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Urban Children's Experience of a Natural Place Outside of Denver

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Urban Children's Experience of a Natural Place Outside of Denver

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ABSTRACT

In the United States, a common and ingrained perception is that humans are separate from nature. Over the last several decades, urbanization, the increasing presence of technology, and progressively busier schedules contribute to a growing concern over a disconnect between children and nature. In light of this potential disconnect, I explored how urban children experience a natural place outside of the city. In this study, I investigated the "sense of place" of 27 children living in Denver, Colorado; sixteen of these children had experienced a natural place at a summer camp outside of the city. The children created photo-story maps of the special places in their lives, which I incorporated into follow-up photo-elicitation interviews, and characterized their experience through a qualitative content analysis. I found that most children enjoyed outdoor activities at the summer camp, with new people, in the largely unfamiliar natural place; however, the short experience there was detached from how the children experienced their everyday fun activities, with family and friends, in their often familiar special places. My findings indicate that if urban children are to become more connected with nature, then experiences of natural places outside of the city need to connect to their everyday lives in the city. To connect such experiences, I suggest urban children would need more frequent exposure to nearby natural places, in the presence of family and friends.

Keywords: urban children, natural place, sense of place, photo-story maps

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

A common and ingrained perception in the United States is that humans are separate from nature (Louv 2005; Berry 2011; Sampson 2015). Many children in the United States spend more than seven hours each day in front of screens, while the average child spends under thirty minutes playing outdoors (Juster, Stafford, and Ono 2004; Rideout, Foehr, and Roberts 2010; Sampson 2015). Over the last several decades, the increasing presence of technology, progressively busier schedules, and safety concerns of parents contribute to a potentially increasing disconnect between children and nature (Louv 2005; Sampson 2015). In this study, I define "nature" inclusively to encompass humans and human-introduced systems (e.g., cities) along with non-human species and systems, which together make up the larger natural world. However, in this study I refer to "natural" places as distinct from other, mostly "urban," human-altered places, to reflect this common perception of nature. Louv (2005) points to the challenge in the United States of overcoming a polarization of what is natural and what is urban. In this study, a "natural place" refers to a minimally human-altered landscape; for instance, a predominantly forested summer camp property with some cabins and other structures. An "urban place" refers to a predominantly human-altered landscape, such as the expanse of buildings, pavement, and manicured green spaces that make up a city.

A growing percentage of the world's population lives in cities (United Nations 2016). With more children growing up in cities and surrounding metropolitan areas, how are urban children in particular disconnected from nature? Sampson (2015) asks, "How can we deepen nature connections for children in urban settings, and radically expand the movement to transcend socioeconomic and ethnic boundaries?" Related to this question, in the current study I explored the research question: *How do urban children experience a natural place outside of the city?* The findings from this study support further understanding factors that contribute to the disconnect between children and nature popularized by Louv (2005) and Sampson (2015). Furthermore, the findings offer further evidence for what could reconnect children with nature, particularly children from urban places.

One opportunity for urban children to experience a natural place is at summer camps, which are often located in natural places outside of cities. In this study, I worked with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Metro Denver (BGCMD) Gates Camp, located in a natural place in the mountains outside of Denver, Colorado. Children who attend Gates Camp are members of Boys and Girls Clubs in neighborhoods across the Denver Metropolitan Area. While at Gates Camp, children experience a natural place for five days and participate in outdoor activities such as canoeing, rock climbing, and fire building. With the community partner, BGCMD, I primarily collaborated with the Gates Camp Director to design this study. He suggested two clubs in Denver and connected me with the Club Directors who agreed to help with the study. The children in this study are

from these two clubs, which are located in low-income Denver neighborhoods with large

minority populations (U.S. Census Bureau 2014): Montbello and Westwood.

With the children from the two BGCMD Clubs, I explored the research question

by comparing some of the children's experience of a natural place, Gates Camp, to all of

the children's experience of their self-identified "special places" in life, which were

mostly located in an urban place, Denver. "Special places" in this study refer to the

places that have meaning to children and contribute to how they perceive their "place."

"Place" is a location with meaning, and the meanings a person associates with a place

refers to their "sense of place" (Cresswell 2012). I define "sense of place" in this study

as: *"the meanings, both individual and shared, that are associated with a place"*

(Cresswell 2012, 113). To collect data to characterize urban children's sense of place, I

facilitated workshops where the children created photo-story maps of the special places in

their lives. I incorporated their photo-story maps into follow-up photo-elicitation

interviews where children could describe further in-depth meanings for their special

places, and the children who attended Gates Camp could also describe their meanings for

the natural place. With support from my observations and telephone interviews with

adults who attended Gates Camp as children, my analysis of the data led to a

characterization of the children's sense of place, and their experience of a natural place

outside of Denver.

Findings from this study contribute to previous studies on children's sense of

place, which depend heavily on visual methods to explore children's perceptions,

meanings, and experiences of places. These studies come from a number of disciplines

and approach a range of topics, from contested public space to physical activity (Derr 2002; Young 2003; Rasmussen 2004; Hume, Salmon, and Ball 2005; Travlou et al. 2008; Lee and Abbott 2009; Lim and Barton 2010; Wridt 2010; Wee and Anthamatten 2014; Christensen, Mygind, and Bentsen 2015). These previous studies have been carried out in a range of contexts: urban, suburban, and rural. My study adds a perspective on how children from one context, an urban place, experience another context, a natural place outside of the city. Similar to Lim and Barton (2010), I conceptualize urban children's place experience based on Relph's (1976) framework of insideness and outsideness. Additionally, during the course of this study, I designed and tested a new visual method – photo-story maps – as a data collection tool for exploring sense of place.

Findings from this study can inform current urban green space planning initiatives. Currently, approximately 80 percent of the United States population lives in metropolitan areas, and many urban residents lack access to green space, especially in low-income neighborhoods (Sherer 2006). A growing number of government and non-government organizations have identified numerous benefits of city parks, including health benefits (e.g., increases in physical activity and contact with the natural world), economic benefits (e.g., increases in neighboring real estate properties), environmental benefits (e.g., increases in vegetation to mitigate air pollution), and community benefits (e.g., provides low-income neighborhoods a communal area) (Sherer 2006).

Recently in Denver, there has been a growing interest among state and local government, land trusts, and community organizations to expand green spaces and improve access to these spaces. The growing interest has led to increases in the funding

of organizations that are working to address the lack of access to urban green spaces. The

Metro Denver Nature Alliance (MetroDNA) is an emerging backbone organization that

aims to bring together and support existing community organizations, including

BGCMD, to achieve the following vision, "Within one generation, the Metro Denver area

will be a thriving place for both people and nature" (The Trust for Public Land 2017a).

MetroDNA proposes to achieve their vision with three stated goals:

> 1) working collaboratively to understanding existing needs and assets of
> local community organizations;
> 2) leveraging those assets to improve the health of people and nature; and
> 3) deepening people's connection to the natural world, especially children
> from under-resourced communities (The Trust for Public Land 2017a).

Findings from the current study may offer valuable insight on how children from

under-resourced communities in Denver experience and perceive nature, and thereby

inform urban green space planners and community organizations. In particular,

understanding the meanings that children attribute to a natural place and their special

places may enable planners and organizations to better design and present urban green

spaces in a way that is more attractive to children and their families.

Before I proceed to lay out my approach to this study of urban children's sense of

place, I offer some of the factors that influence my own sense of place. I am a white male

who grew up in a middle-income family in a Kansas City suburb. As a child, I attended

summer camps, enjoyed outdoor trips with Boy Scouts, and family vacations often

included visits to State and National Parks. In college, I spent many summers leading

outdoor trips as a camp counselor. My frequent experiences in nature with family and

friends have led to my familiarity with natural places. My experiences also fueled my

interest in the research question and the initial assumptions that guided my design of this study. For instance, I assumed that for some of the children in this study, the experience of a natural place outside of the city might impact how they experience natural places in some way: positive, negative, or both. I also anticipated that some of the children might include Gates Camp as a special place in their photo-story maps because of their experience there. Furthermore, my background made me an outsider to the experiences of many of the children in this study, most of whom come from low-income minority neighborhoods. From my outsider perspective, I aimed to be open to the experiences of the children in this study. I also intended to minimize the influence of my assumptions through a largely inductive analysis process that let the data tell the story. Nevertheless, my positionality played an important role in how I approached each aspect of this study.

My account of this study proceeds through six chapters. Chapter 2 summarizes the theoretical background that supports this study. Chapter 3 explains the four methods I employed to collect data: observation, photo-story maps, photo-elicitation interviews, and telephone interviews, followed by an explanation of how I analyzed the data. Chapter 4 tells the story of the results that came out of my data analysis. Chapter 5 discusses how my findings support the further understanding of factors that contribute to the idea of a disconnect between children and nature. Finally, Chapter 6 concludes with evidence from my findings to support how urban children can reconnect with nature.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

I aim to situate this study within a theoretical background and support the research question with relevant literature. First, I situate the concept of "place" I use in this study – "sense of place" – in a methodological and disciplinary framework (Williams and Patterson 2005). Second, I introduce Relph's (1976) "insideness" and "outsideness" experiences of place to conceptualize how urban children experience a natural place outside of the city. Third, I provide age-specific background on children's sense of place. Finally, I summarize factors identified by previous studies to influence children's experience of a natural place to be significant.

2.1 Sense of Place

At the core of this study is the concept of "place," specifically "sense of place." The study of place commonly involves two disparate approaches, either psychometric methods – i.e., statistically summarizing constructs of place – or phenomenological methods – i.e., exploring fundamental essences of place experience (Williams and Patterson 2005). Moreover, researchers from multiple disciplines, ranging from psychology to sociology to geography, study numerous "place"- related concepts, which include sense of place, place identity, place attachment, and place satisfaction (Relph 1976; Tuan 1977; Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff 1983; Low and Altman 1992; Stedman 2002; Cresswell 2012). While I did not specifically use psychometric or

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phenomenological methods in this study, I intended to remain consistent with a common

focus in the field of geography on how people experience place (Relph 1976; Tuan 1977;

Cresswell 2012). To do so, I used qualitative data – i.e., observation, photo-story maps,

photo-elicitation interviews, and telephone interviews – to explore how people,

specifically children, experience place and give it meaning.

Geographers commonly explore how people experience place, particularly in the

context of their everyday lives, with an ultimate aim to understand people's relationship

with the world (Buttimer 1976; Relph 1976; Tuan 1977; Seamon and Sowers 2008;

Cresswell 2012). Fundamentally, a "place" is a location with meaning (Cresswell 2012).

The different physical and social characteristics of a location influence the meaning. For

instance, Relph (1976, 29) described some characteristics of locations that influence how

people experience – or sense – a place:

> In our everyday lives places are not experienced as independent, clearly
> defined entities that can be described simply in terms of their location or
> appearance. Rather they are sensed in a chiaroscuro of setting, landscape,
> ritual, routine, other people, personal experiences, care and concern for
> home, and in the context of other places.

Tuan (1977, 6) describes the experience of place as direct and intimate, or indirect and

conceptual; "what begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it

better and endow it with value." Malpas (2000, 34) explains further how places are

interconnected based on their characteristics:

> Places are thus internally differentiated and interconnected in terms of the
> elements that appear within them, while they also interconnect with other
> places – thus places are juxtaposed and intersect with one another; places
> also contain places so that one can move inwards to find other places
> nested within a place as well as move outwards to a more encompassing
> locale.

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In this study, I investigated the interconnected elements, setting, routine, people, and personal experiences that contributed to how urban children sensed their special places compared to a natural place. To define "sense of place," I adopted a definition commonly used by geographers, synthesized by Cresswell (2012, 113): *"the meanings, both individual and shared, that are associated with a place."* Matthews (1992, 5) defines "meaning" for children in particular as, "a behavioural context within which a child makes sense of or gives significance to a particular environmental transaction." The physical characteristics of a location along with the dominant social, cultural, and organizational systems shape how a child feels and responds to a given setting, and in turn, how they endow it with meaning (Relph 1976; Tuan 1977; Matthews 1992). The meaning is a result of varied experiences of a place, as insiders or outsiders, a part of or apart from the place (Relph 1976).

2.2 Insideness and Outsideness

Relph (1976) further conceptualizes the experience of place in terms of an "inside" distinct from an "outside." Essentially, this distinction sets apart a given place from surrounding places based on its distinguishable characteristics, such as the physical and social setting. People experience the distinction between inside and outside on a continuum with two extremes. At one extreme, Relph (1976, 49) described "insideness" where, "to be inside a place is to belong to it and to identify with it, and the more profoundly inside you are, the stronger is this identity with the place." At the other extreme, Seamon and Sowers (2008) elucidate "outsideness" to be, "a sense of strangeness and alienation, such as that often felt by newcomers to a place." A stronger

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outsideness experience leads a person to feel separated from a place, while stronger

insideness contributes to an identity with a place (Relph 1976, Seamon and Sowers

2008).

Within the two extremes, people experience places with varied intensity levels of

insideness and outsideness. From stonger insideness to stronger outsideness, Relph

(1976, 50) identified seven levels: existential insideness (i.e., an unselfconscious

connection to a place), empathetic insideness (i.e., emotional involvement in a place),

behavioral insideness (i.e., physically being in a place), vicarious insideness (i.e.,

involvement in a place through media), incidental outsideness (i.e., a place is a

background for activities), objective outsideness (a place is a concept or a location), and

existential outsideness (i.e., alienation from all places). The levels of insideness to

outsideness are not exhaustive, but help guide researchers to characterize how people

experience place (Relph 1976; Seamon and Sowers 2008; Lim and Barton 2010).

Lim and Barton (2010) used insideness to conceptualize how urban children

develop a sense of place. Lim and Barton (2010) found that urban children developed

insideness through layered significance and meanings for places based on three

components: environmental understanding (i.e., knowledge of the place), environmental

competence (i.e., knowing how to navigate and engage with a place), and affective

relationships (i.e., identity and social ties to a place). They further describe how children

develop these three components of insideness:

> The kinds of knowledge, skills, and affective meanings that the children
> develop with and in their place are emplaced i.e., uniquely constructed by
> insiders, detailed and particularized from lived experiences, and layered
> with significance and meanings (Lim and Barton 2010).

In contrast, as outsiders in a place, children have more literal place perceptions that lack the depth and multiple layers of places in which they are insiders (Lim and Barton 2010). How children position themselves in a place, as stronger insiders or stronger outsiders, influences the knowledge they have for the place, how strongly they identify with the place, and their ability to experience the place fully:

> When children are positioned in a place, they draw upon their place identity to assess and make sense of whether the place is a good fit or not. When the place is compatible with the child's place identity, the place tends to offer satisfying and meaningful experiences for the child that in return reinforces the child's place identity (Lim and Barton 2010).

In the current study, insideness and outsideness helps to frame how the children positon themselves in their special places, mostly in the city, relative to how they position themselves in the natural place, outside of the city. Moreover, the way in which the children position themselves as insiders or outsiders, influences whether or not they experience their special places or the natural place fully and meaningfully.

2.3 Children's Sense of Place

Children's experience of place, and the meanings they associate with place, depend on a number of factors that are specific to children. Matthews (1992) described three age-related factors that influence how children come into contact with their surroundings. First, children develop mobility and sensory skills that affect how they interact with and perceive their surroundings. Second, adults create the emotional setting in which children experience their surroundings. Third, children become familiar with their surroundings through exploration, and their range expands as they grow older (Matthews 1992). Similarly, Chawla (1992) offered four age-related developmental

factors that cause a variation in sense of place between middle childhood (ages 6 to 11) and adolescence (ages 12 to 17): changing self-identity, expanding mobility, increasing desire for privacy, and shifting social groups. Consequently, the developing sense of place for children is in transition from late middle childhood to early adolescence.

Multiple studies show how children's sense of place depends, in part, on an age-related developmental transition between middle childhood and adolescence (Hart 1979; Sobel 1996; Hay 1998). For example, Hay (1998) found that children in middle childhood mostly prefer going to neighborhood places, while adolescents range further from home to surrounding places. Sobel (1996) noted similar ranges based on neighborhood maps drawn by children. In middle childhood maps, the home diminishes and their "explorable landscape" expands. In adolescent maps, the explorable landscape continues to expand and places take on a social meaning (Sobel 1996). Hart (1979) further highlighted how adults influence the development of children's sense of place because they define the boundaries of where a child may go. In the current study, I explored sense of place for children aged 10 to 14, in the transition from middle childhood to adolescence.

The meanings children associate with places are a focus of numerous studies which use visual methods that incorporate techniques such as photography and mapping with children in similar age ranges. These studies came from a breadth of disciplines,, from geography to education to health science, and approached a range of topics: place experience (Derr 2002), contested public space (Young 2003; Travlou et al. 2008), institutionalized space (Rasmussen 2004), physical activity (Hume, Salmon, and Ball

2005; Lee and Abbott 2009; Wridt 2010; Christensen, Mygind, and Bentsen 2015),

culture of play (Wee and Anthamatten 2014), and urban insideness (Lim and Barton

2010). Still, children consistently associated places with many similar characteristics that

include the activities they do there, family and friends, proximity to home, knowing the

place, feeling welcome, and bad or contested places. Table 1 summarizes the studies

surveyed here and the resulting findings on the meanings children associate with places.

Table 1. Studies that incorporate visual methods to research the meanings children associate with places.					
study	**visual**	**topic**	**context**	**age**	**relevant place meanings**
Derr 2002	map drawing	place experience	Northern New Mexico (urban, rural)	10-11	favorite places associated with the activities, togetherness with family and friends, and emotional support
Young 2003	photo-based, picture and map drawing	contested public space for street children	Kampala (urban)	8-17	places perceived as both exciting and dangerous, children were accepted in marginal urban areas and contested in central areas of the urban landscape
Rasmussen 2004	photo-based	institution-alized space	Denmark (urban, rural, and suburban)	5-12	places for children are socially constructed, though children create places associated with activities and friends, often close to home
Hume, Salmon, and Ball 2005	place mapping	physical activity	Melbourne (urban)	10	important places associated with family and friends, feeling safe, and doing physical and sedentary activities
Travlou et al. 2008	place mapping	contested public space	Sacramento, Edinburgh (urban)	12-13, 16-17	favorite places associated with feeling welcome, hanging out with friends, and activities they do there
Lee and Abbott 2009	place mapping	physical activity	Queensland (rural)	12-14, 16-18	visited or important places attributed to familiarity and physical activity, with family and friends
Lim and Barton 2010	photo-based, neighb. mapping	urban insideness	New York City (urban)	11-13	places associated with knowing the place and how to navigate, the activities, and the people there
Wridt 2010	place mapping	physical activity	Denver (urban)	10-11	mapped places included homes, play areas and hangouts, food, familiar people, and bad places
Wee and Anthamatten 2014	photo-based	culture of play	Denver (urban)	8-11	favorite places to play associated with proximity, informal settings, parent guidance, safety, and sports
Christensen, Mygind, and Bentsen 2015	place mapping	physical activity	Copenhagen (suburban)	11-12	liked places due to activities there, proximity and familiarity, as well as social connections

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While many factors influence the development of children's sense of place, Derr (2002) specifically highlighted the influence of family on children's connection to nature. In this study, Derr (2002) found, "When a child experienced nature, culture, and family as an interwoven entity, his or her connections and attachments were indeed strong and meaningful." To consider the experiences that connect children with nature, in the following section I look at relevant literature on the significant life experiences that lead people to care for the natural world.

2.4 Children's Significant Experiences in Natural Places

To provide context for what an experience of a natural place might mean for the urban children in this study, I summarize relevant literature on significant life experiences. "Significant life experience" research in environmental education explores the factors that influence the experiences of nature that lead people to care for the environment. In particular, multiple studies explore why people pursue environmental careers (Tanner 1980; James 1993; Palmer 1993; Chawla 1998; Chawla 1999; Vadala, Bixler, and James 2011; Ceaser 2015). Louv (2005) popularized the idea that currently children have fewer experiences in natural places than children have had in the past, which contributes to an increasing disconnect with nature:

> Within the space of a few decades, the way children understand and experience nature has changed radically. The polarity of the relationship has reversed. Today, kids are aware of the global threats to the environment – but their physical contact, their intimacy with nature, is fading (1).

Changes in how children experience nature lead to the following question: when children do have contact with nature, what factors influence the experience to be significant?

Studies within the significant life experience literature have identified at least

three common factors relevant to this study. First, the main influence on a significant

experience is children's direct contact with natural places (Tanner 1980; James 1993;

Palmer 1993; Chawla 1999; Vadala, Bixler, and James 2011). Second, family, friends,

and adults often influence significant experiences when they model an appreciation for

nature (Tanner 1980; Palmer 1993; Chawla 1999; Bixler, James, and Vadala 2011).

Third, the significant experiences often occur due to frequent contact with local or

regional natural places (Tanner 1980; James 1993; Bixler, James, and Vadala 2011).

While there is consistency in the findings from studies in the significant life literature, it

is also important to acknowledge that most of the studies involve environmental activists

who are largely from advantaged social groups, which misses the influence of

positionality on how a person experiences nature (Ceaser 2015).

Ceaser (2015) noted the current limitations of the significant life experience

literature. The focus on advantaged social groups and positive experiences in nature

largely overlooks the positionality of disadvantaged groups and the influence of negative

experiences in nature. To address this gap, Ceaser (2015) found in a study of

environmental justice activists, that slightly different factors influenced their significant

experiences of natural places. For instance, negative experiences of social or

environmental marginalization were larger factors that influenced the adults in the study

to pursue environmental justice careers, while direct contact with nature was a smaller

contributor. Therefore, when considering the factors that influence children's significant

life experiences in nature, such as direct contact with natural places, the frequency of

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such contact, and whether the contact is accompanied by family and friends, it is also important to account for children's socioeconomic positionality in relation to their experience (Ceasar 2015). Indeed, the socioeconomic positionality of the children in the current study may affect their access to and experience of natural places.

This theoretical background supports my exploration of how the urban children in this study experience places, as insiders and outsiders, and what makes experiences significant, or not. In the following chapter, I lay out the methods I used to explore the children's experiences of places, both inside and outside of the city.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

The primary goal of this study is to explore how urban children experience a

natural place outside of the city by characterizing their sense of place. The 27 children

included in this study all live in Denver and are members of the Boys and Girls Clubs of

Metro Denver (BGCMD). Sixteen of the children had attended the BGCMD Gates Camp

located in a natural place outside of Denver. To collect data on their sense of place, I

made observations throughout the study, facilitated workshops where the children created

photo-story maps, conducted follow-up photo-elicitation interviews, and interviewed

three adults who had attended Gates Camp as children. In the process, I tested the

efficacy of photo-story maps as a mode of data collection for sense of place. In what

follows, I provide context for the places in this study and I describe the BGCMD and its

member children. Then, I explain each source of data. Finally, I expand on how different

combinations of the data were synthesized in my analysis.

3.1 Places: Montbello and Westwood Neighborhoods and Gates Camp

This study occurred in three primary places (Figure 1): the Denver Broncos

(Broncos) Club in the Northeast Denver Montbello Neighborhood, the J. Churchill Owen

(Owen) Club in the Southwest Denver Westwood Neighborhood, and Gates Camp in the

mountains Northwest of Denver. Since places nest within and make up larger places, the

Figure 1. Study area encompasses BGCMD Gates Camp, Owen Club, and Broncos Club.

three smaller places in this study can be framed within a larger place, the Colorado "Front

Range" (Figure 2): specifically the southern Rocky Mountains east of the Continental

Divide, and adjacent urban corridor (Malpas 2000; Heindel 2014). Because children

"sense" places based on the physical and
social setting of a given place and the
surrounding places, I provide physical,
social, and historical context for the
settings in which children in this study
develop a sense of place (Relph 1976;
Matthews 1992).

Figure 2. Study area within the Colorado Front Range (source: http://www.nps.gov.romo/ learn/education/upload/Floods-final.pdf).

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Both Montbello and Westwood are low-income neighborhoods with large

minority populations relative to the whole of Denver and Colorado (Table 2; US Census

Bureau 2014). While Montbello has large African American and Latino populations,

Westwood is a predominantly Latino community. In the following paragraphs, I expand

on the segregated context for Montbello and Westwood, where children in this study live,

attend school, and go to their Boys and Girls Club.

The children in this study all live in the City and County of Denver. The history of

Table 2. Socioeconomic context of Montbello, Westwood, Denver, and Colorado (2010-2014 American Community Survey).				
	Colorado	Denver	Montbello	Westwood
Median HH Income	$53,482	$51,800	$44,183	$29,431
Total Population	5,197,580	633,777	33,282	16,884
Percent White	69.4%	52.9%	8.9%	11.5%
Percent Latino	20.9%	31.2%	53.4%	80.3%
Percent Black	3.8%	9.5%	19.6%	1.7%

Denver is rooted in the discovery of gold in 1858, subsequent growth related to mining,

and later development that ensured continued economic growth (e.g., the Denver Pacific

Railroad) (Leonard and Noel 1990). As Denver continued to grow and develop through

the 1900s, a racially segregated city emerged, particularly for African Americans and

Latinos (Leonard and Noel 1990; Romero 2005). For African Americans in the early

1900s, clear residential color lines resulted from restrictive real estate covenants,

discriminatory bank lending, and resistance from residents in white neighborhoods

(Leonard and Noel 1990). Following World War II, the growing Black population

previously confined to neighborhoods northeast of downtown, started to move farther

east into White neighborhoods (Leonard and Noel 1990). During the same time, a

growing Latino migrant worker population settled in deteriorated neighborhoods west of

downtown (Leonard and Noel 1990). For both groups, segregated neighborhoods

contributed to segregated and substandard neighborhood schools (Leonard and Noel 1990; Romero 2005). A struggle over civil rights for both groups during the 1960s brought some change, including a busing program to desegregate the Denver Public Schools (Romero 2005). However, the desegregation efforts also contributed in part to a large movement of White residents to the surrounding suburbs in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s (Leonard and Noel 1990). As a result, Denver Public Schools remain largely segregated to this day.

Most children in this study are members of the Broncos Club in Montbello. In the 1960s, the city government could only find room for the expansion of Denver to the northeast (Chaffee 1977). Owners of the land to the northeast, along with multiple developers, looked to merge with the City and County of Denver as a master planned community (Figure 3; Chaffee 1977). Denver annexed Montbello in 1965, the first annexation in the Far Northeast Region of the

Figure 3. Aerial photograph of the former Montbello High School building and surrounding Montbello Neighborhood (source: http://danddroofing.com/portfolio/montbello-high-school/).

city (City and County of Denver 1991). Planners and developers envisioned a master planned community with affordable housing, winding streets, schools, parks, a commercial shopping area, and an industrial park (City and County of Denver 1991). The developers welcomed people from all backgrounds to an integrated community (Chaffee

1977). Through the late 1960s and early 1970s, the affordable single-family housing in

Montbello attracted a diverse community with a large African American population

(Leonard and Noel 1990; Holloway 2009). In the 1980s, suburbanization, an oil bust,

layoffs in the technology sector, and a real estate decline contributed to economic

uncertainty in Denver (Leonard and Noel 1990). In Montbello, the downturn in the 1980s

led economically mobile residents to move away, and contributed to a noticeable increase

in gang activity (Holloway 2009).

Furthermore, social issues combined with low performing schools, and the busing

program ended after twenty years in 1995 (Romero 2005; Holloway 2009). The closure

of neighborhood schools in the early 2010s due to low performance, including Montbello

High School, was part of a larger effort to improve schools in the area (CDE 2015). Still,

the legacy of a segregated school system exists for children in Montbello. For example,

the two schools that now share the former Montbello High School building have a

predominantly minority population: 19 percent Black, 71 percent Latino, and 3 percent

White (CDE 2015). The schools and community of Montbello are where many of the

children in this study spend their everyday lives and develop a sense of place (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Photograph taken outside of the Broncos Club in Montbello. The 7-Eleven down the street was a special place for a few children and mentioned by others during photo-elicitation interviews.

The remaining children in this study are members of the Owen Club in Westwood. Westwood emerged in the Great Depression as a "shack town, trailer town, and tent town," because people could acquire low priced prairie land located just outside of Denver (Simmons and Simmons 2011). During World War II, war workers moved to Westwood for inexpensive land in close proximity to the Remington Arms Plant (Simmons and Simmons 2011). Soon thereafter, Westwood incorporated in 1944 and Denver annexed the community in 1947 (Simmons and Simmons 2011). In the 1940s through the 1960s an increasing population of Latino migrant workers, many from New Mexico and Southern Colorado, settled in Denver west of downtown (Leonard and Noel 1990). By the 1970s, Westwood was an integrated community of middle-income families, with some deteriorating areas, a declining overall population due to suburbanization, and an increasing Latino population to 50 percent by 1975 (City and County of Denver 1986). Currently, reinvestment in Westwood is a result of planning initiatives that aim to build new parks and public spaces (Figure 5), improve

transportation infrastructure, and add new housing developments (City and County of Denver 2016). However, while a recent neighborhood plan discusses benefits

Figure 5. Aerial photograph of Cuatro Vientos/Four Winds Park, opened in 2013, and the surrounding Westwood Neighborhood (source: http://streamla.com/project/cuatro-vientos-four-winds-neighborhood-park/nggallery/thumbnails).

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of the current reinvestment, the Director of the Owen Club described rising housing

prices in Westwood, which were displacing some of his BGCMD member families into

surrounding cities with more affordable prices (Owen Club Director, in conversation with

author, October 2016; City and County of Denver 2016). Furthermore, the Westwood

schools that some children in this study attend have a segregated history, and a currently

large minority population. For example, a small number of children in this study attend

Goldrick Elementary where 88 percent of the student population is Latino, 4 percent

Black, and 3 percent White (Ridgway 2016). The Westwood Neighborhood, a

community in transition, is another context where children in this study live, go to their

Boys and Girls Club, and develop a sense of place.

Most of the children who are members of the Boys and Girls Clubs in Montbello

and Westwood, and across Denver, have the opportunity to go to Gates Camp. Gates

Camp is located fifty miles Northwest of Denver at the foot of the Indian Peaks

Wilderness Area in the Colorado Front Range of the Rocky Mountains (Figure 6).
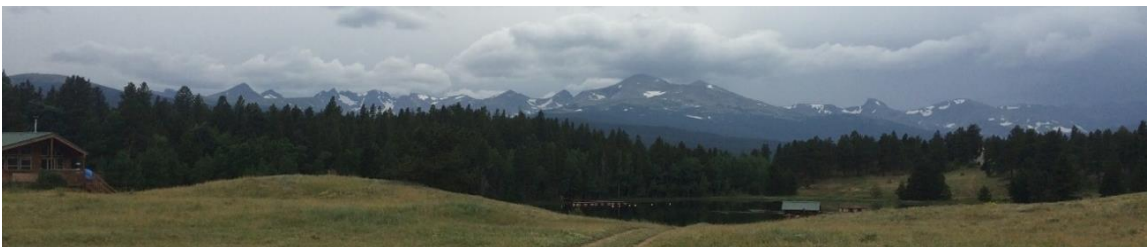
Figure 6. The 80-acre Gates Camp property at the foot of the Indian Peaks towering to the west.

Operations began in 1974 after a donation to the BGCMD of an 80-acre property that was

once the Lodge of the Pines Guest Ranch (BGCMD 2015). In the middle of the mostly

wooded property is a lake surrounded by lodgepole pines and aspens, a meadow, cabins,

and trails connecting the various program areas. Program areas include a fishing dock on

the lake, challenge course, outdoor and indoor rock climbing walls, an archery range, and a teepee. Most of the program areas around the property have generic names, like "archery," while other place names are specific to Gates Camp, like the "lost campsite" (Figure 7). In addition to place

Figure 7. The "lost campsite," a program area where children learn primitive skills.

names, traditions and stories are significant aspects of Gates Camp. Traditions include the

word "Heepwa," a term used by campers and staff, defined by one girl in the study, "It's

like another word of saying thank you, God, or like thank you for what I've done, or

amen." Moreover, stories such as "The Lost Boys" tell the history of Gates Camp and

help to frame the experience for children. The place names, traditions, and stories

contribute to the community that develops at Gates Camp. The aim of Gates Camp is to

provide an environment of trust and safety, as well as to help children identity with

themselves (Gates Camp Director, in conversation with author, January 2016). Each

summer during June and July, approximately 550 children between the ages of 8 and 13

attend five-day, boy- or girl- only sessions (BGCMD 2015). To send a child to a session,

families pay a nominal fee, which makes the experience accessible to many Denver

children in the low-income families served by BGCMD.

3.2 People: Children from the Boys and Girls Clubs of Metro Denver

All 30 people in this study were current or former members of the BGCMD, an organization that aims to offer children, many who come from low-income families, a safe place with opportunities for a good future (BGCMD 2015). Specifically, the people in this study were current or former children members of the Broncos Club in Montbello or the Owen Club in Westwood. The 27 children were between the ages of 10 and 14, and included children who had and had not attended Gates Camp. The three adults, between the ages of 20 and 24, were former members of the Broncos or Owen Clubs, and had also attended Gates Camp when they were children.

Informal precursors to the Boys and Girls Clubs of America began in the mid-1800s in response to the large population of orphaned boys on the streets of northeastern cities. In 1906, 53 local clubs across the country came together and formed the Federated Boys Club. The organization continued with a purpose of helping boys in need, and many Boys Clubs served girls long before the organization officially changed its name in 1990 (Nixon and Horsch 2013). The BGCMD began in 1961. Today, the BGCMD vision is "to transform and inspire lives of all Club members to strengthen the communities that need us most." BGCMD runs 15 clubs around Denver where 90 percent of member children come from low-income families (BGCMD 2015). Two communities served by BGCMD are Montbello and Westwood, where the Broncos and Owen Clubs, respectively, serve diverse populations of children (Table 3). The African

Table 3. Socioeconomic context of children in this study (BGCMD 2015).

	Overall BGCMD	Broncos Club	Owen Club
Percent Black	23%	58%	6%
Percent Latino	58%	24%	83%
Percent White	8%	4%	3%
single parent homes	N/A	54%	51%
free/reduced lunch	N/A	89%	96%

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American and Latino populations in the two clubs reflect the broader Montbello and

Westwood neighborhoods respectively. The Broncos Club (Figure 8) started in 2003 and

the Owen Club (Figure 9) began in the 1960s (BGCMD 2015). Based on my observations
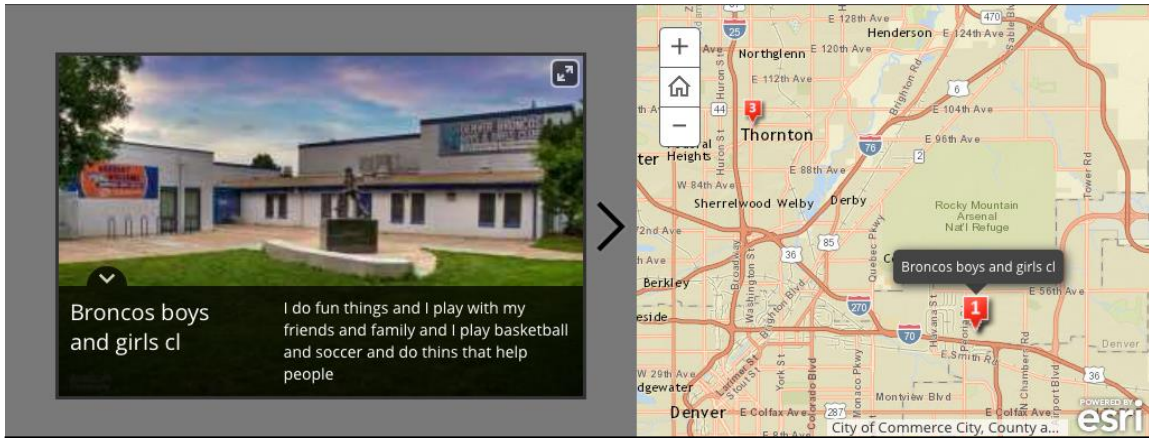
Figure 8. Many children from the Broncos Club included the club in their photo-story map.
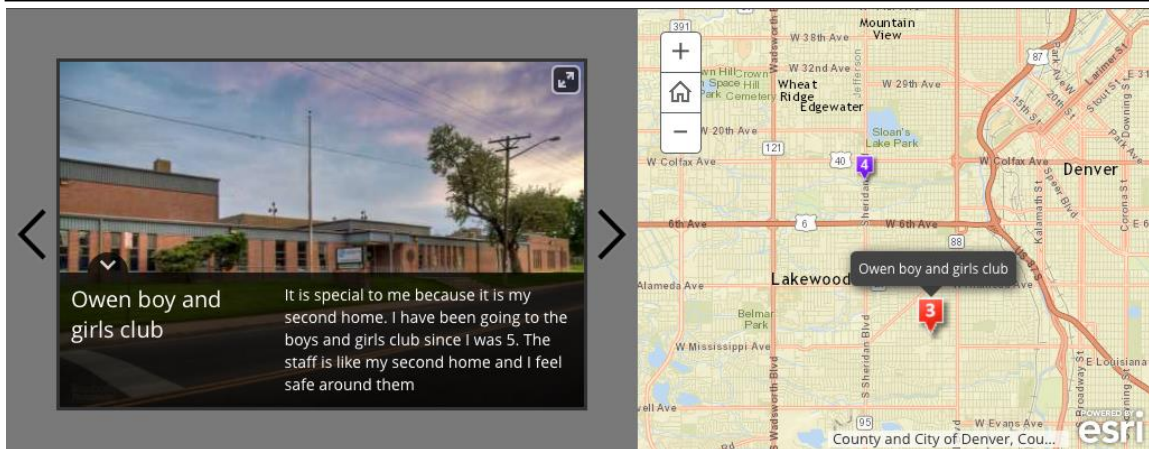
Figure 9. Most children from the Owen Club included the club in their photo-story map.

during workshops, interviews, and visits, both clubs serve as resources in their respective

communities, and many families regularly send their children multiple days each week.

Additionally, both clubs have directors and staff who have been there for a long time. As

a result, both clubs offer a trusted place for children to spend time when they are not at

home or in school (Gates Camp Director, in conversation with author, February 2016).

My aim was to have as many children as possible from both clubs participate in the study. The directors and staff at both clubs recruited the children for the study, and I received parental permission (Appendix 5) and child assent (Appendix 6) for each child that participated. While initially I set a narrower target age range of 11 to 13, in order to maximize participation, I broadened the target age range to 10 to 14. Still, the age range ensured children were old enough to understand the tasks involved with the photo-story map workshop, and balanced my aim to avoid large variations in how children associate meanings with places based on developmental stage (Hart 1979; Matthews 1992; Sobel 1996; Hay 1998). However, the age range of 10 to 14 does span two developmental stages in sense of place research, middle childhood (6 to 11) and adolescence (12 to 17) (Chawla 1992). While I noticed small variations between the younger and older children, including children in this transitional age range seemed to offer a breadth of perspectives.

To get the perspective of adults about their childhood experience in a natural place, again, I aimed for as many participants as possible. To recruit adult participants, I used contact information from old Gates Camp registration forms from 2006 to make telephone calls. Adults gave verbal consent to participate in the telephone interviews (Appendix 4). I was only able to reach three adults to participate in this study, mainly due to the limited contact information. With the three adults I was able to contact, their reflection on their experience of a natural place at Gates Camp offered valuable breadth to this study. While adult memories can transform and inform accounts of childhood, lasting memories of their experience of a natural place at Gates Camp is a valuable perspective (Chawla 1992). Through retrospective accounts of childhood, the adults

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reflected on what from their experience at Gates Camp influenced their life (Williams and Chawla 2015). Since only three adults participated, I included their reflections of their experience to support the reflections of the children in the study. I used four methods to evoke information from the children and adults. I provide background on each method in the next section (Table 4).

Table 4. Summary of study participant groups and corresponding methods.						
Study Participant Groups		BGCMD Club	Observation	Photo-story Maps	Photo-elicitation Interviews	Telephone Interviews
Gates Camp Participants (age 10-14)	16	Owen	on-site	n = 5	n = 2	N/A
		Broncos	on-site	n = 13	n = 9	N/A
Non-Gates Camp Participants (age 10-14)	11	Owen	on-site	n = 1	n = 1	N/A
		Broncos	on-site	n = 8	n = 6	N/A
Past Gates Camp Participants (age 20-24)	3	Owen	N/A	N/A	N/A	n = 2
		Broncos	N/A	N/A	N/A	n = 1
Total	30		N/A	n = 27	n = 18	n = 3

3.3 Data Collection

To collect data for this study, I interacted with the children through each method to evoke information that helped me characterize their sense of place in Denver and their experience of a natural place at Gates Camp. Four methods contributed to the characterization: observation, photo-story maps, photo-elicitation interviews, and telephone interviews. I made observations throughout the study, particularly at the beginning, when I gained context for the children's experience of a natural place during visits at Gates Camp. I facilitated workshops at the two clubs in Denver, where children created photo-story maps of the special places in their lives. Then, I returned to both clubs and conducted follow-up photo-elicitation interviews with a portion of the children to investigate in-depth meanings, both associated with their special places in their photo-

story maps and with the natural place at Gates Camp. I interviewed adults over the telephone to add complementary information for the experience of the natural place at Gates Camp. In the following sections, I give background on each method and explain how each contributed to characterizing sense of place for children in Denver and the experience of a natural place at Gates Camp.

3.3.1 Observation

Throughout data collection, during workshops, interviews, and visits to Gates Camp and the clubs, I aimed to add complementary information to the more structured forms of data with my observations (Yin 2009; Kearns 2010). Additionally, since the study focuses on the places of Gates Camp, the clubs, and the surroundings, observations allowed me to obtain relevant contextual information on the social and physical settings through my own direct experience of the places (Yin 2009; Kearns 2010). Through recording my observations in fieldnotes and photographs (Figure 10), I not only collected complementary and contextual information that supported the characterization of the children's experience, it allowed me to intentionally reflect on the social and physical setting of each place (Watson and Till 2010).

Figure 10. A photograph taken just before lunch in the Main Lodge during a visit to Gates Camp.

I visited Gates Camp during the summer as an observer (July 2016), and I made observations before, during, and after

workshops, interviews, and other visits to Gates Camp and the clubs (Kearns 2010). In

every observation setting, I was aware of my role as an observer and the influence of my

presence on each situation (Kearns 2010; Watson and Till 2010). My role varied in each

situation and affected how children perceived my presence, as an observer at Gates

Camp, or as a workshop facilitator and interviewer at the clubs. During visits to Gates

Camp, my primary role was to be an observer. While the counselor staff knew why I was

there, my presence was less clear to the children who often thought I was just another

counselor. As I floated around the property, I participated in programs when a counselor

or child invited me too, and otherwise watched on the side. I intended to be unobtrusive

and recognized that I was a guest in their community. In contrast, during workshops and

interviews, my role as an observer was secondary to my primary role as a facilitator or

interviewer. While I was still a guest in the clubs, the children more clearly understood

that I was there to facilitate workshops or conduct interviews. Although my role as an

observer varied in the different stages of data collection, the purpose of observation

remained the same – to collect complementary and contextual information about the

setting in support of the more structured forms of data – and I explain the more structured

forms of data in the next sections.

3.3.2 Photo-story Maps

    A photo-story map (Figure 11, used generic photos to only show portion of map)

incorporates photographs, captions, and geotags or manually located points into a web-

based map that tells a story (Kerski 2015). With photo-story maps, my goal was to use a

method that is engaging for the children and allowed them to produce rich visual, textual,

and spatial information that characterizes their sense of place. My use of photo-story

maps as a data collection tool leverages Snap2Map, one of multiple story map
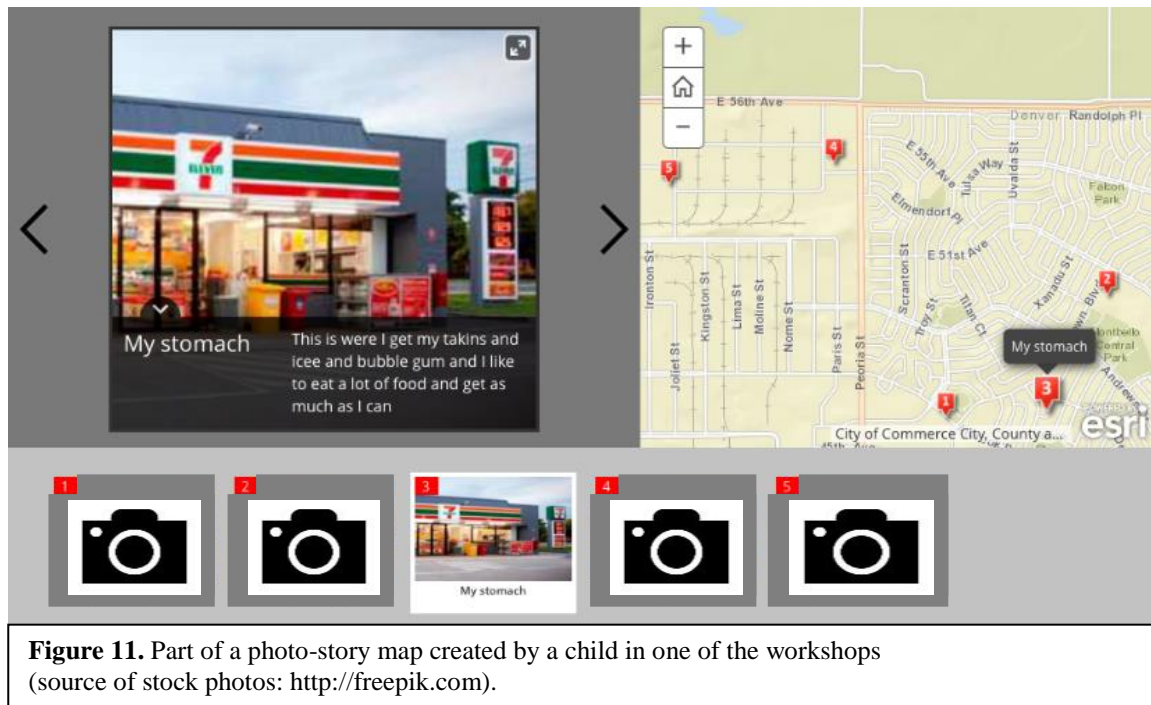
Figure 11. Part of a photo-story map created by a child in one of the workshops
(source of stock photos: http://freepik.com).

applications developed by the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI). To

collect photo-story maps, I facilitated workshops in which the children in the study

created their own photo-story maps (n = 27). In the workshops, children used iPads to

make photo-story maps on the web-based ESRI Snap2Map Application to tell a story of

the special places in their lives (Environmental Systems Research Institute, *Snap2Map*).

I developed the photo-story map workshops, in part, based on two established,

often interrelated, visual methods used to research children's sense of place: photo-based

methods (Young 2003; Rasmussen 2004; Beckley et al. 2007; Lim and Barton 2010; Wee

and Anthamatten 2014; Stedman et al. 2014; Leonard and McKnight 2015) and place

mapping methods (Hume, Salmon, and Ball 2005; Travlou et al. 2008; Lee and Abbott

2009; Wridt 2010; Christensen, Mygind, and Bentsen 2015). Visual methods are underused in the study of place when compared to the potential contribution, especially as a complement to other methods (Stedman et al. 2014). In particular, photo-based methods are suited for the study of place because photographs help communicate the meanings of place (Stedman et al. 2014). Additionally, place mapping also offers insight into the meanings children associate with places (Travlou et al. 2008; Christensen, Mygind, and Bentsen 2015).

In photo-based methods, researchers often ask study participants to take photographs of particular places or experiences for the researcher to analyze and further incorporate into a study (Stedman et al. 2014). In the workshops, I asked children to select photographs from the internet (Figure 12), or previously taken photographs from

Figure 12. Children searched for photographs on the internet (left) and many children used Google Maps (right).

their phone, to represent the special places in their lives. As a result, there was no constraint on the location of photographs selected by children. I then incorporated the photo-story maps into follow-up photo-elicitation interviews.

In place mapping methods, researchers often facilitate focus groups where study participants collectively indicate places on a base map, followed by a guided group discussion about the places (Travlou et al. 2008; Christensen, Mygind, and Bentsen 2015). In the workshops for the current study, children created their own photo-story maps while they talked to friends sitting around them about the photo-story maps. In the workshop format, most children took ownership to create their own photo-story maps, and at the same time, included some shared special places.

I scheduled the photo-story map workshops in the week following the last summer session at Gates Camp. To aim for a maximum number of study participants, I facilitated four workshops: two at the Owen Club and two at the Broncos Club. Before I conducted the four workshops, I piloted the workshop protocol (Appendix 1) with children at the Broncos Club who were not in the study to refine the protocol structure and content. I worked with staff members at both clubs to schedule dates, ask children to participate, and obtain parental permission forms (Appendix 5).

I held the workshops in technology labs at both the Broncos (Figure 13) and Owen Clubs. In the workshops, I provided each child with an iPad to create their photo-

Figure 13. The technology lab where I held photo-story map workshops at the Broncos Club.

story maps using the mobile device application (Environmental Systems Research Institute, *Snap2Map*). Before passing out the iPads, I introduced myself, went over IRB

information, collected child assent forms (Appendix 6), explained sense of place and photo-story maps, and modeled what to include in the photo-story map. I instructed the children to find photographs of up to six of the special places in their life. I framed special places for the children as places that are important and mean something to them, whether it is nearby or not, or whether they go there often, or not. With my model special place, I aimed to minimize my influence on the special places children would choose. Therefore, I modeled a photograph of my apartment under the assumption that many children would include their home anyway. A maximum of six photographs focused reflection on the places that are most special (Beckley et al. 2007), although, a child could have fewer than six special places. There were no limits on the location of a special place. Furthermore, to ensure the unbiased creation of each photo-story map, I did not mention Gates Camp during the workshops. After I passed out iPads, children first found all of their photographs on the internet and saved them to the iPad. Once a child selected photographs, I checked to make sure they followed instructions, signed them into a private account where they uploaded their photographs, and let them create their photo-story map. For each photograph, children included three pieces of information (Figure 14): the
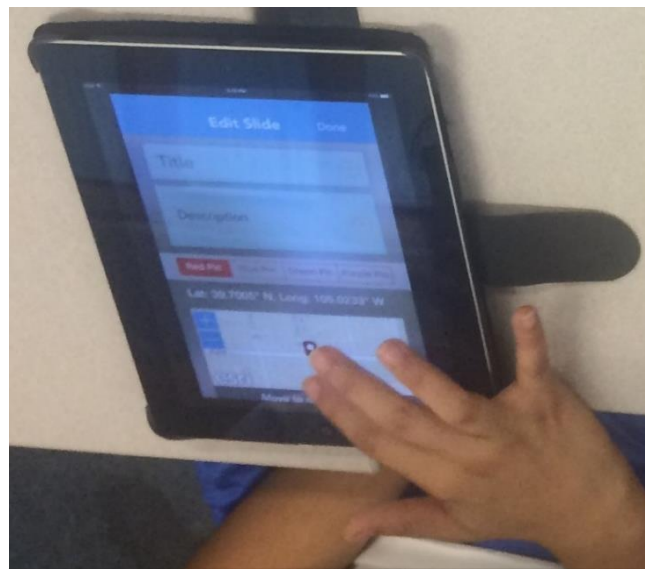
Figure 14. For each photograph, children included a title to name the special place, a description of why the place is special, and the location of the special place.

name of the place, a multiple sentence caption about why the place is special to them, and the location of the place on the map. Upon completion, I instructed the children to raise their hand so I could check over the finished photo-story map and publish it in a private account.

Because the children created photo-story maps with the web-based application, I ensured the privacy of the information they included in their photo-story maps by having children upload their photo-story maps to individual, password-protected, private accounts, of which I was the sole administrator. I stored all of the data I collected in this study on password-protected accounts and on a password-protected computer. Furthermore, to protect the identity and privacy of the children who participated in this study, I only present parts of their photo-story maps or interviews, and I do not use personal identifiers. I incorporated the photo-story maps into the follow-up photo-elicitation interviews.

3.3.3 Photo-elicitation Interviews

I conducted follow-up, semi-structured photo-elicitation interviews with two primary goals: to explore in-depth meanings for their special places in the photo-story maps – with all of the children I interviewed – and to investigate the experience of the natural place at Gates Camp – only with the children who attended Gates Camp. Photo-elicitation incorporates visual materials in a research interview to evoke feelings, memories, and deep reflection about an experience (Harper 2002; Mandleco 2013). Since this study focused on two experiences, the experience of their special places and the experience of a natural place at Gates Camp, I designed the photo-elicitation interviews

with two parts. In the first part, I asked all of the children about their special places in their photo-story map. In the second part – if the child went to Gates Camp – I provided photographs of the Gates Camp property to prompt questions about their experience of the natural place at Gates Camp (Epstein et al. 2006; Leonard and McKnight 2015).

I conducted as many photo-elicitation interviews as possible (n = 18), and interviewed both children who went to Gates Camp (n = 11) and children who did not (n = 7). The staff at each club helped me identify the children from the study who would be available, and then schedule the interviews. I visited each club on many occasions to meet with children at the various times they were available after school. At the clubs, I typically interviewed children near the front desk. While not always quiet, the busy club setting was a relaxed atmosphere where the children felt comfortable to speak (Epstein et al. 2006). I carried out interviews until I had interviewed all of the children who regularly attended each club. By the end of the interview process, I was not hearing many new topics that had not already been mentioned in previous interviews, so I reached a point of saturation (Kvale 2008).

I designed the photo-elicitation interview protocol (Appendix 2) to be semi-structured with open-ended questions so that I covered consistent themes and allowed for flexibility in the direction of my conversations with the children (Valentine 1997; Dunn 2010). Before I conducted interviews for the study, I piloted a photo-elicitation interview with a child at the Broncos Club who was not in the study to refine the protocol structure and content, as well as select Gates Camp photograph prompts (Appendix 3). Since the children chose the photographs in the photo-story maps that primarily guided the first

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part of the interview, they were the experts, which partially minimized the power

dynamic of our conversation and built trust (Mandleco 2013; Leonard and McKnight

2015). Moreover, as the expert of their photo-story map, children articulated in-depth

feelings, memories, and reflections about different characteristics of their special places

(Harper 2002; Mandleco 2013). For the Gates Camp prompts, I selected from the

photographs I took during observations to provide children with "memory triggers" of the

Gates Camp property, cabins, and primary program areas (Figure 15; Leonard and

McKnight 2015). I did not take photographs

specifically for the photo-elicitation interviews and

only intended to use prompts as background for

further conversation about the child's experience of

the natural place at Gates Camp (Epstein et al.

2006). Although the children did not choose the

photographs of Gates Camp, they were still the

experts of the content in the photograph prompts

(Mandleco 2013; Leonard and McKnight 2015).

Figure 15. Photograph prompt of the teepee where children sometimes camp out or learn how to build a fire.

During each photo-elicitation interview, I began with an introduction and went

over IRB information. Then, I asked about the process they used to select their special

places and create their photo-story map. An explanation of the process allowed children

to warm up by answering a clear yet open-ended question (Dunn 2010). In addition, it

allowed me to gain context for how the child understood the workshop instructions and

went about making their photo-story map. We then began the first part of the interview

and discussed each special place in the photo-story map: where it is located, the surroundings, what it feels like there, and why it is special to them. Following our discussion of their special places, if the child went to Gates Camp, we moved on to the second part of the interview. Similar to the questions about their special places, I asked open-ended questions for the child to describe Gates Camp. To give them context, I provided the Gates Camp photograph prompts as we discussed topics related to their overall experience, the programs, and what they learned about the natural place.

I concluded each interview by asking for anything else they would like to tell me about their photo-story map and Gates Camp, or if they had any questions for me. The interviews usually lasted approximately thirty minutes and children were often restless by the end. I recorded all of the interviews with a digital voice recorder with the permission of the children and their parents. Both the photo-story maps created by the children and photographs that I provided helped them reflect on their meanings and experiences of their special places and the natural place at Gates Camp. Photo-elicitation allowed the children to be comfortable and give rich responses about their experiences (Briggs, Stedman, and Krasny 2014). The responses added in-depth information about sense of place for the children in this study and the children's experience of a natural place.

3.3.4 Telephone Interviews

To complement the information from photo-elicitation interviews with children about their experience of a natural place at Gates Camp, I conducted structured telephone interviews (n = 3) with adults who attended Gates Camp when they were children. Telephone interviews provided a practical option to gain some of the benefits of

interpersonal interaction in a face-to-face interview without meeting face-to-face (Carr and Worth 2001; Novick 2008). I designed the telephone interview guide (Appendix 4) to align with the some of the topics about Gates Camp I covered in photo-elicitation interviews. The Gates Camp Director added questions for his own purposes about the long-term impact of Gates Camp, level of education, occupation, and income. With help from the Gates Camp Director, I recruited adults for the study with old camp registration forms. To gain access to old camp registration forms, I visited Gates Camp to sift through registration forms from 2006 and compile a list of telephone numbers for the children who were members of either of the two clubs in this study. Telephone numbers were for the parents or guardians of past campers, so first I called each telephone number to request current contact information for the former Gates Camp participant.

Initially, my goal was to contact as many adults as possible; however, since the contact information was indirect and many of the telephone numbers did not work, I only obtained telephone numbers for three adults. Because it was a challenge to contact adults for the study, telephone interviews offered an alternative to face-to-face interviews and were suitable for the hard-to-reach respondents (Sturges and Hanrahan 2004; Novick 2008). During the telephone interviews, I introduced myself, went over IRB information, received verbal consent for their participation, and asked about their overall experience and what they learned at Gates Camp. I recorded all of the telephone interviews with a digital voice recorder with the permission of each adult. Although it was a challenge to contact adults, and the telephone interviews were short, their reflective perspectives about their experience were valuable complements to this study (Williams and Chawla 2015).

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3.4 Data Analysis

In the analysis, I aimed to synthesize data from the different sources to answer the primary research question: how do urban children experience a natural place outside of the city? I divided the analysis into three components (Figure 16). First, I characterized the children's experiences and meanings for their special places through an analysis of their photo-story map content and photo-elicitation interview transcripts. Second, I characterized the children's experiences and meanings associated with the natural place
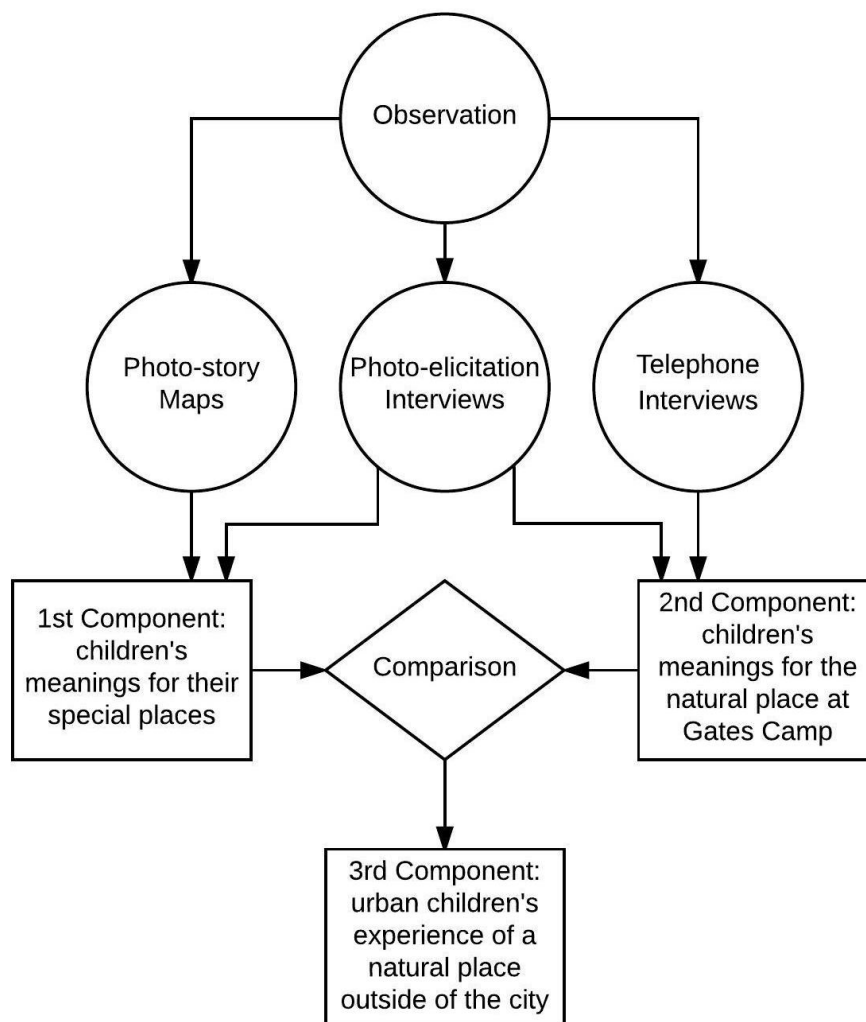
Figure 16. Data analyzed for each component of the analysis.

at Gates Camp through an analysis of photo-elicitation interview and telephone interview transcripts. Finally, I characterized how the urban children experienced a natural place outside of the city by comparing the similarities and differences in how the children experienced and gave meaning to their special places and the natural place. In the following paragraphs, I describe my approach to the analysis and further explain the combinations of data sources that I analyzed in each component of the analysis.

My analysis process was iterative and inductive as I passed through the data numerous times in a process of coding, sorting, and reflecting about the data (Seidel 1998; Lecompte and Schensul 2010). My intent in an iterative and inductive analysis process was to remain consistent with the study of sense of place in geography and explore how the children experienced and gave meaning to place (Relph 1976; Tuan 1977). Additionally, I intended to recognize my own biases and avoid imposing my own preconceived ideas with a focus on what emerged from the data (Gibbs 2002; Bazeley 2007). To organize my analysis I used a qualitative data analysis software (QSR International Pty Ltd., *NVivo*).

Preliminary analysis began soon after each workshop or interview when I engaged with the data again to look through and back up photo-story maps and to manually transcribe interviews with a transcription software (NCH Software, *Express Scribe*; Dunn 2010). To provide context before, during, and after my analysis, I referred to my observation notes and photographs throughout the process (Kearns 2010). For each component of the analysis, I started by coding in detail to explore each word, phrase, or photograph for meaning (Bazeley 2007). I went photograph by photograph and line by

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line, to focus on the documents rather than any of my preconceptions, and thereby let themes emerge from the data (Gibbs 2002; Bazeley 2007). I uncovered increasingly broad themes as I condensed, sorted, and reflected on the codes to develop central themes (Seidel 1998; Bazeley 2007; Lecompte and Schensul 2010). With the themes that emerged, I was able to compare similarities and differences to interpret meaning from the results (Lecompte and Schensul 2010).

The first component I focused on in the analysis process was exploring the characteristics of sense of place for urban children, which I approached through an analysis of photo-story maps and photo-elicitation interviews. I separated my analysis of sense of place into two parts: the types of children's special places and the meanings of their special places. I examined the types of places that are special to the children in this study through an analysis of the photographs they included in their photo-story maps. To start, I looked through all of the photo-story maps together in order to gain a sense for the documents as a whole, and to begin forming keywords that would capture the types of places represented in the photographs (Bazeley 2007). Next, I sifted through each photo-story map individually to code, by assigning a keyword, the type of place represented in each photograph (Figure 17). Then, I reflected on the collection of codes and condensed
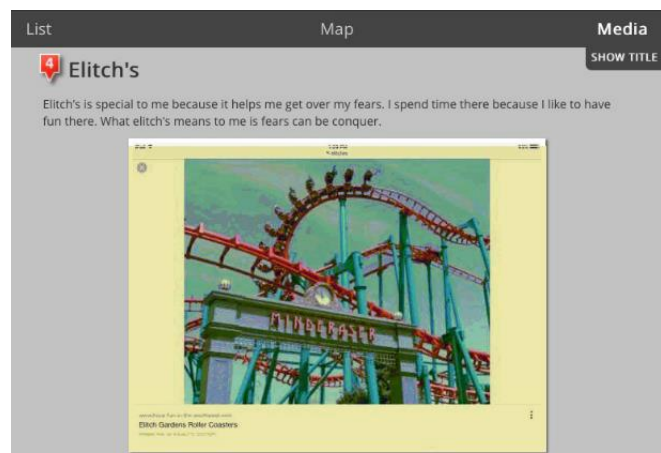
Figure 17. I coded the highlighted photograph under the keyword, "theme park." Then, I sorted the code into a broader special place type category, "entertainment venues."

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them into a concise list that still reflected all of the special place types (Seidel 1998).

Finally, I sorted the list of special place type codes into broader categories of the types of

places that were special to the children in this study (Seidel 1998; Bazeley 2007). The

broader categories represented the central themes in special place types.

I explored the children's meanings for their special places through an analysis of

the captions in photo-story maps and the first part of photo-elicitation interviews related

to photo-story maps. Again, I read the entirety of individual photo-story maps before I

read through each caption line by line to code main ideas with a keyword and developed

a list of special place meaning codes (Figure 18; Seidel 1998; Bazeley 2007). With the

list of special place meaning codes from the photo-story map captions as a foundation, I

followed a similar process to code photo-elicitation interview transcripts. After I read each individual transcript to gain a sense for the whole document, I went line by line to code main ideas into a growing list of special place meaning codes. After I coded each caption and transcript in
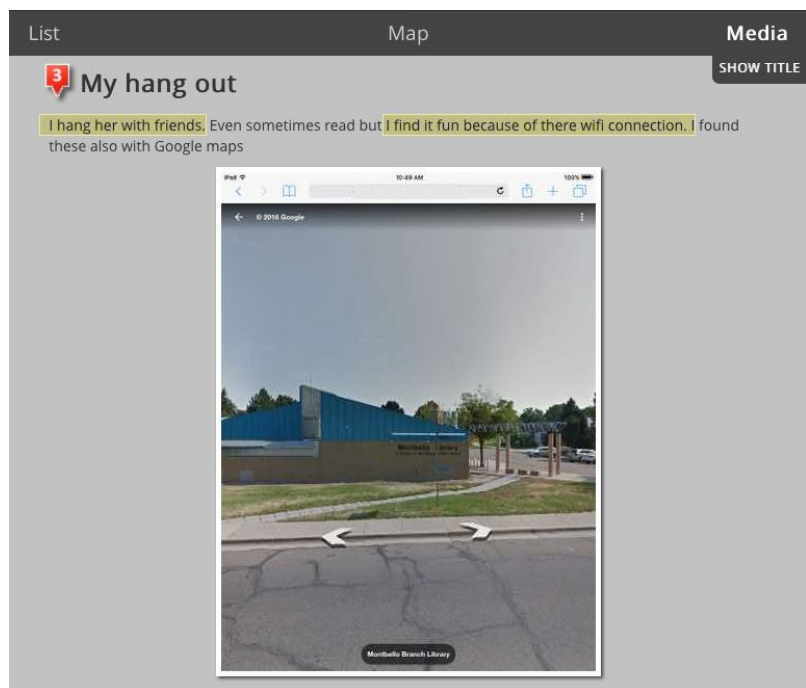
Figure 18. For the photograph of the Montbello Public Library, I coded the first highlighted text segment as, "hang out and chill," and the second segment as, "fun." I sorted both of the codes into the broader special place meaning category, "entertainment."

detail, I read and reflected on the list of codes I created to condense them into a concise list that still embodied the main ideas from the data. Then, I sorted the list of codes into overarching themes (Seidel 1998; Kvale 2008). Finally, I read each photo-story map and photo-elicitation interview transcript again to make sure the codes still accurately described the text segments in their original context. The broader categories represented the central themes in special place meanings.

For the second component of the analysis process, an exploration of the experience of a natural place outside of the city at Gates Camp, I analyzed the second part of photo-elicitation interview transcripts with content about Gates Camp and telephone interview transcripts. Through the same analysis process I used to generate themes in their special place meanings, my goal was to analyze the meaning of the natural place at Gates Camp for the children and adults. I read each photo-elicitation and telephone interview transcript in its entirety before I coded main ideas line by line, condensed the codes into a concise list, developed broader categories, and read each document again to ensure that the codes still accurately reflected the text segments in their original context. The broader categories that emerged represented the natural place meaning themes.

For the third component of my analysis, I compared two sets of central themes: the central themes in special place meanings and the central themes in natural place meanings. In my comparison, I looked for relationships based on the similarities and differences between the two sets (Lecompte and Schensul 2010). Essentially, I compared my characterization for sense of place in their special places, for all of the children, with

my characterization for sense of place in the natural place, for the children who went to Gates Camp. The similarities and differences in sense of place in their special places and sense of place in the natural place then contributed to a broader characterization of how urban children experienced a natural place outside of the city. My comparison identified similarities and differences between broader central themes as well as between smaller sub-themes. As I pieced together the similarities and differences between the two sets of themes, I began to interpret the meaning of my findings (Lecompte and Schensul 2010). In the following chapter, I lay out the resulting sets of central themes from the first two components of my analysis of special place meanings and natural place meanings. In the final two chapters, I discuss the third component of my analysis more in-depth, as I interpret the comparison of the two sets of central themes and consider the broader meaning.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

In my analysis, I combined the four data sources to cultivate three sets of themes: (1) the types of special places selected by the children in this study, (2) the meanings they associated with their special places, and (3) the children's experience of a natural place at Gates Camp. While none of the children selected Gates Camp as a special place, most of the children's special places in their photo-story maps were located in and around the Metro Denver Area. In their photo-story maps, the 27 children included 134 special places: 1 in Mexico, 133 in the United States (Figure 19), 120 in Colorado, 114 in and around Denver, and 52 within the Montbello and Westwood Neighborhoods (Figure 20).

Figure 19. Some of the children's special places spanned the United States and Mexico.
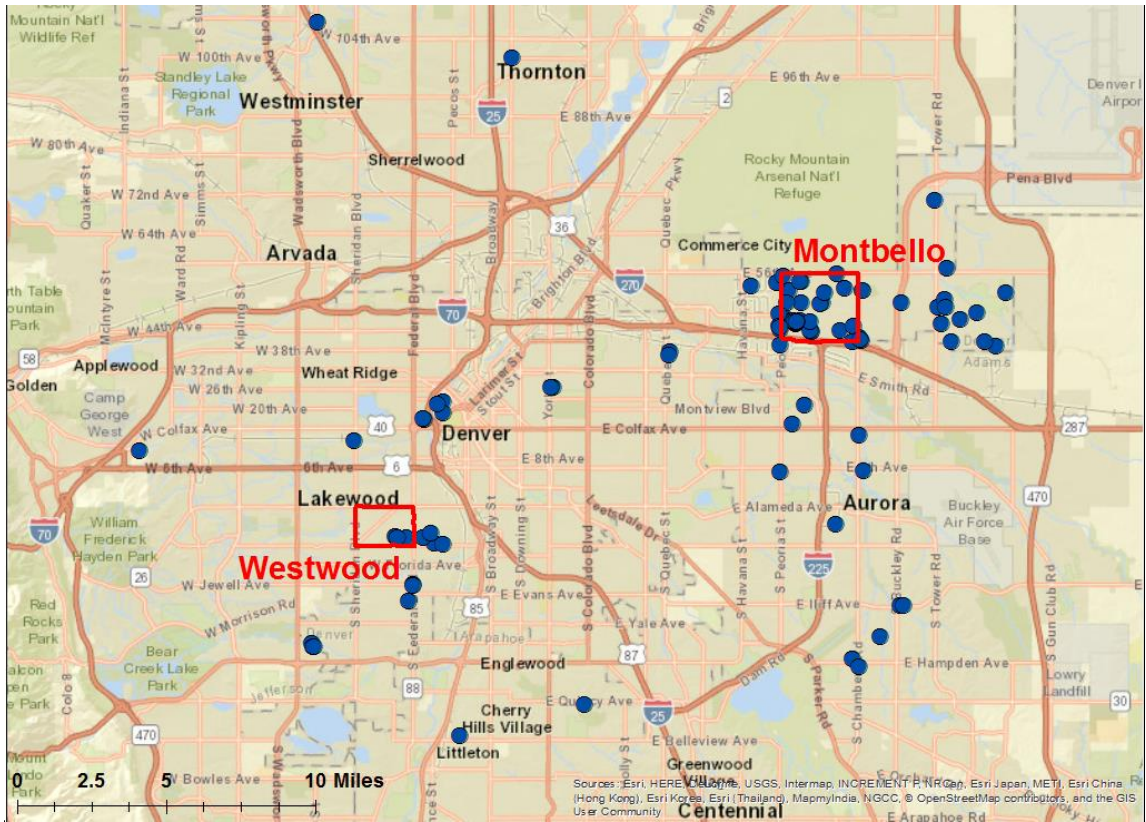
Figure 20. Most of the children's special places were in and around Denver.

To attach meaning to the locations of their special places, in the following sections, I describe the results from the specific combination of data sources that I analyzed to develop each of the three sets of themes.

4.1 Special Place Types

In order to analyze the types of places that are special to children, I identified the type of place represented in each photograph. In the photo-elicitation interviews, I allowed children another opportunity to mention any other special places they may have forgotten about or overlooked in their photo-story map. From both the photo-story maps and the photo-elicitation interviews, five place type themes emerged (Table 5):

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(1) community centers, (2) residences, (3) entertainment venues, (4) food establishments,

and (5) travel destinations.

place type themes	special places (*n = 155)	place type sub-themes
Table 5. Themes in the types of places that children found special. *Number includes special places children added in photo-elicitation interviews. **After I specifically asked about Gates Camp in interviews, three children said it is a special place.		
community centers	44	school – 21 boys and girls club – 20 church – 2 summer program – 1
residences	35	house – 27 apartment – 4 room – 3 family members – 1
entertainment venues	34	recreation center – 10 theme park – 6 library – 4 mall – 4 arena – 2 arcade – 2 central business district – 2 city park – 2 friends – 1
food establishments	21	fast food – 10 coffee shop – 4 grocery store – 3 convenience store – 2 restaurant – 2
travel destinations	19	natural area – 9 other city or state – 10
other	2	hospital – 1 payday loan store – 1 **Gates Camp – 3

Different community centers were the most common type of special place in

photo-story maps. Children often included a picture of their school, and sometimes their

old school or sibling's school. Additionally, since all of the children in this study are

members of the Boys and Girls Club, they often included their club. Most children added

residences, often where they live, but also houses of family members, friends, or

neighbors. Aside from community centers and residences, most children had special

places associated with entertainment or food, although few children included travel destinations; six children included the 19 travel destinations and two sisters accounted for all but one of the natural areas. Other places that did not fit into the five themes were a hospital and a payday loan store. Furthermore, three children said Gates Camp is a special place, though only after I asked why they did not include it in their photo-story map (and assured them it was fine that they did not). The locations identified within the special place type themes provided a foothold with which to analyze the specific meanings that children hold for their respective special places.

4.2 Special Place Meanings

My analysis of photograph captions and photo-elicitation interview transcripts illuminated the meanings children associated with their special places. Three central themes of meanings emerged: (1) entertainment, (2) familiarity, and (3) significant people. These themes represent the meanings that children most frequently associated with their special places, though the full meaning of each special place often reflected some combination of the three. For instance, their special places were often entertaining or familiar because of the lasting relationships children valued there with friends, family, or other significant people in their lives. One child summed up the three central themes in their photo-story map title, "Why they are special to me because I go there and have fun and do things with my family and they are just special places to me." Children go to their special places frequently, have fun there, and do activities with the significant people in their lives. To summarize central themes and sub-themes, I generated "packed bubble charts" for each central theme (e.g., Figure 21) using a visualization software that

produced proportional circles for each sub-theme based on how many children mentioned the sub-theme (Tableau Software, Inc., *Tableau Desktop*). All of the packed bubble charts are also available in sequential order in the Appendix (Appendices 7-15). To account for the three central themes in special place meanings, I offer evidence for each central theme, how they connect to one another, as well as to relevant, less central, sub-themes.

4.2.1 Special Place Entertainment: children like fun and engaging places, often with family and friends

The children in this study described the ways in which their special places are entertaining for a variety of reasons, most commonly for having fun, playing, doing sports, using technology, being active, and hanging out (Figure 21; Appendix 7). Children most frequently mentioned having fun to describe their special places. One girl wrote about the Boys and Girls Club, "This is a special place because I have so much fun you can play on computers play pool you can join sports and play them they have carnivals they have water fights." Another boy said, "Umm, like the Boys and Girls Club, this is some place I can go and hang out and stuff, and you know, and not get bored." Having fun was important to children and, at a basic level, they found their special places entertaining because of the engaging activities there. Furthermore, some children found a place special because of what happened there: a special occasion (e.g., a birthday party), a first time experience (e.g., an airplane flight), a cool sight (e.g., a sunset over a lake), their favorite activity (e.g., drawing), good food (e.g., a fast food hamburger), or their favorite sports team (e.g., baseball hat purchase at the mall).

While various engaging activities and events make a place entertaining, often children included family and friends in their description of the activities or events: playing computer games with cousins, shooting basketball hoops with siblings, going to theme parks with parents, eating at restaurants with family, and hanging out with friends.
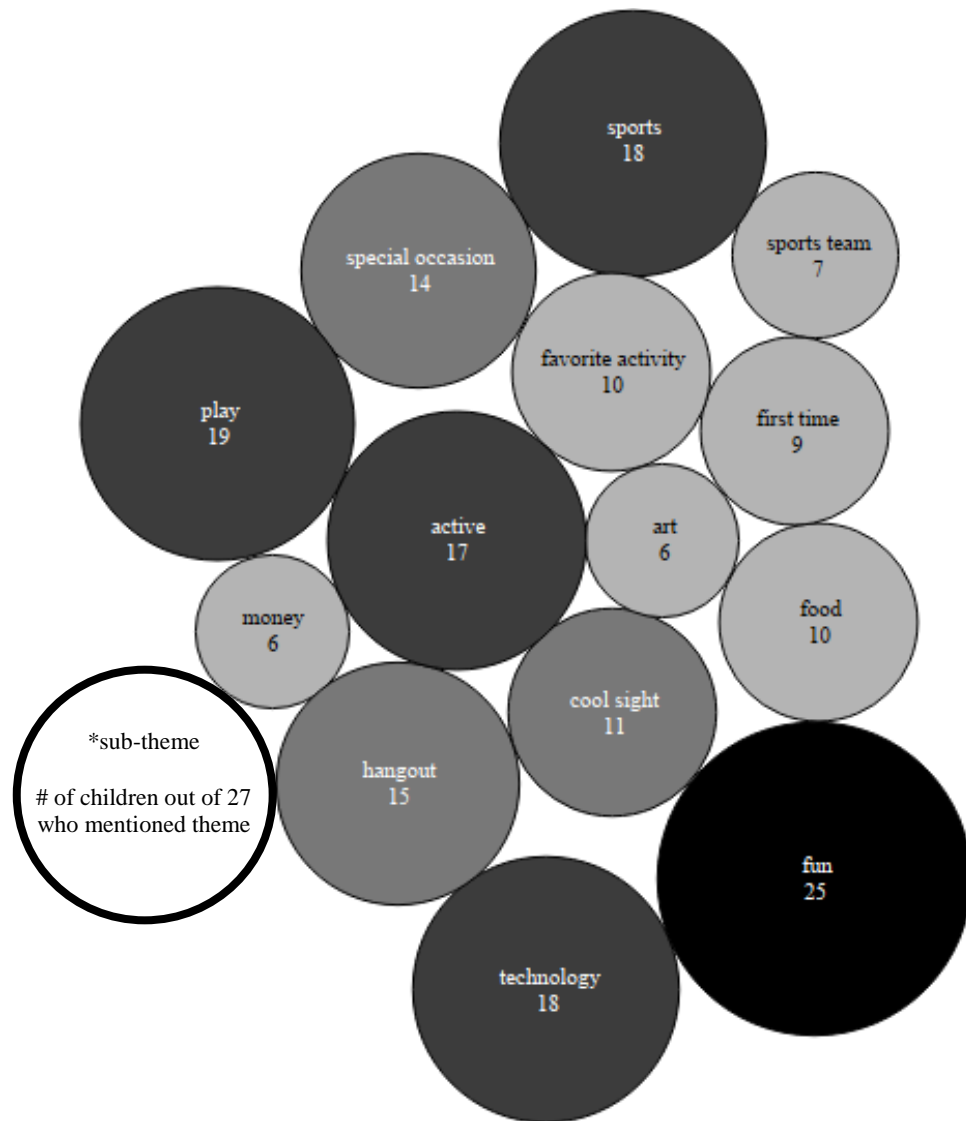
Figure 21. Special place entertainment sub-themes. *Circle size represents centrality of sub-theme relative to other sub-themes, black is more central, light gray is less central, and spatial arrangement is random.

One girl included a water park in her photo-story map (Figure 22), a special place for her because she has a good time there on annual family trips. Furthermore, family or friends often influence the engaging activities children find entertaining. In her photo-elicitation interview, the child who included the water park elaborated on what the place means for her family, and explained the role her mother plays in the annual special occasion, "We didn't go there last, this year, because there's a new park that my Mom wanted to go to, but umm, except for that, we went there every year for Labor Day, and it's like a tradition in my family." More than just having fun with family, the girl describes the importance of the annual special occasion as a tradition in her family. Moreover, her Mom's interest in water parks influences where the family goes which, in turn, influences the water parks the girl has exposure to. Similarly, another girl excitedly explained how she learned to cook and have fun in the kitchen:
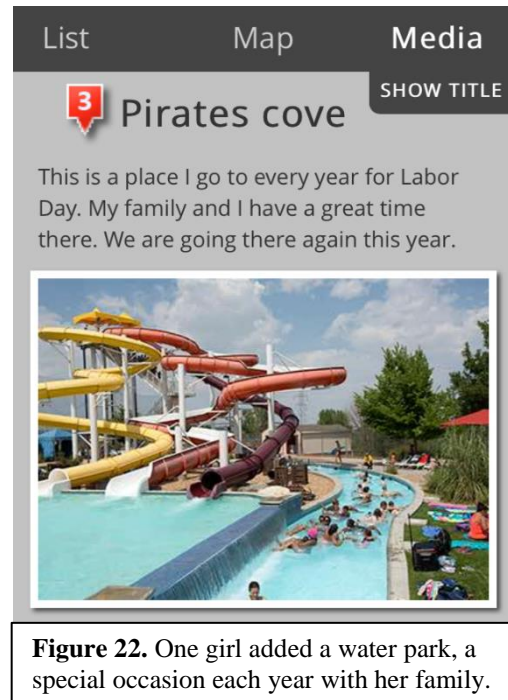
Figure 22. One girl added a water park, a special occasion each year with her family.

> Umm, I picked the kitchen because I like to cook and me and my, since
> my Mom was a chef, she used to be a chef, and she taught me a lot of
> things from like, and like how to like put the measure, measurement and
> everything, and I like to have fun in the kitchen with my Mom.

Not only did the girl find cooking in the kitchen entertaining, she also had fun because she was with her Mom. Moreover, her Mom taught her how to cook there which in turn influenced her affection for the place. Both instances show how parents influence the places children have exposure to and the places children find entertaining. In addition to family, friends also often drive what children find entertaining. One boy described why he finds the library special:

> Uh, mostly cus me and my friends like to hang out there, and read, and,
> and I like to learn new things, so we can like, like sometimes we like to
> read books that gives you umm, explanations for how to build like an
> airplane or a paper airplane, or like give some kind of drawings.

While the boy likes the library because he can read and learn, he is primarily there to hang out with friends, and read and learn with them. Fundamentally, children value the fun and engaging activities that occur in a place and make the place entertaining. Furthermore, a place is often special for a child because of the role family or friends have in the entertainment. Significant people in the lives of children often influence what children do, what children find entertaining, and where the entertainment takes place.

4.2.2 Familiarity: children feel safe and supported in places they know well or go frequently, often surrounded by people they know

In addition to entertainment, children often chose places that are familiar to them (Figure 23; Appendix 8). For most of the children in the study, familiarity resulted from them knowing the place. Often, children know places well because the place is their home or they go there frequently. For example, one girl described how she decided a
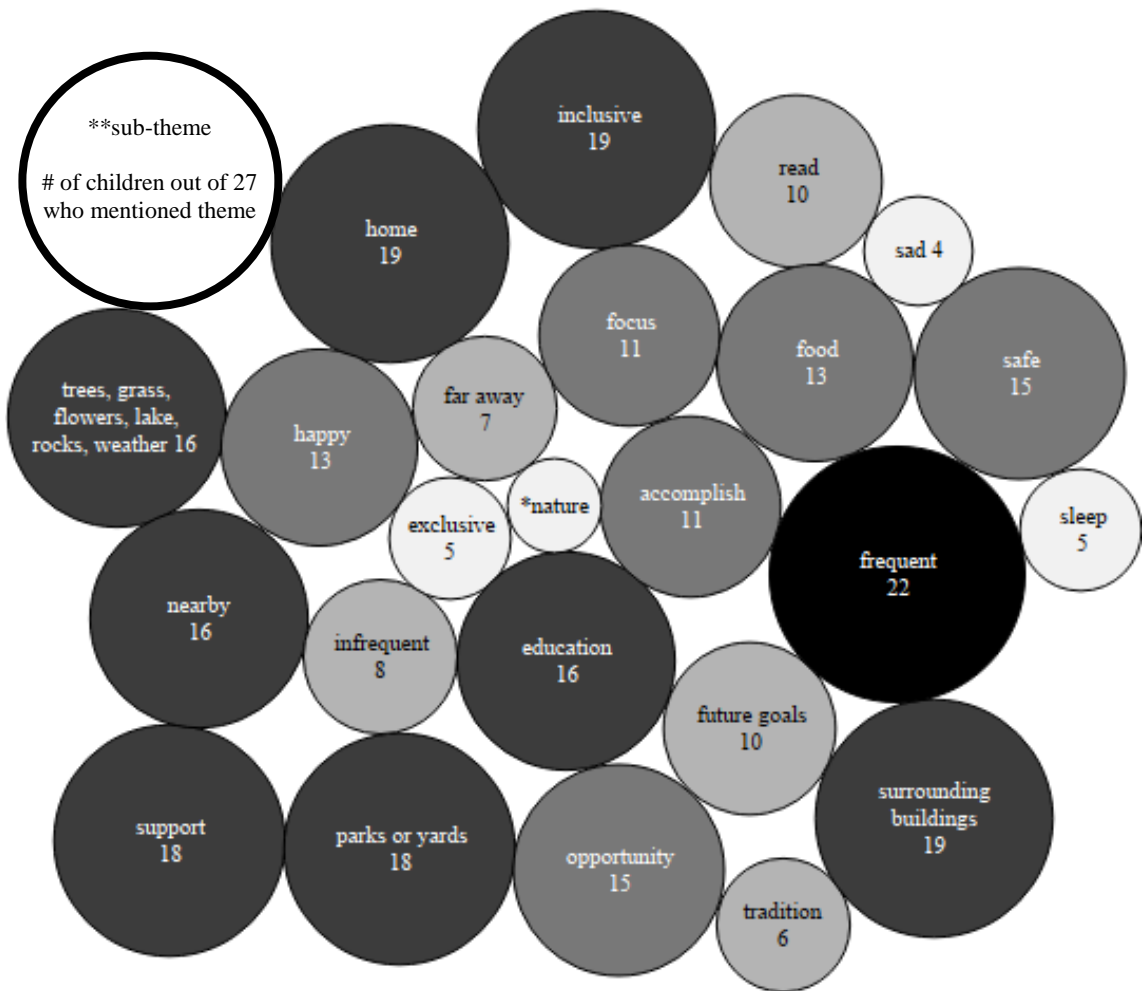
Figure 23. Special place familiarity sub-themes. *nature, wildlife, wilderness **Circle size represents centrality of sub-theme relative to other sub-themes, black is more central, light gray is less central, and spatial arrangement is random.

place was special enough to include in her photo-story map, "It made them special because like, I know the place, and like I go there all the time, and it's fun and relaxing." Furthermore, for their special places that they knew well, children could often describe the surroundings. When I asked children about the surroundings of their special places, they usually described buildings (e.g., houses, schools, and businesses), sometimes their yards or nearby parks, and occasionally the general landscape features (e.g., trees and grass). Many children also knew a special place better if it was nearby or in their

neighborhood. For instance, one girl decided places were special "because they are close to where I live." In contrast, some children described their special places that are far away or places they go infrequently. For example, another girl described locating the arcade in her photo-story map (Figure 24), "The one that was hard for me was trying to find Dave & Busters [3] because like it wasn't in Montbello [1 & 2], it was somewhere else, and it wasn't really close to find it was far to find." Another girl said that where her
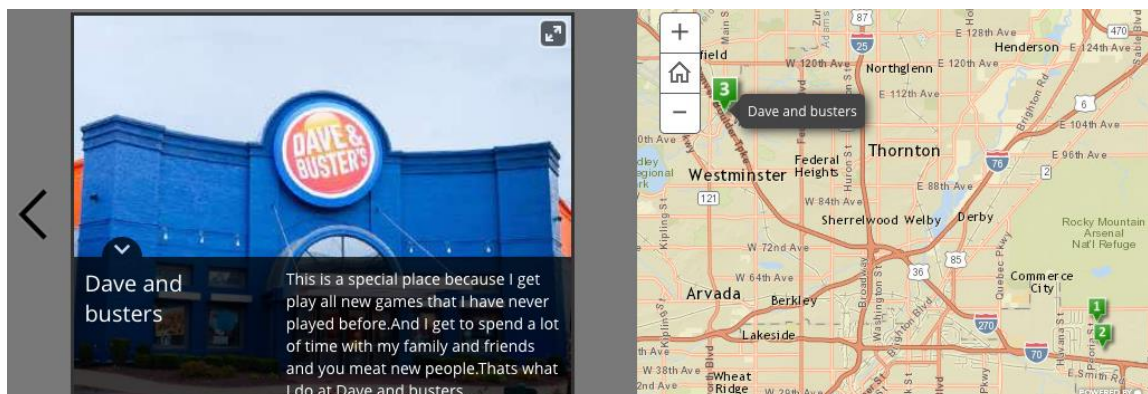
Figure 24. A girl included a far away place, an arcade, which was hard to locate in her photo-story

grandparents live is a special place, but since they live in California, she had only visited them once. Still, familiarity essentially results from frequent contact with their often nearby special places, although children came to know their special places well for additional reasons, such as feeling safe, supported, and included.

Indeed, many children indicated that familiar places were safe, supportive, and inclusive. For example, a girl wrote about her house (Figure 25, used generic photo of house) where she feels safe with people who support her, and since she is there every day, she feels included. Often, the people who children know also contribute to them feeling safe, supported, and included. Another girl talked about her home and what it

means, "A safe place where you have your friends, your family, you have company, people to keep you, like people that care for you, and they keep you safe." Friends, family, and other significant people influence the familiarity of places because they make children feel cared for and safe.

Many children mentioned how some of their special places are safe because they know the place. For example, one boy felt safe because he knows his neighborhood:

Figure 25. A child wrote they feel safe, supported, and included at their house (source of stock photo: http://freepik.com).

> I feel safe, I never feel scared or nothing. There's, I know it [the neighborhood] really good. It's like say somebody is just, if one day somebody tries to attack me or something, I know where to go, I know like good hiding spots and stuff like that.

Aside from knowing a place, most children mentioned feeling safe because of the people watching out for them. For instance, one boy talked about his school, "It feels like, umm, a lot of people watching over me, and, and, uh, yeah just a lot of people watching me, and it feels uh, it feels, good, because, uh, I don't know, it just, it feels safe." The most common safe place children mentioned in the study was the Boys and Girls Club. A girl described how the staff at the Boys and Girls Club ensure her safety:

Mm, it's not a pretty good place to be [the Montbello Neighborhood], but,

it's a good place to be here [the Boys and Girls Club] because, they [the

staff] keep you safe and stuff, from out there, where people can hurt you

and stuff.

Not only did she feel safe because of the staff watching over her, she also felt safe due to

the security that the club provides relative to the surrounding area. The girl who included

the arcade also felt safe there even though the place was far away:

Because umm, like you know the people that are there, like you know the

people that work there, cus like they are at the front desk, and they say if

you need anything come here, or you go over there, and like your parents

are there so you know where you're at, and yeah.

Whil the girl did not necessarily know the arcade well, or the people who worked there,

her parents were there and the staff made her feel safe. While safe places tended to be

where children frequent and know people, basically, safe places for children are where

they know people who are there watching out for them.

In addition to safety, a place's familiarity often led children to feel supported. The

basic forms of support children talked about in their special places were basic needs, such

as shelter. For instance, one girl described her apartment, "It's special because, I have a

roof over my head, at least I get to stay somewhere. Umm, there's friends and family

around there." Similar to feeling safe, most children feel supported by people they know

in a place. Moreover, children in the study identified emotional and directional support

they received from people they know. One boy described directional guidance from the Boys and Girls Club staff:

> The support I get from the staff. Most of them support my decisions and umm, they like, they like what I've been doing with my life, and they, they made a big impact on my life. And they like, they help me a lot from not doing bad stuff, and just staying on the right track.

In addition to help with life direction, familiar places were often where children found emotional support. One girl described emotional support at her house when she is sad, "Sometimes it can get sad there, cus, of course bad things are gonna happen. But then you have good family people to help you get back." Similarly, a girl described when she is happy, "I feel happy because I have a lot of friends there that I can play with when I feel sad and down." Children expressed their emotions, sad and happy, often in association with familiar places with people there to support them.

Some children also mentioned support they gave to others in a special place. In one photo-story map (Figure 8, pg. 21) a girl wrote that at the Boys and Girls Club, "[I] do thin[g]s that help people." One girl described her role as a junior coach at school, "…we protect the place, when we help keep everybody safe on certain days, but umm, at least one junior coach was out every day." Children's familiar places often feel supportive, because of the people both whom they support and who support them.

The people in their special places that are safe and supportive also contribute to children feeling included. For instance, one girl described a summer school program she attended, "at Breakthrough I learned that I can really be myself because there everyone

can be weird, like even the teachers there." The teachers provided a place where the girl

felt included because she could be herself. Moreover, children described some of their

special places where it is calm, peaceful, or a retreat. One girl described somewhere she

can be calm, "the library where I can just calm down if I had an issue at school, or get

some books." Another girl described the gymnastics center (Figure 26) as a getaway and

a place where she can focus. Children felt the freedom to express their emotions and

retreat to places where they felt included.

Familiar places are also sometimes the same places where the children recognized

opportunities that are present in or associated with the given place. Often the

opportunities related to their future goals or education. For example, the girl valued the

gymnastics center (Figure 26) as a place where she can focus on her future goals to achieve her dream of being in the Olympics. Moreover, one boy described why education is important for him to achieve his future goal of going to college (Figure 27). Another girl described her school, "Umm, what I like about McGlone is how all the teachers there, they take care of us, and they make um, and they make learning fun." Along with the opportunity for an
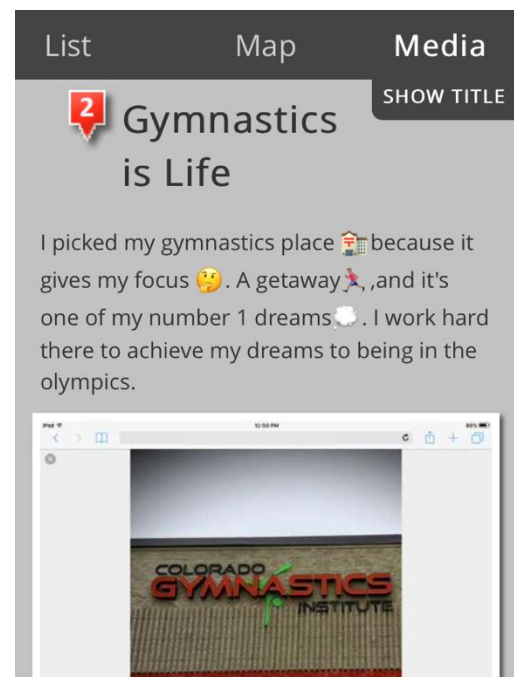
Figure 26. One girl wrote how the gymnastics center is her getaway.
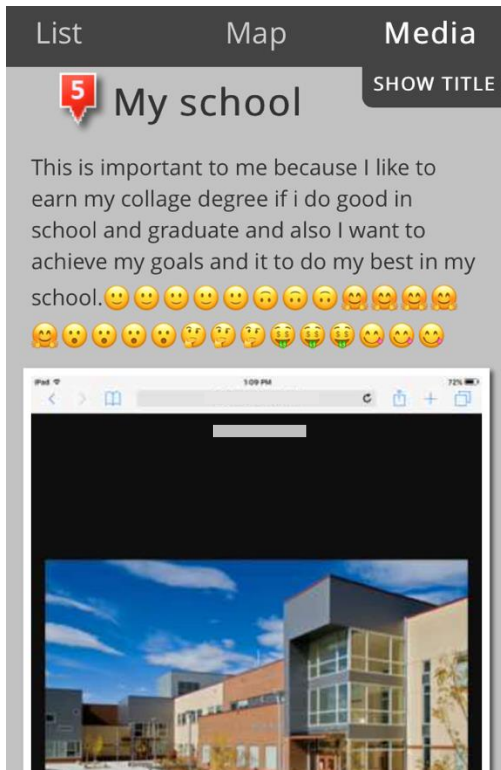
Figure 27. Children value opportunities to pursue their education and future goals.
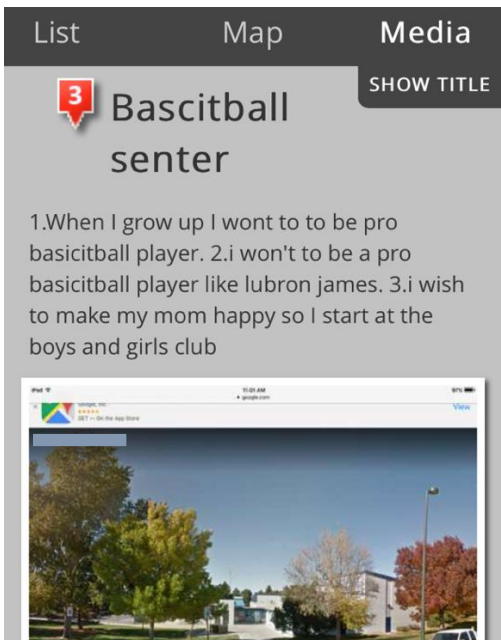
Figure 28. Children often associate opportunity with familiar places and significant people.

education or pursuit of future goals, children valued the people who provide the opportunity. For example, another boy wrote about his mother's influence on his future goal to become a professional basketball player and pursuit to do so at the Boys and Girls Club (Figure 28). Children commonly mentioned opportunities at the Boys and Girls Clubs, and keenly observed the opportunities present, and not present, in other places. For example, one girl talked about the presence and absence of her opportunities at school, "Cus last year we didn't get to have, fourth graders didn't get a lot of opportunities. So now like this year since we have a new principal, we have a lot now." Not only do children sometimes associate their special places with the presence of opportunities, but children also value the significant people who inspire and support their opportunities. At the core of familiar places, and entertaining places, are the significant people in the lives of children.

4.2.3 Significant People: children associate both new and everyday places with family, friends, and staff

Children's special places with both entertainment and familiarity characteristics already highlight the important role significant people play in how children develop meaning for the special places in their lives (Figure 29; Appendix 9). The significant
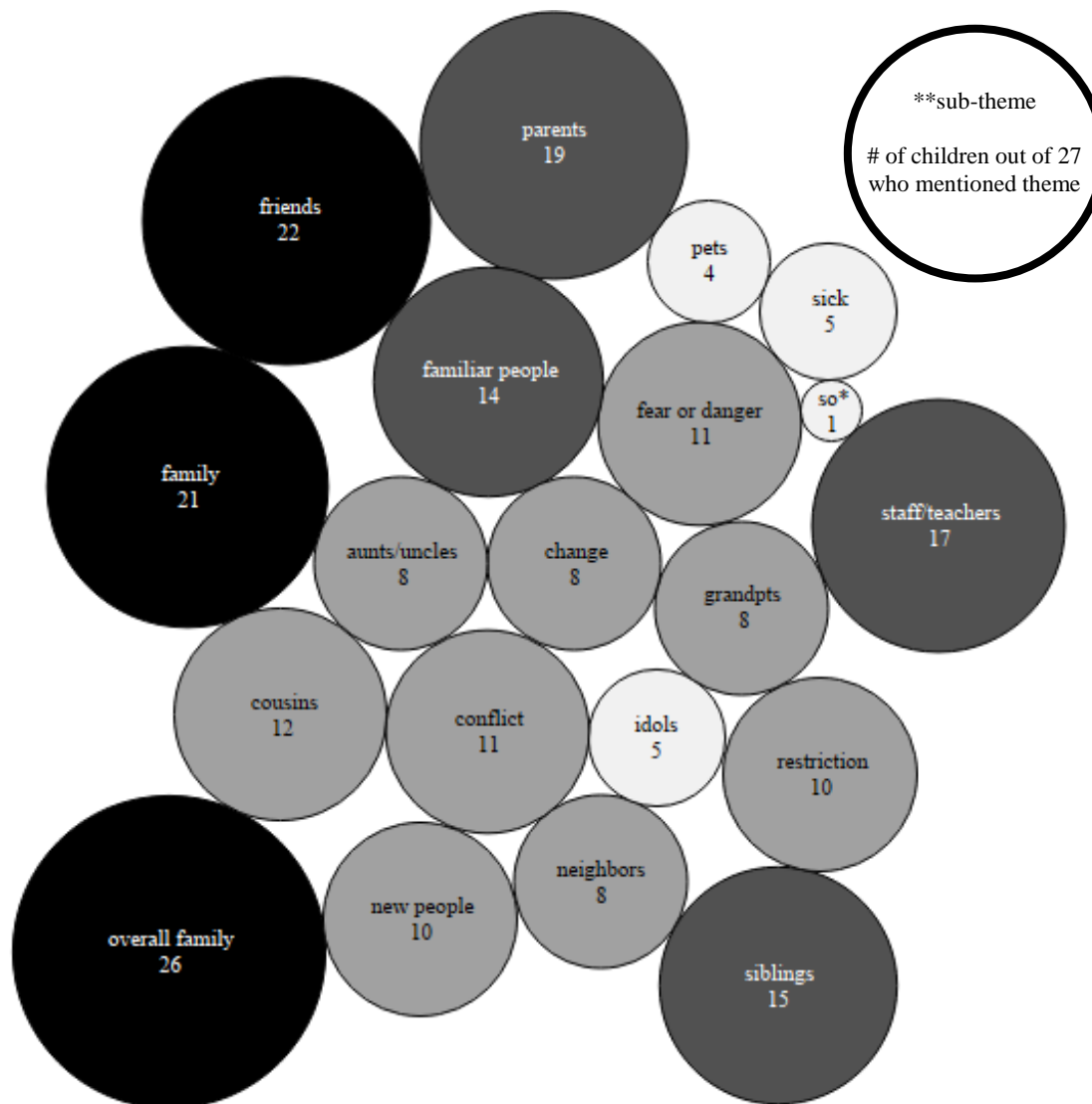
Figure 29. Special place significant people sub-themes. *significant other **Circle size represents centrality of sub-theme relative to other sub-themes, black is more central, light gray is less central, and spatial arrangement is random.

people children referred to in the study were family members and other important people

they see often. Children most commonly referred to their family and friends when they

discussed their special places. One girl described why a place was special enough to

include in her photo-story map, "Why these pictures were special to me is because I go

there with my family, I go there with friends, and I get to see friends, and hang out with

friends." For her, and many children in the study, the most important aspect of their

special places were the significant people there.

The specific family members children

mentioned often were their parents and siblings.

For example, one girl wrote in her photo-story

map that spending time with her family is why

she loves the beach (Figure 30). Children

commonly included spending time with

immediate family members in their descriptions

of their special places. Additionally, children

often associated grandparents and cousins with

their special places and, less often, their aunts

and uncles. For instance, o girl explained when

Figure 30. Children often associated parents and siblings with their special places.

she goes to the library or her Grandma's house, "The library is where I go after, I go

during the summer. I go during the summer while I wait for my Auntie to get done

working here [the Boys and Girls Club], and I, or I get to walk to my Grandma's with my

cousins."

Children either specifically stated the importance of family to a special place, or talked generally about the family members who they often spend time with in a special place. Both cases demonstrate the influence family members have on the meanings children attach to the places in their lives.

In addition to friends, other important people who children most frequently discussed were BGCMD staff or teachers at school. Children also sometimes mentioned neighbors, coaches, and familiar people in general. One boy wrote about the people at his Boys and Girls Club, "All the staff and all the members are like my second family. I know almost every member. I know all the staff." Another girl talked about why her school is a special place, "Cus I've been going to this school for five years, ever since first grade, and I know a lot of people there." Just as knowing a place is important, knowing the people there is at the core of most of their special places. In addition to
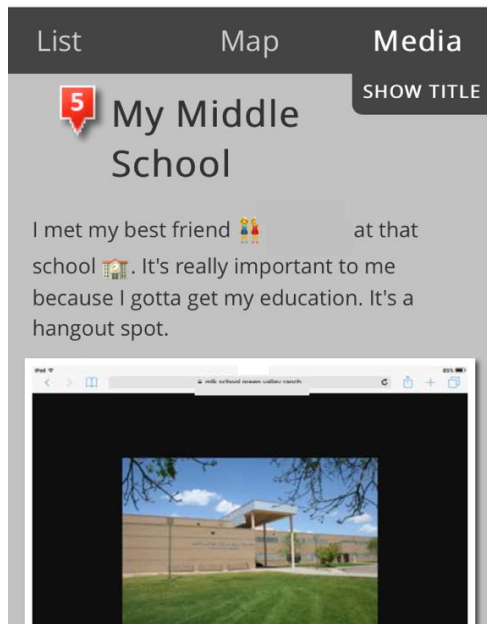
Figure 31. Children associated their special places with the new people they met there to form lasting relationships.

knowing people, another aspect of some of their special places were the people children met there. Meeting her best friend was the first thing one girl mentioned about school (Figure 31). Furthermore, a few children looked up to celebrity idols, like famous basketball players (Figure 28, pg. 59). Various significant people influence how children developed meaning for a place and, at a basic level, knowing people in a place contributed to the place being special.

A smaller portion of children in the study identified conflicts in some of the same places with significant people. Conflicts included life changes, fear or danger, and adult restrictions. Children experienced life changes that included themselves or family getting sick, loved ones passing away, and themselves or friends moving (Figure 32). One boy described when he moved, "I live in Montbello, and we moved from uh, Aurora into Montbello, cus there was a lot of bad stuff going on in Aurora. So, we moved to Montbello and I met new friends there." The life change was memorable for him and the new friends he made as a result were significant. Moreover, the boy also associated the life change with the dangers of where he came from. Often, when children mentioned danger or fear they also included the significant people who helped them to address the cause. For example, one girl explained how her Dad addressed some people in her neighborhood who caused trouble, "A couple of our neighbors, it kinda scares me a little, because I feel they're gonna come knocking or stuff like that, but then they don't because my Dad scares them away." Furthermore, dangers associated with some of their special places led to adult rules that influenced how children experienced the special place. One girl explained the rules for when she is allowed to walk to the Boys and Girls Club, "Our Grandma wouldn't let us like walk by
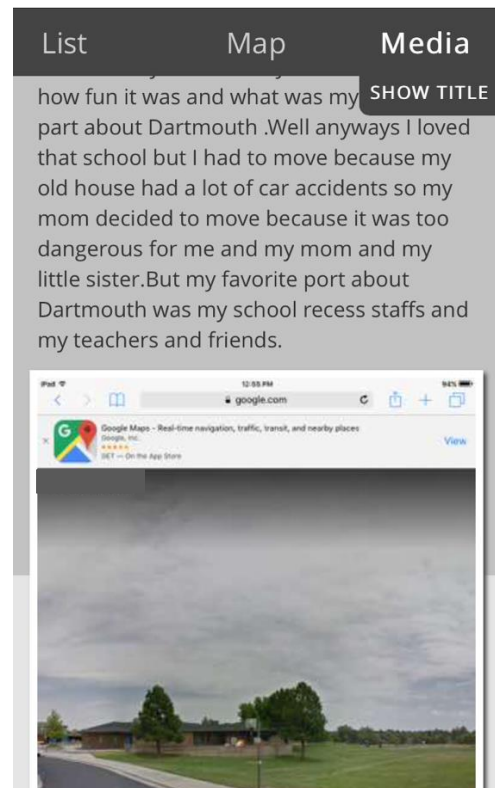
Figure 32. Children experienced conflicts, often mitigated by significant people.

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ourselves if we were to, so she would want us all to go together." The rules adults maintain in certain places, to account for danger or to enforce values such as respect, contribute to how children experience those places.

The significant people in the lives of children are fundamental influences for how children shape meanings for their special places. If a place is fun, children are often entertained because of the significant people there. If there is danger, significant people are often who make a place feel safe and supportive. If a child feels included somewhere, it is because of the significant people who make them feel welcome. One girl explained, "I chose these places due to the amount of love coming from them. Each one symbolizes a place that I entered and felt cared for and taken accounted for as a friend and not an enemy." Children value the experiences and places they share with significant people, such as a hike with family to share a pretty lake view (Figure 33). Moreover, significant people often influence the experiences and places children have exposure to. The main guide for how children perceive places, give them meaning, and decide if they are special, are the significant people in their lives.
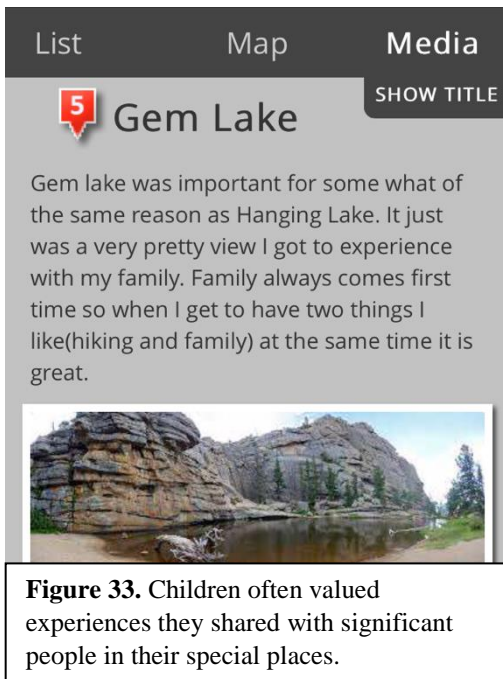
Figure 33. Children often valued experiences they shared with significant people in their special places.

4.3 Gates Camp Natural Place Meanings

My analysis of transcripts from both photo-elicitation interviews with the children who attended Gates Camp and from telephone interviews with the adults who attended

Gates Camp as children in the past, provided insight into how urban children experience

a natural place such as at Gates Camp. Three central themes from my analysis of

transcripts emerged in the children's experiences of a natural place at Gates Camp: (1)

entertainment, (2) unfamiliarity, and (3) new people. A girl summed up the three central

themes when she discussed how Gates Camp is fun, with new people, over a short time

period:

> It is a special place, but at a time it's not cus it's a camp. Well it's a fun
>
> camp where we get to learn, and learn each other's like cultures and
>
> everything, and be able to have fun with each other. And umm because we
>
> all, we're only, like I said it's only in a short period, it's only umm, four
>
> days.

Similarly, most children and adults described new, different, and fun activities, discussed

the unfamiliar aspects of their experience, and mentioned their interactions with new

people. In the following sections, I provide evidence for each of the three central themes,

how they relate to each other and to relevant, less central, sub-themes.

4.3.1 Natural Place Entertainment: through a busy activity schedule, children have fun,
new, and different experiences

Each of the 11 children and three adults who attended Gates Camp described

entertaining aspects of their experience (Figure 34, Appendix 10). Entertainment at Gates

Camp started with a busy activity schedule. For example, one girl described her

experience, "A lot of activities, like when I'm down here [in Denver] I either play on my

phone, or play basketball. But up there like there's not phone, you're always constantly
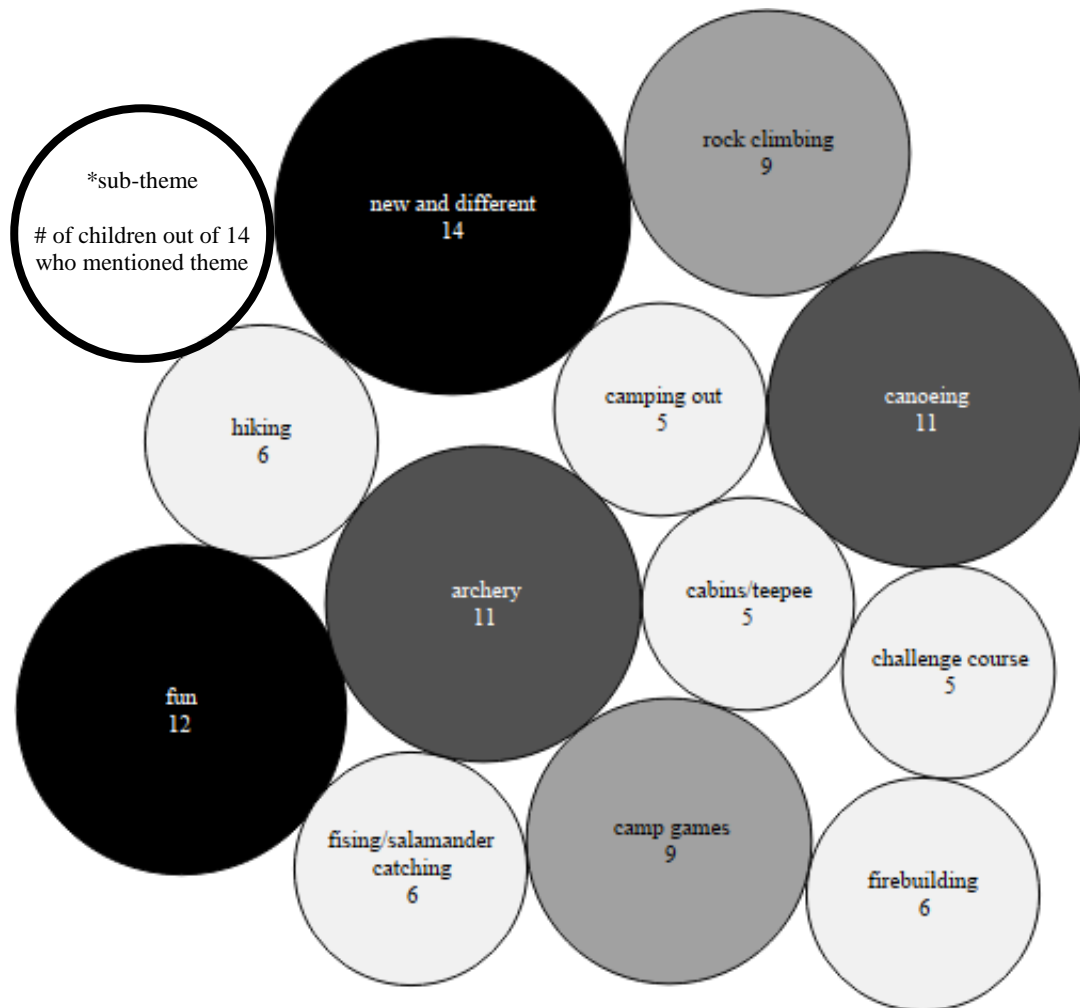
Figure 34. Natural place entertainment sub-themes. *Circle size represents centrality of sub-theme relative to other sub-themes, black is more central, light gray is less central, and spatial arrangement is random.

doing an activity." In addition to the busy schedule, the activities were often new and different for the children who all come from Denver. The days full of fun and engaging activities kept children entertained throughout their time at Gates Camp. For instance, one girl described the activities she liked, "It's really fun, I like the activities there. I like archery, the canoeing, they used to have, what's it called, umm, ziplining [challenge course], when I first went on that it was fun." Moreover, many children mentioned specific fun activities as they looked through the photograph prompts I provided in

photo-elicitation interviews. One boy talked about one of his favorite activities, archery

(Figure 35), "This is one of my favorites, cus I get to learn different things, like how to

shoot, and hit the targets, and, it takes a lot of practice to, achieve, uh, achieve, uh, yeah." Many children had certain activities they especially liked and, for the most

Figure 35. Photograph prompt of the archery range.

part, children thought the experience and activities in general were fun. However, many

children had mixed feelings and found certain activities fun, while at the same time, they

experienced other emotions. For example, one girl described how her new and different

experience of outdoor rock climbing was fun and scary at the same time (Figure 36),

"Yes, it's very very fun, it's kind of scary at first, cus like you're going up this large

mountain, and umm instead of going up, you're going down so its a little scary, and I did

Figure 36. Photograph prompt of outdoor rock climbing area.

it when it was raining." Another girl described how outdoor rock climbing is fun because it is different, "Rock climbing is fun because as a kid, we don't usually climb up rocks, or at least the kids I know of don't climb rocks every day." While children often found the activities at Gates Camp fun and engaging, sometimes children also had mixed or indifferent feelings as they encountered new and different activities.

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On one hand, new and different experiences were entertaining for all of the

children and adults who attended Gates Camp, to varying degrees. For example, one girl

embraced the new experience as an "adventure," "Yeah, it's really fun, it's a lot of fun,

you get to do certain things that you probably have never done before." Moreover, a boy

described what he learned from being somewhere different, "Just to adapt to wherever

you are at like, from like out of the city, to just have fun where you're at, that was the

best part, to just have fun where you're at." On the other hand, some children expressed

mixed feelings, although they still had fun. For instance, one girl explained why she did

not include Gates Camp in her photo-story map, "Umm, I didn't include it cus I like, it

was fun and all but I didn't, for me personally, I didn't enjoy a lot, like all the bugs and

stuff." One of the adults in the study reinforced the mixed feelings that some of the

children felt, "Umm, it was ok, I personally, I don't think I wanted to be there. I think my

Mom kinda just wanted me to go to experience it. But I think it was, I don't know, I think

I ended up having a good time." The adult remembered having a good time, a sentiment

that several of the children in the study who did not want to be at Gates Camp also

expressed. Almost all of the children and adults described at least one entertaining aspect

of their experience of a natural place at Gates Camp. At the same time, the unfamiliarity

of the new and different experiences pushed many children out of their comfort zone.

4.3.2 Unfamiliarity: in their short time at camp, children are challenged outside of their

comfort zone in a different environment

While most children enjoyed their time at Gates Camp, the many new and

different activities also contributed to an unfamiliar experience (Figure 37; Appendix 11).
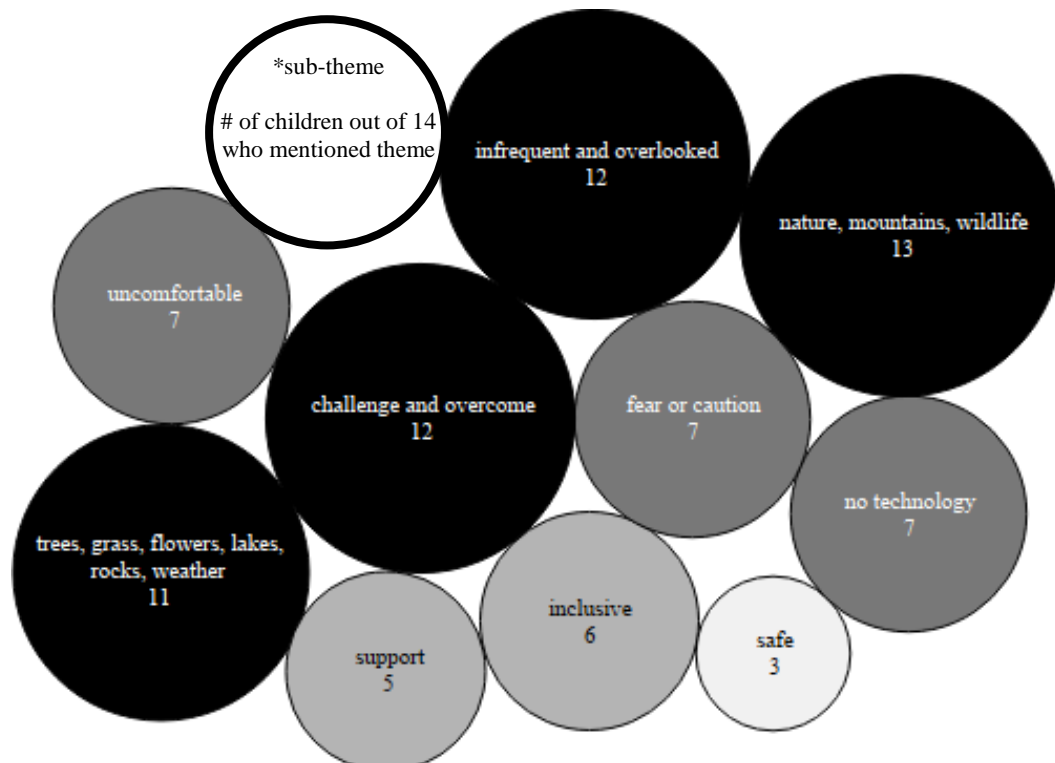
69

Figure 37. Natural place unfamiliarity sub-themes. *Circle size represents centrality of sub-theme relative to other sub-themes, black is more central, light gray is less central, and spatial arrangement is random.

Basically, the experience was unfamiliar because children went to Gates Camp infrequently and spent little time there. For one girl, Gates Camp was not special because she does not go there every day or know it well:

> Well I would, but I wouldn't say it's really special because I don't really
>
> know it as well as I usually know my home. Well I know it pretty good
>
> because I have been there several, several, times, but it's not like a place I
>
> go every day, and yeah.

Similarly, when I asked children why they did not include Gates Camp in their photo-story map, most children overlooked it because they forgot, did not think about it, did not

know the location, or did not spend much time there. For example, a boy explained why he overlooked Gates Camp:

> It's cus I went when I was really little, so I kind of didn't remember too much about it. I know, I know the umm, like, I know all the basics about Gates Camp and what we do. It was a lot of fun. I just haven't gone to Gates Camp for a long time so it just kinda wasn't in my mind.

Two of the three adults in the study expressed similar sentiments, for them, years later. One adult struggled to remember Gates Camp activities, "No, that's where, that's the thing I just don't, I just don't know what we did up there, I can't remember." Likewise, another adult stated, "I don't know, I just remember doing different activities while I was there. I can't honestly, I can't remember how long, I don't even remember how long I was there." The children and adults in the study spent little time at Gates Camp, so fundamentally, it was an unfamiliar place.

In addition to their short stay at camp, other aspects of the experience made the natural place at Gates Camp unfamiliar. Most of the children and adults talked about differences between the environments of Gates Camp and Denver: the different environment with no technology, their challenges and fears with activities such as rock climbing, as well as feeling uncomfortable because of cold weather or bugs. Children often cited the lack of technology as a key difference between the natural place and their everyday lives in Denver. For example, one girl discussed the differences for her:

Interviewer: How is it, can you explain how it's different?

Child: Like there's no umm, there's not one TV in there, around Gates

Camp, so it's like you get to get away from electronics, for umm, a week,

and, it's hard for kids because nowadays we get like phones, tablets, TV,

and yeah.

Interviewer: What does that feel like?

Child: It feels, mmm, just different because you're in the, it's in the

mountains, it gets cold up there at night. Umm, there's just a lot different.

Interviewer: And what does it feel like not having your phone and TVs

and stuff?

Child: It feels weird, cus I usually have it all the time, and I'm always on

it, like more than five hours of the day. So it's like when I'm up there, I

don't get none of that stuff, and it just, increases.

For the children in the study, a retreat from technology as well as the variable mountain

weather and surroundings starkly contrasted their everyday lives and surroundings in

Denver. When I asked children about the surroundings of Gates Camp, most of the

children spoke generally about nature, mountains, and wildlife in addition to the more

specific landscape features of the natural place, like trees and grass (Figure 38).

Moreover, most children found the natural place unfamiliar. For example, one girl

expressed her unfamiliarity with the natural place, "You learn that, I mean it's not usual.

It's not a lot of lights, you don't get a lot of things. You get to learn how it is in the

nature." Since many children found the natural place in the mountains unusual, the

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different natural place environment was also a fundamental unfamiliar aspect of their experience.

The unfamiliar environment contributed to the challenges, fears, and discomforts mentioned by many of the children and adults in the study. While cold weather and no technology challenged some children, other challenges

Figure 38. Photograph prompt of Gates Camp property, a different environment for all of the children in this study.

often resulted from activities. For example, children mentioned the difficulties of fire building, tough climbs on the rock wall, how hard it is to shoot an arrow, and tiring hikes around the property. An adult who attended Gates Camp when he was thirteen still remembered one challenging hike, "I can remember umm, somewhat, going up to the mountains, and then umm, a very long hike, maybe, two or three miles to the umm main campsite." Often challenges during activities resulted in achievement when children started the fire, reached the top of the wall, shot the arrow, or completed the hike. For example, one girl described how she learned to shoot an arrow,

At first when I tried it, it was hard, but the more I practiced like, we would

have archery like different days, so it was like, for the first day I did

archery I was, at first I didn't know how to balance the arch thingy and I

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didn't know how to put the arrow on, but the next day, like the next time

we had it, like I was able to, able to do it.

Some challenging activities also brought out fear; for instance, one boy described rock climbing, "Rock climbing, it's pretty fun and scary because, you have to umm, like, you have to climb really high, and, you're really high in the air, and it makes you not wanna go back down." Again, activities that pushed children out of their comfort zone often led to achievement when they overcame their fear. One girl said she overcame her fear, "It was fun, I went on the big wall the first time. I was scared but I overcame it." While many activities brought children out of their comfort zone, children could opt out of activities with an option called, "challenge by choice." If an activity brought a child too far out of their comfort zone, they could tell a counselor and opt out of the activity. I observed counselors who used challenge by choice during a canoeing activity, when one girl insisted she would have a panic attack if she went canoeing. When challenging or scary activities pushed the limits of some children, it made them uncomfortable.

Some children in the study also felt uncomfortable as a result of the different environment of the natural place. One girl explained her discomfort, "What I like about down here [in Denver] is that there's not as many bugs as in Gates Camp, cus it's like in Gates Camp, there's a lot of trees and stuff. And down here, there's like not as many bugs." Moreover, a few children did not feel they belonged in the different natural place environment. For example, one girl identified herself as, "not an outdoors person." Another boy explained why he didn't include Gates Camp in his photo-story map, "Because, it's not a special place, because, it's in the woods, and the woods isn't, isn't

that special to anyone." Because of the stark differences with what they were used to in Denver, some children could not relate with the natural place at Gates Camp. However, some children felt they belonged in the different environment of the natural place, and one girl explained, "Uh, outside, how I think about outside is, I used to think it's just not a place for me to be out there, and now I think it's a good place for me to be out there, because I can find nature, there's nature that it's good for you I guess." Along with feeling like they belong, some children felt supported. For example, one girl explained why she thinks Gates Camp is a special place, "It's special because, they [the camp staff] just encourage you to do things, and when you're getting encouraged to do something, it makes you want to do it even more." Through the challenges, fears, and discomforts that arose during their short time in a different environment, some children felt supported by the new people around them.

4.3.3 New People: children meet and interact with new peers and camp staff and, often as a result, develop new social skills

Most of the children and adults who attended Gates Camp talked about meeting new friends and staff, as well as some of their interactions with new people (Figure 39; Appendix 12). Additionally, through certain activities and the overall experience, children developed teamwork and social skills. Because children attend Gates Camp from Boys and Girls Clubs across the Denver Metropolitan area, all of the children are together in the same situation. A boy explained the social dynamics at Gates Camp, "it's cool cus you, you don't just stay with your own club, you stay with kids from different clubs." One adult in the study further explained the living situation, "Umm, we had to go back to
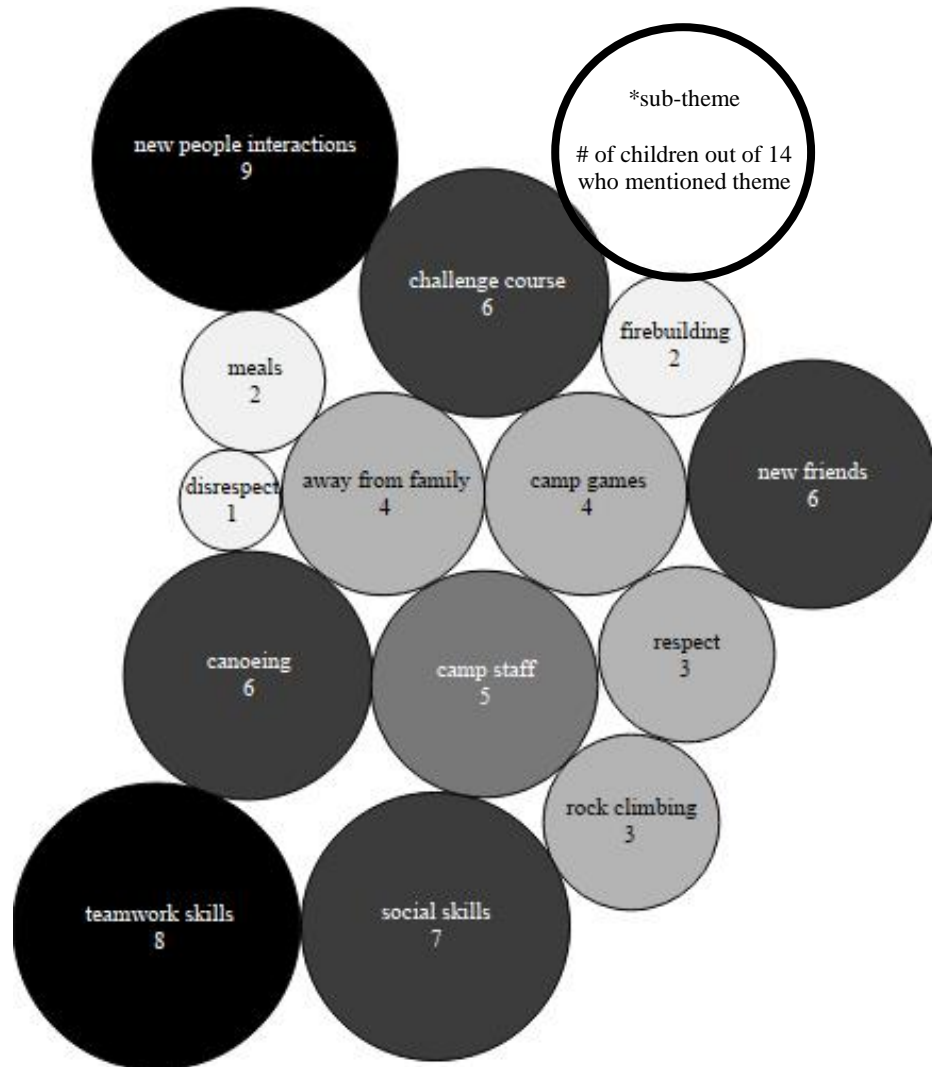
75

Figure 39. Natural place new people sub-themes. *Circle size represents centrality of sub-theme relative to other sub-themes, black is more central, light gray is less central, and spatial arrangement is random.

these small cabins, they're not really small, maybe, I was with all guys, maybe ten in a cabin" (Figure 40). The social experience for the children is framed with new peers and camp staff, many of whom children meet for the first time when they arrive at Gates Camp.

Most children spoke positively about meeting and interacting with their peers and camp staff at Gates Camp. For example, one girl described how Gates Camp feels, "It feels umm good because you get to meet a lot a lot of new people and umm make

Figure 40. Photograph prompt of one of the cabins where children stayed during their time at Gates

friends with them and you get to do teamwork and all those things." Some children who went to Gates Camp for multiple years talked about friends they see when they return each summer. One girl described the new supportive relationships she developed, "Because there's nice people there, there's friends that help me there, that I know I can count on, and that I can go to when I have problems." However, a few children mentioned difficult social situations. For instance, one girl described her cabin-mates as the "meanest cabin in the wilderness." The same girl also talked about what she learned from being with her cabin, "How people be nice to each other, and how we can learn people, how we could bring down people, and how we could bring up people, and then we bring up people." Another example comes from an adult in the study who said,

Just the main thing I remember is being by myself and with people that I'm not really familiar with and having to, and the main value of the camp was having to umm, work in that environment where I don't know the people, and umm, having to, kind of switch around who you're dealing with, who you really umm, who you're working with.

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In the lives of the children and adults in the study, their peers and the camp staff at Gates Camp were mostly new people. As a result, while many children made new friends, they also encountered challenges with certain social situations.

Some other children described the teamwork and social skills they learned from the social situations and activities at Gates Camp. For instance, one girl brought up the social skills she learned in general "Cus at school all we're learning is math and science

Figure 41. Children canoeing on the lake at Gates Camp.

and all that, but at Gates Camp, we're learning how to communicate with more people." Other children mentioned teamwork; for instance another girl talked about what she learned from canoeing (Figure 41)

with her partner: "that you have to work as, with your other partner, if you don't cooperate things can go wrong." Another girl described social skills she developed at the

challenge course (Figure 42): "We had these two boards and we all had to communicate with each other and try to get across from the like, we would start from over there [B] and try to get across to here [A]." The different social situations children encountered at Gates Camp forced them to adapt and develop new teamwork and social skills.

Figure 42. Photograph prompt of an activity on the challenge course.

Additionally, some children found the social norms at Gates Camp to be different. For instance, one girl described meals:

Mmm, what's different is, we eat as a big family [at Gates Camp] and at home I don't eat as a big family, we eat separate, but sometimes we eat as a big family on special occasions. But anytime you have to eat with them [at Gates Camp], you have to use your manners, and you have to be polite. And it's like, sometimes I don't like being polite, so.

Different social norms, like family-style meals, forced some children out of their comfort zone. Similarly, time away from family brought some other children out of their comfort zone. For instance, one boy explained how the time away from his family was hard, though he learned from the experience.

Well the first couple of days, I was little so it was kind of hard to be away from my parents and my family, so I learned how to be a little more independent, and yeah you learn how to be a little more independent and be you, and get to have fun.

Away from their family, with new friends, new staff, and different social norms, children in the study had a different social experience at Gates Camp. The different social experience, in the context of an unfamiliar environment and short stay at Gates Camp, is part of the isolation of the children's experience in a natural place from their experience of their special places, which I discuss further in the following discussion.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

At the outset, I situated this study within a broader common perception in the United States that assumes humans are separated from the larger natural world (Berry 2011). More specifically, Louv (2005) proposed that in recent decades the disconnect between children and nature is increasing, an idea that further framed this study. With a growing population of people in cities and surrounding metropolitan areas (United Nations 2016), my study was an effort to contribute to a better understanding of the disconnect nature and urban children in particular. I aimed to explore the impact of their experience and learning in a natural place outside of the city on their sense of place. My intent was to characterize their sense of place in terms of the meanings they associated with places. I suspected that through such characterization, similarities and differences might emerge between the sense of place of children who did and did not go to Gates Camp, and from there I could distinguish the impact. I guided my initial approach with a research question that focused on such an impact specifically: *For urban children who live in a city, how does an immersive place-based learning experience in a natural area outside of the city impact their sense of place?* My assumption was that children's exposure to the natural place and what they learned at Gates Camp would be impactful on their sense of place in some way, whether positive, negative, or a combination of both.

Thus, I would be able to characterize this impact with the similarities and differences in children's sense of place.

As this study proceeded, I encountered limitations to my initial approach. The main limitation was the many factors that influence the children's sense of place – a breadth of place experiences and meanings the children developed over their lifetimes – which made it problematic to distinguish the impact of one relatively brief experience in a natural place. As a result, differences in the sense of place between children who did and did not attend Gates Camp were not distinguishable. However, for all of the children in this study, "sense of place" associated with their special places was distinguishable from the smaller portion of children's "sense of place" associated with the natural place (additionally supported by the telephone interviews with the three adults). Thus, while I was unable to characterize the specific impact of Gates Camp for the children in this study, their Gates Camp experience provided an opportunity to explore how children from an urban place experience a natural place outside of the city. Based on the themes that emerged in my analysis, I have realized that the characterization of both children's sense of their special places and sense of the natural place, in effect, led me to answer a slightly different research question than I originally posed, that is: *How do urban children experience a natural place outside of the city?* For this research question, the breadth of children's place experiences and associated meanings were valuable. Such breadth allowed for a rich comparison between children's sense of place in their special places and sense of place in the natural place.

Another limitation that perhaps influenced this study is a small sample size. Based on the saturation of central themes during data collection and the consistency of themes that emerged in my analysis, for special place and natural place meanings, I suspect the themes could be representative of children who attend these two respective Boys and Girls Clubs. Furthermore, I suggest the themes should be considered with acknowledgement that all of the children are members of the BGCMD, an organization with specifically stated goals and values, as well as an aim to serve predominantly low-income families. My intent is not to generalize the children in this study, although I note that many children who are members of the Boys and Girls Clubs may come from similar situations because of the families that the BGCMD aims to serve, which, in turn, could influence the findings from this study.

The three key findings that emerged from this study provide evidence to support the broader context in which I framed this study, the disconnect between children and nature, and more broadly, the commonly perceived separation between humans and nature. First, I found that children valued entertainment in both their special places and the natural place, although, the entertaining activities were different in their special places versus the natural place. Second, I found that children expressed that their special places were familiar, while the natural place was unfamiliar. Third, I found that children experienced their special places with significant people; however, they experienced the natural place with new people. I suggest that these findings reflect both the disconnect of children and nature claimed by Louv (2005) and the perceived separation of humans and nature argued by scholars such as Berry (2011).

In this context, I illustrate how the three key findings from this study are factors that influence the disconnect between children and nature. I further frame the differences in children's experiences between their special places and the natural place in Relph's (1976) concept of "insideness" and "outsideness." I then comment on the efficacy and limitations of my photo-story map design to collect sense of place data. Finally, I consider some broader implications of this study on current urban green space planning initiatives and suggest future research directions.

5.1 Special Place Entertainment and Natural Place Entertainment: children valued fun in special and natural places, but the activities are different in both contexts

The first key finding was that children valued fun or engaging activities in both their special places and the natural place (Figure 43; Appendix 13). Previous work has similarly found that the reasons children primarily like places are because of the activities they do there (Hart 1979; Christensen, Mygind, and Bentsen 2015). Additional evidence that children value engaging activities in places, both physical (e.g., playing sports and being active) and sedentary (e.g., watching TV and hanging out) was found by Hume et al. (2005), Travlou et al. (2008), and Lee and Abbott (2009). I also found that children identify some of their special places by their favorite activities, first time experiences, or other special occasions. Likewise, many children in this study associated new and different activities with the natural place at Gates Camp, often experiencing activities

**Entertainment
in Special Places**
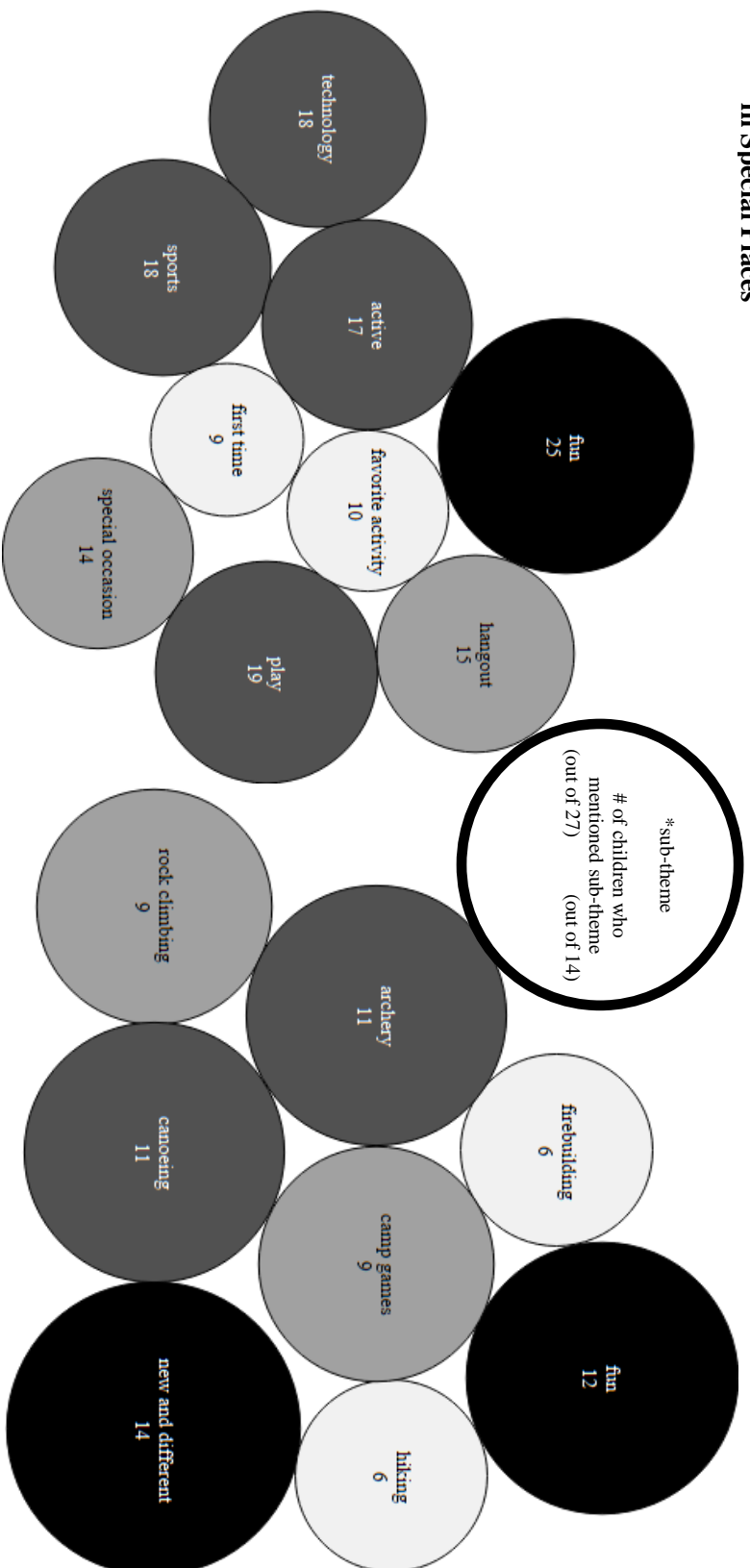
**Entertainment in
Natural Place**

technology
18

sports
18

active
17

first time
9

fun
25

special occasion
14

favorite activity
10

play
19

hangout
15

*sub-theme

# of children who
mentioned sub-theme
(out of 27)   (out of 14)

rock climbing
9

archery
11

firebuilding
6

canoeing
11

camp games
9

new and different
14

hiking
6

fun
12

Figure 43. A comparison of the entertainment children had in their special places and the natural place. *Circle size represents centrality of sub-theme relative to other sub-themes, black is more central, light gray is less central, and spatial arrangement is random.

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there for the first time. Along with previous studies, my evidence further supports that fun, new, and different activities engaged most children and led to overall entertaining experiences, in both their special places and the natural place. Yet, I note a less dominant and possibly important factor that influences an isolation of the children's entertaining experience of the natural place at Gates Camp from their entertaining experience of their special places. Although in general children like to be active and play games no matter the place, the specific types of activities that they engage in at their special places and at Gates Camp are different. In their special places, children enjoyed activities like playing sports and using technology, and at Gates Camp, children liked outdoor activities such as canoeing and rock climbing. However, for most of the children, the new activities they experienced in the natural place were not activities they would be able to repeat in Denver.

Previous work provides evidence that experiences and activities in nature can lead to meaningful experiences and foster a commitment to protect the environment (Tanner 1980; James 1993; Palmer 1993; Chawla 1999; Vadala, Bixler, and James 2011). However, the previous work also indicates other important factors are necessary for experiences to be meaningful, including the influence of parents and peers and a nearby location within children's everyday lives (Tanner 1980; James 1993; Palmer 1993; Chawla 1999; Vadala, Bixler, and James 2011). For the children in my study, outdoor activities at Gates Camp were not only detached from their normal everyday activities in Denver, but the children likely could not continue with the outdoor activities after they went home. Some children did mention archery at their school in Denver, and there was a

basketball hoop at Gates Camp, an activity that many children mentioned they do in their

urban environment. Overall, though, most of the activities children do in their special

places and at Gates Camp are different. Thus, the differences in activities and

unlikelihood that most children can further pursue outdoor activities in their special

places, which were mostly located in an urban place, may contribute to the detachment of

their experience of the natural place from their everyday lives. I further suggest that such

detachment of outdoor activities is a factor that increases the disconnect between urban

children and nature. Urban children could reconnect with nature if they have more access

to outdoor activities in nearby natural places. For example, a study explored the impact of

urban environmental education programs on urban children's sense of place and found

the programs succeeded in fostering ecological place meaning (Kudryavtsev, Krasny, and

Stedman 2012). In the current study, most of the children enjoyed their Gates Camp

experience, and based on previous research, their direct contact with a natural place is

valuable. Yet, greater access to similar outdoor activities in their urban place could help

bridge the children's experience of a natural place outside of the city at Gates Camp to

their everyday lives in Denver.

**5.2 Special Place Familiarity and Natural Place Unfamiliarity: children found their
special places familiar and the natural place unfamiliar**

The second key finding that emerged from my study is that many children

associated their special places with familiarity; however, most children found their

experience in a natural place unfamiliar (Figure 44; Appendix 14). On one hand, a special

place was often familiar because children knew it well, went frequently, or the location

inclusive
19

nature*
3

nearby
16

cool sight
11

home
19

parks or yards
18

trees, grass, flowers, lake, rocks, weather
16

frequent
22

safe
15

surrounding buildings
19

support
18

**sub-theme

# of children who
mentioned sub-theme
(out of 27)   (out of 14)

uncomfortable
7

trees, grass, flowers, lakes, rocks, weather
11

challenge and overcome
12

nature, mountains, wildlife
13

infrequent and overlooked
12

inclusive
6

support
5

safe
3

no technology
7

Figure 44. A comparison of familiar and unfamiliar aspects of their special places and the natural place. *nature, mountains, wildlife **Circle size represents centrality of sub-theme relative to other sub-themes, black is more central, light gray is less central, and spatial arrangement is random.

was nearby; in addition they felt included, supported, and safe. Previous work has supported the claim that familiarity is an aspect of places that leads children to prefer and have positive feelings for certain nearby places (Christensen, Mygind, and Bentsen 2015). Other work supports the claim that children's important places often are not far from home (Hart 1979; Hay 1998). At home, Hume et al. (2005) found that children appreciated feeling safe. Likewise, Hay (1998) noted that children often characterized places with feelings of security, and Travlou et al. (2008) added that children's favorite places are where they feel welcomed and comfortable to be. In this study, I also found that children felt included, safe, and supported in many of their special places, often their nearby special places that children knew well and spend most of their time. In contrast, children found Gates Camp unfamiliar mostly because they go infrequently (sometimes only once) and for a short time (five days), because it is located in a different environment, because of the challenges they encounter there, and because of the new people. When I questioned them directly, children said they did not include Gates Camp in their photo-story maps because they forgot, did not know where it is located, or did not spend much time there.

Additionally, because of the stark contrast (Figure 45) between Denver and the natural place, I found that children were unfamiliar with the different environment of the

Figure 45. Contrast between the Owen Club setting and the setting of the Gates Camp Main Lodge.

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natural place. Most children associated Gates Camp with nature, mountains, and wildlife, although only three children mentioned nature, mountains, or wildlife in their special places. The different environment of the natural place caused some children to have indifferent or negative views, for instance, because they missed technology, thought it was too cold, or disliked bugs. Yet, children often had fun with the new and different activities at Gates Camp, despite their unfamiliarity with the natural place, and this led to positive experiences, such as seeing a moose or camping out under the stars. Furthermore, while the central theme of unfamiliarity was most common in children's description of Gates Camp, a less central and relevant theme was mentioned by some children: Gates Camp is an inclusive, supportive, and safe place.

Irrespective of positive feelings or discomforts, essentially, the environment of the natural place remained unfamiliar due to the short time the children spent there. As a result, I suggest the children's unfamiliarity with the natural place further detached their Gates Camp experience from the familiar aspects of their special places that children experience in their everyday lives. I further note the significance of children's association of nature, mountains, and wildlife with Gates Camp, and the absence of descriptions of nature associated with their special places. Thus, part of the children's unfamiliarity with the natural place may be rooted in the absence of perceived nature in their urban environment. This absence is another reason the children's experience of a natural place outside of the city is detached, and is a factor that may also influence a disconnect between urban children and nature.

5.3 Special Place Significant People and Natural Place New People: children experienced their special places with significant people and the natural place with new people at Gates Camp

The third key finding of my study is that children experienced many of their special places with significant people, while children experienced the natural place at Gates Camp with new friends and camp staff (Figure 46; Appendix 15). Again, just as unfamiliarity contributed to positive experiences for many children, some children associated new friends and camp staff with positive feelings of support and inclusiveness at Gates Camp. Along with mostly positive feelings, children also mentioned a few difficult social interactions in both their special places and Gates Camp (e.g., arguments with siblings at home or a mean canoeing partner at Gates Camp). However, there are basic differences between significant people in their special places and new people at Gates Camp. While the children see significant people in their special places regularly, they may only have time to build relationships with new friends and camp staff during their five days at Gates Camp.

Based on the comparison, I suggest that a core aspect of most of the children's special places are the significant people there, such as family and friends, with whom children have lasting relationships, do fun activities, and feel safe, supported, and included. Previous studies have come to similar conclusions that social connections are important aspects of places for children, and in part determine whether children feel safe in a place (Hume et al. 2005; Christensen, Mygind, and Bentsen 2015). Previous work has also noted the influence of family and friends as "co-participants" in activities, and

conflict
11

overall family
26

friends
22

family traditions
6

staff/teachers
17

*sub-theme

# of children who
mentioned sub-theme
(out of 27)   (out of 14)

new people interactions
9

new friends
6

away from family
4

meals
2

camp staff
5

Figure 46. A comparison of their special places and the natural place based on the people present. *Circle size represents centrality of sub-theme relative to other sub-themes, black is more central, light gray is less central, and spatial arrangement is random.

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the substantial impact of social factors on children's sense of place (Travlou et al. 2008; Lee and Abbott 2009). Derr (2002) added that families instill values in their children that influence how they create meaning for places, particularly for natural places. Studies in the significant life experience literature also identify family and friends as important influences on the experience of a natural place. Chawla (1999) and Vadala and Bixler (2011) found that family and friends influenced access to nature and the content of activities that take place there. Chawla (1998) maintained the influence of family, particularly in natural environments, and found that adults associated their natural special places from childhood with family members who guided their appreciation for nature. In contrast, for many children in my study, family members often guided them to value aspects of their urban place such as theme parks or sports arenas, but less frequently natural places in the city such as parks. Thus, the evidence in my study further supports that not only do significant people influence children's special places as co-participants, but they also influence what experiences are significant for children, the meanings they develop for places, and in turn, what places are special.

Indeed, the results of my study reinforce that the significant people with whom children have lasting relationships are a key influence on their experience of their special places. However, at Gates Camp children have relationships with new friends and camp staff for a short period. The children largely viewed the new relationships positively; nonetheless, many children and adults referred to interactions with different people than who they are used to in their everyday lives. As a result, most children did not experience the natural place with the significant people who normally influence how they perceive

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and make meaning for their special places. This conclusion is similar to that offered by Derr (2002), who asserted there are many ways a sense of place develops for children, and for children in her study, the experience of nature, culture, and family together in a place led to a meaningful connection. Children at Gates Camp experience nature; however, the experience remained largely detached from their culture and family. In contrast, one adult in this study reported their meaningful experience from Gates Camp after attending for four summers, later returning to be a counselor. They explained, "Yeah, uh I mean my family always went camping and stuff, and we would do hikes." Perhaps their positive and impactful experience at Gates Camp also meaningfully connected with what they did with their family outside of Gates Camp. Most of the children and the other two adults in this study did not come from families who did Gates-Camp-like outdoor activities throughout the year. Therefore, their experiences of a natural place at Gates Camp was also isolated from the significant people who influenced what places are special to them. I assert that for most children in this study, the absence of experiences in natural places with significant people in their lives is a key factor that may contribute to the disconnect between urban children and nature. The impact that Gates Camp staff can have on children's experience and perception of the natural place can be meaningful, yeti the impact is perhaps limited by the short period of time children spend there. Once children return home, it is experiences in nearby natural places with family and friends that could lead to a lasting and meaningful connection between their experience of a natural place at Gates Camp and their everyday lives.

5.4 Special Place Insideness and Natural Place Outsideness: children experienced insideness in their special places and outsideness in the natural place

To further conceptualize children's experience of their special places and the experience of the natural place, I frame the difference in Relph's (1976) concept of place experience in terms of "insideness" and "outsideness." In any place, people experience an "inside" distinct from an "outside," which distinguishes a given place from other places based on physical features, activities, and meanings. For children who live in Denver, the surrounding urban environment, sports or technology activities, and special place meanings – inside – is distinct from the mountains in the distance, rock climbing or canoeing activities, and natural place meanings – outside. Moreover, this distinction occurs on a continuum of levels from insideness to outsideness, and I suggest that the children in this study experienced varying intensities of insideness in their special places and outsideness in the natural place, due to the variations in entertainment, familiarity, and people.

Based on Relph's (1976) seven levels of insideness to outsideness, the children in this study experienced their special places and the natural place at contrasting levels, from "existential" or "empathetic" insideness to "incidental" or "objective" outsideness. In most of their special places, children experienced "existential insideness;" that is, they had developed an unselfconscious bond to the place. The unselfconscious bond developed through the everyday fun activities, familiarity, and significant people in their special places. In contrast, most of the children who attended Gates Camp experienced the natural place with "incidental outsideness;" that is, they experienced the place as a

background for activities. Children had fun with the outdoor activities, but the unfamiliar natural place did not connect to their everyday urban environment. The experiences of the natural place, however, did vary amongst the children. Some children experienced Gates Camp with "empathetic insideness;" that is, they emotionally participated in the natural place. For instance, one child explained how they like Gates Camp and want to work there some day. Other children experienced the natural place with "objective outsideness;" that is, they knew the natural place as a concept. For instance, the child who labeled themselves, "not an outdoors person" or a couple of children's reference to the Gates Camp environment as, "the nature."

As Lim and Barton (2010) noted, children position themselves within and perceive places based on how they identify with the places in which they develop insideness. In this study, perhaps children's stronger outsider experiences of the natural place came from their positioning within and perception of the natural place, which they based on places they identify with and know well, such as their special places. Similar to Lim and Barton's (2010) findings of layered significance and meanings in urban children's development of insideness, the urban children in my study had layers of significance and meaning for their special places. Children's layers of significance and meaning in the current study came from frequent exposure to their special places in a known urban environment, followed by the activities they experienced, and the significant people who influenced the experiences and made them feel included, supported, and safe. In contrast, they did not express such nuanced significance and meaning for the natural place at Gates Camp because they were there for a short period of

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time, the natural environment did not fit in with the places they typically identify with, and they were away from the people who normally influence the places that are special to them. Therefore, children's stronger outsider experience of the natural place likely did not allow them to fully experience the natural place as they would their special places where they have the layered knowledge necessary to position themselves as insiders.

5.5 Efficacy and Limitations of Photo-story Maps

Visual methods are relatively common in children's sense of place research, specifically photo-based and place-mapping methods. Although, to my knowledge, photo-story maps in particular are a novel visual approach in children's sense of place research (Derr 2002; Young 2003; Rasmussen 2004; Hume, Salmon, and Ball 2005; Travlou et al. 2008; Lee and Abbott 2009; Lim and Barton 2010; Wridt 2010; Wee and Anthamatten 2014; Christensen, Mygind, and Bentsen 2015). In addition, the photo-story maps provided visual material for the follow-up photo-elicitation interviews, a form of interviewing that is useful and largely underused in accessing the meanings children attach to places (Briggs, Stedman, and Krasny 2014; Leonard and McKnight 2015). I designed the photo-story map method in an attempt to both engage children with technology they are familiar with and enjoy using, while also collecting visual, textual, and spatial data that characterized their sense of place.

The benefits of the photo-story maps were twofold: children participants engaged in the process, and the workshop environment was conducive for the facilitator to collect rich data. First, by engaging the children in the process of making photo-story maps on iPads they took ownership of creating their photo-story map. Similarly, Lee and Abbott

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(2009) reported that children enjoyed using cameras, Young (2003) noted how visual methods were fun and controlled by the children themselves, and Christensen, Mygind, and Bentsen (2015) found that place-mapping encouraged children to engage with the research topic. Second, for collecting rich data the benefits of place-mapping are similar to what I found in photo-story map workshops, including discussion, equitable participation, visual representations of most and least favorite places (I focused on "special" places), and written material to verify map data (Travlou et al. 2008; Christensen, Mygind, and Bentsen 2015). While I originally planned for the children to create photo-story maps without consulting their peers, and I intended for them to select their photographs from the internet without discussion, these goals were challenging to enforce. As a result, I allowed them to talk because I noticed their conversations were constructive, the conversation topics mostly related to the types and meanings of places, and discussion amongst the children did not lead to copied special places or captions. Rather, I found that conversations with friends helped children reflect on what places were special, and while they shared some places, overall, children seemed to take ownership over each special place they included in their photo-story map.

Some limitations of the photo-story map workshops included the inability of children to take their own photographs that represent particular aspects of their special places, an approach used in several studies (Rasmussen 2004; Lee and Abbott 2009; Lim and Barton 2010; Wridt 2010; Wee and Anthamatten 2014). At the same time, a few children were able to use their own photographs stored on their phone or social media websites. Additionally, there was no constraint on the locations of their special places,

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which was particularly important for my study so that the children could include Gates Camp (nobody did) or other places that did not happen to be nearby. Since their special places were not all nearby, it was also a challenge for some children to locate the place in the web application, so I assisted many children in the mapping portion of the process.

Overall, I found the photo-story maps evoked rich spatial, visual, and textual information about children's sense of place. As a result, the photo-story maps were an effective visual material to incorporate into follow-up photo-elicitation interviews. The photo-elicitation interviews allowed children to further elaborate on special place experiences and meanings, especially because the children were the experts about the photographs they included in their photo-story map (Mandleco 2013; Briggs, Stedman, and Krasny 2014).

5.6 Broader Implications and Future Research Directions

The findings from this study reinforced the idea that multiple factors influence the experiences and meanings children associate with places (Derr 2002). Based on findings from the significant life experience literature that support the value of direct contact with nature (Chawla 1998), the opportunity to attend Gates Camp in a natural place is a valuable experience for urban children from Denver. Such value was reflected in many of the children's positive descriptions of the outdoor activities, interactions with new people, and for some, new perspectives on nature. For example, the girl who reflected, "I used to think it's just not a place for me to be out there, and now I think it's a good place for me to be out there, because I can find nature, there's nature that it's good for you I guess." However, since there are multiple factors that influence sense of place, the

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contact with nature children experienced at Gates Camp did not connect to other important factors such as the their typical fun activities, familiarity, and significant people in their everyday lives in Denver.

Consequently, to reinforce an experience in a natural place outside of the city and further connect with nature, urban children need more frequent natural place experiences with family and friends (i.e., significant people) in parks and green spaces in the city. However, while most of the children thought of Gates Camp as nature, few children associated their mostly urban special places with nature. For experiences in natural places outside of the city to connect with natural places in the city, urban children would need to see their urban setting as a part of the larger natural world. In particular, urban green spaces would need to be perceived as natural places and, importantly for urban children, urban green spaces are where they can feasibly connect to nature frequently with family and friends.

Organizations such as the Metro Denver Nature Alliance (MetroDNA) aim to improve urban green spaces that support such experiences for children, especially children from low-income neighborhoods. One member organization of MetroDNA restored an urban green space as a natural place in Montbello. The "Montbello Open Space" (Figure 47) is an example of an urban green space that is intended to be perceived as a natural place, with native gardens, education programs, trails, and nature play spaces (The Trust for Public Land 2017b). In order for urban green spaces to connect with the places outside of the city that are typically perceived to be natural, urban green spaces should not only be presented as a background for activities such as sports. Rather, I

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suggest that interweaving natural places within urban places could help people perceive the two together, as interconnected parts of the larger natural world. Urban green spaces

Figure 47. Montbello Open Space, an urban natural place (source: The Trust for Public Land 2017b).

like Montbello Open Space, planned as "natural places," could contribute to a reconnection between children and nature.

Furthermore, given the influence of family and friends on children's sense of place from the findings of the current study and previous studies (Derr 2002; Chawla 1998), children's significant people play a large role in how children experience places – as natural – or not. Thus, future research should more holistically account for the sense of place of urban children and adults, as well as families. Moreover, future research should not only explore whether or not children, adults, and families use urban green spaces, but also the impact of the frequency of their interactions with these spaces, and how they interact with and perceive urban green spaces.

I further point out that my study did not explore particular factors of different cultural and social groups that specifically influence how people experience natural places, and I suggest that future research should consider such factors. I also note that this study is framed in the ingrained perception in the United States that humans are separate from nature, and the more recently popularized idea of a disconnect between children and nature. Both ideas are grounded in a concept of nature that is largely perpetuated by dominant groups in the United States. Therefore, while I offer suggestions based on my findings for how urban children could reconnect with nature, I do not suggest that there is one right way to experience nature. Rather, future research should further explore the multitude of ways in which different cultures and social groups experience natural places. Such future research should focus on the experiences and meanings that people from different cultures and social groups associate with urban green spaces, as well as their broader urban place. Further knowledge of urban people's sense of place, and how nature is a part of their sense of place, or not, could offer valuable insight into how urban people, from varied cultures and social groups, perceive their urban place as a part of, or apart from, the larger natural world. Such knowledge could inform the planning and design of urban green spaces with particular factors that influence how different cultures and social groups experience natural places. In turn, more targeted efforts could aim to make urban green spaces more attractive to people from diverse backgrounds and reconnect both children and adults with the larger natural world.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

How do urban children experience a natural place outside of the city? For the

urban children in this study, their outsider experience of a natural place outside of the city

offered them valuable contact with nature; however, the experience was isolated from

their stronger insider experiences of their familiar special places with family and friends

in their everyday lives in the city. To build meaningful connections between an

experience of a natural place outside of the city and their everyday lives in the city, urban

children would need frequent experiences in nearby urban green spaces with family,

friends, and other significant people in their lives. Such experiences of natural places in

the city would allow children to build layered significance and meaning for those places,

so that when they experience a natural place outside of the city, they may better position

themselves as insiders in that place. As insiders, they would know the natural place in a

way that allowed them to more fully experience the place. Furthermore, nearby urban

green spaces that are designed to be perceived as natural places, such as Montbello Open

Space, are accessible and feasible for urban children from any socioeconomic

background to visit frequently; especially for children from low-income neighborhoods

who lack the resources for frequent visits to natural places outside of the city. With more

frequent visits to urban green spaces that are meant to be perceived as natural places,

urban children, and the significant people who influence them, might experience nearby urban green spaces as natural places.

Future research should take a more holistic approach to explore how children, adults, and families use urban green spaces, and importantly, the experiences and meanings they associate with urban green spaces, as natural places, or not. In an increasingly urbanized world, to connect the natural places outside of cities with the natural places inside of cities, urban green spaces must be planned in such a way that people perceive both urban and natural places inclusively as nature. I am not suggesting there is one right way to experience or give meaning to natural places. Rather, future considerations in the planning and design of urban green spaces should explore specific factors that influence how different cultural and social groups experience and give meaning to urban green spaces. Further research on the experiences and meanings that children, adults, and families – from varied cultural and social groups – have for natural places, particularly in cities, would add further understanding to both the disconnect between children and nature and the common perception that separates humans from the larger natural world.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Photo-story Map Workshop Protocol

Set up: Arrive early to arrange the technology lab tables and seating so that everyone is sufficiently spread out in an attempt to maximize focus on photo-story maps.

1. Introductions

   "Hi guys, thanks for joining me this morning/afternoon! My name is Corey, and I am Graduate Student at the University of Denver. Today, we are going to do an activity where we make a photo-story map using an app on iPads/Smartphones. I will tell you about photo-story maps, and why we are making them, here in a minute."

2. IRB information

   "The activity today is part of a research study that I am doing. In order for you to participate in the research study, I am going to pass out a form, read it aloud, and have you follow along. Then, you will sign the form if you would like to participate. There will be pizza, chips, and soda for those who participate, try their best, and finish the activity." Pass out child assent form, read it aloud, and have study participants to follow along. Study participants sign the form if they agree to participate in the study. Collect the forms and check to see whether each form is signed.

3. Background on sense of place and photo-story maps

   Sense of Place
   "This activity will help us learn about our sense of place. First, let's talk about what sense of place is. Can anyone tell me what a place is?" (go around the group to allow volunteers to give their description of place/examples of places) Based on their descriptions/examples of place, "your sense of place is why a place, like (insert descriptions/ examples of places that they give), is special to you."

   Photo-story Maps
   "To learn about the places that are special, or that mean something, to you, we are going to make photo-story maps using an app on iPads/Smartphones. Let's talk about what a photo-story map is. Can anyone tell me what a map is? (go around the group to allow volunteers to explain what a map is) So, like the maps… (insert explanations of maps that they give), a photo-story map is a special kind of map that uses photographs to tell a story… and today, we are going to make a photo-story map to tell a story about places that are special in your life. Here is an example of what a photo-story map looks like. (Show the ESRI Broomfield story

map so that they study participants get an idea of what a photo-story map looks like as a finished product)"

4. Details on what to include in your photo-story map

     a. "First, find a photograph for up to six special places in your life, but no more than six. A special place could be a place that you go all of the time, or you may not go there a lot, but it is a place that is important in your life... The photograph should help show why that place is special to you. I also put in terms of what does the place mean to you? Why do you go there? Why do you like or dislike that place? It can be somewhere you go often, or not. Also, somewhere that is nearby, or not. Try to balance giving the children enough background without leading them select certain special places or to give certain meanings to their special places. This will be done quietly on your own. Try to manage this, but in general just try to keep the children on task.
     b. You may find photographs on the internet, using websites like: Instagram or Facebook if you have them, google images, google maps, and other acceptable websites, etc. If you have a photograph on your phone that best shows one of your special places, and you would like to use it, we will use email to transfer the photograph to the iPad. When you find a photograph, you can either "Save Image" or "Screenshot" the photograph to save it to the iPad."
     c. "After you find up to six photographs, but no more than six, and save them to the iPad, raise your hand and I will log you in to the photo-story map app so that you can begin making your photo-story map."
     d. "Let's talk about what you need to have in your photo-story map. The first thing you will do is make a title for your photo-story map, you can be creative, and write about how you decided to choose the places that are special to you. For each photograph include a…(write on the white board so that they can refer back to it, and so that it is clear exactly what must be in their map before they are finished."
          i.   For each photograph include:
          ii.   Title: The name, or names if there are more than one, of the special place. (include its different names if it has more than one, what you call it and what everyone else calls it).
          iii. Description: 3 or more sentences that describe why the place is special, why you spend time there, what the place means to you (ask them to put more than "because it is cool")
          iv.   Map Pin: Locate the special place on the map correctly. (Emphasize that this is very important, and that if they need help finding the place on the map, ask me or Jeff – the BGCMD staff member who is helping me – for help).

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e. Model

Example Special Place: My Apartment. Go through the steps of internet search for the pictures (two ways to find a photograph, from the internet or from your phone), saving the picture to the iPad, uploading pictures to the Snap2map application, and an example of a finished product so they see what it will look like. Again, try to give them a model of what a special place might be, so that I get usable data; however, without leading them to select certain special places or give their special places certain meanings.

f. Summary

5. Remind study participants that if they complete their photo-story map to the best of their ability, they will receive pizza, chips, and a drink.

6. Refer to the board, where I wrote the basic instructions of what to include in their photo-story map.

7. Any Questions?

8. Distribute iPads to study participants and inform them to use the internet and their smartphones to find up to six photographs of special places. Remind them that while they find their photographs, they are to work quietly on their own.

9. Once a study participant has selected up to six photographs, log them in to the ESRI Snap2Map application for access to a private account. Select, "Create New Story Map," and hand the iPad back to the study participant to assist them in uploading their photographs and beginning their photo-story map.

10. Assist study participants throughout the creation of photo-story maps with issues that arise related to technology, the photo-story map application, or other questions that do not influence the content they include in the photo-story map.

11. Inform study participants to indicate when they finish so that each photo-story map can be checked for completion: up to six photographs, caption for each photograph (three sentences or more), and marker to locate each photograph on the map. When complete, upload the photo-story map to the private account under private settings. Load the finished photo-story map to allow the study participant to see what they created.

Appendix 2: Photo-elicitation Interview Protocol

Introductions and Context

> "Hi, thanks for joining me this afternoon! Once again, my name is Corey and I am a Graduate Student at the University of Denver. Today, we are going to talk about the photo-story map you made with me earlier this summer and Gates Camp, if you have gone before. First, I am going to ask you some questions about the photo-story map to learn more about the places that are special to you. Then, I will ask you some questions about Gates Camp, to understand your experience and what you learn there. Have you gone to Gates Camp before? (If yes, do full protocol. If no, do first five themes.)"

IRB Information

> "The interview today is part of the research study that I am doing. Your parent or guardian knows about the research study, and said that I could ask you if you would like to do an interview. Are you ok with participating in the interview? Do you mind if I record it for the research study?"

> "You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to, and you do not have to tell anyone about what you say in this interview. I will be the only other person to listen to this interview. If I use anything from the interview when I write or talk about the study, I will not use your name. There are some things I cannot keep private and must report. If you talk about abuse or neglect, or that you plan to harm yourself or others, I have to report it."

> "Do you have any questions about the research study or interview? You can ask questions at any time. Just ask me, or if you have a question later, ask your parent or guardian. Your parent or guardian have access to my contact information."

Background – Road Map, Mapmaking Process, Home -> Story Map, Gates Camp, Learning

1. *(photo-story map making process)* "To start off, we are going to talk about how you made your photo-story map." **Describe what you did to make the photo-story map.** Tell me about what made a place special enough to put in your photo-story map. Are there any special places that you would add to your photo-story map since you made it? Why are they special? Where did you get the photographs? Were there any special places that you wanted to include but did not have/could not find a photograph? (If Gates Camp participant) Why did you not include Gates Camp in your photo-story map?

2. *(where study participant lives)* "Now we are going to look at the photo-story map you made and talk about the special places that you included." **First, can you please tell me about where you live?** Tell me about the surroundings of where

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you live, what is around it? Describe what it is like there. Describe what happens there. What does it feel like? (If in story map) Tell me about why where you live is special to you. What do you like and dislike about where you live and why? How long have you lived there? Can you describe the Montbello/Westwood Neighborhood.

Sense of Place (For each photograph in the story map (and Gates Camp if applicable).)

3. *(location of place)* **Describe where the place in the photograph is located.** Tell me about the surroundings of the place, what is around it?

4. *(type of place)* **Tell me about the place in the photograph.** Describe what is at the place. Describe what it is like there. Describe what happens there. Why do you go there?

5. *(meaning of place)* **Tell me about why the place is special to you.** What does it feel like there? What do you like and dislike about the place and why? (If Gates Camp participant) What does Gates Camp mean to you? Tell me about how Gates Camp is similar or different from the places in your photo-story map? Why do you go to Gates Camp? How many summers have you gone to Gates Camp? (if different) How do you feel about it being different? (if similar) How do you feel about it being similar?

Place-based Learning (If Gates Camp Participant)

6. *(place-based learning outcomes from the Gates Camp experience in general)* **Tell me about what you learn from just spending time at Gates Camp.** What do you learn at Gates Camp that you would not learn at school or at home? D you use anything that you learn at Gates Camp, here at home?

7. *(place-based learning programs)* **Describe the programs you participate in at Gates Camp.** What do you do in the programs? What do you like and dislike in the programs?

8. *(place-based learning outcomes from specific Gates Camp programs)* **Tell me about what you learn from the programs that you participate in at Gates Camp.** What did you learn from (blank program)…

Conclusion

Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about? Anything about your photo-story map? (If Gates Camp participant) Anything about Gates Camp? Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix 3: Gates Camp Photo-elicitation Interview Prompts

Appendix 4: Telephone Interview Protocol

<u>IRB Information and Introductions</u>

Hello (person's name), thank you for taking the time to allow me to call you for a telephone interview. I first need to go over consent information for your participation in this study. In the study, I am interested in the experience and learning that happen at Gates Camp. This interview will have two parts. The first part will be included in the study, the second part will not be included in the study and will provide the current Gates Camp Director with information to improve Gates Camp. Your participation is completely voluntary.

The first part of the interview will consist of four questions about what you learned at Gates Camp. With your permission, I would also like to record these first four questions to help in my analysis. I will keep the information from these questions confidential. Do you agree to answer these first four questions for use in the study? Is it all right if I record your answers to these questions?

The second part of the interview consists of five questions about the impacts of Gates Camp. Information from these questions will not be used in the study, but will be used by the current Gates Camp Director. Do you agree to answer the five questions for the Gates Camp Director? I will not record your answers to these five questions.

<u>Questions included in the study</u>

1. Tell me about your experience at Gates Camp.

2. Tell me about what you learned from your experience at Gates Camp.

3. Tell me about the programs you participated in at Gates Camp.

4. Tell me about what you learned from the programs that you participated in at Gates Camp.

<u>Questions for the Gates Camp Director that will not be included in the study</u>

1. Do you feel that Gates Camp has had a long-term effect on your life?

2. Whether it is positive or negative, what is the effect?

3. What is your level of education?

4. What is your occupation?

5. What is your income?

That is the end of the interview, thank you for your time. If you have any further questions, my phone number is 913-269-9354. Have a great day.

Appendix 5: Parent or Guardian Permission Form

University of Denver
Parent or Guardian Permission Form
for Child's Participation in Research

Researcher: Corey Martz, Graduate Student, University of Denver

Study Site: Boys and Girls Clubs of Metro Denver, Owen/Denver Broncos Branch

<u>Purpose</u>
Your child is being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of the research is to explore the relationship of youth with nature through understanding the places that are special to youth.

<u>What your child will do in the study</u>
If you agree to let your child participate in this research study, your child will be asked to attend a session that will take place at the Owen/Denver Broncos Branch in the technology lab. In the session, your child will be asked along with 10 to 15 other participants, to make a map with photographs and descriptions of the special places in their life. The photograph story map will be made using a smartphone application and saved in a private account. Additionally, your child may also be asked to participate in an interview about their photograph story map. An interview would also take place at the Owen/Denver Broncos Branch.

<u>Time Required</u>
Your child's participation in this study will take approximately one hour. The session will occur at 2:00 pm on Tuesday August 2, 2016 or at 2:00 pm on Wednesday August 3, 2016 at the Owen Branch/10:00 am or 11:30 am on Tuesday August 2, 2016 at the Denver Broncos Branch. Your child may be asked to do an interview following the session in August, September, or October.

<u>Voluntary Participation</u>
Your child's participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you agree to let your child participate in this research study, you have the right to withdraw your child from the study at any time without penalty. If you would like to withdraw your child from the study, please tell the researcher.

<u>Risks or Discomforts</u>
There are no foreseeable risks associated with this research study. Even so, there may still be some risks related to participation, even when the researchers are careful to avoid them. The University of Denver has not provided for any payment to you for treatment if your child is harmed or injured as a result of taking part in this research study. Additionally, some information cannot be kept private and must be reported to proper authorities. If your child discloses information about child abuse or neglect, or that your child is going to harm themselves or others, the researcher must report it in line with the protocol of Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Denver.

Benefits
Possible benefits of participation include the opportunity for your child to learn how to make a photograph story map with a smartphone application, and to reflect on the special places in their life. Findings from the study can help policymakers plan and build parks and recreation spaces with knowledge of how youth residents perceive these spaces.
Confidentiality
Contact information will not be collected from your child, and your child's individual identity will be kept private when information is presented or published about this study. Photograph story maps and audio records from interviews will be analyzed by the researcher who will be the only person with access to the information. The researcher will store data that is collected throughout the study in a private password-protected account, and on a password-protected external hard drive kept in a locked office. The data collected in this study will be destroyed after five years. The research records are held by researchers at an academic institution; therefore, the records may be subject to disclosure if required by law. The research information may be shared with federal agencies or local committees who are responsible for protecting research participants.
Questions
If you or your child have any questions about this project or your child's participation, please feel free to ask questions now or contact Corey Martz at corey.martz@du.edu at any time. The Faculty Sponsor overseeing this project is Rebecca Powell and may be reached at rebecca.l.powell@du.edu. If you or your child have any questions or concerns about research participation or research participant rights, you may contact the DU Human Research Protections Program by emailing IRBAdnim@du.edu or calling (303) 871-2121 to speak to someone other than the researchers.

Options for Participation

Please initial your choice for the options below:

___The researcher may ask my child to do an interview about their photograph story map.

___The researcher may NOT ask my child to do an interview about their photograph story map.

___The researcher may audio record my child during this study.

___The researcher may NOT audio record my child during this study.

Please take all the time you need to read through this document and decide whether you would like your child to participate in this research study.

If you agree to allow your child to participate in this research study, please sign below.

_____

Name of Child allowed to participate in the study

_____   _____

Parent/Guardian Signature   Date

Appendix 6: Child Assent Form

University of Denver
Assent Form for Youth Participation in Research

Researcher: Corey Martz, Graduate Student, University of Denver

Study Site: Boys and Girls Clubs of Metro Denver, Denver Broncos Branch and Owen Branch

I want to tell you about the research study that I am doing. A research study is a way to learn more about something. I would like to learn more about the places that are special to youth. I am asking you to participate in the study because I want to know what places are special in your life, and understand why.

Your parent or guardian knows about the research study, and said that I could ask you if you would like to participate. If you agree to participate in the study, I will ask you to make a photo-story map on an iPad/Smartphone. I may also ask you to participate in an interview about your photo-story map later on.

In this activity, you will learn how to make a photo-story map on an iPad/Smartphone. I do not think that you will be hurt or upset during this activity. However, you do not have to be in this study, it is up to you. You can also agree to be in the study and change your mind later. All you have to do is tell me when you want to stop being in the study. No one will be upset if you don't want to be in the study, or if you change your mind later and want to stop being in the study.

I will not tell anyone else that you are in this research study. You do not have to tell anyone about the photo-story map that you make. You will make the photo-story map on your own, and I will be the only other person to see the finished photo-story map that you make. If I use anything from your photo-story map when I write or talk about the study, I will not use your name. There are some things I cannot keep private and must report. If you include in your photo-story map, information about abuse or neglect, or that you plan to harm yourself or others, I have to report it.

Do you have any questions about the study? If you agree to participate in this activity, you can ask questions at any time. Just ask me, or if you have a question later, ask your parent or guardian. Your parent or guardian have my contact information.

Corey Martz: corey.martz@du.edu
If you agree to participate in this research study, please sign below.

_____   _____

Participant Signature   **Date**

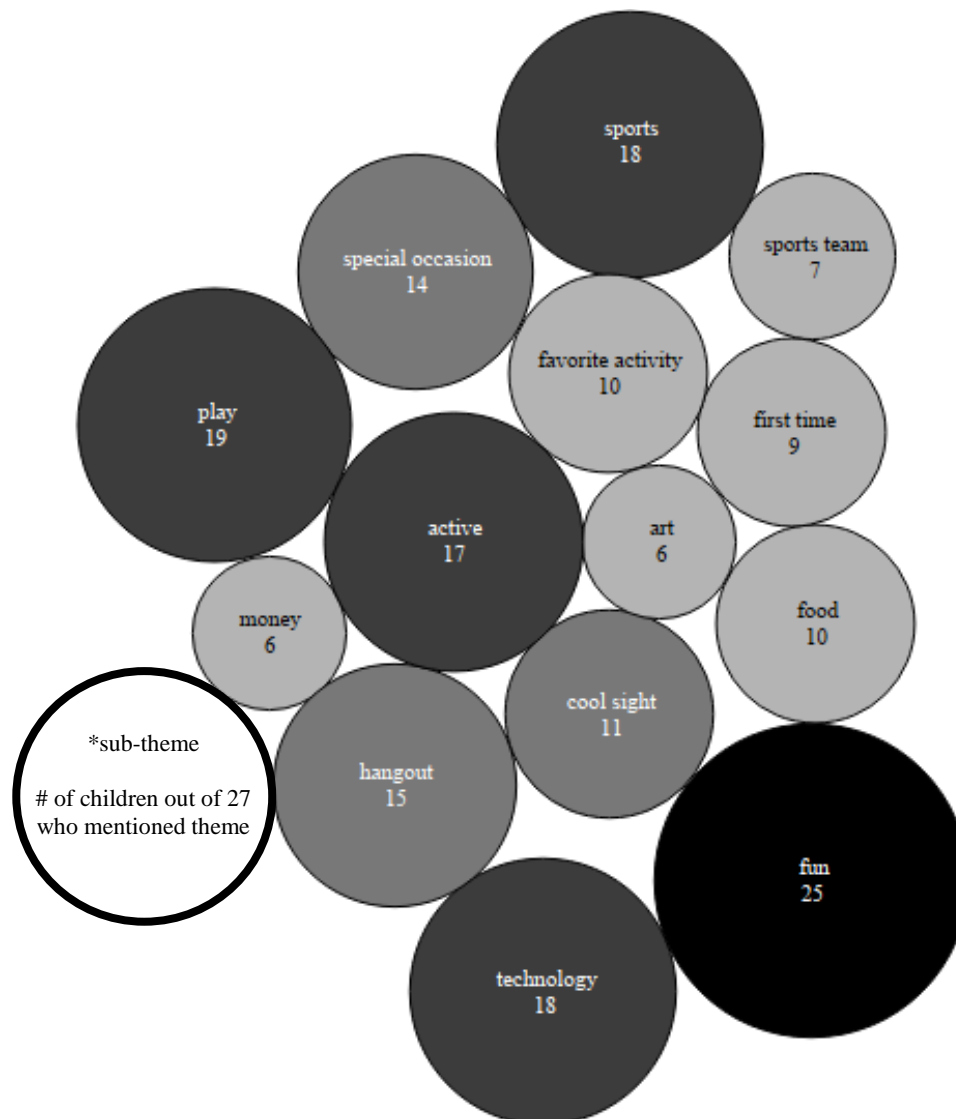**Appendix 7: Special Place Entertainment Sub-themes Chart**

Figure 21. Special place entertainment sub-themes. *Circle size represents centrality of sub-theme relative to other sub-themes, black is more central, light gray is less central, and spatial arrangement is random.

Appendix 8: Special Place Familiarity Sub-themes Chart
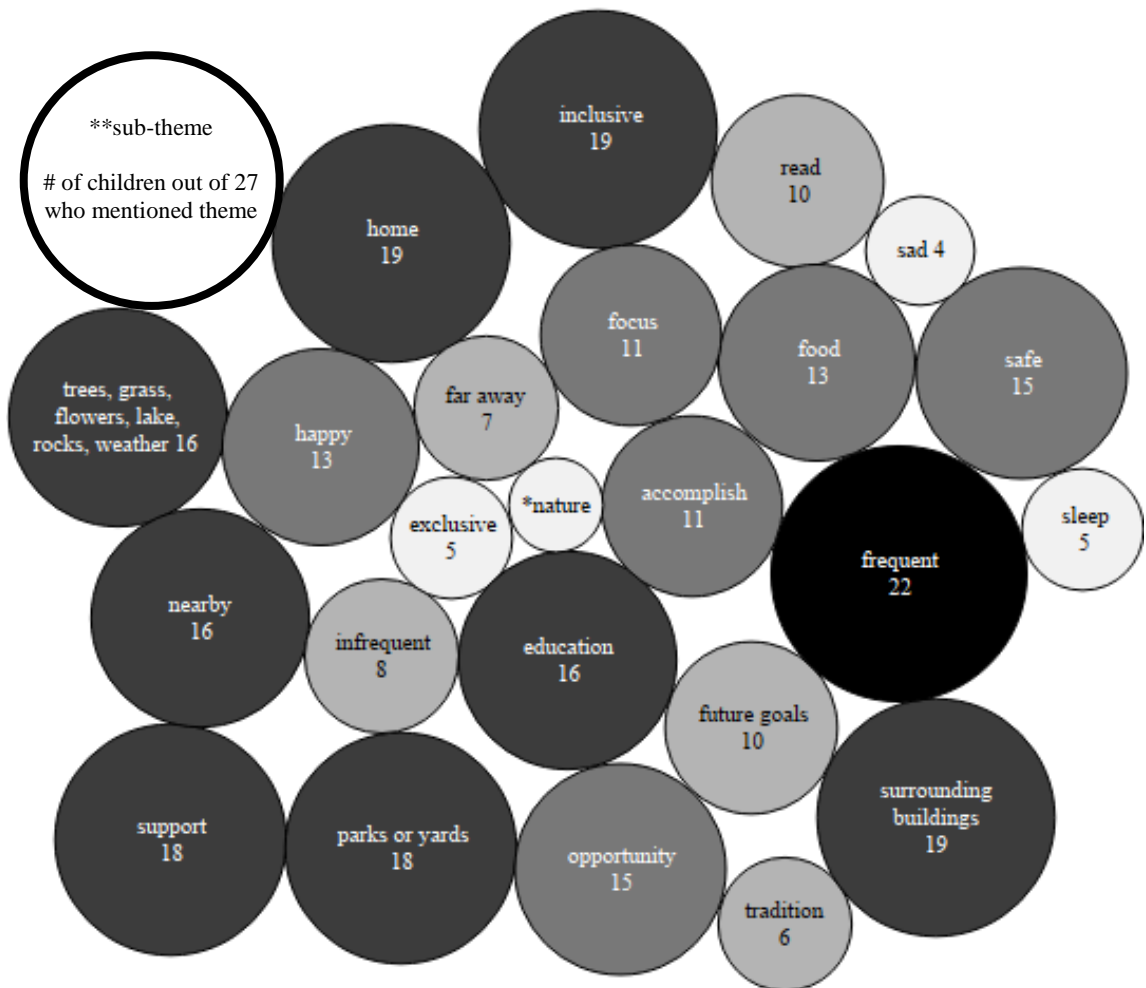

Figure 23. Special place familiarity sub-themes. *nature, wildlife, wilderness **Circle size represents centrality of sub-theme relative to other sub-themes, black is more central, light gray is less central, and spatial arrangement is random.

Appendix 9: Special Place Significant People Sub-themes Chart
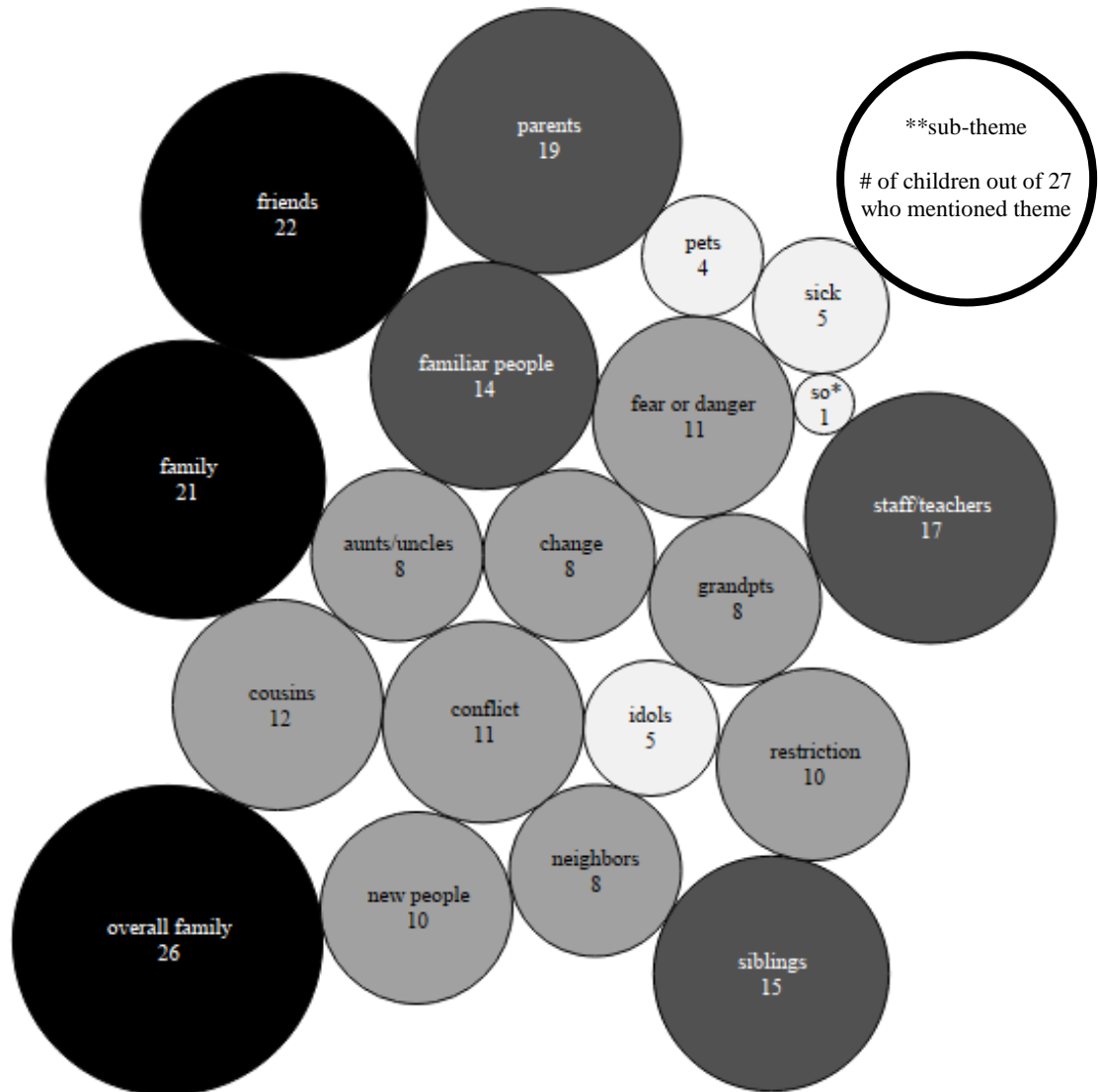

Figure 29. Special place significant people sub-themes. *significant other **Circle size represents centrality of sub-theme relative to other sub-themes, black is more central, light gray is less central, and spatial arrangement is random.

Appendix 10: Natural Place Entertainment Sub-themes Chart

Figure 34. Natural place entertainment sub-themes. *Circle size represents centrality of sub-theme relative to other sub-themes, black is more central, light gray is less central, and spatial arrangement is random.

Appendix 11: Natural Place Unfamiliarity Sub-themes Chart

Figure 37. Natural place unfamiliarity sub-themes. *Circle size represents centrality of sub-theme relative to other sub-themes, black is more central, light gray is less central, and spatial arrangement is random.

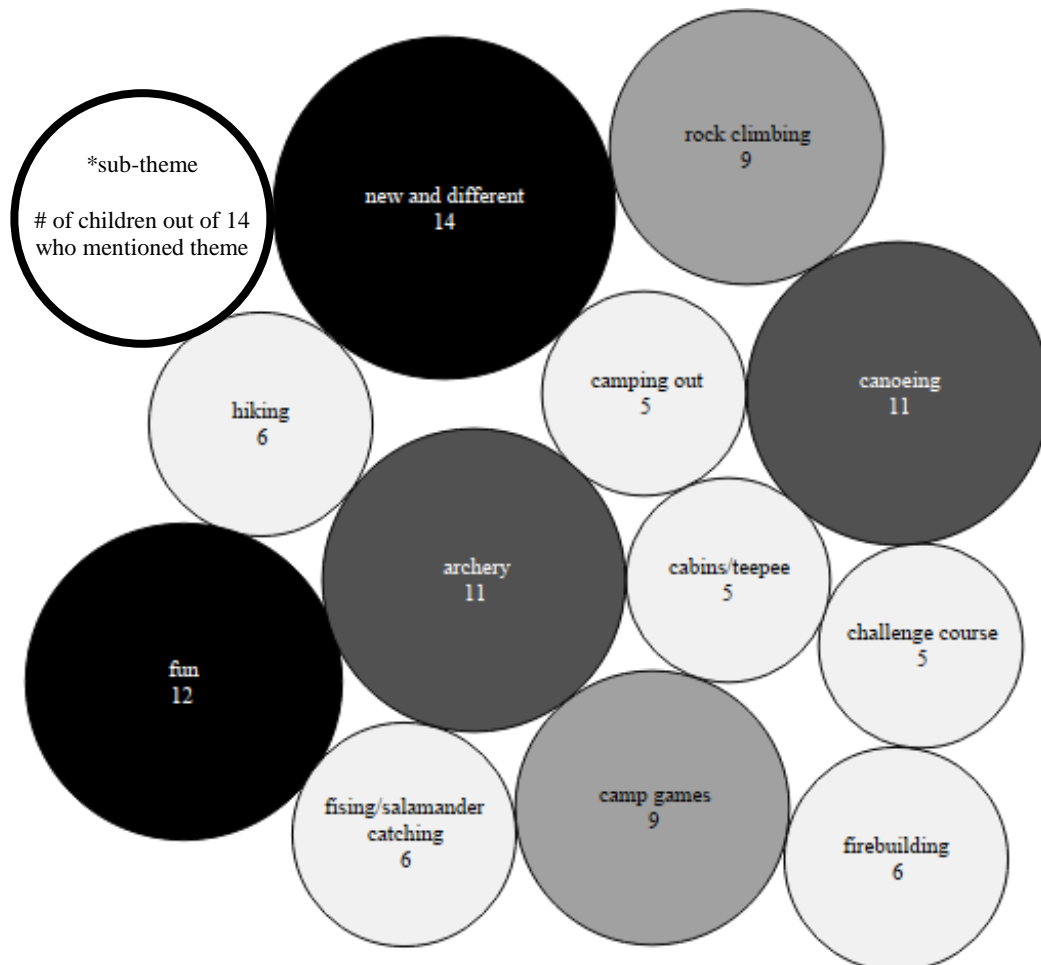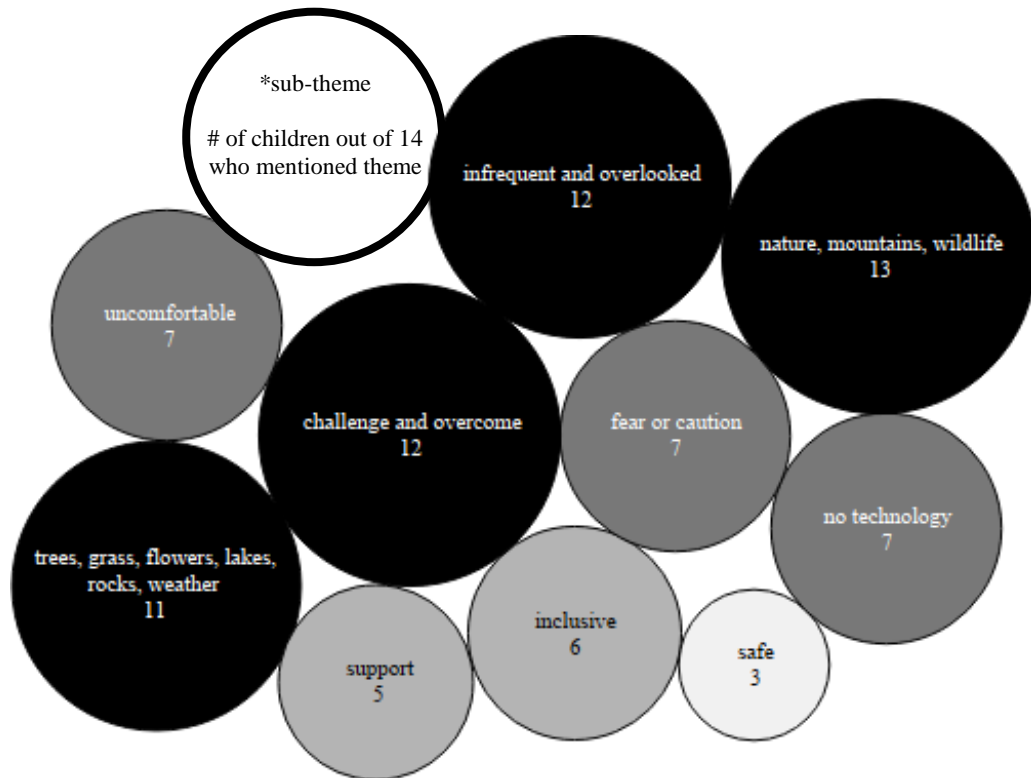**Appendix 12: Natural Place New People Sub-themes Chart**
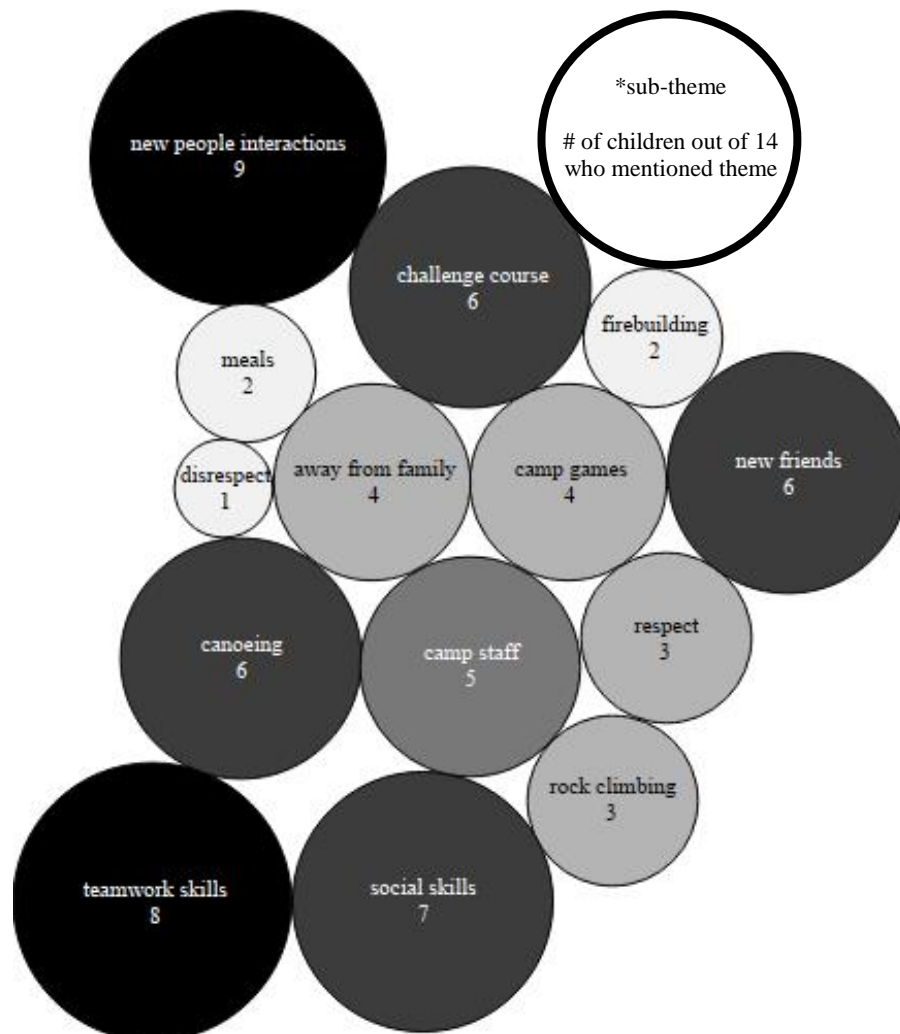

Figure 39. Natural place new people sub-themes. *Circle size represents centrality of sub-theme relative to other sub-themes, black is more central, light gray is less central, and spatial arrangement is random.

Appendix 13: Special Place and Natural Place Entertainment Sub-themes Comparison Chart

Entertainment in Special Places

technology 18

sports 18

active 17

fun 25

first time 9

favorite activity 10

special occasion 14

play 19

hangout 15

*sub-theme
# of children who mentioned sub-theme
(out of 27)
(out of 14)

rock climbing 9

archery 11

firebuilding 6

canoeing 11

camp games 9

fun 12

new and different 14

hiking 6

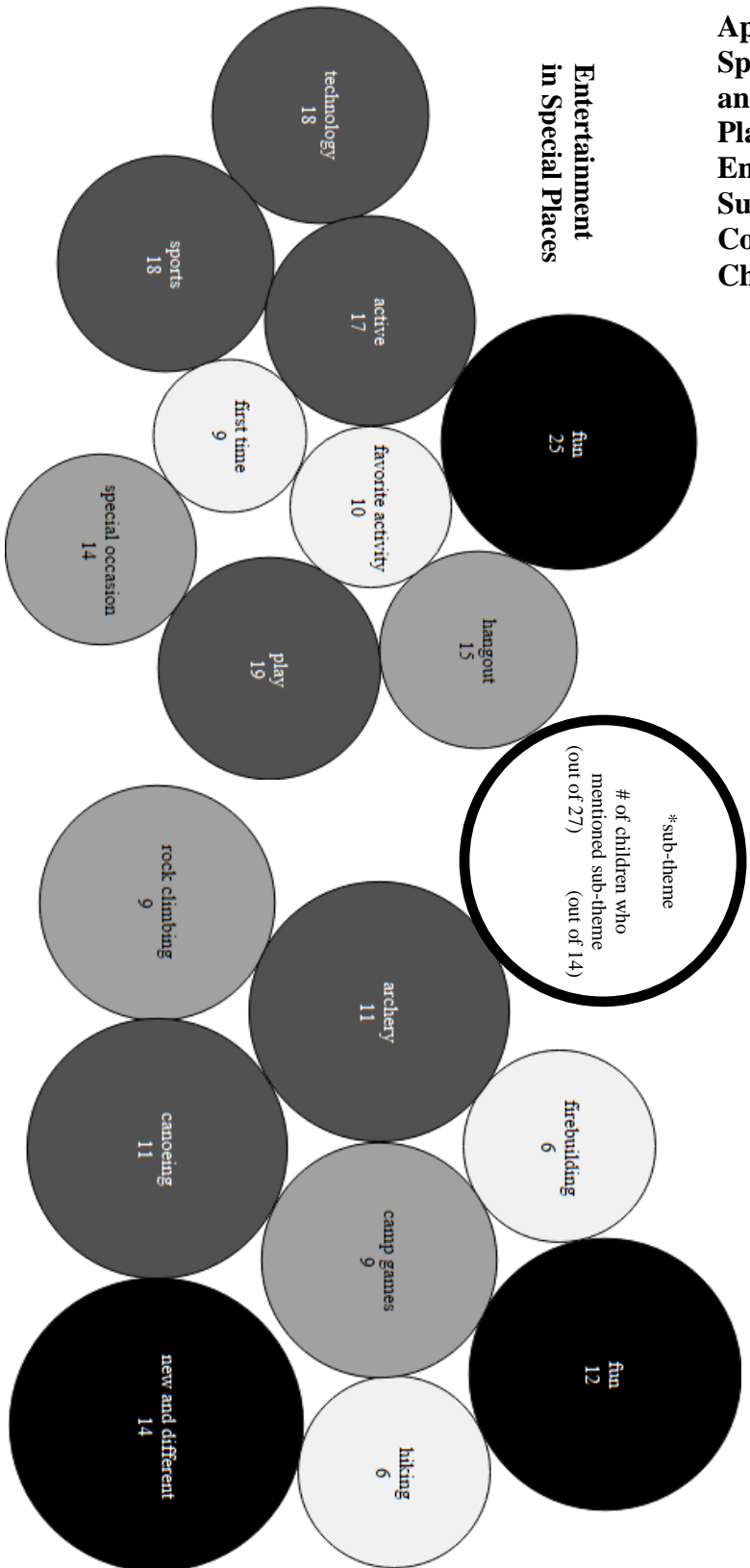**Entertainment in Natural Place**

Figure 43. A comparison of the entertainment children had in their special places and the natural place. *Circle size represents centrality of sub-theme relative to other sub-themes, black is more central, light gray is less central, and spatial arrangement is random.

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Appendix 14: Special Place Familiarity and Natural Place Unfamiliarity Sub-themes Comparison Chart

Familiarity in Special Places

inclusive 19

nature* 3

nearby 16

cool sight 11

home 19

parks or yards 18

trees, grass, flowers, lake, rocks, weather 16

frequent 22

surrounding buildings 19

safe 15

support 18

Unfamiliarity in Natural Place

unconfortable 7

**sub-theme
# of children who
mentioned sub-theme
(out of 27)   (out of 14)

trees, grass, flowers, lakes, rocks, weather 11

challenge and overcome 12

infrequent and overlooked 12

nature, mountains, wildlife 13

inclusive 6

support 5

safe 3

no technology 7

Figure 44. A comparison of familiar and unfamiliar aspects of their special places and the natural place. *nature, mountains, wildlife **Circle size represents centrality of sub-theme relative to other sub-themes, black is more central, light gray is less central, and spatial arrangement is random.

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Appendix 15: Special Place Significant People and Natural Place New People Sub-themes Comparison Chart

Significant People in Special Places

New People in Natural Place

circles:
- conflict 11
- overall family 26
- family traditions 6
- friends 22
- staff/teachers 17
- *sub-theme / # of children who mentioned sub-theme (out of 27) (out of 14)
- new people interactions 9
- new friends 6
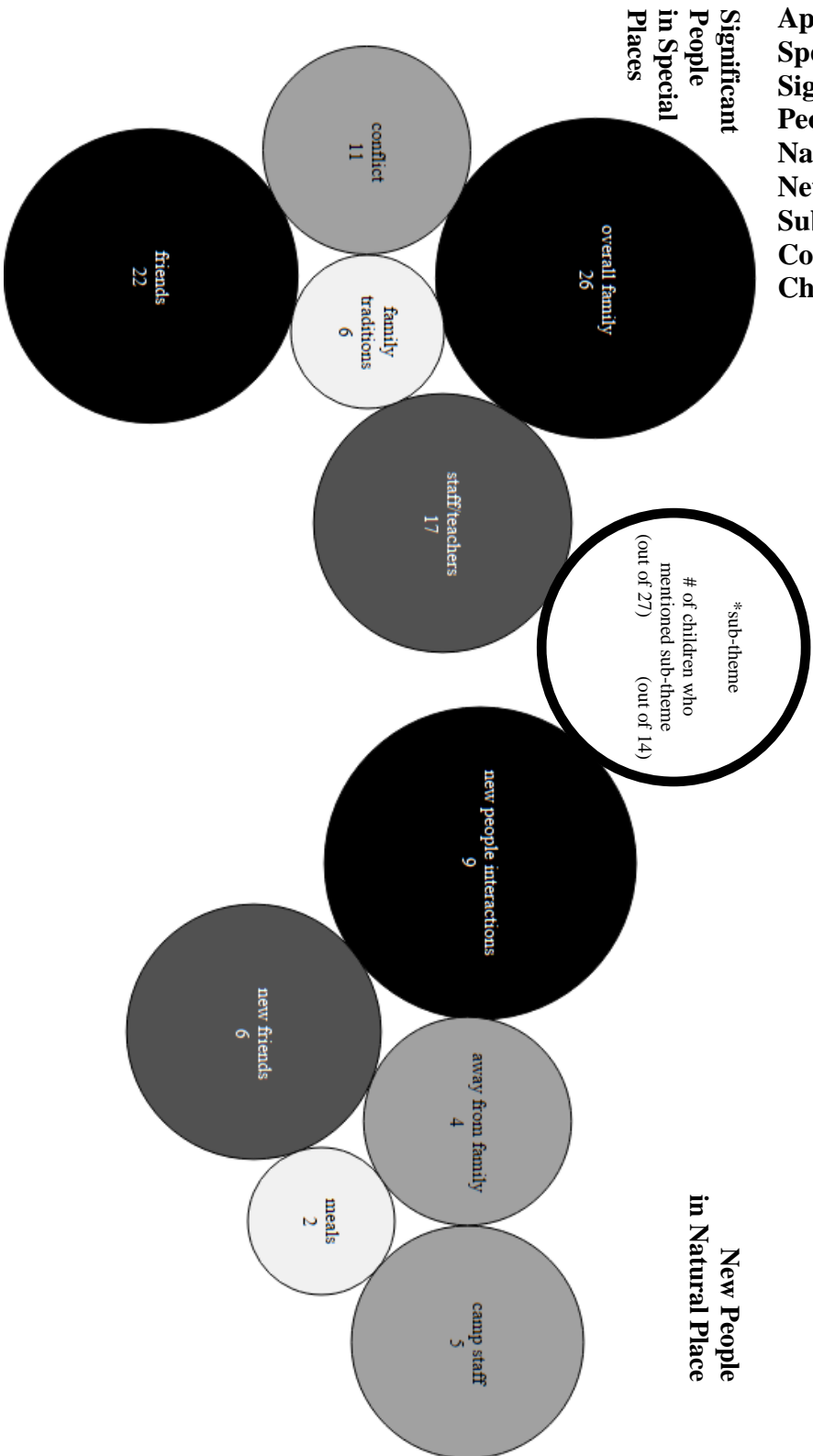- away from family 4
- meals 2
- camp staff 5

Figure 46. A comparison of their special places and the natural place based on the people present. *Circle size represents centrality of sub-theme relative to other sub-themes, black is more central, light gray is less central, and spatial arrangement is random.