been written at the time of my study regarding concerns over children's over indulgence in sedentary, socially isolating, electronic gaming and overscheduling in organized activity participation. Although these aspects were examined as free-time alternative activities in relation to the children's outdoor play, I sought to re-establish the role of parental socialization including but not limited to parenting practices, in the perpetuation of these presumed social ills. All parents provided resources and had rules or expectations related to both their children's use of electronics and their organized activity participation. Parents were culpable in the decrease in children's outdoor play, again presumed to be a social ill, despite these parents' best intentions for their children's healthy development. At the same time, whether due to desires to present a particular family image, or the lack of frequency data, no evidence suggested that children spent more time using electronics than playing outdoors in any family. All children were reported to play outdoors as often or more so than the time they spent playing electronics. As research findings of children's time use have relied on quantitative measures that included or excluded outdoor play—most commonly embedding within other categories, it was not possible to discern whether my findings in this regard were groundbreaking. This area is one of several areas requiring further research.

## **Future Research**

### **Methodological recommendations.**

This section addressed those aspects of my methodology that were worth repeating and modifications that could make this methodology more efficient. Recommendations addressed these topics: (a) limit scope, (b) heterogeneous sample, (c) data collection

timeframe, (d) data collection timing, (e) photos for binder activity, (f) unfruitful line of questioning, (g) observation checklist, (h), child-led tour, (i) case narratives, (j) coding, (k) worksheets, and (l) data organization.

Though not intended at the outset, this project evolved into the most comprehensive study on both children's outdoor play and parental socialization I had come across in the literature. My study was comprehensive in that it transcended previously isolated veins of research (e.g., organized activity participation or nature play), included the perspectives of both parents and children, and embedded the subject within the context of all the children's free-time activities. The scope and volume of data were too large and unwieldy for a single researcher. It was not until I was entrenched in data collection and analysis that I found mention of a presumed appropriate number of cases for a qualitative comparative case study dissertation in Stake (2006). Three or four were the proposed number of cases for dissertation research, although the cases described were related to agencies and the focus of research on policy evaluation and development. However, in the end I believe that although the sources and focus were different, I likely collected no less data per case because of my use of multiple sources and multiple methods for purposes of triangulation.

Therefore, my recommendation for future research would be to reduce the scope by focusing on examining the relationships between fewer constructs. In hindsight, focusing on either Research Question 1 with its two underlying theoretical propositions or either Theoretical Propositions 3, 4, or 5 separately would have permitted a depth of investigation not achieved here. Narrowing the scope would likewise require fewer cases to achieve

theoretical and literal replication. What I did could not have been accomplished with fewer cases only because of the scope, especially the inclusion of children's age and gender.

Regarding sampling procedures, having a sample biased toward the facilitation of outdoor play in a variety of environments was fruitful for this initial investigation into the topic of parental socialization and children's outdoor play. However, future research should focus on other demographics. An unintended outcome of my sampling was that all of the mothers were stay-at-home moms. Although this similarity furthered the opportunities available to these children to choose to play outdoors if they desired, it would be more fruitful for future research to focus on more typical families. Future research should focus on different populations related to ethnicity and socio-economic status. Valentine's (2004) research discussed differences between middle and working class families. Children in more affluent families were afforded resources that many children likely did not have, both for outdoor play (e.g., basketball court, safer neighborhoods) and for alternative free-time activity participation (e.g., financial resources to participate in multiple youth sports and take music lessons).

Regarding data collection, my first recommendation would be to spread the data collection over a greater period (i.e., at least 6 months). There was insufficient time to thoroughly analyze and code data between families. Where coding was not completed before data collection commenced with the next family, I found it useful to re-listen to audio recordings in addition to reviewing transcripts. I gained greater understanding hearing the inflections in people's voices and their nervous laughter. Thus, I was able to identify and pursue unanticipated or seemingly more relevant themes with later families. I believe

spreading data collection with the families over a period of at least two weeks would diminish the sense of imposition felt by families—although they denied feeling any imposition. It was evident in trying to schedule around the children’s and parents’ various commitments how time stretched these families were. This lack of time was likely a contributing factor to the bias I experienced with only families with stay-at-home moms participating. Families in which both parents work might be more amenable to participating if they perceived the imposition as only a couple of times per week.

In a similar vein, I did not use a parent time diary I had originally designed for this study out of concerns for parents’ perceiving their family’s participation required too great a burden. Should I conduct a study using this methodology in the future, I would use the parent time diary to get the parent’s perception of their children’s free-time activity participation. It was designed to coincide with the children’s activity journals that were used (see Appendices D8 & D9). However, out of concerns that families would find participation burdensome, it was repeatedly emphasized to parents and children that completion of the journals was optional as their intent was mainly to stimulate conversation. With this knowledge, most parents misplaced the journals, if not immediately, within a few days. Therefore, most children completed only a few pages and some children none of the activity journal at all.

If I were to embark upon a similar study, I would incorporate some form of time diary data from both parents and children. A simple time diary (e.g., checklist) would likely have been more fruitful than the activity journals as they would have been less cumbersome and time consuming to complete. Children were more willing to talk to a stranger than anticipated and little new data were gained from the activity journals apart from other

methods. Often the activity journals served more as another source for triangulation of the children's data. For example, the activity journal and the binder activity both captured seasonal differences in outdoor play that may not have been recalled because data collection occurred over the colder winter months.

Parents and children were informed both on the parents' consent form and again in person at the time of the interview that they could elect not to answer or participate in any of the activities. Some of the children elected not to do the story activities and seemed to feel comfortable exercising their right to refuse participation. The potential contribution of the time diary and activity journals for interpreting differences in children's frequency or duration of playing outdoors beyond parents' and children's general perceptions and social comparison references was lost. Although I was able to discern pattern differences between families, I felt these differentiations would have been stronger had this additional data been available.

Unfortunately the timing of much of my data collection fell to the season these children played least outdoors (i.e., winter). Therefore, I developed an extensive binder activity where the children reviewed coloring pages depicting a variety of outdoor play activities and photographs of potential domestic and wild nature "play" environments. Although I was able to obtain more reliable responses than asking a child if he or she had ever played a sport outdoors, the activity was cumbersome and lengthy. All children made it all the way through the activity but particularly younger children expressed impatience to move on to other activities. Most children's responses were affirming or disconfirming regarding each specific activity although their occasional elaborations provided insights not

captured with other methods. Although I believe this method would continue to be useful to discuss off-season activities in comparison to the timeframe of data collection, had I collected data during any other season I believe this binder activity would not have needed to be so comprehensive (i.e., covered such a wide variety of play activities typical of all four seasons of the year).

The photographs in the binder activity presented a different set of challenges. Although I had taken random snapshots of yards, park fields, playgrounds, other park amenities, wild nature scenes, or selected activities at the nature playground at the local nature center that could have been played elsewhere just as readily, the initial reaction of every child in the study was to scrutinize the photos to determine whether or not they recognized where that picture had been taken. Although not of such importance for my study, I believe this technique would be useful in investigations of children's or adult's usage of neighborhood parks. These photos spurred discussions not captured by other methods. For example, older children stated that they used to play on a particular piece of equipment, or something similar at another park, but could no longer because they were either physically too big or just no longer interested in it. For my own purposes, I believe in hindsight that it would have been better to use photographs not taken locally. The emphasis then would have been placed on whether or not children had played in similar environments rather than worrying about whether or not they could recall playing in that specific location, which was not the intent of the exercise.

The only line of questioning that was less fruitful than desired was related to the parental socialization construct of *structure*. Parents and children were asked how rules were

made and communicated in their households. Despite children in all families having little to no say in how rules were made regarding outdoor play, none of them perceived them as controlling so long as their psychological needs were met. Questions related to parents' rules and expectations when the children played outdoors were more successful as they were easily related to aspects of the children's experiences (e.g., frequency and duration). So like Hutchinson et al. (2003), I was able to capture how parents communicated rules to their children but found it did little to further an understanding of parental socialization as it related to children's leisure, and more specifically to outdoor play.

I found note taking during interviews distracted my attention from what parents were sharing with me. Therefore, I did little of that during the interviews. The observation checklist worked well and required little effort. I would use it again. Not as many parent-child interactions were observed as I had anticipated because parents often scheduled their interviews when the children were not present to reduce distractions. I found digitally recording field notes on the drive home from each visit to a family's home was useful. I was aware of current weather conditions and any evidence of children's having played outdoors (e.g., footprints in the snow).

Although I took written notes and photographs during the child-led tours of outdoor play resources and environments, I would highly recommend using a video recording device that could be worn, preferably by the children to gain their vantage point as they described their outdoor play experiences (e.g., GoPro camera). Doing so would help to minimize differences between children's and adults' perspectives, further giving the children an active voice in the study and highlighting what was important to them.

As data were collected from different sources using different methodologies, it was impossible to analyze without first developing a case narrative derived from the compilation of data that captured each family's story of outdoor play. This step had been proposed by Patton (2002) as an optional step in qualitative case study analyses but I found it to be essential not only for triangulation between sources and methods but also for organizing the data for interpretive purposes. These case narratives were included in the case record in MAXQDA and served as the basis for coding and analysis.

Regarding coding in MAXQDA, I encountered several problems that could be avoided in future research. First, my initial coding was purely inductive without regard to my research questions, theoretical propositions, or sensitizing concepts. Given my inexperience with my modified analytic induction methodology, and being a neophyte in inductive research, I overshot the mark by trying to be purely inductive. By the time I did selective coding related to the sensitizing concepts from my theoretical framework, all I had achieved was a picture of how the socialization constructs and various aspects of children's outdoor play were manifested without identifying the associations between them. I was deeply troubled by the loss of each families' stories as the sum of the parts failed to capture the essence of the whole story of outdoor play. Nor had I captured the process of parental socialization by depicting relationships between the constructs and aspects of children's outdoor play.

As I struggled with my analyses, both within and between cases, I came across another book on comparative case analyses by Stake (2006). There I found a variety of worksheets proposed as various stages for analyses. I chose a single worksheet that was

adaptable to addressing each of my research questions and theoretical propositions (see Appendix E). I relied on these worksheets to draw the associations between constructs and aspects of outdoor play because of the open, axial, and selective coding I had already completed. After several revisions, I was finally able to arrive at an organizational structure that allowed me to accomplish what I had failed to earlier. I was able to identify relationships between the parental socialization constructs and the aspects of children's outdoor play (e.g., parents' rules about landscape use were related to the children's playing with nature, or not, at home). As a validating measure, my MAXQDA coding was compared to the worksheets to ensure nothing was overlooked or erroneously omitted. I would recommend using this worksheet format again in future research.

The case worksheets were isolated into 10 separate documents, just where I had begun my analysis with the 10 case narratives. Therefore, I created an additional step that I referred to as "wall worksheets." Through several revisions, I was able to arrive at a format that permitted me to capture the relationships between parental socialization constructs and aspects of children's outdoor play across families. Ultimately, the case worksheets and wall worksheets were an iterative process that was experimental and time consuming, but I would not have achieved the clarity and depth of analysis that I did if I had not gone through the painstaking process to arrive at final versions that facilitated my interpretation and presentation of the data. This step enabled me to identify pertinent topics in the data that had relevance to furthering an understanding of parental socialization and outdoor play beyond the mere "how" involved in focusing on constructs.

What I would do differently in addition to skipping ahead to those versions of the worksheets that were most useful, would be to organize the data for MAXQDA analysis differently. Rather than creating a single comparative file comprised of the case narratives for the 10 families, I strongly recommend creating separate comparative files based on the theoretical propositions. This approach would not only minimize the problems I encountered with the software being unable to handle the volume of codes, but it would have helped me keep the initial interpretive coding focused. I continued to be overwhelmed by the data, through my early drafts of Chapter 4, when I was finally able to achieve clarity. The expression, “hindsight is 20/20” definitely applied to my experiences in conducting this study. I believe were I, or anyone else, to conduct another qualitative comparative case study to investigate a phenomenon or process in recreation and leisure that making this one change would expedite the analytic process by increasing efficiency.

**Topics requiring further research.**

This research was a comprehensive study of parental socialization (i.e., transcended isolated veins of research, included multiple perspectives, and embedded topic in context of family and all children’s free-time activities) and children’s outdoor play. As the scope was so large, there is essentially no aspect of my study that I believe would not benefit from further research. Both SDT and EVT, from which my theoretical framework was drawn, had been extensively studied academics, youth sports, physical activity, and more limitedly leisure extracurricular activities (e.g., Frederick & Ryan, 1995; Simpkins et al., 2006). Most of that research was based on quantitative survey research focused on elucidating the relationships between socialization constructs and outcomes such as performance. Outdoor

play had never been subjected to such theoretical scrutiny at the time of my study. Therefore future research should follow the same course as prior investigations in the domains of youth sports and physical activity (e.g., regression, path analyses, structural equation modeling). For example see the work of Brustad (1992, 1993, 1996) pertaining to parental socialization of children's physical activity.

However, research with SDT and EVT were well-supported, although entrenched, theories used in isolation, with their developers each advocating for their own theory rather than moving forward toward the development of a new theory that could encompass aspects of both while eliminating the redundancies or overlap in the theories (e.g., competency perceptions). Only one study was found that simultaneously assessed a component of both theories (i.e., IM in SDT and intrinsic interest in EVT; Katz et al., 2008). In that study, these constructs were found to be statistically equivalent as they were measured in research studies at that time. It seemed that as elements of both theories were strongly evident in my study, that this would be a logical step forward just as Deci and Ryan (1985) and Eccles (1983) based much of their theories on motivational theories that preceded them (e.g., White's effectance-motivation theory, 1959).

In furthering outdoor play research, quantitative strategies need to be pursued to delineate the relationships between socialization constructs and aspects of outdoor play. Again, following the course of physical activity and youth sport research as models, regression studies, path analyses, and structural equation modeling could further an understanding of the weight and importance of these various socialization constructs to specific aspects of children's outdoor play.

Additionally specific findings in my study require further attention and would benefit most from qualitative investigation. There appeared to be a motivational hurdle regarding children's self-initiation of outdoor play beyond the age of 10 years. By all accounts these children not only failed to resent their parents' insistence in *sending* them out to play (e.g., following sedentary activities like electronic games) but were reported to find enjoyment once playing outdoors. What remained unclear was why, as these children clearly enjoyed playing outdoors, were they disinclined to go outdoors in the first place? Although there was evidence that restricted home ranges, an inability to meet psychological needs (e.g., relatedness), and a lack of adventure or challenge contributed to some children's lessened interest in playing outdoors, in comparison to that of their parents as children for example, further research is needed to understand this seemingly complex phenomenon. Only then can researchers and practitioners devise practical solutions to address the problem of older children's not playing outdoors.

Older children's outdoor play increasingly resembled that of their parents, including same-gendered parents. Further research would be required to elucidate the influence of parents' *role modeling* on children's free-time activity choices as they age. This research would require inductive qualitative strategies to understand the various perspectives of parents and children. For example, do children perceive social expectations for them to forego some childhood activities in the pursuit of others as they approach a certain age? What is the role of parents in socializing their children's changes in leisure as they age into adolescence?

Despite parents' claims to value all of their children's free-time activities equally, evidence indicated that parents' valued organized activity participation over outdoor play. Data suggested that utility values and competency perceptions of their children's abilities were more salient to parents for organized activities than outdoor play. More can be learned in this area that could help the cause to revitalize children's playing in the outdoors.

Along a similar vein, why were parents' recollections of their children's interests in playing outdoors more salient if they were gender-stereotypically consistent? Most parents denied treating their sons or daughters differently, and wrote differences in mothers' and fathers' *role modeling* of recreation and leisure off to personalities or individual differences in interests. Yet, despite their acknowledgment of their sons and daughters displaying gender differences, typically stereotypic differences in their outdoor play, these parents seemed to feel no culpability in socializing their children's gender roles in free-time activities. Further research is necessary to determine where and how children are developing these gendered identities in their outdoor play and other free-time activities.

Related to generational changes in children's free-time activities, such as increases in electronics usage, increased organized activity participation, and decreased outdoor play, what are the costs or benefits to children's healthy psychological development (e.g., cognitive, affective, social, personality). Sedentary activity changes from past generations have been a focus of research, but not in the area of psychological health and children's wellbeing. Further research is needed especially in contrasting organized activity participation and independent outdoor play. How do actual physical activity levels differ between these activities? How does the formation of peer relationships and children's overall

social development differ because of these experiences? Is it possible that participation in organized programs is an equivalent leisure substitute for children's fulfillment of relatedness needs? Many questions remain that have not been raised or addressed in the literature in this area.

Participation in youth sports was related to children's outdoor play activities as they often practiced their sport at home with parents, siblings, or friends. More research is needed to understand how participation in youth sports affects children's psychological health. For example, was it healthy that older children who played youth sports, based their outdoor-play competency perceptions only on those sports, believing a person could not be considered "good at" non-sport activities? What did it matter that older children did not participate in playing any sports activities at home that they did not know how to do *right*? At the same time, the knowledge of how to play a sport "right" seemed to come from either a parent or coach's instruction. Older children were depicted by their parents to no longer "putter around" or "goof off" rather focusing their outdoor play on more "structured" activities such as sport. Are these the messages that children learn? Research on adolescent leisure suggests this may be the case (e.g., Dunn, 2003; Hutchinson et al., 2003). What kind of pressure does that message place on children and is it healthy?

Younger children showed an unusual pattern of diminished interests playing outdoors. Why did some later-born youngest children, as old as 5-years-of-age, demonstrate less interest in playing outdoors than their elder siblings had at the same age? Parents spent less time directly interacting with these later-born children outdoors, relying more on the *role modeling* of elder siblings for teaching their children outdoor play skills. These parents

seemed to believe that their participation with later children was no longer necessary. What if they are wrong? What could be the long-term impact of children not fulfilling relatedness needs with their parents in outdoor play? A tenet of the back-to-nature movement going back to Rachel Carson's iconic work, *The Sense of Wonder* (1956) was that a child needed just one caring adult to introduce her or him to the natural world. What happens with later born children who did not have the benefit of the same parent-child interactions as their elder siblings? Could birth-order play a role in children's development of environmental preferences, beliefs, actions, and identities? Little is known about the parental socialization influences of children toward nature before adolescence.

No research had been found related to differences between parental role beliefs and parenting practices from previous generations, particularly as they influenced socialization of children's free-time activities. Intergenerational research would be required to further an understanding of these changes. Parents in my study perceived role changes in three areas: (a) protectors, (b) providers of experience, and (c) direct involvement in comparison to that of their own parents. Although there was abundant evidence to support parents' perceptions of potential dangers as prompting increases in their role as protectors (e.g., Valentine, 2004), little research had been conducted related to changes in parents' role perception for providing a variety of experiences (e.g., Skår & Krogh, 2009) or being more involved in playing with their children (e.g., Shaw & Dawson, 2001). Further research is needed to understand why parents encourage, even require, their children to participate in organized programs and what the ramifications of this cultural change are for both parents and children. Parents took into

consideration their own enjoyment, IM, or STV for participating in an activity when choosing what to introduce, teach, and play with their children outdoors.

Cumulatively, these parenting practices have been described as overprotective or “hovering” parents. Ungar (2009) suggested that such behaviors in low-risk environments, consistent with the families in my study, may have deleterious effects for children’s healthy development. Further, these parents perceived that if they themselves enjoyed playing with their children, that it had to be beneficial to their children. Although some evidence showed that parents’ playing with their children outdoors contributed to children’s enjoyment of playing outdoors without parents presence, little is known about potential negative impacts, or whether “too much” parental involvement is possible.

### **Summary**

The purpose of my qualitative case study was to develop an explanation of the potential influence of parental socialization on children’s outdoor play. Toward that end, I used a theoretical framework derived from (a) outdoor play literature, (b) leisure socialization literature and (c) two developmental theories of the effects of parental socialization on children’s motivations and activity selections (i.e., SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985 and EVT; Eccles, 1983). Five theoretical propositions underlie two research questions. The first question was, How does parental socialization influence children’s outdoor play? (a) Direct forms of parental socialization influence children’s outdoor play, and (b) Indirect forms of parental socialization influence children’s outdoor play. Direct forms of socialization are considered to be parenting practices targeted specifically at children’s outdoor play (e.g., outdoor play rules and parents’ efforts to monitor their children’s

compliance). Indirect forms of socialization are considered to be those constructs that were mediated or moderated by parenting practices surrounding outdoor play within each family (e.g., parental beliefs that guided formation of outdoor play rules) as well as those parental actions that had an incidental effect on the children's outdoor play (e.g., family relocation). The second question is, How do parents differ in the socialization of their children's outdoor play? (a) Parents socialize children's outdoor play differently based on the child's gender, (b) Parents socialize their children's outdoor play differently based on child's age, and (c) Parents socialize their children's outdoor play differently based on perceptions of environmental factors in their community.

Consistent with Theoretical Propositions 1 and 2, constructs were distinguishable between direct and indirect forms of socialization. Independent mobility or home range restrictions as well as participation in organized activities precluded children's group play and ability to meet relatedness needs in outdoor play. Gender differences were found not only between boys and girls but also between the socialization efforts of mothers and fathers related to outdoor play in Theoretical Proposition 3. Despite evident gender differences in the children's play and the role of mothers and fathers, most family members attributed differences in outdoor play to age and personality of each child rather than gender influences of the parents. Age changes were found in Theoretical Proposition 4, including the discovery that children were better able to fulfill some psychological needs (e.g., competence) through electronic games and organized activities, particularly older children. Although many findings in Theoretical Proposition 5, were consistent with other research, I found that children were socialized by omission. Children no longer were socialized by older children in

their communities and parents did not socialize their children into activities or environments for which they either had no knowledge or did not enjoy themselves, either as children or now as adults.

Strengths and limitations of the study were discussed as they pertained to the scope, sample, and methodologies used in this study. Practical recommendations were made regarding how park and recreation officials might assist parents in facilitating children's outdoor play in their local parks and neighborhoods and incorporate outdoor play experiences in wild nature (i.e., nature play) into children's repertoire of free-time activity choices. The theoretical framework from this study can be used to guide future research related to parental socialization of children's free-time activities as well as outdoor play. Recommendations were made for future research incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to further our understanding of the relationship between parents' socialization efforts, or omissions, and children's outdoor play.

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## Appendices

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# Appendix: A1 - IRB Application

North Carolina State University  
 Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human Subjects in Research  
 SUBMISSION FOR NEW STUDIES

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

1. <b>Date Submitted:</b> <i>November 11, 2011</i>
1a. <b>Revised Date:</b> <i>n/a</i>
2. <b>Title of Project:</b> <i>Parental Socialization of Children's Outdoor Play</i>
3. <b>Principal Investigator:</b> <i>Penny A. James</i>
4. <b>Department:</b> <i>Parks, Recreation &amp; Tourism Management</i>
5. <b>Campus Box Number:</b> <i>8004 Biltmore Hall</i>
6. <b>Email:</b> <i>penny.ann.james@gmail.com</i>
7. <b>Phone Number:</b> <i>(309)660-4938</i>
8. <b>Fax Number:</b> <i>n/a</i>
9. <b>Faculty Sponsor Name and Email Address:</b> <i>Dr. Karla A. Henderson email: karla_henderson@ncsu.edu</i>
10. <b>Source of Funding? (required information):</b> <i>Department of Parks, Recreation &amp; Tourism Management, NC State University</i>
11. <b>Is this research receiving federal funding?:</b> <i>No</i>
12. <b>If Externally funded, include sponsor name and university account number:</b> <i>n/a</i>
13. <b>RANK:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Faculty <input type="checkbox"/> Student: <input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate; <input type="checkbox"/> Masters; or <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PhD <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify): _____

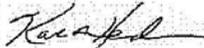
*As the principal investigator, my signature testifies that I have read and understood the University Policy and Procedures for the Use of Human Subjects in Research. I assure the Committee that all procedures performed under this project will be conducted exactly as outlined in the Proposal Narrative and that any modification to this protocol will be submitted to the Committee in the form of an amendment for its approval prior to implementation.*

**Principal Investigator:**

Penny A. James  11/11/2011  
 (typed/printed name) (signature) (date)

*As the faculty sponsor, my signature testifies that I have reviewed this application thoroughly and will oversee the research in its entirety. I hereby acknowledge my role as the principal investigator of record.*

**Faculty Sponsor:**

Dr. Karla A. Henderson  11/11/2011  
 (typed/printed name) (date)

\*Electronic submissions to the IRB are considered signed via an electronic signature. For student submissions this means that the faculty sponsor has reviewed the proposal prior to it being submitted and is copied on the submission.

Please complete this application and email as an attachment to: [debra\\_paxton@ncsu.edu](mailto:debra_paxton@ncsu.edu) or send by mail to: Institutional Review Board, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (Administrative Services III). **Please include consent forms and other study documents with your application and submit as one document.**

\*\*\*\*\*

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**Reviewer Decision** (Expedited or Exempt Review)

Exempt  Approved  Approved pending modifications  Table

Expedited Review Category:  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8a  8b  8c  9

Reviewer Name	Signature	Date
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## Appendix A1 - IRB Application (Continued)

North Carolina State University  
Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human Subjects in Research  
GUIDELINES FOR A PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

In your narrative, address each of the topics outlined below. Every application for IRB review must contain a proposal narrative, and failure to follow these directions will result in delays in reviewing/processing the protocol.

### A. INTRODUCTION

1. Briefly describe in lay language the purpose of the proposed research and why it is important.

The purpose of this study is to examine (a) how parents influence their children's outdoor play during middle childhood (i.e., ages 8-12 years); and (b) how parenting beliefs, values and practices related to their children's outdoor play differs based on the age or gender of the child or parental perceptions of their community as a safe play environment (e.g., busy streets or neighborhood bullies). My study has the potential to make a significant contribution to the leisure literature as it addresses aspects of a contemporary social issue. No research was found that focused on how parental interactions with their children differ in terms of parenting practices, nor how these efforts are perceived by the children themselves. My study expands the socialization of children's leisure literature by (a) focusing on the domain of children's outdoor play, (b) focusing on children younger than adolescence, (c) linking data from parents and their children, (d) using data collection methods to triangulate data and (e) developing a more comprehensive theoretical framework that can be used as the basis for further research into the influence of parental socialization (e.g., communication, parenting practices) on children's leisure.

2. If student research, indicate whether for a course, thesis, dissertation, or independent research.

My study will be conducted for the fulfillment of my dissertation research requirement as a PhD candidate in PRTM at NC State University.

### B. SUBJECT POPULATION

1. How many subjects will be involved in the research?

Estimates or ranges are acceptable. Please be aware that if you recruit over 10% more participants than originally requested, you will need to submit a request to modify your recruitment numbers.

It is estimated that 8-10 families will be involved in my comparative case study. Within each family, there is the potential for up to two parental figures and one child, ages 8-12 years to participate in the study. Therefore, participant numbers could range between 16 and 30 people.

2. Describe how subjects will be recruited. Please provide the IRB with any recruitment materials that will be used.

Potential cases will be identified through questioning people knowledgeable about an eligible child and his or her family. This approach will include inquiries of school officials or local non-profit professionals who work with children ages 8-12 years. I will schedule a meeting with these professionals to describe the purpose of the study, eligibility requirements, and outline the data collection methods (i.e., what would be asked of participating families). Selection of the first cases will rely heavily upon these referrals as families are identified who would be willing to spend more time with the researcher as procedural issues are worked through. I am a member and volunteer of the Sugar Grove Nature Center, an organization with a designated and designed outdoor play area. The Director, Angela Funk, has verbally offered to assist by providing at least two initial referrals from families who routinely bring their children to the center.

3. List specific eligibility requirements for subjects (or describe screening procedures), including those criteria that would exclude otherwise acceptable subjects.

My comparative case study relies on a purposeful sample. Initial recruitment efforts will focus on the inclusion of families with varying degrees to which children play outdoors. For example, some children play outdoors almost daily whereas other children play outdoors infrequently. As this study progresses, more targeted selection criteria will ensure that both literal and theoretical replication are achieved. Later cases will, thus, be selected to fill any gaps in representation, replicate earlier findings, or test revisions to working hypotheses based on earlier case study findings. A case is defined for this study as a multiple-child family residing within the same household. Eligibility is not restricted to traditional, two-parent households. Parental figures need not be the biological parents of the targeted 8-12 year old child. Foster parents or guardians who reside with the child and for all intents and purposes fulfill the role of the child's parent (e.g., establishing rules or permissions for playing outdoors) may be included. Cases will be drawn from families in the Bloomington-Normal, IL area where the researcher resides.

## Appendix A1 – IRB Application (Continued)

4. Explain any sampling procedure that might exclude specific populations.

Families with only one child or no children are not eligible for inclusion in my study. Parents and children must be fluent in English (i.e., spoken and written) given the nature of the data collection procedures. All written materials are at approximately a third grade reading level. Therefore, at least one parent must be able to read at a third grade level to possibly assist their child with the children's activity journal. The design of this case study requires more than one contact with the family as well as optional independently completed assignments throughout a week's data collection period. Some families may be too busy to participate.

5. Disclose any relationship between researcher and subjects - such as, teacher/student; employer/employee.

Referrals of eligible families have not yet been requested. There is a possibility that I may have worked with a family in the past year, as I worked with the Bloomington-Normal YMCA and oversaw the before and after school program in 5 area schools and directed the summer day camp. No effort is being made to seek out any of these families but it is conceivable that they could be included in referrals from area school and non-profit professionals. Their inclusion would be considered based on how well they meet the needs of the study rather than being included or excluded based on any prior relationship with me.

6. Check any vulnerable populations included in study:

- minors (under age 18) - if so, have you included a line on the consent form for the parent/guardian signature
- fetuses
- pregnant women
- persons with mental, psychiatric or emotional disabilities
- persons with physical disabilities
- economically or educationally disadvantaged
- prisoners
- elderly
- students from a class taught by principal investigator
- other vulnerable population.

7. If any of the above are used, state the necessity for doing so. Please indicate the approximate age range of the minors to be involved.

Outdoor play research has focused on middle childhood for many reasons but most important for this study is that during the ages of 8 - 12 years children have been shown to (a) have an interest in playing outdoors, (b) parents have granted children in this age range permission to play outdoors without immediate adult supervision, and (c) children in this age range have been observed playing outdoors. By the time children reach this age, they have become accustomed to people asking them questions (e.g., teachers), are better able to focus attention, and can answer questions about their routines and actual experiences. Generally, children in the targeted age range can provide usable and reliable interview responses with the techniques to be employed in this study.

### C. PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED

1. In lay language, describe completely all procedures to be followed during the course of the experimentation. Provide sufficient detail so that the Committee is able to assess potential risks to human subjects. In order for the IRB to completely understand the experience of the subjects in your project, please provide a detailed outline of everything subjects will experience as a result of participating in your project. Please be specific and include information on all aspects of the research, through subject recruitment and ending when the subject's role in the project is complete. All descriptions should include the informed consent process, interactions between the subjects and the researcher, and any tasks, tests, etc. that involve subjects. If the project involves more than one group of subjects (e.g. teachers and students, employees and supervisors), please make sure to provide descriptions for each subject group.

**I. Recruitment & Selection:** A parent would initially be approached by a referring professional from either their child's school or an area non-profit organization with which the family has a connection. An informal conversation would provide a brief description of the study, overview of what would be asked of the family, and compensation for participation. If a parent has expressed interest and given the professional permission to contact me and share the parent's contact information, I will call the parent to provide additional information about the study and answer any questions. At this time, I will ask general questions related to their 8 to 12 year old child's outdoor play and make sure the parent understands that participation in the study requires a time commitment over the course of 1 to 1 ½ weeks with more than one contact in their home for interviews and observation. A deadline will be set for the parent and myself to communicate regarding whether or not it is appropriate to move forward with including the family in the study. Specific screening criteria are outlined in B3 and B4 above. If both parties agree to move forward, an initial meeting will be scheduled with the entire family in their home. At the initial meeting, the researcher will (a) discuss the purpose of the study, (b) provide a detailed explanation of data collection methods and scheduling for

## Appendix A1 – IRB Application (Continued)

both parents and children, (c) provide an opportunity to discuss and review the optional children's activity journals, (d) discuss how anonymity and confidentiality of the family's contribution to the study will be protected including use of pseudonyms and secure storage of data, securing permission to audio record, video record, or photograph for purposes of data collection, (e) discuss compensation in the form of gift cards for participation, and finally (f) review parental informed consent and child assent forms with the family. If all parties agree to proceed, parents and children will be asked to sign the consent and assent forms. A week for primary data collection will be set with the specific scheduling details to be worked out at a later time through phone or email contact with one of the parents. Demographic information about the family and pseudonyms will be collected by the researcher.

**II. Overview of Scheduling for Data Collection:** Case study research follows an emergent design and the methods described are based on a review of related literature. *Not all of the methods included here will necessarily be employed in conducting each individual case study.* Similarly, I may discover that a method may need to be revised or a new strategies incorporated. In either case, the researcher shall contact the IRB prior to initiating these changes via submission of the Study Modification/Addendum Request form required by NC State. Actual scheduling will be dictated by the availability of the participants and the needs of the researcher (i.e., to allow sufficient time for the ongoing transcription and analysis of qualitative data). Therefore, the following is a sample schedule of how data collection may proceed within a given case study: (a) Monday evening: Interview with parent who will possibly assist child (if needed) with optional activity journal. (b) Tuesday evening: Interview with second parent (if applicable). Review optional child activity journal (CAJ) with child and parent(s), answer questions to assist in completing 1<sup>st</sup> of 5 day CAJ. (c) Thursday: First child interview session conducted. (d) Saturday: Second child interview conducted with the possibility of an optional walking interview with parent and child's permission to view outdoor play artifacts (e.g., toys or structures) and play spaces. (e) Sunday: Data Collection Wrap-Up Meeting where I: (a) collect and review optional CAJ with family, (b) provide opportunity for additional researcher or participant questions to be answered or information clarified, (c) may share interpretation of facts or information provided by the family for verification (i.e., member checks), (d) debrief the research experience with the family, (e) discuss the potential for future contact with the family, and (e) present the family with the participation incentive. Specific time estimates for each data collection procedure are provided in C2 below.

**III. Parent Interview:** An attempt has been made to be as inclusive as possible in providing a comprehensive list of all anticipated lines of inquiry including questions and probes (see **Attachment A**). However, given the emergent nature of this study, it will be necessary to follow the train of thought or path set forth by the participants themselves as it relates to their children's free-time activities, especially outdoor play and how they as parents interact with their children in these areas. Parent(s) will be interviewed separately in the family home.

**IV. Child Interview:** An attempt has been made to be as inclusive as possible in providing a comprehensive list of all anticipated lines of inquiry including questions and probes (see **Attachment B**). In addition to the issues related to conducting qualitative interviews with adults outlined in III above, interviewing children presents additional challenges to the researcher. To minimize power issues, leading questions, or reticence by the child to participate, several strategies found in the literature to facilitate the child interview process *may be employed as needed. It is not anticipated that each method will be necessary with each child. The following is a list presented rather as a "tool box" from which I may draw as needed to develop rapport with the child and to focus a discussion of the child's outdoor play, other free-time activities, and their perceptions of their interactions with their parents related to these activities (e.g., what rules the child's parents have about playing outdoors).* These additional methods include:

- Referencing the progress or lack thereof on the optional Child's Activity Journal (CAJ; **Attachments E and F**)
- Using a projective technique that is developmentally appropriate to the age of the child
  - Younger children would be given the opportunity to make puppets representing each of their immediate family members or use family play figures provided by the researcher to "put on a play" that tells the story of what happens before a child goes outdoors to play (**Attachment C**).
  - Older children would instead be shown an image of a child peering out of a door. The child would be asked to tell the same story as the younger children (**Attachment D**).
- Providing crayons, colored pencils, markers, and paper for drawing. After a free drawing period, I may ask child to draw a map of their outdoor play spaces including things like where their parents permit them to play or not and why the child believes the parents have these rules. This map may even be used to guide an optional walking interview of outdoor play artifacts and play spaces with the parents' permission and the child's verbal assent.

## Appendix A1 – IRB Application (Continued)

- Using photo-elicitation techniques whereby the child is shown either photos representative of local rural and urban outdoor environments ranging from woods to small patches of grass around an apartment building or coloring pages of children, either alone or with others (i.e., children or parents) engaged in a variety of outdoor activities ranging from nature photography to sports (e.g., badminton or baseball). Photos were taken by the researcher and contain no people. There is a possibility that the children may recognize some of the photos taken at public parks in the area. Coloring pages were downloaded from several free coloring page websites and were selected to represent the wide range of children's possible outdoor activities. These items are not attached but can be scanned into a PDF and submitted for IRB review if needed.
- Finally, there may be periods of free play either initially to establish rapport or at random periods throughout the interview process to allow the children to "take a break." Research has shown that child-initiated tangents can help the child to maintain a sense of control in an interview environment.

**V: Child's Activity Journal (CAJ):** The purpose of this instrument is to focus or initiate discussion during a child interview session. Completion of this activity is *optional* so as not to overwhelm busy families but to encourage forethought prior to child interviews to facilitate a more conversational introduction to the interview process for the child. Two journals were designed to accommodate the ranging developmental needs of younger and older children within the study (see **Attachments E and F** respectively). Depending upon the level of completion, data may also be used to triangulate child participation, enjoyment, and interest in outdoor play within the context of the child's other free-time activities. All children will have the option to choose either journal format so as not to discourage older children who may dislike or not want to do more writing because of their other homework commitments. Crayons and markers will be provided with the younger journal and colored pencils, charcoal, and water color paints will be provided with the older child journals to allow for developmentally appropriate and engaging forms of self-expression.

**VI: Activity and Socialization Observation Checklist:** The *researcher* will use this instrument to capture information about the child's free-time activities and parent interactions related to those activities that coincide with my visit the family home for purposes of data collection (**Attachment G**). There will be no dedicated observation periods. The purpose of this instrument is triangulation of data regarding the child's activities and parental interactions with the child related to these free-time activities. The parents and children will be informed that the researcher will be recording observations during the course of parent and child interviews.

2. How much time will be required of each subject?

Principal data collection for each family will occur over the span of 1 to 1 ½ weeks. Each parent will be asked to participate in a 1 hour interview. Children will be asked to participate in at least one ½ hour interview and it is anticipated that this will typically require a second ½ hour interview for most children. All family members will be asked to participate in a final wrap-up meeting of 1 hour at the end of the data collection week. Children will also be asked to complete an *optional* daily activity journal with which the parents may or may not provide assistance. The degree to which the children complete this journal or the amount of time and effort expended is expected to vary greatly from child to child. Finally, there is a possibility that an important theoretical development may emerge in later case studies necessitating contact with a family from a previous case study. It is anticipated that this could be addressed in the course of a ½ hour phone call.

**D. POTENTIAL RISKS**

1. State the potential risks (psychological, social, physical, financial, legal or other) connected with the proposed procedures and explain the steps taken to minimize these risks.

There are no foreseeable psychological, social, physical, financial, legal, or other risks to parents or children for participating in this study.

2. Will there be a request for information that subjects might consider to be personal or sensitive (e.g. private behavior, economic status, sexual issues, religious beliefs, or other matters that if made public might impair their self-esteem or reputation or could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability)?

Parents and children will be asked about parenting practices and interactions between the parents and children as they relate to a child's participation in free-time activities with an emphasis on outdoor play. It is not anticipated that this would pose any threat to a parent or child's self-esteem or reputation.

- a. If yes, please describe and explain the steps taken to minimize these risks.

n/a

## Appendix A1 – IRB Application (Continued)

3. Could any of the study procedures produce stress or anxiety, or be considered offensive, threatening, or degrading? If yes, please describe why they are important and what arrangements have been made for handling an emotional reaction from the subject.

None of the procedures in this study would be expected to produce stress or anxiety as participation in each data collection technique is voluntary. No lines of questioning or inquiry that would be considered offensive, threatening, or degrading. I will maintain a neutral stance (i.e., non-evaluative) related to beliefs, values, or parenting practices shared in the course of conducting this study.

4. How will data be recorded and stored?

Hard copies of all data will be kept in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home. Only the researcher will have access to this cabinet and the data therein contained. Hard copies of data would include: a) basic demographic information about the family for purposes of case description, b) researcher's field notes, and (c) activity/socialization observation checklist. All data will be captured digitally except for demographic information as this is the only place that actual names and contact information for a family will be recorded. The researcher's demographic information collection form will be shredded and destroyed at the end of data collection for my study in April 2011. Please see response to question 5 below for handling of all data that will be digitally captured or stored.

- a. How will identifiers be used in study notes and other materials?

Parents and children will be identified in transcriptions, field notes, and research memos by pseudonyms that they themselves choose at the researcher's initial meeting with the family.

- b. How will reports be written, in aggregate terms, or will individual responses be described?

The pseudonyms chosen by the participants will also be used in writing the individual and comparative case study reports. Exemplary quotes will be used to demonstrate evidence of theoretical concepts and propositions. Descriptions of families in these reports will not provide a level of detail that would be anticipated to permit anyone to identify a specific family or individual.

5. If audio or video recordings are collected, will you retain or destroy the recordings? How will recordings be stored during the project and after, as per your destruction/retention plans?

Parent and child interviews will be digitally audio recorded. Digital photos will be taken of physical artifacts (e.g., outdoor toys) and play spaces (e.g., tree house). No identifying information or people will be included in the photographic record. Children's activity journals will be scanned into a PDF document and the original returned to the child. All digital records will be securely stored on the researcher's computer which is password protected. Researcher's field notes will be digitally scanned into a PDF document and the hard copy kept in the case file. All digital data will be transcribed and coded in MAXQDA version 10 on the researcher's computer. A back up of all digital records will be kept on an external hard drive that will be kept in a locked firebox in my home. All hard copies of field notes will be kept in the case file in a locked cabinet in my home. Only I and my faculty sponsor will have access to the locked cabinet, the computer, and the firebox. Upon completion of the study, all identifying information for families, parents, and children will be destroyed.

6. Is there any deception of the human subjects involved in this study? If yes, please describe why it is necessary and describe the debriefing procedures that have been arranged.

No deception is employed in this research study.

### E. POTENTIAL BENEFITS

*This does not include any form of compensation for participation.*

1. What, if any, direct benefit is to be gained by the subject? If no direct benefit is expected, but indirect benefit may be expected (knowledge may be gained that could help others), please explain.

No benefits are anticipated for the individuals or families that participate in this study other than that the methods employed in the study have the potential to open a dialog within the family about the nature of children's free-time activities, especially outdoor play, and how parents and children interact related to those activities. The data collection methods and strategies are designed to generate thought and reflection on the part of both parents and children.

## Appendix A1 – IRB Application (Continued)

### F. COMPENSATION

*Please keep in mind that the logistics of providing compensation to your subjects (e.g., if your business office requires names of subjects who received compensation) may compromise anonymity or complicate confidentiality protections. If, while arranging for subject compensation, you must make changes to the anonymity or confidentiality provisions for your research, you must contact the IRB office prior to implementing those changes.*

1. Describe compensation

An incentive of \$100 per family is available from the Department of PRTM at NC State University. I will be given funds to purchase gift cards to be presented to the families at the end of the scheduled one week data collection period. One of the parents will be required to sign a form confirming the date, amount, and type of gift card (e.g., Mobil gas card) received. This form will contain the printed name and signature of the parent. This form shall be kept in a locked cabinet with the other records related to this study and shall be made available to the department should they request proof of dispensation of incentive funds.

2. Explain compensation provisions if the subject withdraws prior to completion of the study.

To receive the \$100 incentive, at least one parent interview and one child interview must be completed with the researcher. Participation will not be pro-rated if a family withdraws from the study prior to completing these two minimum interviews. This stipulation is stated on the parent informed consent form. I will also explain this stipulation to the family on two separate occasions: (a) during my first phone contact with the parent of an interested family and (b) during my initial meeting with the entire family.

3. If class credit will be given, list the amount and alternative ways to earn the same amount of credit.

n/a

### G. COLLABORATORS

1. If you anticipate that additional investigators (other than those named on **Cover Page**) may be involved in this research, list them here indicating their institution, department and phone number.

n/a

2. Will anyone besides the PI or the research team have access to the data (including completed surveys) from the moment they are collected until they are destroyed.

n/a

### H. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

1. Do you have a significant financial interest or other conflict of interest in the sponsor of this project? No

2. Does your current conflicts of interest management plan include this relationship and is it being properly followed? n/a

### I. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

1. If a questionnaire, survey or interview instrument is to be used, attach a copy to this proposal.

- Attachment A: Parent Interview Guide
- Attachment B: Child Interview Guide
- Attachment C: Projective Technique for Younger Children
- Attachment D: Projective Technique for Older Children
- Attachment E: Younger Child Activity Journal
- Attachment F: Older Child Activity Journal
- Attachment G: Activity and Socialization Observation Checklist

2. Attach a copy of the informed consent form to this proposal.

- Attachment H: Parent Informed Consent Form
- Attachment I: Child Assent Form.

3. Please provide any additional materials that may aid the IRB in making its decision.

### J. HUMAN SUBJECT ETHICS TRAINING

\*Please consider taking the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI), a free, comprehensive ethics training program for researchers conducting research with human subjects. Just click on the underlined link.

## Appendix A2 – IRB Approval Letter

North Carolina State University is a land-grant university and a constituent institution of the University of North Carolina

Office of Research and Innovation  
Division of Research Administration

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

Campus Box 7514  
Raleigh, North Carolina 27695-7514

919.515.2444 (phone)  
919.515.7721 (fax)

From: Deb Paxton, IRB Administrator  
North Carolina State University  
Institutional Review Board

Date: December 16, 2011

Title: Parental Socialization of Children's Outdoor Play

IRB#: 2409-12-12

Dear Ms. James,

The project listed above has been reviewed by the NC State Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human Subjects in Research, and is approved for one year. **The approval for this protocol will expire on December 15, 2012 and will need continuing review before that date.**

NOTE:

1. You must use the attached consent forms which have the approval and expiration dates of your study.
2. This board complies with requirements found in Title 45 part 46 of The Code of Federal Regulations. For NCSU the Assurance Number is: FWA00003429.
3. Any changes to the protocol and supporting documents must be submitted and approved by the IRB prior to implementation.
4. If any unanticipated problems occur, they must be reported to the IRB office within 5 business days by completing and submitting the unanticipated problem form on the IRB website.
5. Your approval for this study lasts for one year from the review date. If your study extends beyond that time, including data analysis, you must obtain continuing review from the IRB.

Sincerely,



Deb Paxton  
NC State IRB

## Appendix A3 - IRB Extension Application

### North Carolina State Institutional Review Board IRB CONTINUATION REVIEW FORM

To have a study's approval renewed, please complete this form and send it to [ncsuirboffice@ncsu.edu](mailto:ncsuirboffice@ncsu.edu) with any necessary attachments.

<b>Study Information</b>	
IRB #: 2409	IRB Approval Expiration Date: 12/15/2012
Project Title: Parental Socialization of Children's Outdoor Play	
Principal Investigator(s): Penny A. James	
E-mail Address for Principal Investigator(s): penny.ann.james@gmail.com	
Best Contact Phone Number: (309)660-4938	
Faculty Sponsor(s): Dr. Karla A. Henderson	
E-mail Address for Faculty Sponsor: karla_henderson@ncsu.edu	

**IMPORTANT NOTES:**

- For studies with Expedited Review: applications for continuing review approval should be submitted, preferably, at least 3 weeks prior to Expiration date.
- For studies with Full Board Review: applications for continuing review approval should be submitted, preferably, at least 4 weeks prior to Expiration date.
- If there are any revisions that you would like to request, along with your continuing review form, please submit a "Study Revision Request Form"
- Make sure to send the most current (approved) consent forms for validation
  - \*If the project obtains verbal consent, please provide a script used for obtaining consent.
  - \*If your project has a waiver of some/all of the requirements for consent, please check here:

*If form is sent via email and faculty sponsor is cc'd on the email, you do not need signatures.*

\*\*\*\*\*  
(For IRB office use only)

Review Received:      Administrative              Expedited              Full Board

Review Decision:      Approve              Approve with Modifications      Not Approved

Study No Longer Needs Continuing Review Approval

Review Notes:

Reviewer \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix A3 – IRB Extension Application (Continued)

### REPORT ON STUDY PROGRESS

1. List the total number of participants enrolled to date: 35
2. List the total number of participants originally approved by the IRB. 30  
Provide an explanation in the space below if the number of participants currently enrolled is different than the number of participants approved by the IRB.  
**Five of the ten families in the study contained multiple children within the 8-12 year age eligibility range. Rather than selecting one eligible child to participate as proposed, siblings and parents expressed a desire for all eligible children to be included--so that none of the children felt excluded. I had not anticipated this response from families prior to data collection. After discussing with my faculty sponsor, we concluded that including the additional children was not in violation of my IRB approval as no additional risks were incurred and participation of all children remained voluntary and subject not only to parent consent but to each individual child's assent as well. At the same time, having another child's perspective within a family not only added to further triangulation of data for each qualitative case study but also provided additional data for the investigation of possible age and gender differences in the siblings' experiences of outdoor play.**  
  
It was explained to the parents that the inclusion of more than one eligible child was not necessary and that no additional compensation would be provided. Parents expressed a desire for their children to participate in the study as a valuable and unique learning experience. The children expressed curiosity and thought the child interview activities sounded like fun. The inclusion of additional siblings resulted in between 1 and 3 children being interviewed within a family. No ineligible children were included in the study. In all cases ineligible siblings were too young, which was explained to them and their parents. The younger siblings were given an opportunity to play with interview toys and select coloring pages to keep for themselves, which seemed to ease their disappointment. While transcripts from all parent and child interviews were typed verbatim and on occasion included family conversations or interactions related to ineligible children, no information from these ineligible children was included in the analyses. All family members were identified only by their chosen pseudonyms, whether participating themselves or discussed by other family members.
3. Did any participants withdraw from your study?  
No  Yes   
If yes, provide an explanation for each participant that withdrew:
5. Were there any adverse events or unanticipated problems in your study?  
No  Yes   
If yes, please provide a detailed statement in a separate document.
6. Were there any complaints from participants or others regarding this study?  
No  Yes   
If yes, please describe the complaint and/or attach copies of written complaints.
7. Is there any new information since the last IRB review that may impact the risks and benefits of your research?  
No  Yes   
If yes, please submit a summary of relevant information highlighting these risks/benefits below:
8. Has the protocol for this study been revised since the last IRB approval date?

## Appendix A3 – IRB Extension Application (Continued)

No  Yes

If yes, briefly describe all changes including approval dates:

9. Are you planning to continue participant enrollment in the upcoming year?

No  Yes

If yes, list the number of participants you anticipate enrolling:

14. Have there been any changes regarding funding for the study?

No  Yes

If yes, please provide the IRB with any information regarding the changes (example: a different source of funding, or a new relationship between investigator and sponsor):

10. Briefly list study activities conducted since last date of approval or renewal?

Data was collected from parents and children in 10 families in accordance with the study protocol approved by IRB. Digitally recorded interviews have been transcribed. Analysis of the data has commenced and is anticipated to be concluded within a few months.

11. Will study activities, including data collection, continue in the next year?

No  Yes

If yes, briefly list study activities you anticipate conducting:

There remains a possibility that it could be past the December 15, 2012 IRB deadline when some families are finally given the opportunity, at their discretion, to review the final case studies for their families. Those family case studies attempt to summarize pertinent data to the cross-case analysis collected from members of a given family within 10-15 pages. All families will be emailed the case report for their family only and given a period of one week to provide any corrections. This will serve as a member check that in reducing the volume of the data provided that misinterpretations of family member's comments or intent do not occur. Families have already received compensation for participation in the study and been informed that they have fulfilled all obligations for participation. All parents within the study expressed during data collection a desire to review their family's case study. It will be reiterated in the email accompanying their case study that providing any corrections will be voluntary. No new information will be requested or analyzed. The purpose of this verification measure is merely to ensure correct interpretation of the information families have already provided.

12. If data collection is complete, are study activities limited to data analysis ONLY at this time?

No  Yes

If yes, has all participant-identifiable information been removed from study records?

No  Yes

If yes, describe how this was done below:

Please see explanation under additional notes at end of this form.

13. What is the anticipated date for completion of data analysis?

**While it is anticipated that data analysis may not be fully completed by the December 15, 2012 expiration of IRB approval for this project, I request an extension until January 31, 2013. That should allow a sufficient cushion for any time overruns.**

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Request for Renewal Termination**

*Please fill out this section **ONLY** if data collection is complete and if all identifiers have been removed from the data at this time.*

## Appendix A3 – IRB Extension Application (Continued)

Please check yes, no, or not applicable (N/A). If any of your answers are not applicable, please explain why under “Additional Notes.”

STUDY ACTIVITIES	YES	NO	N/A
Data are no longer being collected and enrollment is closed.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Data analysis is complete at this time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Only writing and/or publication activities are ongoing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
All data including video and/or audio recordings have been destroyed or properly stored, as per the originally approved IRB application.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participant identifiers (direct/or indirect) have been removed from all study materials and data sets.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There is no additional research beyond what was intended and approved for this study.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Additional Notes** Family contact information and names associated with each family members' pseudonyms are retained on demographic information sheets. This is the only place participants' names or other family members can be linked to their pseudonyms in transcripts and analyses. These sheets are stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home and only the researcher has access to this cabinet. The demographic forms will be destroyed as each family responds with any clarifications for their individual family case study or their one-week review period has expired. Demographic sheets will be shredded before discarding.

*It is the researchers' responsibility to maintain the confidentiality of the data.*

*Please contact the NCSU IRB office if stored data is used for research purposes beyond what was approved by the IRB for this study.*

## Appendix: A4 - IRB Extension Approval

North Carolina State University is a land-grant university and a constituent institution of the University of North Carolina.

Office of Research and Innovation  
Division of Research Administration

**NC STATE UNIVERSITY**

Campus Box 7514  
Raleigh, North Carolina 27695-7514

919.515.2444 (phone)  
919.515.7721 (fax)

From: Deb Paxton, IRB Administrator  
North Carolina State University  
Institutional Review Board

Date: October 23, 2012

Project Title: Parental Socialization of Children's Outdoor Play

IRB#: 2409

Dear Penny James

The continuation request for the project listed above has been approved in accordance with policy under 45 CFR 46, and is approved for one year (through October 23, 2013). If your study lasts beyond that time, including data analysis, you must apply for continuing approval before the listed expiration date.

NOTE:

1. This committee complies with requirements found in Title 45 part 46 of The Code of Federal Regulations. For NCSU projects the Assurance Number is: FWA00003429.
2. Review de novo of this proposal is necessary if any significant alterations/additions are made.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact the IRB office at 919.515.4514. Please provide a copy of this letter to your faculty sponsor, if applicable. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Deb Paxton  
NC State IRB

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## Appendix B1 - Parent Informed Consent Form

### North Carolina State University INFORMED CONSENT FORM for RESEARCH

#### Parental Socialization of Children's Outdoor Play

Penny A. James  
email: penny.ann.james@gmail.com

Dr. Karla A. Henderson  
email: karla\_henderson@ncsu.edu

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Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management

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#### **What are some general things you should know about research studies?**

You and your child are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to be a part of this study, to choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty. The purpose of research studies is to gain a better understanding of a certain topic or issue. You are not guaranteed any personal benefits from being in a study. Research studies also may pose risks to those that participate. In this consent form you will find specific details about the research in which you and your child are being asked to participate. If you do not understand something in this form it is your right to ask the researcher for clarification or more information. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you. If at any time you have questions about your participation, do not hesitate to contact the researcher(s) named above.

#### **What is the purpose of this study?**

The purpose of my study is to learn how parents influence their children's outdoor play.

#### **What will happen if you take part in the study?**

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a 60 minute face-to-face interview with the researcher. Your child will be asked to participate in up to two 30 minute face-to-face interviews with the researcher. With your permission and the child's assent, one of the parent or child sessions could involve a walking interview to see your child's toys and outdoor play areas. All interviews will take place in and around your home. The researcher will take notes during all interviews. You and your child will be asked to participate in a wrap up meeting that could take up to 60 minutes at the end of the data collection week. Your child will be asked to complete an *optional* Child Activity Journal (CAJ) to help him or her begin thinking about his or her outdoor play and other free-time activity experiences before meeting with the researcher for an interview. With your permission digital recordings will be made as follows: (a) in home or walking interviews with parents and children and the wrap up meeting will be audio recorded, (b) the researcher may ask to take digital photos of toys or play spaces. No identifying information will appear in the photos, (c) if the child completed the CAJ, the researcher will ask to digitally scan the journal and return the original to the child. It may be necessary to contact you to clarify information you or your child has shared or to ask questions that arise in talking to other families in the course of the study. I understand that your time is valuable and this will only occur when deemed essential to the study. Such follow-up inquiries are anticipated to be able to be addressed in a 30 minute phone call. This study is expected to conclude in May 2011.

#### **Risks**

There are no foreseeable risks to you or your child. A portion of the interviews will address family interactions and rules. You and your child are free to skip any questions that you don't want to answer.

## Appendix B1 – Parent Informed Consent Form (Continued)

### **Benefits**

No direct benefit to you or your child is expected.

### **Confidentiality**

The information in the study records will be kept confidential to the full extent allowed by law. All digital data such as audio recordings, transcripts of interviews or digital photographs of toys will be stored on a computer protected by a password. No photos will include identifying information about your child or your family. Only the researcher and faculty sponsor will have access to these digital records. A back up copy of these files will be kept on an external hard drive. The external hard drive will be securely stored in a locked cabinet. No reference will be made to you or your child in oral or written reports which could link you to the study. Instead, any references to you or your child will be labeled with pseudonyms.

### **Compensation**

A \$100 incentive in the form of a gift card to an area store of the families' choice will be presented at the end of the one week data collection period. To receive the incentive, at least one child interview and at least one parent interview with the researcher must be completed. Participation will not be pro-rated if a family withdraws from the study without completing these minimal participation requirements.

### **What if you have questions about this study?**

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Penny James by email at: penny.ann.james@gmail.com or cell phone: (309)660-4938.

### **What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/515-4514).

### **Consent to Participate**

"I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled."

**Parent Participant's signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of your child/children and their grade level (s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Investigator's signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix B2 - Child Assent Form**

**North Carolina State University**

**CHILD ASSENT FORM for RESEARCH**

**I, \_\_\_\_\_, understand that my parents/guardians have said it is okay for me to answer questions about outdoor play for a research project done by NC State University.**

**I am taking part because I want to. I can stop at any time I want to. I won't get in any trouble if I stop.**

---

*Signature*

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## Appendix C1 - Case Study Protocol

### Case Study Protocol

#### I. Overview

##### A. Aim of Study

The aim of my qualitative case study was to develop an explanation of the influence of parental socialization on children's outdoor play for the purposes of theoretical generalization (Patton, 2002, Yin, 2003). Analytic generalization is a goal of case study research where findings are sought to generalize to some broader theory whether existing (e.g., Erickson's psycho-social stages of development) or grounded theory that emerges from the data (Yin, 2003). Explanation building in case study research requires either theory development through methods such as grounded theory, a reliance upon an existing theory (e.g., SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985 and EVT; Eccles, 1983), or both as in the analytic induction strategy proposed for my study (Patton; Yin).

##### B. Research Questions and Theoretical Propositions

*Research Question 1: How does parental socialization influence children's outdoor play?*

Theoretical Proposition 1:

*Direct forms of parental socialization influence children's outdoor play.*

Theoretical Proposition 2:

*Indirect forms of parental socialization influence children's outdoor play.*

*Research Question 2: How do parents differ in the socialization of their children's outdoor play?*

Theoretical Proposition 3:

Parents socialize their children's outdoor play differently based on the *gender* of their children (e.g., redirection of children's free time activities toward gender-stereotypical pursuits).

Theoretical Proposition 4:

Parents socialize their children's outdoor play differently based on the *age* of their children (e.g., increased home range permissions).

Theoretical Proposition 5:

Parents socialize their children's outdoor play differently based on perceptions of *environmental factors* in their community (e.g., traffic or gangs).

## Appendix C1 – Case Study Protocol (Continued)

### C. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for my study is predicated upon an integration of the outdoor play and leisure socialization literature with two developmental theories of parental socialization (i.e., SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985 and EVT; Eccles, 1983). The construct of *intrinsic motivation* was used to examine the interest, enjoyment, and participation of the children in outdoor play. The construct related to *parenting practices* included three dimensions: (a) *autonomy support*, (b) *interpersonal involvement*, and (c) *structure*. Sensitizing concepts related to the construct of *beliefs and values* were: (a) valuing children's autonomy, (b) subjective task value, and (c) perceptions of child's competence. Constructs derived from SDT and EVT were refined relevant to children's outdoor play and serve as sensitizing concepts for my qualitative case study investigation of parental socialization and children's outdoor play.

### D. Role of Case Study Protocol

Case study protocols facilitate continuity in data collection and ongoing comparative-case analyses (Yin, 2003). The protocol outlines the procedures for conducting individual case studies and serves to ensure that subsequent studies will be comparable for purposes of literal and theoretical replication rather than being concerned with cross-case comparisons. The same types of data and sources must be collected at each site (Henderson, 2006).

## II. Data Collection (Field) Procedures

### A. Recruiting and Screening Potential Cases

My study relies on a purposeful sample. In qualitative research, purposeful sampling may be used to demonstrate either ordinary or differing perspectives about a topic or phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). Stake (2005) suggested that in conducting qualitative case studies, cases should be selected that afford a researcher the greatest opportunities for learning. Accessible cases afford researchers greater opportunities to learn from the participants of a study because the researcher can spend more time with them (Stake). Each case constitutes an entire study whereby convergent evidence (i.e., data triangulation) is brought to bear in confirming, repudiating, or refining a theory (Creswell, 1998; Yin). The credibility of findings in a comparative case study is dependent upon the quality of the individual case studies (Patton). Therefore, I seek to fully develop sufficient individual case studies for purposes of (a) literal replication, (b) theoretical replication, and (c) theory development (i.e., grounded theory) in explaining the phenomenon of parental socialization of children's outdoor play. This will require the inclusion of a families that collectively represent the community from which they were drawn as well as along a continuum of children who play outdoors a great deal to those children who rarely play outdoors.

### 1. Recruitment

#### a. Referrals from Local Professionals

## **Appendix C1 – Case Study Protocol (Continued)**

Informal inquiries will be made of school officials or local non-profit professionals who work with children ages 8-12 years in and around the urban center of a small metro county in the Midwest to identify eligible and interested families. I will follow up for contact information of potential cases. I will contact the parent(s) to explain the study, what would be asked of them, their rights as participants, and remuneration for participation and make a determination as to whether to continue screening for consideration to be included in my study.

### **b. Referrals from Participants**

I will also consider referrals from participants in my study to identify eligible and interested families. I will contact the parent(s) of potential cases to explain the study, what would be asked of them, their rights as participants, and remuneration for participation and make a determination as to whether to continue screening for consideration to be included in my study.

### **c. Other**

In the event that referrals provide an inadequate pool of eligible families, it may be necessary to make formal inquiries through all area schools and non-profit agencies working with children ages 8-12.

## **2. Screening**

### **a. Presentation of Credentials**

I shall present my North Carolina State University (NC State) student ID to the parent(s) at our first meeting. Any written correspondence with families will be on official Parks, Recreation & Tourism Management Department letterhead.

### **b. Eligible Case**

I define a case as a multiple-child family residing within a household in and around the urban center of a small metro county in the Midwest, where parental figures and children ages 8-12 years represent the embedded units of analysis. Eligibility for consideration as a case for my study is not restricted to traditional, two-parent households. Parental figures do not need to be the biological parents of the targeted child. Foster parents or guardians who reside with the child and for all intents and purposes fulfill the role of the child's parent (e.g., establishing rules or permissions for playing outdoors) may be included in my study.

### **c. Relevance for Theory Development**

## **Appendix C1 – Case Study Protocol (Continued)**

In addition to ensuring cases adhere to my definitions of cases and embedded units of analysis, cases will be screened for their anticipated value in furthering the study by contributing to (a) literal replication, (b) theoretical replication, or (c) theory development (i.e., grounded theory). This will also include consideration of sibling's age or gender in comparison to the targeted 8-12 year old child.

### **d. Remuneration for Participation**

I will offer an incentive for participation in the form of (2) \$50 gift cards per family to Walmart. Payment will be made at the conclusion of data collection.

## **B. Communication and Scheduling with Cases**

### **1. Communication**

Contact information for myself (i.e., cell phone number and personal email address), my dissertation committee chair (i.e., office phone and business email address), and the North Carolina State University IRB board (i.e., business phone, business email, and mailing address) will be provided to participants. I will ask parents for their street address, home phone number, cell phone number(s), and email address(es) as well as their contact preference to be recorded on Demographic Information Sheet. I will contact parents via their preferred method. Children will not be directly contacted without going through the child's parent(s) and then will only be contacted by phone, never by email. There shall be no contact with any member of the family via social media such as Facebook or Twitter.

### **2. Scheduling**

#### **a. Time Table**

Data collection for each case (i.e., family) is planned to occur over the course of approximately one week with 60 minute parent interview(s) occurring at least two days before the first of two 30 minute interviews or single 60 minute interview with the targeted child. Interviews should be scheduled early enough in the day that there is adequate time for data clarification, elaboration, and evaluation (Patton, 2002). A 60 minute Wrap Up Meeting will provide an opportunity to address any topics not adequately covered during interviews or to clarify information the parents or children had previously shared. Interviews and wrap up will be scheduled during my preliminary meeting with the family. An attempt will be made to schedule interviews no less than two weeks in advance.

#### **b. Reminders**

## Appendix C1 – Case Study Protocol (Continued)

I will contact parent(s) one week prior to our scheduled data collection sessions to confirm. If a family cannot meet with me during the pre-arranged week, it may be necessary to replace them depending upon the scheduling of other cases and the families' availability. For example, the parent(s) may state that the family would be available the following week but I might already have data collection with another family scheduled.

### **c. Follow-ups**

It may be necessary to contact parents to clarify information they or their child has shared or to ask questions that arise in talking to other families in the course of the study. This will only occur when deemed essential to the study. Such follow-up inquiries may involve email correspondence with the researcher, scheduling a phone conference, or possibly scheduling an additional interview session with you or your child. Calling participants to follow up indicates that the researcher is taking the interviewee's responses seriously and cares about the accuracy of what that person shared (Patton, 2002).

## **C. Data Collection Plan**

### **1. Preparation for Site Visit**

#### **a. Records to Review**

The case study protocol should be reviewed prior to each site visit (Yin, 2003). Case study narratives should be reviewed from prior cases. Field notes and memos from prior interviews within the case or from previous cases (Henderson, 2006). Parent interviews must at least be reviewed and if possible transcribed prior to conducting child interviews. Parents can provide insights into their child that will enable me to better establish rapport, trust, and ask more informed questions to which the child can respond in greater detail (Garbarino et al., 1992).

#### **b. Driving Directions**

Directions to the site will be entered into my GPS navigation system. I will also print off a backup hard copy from Google Maps Directions. I will incorporate a 15 minute cushion into stated drive times to allow for any delays due to traffic, construction, or getting turned around.

#### **c. Digital Equipment**

- 1) Charge or replace batteries
- 2) Test digital recorder, cassette recorder, and camera

#### **d. Site Visit Checklist**

## Appendix C1 – Case Study Protocol (Continued)

The site visit checklist will be used to ensure that I have all of the materials and equipment necessary for conducting interviews and observations during site visits.

### **e. On Site Procedures**

If possible, I will make an initial visit to obtain signed forms, discuss the logistics of the study, schedule visits for interviews (separately for parents and children) and wrap up meeting, as well as to answer any questions. I will request permission at the initial visit to digitally record all interviews and photograph artifacts. I will make efforts to begin establishing a positive rapport with the family and especially the children at this initial meeting. I will ensure parental consent and child assent forms are signed and a copy of these forms returned to the parents when I return for interviews. A parent may ask me my opinion or personal advice related to the topic or to something else (Henderson, 2006). I will be honest with the parent or child that I am not a child expert, merely a researcher interested in this topic due to my own personal and professional experiences. If a parent asks me for information about an aspect of the study that I could share with them, I would offer to do so after my data collection has concluded.

Again the child's verbal assent will be obtained before I conduct that interview. I will try to position myself at the child's level during interview sessions. I will attempt to keep interviews shorter for children, and may schedule more than one session as necessary to progress at the child's comfort level. Interviews will take place in a more public room like the living room or family room where family members are close by but not directly present to influence the parents' or child's responses. Efforts to observe toys or play spaces will be conducted under the *rule of threes*, a common practice in non-profit agencies that work with minors, meaning that at least three people will be involved in any interaction. At no time will I be alone with a child beyond earshot of the child's parent or parents. Another child or adult must accompany us for the protection of the child as well as my own protection against any allegations of inappropriate or unethical behavior.

## **2. Interviews**

### **a. Interview Guides**

Using an interview guide provides me with cues to ensure that all necessary topics are discussed in the course of an interview without dictating the placement or formulation of specific questions (Henderson, 2006). Rather, my goal is to strike a balance between

## Appendix C1 – Case Study Protocol (Continued)

fostering parents and children's spontaneous responses to broad questions about the topic as would be warranted in an exploratory or descriptive case study and probing for confirming or disconfirming evidence related to my initial theoretical framework.

### **b. Parent Interviews**

Parent interviews will be scheduled for approximately 1 hour and conducted prior to interviewing the child. If possible, I will schedule separate interviews for each parent. I will refer to a bulleted list of topics drawn from the full parent interview guide. Parents can provide insights into their child that will enable me to better establish rapport, trust, and ask more informed questions to which the child can respond in greater detail (Garbarino et al., 1992).

### **c. Child Interviews**

Actual interviews will be semi-structured based on the incorporation of activities to encourage and focus discussion of a child's outdoor play. I will also refer to a bulleted list for reference during the interview to ensure all areas of inquiry have been adequately addressed. This interview guide presents a full list of potential questions to be asked of children for IRB purposes. Care was taken to make language appropriate for children's developmental level and to ensure neutrality so children's responses would not be led by the framing of the question itself.

Child interviews will be scheduled over the course of one 60 minute or two visits of approximately 30 minutes each. Children have shorter attention spans than adults and are more likely to *open up* and share more information if the researcher is not perceived as a stranger or authority figure (Garbarino et al., 1992). The use of props (e.g., drawing materials) is common in conducting interviews with children as they can provide a fun way to ease into a topic (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Using props and allowing off topic tangents allows the child to exercise some control in the interview situation (Garbarino et al.).

I will take an interview kit containing crayons, markers, drawing paper and a variety of small toys with me to each child interview. The child will be offered an opportunity to use these objects for free play if he/she likes before I attempt to redirect the child's attention to discussing their outdoor play experiences (Marshall & Rossman). This transition might incorporate the activity in a manner that could serve

## **Appendix C1 – Case Study Protocol (Continued)**

as a prompt for further discussion and elaboration such as asking the child to draw a picture of children playing outside.

Photo-elicitation procedures will be used to encourage recall and sharing of children's outdoor play experiences. A binder containing coloring pages of a wide variety of outdoor play activities and photographs of different potential outdoor play environments will be looked through with the child. Children will also be asked to respond to a set of flash cards to discuss their affective experiences of playing outdoors. Finally children may be asked, if deemed appropriate, to draw a map of their outdoor play spaces that can be used to discuss the child's experiences playing in those areas depicted as well as a guide for the walking tour depending upon timing.

Another activity designed to enhance the child's recall of their outdoor play experiences and to perhaps provide insights the child might not share if directly questioned was creating a story of a child playing outdoors. This projective technique for younger children involved following a storyboard to create their own unique story which then could be acted out with toy props if the child desired. For older children, a TAT-like (i.e., thematic apperception test) activity involved the child looking at a picture of a face peering out a door and to tell the story of a child going outdoors to play. Older children will be given the choice of which version of the projective activity to do.

Instructions for conducting each of these child interview activities will ensure consistency in their implementation with all of the children. Further, a child can elect not to do any or all of these activities preferring a more traditional question and answer format. Also, due to time constraints and the unique developmental needs of each child it is not likely that all activities will be performed with all children. The intent is merely to provide a platform for eliciting and focusing children's discussion of their outdoor play experiences.

### **3. Observations of Physical Artifacts**

#### **a. Walking Tour**

Observations of physical artifacts such as toys, sport equipment, or play spaces (e.g., backyard jungle gyms or swing sets) used by a child for outdoor play will be recorded by digital photograph, with the parents' and child's permission during a walking tour led by the child. I also expect that participants will be encouraged to provide additional information and insights in sharing their stories about the artifacts.

## Appendix C1 – Case Study Protocol (Continued)

These interactions will not be recorded so taking complete field notes will be essential.

### **b. Observation Checklist**

Conducting interviews in the families' homes will facilitate my making initial observations and requesting to see and record the presence of relevant artifacts. An observation sheet was designed so that I could record not only observed artifacts but also parent-child interactions related to the child's and sibling's free time activities including outdoor play.

## **5. Field Notes**

### **a. Content**

Field notes will include my observations and impressions for coding and analysis as part of the case study database (Henderson, 2006). Notes should describe who was present, what transpired or was discussed, when did this happen and where did the observation or interview take place. Descriptions of the setting should include the physical and social context (Patton, 2002). It is important to indicate whether a note expresses a fact or interpretation (Henderson). I will provide concrete descriptions with specific details and avoid vague, evaluative, or interpretive words in describing observations and facts (Patton). If noting a conversation not recorded during an interview, I will provide exact quotes to the extent possible (Henderson). Field notes will include my own feelings, insights, and hunches in field notes, with clear identification as such. Pseudonyms will be used to identify all participants in my field notes. Notes and memos can further be added to the transcribed field notes in MAXQDA. I will include notes about things that I may not understand in relation to this specific case or as it relates collectively to the comparative case analyses as this is better than omitting potentially relevant data and can help identify areas for further clarification and investigation (Henderson).

### **b. During Site Visit**

Jotting some notes to jog my memory should not be a distraction during interviews (Henderson, 2006). Notes can be jotted on the interview or observation sheet. Written notes or discussion in digital field notes related to nonverbal behaviors and gestures during interviews are important because unlike long pauses or tone of voice they cannot be picked up in the digital recording of the interview. While written notes can serve as a backup should the digital recorder fail (Patton, 2002), I have elected to minimize note taking during

## **Appendix C1 – Case Study Protocol (Continued)**

interviews to allow me to direct my full attention to the participant and to maintain a conversational atmosphere. Rather I will use two recorders so that if one fails there is still a recording of the interview.

Field notes should consist of key phrases, list major points made by parent or child during interview, direct quotes. The use of standardized abbreviations or shorthand can help. Because of the conversational nature of my recorded field notes, I must clearly distinguish between facts and interpretations. An advantage of recording interviews is that the questions are recorded with their responses and will be transcribed as such in MAXQDA to provide the context (Patton) as well as to identify any possible researcher bias in the phrasing of a question that may have influenced the response.

### **c. Following Site Visit**

All field notes will be digitally recorded on the drive home or as soon as possible thereafter. Check the recording is important because if it failed, rerecording or writing field notes immediately will take on greater urgency (Patton, 2002). No further data will be collected until these notes have been recorded to avoid confusion and to provide a foundation for future data collection (Henderson, 2006). Details about my observations of the setting and circumstances of the interview will be included (Patton). I will also include notes regarding how well I thought the interview went, the quality of the rapport, and the perceived responsiveness or willingness of participant to the interview lines of questioning and procedures used. Reflection upon the quality of the data collected in terms of achieving the desired data will assist me in planning for the wrap up meeting with the family or in modifying questions or procedures with future participants. I will analyze any problems and make attempts to modify procedures to improve the quality of the data collected. I will also review my interview and observation notes to make sure they make sense both now and when I will code in the future (Patton). All field notes will be transcribed into MAXQDA and included in the data for coding and analysis.

### **d. Memos**

Memos include reactions, reflections, or thoughts in reviewing field notes or other data (Henderson, 2006). Memos can include directions for data analysis or products of analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Unlike field notes, memo types include theoretical notes, coding notes and operational notes. Memos “grow in complexity, density, clarity, and accuracy as the research progresses (Strauss & Corbin, p. 218).

## Appendix C1 – Case Study Protocol (Continued)

Later memos can build upon, modify, or negate earlier memos. Memos help the researcher to gain analytical distance from the data.

All memos will be created in MAXQDA where the software clearly identifies them as such, provides flexibility in developing useful headings that denote concepts or categories (e.g., coding, interpretation, or theoretical memos). My memos need not contain direct quotes as they are linked to specific interview data within MAXQDA. Memos can be modified in light of new evidence. Notes on saturation for specific constructs or propositions typically occur within my field notes but are treated the same as other memos added later during analysis. Keep in mind that memos differ throughout the research process. Memos during open coding can be of unlimited variety whereas during axial coding, memos help the researcher relate data to categories. Memos during selective coding highlight gaps in theory development and purposive sampling. These memos tend to focus more on theoretical and operational notes (Strauss & Corbin).

### III. Data Analysis

Data analysis is an ongoing process that coincides with data collection (Yin, 2003). Each individual case must be fully developed before moving on to the next case. After the first case study is completed, cross-case comparisons must accompany the individual case studies in the analysis. It is important to keep the purpose of my qualitative case study in mind to focus analyses (Yin, 2003). Explanation building is a special case of pattern matching that involves continually reviewing data in light of theoretical propositions, revising propositions if necessary, and comparing previous cases and new cases against the revised propositions. This process differs from pattern matching in that my final explanations will ultimately be derived from the data rather than being rigidly stipulated at the outset (Yin). Strauss and Corbin (2006) pointed out that explanation building is not inconsistent with theorizing, as in grounded theory, because both analysis strategies involve interplay between inductive and deductive processes.

Data analysis will be guided by a modified analytic induction strategy that seeks confirming or disconfirming evidence related to my sensitizing concepts and theoretical propositions. Analytic induction differs from grounded theory in that it begins with theorized propositions but similarly uses thick description and coding for content analysis. I will use qualitative coding strategies (i.e., open, axial, and selective; Strauss & Corbin, 2006). Selective coding should elucidate data that conforms to my initial theoretical framework and identify areas for further theoretical development. In this way, I will allow the data speak for itself before superimposing my theoretical frame upon it. Data that do not conform to the theoretical frame will be further investigated and developed through follow-up interviews and reviews of the literature (Strauss & Corbin, 2006).

## **Appendix C1 – Case Study Protocol (Continued)**

Before, I can employ my modified analytic induction strategy to addressing my second research question, “How do parents differ in parental socialization of their children’s outdoor play?” I must first establish that differences actually exist or this question is rendered groundless. Evidence will be sought through parent interviews, child interviews, and my observations related to the presence or absence of differential parental socialization related to a child’s age, gender or perception of environmental factors. This will include both direct and indirect forms of parental socialization.

### **A. Individual Case Study Databases**

The case study database serves to organize the raw data collected from interviews , my field notes and memos that would enable other researchers to examine the evidence without the interpretation inherent in a case study report (Yin, 2003). All evidence whether digital (e.g., computer files) or hard copy will be maintained separately for each case. The case study database also includes a narrative that presents the story of children’s outdoor play as experienced by parents and children between the ages of 8 and 12 years within their family. Finally each case study database will include a worksheet to be used for the comparative analysis depicting the convergence or divergence of data from the research questions and theoretical propositions of my study.

#### **1. MAXQDA**

All interview data must be transcribed and coded before it can be brought together into a case study database along with field notes and observations of physical artifacts. Transcribed interviews and field notes will be entered into MAXQDA for coding and content analysis.

#### **2. Individual Case Study Narratives**

The case record or narrative will serve as the basis for writing my individual case studies and conducting cross-case comparisons (Patton, 2002; Yin). The narrative collectively addresses all of the data collected from multiple sources within a case. The writing of this narrative is an optional step not intended for outside audiences that focuses on constructing the case rather than being concerned with presentation (Patton). Individual case study database narratives will tell the story of children’s outdoor play within that family. Thick descriptions of the data that incorporate emic (i.e., participant) and etic (i.e., researcher) perspectives will be used to describe the case and present evidence for research questions, theoretical propositions, and sensitizing concepts (Henderson, 2006).

#### **3. Case Worksheet**

## **Appendix C1 – Case Study Protocol (Continued)**

These worksheets will contain sections related to: (a) summarizing the case including identification of any unique characteristics that distinguish that family from the other cases and may therefore affect the data, (b) convergent or divergent findings related to the first research question and associated theoretical propositions, (c) convergent and divergent findings related to the second research question and associated theoretical propositions (i.e., differences in parental socialization related to a child's age, child's gender, or perceptions of environmental factors), (d) convergence or divergence of findings with the theoretical framework and sensitizing concepts, and finally (e) refinement of case selection criteria for future cases based on topics not sufficiently addressed by this and previous cases or to further develop emergent findings from this case.

### **B. Comparative Case Analyses**

Comparative case analyses will involve analyzing the comparative case worksheets and if needed to further elucidate themes developing categorical matrices and data arrays across cases to demonstrate how patterns in the overall data relate to the questions and theoretical propositions posed by my study (Yin, 2003). It may be useful to develop a process/outcomes matrix (see Patton, 2002, p.471-477). This matrix allows for abductive or logical analysis through the development of a scheme that links processes to outcomes. While it is generally used in evaluation research of programs on participant outcomes, I expect that it will be equally effective for analyzing the process of parental socialization on children's intrinsic motivation for outdoor play (i.e., outcomes).

## **IV. Case Study Reports**

The primary audience for my case study reports is my dissertation committee and a secondary audience would be academic colleagues for purposes of publication. Thus, my case study reports will emphasize connections of my findings to previous theory and research, including modifications or expansions upon my theoretical framework in light of the data. Each family's case report will be included in the appendices of my dissertation. Chapter 4 Results and Chapter 5 Discussion in my dissertation will serve as my comparative case report (Yin, 2003). While my overall dissertation follows a linear-analytic structure, thick descriptions will be used in both individual and comparative case reports in presenting findings and contributions to the analyses of theory-building structures (Yin).

### **A. Individual Case Study Reports**

Individual case study reports "should indicate how and why a particular proposition was demonstrated (or not demonstrated; Yin, 2003, p. 50). Therefore they will follow directly from the comparative case worksheets for each family. However, unlike the worksheets, thick descriptions will be used to describe the case and the evidence for each research question, theoretical proposition, and relative consistency with the

## **Appendix C1 – Case Study Protocol (Continued)**

theoretical framework of my study (Henderson, 2006; Patton, 2002). Pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of all participants.

### **B. Comparative Case Report**

The comparative case study report will likewise follow the research questions, theoretical propositions, and theoretical framework of my study (Yin, 2003). If theoretical propositions are revised from those proposed at the outset of my study due to inconsistent findings, this report will present the substantiating evidence for those revisions. Unlike the individual case reports, the comparative report will relate the overall findings to the existing literature in the areas of (a) outdoor play, (b) leisure socialization, and (c) parental socialization. Recommendations for future research will also be made.

## Appendix C2 - Site Visit Checklist

### Site Visit Checklist

- Case file with Demographic Information Sheet**
- Driving Directions to Site**
  - Printed Directions**
  - Programmed into GPS**
- Electronic Equipment**
  - Cell Phone—time app for adhering to interview schedule**
  - Digital Recorder w/extra batteries**
  - Cassette Recorder w/extra batteries and tapes**
  - Digital Camera w/extra battery**
- Note Taking Supplies**
  - 2 letter-size note pads**
  - 3 ballpoint pens**
  - Activity/Socialization Observation Checklist**
- Props/Toys for Child Interviews**
  - Toys for “Outdoor Play” Story Activity**
  - TAT Projective Story Activity**
  - Binder with Coloring Pages of Outdoor Play Activities and Photos of Outdoor Play Environments**
  - Crayons, Colored Pencils, Markers, & Paper—blank, unlined**
  - Younger Child Activity Journal—blank**
  - Older Child Activity Journal—blank**
- Water Bottle—to avoid parched throat during interviews**

## Appendix C3 – Demographic Information Sheet

### Demographic Information for Outdoor Play Study

**Primary Contact:**

Name:	DaytimePhone:	Driving Directions:
	Evening Phone:	
Email:	Preferred Contact: <input type="checkbox"/> Phone <input type="checkbox"/> Email	
Street Address:		

**Household Members:**

Category	First Name	Last Name	Pseudonym	Relationship to Study Child	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Occupation	Education
Parent/Guardian									
Parent/Guardian									
Child (Selected for Study)									
Child									
Child									
Other									

Household Income Category (self-described):

Working Class (\$)     
  Lower Middle Class (\$\$)     
  Upper Middle Class (\$\$\$)     
  Upper Class (\$\$\$\$)

Agreed Upon Week for Data Collection: \_\_\_\_\_

Incentive (Gift Card) Preference: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Appendix D1 – Parent Interview Guide

### Interview Guide for Parents

#### Definitions to be shared with parents:

Free Time = Time when the children are not in attendance at school, engaged in homework, or performing household chores.

Outdoor Play = Playing outside alone or with friends in unstructured activities without immediate adult supervision or direction. Examples could include: riding bicycles, playing a pick-up game of kickball, building forts, playing on a swing set and so on.

#### Background Questions:

- (a) Tell me about your family.
- How long have you lived in the area?
  - How would you describe the area in which your family lives?
  - How would you describe your family?
    - In what ways would you say that your family is typical of the “average” American family?
    - In what ways would you describe your family as different from the “average” American family?
- (b) Tell me more about (children’s names).
- How would you describe each of your children?
  - What are their interests?
  - In what ways would you say the children are similar?
  - How are the children unique?
  - What about your children makes you smile?

#### Primary Questions with Possible Probes (see bullets):

Questions will initially deal with all children in the household with follow-up for more specifics related to target child [ages 8-12 years] if necessary. This will enable me to explore differences in socialization between the children based on child’s gender, child’s age, or parent’s perceptions of environment factors (e.g., traffic dangers) without a separate direct line of questioning.

- (a) Tell me what (children’s names) do in their free time?
- What activities do they do?
  - How did (children’s names) come to be involved in (specific organized activities mentioned by parent)?

## Appendix D1 – Parent Interview Guide (Continued)

(b) Describe for me how, as a family, decisions are made about what (children's names) do during their free time.

- Describe for me how much choice or control (children's names) have over their free time activities.
  - How important do you believe it is for children to have choices or the ability to exert some control in their leisure activities?
- What role do you play, as a parent, in what (children's names) do during their free time?
  - Describe for me any instances during the past year where you have enrolled your child in an activity.
  - Describe for me any instances during the past year where you may have redirected (children's names) away from doing an activity (like watching tv) toward doing another activity other than homework or chores.
- Describe for me any differences between your children in terms of how much choice you let them have over their free time activities.
  - To what do you attribute these differences?
- As a parent, how would you like to see (children's names) spend their free time?
  - What are your priorities for (children's names) activities?
  - Describe for me the role that immediate benefits (like fun) or long-term benefits (like getting into college) play in your priorities for guiding (children's names) participation in free time activities.
  - In what ways does outdoor play fit well with your priorities for (children's names) free time activities and the benefits you would like them to get from their leisure?
  - In what ways does outdoor play not fit with the benefits you would like (children's names) to get from their free time activities and your priorities for their leisure?

(c) Describe for me any similarities or differences between (children's names) outdoor play and your own childhood experiences of outdoor play.

- How do the activities they do differ?
- How does the play environment differ?
- How do you feel about these changes?
- Describe for me any instances where you have shared stories of your childhood outdoor play experiences with your children.

(d) Please tell me about (children's names) outdoor play. *(Note: Asked only to elaborate on above comparison with parent's childhood as necessary.)*

## Appendix D1 – Parent Interview Guide (Continued)

- What opportunities for outdoor play are there when (children’s names) are not at school?
  - At home?
  - At childcare, if any?
  
- How would you describe the opportunities in your neighborhood for (children’s names) to play outdoors?
  - What is good about your neighborhood for the children to play outside?
    - Describe physical environmental factors (e.g., neighborhood playground or park).
    - Describe social environmental factors (e.g., the availability of suitable playmates).
  - What concerns do you have about your neighborhood for the children to play outside?
    - Describe physical environmental factors (e.g., traffic).
    - Describe social environmental factors (e.g., bullies).
  
- Describe for me any talents, abilities or personality traits that you think contribute to (children’s names) having positive outdoor play experiences.
  - Are there characteristics of (children’s names) that you think lessen their interest, enjoyment, or participation in outdoor play?
  
- Describe for me any talents, abilities or personality traits (children’s names) have that make you feel comfortable as a parent letting them play outdoors alone or with friends.
  - Are there characteristics of (children’s names) that cause you any concern in letting them play outdoors alone or with friends?
  
- How do you learn about (children’s names) outdoor play experiences?
  - Describe a typical conversation you would have with (children’s names) after they have been outdoors playing.
  - Please describe any time you spend outdoors either for leisure or yard work where you might indirectly observe (children’s names) outdoor play.
    - How do you feel about spending time outdoors when you are home?
    - Describe for me any conversations you have had with (children’s names) about how you feel about spending time outdoors at home.
  - Other means?
  
- How do you feel about (children’s names) outdoor play?
  - What benefits do feel (children’s names) gain from playing outdoors?
    - Knowing what you know now as an adult, looking back on your childhood, can you tell me of any skills or abilities that you felt you

## Appendix D1 – Parent Interview Guide (Continued)

- learned or developed by playing outdoors alone or with friends in your free time?
- Tell me of any skills or abilities that you feel (children’s names) learn or develop by playing outdoors alone or with friends in their free time.
  - In what ways, if any, do you feel that playing outdoors is important for (children’s names) development? Areas of development may include: cognitive, social, emotional, physical.
  - Why do you feel differently about the importance of outdoor play for (children’s names) at this time? (Only if differences were previously mentioned by parent.)
- What are the risks of (children’s names) spending their free time playing outdoors?
    - Describe immediate risks (e.g., safety).
    - Describe long-term costs (e.g., missed opportunities & futuristic orientation: like sports & college scholarship).
- What role do you play, as a parent, in (children’s names) outdoor play?
- Please describe for me any instances during the past year where you have encouraged (children’s names) to play outside during their free time.
  - Describe for me any instances during the past year where you have redirected (children’s names) away from playing outdoors in their free time, for a purpose other than homework or chores.
  - Describe for me any instances where you have provided (children’s names) with instruction or practice of an outdoor play skill like playing catch or riding a bike that they could then do on their own alone or with friends.
    - Please describe any such instances that have occurred within the past year.
  - Describe for me any instances where you have provided resources for (children’s names) to play outside like hammer and nails for building a fort.
    - Please describe any such instances that have occurred within the past year.
  - Describe any occasions within the past year where you provided transportation to a specific destination like a playground or park for (children’s names) to play outside.
- Describe for me any rules you have about (children’s names) outdoor play such as where they are allowed to play, what they are allowed to do, who they are allowed to play with.
- As a family, how do you establish rules for outdoor play?
    - Describe for me an instance in the past year where (children’s names) have approached you to request permission to do something they were not allowed to do before (e.g., ride bike across a major street). How was the request negotiated and resolved.
    - As parents, how do you communicate your expectations for (children’s names) behavior and the consequences for noncompliance with the rules?

## **Appendix D1 – Parent Interview Guide (Continued)**

- What means do you have for monitoring (children's names) outdoor play?
  - Describe use of specific procedures like check-in times or periodically checking up on the children.
- How do you provide feedback to (children's names) about their behavior and meeting of your expectations during outdoor play?
  - How consistently are consequences followed through on for breaking outdoor play rules?
- Please describe for me any ways that these rules differ between the children.
  - What contributed to your decision to set different rules for the children at this time?

## Appendix D1 – Parent Interview Guide (Continued)

### Parent Interview

Tell me about your **family**: (a) how long lived here (b) how describe area (c) how describe family (e.g. “average” American family—same &/or different).

Tell me about your **children**: (a) describe (b) what makes you smile (c) interests (d) same/unique

Selected **child’s free time**: (a) after school (b) weekends (c) school breaks (d) summer vacations

-*what, how often, with who, why* (internal/external motivation), *feel about it?*—child & parents

-*how do parents know* about child’s experiences—involved, observe, ask

- same &/or different for *siblings*

**Who decides**: (a) **free time activity** (b) **outdoor play** (c) **organized activities**

-how much *freedom to choose* (importance to parents)

-*role of parents*: enrollment, transportation, encouragement, resources, teaching skill—ride bike

-*redirection* of child’s activity (indoor to outdoor or vice versa)

-*child’s motivations* (How do you know?) & *parents’ motivations*

-selected child compared to *siblings* (same &/or different--why)

**What parents’ want** for selected child: (a) **immediate benefits**--fun (b) **long term benefits**--skill (c) **immediate risks**-safety (d) **long term costs**-missed opportunities & future orientation (e.g., scholarship) (e) other **priorities** for child--values (d) how **outdoor play** fits w/priorities—positive & negative

- *skills or abilities parents learned* in *outdoor play* as children

- *skills or abilities selected child &/or siblings gain* from *outdoor play*

- *child development: outdoor play* important and not important for

- same &/or different for *siblings*

**Parent’s childhood free time**: (a) **activities** (b) **physical environment** (c) **social environment** (d) role of **parents** (e) **rules**, boundaries or restrictions

-*why different &/or same*—how *feel* about that?

-*share stories* with children?

-*comparison to own parents*--why as parent now different &/or same behaviors, values, beliefs

-focus follow-ups exclusively on *outdoor play*

**Parents’ outdoors**: (a) **time outdoors**—frequency & activity (b) how **feel** about time outdoors for self (c) **conversations** with child about how feel about time outdoors (d) family excursions or **vacations**

## Appendix D1 – Parent Interview Guide (Continued)

**Selected child's outdoor play--environment:** (a) **opportunities**—home or daycare  
(b) physical **environment**—good & bad (c) **social environment**—good & bad (d) **other concerns**

-at *home*, in *neighborhood*, in *town*—parks or playgrounds

-different &/or same for *siblings*

**Selected child's talent's, abilities, personality traits:** (a) contribute to **positive outdoor play** experiences  
(b) **lessen** interest, enjoyment, or participation (c) make **parents feel comfortable** letting play outdoors  
(d) **cause parents concern** for playing outdoors

**Rules for selected child's outdoor play:** (a) **type**--where, what activities, who play with (b) how **expectations**  
for behavior and **consequences** for noncompliance **communicated** to child (c) how **monitor**  
compliance—check in times (d) how provide **feedback** about meeting expectations for behavior (e)  
what are **consequences** for noncompliance & how **consistently enforced** (f) describe request of child to  
do something new or **change a rule**—how negotiated and resolved

-differences &/or same for *siblings*

## Appendix D2 – Child Interview Guide

### Interview Guide for Children

#### Definitions to be shared with children:

Free Time = Time when you are not at school, doing homework, or doing chores. Free time is when you can play or do what you want to do.

Outdoor Play = Playing outdoors by yourself or with friends doing things like riding bicycles, playing kickball, building forts, playing on a swing set or climbing a tree.

#### Background Questions:

(A) Tell me a little bit about your family.

(B) Tell me a little bit about you.

- What do you like to do?
- What don't you like to do?
- We're all good at different things. Some people are good at doing school work, playing sports, singing or dancing, all kinds of things. What are you good at?

#### Primary Questions with Possible Probes (see bullets):

A) What do you do in your free time?

- What do you do after school?
  - Who do you play with?
  - What do you do?
  - How often do you do it?
  - Why do you do it?
- What do you do on weekends?
  - Who do you play with?
  - What do you do?
  - How often do you do it?
  - Why do you do it?

(B) Tell me a little bit about what happens when you play outdoors.

- Where do you play?
  - At home, at child care, local playgrounds or parks?

## Appendix D2 – Child Interview Guide (Continued)

- What is good about these places for playing outdoors? (include probes related to: physical resources like playground equipment or hedgerows for forts and availability of playmates)
- What is bad about these places for playing outdoors? (include probes related to: concerns about getting hurt by physical or social environment)
- What do you do when you play outdoors?
  - With Whom: Alone or with friends or siblings?
  - Participation: How often?
  - Motivations: Why? What makes playing outdoors fun for you? What don't you like about playing outdoors?
- What are you good at when you play outdoors? (prompt from activities the child has stated he/she does)
  - Specific skills child feels are important
  - Finding things to do vs. boredom
  - Getting along with playmates
  - Avoiding danger
  - Way finding vs. getting lost
- What have your parent(s) told you that you were good at when you played outdoors?

(C) Some parents enjoy spending time outdoors and some parents don't enjoy spending time outdoors. What about your parents?

- How do you know? (Trying to determine if parents made statements or child picked up on indirect message.)
- How much time do your parents spend outdoors for fun or working in the yard?
- What activities do you do with your parent(s) outdoors at home?
- Have your parent(s) ever helped you to learn something or get better at something that you do when you play with your friends like playing catch or riding a bike?
  - What other things have you played outdoors with your parents?
  - How do your parents act differently with (sibling's name) than they do with you when they play outdoors with (him or her)?
    - What different activities do they do?
    - Why do you think that is?
- Some parents choose activities for their children and some parents let their children choose what they want to do in their free time. Who chooses what you do in your free time?

## Appendix D2 – Child Interview Guide (Continued)

- How did you get involved in (specific activity child or parent has previously mentioned)?
  - Was it your idea or your parent(s)?
  - Why did you want to do it?
  - Why did your parent(s) want you to do it?
- How often do your parent(s) let you do what you want to do? (may want to structure: not often, sometimes, most of the time and then probe for details)
- Does (sibling's name) have more choice, less choice, or about the same amount of choice over what she/he does during free time than you?
- What types of choices does (sibling's name) get to make that you don't?
  - What types of choices do you get to make that (sibling's name) doesn't?
  - Why do you think that is?
- Some parents want their children to do an activity because they think it is good for the child like running for exercise and some parents don't much care. Can you think of any activities that your parents want you to do because they think it is good for you?
  - What activities?
  - Why do they want you to do it?
- How do you know? (Trying to determine if parents made statements or child picked up on indirect message.)
  -
- Some parents tell their children to do something else when they don't like what the child is doing, like watching too much TV.
  - Have your parent(s) ever told you to do something else?
  - What activities do your parent(s) not like you doing too much?
  - Have your parent(s) ever told you to go play outdoors?
  - Have your parent(s) ever told you to come in and play indoors?
- Some parents let their children use household items like dishes or old lumber to play outdoors and some parents want their children to just play with their toys. Have your parent(s) ever given you any tools or household items to use for playing outdoors?
  - Like what?
- Have your parent(s) ever driven you somewhere so you and (sibling's name) or your friends could play outdoors, like a park?
  - Tell me about that.
- What do you tell your parents about your outdoor play? Like if you played outdoors today, what would you tell them about it?
  - What do your parent(s) ask you about? (where, what, with whom)
  - How often do you talk to your parents about your outdoor play?
  - Have you ever not told your parent(s) about something that happened when you played outdoors because you didn't want them to worry or be mad at you?

## Appendix D2 – Child Interview Guide (Continued)

- Can you share a little bit about it with me now?
- Some parents tell their children stories about what they did when they were a kid and some parents never talk about what things were like when they were a kid. What have your parent(s) told you about when they were kid(s)?
  - What did your parent(s) do as children?
  - How is what you do in your free time different from what your parent(s) did when they were your age?
  - What did your parents do that they don't let you do?
    - Why don't they let you do it?
- Some parents like their children to play outdoors and some don't care so much. What about yours?
- How do you know? (Trying to determine if parents made statements or child picked up on indirect message.)
- Who do your parents do more for you or (sibling's name) to play outdoors?
  - Like what?
  - Why do you think that is?

(D) Parents often have rules about what a child can and cannot do when playing outdoors. Some parents have a lot of rules and some parents don't have so many rules. What about your parents?

- What rules do your parents have about your playing outdoors?
  - Where can or can't you go?
  - Who can you play with?
  - What can or can't you do?
  - Why do your parent(s) have these rules?
  - How do you know how your parent(s) expect you to behave when you play outdoors?
  - What are the consequences for breaking the rules?
  - How often are the consequences enforced?
- How do your parent(s) know if you follow the rules?
  - Tell me more about that.
  - Some parents make their children "check in" at certain times or when they arrive at a friend's house and other parents don't make their children "check in." What about your parents?
  - Some parents "check up" on their children by showing up unexpectedly sometimes and other parents never surprise their children by showing up unexpectedly. What about your parents?

## Appendix D2 – Child Interview Guide (Continued)

- Have other people like neighbors or siblings ever told your parents when you did something you shouldn't have done when you were playing outdoors?
  - What happened?
- Every family has at least some rules. How does your family make the rules in your house?
  - Some families let the children have a vote on new rules and some families just have the parents make up all the rules without the children having any say. What about your family?
  - Tell me about a time when your parent(s) have said you need to follow a rule just because "they said so."
  - After talking about the rules, does your family vote on it or do your parent(s) just decide?
    - Tell me more about what happens when a new rule is made at your house.
- If you wanted to do something that your parent(s) don't let you do now, how would you talk to them about it?
  - Some parents listen to their children before saying yes or no if a child wants to do something that he or she didn't have permission to do before and other parents don't listen to their children before making up their minds. What about your parents?
  - Why do (or why don't) you feel that your parents listen to you when you tell them that you want to do something new?
  - What concerns do you think your parents have if they change a rule or give you permission to do something new? (use examples like: crossing a busy street or playing in a neighborhood park)
  - How do you convince your parent(s) to let you do something that you weren't allowed to do before?
- In some families the rules for outdoor play differ because of the (age or gender) of the children and in some families the rules are the same for all children. What about your family?
  - How do the rules differ for you and your sibling(s)?
  - Why do you think that is?

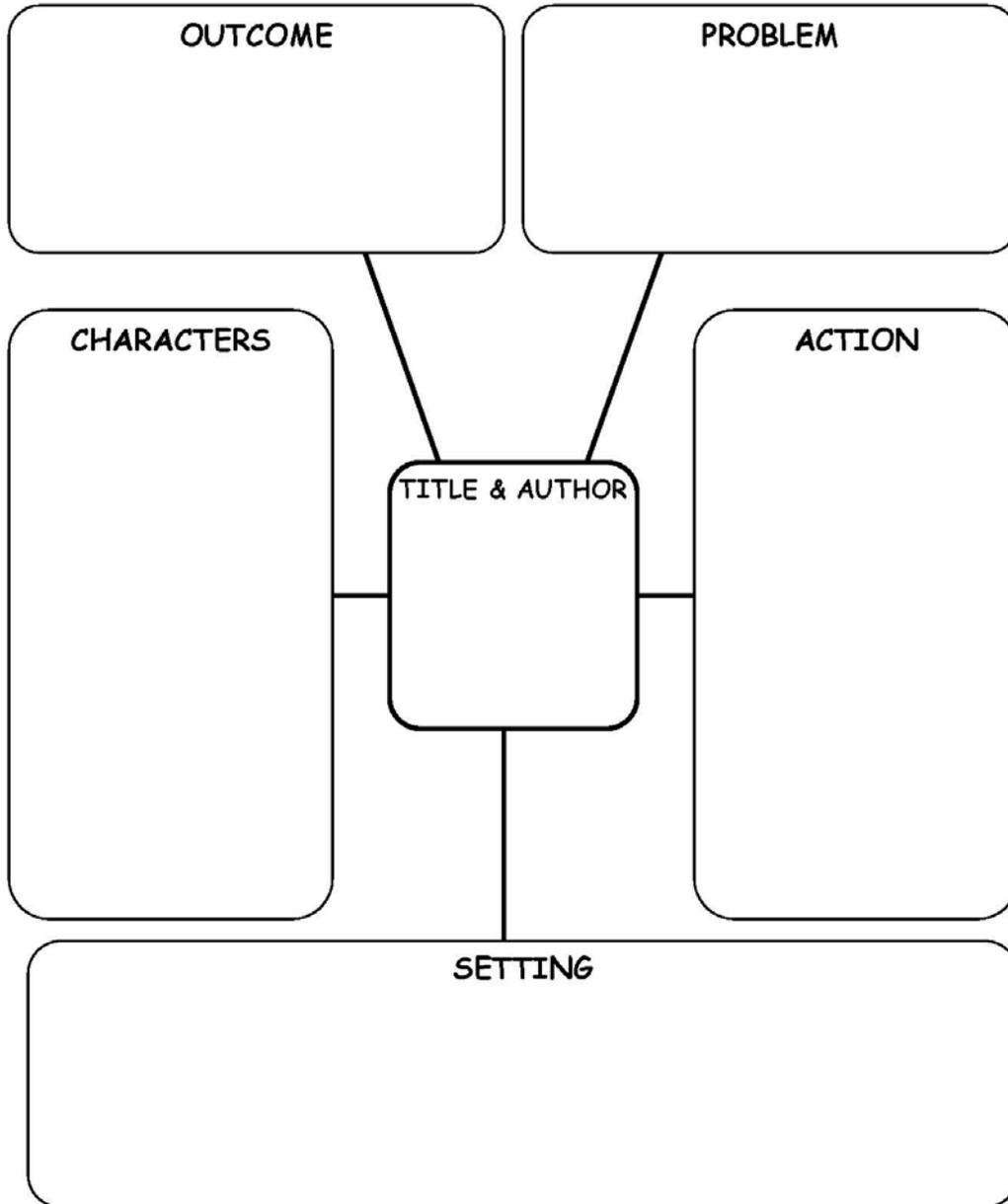
## Appendix D2 – Child Interview Guide (Continued)

### Child Interview

- ☺ Tell me about **you**: (a) like to do, (b) don't like to do, (c) good at?
- Free Time**: (a) after school (b) weekends (c) school breaks (d) summer vacation
- what, how often, with who, why* (internal/external motivation), *feel about it?*
- ☺ **Outdoor play**: (a) **Where: physical environment** (e.g., playground equipment) & **social environment** (playmates) -What's **good & bad** about it?
- what, how often, with who, why* (internal/external motivation), *feel about it?*
- (b) **Parents**: do together, involved, in area, inside
- like spending *time outdoors*? Like you spending time outdoors? Know how?
- how much time outdoors? Doing what?
- share *stories* of their childhood at your age? How different & same?
- taught skill* (e.g., ride bike)
- provide *resources* (e.g., toys, equipment, household items)
- provide *transportation* (e.g., park or nature center)
- what do you *tell parents* about your play? Do they ask?
- Ever not told them something?
- differences w/*sibling*? Why do you think?
- (c) **Good at?** *Child* thinks &/or *parent* thinks Know how?
- ☺ **Who decides**: (a) **free time** activity (b) **outdoor play** (c) participation in **organized activity(ies)**
- how much *freedom to choose*
- child motivations & parent motivations* (How do you know?)
- parent *redirection of activity* (indoor to outdoor or vice versa)
- differences with *sibling*? Why do you think?
- ☺ **Rules**: (a) **how many**: a lot or a few (b) **what** are they (c) **how** do you **know** (d) **why** the rules (e) **consequences** of breaking rule (f) how do **parents know** (g) how **often enforced**
- practices & procedures* for: *setting rules, monitoring compliance, enforcement*
- differences w/*sibling*? Why do you think?
- ☺ **Negotiation of Rule Change**: (a) what do **you do** (b) what do **parents do** (c) what are **parent concerns**? How do **you know**? (d) **What** do you do to **convince them**?
- differences w/*sibling*? Why do you think?

### Appendix D3 - Storyboards for Child Interviews

Make up a play using either puppets or family figures about a child going to play outdoors. The story should begin with what happens before the child goes out to play and what happens when she or he is playing outside. Use this story map to plan your play. Complete this sheet before you do the story board.



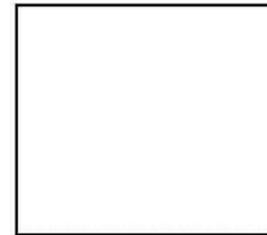
### Appendix D3 - Storyboards for Child Interviews (Continued)

Make up a play using either puppets or family action figures about a child going to play outdoors. The story should begin with what happens before the child goes out to play and what happens when she or he is playing outside. Sketch the scenes in the boxes and write brief descriptions below them.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Story Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Author: \_\_\_\_\_



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## Appendix D4 - TAT Projective Exercise for Child Interviews

Tell me a story about "Going Outdoors To Play."

### Procedures:

I. Show the child a picture of child standing in doorway with a neutral expression on face.

II. Ask child to tell me a story about the picture:

A. Explain that all details are up to the child's imagination. The child can be a boy or girl of any age and live anywhere. The child can think or feel anything. *(Acknowledge that picture could look like a boy because of the short hair, but that I (a girl) have short hair too. Child may interpret facial expression as surprise—acknowledge that you can see why they think that but state that is not necessarily the case. Encourage child to make the picture fit their story rather than making their story fitting the picture. The circumstances of the character(s) and setting should be whatever the child wants them to be.)*

A. What happens that leads up to the child going outside to play? Whose idea was it for the child to go out to play? What was the child thinking and feeling? What were the parents doing? What did the parents have to say about the child going outside to play?

B. The child is getting ready to go outside to play now... What is the child thinking? How does the child feel?

D4 – TAT Projective Exercise for Child Interviews (Continued)



[phillipmartin.info](http://phillipmartin.info)

## Appendix D5 - Outdoor Play Activities and Play Spaces Binder

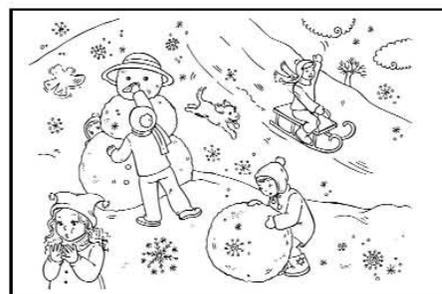
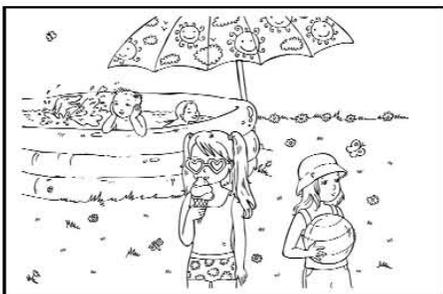
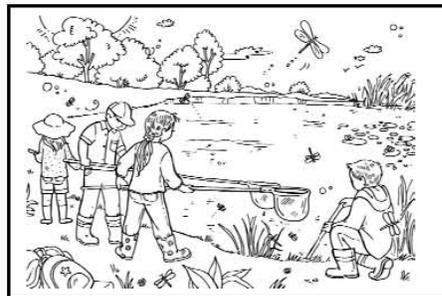
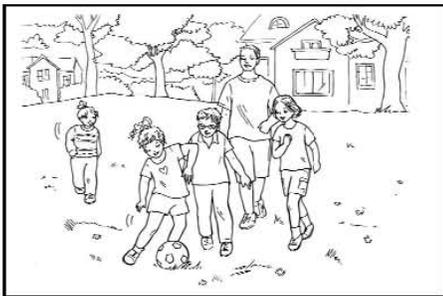
### Play Activities and Play Spaces Binder

This was a photo-elicitation technique to encourage children's recall and discussion of their experiences with various outdoor play activities and play environments. As much of the data was collected with children over the colder seasons of the year, this method served to provoke the children's memories of warmer weather experiences.

While the entire binder was too cumbersome to include here, I present examples of the types of coloring pages and photos presented to the children. There were a total of 90 coloring pages of children playing outdoors alone, with friends or siblings, or with parents.

Coloring pages of children's outdoor play activities were downloaded from a variety of free coloring page websites. An effort was made to include a variety of outdoor play activities including nature-related, sport-related, playground-related, and toy-related.

Sample pictures and photos:



## Appendix D5 – Outdoor Play Activities and Play Spaces Binder (Continued)

Photos of outdoor play environments encompassed patches of urban green space as well as rural fields and forest areas. Examples of landscaped or domesticated nature spaces were included as well as wild nature spaces. An area nature center, approximately 12 miles from the urban center of the small metro area from which families were recruited had a unique outdoor play area that many area children, including those in the study had visited on at least one occasion. Photos of Imagination Grove were included not only for the children to discuss their specific experiences there but also to elicit discussion as to whether or not the children had ever engaged in those types of activities there or elsewhere (e.g., climbed a tree, built a stick fort, or played in a creek).

There were 10 pages with 4 photographs per page for a total of 40 play environment pictures. This is a sample demonstrating the range of environments.



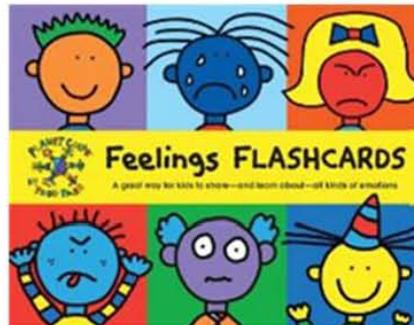
## Appendix D6 - Feelings Flash Cards

### Feelings Flashcards

by Todd Parr

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This was a photo-elicitation technique to encourage children to share the affective dimension of their outdoor play recollections. Children were asked to think about how they usually felt when they played outside and to respond to each of the cards. The children either chose one of the dichotomous options represented by the card, denied that they ever typically felt either option or felt that it did not really apply to their outdoor experiences, or shared that they recalled feeling both of the dichotomous emotions at one time or another when playing outdoors. Children's spontaneous discussion of their recollections or associations of these emotions with their outdoor play experiences was encouraged. This particular card set was selected for its' appropriateness with diverse racial and ethnic groups as well as the applicability of most of the cards to a child's outdoor play experiences.



## Appendix D7 - Outdoor Play Map

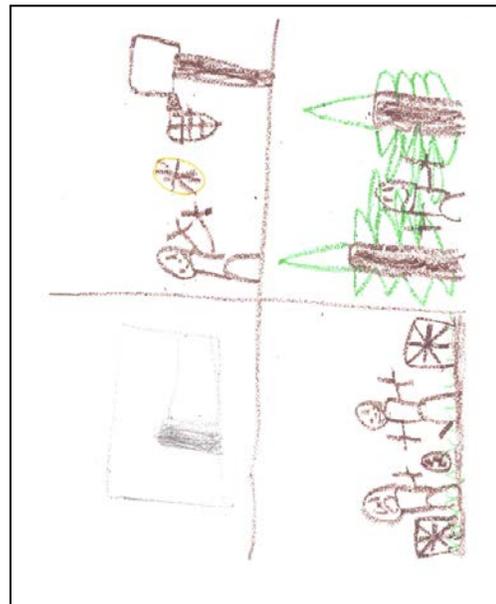
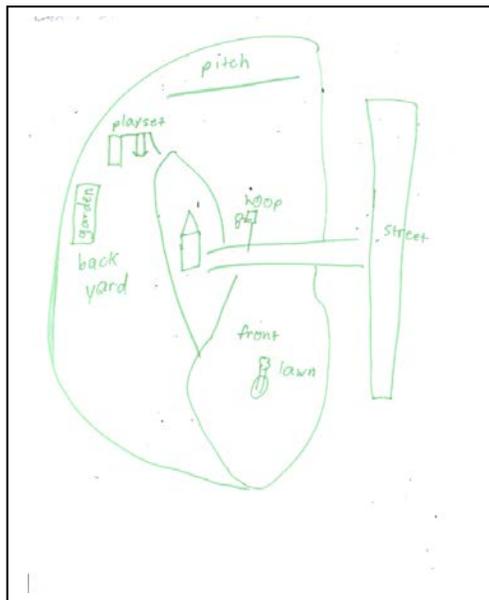
### Outdoor Play Map

Children were given a blank, unlined sheet of paper with their choice of crayons, colored pencils or markers.

The children were asked to draw a picture of their outdoor play spaces and the only requirement was that they had to include their house on the map.

The purpose of the child's map was to serve as an additional photo-elicitation technique to encourage and focus children's discussion of their outdoor play experiences including play spaces and activities. Depending upon the timing of the walking tour of the children's outdoor play spaces, the map served as a double check to ensure that all activities and play spaces previously mentioned on the map were included and discussed on the tour. This procedure also contributed to triangulation of the children's data.

These are samples of the children's maps demonstrating their artistic freedom in interpreting the directions given to them:



Appendix D8 - Younger Child Activity Journal



# Daily Activity Journal

This journal belongs to:



Appendix D8 – Younger Child Activity Journal (Continued)



Why your journal is so important:

I want to learn about you, what you like to do in your free-time, and how you feel when you are playing or doing other activities. There's only one expert in the whole world on you—and that's you! Your parents know a lot about you but they can't know everything you think and feel all the time. Only you know that.

This journal is designed to be FUN! I don't want you to think of this journal as more school work. The really cool thing about keeping a journal is that as long as you write the truth about what you think and feel...there can *never* be a wrong answer!

This journal is yours. I will make a copy and give you back the original to keep.

Need Help?

It's OK to ask your parent(s) for help if you want to. Just remember, I want to know about YOU. So, all of the answers should be your thoughts and feelings. If you are not sure what to do and your parents can't help you, ask them to call Penny.

Have Fun! I look forward to seeing what you do with your journal.



**Appendix D8 – Younger Child Activity Journal (Continued)**



**Write or Draw About What You Like To Do This Time of Year:**

**Appendix D8 – Younger Child Activity Journal (Continued)**

**What did you do in your free time today? (Day 1)**

Date: _____ Example: Monday, October 24, 2011	Completed: <input type="checkbox"/> All By Myself OR... <input type="checkbox"/> With Help From:
--	---

What sports, clubs, or activities did you do today that were led by an adult? (List)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How much time did you spend in organized activities: (check one)

None	$\frac{1}{2}$	1	$1\frac{1}{2}$	2	$2\frac{1}{2}$	3	>3 Hours
<input type="checkbox"/>							

What did you do **indoors** in your free time today? (List)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How much time did you play or do other things indoors: (check one)

None	$\frac{1}{2}$	1	$1\frac{1}{2}$	2	$2\frac{1}{2}$	3	>3 Hours
<input type="checkbox"/>							

What did you do **outdoors** in your free time today? (List)

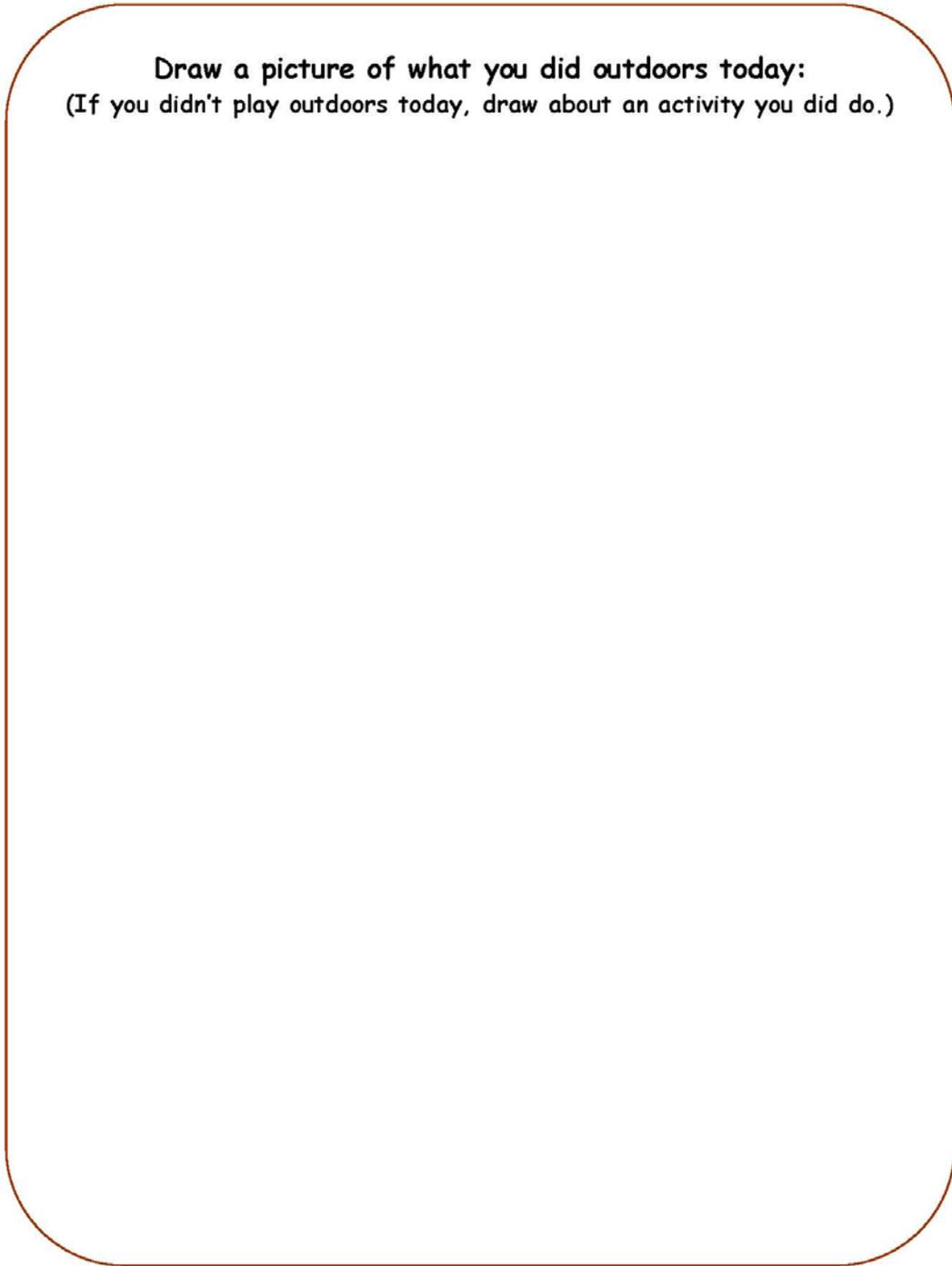
\_\_\_\_\_

How much time did you play or do other things outdoors: (check one)

None	$\frac{1}{2}$	1	$1\frac{1}{2}$	2	$2\frac{1}{2}$	3	>3 Hours
<input type="checkbox"/>							

**Appendix D8 – Younger Child Activity Journal (Continued)**

**Draw a picture of what you did outdoors today:**  
(If you didn't play outdoors today, draw about an activity you did do.)



Appendix D8 – Younger Child Activity Journal (Continued)

What did you do in your free time today? (Day 2)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Example: Monday, October 24, 2011

Completed:  All By Myself OR...  
 With Help From:

What sports, clubs, or activities did you do today that were led by an adult? (List)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How much time did you spend in organized activities: (check one)

None    $\frac{1}{2}$    1    $1\frac{1}{2}$    2    $2\frac{1}{2}$    3   >3 Hours

What did you do indoors in your free time today? (List)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How much time did you play or do other things indoors: (check one)

None    $\frac{1}{2}$    1    $1\frac{1}{2}$    2    $2\frac{1}{2}$    3   >3 Hours

What did you do outdoors in your free time today? (List)

\_\_\_\_\_

How much time did you play or do other things outdoors: (check one)

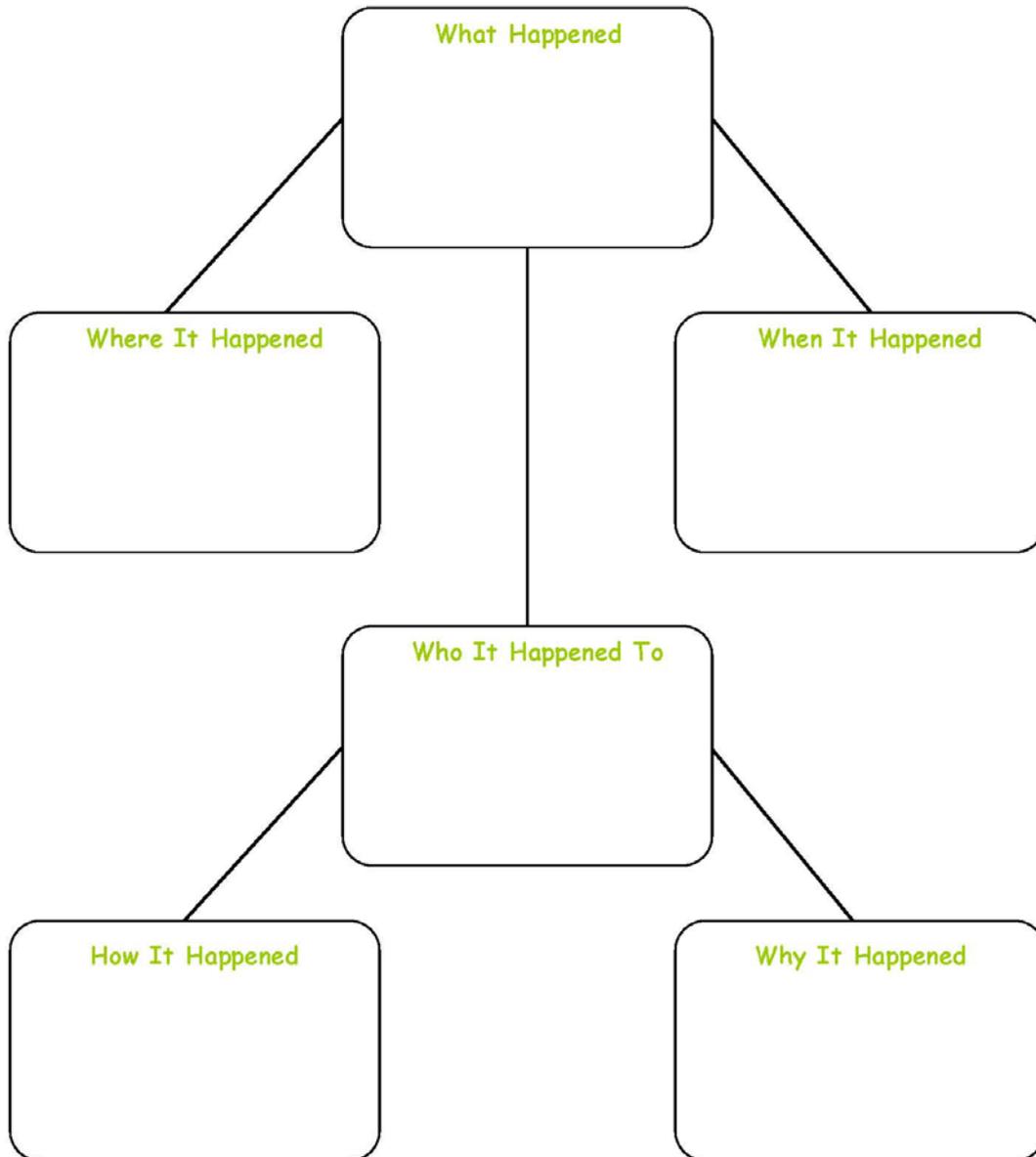
None    $\frac{1}{2}$    1    $1\frac{1}{2}$    2    $2\frac{1}{2}$    3   >3 Hours

**Appendix D8 – Younger Child Activity Journal (Continued)**

Write an outdoor play journal entry: (If you didn't play outdoors today, write about an activity you did do.)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Check one:  I wrote this all by myself.  I had help from: \_\_\_\_\_



**Appendix D8 – Younger Child Activity Journal (Continued)**



**Write or Draw About What You Like To Do This Time of Year:**

Appendix D8 – Younger Child Activity Journal (Continued)

What did you do in your free time today? (Day 3)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Example: Monday, October 24, 2011

Completed:  All By Myself OR...  
 With Help From:

What sports, clubs, or activities did you do today that were led by an adult? (List)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How much time did you spend in organized activities: (check one)

None    $\frac{1}{2}$    1    $1\frac{1}{2}$    2    $2\frac{1}{2}$    3   >3 Hours

What did you do indoors in your free time today? (List)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How much time did you play or do other things indoors: (check one)

None    $\frac{1}{2}$    1    $1\frac{1}{2}$    2    $2\frac{1}{2}$    3   >3 Hours

What did you do outdoors in your free time today? (List)

\_\_\_\_\_

How much time did you play or do other things outdoors: (check one)

None    $\frac{1}{2}$    1    $1\frac{1}{2}$    2    $2\frac{1}{2}$    3   >3 Hours

**Appendix D8 – Younger Child Activity Journal (Continued)**

Draw a picture of how playing outdoors made you feel:  
(If you didn't play outdoors today, draw about an activity you did do.)

Appendix D8 – Younger Child Activity Journal (Continued)

What did you do in your free time today? (Day 4)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Example: Monday, October 24, 2011

Completed:  All By Myself OR...

With Help From:

What sports, clubs, or activities did you do today that were led by an adult? (List)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How much time did you spend in organized activities: (check one)

None       $\frac{1}{2}$       1       $1\frac{1}{2}$       2       $2\frac{1}{2}$       3      >3 Hours

What did you do indoors in your free time today? (List)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How much time did you play or do other things indoors: (check one)

None       $\frac{1}{2}$       1       $1\frac{1}{2}$       2       $2\frac{1}{2}$       3      >3 Hours

What did you do outdoors in your free time today? (List)

\_\_\_\_\_

How much time did you play or do other things outdoors: (check one)

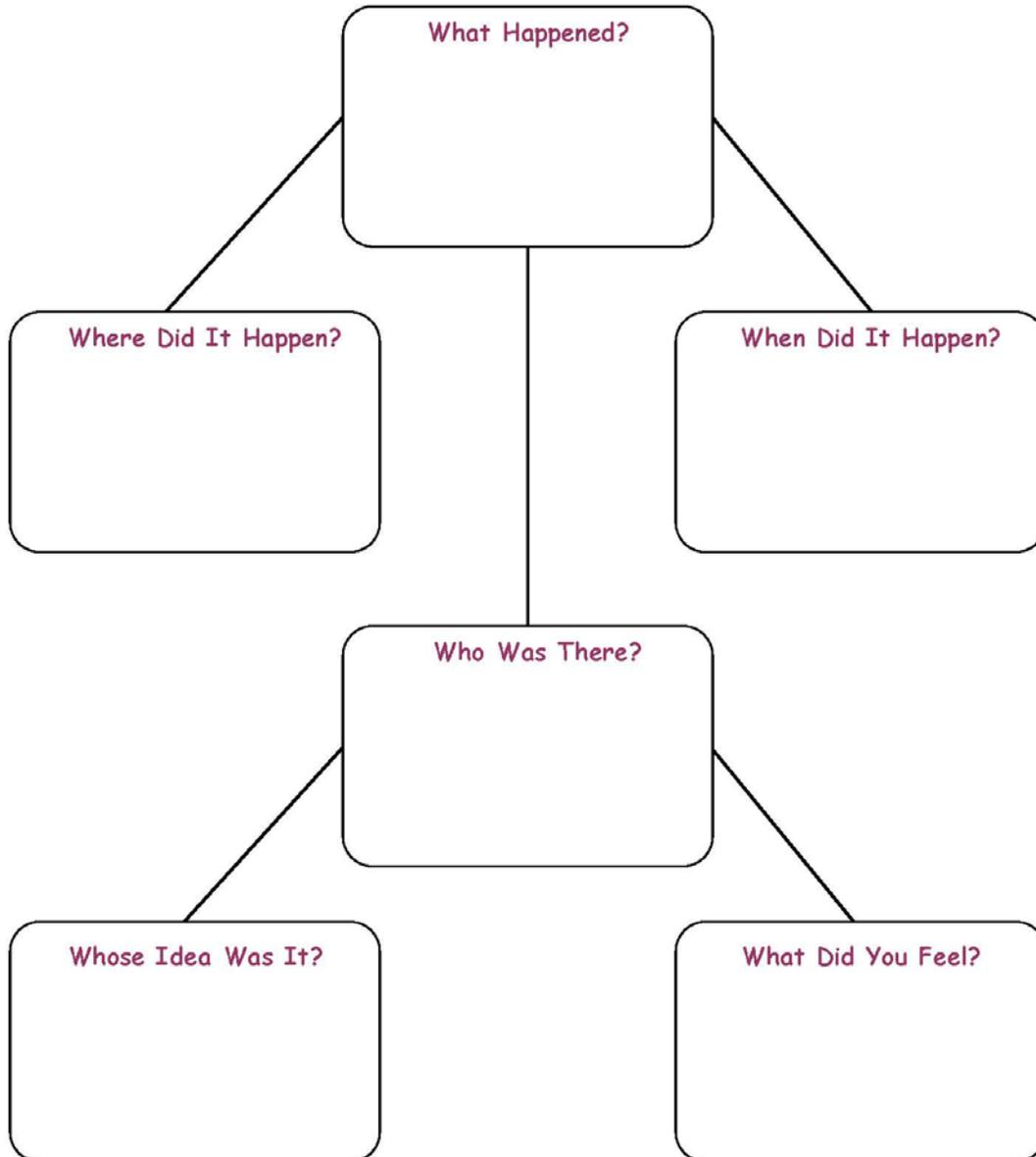
None       $\frac{1}{2}$       1       $1\frac{1}{2}$       2       $2\frac{1}{2}$       3      >3 Hours

**Appendix D8 – Younger Child Activity Journal (Continued)**

Write an outdoor play journal entry: (If you didn't play outdoors today, write about an activity you did do.)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Check one:  I wrote this all by myself.  I had help from: \_\_\_\_\_



**Appendix D8 – Younger Child Activity Journal (Continued)**



**Write or Draw About What You Like To Do This Time of Year:**

Appendix D8 – Younger Child Activity Journal (Continued)

What did you do in your free time today? (Day 5)

Date: _____ Example: Monday, October 24, 2011	Completed: <input type="checkbox"/> All By Myself OR... <input type="checkbox"/> With Help From:
--	---

What sports, clubs, or activities did you do today that were led by an adult? (List)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How much time did you spend in organized activities: (check one)

None	$\frac{1}{2}$	1	$1\frac{1}{2}$	2	$2\frac{1}{2}$	3	>3 Hours
<input type="checkbox"/>							

What did you do indoors in your free time today? (List)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How much time did you play or do other things indoors: (check one)

None	$\frac{1}{2}$	1	$1\frac{1}{2}$	2	$2\frac{1}{2}$	3	>3 Hours
<input type="checkbox"/>							

What did you do outdoors in your free time today? (List)

\_\_\_\_\_

How much time did you play or do other things outdoors: (check one)

None	$\frac{1}{2}$	1	$1\frac{1}{2}$	2	$2\frac{1}{2}$	3	>3 Hours
<input type="checkbox"/>							

**Appendix D8 – Younger Child Activity Journal (Continued)**

**Write an outdoor play journal entry:** (If you didn't play outdoors today,  
write about an activity you did do.)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Check one:  I wrote this all by myself.  I had help from: \_\_\_\_\_

Write about what you did: \_\_\_\_\_

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Write about who was there and what they said or did: \_\_\_\_\_

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Write about what you were feeling: \_\_\_\_\_

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Write about anything you want to: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Appendix D8 – Younger Child Activity Journal (Continued)**



**Write or Draw About What You Like To Do This Time of Year:**

Appendix D8 – Younger Child Activity Journal (Continued)

Great Job!



Thank You!

Appendix D9 - Older Child Activity Journal

# MY ACTIVITY JOURNAL

This journal belongs to:



## Appendix D9 – Older Child Activity Journal (Continued)



### Why your journal is so important:

I want to learn about you, what you like to do in your free-time, and how you feel when you are playing or doing other activities. There's only one expert in the whole world on you—and that's you! Your parents know a lot about you but they can't know everything you think and feel all the time. Only you know that.

This journal is designed to be FUN! I don't want you to think of this journal as more school work. The really cool thing about keeping a journal is that as long as you write the truth about what you think and feel...there can *never* be a wrong answer!

This journal is yours. I will make a copy and give you back the original to keep.

### Need Help?

It's OK to ask your parent(s) for help if you want to. Just remember, I want to know about YOU. So, all of the answers should be your thoughts and feelings. If you are not sure what to do and your parents can't help you, ask them to call Penny.

Have Fun! I look forward to seeing what you do with your journal.





**Appendix D9 – Older Child Activity Journal (Continued)**



**Draw Or Paint About What You Like To Do This Time of Year:**

Appendix D9 – Older Child Activity Journal (Continued)

What did you do in your free time today? (Day 1)

Date: _____ Example: Monday, October 24, 2011	Completed: <input type="checkbox"/> All By Myself OR... <input type="checkbox"/> With Help From:
--	---

What sports, clubs, or activities did you do today that were led by an adult? (List)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How much time did you spend in organized activities: (check one)

None	$\frac{1}{2}$	1	$1\frac{1}{2}$	2	$2\frac{1}{2}$	3	>3 Hours
<input type="checkbox"/>							

What did you do **indoors** in your free time today? (List)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How much time did you play or do other things indoors: (check one)

None	$\frac{1}{2}$	1	$1\frac{1}{2}$	2	$2\frac{1}{2}$	3	>3 Hours
<input type="checkbox"/>							

What did you do **outdoors** in your free time today? (List)

\_\_\_\_\_

How much time did you play or do other things outdoors: (check one)

None	$\frac{1}{2}$	1	$1\frac{1}{2}$	2	$2\frac{1}{2}$	3	>3 Hours
<input type="checkbox"/>							



Appendix D9 – Older Child Activity Journal (Continued)

What did you do in your free time today? (Day 2)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Example: Monday, October 24, 2011

Completed:  All By Myself OR...

With Help From:

What sports, clubs, or activities did you do today that were led by an adult? (List)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How much time did you spend in organized activities: (check one)

None     $\frac{1}{2}$     1     $1\frac{1}{2}$     2     $2\frac{1}{2}$     3    >3 Hours  
                           

What did you do **indoors** in your free time today? (List)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How much time did you play or do other things indoors: (check one)

None     $\frac{1}{2}$     1     $1\frac{1}{2}$     2     $2\frac{1}{2}$     3    >3 Hours  
                           

What did you do **outdoors** in your free time today? (List)

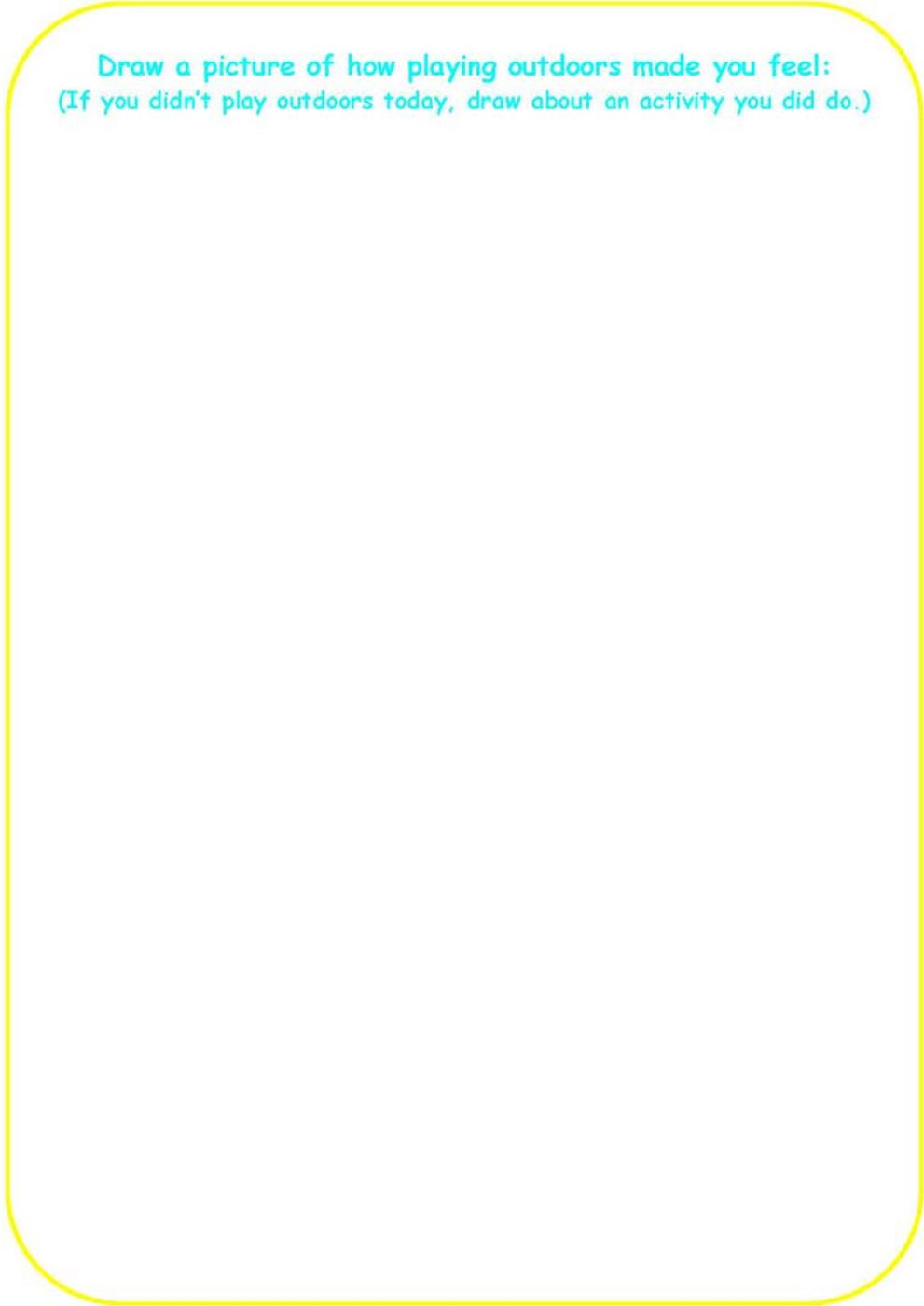
\_\_\_\_\_

How much time did you play or do other things outdoors: (check one)

None     $\frac{1}{2}$     1     $1\frac{1}{2}$     2     $2\frac{1}{2}$     3    >3 Hours

**Appendix D9 – Older Child Activity Journal (Continued)**

Draw a picture of how playing outdoors made you feel:  
(If you didn't play outdoors today, draw about an activity you did do.)





**Appendix D9 – Older Child Activity Journal (Continued)**



**Draw Or Paint About What You Like To Do This Time of Year:**

Appendix D9 – Older Child Activity Journal (Continued)

What did you do in your free time today? (Day 3)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Example: Monday, October 24, 2011

Completed:  All By Myself OR...

With Help From:

What sports, clubs, or activities did you do today that were led by an adult? (List)

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How much time did you spend in organized activities: (check one)

None     $\frac{1}{2}$     1     $1\frac{1}{2}$     2     $2\frac{1}{2}$     3    >3 Hours

What did you do indoors in your free time today? (List)

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How much time did you play or do other things indoors: (check one)

None     $\frac{1}{2}$     1     $1\frac{1}{2}$     2     $2\frac{1}{2}$     3    >3 Hours

What did you do outdoors in your free time today? (List)

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How much time did you play or do other things outdoors: (check one)

None     $\frac{1}{2}$     1     $1\frac{1}{2}$     2     $2\frac{1}{2}$     3    >3 Hours



**Appendix D9 – Older Child Activity Journal (Continued)**

**What did you do in your free time today? (Day 4)**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Example: Monday, October 24, 2011

Completed:  All By Myself OR...

With Help From:

What sports, clubs, or activities did you do today that were led by an adult? (List)

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How much time did you spend in organized activities: (check one)

None     $\frac{1}{2}$     1     $1\frac{1}{2}$     2     $2\frac{1}{2}$     3    >3 Hours

What did you do indoors in your free time today? (List)

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How much time did you play or do other things indoors: (check one)

None     $\frac{1}{2}$     1     $1\frac{1}{2}$     2     $2\frac{1}{2}$     3    >3 Hours

What did you do outdoors in your free time today? (List)

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How much time did you play or do other things outdoors: (check one)

None     $\frac{1}{2}$     1     $1\frac{1}{2}$     2     $2\frac{1}{2}$     3    >3 Hours

## Appendix D9 – Older Child Activity Journal (Continued)

Use the storyboard below to tell the story of your outdoor play or activity experience today. If you didn't do anything outside, tell the story of a free-time activity you did do. Sketch the scenes in the boxes and write brief descriptions below them.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Story Title: \_\_\_\_\_



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**Appendix D9 – Older Child Activity Journal (Continued)**



**Draw Or Paint About What You Like To Do This Time of Year:**

Appendix D9 – Older Child Activity Journal (Continued)

What did you do in your free time today? (Day 5)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Example: Monday, October 24, 2011

Completed:  All By Myself OR...

With Help From:

What sports, clubs, or activities did you do today that were led by an adult? (List)

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How much time did you spend in organized activities: (check one)

None     $\frac{1}{2}$     1     $1\frac{1}{2}$     2     $2\frac{1}{2}$     3    >3 Hours

What did you do indoors in your free time today? (List)

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How much time did you play or do other things indoors: (check one)

None     $\frac{1}{2}$     1     $1\frac{1}{2}$     2     $2\frac{1}{2}$     3    >3 Hours

What did you do outdoors in your free time today? (List)

---

How much time did you play or do other things outdoors: (check one)

None     $\frac{1}{2}$     1     $1\frac{1}{2}$     2     $2\frac{1}{2}$     3    >3 Hours





**Appendix D9 – Older Child Activity Journal (Continued)**



**Draw Or Paint About What You Like To Do This Time of Year:**

Appendix D9 – Older Child Activity Journal (Continued)

Great Job!



Thank You!

## Appendix D10 - Activity and Socialization Observation Checklist

### Instructions for Completing Activity and Socialization Observation Checklist

Purpose: To provide additional insights into children's outdoor play within the context of the children's other activities and the influence of parental socialization as a motivational influence. Direct observation is not a methodology employed in my study but will occur secondary to scheduled interview sessions.

Observation Procedure: Observations of children's activity participation, parental interactions with children surrounding these activities, and observed motivational statements or behaviors that appear to influence child's participation will be informally observed and recorded during the course of 1 hour parent interview sessions and ½ hour child interview sessions. Multiple occurrences of the same code will be indicated by tally marks following the code. Differences in parental interactions or motivated behaviors observed during interviews will be indicated by separate codes.

#### Coding Conventions:

People Locations: **I** = Indoors, **O** = Outdoors, **B** = Both Indoors and Outdoors, **N** = Not Present

Organized Activities: **A** = Art, **M** = Music, **SC** = Scouting, **SP** = Sport, **Y** = Youth Group

Parent Interactions: **P** = Parent Participated with Child, **O** = Parent Observed (i.e., in area but not directly engaged, **A** = Child Asked Permission, **T** = Child Told Parent After

Suffix: **C** = Target Child, **S** = Sibling

Motivated Behavior: **T** = Toward Activity, **A** = Away from Activity

Suffix: **C** = Child, **F** = Friend, **P** = Parent, **S** = Sibling, **O** = Other

### Instructions for Completing Physical Artifact and Outdoor Play Space Observation Checklist

Purpose: To provide additional insights into children's outdoor play.

Observation Procedure: Requests will be made of the parents and target child during scheduled interview sessions to show the researcher a variety of physical artifacts and outdoor play spaces as outlined in the checklist. The researcher shall photograph artifacts and play spaces and audio record conversations surrounding this evidence with parents and children as part of the interview record. Brief notes will be recorded on checklist as cues for further development in researcher's field notes.

## **Appendix D10 – Activity and Socialization Observation Checklist (Continued)**

### Coding Conventions:

Indoor and Outdoor Physical Artifact Observations: **NO** = Not Observed, List Specific Items

Outdoor Play Spaces: **NO** = Not Observed, List with Place Descriptions

**Appendix D10 – Activity and Socialization Observation Checklist (Continued)**

Date: Monday Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Reason for Site Visit: \_\_\_\_\_

Family: \_\_\_\_\_

Setting & Notes:

People & Locations	Notes:
Parent 1: I O B N	
Parent 2: I O B N	
Child: I O B N	
Sibling 1: I O B N	
Sibling 2: I O B N	

<b>Child's Organized Activities: (A, M, SC, SP, Y)</b>	<b>Motivated Behavior</b>	<b>Parent Interactions</b>
Type:		
<b>Child's Indoor Activities:</b>	<b>T, A / C, F, P, S, O</b>	<b>P, O, A, T / C, S</b>
Active Play		
Electronic Media (Passive): TV, DVD, or Video; playing CD, Radio, MP3		
Games or Toys (Interactive Electronic): Computer, Internet, Gaming Console		
Games or Toys (Non-Electronic)		
Socializing (Electronic): IM, Text, Facebook or Phone		
Socializing (Face to Face)		
Still (Quiet) Activities: Art, Hobbies, Playing Instrument, Reading for Pleasure		
Other:		
<b>Child's Outdoor Activities:</b>	<b>T, A / C, F, P, S, O</b>	<b>P, O, A, T / C, S</b>
Chase Games: Running, Tag, Hide and Seek		
Construction Play: Building or Creating		
Exercise: Running, Jogging, Trail Running		
Forts, Treehouses, Playhouses or Dens		
Gardening: Planting, Tending, or Harvesting		
Make-Believe, Pretend or Dramatic Play: House or Super Heros		
Nature Exploration: climbing trees, nature walks, wildlife viewing/photography		
Outdoor Recreation: Camping, Boating, Fishing, Hiking, Hunting		
Playground Equipment: Swings, Slides, Monkey Bars, Other		
Quiet Ground Level Games: Marbles, I Spy		
Riding: Bicycle, Skateboard, Other		
Rough and Tumble Play: Wrestling or Play Fighting		
Skipping, Hopping, & Jumping Games		
Socializing (Face to Face)		
Sports: Skill Practice (alone or w/others) or Informal "Neighborhood" Games		
Other:		
Other:		
	<b>T, A / C, F, P, S, O</b>	<b>P, O, A, T / C, S</b>

## Appendix D10 – Activity and Socialization Observation Checklist (Continued)

Date: **Monday** \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Reason for Site Visit: \_\_\_\_\_

Family: \_\_\_\_\_

Observation Conditions: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Indoor Artifacts</b>	<b>Observations: NO or List</b>
Active Toys: Skip-It	
Books or Magazines: nature or outdoor recreation	
Construction Play Equipment: boards, shovels, pails	
Dramatic Play Equipment: cooking utensils & bowls	
Exercise Equipment: jump rope, weights	
Gardening Equipment: seeds, watering can, hoe	
Nature Exploration Equipment: collection jars, nets	
Outdoor Recreation Equipment: fishing pole, backpack	
Photographs: child or family in nature/outdoor recreation	
Playground Equipment: swing, monkey bars	
Riding Equipment: Bikes, Skateboards	
Sports Equipment: baseball glove, soccer ball	
Still/Quiet Toys: Marbles or Jacks	
Other:	
<b>Outdoor Artifacts</b>	<b>Observations: NO or List</b>
Active Toys: Skip-It	
Construction Play Equipment: boards, shovels, pails	
Dramatic Play Equipment: cooking utensils & bowls	
Exercise Equipment: jump rope, weights	
Gardening Equipment: seeds, watering can, hoe	
Nature Exploration Equipment: collection jars, nets	
Outdoor Recreation Equipment: fishing pole, backpack	
Playground Equipment: swing, monkey bars	
Riding Equipment: Bikes, Skateboards	
Sports Equipment: baseball glove, soccer ball	
Still/Quiet Toys: Marbles or Jacks	
Other:	
<b>Outdoor Play Spaces</b>	<b>Observations: NO or List</b>
Backyard (Constructed): treehouse	
Backyard (Natural): bushes, hedgerow	
Neighborhood (Constructed): playground	
Neighborhood (Natural): vacant lot	
Park (Constructed): playground	
Park (Natural): woodlands, sport fields	
Other:	

## Appendix E - Comparative Case Worksheet

Comparative Case Worksheet for Family **Blank**

**Synopsis** (~ 500 words):

**Situational Constraints:**

**Uniqueness among Other Cases:**

Scale: 1 = very low, 2 = low, 3 = moderate, 4 = high, 5 = very high (Circle one)
--

**Research Question 1:** *How does parental socialization influence children's outdoor play?*

Theoretical Proposition 1: Parents socialize their children's outdoor play *directly* through their parenting practices as well as the communication of their own values beliefs and fears related to their children playing outdoors independently (e.g., parents' verbal expression of encouragement, communicating permissions and rules, and the provision of outdoor play resources).

**Prominence of Theoretical Proposition 1** (1 2 3 4 5)

**Expected Utility of Case for Developing Theoretical Proposition 1** (1 2 3 4 5)

**Supporting/Conflicting Evidence for Theoretical Proposition 1:**

Theoretical Proposition 2: Parents socialize their children's outdoor play *indirectly* through role modeling (i.e., parents' own outdoor activity and affective responses to nature), as well as their parenting practices and non-explicit communications demonstrating to the children their parents' values, beliefs, and fears related to outdoor play (e.g., redirection of children's independent outdoor play increasingly toward adult supervised activities as children age).

**Prominence of Theoretical Proposition 2** (1 2 3 4 5)

**Expected Utility of Case for Developing Theoretical Proposition 2** (1 2 3 4 5)

**Supporting/Conflicting Evidence for Theoretical Proposition 2:**

## Appendix E – Comparative Case Worksheet (Continued)

*Research Question 2: How do parents differ in the socialization of their children's outdoor play?*

Theoretical Proposition 3: Parents socialize their children's outdoor play differently based on the *gender* of their children (e.g., redirection of children's free time activities toward gender-stereotypical pursuits).

**Prominence of Theoretical Proposition 3** (1 2 3 4 5)

**Expected Utility of Case for Developing Theoretical Proposition 3** (1 2 3 4 5)

**Supporting/Conflicting Evidence for Theoretical Proposition 3:**

Theoretical Proposition 4: Parents socialize their children's outdoor play differently based on the *age* of their children (e.g., increased home range permissions).

**Prominence of Theoretical Proposition 4** (1 2 3 4 5)

**Expected Utility of Case for Developing Theoretical Proposition 4** (1 2 3 4 5)

**Supporting/Conflicting Evidence for Theoretical Proposition 4:**

Theoretical Proposition 5: Parents socialize their children's outdoor play differently based on perceptions of *environmental factors* in their community (e.g., traffic or gangs).

**Prominence of Theoretical Proposition 5** (1 2 3 4 5)

**Expected Utility of Case for Developing Theoretical Proposition 5** (1 2 3 4 5)

**Supporting/Conflicting Evidence for Theoretical Proposition 5:**

**Other Relevant Findings (if any):**