

## Visual Methodology Activity

**Total Time Needed: 3 Hours (1 hour first day & 2 hours second day)**

**Equipment Needed: Photos, tables for group work, map with all park sites, big sticky papers, tape**

**Total Staff Needed: At least 5 (1 for each group observation & 1 overall coordinator)**

Youth enjoy working with photos. The stories told in photos are related but different from the analysis completed through text or speech. This activity asks youth to collaborate to analyze a collection of photos for theme and aesthetics. It is a method that relies on analysis of the visual. The youth can select photos in a sequence that can tell a story.

Desired outcomes include:

- Analysis of photos to be used in a research project
- Analysis of the validity of research findings through testing whether the research findings correspond with what was observed and photographed at the field site
- Introduction of research terms to youth such as methodology, visual analysis, data, and findings
- Learning to image audience and tell a clear story to them
- Reminders and reinforcement about the fun of getting outdoors through working with photos of the outdoors.

### Preparation (gathering photos)

Activity leader needs to print the collection of photos for each day. We recommend about 15 photos for a group of ten youth for the first activity on day one and about 50 photos for the second day activity. Photos from the youth and parks research project [are available for use](#). Photos from your organization's field research challenge could also be used.

This activity happened over a two-day period using a collection of photos created during in-park experiences. Research or planning staff will need the collection of photos from an in-park activity. We used fifteen on the first day and fifty on the second day, printed in color on office printer paper.

Some of the photos involved the youth who participated in the visual methodology activity. Other photos were from activities they had not attended. The photos represented a range of activities, scenery, and young people age 14-18. The activity leader will also need a list of themes or concepts that they would like youth to apply ("code") to the photos. In the original activity, youth coded the photos to the themes of the research. Coding could also be done around park and trail planning (amenities, habitats, activities, missing elements).

### Tuesday 11/19 (First day of 2-day engagement activity)

1. Spread out 15 photos
2. Each person gets to pick a photo
3. Between now and Thursday, think a bit about the photo and what it says about the park. What can someone learn from seeing it?

## Thursday 11/21 (Second day of 2-day engagement activity) 4:00-6:00 (2-hour duration)

### 4:00-4:10:

Recent photo discussion activity.

Define: coding as categorizing data (visual data, in this case) into specific categories. Systematically analyzing how data fits into patterns. Look at photos as data and apply themes to each.

- What did you learn/discuss in looking at the photos?

### 4:10-4:15:

Explain to youth the collection of photos they are working with. For our activity, we explained that they were looking at photos from across five different parks. Display a map of the park system. Explain and point out relevant park sites.

Get out the photos for youth to work with.

### 4:15-4:25:

Review of photos taken in park and what makes a quality photo.

Ask if there are any photographers in the group.

## Discussion Questions

- ✓ What was our activity with photos in the park (Field research challenge)?
- ✓ What are student photos telling us about the experience of people like you in the park?
- ✓ Lay photos out that correspond to each category/activity.
- ✓ What does this photo tell us about the park visit activity?

### 4:25-4:35:

Talk about data from photos

Explain visual methodologies – analyzing what we can see in photos that can't always be described in surveys, interviews or other talk.

- ✓ How can we learn from photos/what can we learn from photos?
- ✓ How can this add to our research in a different way than our interviews, for example?

Put one photo up and talk as a group about composition. Describe the rule of thirds.

4:35-4:45:

Break into four small groups of youth to discuss the selected photo from prior meeting:

- ✓ What does your photo tell you?
- ✓ Why did you choose this photo when we met at our last meeting?

#### **4:45-5:15:**

Code the photos, sorting by theme

Summary of activity: Spread lots of photos (taken by research team or use the youth & parks photos) out. Sort by theme based on 5 main research finding themes. Work as a group to put into categories. This could be adapted to the needs of your project. We worked as an entire group with all pictures (50 photos), but a group could be divided into two groups. Youth were told that it was important that different people agreed with the way photos were thematized, called inter-coder reliability (different people agree what the theme is in the photo).

Youth put thematized groups of photos together by using big sticky notes and tape.

Let group pick themes but offer suggested themes that meet goals of the activity. Youth & parks themes were:

- Staff connecting youth to parks
- History/nature education
- Peer interaction/free time
- Recreation/activity
- Photography/understanding the park visually or through social media or art
- Safety in parks
- Visiting parks with an organization
- Sharing stories in parks
- Using the park to connect to community
- Parks as a time for mindfulness and health
- Parks as a place to be myself

#### **5:15- 5:30:**

Pick your favorite and least favorite photos as a group.

- ✓ Share why
- ✓ If you had to add something to a photo what would it be?
- ✓ How does this photo make you feel?

#### **5:30-5:50:**

Make a story with ten pictures. Now that you organized the photos, select 10 photos and make a book that is telling a story with them. What images bring out a clear message?

- Which photos would you curate together to tell a story?
- Which photos would make a good coloring page?
- Create a book with your team
- Write descriptions for photos based on your experience in the parks
- Curate photos together (like an art exhibit or an Instagram feed)

What do photos tell you about parks more broadly?

Where would you like to see photos of parks?

**Talk with youth about possible places to post stories:**

- On social media?
- On the Youth & Parks Instagram?
- Imagine 5 weeks of posts