



BREAKING
BARRIERS
PROJECT

UNDERSTANDING MOTIVATIONS & BARRIERS TO YOUTH
PARTICIPATION IN THE OUTDOORS

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About This Report

Breaking Barriers is a cooperative project between the UC Berkeley Adventure Risk Challenge Program, the National Park Service (NPS) and NatureBridge, designed to help reduce obstacles to engaging youth in the outdoors. Breaking Barriers seeks to address the cultural and socio-economic barriers to participation in the outdoors by identifying opportunities to align outdoor programs with the needs and concerns of diverse Central Valley communities.

Project Participants

Jennifer Gurecki, Executive Director, UC Berkeley Adventure Risk Challenge Program: Under the auspices of UC Berkeley and Merced, Adventure Risk Challenge (ARC) is an intensive academic and outdoor education program for underserved high school students, bolstering their skills in literacy, leadership, and life. The mission of ARC is to improve literacy and life skills, expose youth to a range of natural environments and wilderness experiences, and inspire the confidence they need to envision and accomplish goals, succeed in high school, and become engaged, empowered citizens. ARC is dedicated to providing transformational outdoor opportunities for underserved youth in California, to assisting them in developing and expanding their academic and life skills in order to succeed in high school and beyond, and to supporting them in becoming engaged and civically engaged young adults.

Jesse Chakrin, Director, UC Merced Wilderness Center (WEC): The WEC brings park resources and education into the campus and greater Merced communities. This NPS-run, student-staffed, on-campus Wilderness Education Center provides awareness about natural and cultural resources as well as recreational and professional opportunities to students, faculty, staff and community members in and around UC Merced. Built on a place-based model, WEC meets people where they are and helps build relevancy in their own communities.

Laura Beardsley, Director, WildLink: WildLink is a unique, innovative partnership program operated by NatureBridge in collaboration with the National Park Service, and the USDA Forest Service. Through backpacking expeditions and community leadership opportunities, WildLink connects culturally diverse, low-income students to Sierra Nevada wilderness and works to ensure the protection of California's wild places. WildLink empowers underserved youth to better their own lives and their communities through a series of wilderness and community-based outdoor programs and service projects, and inspires them to become environmental stewards with strong connections to the natural world in both wild places and at home. NatureBridge, founded in Yosemite in 1971, provides environmental field science education for students in six national parks. Through residential education programs, NatureBridge connects students to the wonder and science of nature and inspires the stewards of tomorrow. As the largest residential education partner of the National Park Service, the organization serves more than 30,000 students each year in Yosemite National Park, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Olympic National Park, Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, Channel Islands National Park, and Prince William Forest Park.



A Message from the Breaking Barriers Team

By publishing this report, we aim to more deeply understand the barriers to, and motivations for, youth engagement in the outdoors.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN THE CENTRAL VALLEY

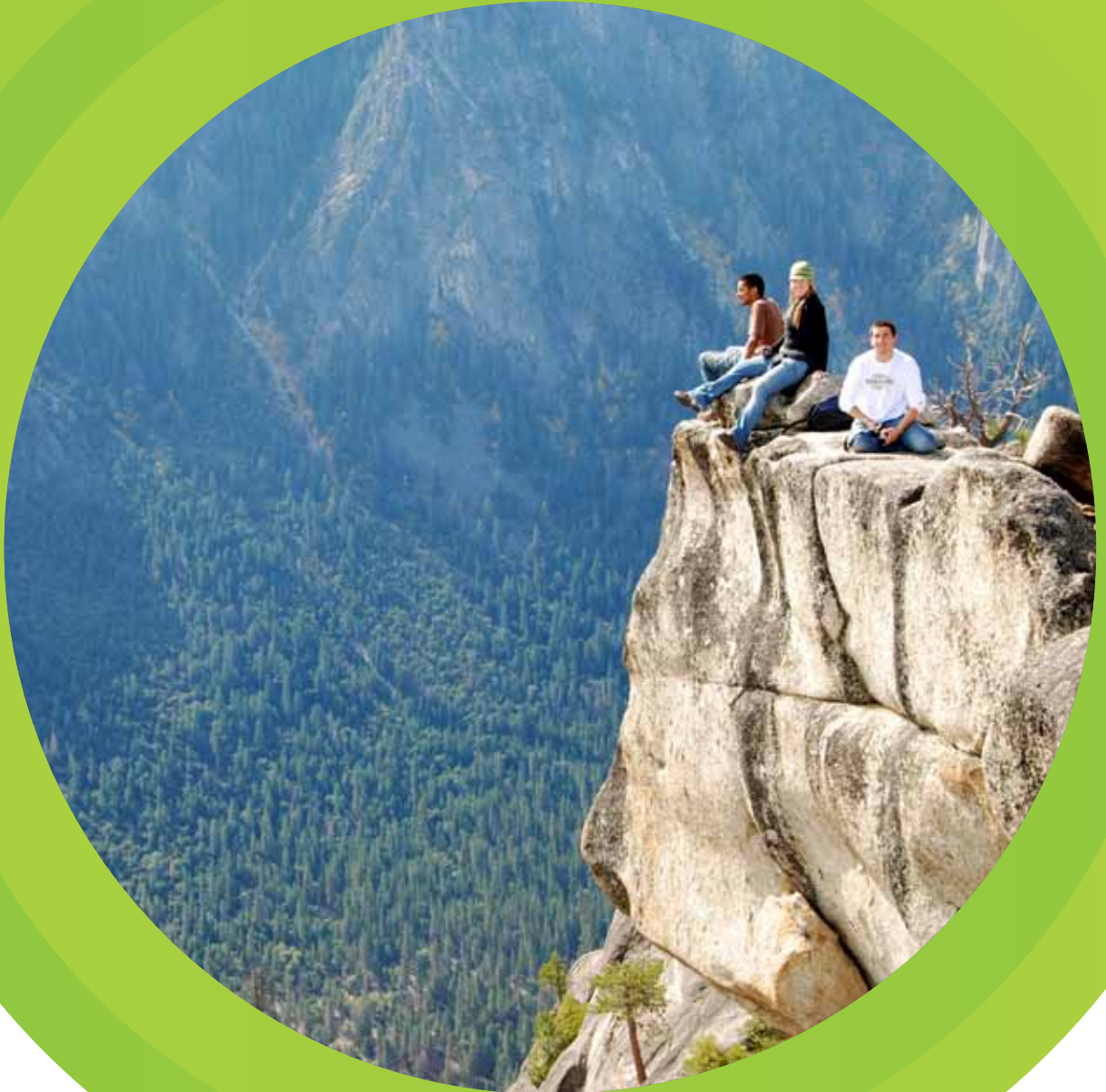
Across California and around the country, young people are spending less time outdoors and more time in front of a screen than ever before. As a result, more and more young people are disconnected from the natural world. This disturbing trend has implications for their health and well being, academic success, civic engagement, and their future interest in both public lands and the environment. In 2011, the Breaking Barriers Project undertook a year-long, action-oriented, research project designed to increase understanding of what prevents and what motivates youth to participate in activities outdoors.

As providers of programs designed to engage underserved youth in transformative experiences outdoors, we are keenly aware of the challenges that exist in making our work relevant and appealing to youth and families. Many previous attempts to address resistance to and improve interest in existing outdoor programs and experiences have experimented with solutions without the input or investment from local communities. The Breaking Barriers Project sought to define relevant solutions by collaborating with the communities that we serve. As a result, we were able to incorporate the wisdom of community members and youth and collaboratively identify potential solutions where previous barriers existed.

The following report aims to improve the ability of

outdoor and youth-focused organizations to engage the youth of the Central Valley of California by presenting qualitative and quantitative results of the Breaking Barriers Project. By incorporating the insights and recommendations of Breaking Barriers participants, outdoor programs and opportunities can be adapted to better serve the youth of the 21st century. This project comes at a critical time for outdoor-focused and youth-serving organizations. Given the current economic climate and the ongoing change in population demographics, providing culturally relevant, engaging opportunities for youth in the outdoors will prove essential for the health of individuals, communities and the environment, both today and tomorrow.

The Breaking Barriers Project worked specifically with the Central California communities of Fresno, Merced, and Mariposa, gathering local insight and opinion through a series of six facilitated listening sessions for youth and community members as well as a comprehensive survey of school-aged youth. The workshops helped us to better understand youth engagement in the outdoors in the context of each unique community and allowed us to explore in-depth, creative solutions to existing barriers to participation. The survey complemented the finding of the workshops by identifying common attitudes and values among youth in the Central Valley about participating in outdoor recreation.



Research on Youth Participating in the Outdoors

BACKGROUND

A growing body of research suggests that youth participation in the outdoors contributes to their physical and emotional health as well as their academic achievement, sense of leadership, and environmental responsibility. As part of the Breaking Barriers Project, Nina S. Roberts, Ph. D., of the Pacific Leadership Institute and San Francisco State University, completed a review of the relevant research and literature from 1995 to 2011, focusing primarily on the work of the last five years. Portions of her review, presented here, highlight evidence revealing that when youth develop a relationship with nature, are involved in environmental education, and participate in outdoor recreation activities, they are healthier mentally, physically, and emotionally. As Dr. Roberts notes, "The key to full comprehension, however, is the fact that it takes high quality programs and solid adult mentors to make a lasting impact on youth. Given the incredible benefits related to outdoor activity, why are many of today's youth not engaged in the out of doors?" Her complete review, including a bibliography, is available at intooutside.org/breakingbarriers.

MOTIVATIONS TO PARTICIPATION

Activity interest: Larson, Green, and Cordell concluded that, "overall outdoor recreation participation in America may actually be on the rise, with participation trends leaning towards traditional activities such as picnics, family gatherings, and driving for pleasure."^[30] This conclusion that youth are doing such outdoor activities is not entirely positive. For example, participation in nature-based, and more adventure-type activities (hiking, camping, boating, etc.) is seeing a decrease^[32].

In general, the most common activities that youth participate in are playing, simply 'hanging out', biking, running or jogging, skateboarding, and using electronic media outdoors^[20,29,30]. The most popular nature-based or adventure activities that youth like to engage in include fishing, camping, hiking, and snowboarding.^[29] Other enjoyable activities cited by youth include backpacking, rock climbing, and kayaking.

Research by the Outdoor Foundation^[29] found activities with the greatest proportion of youth were skateboarding, BMX bicycling, snowboarding, indoor rock climbing and, interestingly, competing in triathlons. Conversely, bird watching and wildlife viewing, fly fishing, saltwater fishing, and hunting were the activities with the lowest proportion of youth.

Motivation and behavior: According to the American Institutes for Research, the concept of motivation refers to the forces that initiate, direct and sustain human behavior (see www.air.org). The relationship between motivation and outdoor recreation behavior is well established yet quite complex. There are attitudinal concepts, for instance, that interact with motivations and determine behavioral outcomes such as activity involvement. One study found that individuals with a greater variety of motivations and strategies to overcome constraints were more likely to visit parks^[7]. Agencies working with youth must consider what their current motivations are and what would motivate them to partake.

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

There are a number of barriers and constraints that have been reported in the literature. A few key factors include: Lack of time, lack of interest, transportation issues, safety concerns, and a reduction in school-based opportunities.

Lack of time: It is important to note that "time" is a complex variable. It is also culturally based and contingent on many influences and factors such as economic status, family situation, gender issues, and others. Multiple studies report that "lack of time," for a variety of reasons, was one of the most common constraints preventing youth from participating in outdoor recreation and environmental activities^[4,29,35]. For instance, youth spend much of their discretionary time in sedentary activities associated with technology (computer use, playing video games, watching TV), reading, or studying.^[4,30,31]

Lack of interest: Another primary reason cited regarding why youth do not go outdoors and participate in outdoor recreation is they simply prefer not to^[29,35]. Betz^[31], for example, reports that the primary alternative activities for youth are consuming music, art, or reading. This preference is especially strong among youth that report spending less time outside than in previous years.

Transportation: Merely getting to natural areas and parks is one key barrier that appears multiple times in the literature^[4,29]. For instance, "confusing and costly" transportation options continue to be challenging^[1,33] or are basically inaccessible to youth.

Safety: Safety, or perceptions of safety, is another issue that is strongest for younger children in both elementary school and middle school^[35,36] including trepidation of other people (e.g., "stranger danger"), gang activity in [city] parks, and general fear of

any park experience if less familiarity or no knowledge. The notion of “lack of safe routes to a transit system” is cross-cutting with connection to the transportation factor noted above.

IMPORTANCE OF NATURE-BASED ACTIVITIES

The literature has findings on multiple reasons supporting the value for youth to be exposed to nature and participate in outdoor recreation. Prominent reasons in the literature include positive environmental attitudes, long-term park visitation, and an improvement in physical and mental health.

Environmental attitudes: Attitudes toward environmental conservation are one reason that many professionals (and others) have supported getting youth outside. Childhood experiences playing outdoors have been found to have a positive impact on conservation attitudes[3,4]. Metz and Weigel[4], for instance, found that youth who had significant experiences in nature were more likely to be concerned about water pollution, air pollutions, and climate change. Moreover, these youth were more likely to believe that humans could positively affect these issues and identified themselves as strong environmentalists[4]. Zaradic, Pergams, and Kareiva[5] reported that nature-based outdoor recreation experiences during the middle-school years lead to positive environmental behaviors a decade later.

Long-term park visitation: A variety of research was found measuring long-term outcomes of visiting parks and other protected areas. One example is based on a recent study by Asah, Bengston, and Westphal[7]. They found a significant relationship between visitation to parks as an adult and recall of nature-based activities during childhood as positively influencing their recreation decisions and support of parks.

Health-Current status and future predictions: Exposure to the natural world appears to be significant for a youth’s physical and mental health[8-10]. Research shows parks, and the outdoors more generally, can and do promote health[11]. For example, children in their pre-school years tend to have higher physical activity levels when they play outdoors[12,13].

Higher levels of activity are one important way to combat the rising levels of obesity in late 20th Century America[14]. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) (<http://aspe.hhs.gov/health/reports/childobesity>), “The number of adolescents who are overweight has tripled since 1980 and the prevalence among younger children has more than doubled.” There have been a number of studies, for instance, showing a negative correlation between spending time outdoors and level of activity[18]. Pitcock and Bialeschki[1] substantiate

THE DECLINE IN NATURE/ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES



“Overall outdoor recreation participation in America may actually be on the rise, with participation trends leaning towards traditional activities such as picnics, family gatherings, and driving for pleasure.” This conclusion that youth are doing such outdoor activities is not entirely positive. For example, participation in nature-based, and more adventure-type activities (hiking, camping, boating, etc.) is seeing a decrease.

this by explaining what is most important to reversing the youth obesity epidemic is that age across the life span has a consistent negative correlation with physical activity, and that activity patterns may start to decline as early as age 6.

Unfortunately, DHHS warns us that obesity disproportionately affects certain minority youth populations. For instance, African American and Mexican American adolescents ages 12-19 are more likely to be overweight than non-Hispanic white youth. Several studies show promising findings indicating that the more active people are as children, the more active they are as adults. This correlation is based on research revealing high levels of physical activity in childhood predicts high levels of future activity in all stages of life[1].

Consequently, obesity could also be a barrier to enjoying parks and natural areas. One study found that obese youth were less likely to have had meaningful experiences in nature and prefer to spend less time outdoors[4]. The majority of studies give all this, coupled with examples of higher physical activity, as an argument that being immersed in natural areas helps people prevent weight gain or lose weight.

The outdoors can also be mentally healthy for youth in ways that are unequivocally extremely beneficial [11,21,22]. The outdoors provides variety and typically reduces constraints necessary to promote free play in young children.[12,13] Free play is important because it helps youth develop the ability to focus, work well with others, and decreases anxiety, depression and aggression[23,24].

Community Listening Sessions

Our mission has been to gain richer insight into youth participation in the outdoors and work collaboratively to create strategies that improve the lives of young people.

"We need an invitation, a sense of ownership, and connection."

"It's important to have someone speaking Spanish because you don't want to go anywhere where people don't speak your language."

In partnership with community organizations, the Breaking Barriers Project gathered information on common barriers, motivations, and shared ideas concerning youth participation in the outdoors. This was accomplished through the execution of six facilitated, multi-lingual and youth-supported listening sessions in Mariposa, Merced and Fresno Counties. In total, 149 individuals (81 youth and 68 adults) participated in Breaking Barriers workshops. The purpose of the community workshops was to harness community skills, talents, ideas, and assets, and also through engaged, meaningful dialogue, build relationships so that culturally relevant ideology and collaboration is included in program development.

At each workshop, participants were asked a series of questions regarding what they believe are the barriers and motivations for engaging in outdoor recreation. Workshop facilitators engaged the group in conversations to distill the discussion and move beyond the common responses of time, money, and transportation. At each workshop, the process led to open discussions and presentations among the participants that reflected the diversity of the three communities and their relationship to the outdoors. Participants expressed their personal stories and opinions with the group. Conversations about the barriers and motivations to engaging youth in the outdoors, as well as recommendations for what individuals need to participate in these activities, were recorded by several note takers at each session.

To collectively analyze the meeting notes, individual comments were organized into one of three categories: engagers, barriers, and community opportunities.

LOCAL RESULTS

Each community focused on specific barriers that were locally significant. Adults in Merced, for example, identified a lack of safe opportunities available for youth. They also discussed not having time available to personally take youth to outdoor activities.

At the Fresno workshop, participants expressed views about how the interconnectedness and complexity of the situation; there are not just three barriers that you can remove, such as transportation, money, and fear. Also, discussions of fear including of crime, violence or running into "bad people" arose in conversations more frequently in Fresno than at the other workshops.

Barriers at the Mariposa workshop focused on a lack of time or the willingness to prioritize time to get outdoors.

In addition to the motivations and barriers highlighted earlier, issues of trust, ownership, and race appear to be significant for workshop participants, especially in Merced and Fresno. Groups discussed how having park staff that speak their language would be ideal.



ENGAGEMENT IN THE OUTDOORS

Primary Engagers

FAMILY & CULTURE

"Family tradition causes us to do more outdoor activities, it is more likely to carry on through the generations if your family is involved with outdoor recreation."

"It's a place where heritage/traditions of everything can be connected."

"Adults are barriers. They do not let kids go outdoors due to the lack of control and fear."

Secondary Engagers

COMMUNITY & EMOTION

"Many people would do it if their friends are there."

"Feeling a connection to something greater than myself."

QUESTION 1: ENGAGEMENT

The category "What causes us to engage in the outdoors?" includes motivations, inspirations, and explanations for why individuals connect with the outdoors and nature. The majority of comments received through the workshops in all three communities related to family and cultural connections. The next two prominent engagers were community (friends/social connections) and emotional reasons such as connecting to nature, peace and stress relief. Other engagers include mental and physical reasons such as seeking adventure and exercise, respectively. Since engagers are known motivators, they can be included in program development to ensure attractiveness.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

It is important to build long-term relationships and establish connections between public land officials and the community. A sense of family, friends, and safety needs to be facilitated by program providers and public land agencies. By physically extending into communities and communicating with people directly in their native language, individuals have more of a reason to engage with the outdoors and a better understanding of the importance of recreating outside.

YOUTH RECOMMENDATIONS

Many youth have a hard time imagining themselves as someone who would participate in outdoor activities. As a result, having ambassadors, mentors, and peer role-models that are from the community is critical in encouraging engagement with the outdoors. This helps youth to see that connecting to the outdoors is a value of their community.

QUESTION 2: BARRIERS

The question “What are the barriers to participation in the outdoors?” included obstacles, barriers, and aversions that explain why individuals are apprehensive about and/or are uninterested in the outdoors and nature. The primary barriers reported were assorted fears, such as lack of confidence, fear of crowds, fear of animals, fear of unknown, and concern about safety. The second most prominent barrier was individual priorities deemed more valuable than spending time outside. These included work, school, family, video games, and lack of desire. Other barriers included a lack of means or absence of resources, including money, transportation, gear, companionship, and information.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

Targeted outreach to families can help mitigate fears and perceptions of value. There needs to be a mechanism to convey the benefits, both short term and long term, to youth participation in the outdoors. Outreach should be multi-lingual, include culturally relevant and sensitive language, and images that convey a feeling of family connection.

YOUTH RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to address various fears regarding the outdoors, it is important to have easily accessible information readily available. This could come in the form of how to videos on Youtube, activity summaries in digital form, or a mobile app that connects location specific information to necessary skills and equipment, FAQs and forums. It is also important to develop activities that are appropriate for people of all experience levels, that build on themselves in a sequential way, and create opportunities for participants to show leadership. This should include activities that are not physically based, such as art, photography, writing, and just plain chilling out. Not everyone connects to nature by hiking or climbing.



BARRIERS TO THE OUTDOORS

Primary Barrier

FEAR

“News and the media portray dangerous people/activities in Yosemite.”

“City people are afraid of the wild wilderness. It’s dirty and you can get attacked by wildlife.”

“Adults are barriers. They do not let kids go outdoors due to the lack of control and fear.”

Secondary Barrier

PRIORITIES

“People get caught up in their personal lifestyles not finding enough time for the outdoors.”

“You have to plan to recreate outside, it takes more energy and time to get outdoors.”

“A lot of people don’t want to go because they’re connected to phone/computers.”



GETTING OUTSIDE



Primary Method

ENGAGEMENT

"There is a lack of knowledge; people don't know that these places exist."

"There is a lack of communication, lots of people don't know what's going on or what to do."

"Keep engaging the community to address the issue."



Secondary Method

RELATIONSHIPS

"Use preexisting relationships to your advantage, engage with other entities that are already involved."

"Partnerships with schools and with the home school community."

"Kids are influenced so much by their peers that organized events with a group are better, because they can enjoy each other and the activity, and they'll talk about it to their peers and recruit more to engage the next time."

QUESTION 3: GETTING OUTSIDE

Finally, each workshop offered participants the opportunity to brainstorm and offer creative answers to the question: "What would have to happen for people in my community to spend more time outdoors?" The input included an array of ideas that included the role of community organizations and schools, information dissemination, transportation options, family and youth inspired activities, and location. At the Central Valley forums, conversations regarding the lack of accessible information (language, in schools and communities, through youth) were significant. These ideas and recommendations could be foundational to successful program development.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

Some barriers such as fear and lack of means can more easily be addressed through adequate opportunities, education, and programming, whereas it is more challenging to shift individual priorities. However, engaging with individuals and organizations who have strong relationships with families and youth is a critical step in building trust with local leaders, community, members and youth.

YOUTH RECOMMENDATIONS

Make the outdoors a visible part of where the youth live, and start young. Outdoor engagement should not be something that only happens somewhere far away in sixth grade, but should also be something that happens in your own community everyday. Seeing natural connections in the park down the street can be just as powerful as seeing them in Yosemite. Also, having consistent and reliable opportunities and, or programs in communities is critical to building trust with local leaders, members, and youth.

Youth Surveys

BACKGROUND

In collaboration with Nina Roberts, Ph.D. the Breaking Barriers Project developed a survey tool in order to capture quantitative data about Central Valley youth and their commonly held beliefs around outdoor recreation. Surveys were completed by all youth at the listening sessions and by students of a network of teachers in the Central Valley. Because of the non-random distribution method, results are informative, but not scientific.

The purpose of the youth survey was to understand the "what and why" behind existing fears and motivations regarding outdoor interests and activities. Along with basic demographics, the youth survey captured types of outdoor activity participation, the importance of reasons to be outdoors, the frequency of outdoor activities, the motivations for being outside, and the obstacles to going outside. Whereas the results from the workshops can be used to target the best outreach vehicles, the survey research could be used to design desirable programs that reduce or eliminate barriers.

THE NUMBERS

A total of 1,266 surveys were analyzed. Demographic results revealed about half the respondents were female and the other half male. Most of the respondents were in 10th grade, and the average age was 15 1/2 years old. Racial/ ethnic associations were predominantly Hispanic or Latino (68.0%) followed by white (29.5%). Next were Black/African American (5.1%), Native/American Indian (4.3%), Asian Indian (2.7%), Filipino (2.1%), and Hmong (2.0%). There

were no major differences in survey responses between these groups.

FRESNO VS OTHER AREAS

The majority of respondents live in Merced, but there are a few significant points worth mentioning regarding Fresno. Based on percentages, Fresno youth reported greater issues with a lack of transportation as well as challenges with cost. Fresno respondents also were the most interested in learning about nature and were the most interested in volunteering for an organization or at an event related to the environment.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BOYS & GIRLS

There were some minor differences between male (622) and female (584) respondents. More males expressed being very interested in spending free time outdoors and participating in outdoor activities. For males, being outside rated as very important for physical activity and for females being outside rated as very important to release stress and tension.

In general, the following statements were more true for females than males:

- 1) A lack of information about outdoor areas,
- 2) The outdoors being more uncomfortable because of bugs, dirt, and weather.
- 3) Being afraid of other people in parks or outdoor areas if they are not known or trusted.

FREQUENCY IN THE OUTDOORS

Interestingly, the majority of respondents (56%) reported participating in outdoor activities daily or a few times a week with friends. Going outdoors daily or a few times a week "by myself" was next most frequent with 43% of responses. As noted in the community workshops, family was one of the primary engagers for youth. In terms of frequency of participation, spending time in the outdoors occurred less frequently with friends and less than "by myself" than with families. Seventy three percent reported either once or twice or never participating in any type of outdoor activities during school field trips as well as 69% reporting either once or twice or never participating in any type of outdoor activities through an organization (such as church, scouts, clubs, etc.).



TOP FIVE OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES:



TOP FIVE REASONS TO BE OUTSIDE



MOTIVATIONS FOR OUTDOOR PARTICIPATION

The survey asked participants whether they agreed or disagreed to 13 statements regarding their motivations to do outdoor activities from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree, with (3) neutral. The top five motivational statements that are most agreeable along with their rating average are:

- 1) I like doing things outdoors that I have never done before so I can challenge myself.
- 2) I think it's really cool to do things that help protect nature and the environment.
- 3) I would visit parks (or similar places) and participate in outdoor activities more often if transportation was provided for me.
- 4) I would visit parks (or similar places) and participate in outdoor activities more often if a professional athlete on a sports team was there or encouraged me and/or my friends to go.
- 5) I would be interested in having a job that allowed me to spend time in nature, learn about the environment, develop outdoor skills, etc.

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

The following are the top seven barriers to youth participation in the outdoors as identified by the survey participants:

- 1) My parents/caregivers worry about my safety.
- 2) Scheduling conflicts are challenging (homework, sports in school, involved in other activities, job).
- 3) I don't have the proper equipment or outdoor gear.
- 4) Few, if any, of my friends enjoy the outdoors.
- 5) Costs too much, too expensive.
- 6) My parents/caregivers want me to be closely supervised.
- 7) Transportation is a problem for me (or my family).

CONCLUSIONS & NEXT STEPS

Through community workshops and a youth survey, the Breaking Barriers Project identified issues affecting use of the outdoors by the diverse ethnic groups of California's Central Valley. Each of the workshops illustrated that familial and cultural traditions are the primary factor for engaging in outdoor activities. Other prominent engagers were community (friends/social connections) and emotional reasons such as connecting to nature and peace and stress relief. Although wildlife was mentioned, the fact that it was not mentioned prominently could speak to a lack of or absence of direct experiences in nature with wildlife.

One of the largest barriers to participation in outdoor activities is a range fears including lack of confidence, fear of animals, fear of the unknown, concerns for safety, and fear of crowds. In the Merced and Fresno workshops, forum comments indicated that many ethnic groups are not visibly present when visiting parks and public lands, leading to a sense of feeling unwelcome. These fears are also reflected in the youth survey, where respondents identified parental/caregiver safety concerns as the number one obstacle to spending time outdoors. Fear involving crime and violence was brought up in the Fresno workshop, while fears associated with a lack of familiarity resulting in a sense of unwelcome seemed apparent in the Merced discussions. The second most prominent barrier indicated by both the workshops and the surveys is the role of other life priorities and interests. Adults feel that outdoor time requires planning and energy, while youth find conflicts with homework, school sports and other activities.

Youth culture, in particular, can often have conflicting values with program providers and other adults. Adults want a framework, organized activities, structure, and community support, while youth want freedom, less rules, and time to just "hang out." They desire support, but not structure, and adventure versus the safety many adults crave.

Workshop participants indicated that increased community participation in outdoor activities

would result from further development of existing partnerships and relationships between parks and local community groups. It was also noted that there is a lack of knowledge about parks and outdoor activities. Increasing access through free or cheap transportation was a third means identified for attracting additional visitation. The youth surveys also identified the need for transportation to outdoor activities, as well as a need for additional planned activities to participate in.

What may have been traditionally perceived as transportation, may actually be more related to distance. Fresno and Merced residents must travel a significant distance to be outside of private property and find places where they feel safe recreating. Increased distance also equates to increased amounts of time spent recreating in the outdoors.

The data collected through the Breaking Barriers Project is intended to support the development and implementation of relevant programming to engage youth in the outdoors. For further reference, the full data sets and additional reports cross-tabbing differences based on county, gender and ethnicity and primary language for the surveys compiled for this study are available online at www.intooutside.org/breakingbarriers. By integrating the recommendations of the youth and communities we aim to serve, youth program providers, educators, and community members can provide compelling, welcoming opportunities for young people and their families to make activities in the outdoors a priority.

As evidenced throughout the Breaking Barriers project, there aren't simply just three barriers that one can remove—such as transportation, money, fear—to increase youth participation in the outdoors; the issue is far more interconnected and complex. Individuals want to see their culture reflected in the outdoors. For example, National Parks look at themselves as the carrier of formative American stories. They should also see themselves as reflections of the nation as it is now. As we have seen, program providers tell the story of their work, design curriculum



There are many ways to approach change in outdoor culture, including the following suggestions from Breaking Barriers participants:

- Connect to culture via oral history and tradition; it's a place where heritage and traditions can be connected
- Invite people to have ownership outdoor experiences. It's not a privilege to spend time in the outdoors, it's a right.
- Build familial, trusted relationships; initially you need someone to introduce you to the possibilities of the outdoors
- Support family traditions, as they cause us to do more outdoor activities, which are more likely to carry on through the generations if your family is involved with outdoor recreation. •
- Use preexisting relationships to your advantage. Engage with other entities that are already connected to youth and families, including the schools.
- Increase communication, as many people don't know what programs are available or what organized activities are scheduled.

and programming, and engage in outreach, they should do so in a multi-lingual, culturally relevant format.

Individuals and organizations who work with youth need to not only gain knowledge of the cultures represented in the communities in which they work, they need to translate this knowledge into instructional practice. This can

be demonstrated through a willingness and ability to nurture and support cultural competence in both home and program cultures.

Program providers can make changes in their organizations and institutions by identifying decision-making opportunities that influence outcomes for their programs and their relevancy to constituents. The cumulative impacts of many small choices can be as significant as the impacts of big decisions. When agencies and organizations are conscious of their decision-making and the related impacts, they could be less likely to replicate implicit bias and the status quo, creating new possibilities for to understand and serve diverse cultures. Individuals and organizations should address the following questions to instill institutional change:

- What are the decision-making points—from choosing photos that represent diversity to hiring bilingual staff—that can create situations in which individuals feel safe, included, and represented in our work?
- What decisions/actions may be reinforcing the status quo and/or current inequities?
- What alternative actions could produce different outcomes?
- What actions will best support engaging youth and their families in the outdoors?
- What reminders, supports and accountability systems can be structured into routine practices to keep cultural relevancy as a high priority?

Making institutional changes regarding cultural relevancy within organizations who work with youth, however, is not enough. Youth serving organizations must value and build on skills that participants bring from the home culture and develop a sociopolitical or critical consciousness.

Engaging youth in the benefits of the outdoors is essential for their health and well being as well as the future health of our environment and our communities. To do so effectively, institutions and individuals can benefit from the wisdom of both youth and adult community members to implement recommendations that inspire participation and motivate future priorities.





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- The Central Valley teachers who assisted in disseminating the surveys.

Contact us

Phone: +1209.770.6340

Email: brkng.barriers@gmail.com

Website: www.intooutside.org/breakingbarriers

Facebook: www.facebook.com/Brkng.Barriers

