

2004

Photovoice: Capturing Campers' Perceptions of the Outdoor Experience

Jennifer Johnston

University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.cortland.edu/reseoutded>



Part of the [Environmental Education Commons](#), and the [Leisure Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Johnston, Jennifer (2004) "Photovoice: Capturing Campers' Perceptions of the Outdoor Experience," *Research in Outdoor Education*: Vol. 7, Article 13.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.cortland.edu/reseoutded/vol7/iss1/13>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Cortland. It has been accepted for inclusion in Research in Outdoor Education by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ Cortland. For more information, please contact DigitalCommonsSubmissions@cortland.edu.

PHOTOVOICE: CAPTURING CAMPERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE OUTDOOR EXPERIENCE

Jennifer Johnston
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

This is a presentation of the Photovoice methodology. Photovoice originated in the field of public health and holds many benefits for outdoor educators, campers, and researchers. It offers camps an opportunity to gain insight into how campers experience the camp program, empowers participants to share their experiences, and generates images and narratives that can illustrate the benefits of camp to supporters and potential participants. Photovoice encourages participants to reflect on their life experiences by taking photographs, writing about, and discussing their work. It is based on Paulo Freire's empowerment education, which uses discussion to foster critical consciousness about one's life experiences. The purpose of this paper is to describe the Photovoice methodology and illustrate its application in a camp setting. The Photovoice project was carried out at a residential camp in New York in the summer of 2003. The main goal of the project was to empower the campers to express their feelings and perspectives on the camp experience. The second goal of the project was to collect qualitative data from campers who were participating in a camp outcomes study. The Photovoice data allowed researchers to explore the relationship between intended camp outcomes and the outcomes experienced by the campers involved in the project. The photographs and ideas generated by the Photovoice project will be shared with camp staff, campers, and supporters in order to take action on the views expressed by the youth. The Photovoice project was carried out with 45 seventh grade campers. Over a two- to three-week period, campers attended five single-gender workshops of 50 minutes each. The boys and girls chose the topics they would photograph with individual cameras. Campers in Session 1 chose "What I like about camp" and Session 2 campers chose "What is special to me at camp." The campers created displays of their work and discussed the themes they saw in the pictures. The posters were hung at an all-camp exhibit night and then in the office for the whole camp community to enjoy. Manual qualitative data analyses were done to interpret the findings of the Photovoice project. All of the campers' writings, photographs and discussions were analyzed, along with the researcher's notes. The information was coded using words that appeared in the data. The themes that emerged from the data were categorized into five domains by the researcher: 1) people; 2) natural beauty; 3) great places; 4) parts of camp life; and 5) feelings. Many of the findings of the Photovoice project would not be readily obvious without conducting in-depth data collection. Abstract concepts such as "feeling safe" at camp, the importance of role models, the campers' love of the natural surroundings, and the most well-liked program areas at camp were revealed through photographs and discussions. Individuals who participate in Photovoice are given the ability to positively impact their own development and their environment by sharing with others what the outdoor experience means to them. The Photovoice methodology offers many benefits to campers, leaders of outdoor programs, and those who want to learn more about campers' perceptions of their outdoor experiences.

JOHNSTON

Bibliography

- Freire, P., (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Seabury.
- Killion, C. & Wang, C. (2000). Linking African American Mothers Across Life Stage and Station Through Photovoice. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, 11(3), 310-25.
- Wang, C. (1999). Photovoice: A Participatory Action Research Strategy Applied to Women's Health. *Journal of Women's Health*, 8(2), 185-92.
- Wang, C. (2003). Photovoice homepage. Retrieved from www.photovoice.com on April 21, 2003.
- Wang, C. & Burris, M. (1994). Empowerment through Photo Novella: Portraits of Participation. *Health Education Quarterly*, 21(2), 171-86.
- Wang, C. & Burris, M. (1997). Photovoice: Concept, Methodology, and Use for Participatory Needs Assessment. *Health Education & Behavior*, 3, 369-87.
- Wang, C., Cash, J & Powers, L. (2000). Who Knows the Streets as Well as the Homeless? Promoting Personal and Community Action Through Photovoice. *Health Promotion Practice*, 1, 81-89.

Contact: Jennifer Johnston at jljohnst@email.unc.edu