Paper Two: Last Child in the Woods

**Summary**

“Last Child in the Woods,” written by ~~Richard~~ Louv, stresses the importance of saving our children from “nature-deficit disorder” (2008, p. #). Although it is not technically a medical diagnosis, Louv uses the term to describe the current lack of outdoor experiences and the consequences that come with it. To support his idea, he includes research studies, personal experiences, and interviews on the topic of the associations between nature and child development. The book also contains information as to why children are less involved in nature, and provides ideas on how this problem can be resolved.

One of the most important/prevalent topics Louv discusses throughout the book is the relationship between nature and various developmental aspects. Studies have shown that outdoor exposure can lead to positive social, cognitive, spiritual, and physical development. According to the author’s findings, the symptoms from Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), depression and anxiety, are all lowered when a child is exposed to nature. The outdoors offers stimulating environments that can help children pay attention, become less stressed, and be creative. Consequently, it has been shown there is an increase in academic performance from children who attend environment-based education programs. Nature also provides children with intensified spiritual experiences. They feel the sense that there is more to the world than just their human existence and can be humbled by these experiences. Organizations such as Outward Bound can be therapeutic for children and provide them with self-confidence, a respect for nature, and social, leadership and problem-solving skills.

Louv addresses reasons why children are on the verge of experiencing/getting “nature-deficit disorder,” and the negative consequences that come with it. As more and more buildings get built, farmland and forests are becoming smaller, in some place they are gone completely. It has become difficult for children/kids to access natural play areas, and even if they can, there are restrictions and liabilities that can further prevent the child to explore nature freely. Another limiting factor to a child’s nature play is their parents. There has been a fear instilled in many adults that prohibits them from encouraging their children to discover the outdoors. Although there are some valid safety concerns about being outside, Louv suggests that children learn safety skills from being exposed to nature, such as protection and awareness- expand. Today children are becoming more depressed, stressed and overweight, which Louv believes are all problems that can be helped with nature.

Louv offers a variety of ways that people can save kids from “nature-deficit disorder.” Because children spend many hours at school, environment-based school programs should start incorporating nature into children’s every day lives. Organizing field trips to parks, farms, and creeks are beneficial learning experiences. Providing more open, natural areas for kids to play, as opposed to blacktops and sports courts, can allow for more exploration. Getting children involved in outdoor camps can enhance their emotional and social well-being. Near the end of the book, Louv shares hope that young adults will become aware of “nature-deficit disorder” and want to do something about it. He is optimistic that future generations will gain experience and knowledge regarding this issue, and pursue careers dedicated to getting children back into nature.

**Quotes and Application of class materials**

As the nature deficit grows, another emerging body of scientific evidence indicates that direct exposure to nature is essential for physical and emotional health. For example, new studies suggest that exposure to nature may reduce the symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), and that it can improve all children’s cognitive abilities and resistance to negative stress and depression (Louv, 2008, p. 35).

ADHD is becoming more and more prevalent throughout society, and Louv strongly believes there are many positive benefits from nature that can help not only children with ADHD, but all children in general. The value of stimulating outdoor experiences is a common theme throughout the book. In our first learning module we learned that the four main developmental domains in child development are physical, cognitive, affective, and social.- The Study of Child Development should be cited as the source. Natural environments can positively impact each of these domains. Playing outside keeps children’s bodies moving, which promotes physical health and reduces the likelihood of harmful health related issues. The cognitive domain involves intellectual development, memory capacities, and academic skills. The symptoms from ADHD may cause children to struggle in this domain, but exposure to nature can help reduce the symptoms. Affective development is when children gain emotional development, personality, and a sense of competence through participation in academic, athletic or artistic activities. Stress and depression are emotions that have been shown to decrease in environment-based settings. Playing and interacting with children away from technology has shown to encourage positive development in the social domain.

“If children do not attach to the land, they will not reap the psychological and spiritual benefits they can glean from nature, nor will they feel a long term commitment to the environment, to the place” (Louv, 2008, p. 159). Louv states/says that being attached to nature is important because when we become attached to something, we are more likely to respect and take care of it. If children become attached to nature early on, they are also more likely to continue to have a relationship with nature in the future. There is an interesting association/correlation between the class required reading on attachment and the studies Louv discusses in his book. Cite the reading on Attachment Terms. Secure attachment in school age children is associated with self-esteem, ability to manage impulses and feelings, and academic success in school. Research has shown that nature can also have the same influences on children. This raises the idea that attachment with nature could be just as important attachment with humans.

**Person Reflection**

I chose this book because I wanted to gain more knowledge about why children need to be spending time I nature. I have always been an advocate for children playing outside, but I never knew the specific benefits it had. I recently declared a minor in Recreation Administration, which I believe was slightly influenced by what I learned in this book. It provides insight to an overwhelming amount of benefits nature has for children, and it has inspired me to seriously work towards a career that involves working with children in nature-based settings- great. I would recommend this book to parents, teachers, students that are studying child development or psychology, and anyone who spends a lot of time around children. If more people were aware of the findings in this book, I strongly believe it would change their perspective on what kinds of experiences are important for kids. The information is a helpful tool to understanding the correlation between nature and child development, and gives solutions to avoid children from getting “nature-deficit disorder.”

**Paper Two Grade Rubric: The Book**

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| **18.5** | **Book Summary 20 pts** |
|  | You described the significant or the key experiences |
|  | Was your summary detailed enough that someone who has not read the book can understand its purpose and key insights. |
|  |  |
| **15** | **Quotes and Application of Class Materials 20 pts** |
| 4/4 pts | Quote 1 and the interpretation of its meaning |
| 4/6 pts | Clear, concise summary and application of class materials |
| 4/4 pts | Quote 2 and the interpretation of its meaning |
| 3/6 pts | Clear, concise summary and application of class materials |
|  |  |
| **3.5** | **Personal Reflection 5 pts** |
| Yes | Explained why did you chose this book |
| Not clearly | Explained how this book changed, influenced, or confirmed knowledge that you have about children’s development or experience? |
| yes | Explained how information in this book is useful? To whom? For what purpose? |
|  |  |
| **3.0** | **Technical Merit**  **5 pts** |
|  | Length – No longer than 5 pages |
|  | Centered title, not bold, in title caps (key words capitalized) |
| -.25 | Formatting: subheadings are bold (no colons), left justified, same font size, Black ink, same font in header and paper |
| -1.0 | Other Formatting Errors: 1” margins all sides, citations, titles |
|  | Header: Paper Two, Last Name in All Caps on Left/  page # on right side, |
|  | Double space all lines, More than Double-spaced |
|  | Indent new paragraphs,  block quote, single spaced, no quote marks, indented |
|  | Organization of information is logical and clear |
| -0.75 | Writing mechanics WM: spelling, grammar, punctuation, syntax, semantics = using the word with the correct meaning |
|  | Clear, concise, objective, etc |
|  | Correct font size (12) and type of font, same font throughout paper, including the header font |
| Yes | Turnitin Report: Acceptable % of matches |
|  | Filename with student’s last name |
| **40** | **50 points possible** |