

# WHY PLAYING OUTDOORS IS SO IMPORTANT FOR CHILDREN?

Engages all of a child's senses and gives an opportunity for hands-on exploration of the environment

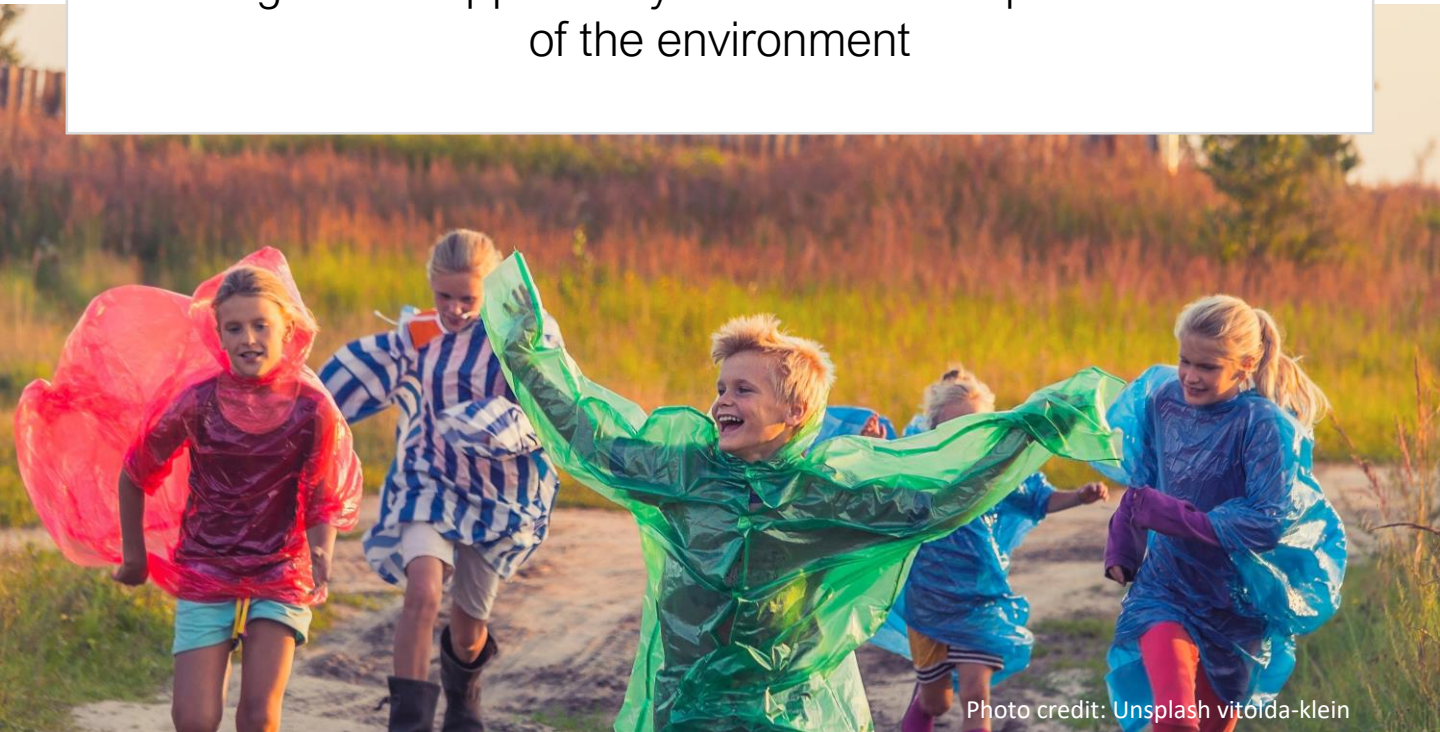
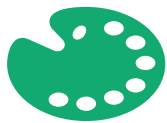


Photo credit: Unsplash vitolda-klein

**Outdoor play** encourages creativity, risk-management, problem-solving, self-confidence



Outdoor play is **crucial** for a child's healthy development and wellbeing

# WHAT IS INDEPENDENT MOBILITY?

Freedom for a child to travel around their neighbourhood without adult supervision



Photo credit: Unsplash ali-elliott

## Independent mobility



creates opportunities for physical activities



promotes a child's motor and spatial skills



gives a child a sense of self-control and independence

**AND,** it is a fundamental **human right** and need, and crucial for a child's healthy **development** and **wellbeing**

# DID YOU KNOW ...



Children get less outdoor play and independent mobility than we used to when we were younger?



Children's outdoor play is very much influenced by parents, children's gender and their neighbourhood environments?



Photo credit: Unsplash andrew-seaman

*“What can we do about this?”*

# THE PLAYABILITY STUDY



Is led by Drs Mariana Brussoni and Louise Mâsse at the University of British Columbia and the BC Children's Hospital Research Institute



Looked at what influences children's outdoor play and independent mobility in their neighbourhood



Was conducted in 3 neighbourhoods in Metro Vancouver between April 2016 and June 2018



*“What makes you want to go play outside?”*

Photo credit: Unsplash james-todd



Information from Han C.S., et al. (2018). State of Play: Methodologies for investigating children's outdoor play and independent mobility. *Children, Youth and Environment*, 28(2). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7721/chilyoutenvi.28.2.0194>



# A LITTLE BIT ABOUT OUR PARTICIPANTS



A total of 105 families of children 10 to 13 years old in 3 neighbourhoods in Metro Vancouver participated



53 girls and 52 boys, and 135 parents participated



Most of the participating families were Caucasian

NORTH VANCOUVER –  
LOWER AND CENTRAL  
LONSDALE



VANCOUVER – GRANDVIEW-  
WOODLAND



RICHMOND –  
STEVESTON



Photo credit: @Brussonilab 2017

# A LITTLE BIT ABOUT OUR STUDY



Photo credit: Unsplash josh-mills

## This is what 105 children did for the study:

- Wear a GPS monitor and a physical activity tracker for 7 days.
- Keep a journal of daily physical activities.
- Draw a map of their neighbourhood
- Take researchers on a tour of their neighbourhood
- Take pictures of their neighbourhood



## This is what 135 parents did for the study:

- Participate in an interview
- Take a survey on their child's outdoor play and independent mobility





# HERE IS WHAT WE FOUND!

Photo credit:  
Playability 3033-1

## How children decide to go play outside?

✓ *Parents' permission*

Am I  
allowed to  
go out?

✓ *Nice and friendly neighbours*

Do I feel safe  
outside?

✓ *No scary people  
around*

✓ *Safe traffic*

Are there  
things to do?

✓ *A lot of places  
to play*

Is there  
anyone I can  
play with?

✓ *More fun with  
friends*



Photo credit: Unsplash mi-pham

# HERE IS WHAT WE FOUND!



Photo credit:  
Playability 2027-1

## How children see boundaries in their neighbourhood?



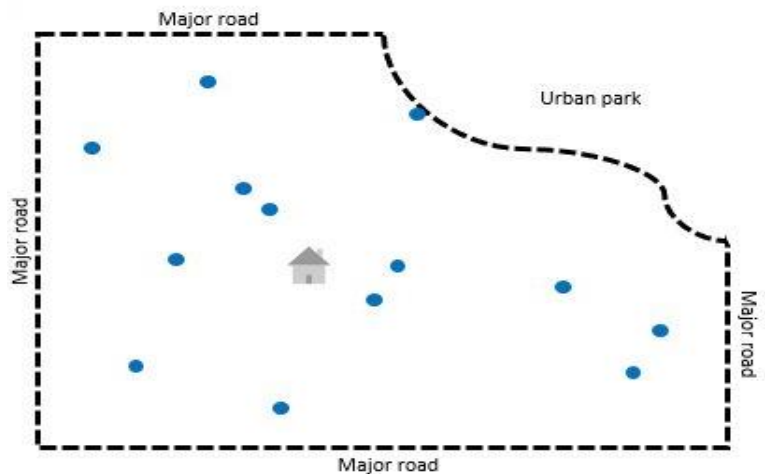
 is my home.

--- Are the farthest points I *could* go without adults, *if* I wanted to.

But the blue dots are the places I usually go and hang out!

This is **my** version of the neighbourhood!

Basically, I can go anywhere within *my* neighbourhood but I have to be back by my curfew or check in with my parents time to time.



Information from Han C.S., et al. (2020). "There's kind of a wall I have to stay inside of": A qualitative understanding of children's independent mobility range, destination, time and expansion. *Children, Youth and Environments*, 30(2), 97-118.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7721/chilyoutenvi.30.2.0097>



# HERE IS WHAT WE FOUND!

Photo credit:  
Playability 2027-1

## How children expand their boundaries?



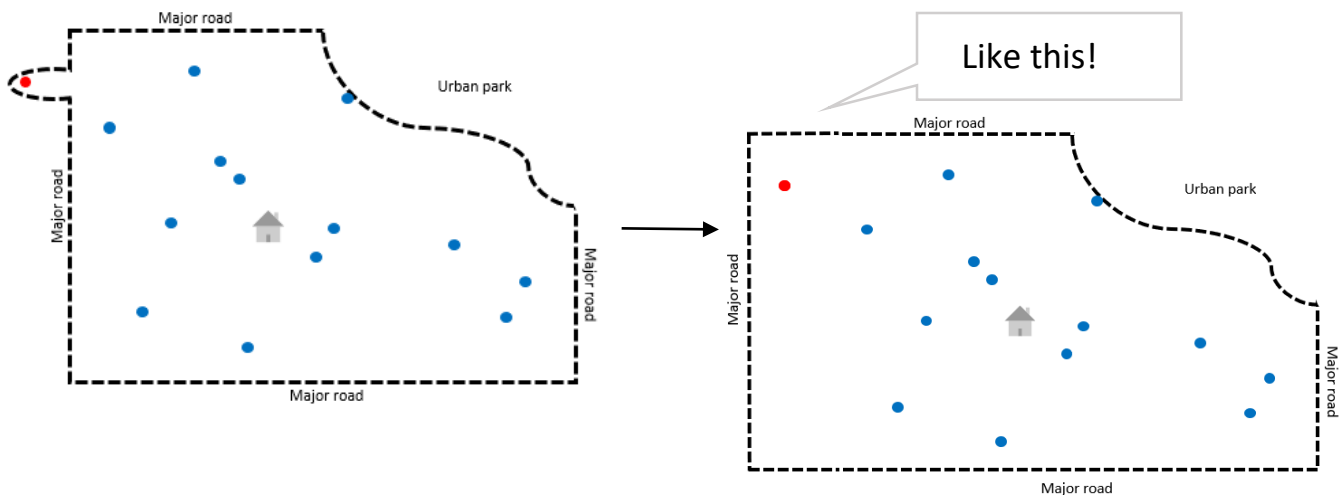
 is my home.

--- Are the farthest points I *could* go without adults, *if* I wanted to.

The blue dots are the places I usually go and hang out!

This is *my* version of the neighbourhood!

But when I find a new place like the red dot, I make change to the boundaries in *my* neighbourhood.



Information from Han C.S., et al. (2020). "There's kind of a wall I have to stay inside of": A qualitative understanding of children's independent mobility range, destination, time and expansion. *Children, Youth and Environments*, 30(2), 97-118.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7721/chilyoutenvi.30.2.0097>

# HERE IS WHAT WE FOUND!



Photo credit:  
istockphoto.com  
1073288908

Neighbourhood characteristics that help parents to give their child more independent mobility

More people  
living in the  
neighbourhood

**CRIME-FREE**

Having  
recreation  
facilities

**HAVING PLACES FOR  
CHILDREN TO GO THAT ARE  
WITHIN WALKABLE DISTANCE**

Having spaces  
that can be used  
in different ways

**Social  
safety**

Streets that  
are well  
connected

**TRAFFIC  
SAFETY**

PLEASING  
LOOKING  
NEIGHBOURHOOD

**GOOD  
RELATIONSHIPS  
WITH THE  
NEIGHBOURS**



Information from Vlaar, J., et al. (2019). Roaming the neighbourhood: influences of independent mobility parenting practices and parental perceived environment on children's territorial range. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 16(17), 3129

[https://scholar.google.ca/citations?view\\_op=view\\_citation&hl=en&user=53LNwqwAAAAJ&cstart=20&pagesize=80&sortby=pubdate&citation\\_for\\_view=53LNwqwAAAAJ:fQNAKQ3IYiAC](https://scholar.google.ca/citations?view_op=view_citation&hl=en&user=53LNwqwAAAAJ&cstart=20&pagesize=80&sortby=pubdate&citation_for_view=53LNwqwAAAAJ:fQNAKQ3IYiAC)

# HERE IS WHAT WE FOUND!

Photo credit:  
Playability 1005-1

## Parents and children, are you ready for more independent mobility?

Yes, I'm excited to go outside and explore a little on my own!



Of course, you are ready for more independence and I'm in full support of it!

Yippee!

OR

I don't think I'm ready. I rather stay close by my parents and places I'm used to.



Okay, we can take it slowly. Maybe you could grab me some milk from the grocery store around the corner?

Okay, I'll give it a try.

OR

I don't think I'm ready. I rather stay close by my parents and places I'm used to.

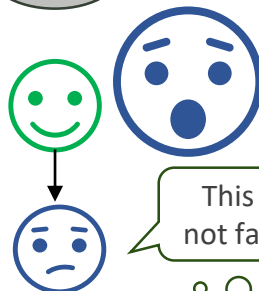


So glad that you feel that way too. I'm sure things will get better as you get older.

Phew, great!

OR

Yes, I'm excited to go outside and explore a little on my own!



Oh no, I don't think you are ready, nor am I.

This is not fair!!

Hmm, maybe I'll try without telling my parents and prove that I can do it!

Information from Han C.S., et al. (In Press). "Parental autonomy support in the context of parent-child negotiation for children's independent mobility: "I always feel safer with my parents" to "Boom! Bust down those walls!". *The Journal of Early Adolescence*.



# CONTACT US

## Brussoni Lab

F508-4480 Oak St. Vancouver, BC. V6H 3V4

[PlayOutside@bcchr.ca](mailto:PlayOutside@bcchr.ca)

604-875-2433

[Twitter.com/mbrussoni](https://twitter.com/mbrussoni)

<https://www.facebook.com/PlayOutsideUBC/>

<https://www.instagram.com/playoutsideubc/>

<https://www.instagram.com/marianabrussoni/>

*We gratefully acknowledge that our places of work lie on the ancestral unceded territories of the s̓kwx̓wú7mesh (Squamish), sel̓l̓wítulh (Tseil-Waututh), and x̓w̓məθk̓w̓əy̓əm (Musqueam) Nations*