BUGS, BOUNDARIES, AND BUTT CRACKS:
A STUDY OF CHILDREN'S PLAY

BY

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THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in Education Policy, Organization, and Leadership
in the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2019

Urbana, Illinois

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ABSTRACT

During World War II, kids in England began building their own playgrounds on bombed out properties. The idea spread across Europe as grownups caught on, allocating empty lots with raw materials for kids to play in, referring to these as "Adventure Playgrounds." I completed this ethnographic study of child culture at one of the few Adventure Playgrounds in the United States. I observed 44 children and three playworkers for 103 hours across three weeks of camp, seeking to answer the question, "What do children do when no one is telling them what to do?" I found that many of the children at my site interacted empathetically with bugs; that they largely showed an understanding of respecting each other's bodies and boundaries; that the impact of the supervising adults on children's experience is significant; and that, when allowed the opportunity, children tend to spend some of their playtime on taboo topics. Implications of my findings include that grownups need to understand that, as children play, they are doing intense, complex work. Educators, especially, would do well to understand and build on what children are making instead of erasing children's untrained beginnings when teaching a new concept.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to my advisor, Anne Haas Dyson, who brought her decades of social science research to bear as she helped me craft my study and finish my work.

Thank you to my friends, who believed in me and in my work.

Most of all thank you to the children who let me watch them play, made up their own pseudonyms, and wrote and drew in my notebook during my research. If my work is alive, it's because of you.

To all the children who have ever played.

Especially Clara, who showed grownup me that climbing trees is cool,

and Brandon, who climbed with me.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Yamina knelt on the cement walk, concentrating on the sidewalk chalk she was hammering to bits. (Observing her from perhaps 20 feet away, I felt I was in a sacred moment: at any standard camp, her actions would have been stopped by a camp counselor to prevent wasting resources. Yet no one interfered.) Nolan approached. “Can I join?” he asked. Giving him the hammer, she continued and he began smashing, their absorption evident by their shared attention on the chalk and their focused smashing actions. Zane joined then, swinging an oversized frying pan above his head, smashing it onto the chalk. “STOP!” yelled the other two as it whooshed past their heads. Tools changed hands, and when I next glimpsed who had what, Yamina was observing as Zane chopped with the trowel and Nolan pounded with the hammer. Other kids stopped by, Nolan offering one of them chopped chalk to put in a chocolate (mud) candy mixture he had made earlier that day. With zero adult input, the three kids worked together, negotiating limited tools and safety boundaries and sharing their new product, freshly minted chalk powder.

Play, according to the Playwork Principles, is “a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated” (Skills Active 2004). Developed by playworkers across the United Kingdom, the Playwork Principles act as a guide to adventure play and what it means to hold the profession of Playworker. When Yamina, Nolan and Zane smashed sidewalk chalk to bits, they personally directed their own participation in this freely-chosen activity. Their intrinsic motivation for doing so was evident by the undivided concentration with which they pursued this activity that they themselves initiated.

Adventure Play by Kids (APK), a nonprofit startup in the Midwest, has operated since 2014 on the presupposition that children need play in order to thrive. The organization runs

community play events and a regular after school program, providing space and resources for children to personally direct intrinsically motivated activities of their own choosing. Despite—and perhaps also because of—the scarcity of Adventure Playgrounds in the United States, until now Adventure Play by Kids has never been formally researched. What do children do when no one is telling them what to do? This question drove my research as I wrote down what my child participants did, lending them my pencil to make sketches or add words to my notes.

In 2014, the US Center for Disease Control found that only 20% of school districts in the United States required daily recess for their elementary school students. Of these, fewer than half of the districts required at least 20 minutes of recess daily (Center for Disease Control, 2014). The after school program run by Adventure Play by Kids is located in Astron County, School District 17. Astron County School District 17 has no official policy on recess. Astron County school district holds progressive policies in many other respects, but their policies do not emphasize play as a priority. *Adventure Play By Kids* contrasts sharply against the adult-centric priorities of the school district with which it shares Astron county.

Kids have been playing since kids have existed. In the mid-1900's, World War II bombing raids in England provided bombed-out structures for kids to modify to better serve their play needs (Kozlovsky 2007). And beginning in Nazi-occupied Denmark, adventure playgrounds provided a space for kids to self-determine in their play (Kozlovsky 2013). Next I will explore this international and evolutionary history of adventure play.

**Playworks, Inc.* is not related to playwork or the *Playwork Principles*.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Adventure Play as we know it today was first proposed by landscape architect Carl Theodor Sørenson. In 1931, after hearing children playing with leftover materials at a construction site, he wrote in his 1931 book *Park Planning for Town and Country* that there should be "waste material playgrounds in suitable large areas where children would be able to play with old cars, boxes, and timber." Although Sørenson believed deeply in this social mission, more than a decade passed before it was anything besides a unique idea in a landscaping book. In 1940 in London, adults began to observe children turning bombed-out properties into their own constructed creations. The first "waste material playground" planned by adults occurred in 1943 in Emdrupvej, Denmark, where architect Dan Fink commissioned Sørenson to create it against the backdrop of the current Nazi occupation. So, in 1943, under Nazi rule, Adventure Playgrounds were born, giving children of Emdrupvej, Denmark, a space to run free despite ongoing war and genocide (Wilson 2018).

After the war, children in Great Britain began to claim bombed-out structures and lots, using rubble to build their own play structures (Kozlovsky 2007). Observing this, adults recognized the potential for community healing through the transformation of destroyed lots into child-constructed play spaces. Lady Allen of Hurtwood was particularly influential, spreading these ideas throughout England's post-war population and coining the term "Adventure Playground" to refer to these child-directed spaces (Allen 1968; Kozlovsky 2013). The first officially-termed "Adventure Playground" was opened in London in 1948 (London Play). One year later, the first US Adventure Playground was opened in Minneapolis, Minnesota (Wilson 2018).

Fred Rogers, who used to champion the value of play, once said about disaster, “When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, ‘Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.’ To this day, especially in times of ‘disaster,’ I remember my mother's words and I am always comforted by realizing that there are still so many helpers – so many caring people in this world” (Rogers, 2019). During Nazi occupation in Denmark, architect Dan Fink commissioned Sørenson to create the playground he had described in his publication twelve years prior (Kozlovsky 2007). A distinct component of these spaces was the presence of a playworker—a caring adult who looked out for danger and helped play to move forward if it became stuck. Architects Fink and Sørenson, as well as associated playworkers, provided a space in which children could freely play despite ongoing atrocities.

After World War II, Europe continued this tradition; in the present day, there are over 1000 Adventure Playgrounds throughout Europe (Play and Playground Encyclopedia, 2019). By contrast, there are fewer than ten Adventure Playgrounds in the United States (M. Leichter-Saxby, Lecture, January 20-21, 2019). APK is one of these, founded in 2014 by four women who wanted to compensate for cultural structures that leave little room for children to self-determine. All of the founders still serve on the board, with Terry Williams (a pseudonym, as are all participant names in this document) acting as executive director, overseeing and participating in APK’s day-to-day operations. Since its founding, APK has provided play to countless children, both through pay-to-play scheduled after school programs and free community pop-up events, provisioning play materials in environments that reach children across a wide demographic range.

Although Adventure Play is often perceived and branded as a new thing, it is new only in context and details. According to biological science, play is well-developed in primates, carnivorans, ungulates, rodents, cetaceans, and elephants (Graham 2010). It is reasonable to conclude that play was also well-developed in pre-human primate species long before humans arrived, in hominids that existed thousands of generations before humans appeared on the scene. Unbranded, adventure play is as old as primate evolution. If we were to begin with early hominids, fast forwarding through the introduction of bipedalism, language, tool making, fire, the wheel, and reading, Adventure Play was just called play. In the last few hundred years, children have filled the role of property, laborer, student, and companion of the adults that have produced them (Fass & Mason, 2000). Throughout many cultures since civilization began, children have spent much of their growing-up time in playgroups, determining their own activities in a setting mediated by the presence of other children, rather than adults (Lancy 2015). Some smaller-scale cultures still operate this way, specifically the Kung and Masai (Konner 1991). Throughout cities around the world, the inception and ubiquity of schooling and increased emphasis on safety have caused children's lives to become increasingly structured, as more than ever, adults determine the what and when of child activities (Rosenfeld 2000).

Since the beginning of adventure playgrounds, theories of Adventure Play have been extended to include Loose Parts theory. The term "Loose Parts" was coined by Simon Nicholson, who published "How Not to Cheat Children—the Theory of Loose Parts" in the *Landscape Architecture* journal, continuing in Sørenson's tradition of using landscape architecture to further the interests of children and play (1971). He summarized the theory as follows: "In any environment, both the degree of inventiveness and creativity, and the possibility of discovery, are directly proportional to the number and kind of variables in it" (Nicholson, 1971, p. 30). In other

words, environments with many movable parts make better play spaces. Professor Fraser Brown describes the related theory of "compound flexibility" as, "given ideal conditions, the growing child makes use of whatever flexibility there is in the environment, and so becomes more flexible, and able to make even better use of elements of flexibility in the environment..." (Brown, 2003, p. 53). In other words, flexible environments compound creative energy, multiplying their effectiveness across time.

In 2014, four child advocates teamed up to create an Adventure Playground in a Midwestern university town. Their organization, Adventure Play by Kids, does not own property, so shares space with a local private primary school, providing after-school programming and camps for local children whose parents can afford to send them to these. They also provide seasonal play events throughout the community where children can attend to play at no charge.

Because APK shares space with a school, many of the peripherally-involved adults have non-play priorities. The Playwork Principles, a set of practices that informs playwork internationally, delineate best practices for playworkers in general (Skills Active 2004). In these principles, Playwork Principle 4 states that a responsibility of playworkers is to engage with adult led agendas when advocating for play. In the case of APK, that frequently means exercising more intervention than would be necessary at an adventure playground that had a space of its own. For instance, the school has strict policies against any kind of fire during adventure play, despite the documented success of children playing with fire in adventure play environments such as The Land, a playground in Wales (Davis 2015). (See Appendix B for a longer discussion of children and fire.) Because violating such location-specific policies would

hinder them from continuing to provision play, APK playworkers honor such strictures, despite their seeming contradiction to the freedom inherent in the child-led adventure play model.

Adventure Play by Kids seeks to provide compensatory play to children by understanding that child-controlled geographic spaces have shrunk, as vacant lots and unused wooded areas have become rarer. It acknowledges that time under children's control has also decreased, as many middle-class parents plan a full schedule of extracurricular activities for their children (Rosenfeld, 2000). Social framing of parents who leave their children on their own for brief times as irresponsible and legally culpable has served as a further motivator to parents to give children almost no time in which they are left to themselves (Stokes 2009). Adventure Play by Kids provides a space that is provisioned and protected for kids, communicating with them via the play environment, urging them to do exactly the things the rest of their lives may be too structured to permit: ***be wild, create big and messy things, do the things you want to do***. APK provides a context for play to families who don't readily have an empty lot, a nearby woods, or a local group of kids for their children to join.

In *Childism,* Elisabeth Young-Bruehl's final work, she introduced the title term to indicate systematic prejudice against children, describing the state of children's rights in the Western world (2012). She argued that children are a target group for oppression as much as are women, gays, or people of color, and in the United States we express and justify our prejudices against children in a variety of ways, including the strong Christian childism in the United States that views children as born sinful, rejecting them for this human state. Her book speaks extensively on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has been ratified by every nation in the world except the United States (Status of Ratification, 2014). In it, Article 31.1 reads, "States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and

recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child," (Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989). Many European countries make a practice of providing for their children's play needs. The UK has approximately 1,000 adventure playgrounds, and the country of Wales has a national play plan. Several northern European countries have play-based early elementary education, notably Finland, whose educational system has become a worldwide wonder (Sahlberg 2015).

In this section I have traced the thread of adventure play since World War II, bringing the focus to the nonprofit organization Adventure Play By Kids in the Midwest. I now shift to a discussion of my data-gathering methods one summer at an adventure play camp in order to answer the question: What do children do when no one is telling them what to do?

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

This is an ethnographic case study in the educational tradition of ethnographic studies of children (Dyson and Genishi 2005; Spindler & Spindler 1997). It is the writing of a culture: in this case, a culture largely under the control of children (Geertz 1988). The Adventure Play setting of this study is clearly not a traditional classroom, but a space inhabited by children in which they compose their own culture. How do children create their own culture, when they have physical and relational freedom to do so? What are common themes, and what factors constrain their ability to create a culture of their own? While I cannot say that most children would relate the way children in this study do, the themes that arose in my data, and the practices they engaged in, provide a starting point for exploring the dynamics of adventure play.

Ethnographic studies are qualitative, pursued via empirical methods—methods that involve direct contact with original data. To obtain original data on adventure play, I attended three weeks of Adventure Play by Kids summer camp in 2018, beginning June 18th and ending July 13th. (Camp was not in session the week of July 4th.) I spent a total of 103 hours observing children's play to gather data for this project, obtaining Institutional Review Board clearance for my research and collecting consent forms from campers' parents. In addition, as seemed appropriate, I asked individual campers for their verbal consent to gather their data onsite.

Site and Participants. The site was an adventure play camp in a Midwestern university town. During fall, spring, and winter, the location holds a school; during summer, Adventure Play by Kids runs a camp that focuses on providing space for children to self-determine. During these camps, children use the schoolhouse to store personal possessions such as jackets and lunchboxes; their play also moves inside during inclement weather. With the exception of an

unsafe heat index, rain, or a half-hour lunch, kids at the camp spent most of their time outside. During my time at the camp, three staff members overlapped shifts to keep two adult playworkers on the clock when children were present. Of these three, Terry Williams was the executive director of the organization; Lena was a playworker who had moved from out of state to facilitate adventure play; and Sharon was a former schoolteacher who picked up hours at APK in addition to a groundskeeping job. Terry had extensive background in play theory and research, having read extensively, worked as a playworker since 2014 and both facilitated and attended play-themed academic conferences. Lena had independently pursued her own education in play and was currently completing a one-year course on play. Sharon had received initial training as a playworker but was reluctant to pursue any additional adventure play training. In addition to the three staff members, five high school students spent time at the site, paid by a local youth program to assist with camp activities.

Focal participants. As my weeks at camp unfolded, several campers and one grownup became ongoing focal participants. (See list of campers and playworkers in Appendix A.) With campers, this happened as relationships began to grow. Ruhan and I became friends as he asked me to babysit his bugs, telling me details about his bug farm I could not have guessed. Mirella became a focal participant because she frequently invited me into her play, or sought me out to request stories. Playworker Sharon was a focal participant because her interactions, which often contrasted with playwork principles, were significant and I couldn’t avoid them. Often they were jarring to me; at least once I left the play site early because I found her interactions with children so upsetting that I could not think clearly to take notes. Despite the constraints of such contrasting adult input in an adventure play space, I value these interactions for my research, as

they create a natural emphasis by building a negative-space picture of ideal adult interactions within adventure play.

The total number of children enrolled at the camp over my three weeks of research was 45; 44 of these were study participants. Campers ranged in age from 4 to 12. They were almost exclusively brought by parents, an exception being a camper who walked across the field from his apartment to the play site. While camp enrollment forms did not specify genders, 23 of these children were socially positioned as girls and 21 as boys. The majority of the campers were White, but again, as there was not an intake form asking parents to specify race, I did not have specific racial demographic information.

Each morning before kids arrived, staff would set out an array of materials including slides, ropes, industrial-sized spools, pallets, washable paints, cardboard boxes and pieces, a swimming pool of water, a farm trough, ribbed plastic tubing of several diameters and lengths, milk crates, pool noodles cut short, fabric in variously sized pieces, an air mattress, and various other raw materials. APK staff provided this range of loose parts to increase the possibilities of discovery for campers, allowing them a wide berth of inventiveness and creativity (Nicholson 1971). Campers began arriving at 8:30 a.m.; upon arrival they were free to peruse materials and play. Around 9 a.m. each Monday, the executive director would round up the kids for a brief meeting to let campers know they could freely play with materials and asking campers to assent to the four APK agreements. This meeting was short, usually under ten minutes, and afterward campers were free to play. The other required event was lunchtime. Because playworkers needed a chance to eat, grownups and campers would all sit down around midday for approximately twenty minutes for a lunch break. Besides these two required events, kids were free to engage with materials and eat food from their lunchboxes at their discretion throughout the day. Some

campers knew each other, having attended previous APK camps; some kids went to the elementary school on-site, so knew classmates who were also attending; and some kids were new to each other, adventure play, and APK.

Data Collection. I gathered data by observing play and taking notes with pencil and paper to record activities kids chose to engage in. Most days, I arrived at the site prior to 9:00 a.m. and stayed until after 4:00, so I could observe play development throughout the day. Generally I did not use a computer on site for several reasons. First, as most of the play was outside and often involved water, using a computer would have made protecting it my focus. Second, in a nature setting, technology serves as an element of distraction from play for many children who are growing up digital natives, and I wanted avoid distracting them from their play. Third, I felt the computer was a barrier between the children and me; because as a qualitative researcher I was a data gathering instrument, I wanted to avoid this barrier.

Because this summer camp protected children's self-determination and provided a space in which they could play without interference, I did my best to be a unobtrusive researcher, hanging back from full engagement unless a child invited me into their play. Some interactions were simple to interpret using the information the children provided verbally and through body language. Because children often participate in or initiate particular kinds of play for reasons only they know, other interactions omitted information I would have found interesting and useful to my study. Ultimately, the value of protecting children's play by refraining from interfering was the determining factor in what data I was free to collect. As camp progressed, I found myself drawn into the multiple worlds they inhabited, whether that was a bug farm, modified as knowledge of bugs increased, or an ankle-deep pond of mud, named Mud Beach by the four-year-old who created it.

Data Analysis. After leaving the adventure playground in the evening, I would transform my scratch notes into formal field notes, storing these for later analysis. My unit of analysis was a play event, and I began analysis by open coding of my field notes, reading through a paper copy and noting frequent themes. I used these themes to shape the questions I asked of the data. For instance, bugs came up frequently, so in response to this I created the question, "How do children interact with nature in an outdoor setting when no one is telling them what to do?" Next, I used text finding software to look at numbers and contexts of particular mentions; for instance, there were a total of 86 mentions of the word "bug" or "bugs" in my field notes, and 32 mentions of "cricket" or "crickets"; these, coupled with their contexts, created a theme of children's interactions with living forms of nature at the play site. Some mentions were my own thoughts, as when, for example, I contemplated needing bug spray on page 7 of my field notes. Most mentions were from children—their play or talk involved bugs, revealing qualitative dimensions of their interactions with nature in that setting.

In play theory, the play cycle (herein also called a play event) is a way for scholars to conceptualize children's play (Sturrock & Else, 1998). A play cycle begins with a child's internal consideration prior to play, termed a *metalude*, proceeding through a number of stages until annihilation, when it ends. Ideally, this occurs after it has progressed naturally through stages of a play cycle, when a child tires of it and has used up that particular type or kind of play (Sturrock & Else, 1998). Play may annihilate after minutes or weeks; ideally, in an adventure play setting, children will determine when this happens.

In my data, I observed a diversity of play cycles among my study participants. When choosing play cycles to emphasize, I selected types that were theoretically and conceptually rich and that showed up enough in my field notes to establish trends among the children I observed.

Returning to the bug theme, I did not observe all of the campers interact with bugs, but of the 44 participants, I have records of 22 of them intentionally and positively interacting with bugs at least once. Many of these 22 interacted with bugs frequently at the site in ways that illustrated complex child/bug relationships, and these interactions became a focus of my analysis.

Positionality. I come to play with a complex backstory. A child of controlling parents, I vowed in adolescence never to forget what it was like to be a kid. Once I reached adulthood and began making my own way in life, I discovered that ways I had been conditioned to treat children were demeaning and unfit for empathetic human relationships. Responding to this self-knowledge, I began to purposively see children as equally worthy, deserving of respect as any other human. Since that time, I have worked for over a decade to modify my interactions with children to reflect respect rather than considering their thoughts and words trivial (Sutton-Smith 1970). I work to show them respect in an attempt to compensate for the many contexts in which child thoughts are not valued or taken seriously.

Across these years of personal transformative work, I generally held jobs in the role of child caretaker. Once I left this role to work at a home for troubled adolescents. Not until I was there did I understand how harshly the facility treated the girls it was attempting to reform. I left when I realized the unfair punishments I would be required to oversee. In a moment stolen during studies, I told one girl I was leaving and why. She begged me to stay. “We need people like you,” she said. I empathized with her plight, trapped and held by adults whose actions did not demonstrate respect. I was powerless to effect change, however, and chose to move on rather than continue to be complicit with the program.

I learned how to know children outside of elementary schools, where they spend so much of their time. Working in childcare, I worked to figure out as many things about children as

possible. I observed that children do things that make sense to them, as all humans do; their thoughts have logic that make sense from their own perspective. While in college, I began formally studying childhood, using what I had learned from reading about and observing children to filter the information I found. I learned to celebrate children as overlooked and brilliant, informavores who trawl their environments for things to know. I discovered they were savants who master the hardest intellectual work of their lives before their first birthday, without the help of narrative memory (Fló et al 2019).

For all my research and work in the field of Childhood Studies, play was not central to the things about childhood I knew to be important. Immediately prior to gathering data for my study, I was introduced to the concept of play as *what children do* (and therefore vital to understanding them) by an academic conference on play sponsored by Adventure Play by Kids. The background and theories presented at this event put together my piecemeal understandings of childhood into a coherent whole, tied together by the overarching conception of play as central and integral to what children do.

Half a year after beginning this study, I was hired as a playworker by the director of APK. I believe my work of provisioning play and building relationships with kids in APK has been deeper and more effective because of the understandings I gained through my prior research into the qualitative dimensions of adventure play. In addition, my daily interactions with the minutiae of playwork has deepened my understanding of the Adventure Play by Kids playwork world.

Having described the site, participants, data collection and analysis, and my own positionality, I transition to a discussion of what I saw: What happened at the play site? What did children do during those 103 hours to which I bore witness?

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

In this study, I began with the question, *What do children do when no one is telling them what to do?* Other related questions include, "How do children in an outdoor environment interact with living, moving aspects of nature when no one is telling them what to do?" "What impact does a playworker have on children and their play environment?" "How do children interact around personal boundaries when given free choice of how to play?" and, "How do children explore taboo ways of playing when they are free to do so?" These questions surfaced while conducting my data analysis. In this section, I explore what I saw related to key themes of Children and nature; Playworker Impact; Consent and Boundaries; and Taboo Play Forms. Originally, Consent was a category distinct from Looking Out for Others' Boundaries, but on close examination of material I observed that these themes had in common the social navigation of personal needs, both of self and others, so combined them into one theme.

Children and nature. Many researchers have written about children and nature; for example, Hordyk, Dulude, & Shem (2014) wrote that immigrant children in Montreal experienced nature as a place that held them, comforting them from traumas of displacement and allowing them to engage with all of their senses. Throughout my research, I observed children interact heavily with nature, as the play space was outside as often as weather permitted.

Bugs were the main non-human form of animate life children encountered, so I followed these interactions closely, as these situations demonstrated how campers related to living things smaller than them in an unstructured play environment. In an absence of larger non-human animal life, the kids searched for, captured, and loved bugs of many different kinds.

Consistently, I observed children interacting with bugs with kindness and affection. For a few dedicated kids, this involved observing the impacts of their actions, providing the food and bedding they felt best suited their bugs, and changing their practices as needed to better sustain their insects' lives. An example of this was Ruhan and Asher's bug farm, created during the third week of my research. They had been catching grasshoppers, cicadas, and monarch butterfly larvae during my first two weeks of research. During the third week, they transformed a fort made of 5' sticks leaned against a main tree into a place for their bugs to live, labeling it "bug farm" with a sign hand printed on copier paper. The contents of the farm varied with the serendipity of what bugs they found, and which ones died, but a sample inventory one morning included a cricket in a shiny metal bowl, with leaves and grass; two monarch caterpillars munching on milkweed, in a cut-off plastic barrel; and a sow bug—or roly poly—in a shallow enamel pan with dirt, grass, and plantain leaves. As a sometimes babysitter for the bugs, I asked Ruhan about their housing. He explained that in a previous set of bugs, they had closed a box lid over a captive beetle, then had returned to find the beetle dead. So now, instead of using lids to close their beloved bugs in, they used wide-open containers and acted as babysitters, or asked others to babysit the bugs if they could not be close by. I was impressed by this display of learning from evidence, the way Ruhan and Asher had changed their actions to keep the bugs alive. Being near to the bugs by keeping them in captivity was important to them; so was appropriate provision and keeping their bugs from harms such as suffocation.

Children who did not decide to create an entire bug farm also spent time searching for bugs, making habitats for them, showering them with adoring affection, and drawing conclusions based on their behavior and appearance. For instance, Maddie, the oldest camper at 12, found a cicada just molting and helped it out of its skin. Its new wings were clear and wet. She named

him Bob and let him nibble her finger, interpreting this nibbling as a sign of friendliness; she concluded that the golden marks between his eyes meant Bob was "a he." She and her good friend, Nolan, claimed a section of the main camp area as their house and making a dwelling for Bob there as well, complete with a place for him to poop. Seeing all of this action, Dominic said, "But then he'll fly away, once he gets his wings stretched out." Looking at Maddie, Nolan responded, "Yeah. That's the point." He knew the beloved cicada was only in their care for a little while and was prepared to let him go when Bob was ready.

During my first week of observing, bugs became a point of conflict between campers, as they disagreed about appropriate ways to treat them. On the one side were Katerina, Ruhan, Dominic, and Asher; on the other side was Jill, a precocious 9-year-old who wanted to be a writer and was concerned about the effects of global warming. Katerina, Ruhan, Dominic, and Asher had caught a cicada, keeping it in an open tub of sticks and grass. When they heard that Jill was coming, one of them called, "Jill, we saved the cicada!" I could not see Jill from my position, but the group of kids rolled their eyes and tossed their heads, appearing to imitate her. She didn't respond until a moment later, when they again called to her: "Jill, we saved the cicada!" This time she said, "You kidnapped it!" They laughed. "It's not a kid!" They enjoyed the drama of actively spiting Jill's bug sensibilities, but never did this devolve into hurting the bugs they loved.

Playworker impact. Throughout the adventure play camp, I observed Sharon, an adult employed as a playworker, repeatedly interacting with children in ways that were directive, educative, or physically intrusive. Play researchers call this type of interference **adulteration** (Hughes 2001). Adulteration involves adding elements to the play space that would not be present except for the intervention of adults (Hughes 2001). In many other social spaces, adults

are encouraged and expected to add elements to children's environments; for instance, interactions seeking to educate children are accepted among teachers as best pedagogical practice within classrooms. The adventure play context, however, is one meant to be owned by children, compensating for the many spaces they inhabit where adults make the rules (Hughes 2001), so even a perceived social good such as educative practice does not belong there (Sturrock & Else, 1998). When an adult interferes in play, it often brings a play event to a premature end, as I observed happen frequently in Sharon's interactions with campers.

As I gathered data, I noticed the contrast between many of Sharon's interactions with children and those Terry and Lena regularly enacted. Needing insight, I asked Terry, the executive director of APK, for her thoughts on this unique social dynamic: an adult doing things that most spaces in society would approve of, but that here, in this adventure play space, violated the spirit of adventure play and adulterated the play that occurred. Terry told me that Sharon had been a teacher in a past career, and also raised three children, which made her confident in her approach and unwilling to adjust for an adventure play setting. In addition, she had not displayed these behaviors during the first week of camp; as time passed, her actions changed to regularly adulterate the play environment. The shortage of staff who understood and embraced playwork principles led to needing to employ a playworker whose actions demonstrated an inability or unwillingness to fulfill key aspects of the playworker role.

When an adult ends a play cycle prematurely, it cuts off the possibility of that play progressing, reducing children's possibilities to fully play. I observed an example of Sharon's interference ending a play cycle early one afternoon when she stopped a child who was unwinding string from a spool. "That's for crafts," she said, and the child stopped unwinding the string. When Sharon was not present, materials at APK were not limited to traditionally adult-

sanctioned activities: sidewalk chalk could be pounded into a fine powder; duct tape could be used to secure a willing friend to a tree; paint could be poured into a swimming pool of water. Sharon's quickness to step in limited the play possibilities available to the children by interrupting the play cycle and confining materials to traditional, adult-approved uses.

Sharon also reduced possibilities for play by physically intruding into children's spaces and calling for their attention when they were busy playing. Part of the importance of creating space and time for play is allowing playing children to reach "flow" in their play. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi popularized flow in his book *The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (1990), referring to a state of concentration and deep enjoyment. For children, this state occurs as their play progresses from one stage to another in the play cycle. Adult interruption inhibits flow and hinders a play cycle from continuing. Hughes wrote, "If adults interfere with play, if they stop children engaging in certain types of play, they may make children ill" (2001, p. xix). An illustration of Sharon physically intruding into children's space and interrupting their flow occurred one afternoon just after she arrived at the play site. Seeing the bug farm, she reached into it and removed the monarch caterpillars' home. Finding Ruhan and Asher elsewhere on the site, absorbed in play, she displayed the monarch home to them and yelled, "These are monarch worms, yes?" she repeated these words again until they stopped their play to attend to her and told her that indeed they were. Only then did she return the bowl to its place in the bug farm, having physically intruded into the bug farm and disrupted the play flow of children. Monarch caterpillars residing in an adventure play bug farm should not be subject to the curious fingers of a playworker any more than the nearest grownup's briefcase should be fair game to a toddler. Sharon bore no overt ill will towards the children; rather, it seemed she did not recognize the potential negative impacts of interfering with their play.

Sharon's interference with play not only negatively impacted the children's possibilities at camp but reduced the time and energy I could spend thinking deeply about research at the site. I was there to understand and record children as they freely played; yet an adult, employed to support that play, was inhibiting and adulterating it. As a researcher, it was never in my place to interfere, and I did not. Yet listening to Sharon direct and educate in this space made my blood boil. I knew this was not an ideal frame of mind for a researcher and began to position myself in another room or several hundred feet away from Sharon so that I could take notes without hearing her interfere. At least once I left the research site early because I was not calm enough to take notes effectively after Sharon had interfered with play. By interfering, she negatively impacted both the children's play and my ongoing research.

Sharon's educative interactions often took place when a problem occurred in play, preventing children from discovering their own solutions as they solved problems that arose. For instance, one afternoon a Frisbee got stuck in a tree. The kids were trying to figure out how to get it down; one suggested throwing something into the tree to knock the Frisbee out. Sharon asked what might happen if they tried that. Several children guessed; then one child said someone might get hurt if they tried that idea. Sharon responded with emphasis, "*Thank you*," praising the child for correctly guessing her thoughts. Because of my training in education, I recognized this school questioning technique: many teachers believe asking children questions with a particular answer in mind enhances learning, so it is widely used in education (Heath, 1982). Despite this social significance, it has no place in adventure play, where grownups are present to support children's freely chosen play rather than adulterating it with their own ideas (Hughes, 2001). Because Sharon's emphasis was on her own conceptions of what might work to solve the problem, it prevented the kids from working to solve the problem. Because one of the

benefits of free play is the space it creates for children to problem solve, grownup behavior inhibiting them from freely working toward solutions is problematic (Bruner, 1972).

Contrasting with this approach, Lena, who had moved from out of state to be close to adventure play, had an observable ethic of allowing kids to solve their own problems. When Mark pushed Alejandro as they were at the top of the slide, Alejandro declared he was telling the teacher, and told Lena about the problem he was having. “You tell him,” responded Lena, encouraging Alejandro to take charge of solving this problem himself. “He pushed me!” responded Alejandro. “I saw,” she said, witnessing to his experience and refusing to involve herself at the expense of his chance to solve a problem. Lena told me later, when I asked, that they wanted kids to solve their own problems, and had considered saying this explicitly in the morning meeting so kids would not experience this as a brush-off. Consistently, I saw Lena refusing to interfere unless absolutely necessary, encouraging children to find their own answers to issues that arose. In this way, she protected their agency on the play site.

Consent and personal boundaries. For the duration of the camp, one of the group meeting themes on Monday mornings and afternoons was consent: If you don’t like something someone is doing, Terry said in the meeting on my first day, “You can turn around and say, ‘Stop!’—and if someone else says stop you have to listen to them.” I observed that in this free play context, children often chose to both defend their own boundaries as well as those of others, even defending fellow campers from pressure to do things that might make them uncomfortable. I frequently saw children tell each other “Stop!” when they needed a situation to end. I also saw complex negotiations of interpersonal boundaries, advocated for by children themselves as well as by a caring friend or fellow camper. One occasion that stood out to me occurred when Valentina was in a tree and the other campers were urging her to jump down onto a mattress.

“You can do it!” they yelled, clapping and cheering. Yamina, who I had not observed interacting with Valentina much prior, quickly came to Valentina’s defense: “Stop putting pressure on her!” she said, repeating this several times. Bob asked, “Can you do it? Do you want to do it?” “Just back down the ladder, it’s okay!” said Yamina. Valentina, ultimately uncomfortable with jumping, chose to sit nearby on another branch while other kids took their turns jumping out of the tree. In this way she both gave others a chance to jump and preserved her own autonomy to take her time deciding whether or not to jump out of the tree. Events such as this one, where one child took upon themselves to defend another’s bodily autonomy, were not uncommon at the play site.

The playworker interactions around physical touch and consent were interesting to note as well. Child-initiated bodily contact was not off limits; I observed Terry play a tickle game with Valentina, and she received big hugs from (for example) Mirella. Once Ruhan grabbed her shoulders from behind. “Whoa!” she said, explaining without anger that this had almost knocked her down. These touches were fine aside from the obviously problematic nature of knocking someone down. By contrast, Sharon initiated physical touch with both me and the kids—once as I walked past her, she patted me on the shoulder, making me uncomfortable. Another time she told Maddie to pick up some screws she had dropped, despite the APK policy that grownups, not kids, are responsible to clean up materials. She followed this by touching Maddie’s hair without permission. It seemed she understood that at some level, her direction was inappropriate. In this she was right, although her attempt to soften the unwarranted directive with affectionate touch did not ameliorate the situation. Adult-initiated touch does not belong on an adventure playground, whether or not it is intended to soften an inappropriate command. In both of these

scenarios, the touches were not themselves inappropriate, but without consent from the person being touched, they had no place on an adventure playground.

Kids at camp were often open about how they saw the world, even if their feelings did not change the situation. One instance of this occurred when Zane had both his and Nolan's play guns. Upset, Nolan grabbed him in a hold and spoke very clearly: "I am sick and tired of you!" Nearby, Mirella heard. "That's a sad thing to say," she commented. Both Nolan and Mirella minced no words. At APK, many ways of saying things happened, and the open environment gave kids full leeway to use language in as many ways as possible. After this exchange, the children involved found an earwig, and repeatedly announced this find to anyone who would listen. Speaking their truths to each other gave them freedom to move on from harsh feelings into play they all enjoyed.

Taboo play forms. **(Note: the following paragraph contains references to gun violence.)** In his book, *Play: How it Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul*, Stuart Brown, assistant professor of psychiatry at Baylor School of Medicine, tells of his first assignment as a professional academic. He was to figure out why Charles Whitman committed what was, and would remain for over 40 years, the deadliest school shooting of his time. In 1966, Charles Whitman murdered his wife and his mother; the next day he opened fire from the campus tower at the University of Texas in Austin, killing fifteen people and injuring 31 before he could be stopped. Sorting through data on Whitman's childhood, Brown discovered that his father insisted on controlling every detail of his life. Rather than ever have time to himself, young Charles had to do "useful" things, like practicing piano, with no time left for anything he wanted to do. If friends visited, Charles' father would make him perform for them. If he went to the store with his mother, his father monitored him by CB radio. He had not a

moment away from adult control. According to Brown, “The result was that nothing Charlie did came from within himself” (p. 96). His acts of murder were a pushback against a lifetime of abuse coupled with provision for zero agency (Brown 2009).

Charles Whitman’s story relates one outcome of extreme play deprivation (Cymru, 2019). APK exists primarily to function as a compensatory play space, giving kids opportunities for play not otherwise available to them. A key function of this compensation is allowing children to explore language and acts forbidden in many parts of their lives. Kids instinctively know when they need to play out their own material, and not infrequently, this material consists of language and actions their parents’ cultures find taboo. As they explore ideas and words that they have not had the opportunity to process, children grow in figuring out how they themselves feel about words and themes normally off limits to them (Russell, Lester & Smith, 2018).

Repeatedly, I observed campers at APK play with normally off-limits language—often words about bodily functions—and themes such as spanking each other or taping each other to a tree. While not strictly age-divided, I observed trends: the youngest kids, 4-6-year-olds, would often enjoy tactile things that were normally forbidden, such as covering themselves in mud or making a mud pool to sit in, as well as ubiquitous use of toilet-related words such as “poop.” Some middle children enjoyed these exploits as well, but largely it was the younger crowd that sought out fully tactile mud experiences. A slightly older group, around ages 6-8, had a wider range of taboo practices they enjoyed exploring, including use of vocabulary such as “butt crack,” hitting each other, taping each other to trees, breaking school rules together, and transforming materials in ways that would normally be condemned as “waste.”

Significant to how APK creates a safe play space that can accommodate taboo forms is the established norm of consent. Children know that if they are not comfortable playing at any

time, they can stop, and they can tell someone else, “Stop!” if something is happening to them they don’t like. I watched one instance in which Theodore, Dominic, and Timothy began playing a spanking game. Benjamin had been playing with them, and they picked him for the first turn of being hit with pool noodles. Seeing him hesitate, playworker Lena told Benjamin he shouldn’t do anything he didn’t want to, and he sat down beside the game instead of participating. The other three continued to play their game, merrily whaling and being whaled on by each other. The rule of consent, augmented by playworkers who carefully watch to speak for children who hesitate to speak for themselves, protects children at APK from feeling pressure to engage in types of play normally discouraged by their grown-ups.

As I observed children explore themes, actions, and words that would be taboo in most settings they inhabit, I did not interrupt. Many of their actions crossed lines I was familiar with, such as the near-universal frowning of middle class parents on children gratuitously using words such as “poop” and “butt crack.” At times it was evident they were playing with forbidden themes, as they would contextualize these actions by labeling themselves as “bad” in the game. In the game “Bad Kitty,” invented by Thomas, Benjamin established the rule that he (as a bad kitty) poops in a hole, and Grace made the rule that she (also as a kitty) smacks Benjamin on the butt, demonstrating this without malice given or received. “And all the bad kitties are nice to each other,” another child established. Even when playing with taboo themes of pooping and smacking, the kids regularly showed empathy and awareness towards each other as they played.

Another example of kids exploring forbidden things while in cheerful and empathetic relationship to each other occurred at the main sidewalk, near the building entrance. The sidewalk is much lower than the lawn above, and a fence guards its upper edge. During school days, children are never permitted to throw objects from this fenced area onto the sidewalk

below—so of course this is how the APK campers decided to play. Bob, Mark, Alejandro, and Asher threw items down, and Ruhan, standing on the sidewalk below, would throw these items back up. After a few minutes of exploring this play, Bob and Asher joined Ruhan on the sidewalk. Alejandro would yell, “Here comes a piece of cloth!” or, “Everybody get out of the way, I’m going to throw a rock!” Even in the heat of normally-forbidden play, making sure others were safe was a top priority.

Sometimes kids would cross each others’ boundaries as they did forbidden things. An example occurred one day as Dominic announced, “I have a very, very, very, very bad idea!” and smacked Ruhan’s butt. “Hey, please stop!” said Ruhan, not pleased. “Okay,” said Dominic, and without drama, this forbidden interaction was over due to lack of reciprocated consent. Here again, a child listened and respected another’s boundary when it was made explicit.

Lena sometimes joined the kids in forbidden types of play. As I watched, I could tell they took her more seriously because she would, for instance, demonstrate her own fully-clothed peepee dance when they demonstrated theirs. I never saw her initiate a forbidden theme, but she was game to participate in theirs, and I watched their respect for her grow as they experienced her actively on their side, rather than siding with the crowd of grownups who frown on questionable conversation or demonstrations. Once, when Nolan (fully clothed) climbed onto a table, bent his legs, and announced “I’m peeing on the table,” Lena responded, “I know APK doesn’t have a lot of rules—but peeing on the table?” Here she accepted his pretend actions as real, legitimating his play. Because she made space for him to explore the normally-forbidden instead of siding with normative adult rules, he also took her seriously when she said words he needed to heed for health or safety.

As I drew on field notes to write what I saw at camp, a multitude of themes congealed into a narrative about kids and their play. The themes I saw in my data—how the kids interacted with nature; a playworker who acted like a teacher; how children interacted around consent; and ways the kids played with taboo subjects—wove a story of what kids do when no one directs them. As I watched them at camp, I saw kids show empathy, passion, tentativeness, learning, and a spirit of exploration. No two days at camp were alike, and each camper's day was unlike any other camper's day. While a qualitative study such as this generalizes only to the study site, it can provide insights into other spaces where children play. The next section explores these insights.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS.

Discussion. In the last thirty years, Childhood Studies scholars have begun to refer to children as social actors who create their own cultures, rather than beings without agency caught up in webs of cultural significance spun solely by grown-ups (Geertz 1973; James & Prout 1997). Piaget, who argued that to understand any idea, a child must first invent that idea (1974), and Vygotsky, who argued that all knowledge is socially co-constructed, or collaboratively built by social actors (1978), both lend weight to the idea of a child culture that children actively create together. As I gathered data in this study, I observed kids co-constructing their joined culture at adventure play camp: doing complex, empathetic, and meaningful activities that spoke deeply about human connection, shared meaning creation, and their connections to the natural world. The culture these humans created was made out of play, and, playing together, they created a culture in which there was room for each of them.

The essential meaningfulness of the play-created culture at APK summer camp challenges the assumption that what we do not understand lacks meaningful patterns. For generations, this viewpoint described how White people thought of Indigenous peoples of all kinds. Broadly, our narrative across disciplines was that nonwhite people were not capable of ordered language or complex thought (for example, Cass 1826). We only later learned that the technological differences White people most despised preserved the health of ecosystems across our planet.

Analogous to this blatant racism is the childism with which adults have often dismissed things children do as trivial and meaningless (Sutton-Smith 1970). Actions make up culture, and children's culture is their play. To deny them play is to take away their culture, an act as cruel

and damaging as taking an adult's culture away. In our society, it is common to take play away from children. It comes standard at school, as play gives way to lessons; the last bits are removed as recess is taken as punishment for infractions. Children suffer when we take away their play (Cymru 2019). The backdrop for this study is the situation around play in the United States: here, children's lives have become increasingly scheduled and parental surveillance has increased, reducing opportunities for play. Adventure Play by Kids is a bright spot of play on a map of grownup-controlled time.

Summary. In this study, I discovered that children at the APK adventure play camp loved and valued small living things in nature, and they showed this by treasuring the bugs they found. They taught themselves how to keep their bugs alive, exerting care to mimic natural environments, even when this diminished time for other kinds of play. I further found that the practices of a playworker can significantly impact children's opportunities for play; when Sharon was quick to forbid playful actions, those actions often immediately and prematurely ended. When she used moments to educate, children figured out fewer things on their own. Norms of respecting consent and personal boundaries among children allowed play to continue freely without harming anyone. In general, children respected each other's boundaries, making APK camp a safe and fun space for campers. I also watched as taboo forms of play were proposed and pursued: talk of poop and butt cracks; acting out spanking each other; taping a friend to a tree. Within these activities, personal boundaries were generally respected and campers demonstrated empathy toward each other.

Many scholars have written about children's interactions with nature. Richard Louv argues that children need nature, suffering harm without access to wild environments (2005). Wells and Evans discovered that rural children who live close to nature show fewer effects from

life stresses (2003). Taylor, Kuo, and Sullivan found that green spaces near children's homes can correlate with increased self-discipline (2002). Scholars understand and have documented positive effects of outdoor environments on children. Although the findings of my research are generalizable only to my research site, they can point to issues a grownup interested in understanding outdoor play is likely to encounter. Based on my data, I conclude that children may show empathy towards small living things in nature when given the opportunity to interact freely. I discovered little scholarship around children interacting with bugs, but Dr. Dana Miller, in a study of nature and children, found in her research that some children collected dead bugs and later drew them, and this became a significant project in their school that year (2007). Children hold the future, and insects are integral to the future of bioecosystems. How children and bugs interact provides a glimpse into potential futures of our planet's ecosystems, and we need more research exploring and documenting these connections.

Research and life experience have repeatedly demonstrated that how adults relate to children matters (Christakis, 2016). Myriad books instruct educators in specifics of classroom control, for instance, *Conscious Classroom Management* (Smith 2004), *Classroom Management Techniques* (Scrivener 2012), and *Classroom Management from the Ground Up* (Whitaker, Good & Whitaker, 2018). During my research, I often saw Sharon acting in ways that reflected this cultural framework. Based on my observations, I concluded that a playworker who takes control, mirroring the work of an educator, may reduce possibilities for children at play. Child scientist Alison Gopnik agrees that a child's closest adults do best to provide children space without prescribing what they do within it. She writes, "Parents are not designed to shape their children's lives. Instead, parents and other caregivers are designed to provide the next generation with a protected space in which they can produce new ways of thinking and acting that, for better

or for worse, are entirely unlike any that we would have anticipated beforehand" (Gopnik, 2016, pp. 22-23). More research is needed on the impact of accepting adults who protect spaces for children to freely explore.

In popular culture, authors in the last decade have written extensively on creating norms of consent and helping children have control over their own bodies (for example Burk 2015; Ewen 2018; Balodi 2019). From my study of play, I conclude that consent may be something children understand and use to respect each other in a free play setting. In the academy, scholars have explored two types of consent extensively: sexual consent and consent to perform research. Research on consent outside of these topics is scarce and hardly extends into an analysis of children's play. More research is needed to highlight how children explore, communicate, and experience consent when negotiating interactions with their peers. Additionally, we need long range studies interrogating how consent practices from childhood correlate to adult practices around consent.

Humans consistently have taboos, and social scientists consistently write about them (Freud 1913; Douglas 1966). To the frequent dismay of their dignified grown-ups, children explore these taboos without mercy, and taboo ways of playing and speaking help to comprise the experience of growing up human (Holmes 2011). From my study, I conclude that children may explore taboo words and types of play when they are provided an unstructured play environment. While we know that a lack of freedom to play is damaging, we need more research exploring the connections between healthy ways of interacting with the world and freedom to explore cultural taboos in childhood play.

Implications for educators. The job of a teacher is to educate, and this diverges from the job of a playworker, whose primary job is to support play. Despite this, inherent in a study of

adventure play are valuable considerations for teachers who care about children. Perhaps most important, we need to remember that children are creating their world every day (Piaget 1974). As they play, they co-construct meaning together, and as we make room for them to do this work, we may find them breaking social taboos or prioritizing activities we would not normally have time for. If we practice making an effort to understand what they are working at, before trying to tell them what to do, we can afford them the respect of beginning where they are conceptually, instead of erasing their beginning to make room for our own. As teachers, we can watch to see how they are discovering their world by playing, and how we can extend their play to provide more opportunities for them to grow and develop. Teachers often remove play from children, but as we provide materials, space, and permission for play, we make room for their biological and social drive to become effective adults. As we bring children and play together, we have the chance to be allies with our students, making room for their chaotic and explorative wonder in our classrooms.

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APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT LIST

Child participants:*

Lucius

Zane

Yamina

Bob (self-chosen name)

Meadow

Harris

Paxton

Crystal

Hayden

Malia

Mirella (self-chosen name)

Rose

Violet

Melville

David

Rudolf

Peyton

Theodore

Minnie

Jill

Asher

Valentina

Edward

Alejandro

Benjamin

Hudson

Katerina

Mark

Ruhan

Grace

Stella

Vihaan

Nolan

Dominic

Maddie

Adria

Adaline

Lucy

Malik

Adra

Olive

Leiden

Mary

Kate

Playworkers:*

Terry Williams

Lena Davies

Sharon Wright

*All names are pseudonyms.

APPENDIX B: CHILDREN AND FIRE

Increased scheduling of children's time and a growing trend to increase child supervision has created an increasingly small window of self-directed activity for many children (Rosenfeld, 2000; Stokes 2009). As humans, our significant knowledges are social—we learn from the things we see around us and build on those things (Aristotle). Throughout our history and prehistory, we learned from our social groups to use language and tools, walk on two feet, and control fire as part of growing up (Wrangham 2009). In our current world, the shrinking of child-controlled spaces, increased scheduling of children's time, and increased emphasis on supervision and safety often prevent any opportunity for children to interact with fire. Without this experience, children do not understand fire and are not safe around flames. According to the National Fire Protection Institute, 43% of the 49,300 destructive fires reported to municipal fire departments in the US from 2007-2011 were started by a child under age 6 (Campbell 2014). Ignorance of fire does not protect children from setting harmful fires.

The urge to interact with fire is as much part of being human as the urge to walk, talk, or procreate (Wrangham 2009). It is notable that adventure playgrounds in the UK have traditionally provided access to fire for children, and this has not resulted in widespread disaster (for example, Davis 2015). Fire expert Kain Karawahn believes that children need experience with fire to allow them to express their evolutionary heritage of fire knowledge. Karawahn, once a dissident from behind the Berlin Wall, now runs fire education programs in which he teaches elementary and preschoolers how to make fires and cook, doing everything by themselves. European insurance companies pay him to reduce destructive fires by teaching children how to

make and interact with their own fires (Karawahn 2004). We need more research documenting the results of combining children and fire in moderated ways.