

# A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words: Understanding Campers' Experience of Nature at Camp Using Photovoice

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# BACKGROUND

**Connection to nature aids in several areas of health and development of youth:**



- Physical
- Mental
- Cognitive
- Social
- Emotional

(Mainella, Agate & Clark, 2011)

# BACKGROUND

**More and more youth are disconnecting from the natural world.**

- 30 minutes or less of unstructured outdoor play
- 7 hours or more of screen time
- More schools are cutting recess time and integrating more technology.



(National Wildlife Federation, 2010)

# BACKGROUND

Summer camps, however, can serve as an important environment where youth can experience and ‘connect’ to nature.

The purpose of this study was to utilize photovoice methods to explore campers’ experience of nature at a summer camp.



(Dressner & Gill, 2010; Schmillen & Jacobs, 2011)

# METHODS

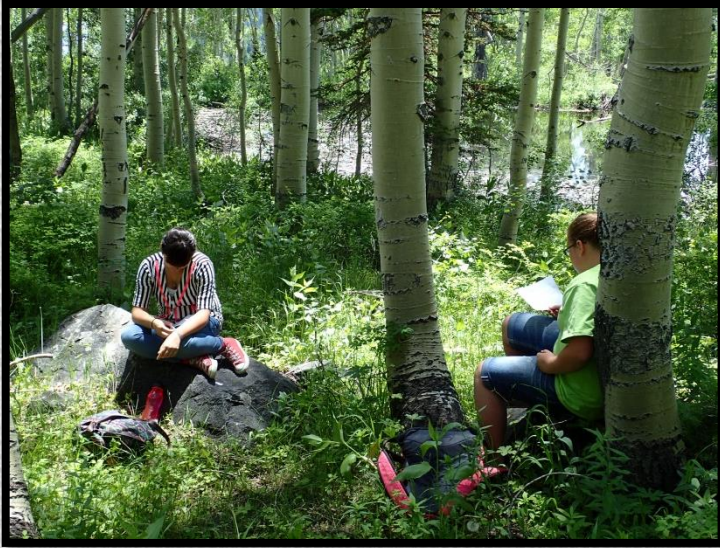
This study used a participatory qualitative methodology known as photovoice.

The photovoice technique focuses on empowering research participants to share and visually represent their perspective on specific issues using photographs and open dialogue.



(Wang & Burris, 1997)

# METHODS



The study sample were campers participating in a photography program.

The study was streamlined into program curriculum.

Campers used cameras to capture images they felt illustrated answers to the research questions.



The campers selected 3 photos they felt best addressed their perspective of the research questions.

# METHODS

The campers were divided into small groups to discuss their images and how they reflected the research questions.

The discussions were voice recorded and transcribed.



The photos and audio transcription were analyzed for themes and organized into a codebook.

# RESEARCH QUESTIONS



How do youth perceive nature in a summer camp environment?

How are current camp programs encouraging youth to participate in outdoor recreation?



How do youth perceive their ideal outdoor experience at camp?



# RESULTS



## Natural Features

“Before I just saw a lake, tree, clouds and sky. But now I look at how they are in the sky and how they reflect in the lake. Even though the trees in the picture aren’t the prettiest, it’s still pretty and calming.”

“I feel, umm, I feel calm and peaceful in nature. I love it. It’s basically a picture of the lake, pine trees, the dock. The water calms me down. Trees are peaceful. There is no fighting in my pictures. The water is peaceful and easy, that is basically how I feel.”

# RESULTS



## Positive Feelings

“It’s [nature] calming and once you look at it you realize there is more to the picture. There is more to the lake, more to the trees, more to everything in life.”

## Negative Feelings

“I feel grossed out and uncomfortable. Because I don’t like nature.”



# RESULTS

## Desire to go outside more

“I feel like here, I get used to being outside and everything so it will feel weird when I go home and watch tv and stuff. So I’ll probably want to go back outside more. I think it’s a good thing. I’ll probably feel more one with the world.”

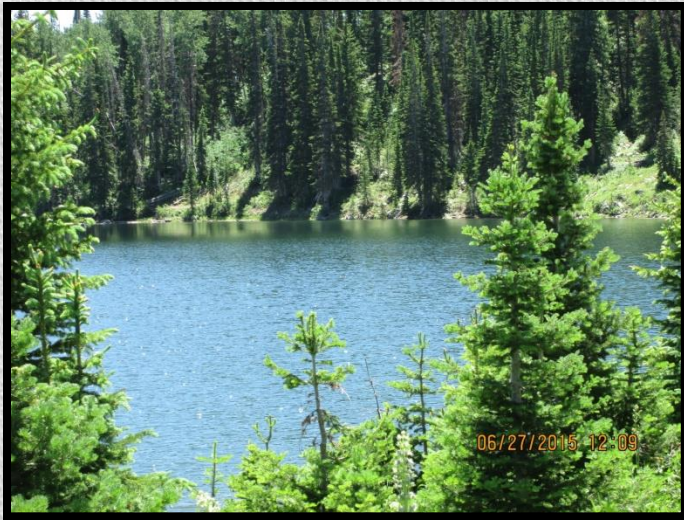


## Recognize effects of technology

“At home what I usually do is sit and play on my phone and stuff. But whenever I go to camp I feel something very different and it makes me want to go outside more. I took a picture of a flower. If I had my phone with me I would pass up stuff like this.”

# DISCUSSION

The campers were able to express using photovoice the value of camp in their lives and some aspects of spending time in nature that were not as positive.



This study found outcomes similar to other studies from spending time in nature. (e.g. stress relief, contentedness, calmness.)



Some of the limitations of this study were the small sample size and that the results can were based off of one environment and cannot be generalized to all camps.

(Mainella, Agate & Clark, 2011)

# IMPLICATIONS FOR CAMP

- Incorporate more nature-based programs into traditional camp programming.
- Provide more unstructured time that would allow for campers to relax and enjoy nature.
- Incorporate more time into program schedules in order to move traditional camp activities outside.
- Identify ways to improve campers' negative perceptions of the outdoors and work to change those perceptions.
- Use innovative methods of research, to collect camp data.
- Use creative methods of research as a means for campers to connect with nature.



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# Questions or Comments?

