

Student Research Conference Abstract

This anthropological project studies alloparenting and counselors at summer camp and the roles alloparents play in helping to guide children as they deal with common social issues such as group hierarchies and conflict, peer relationships and overall growth and social development. This topic draws from different disciplines in anthropology, ranging from biological to cultural, and also is based in common theories concerning childhood socialization within the field of sociology, and in the end offers insight on a unique research question that has not been written about in the past. Active participant observation at Coutts-Moriarty Summer camp in northern Vermont working as a counselor allowed me to gain firsthand information and experience about the complex role of counselors and also what summer camp has to offer to campers in terms of social development and growth. Coutts-Moriarty Summer camp can be seen as a form of outdoor ecological-adventure based anticipatory socialization, where, through cultivation and nurturing of the “individuals” in hopes to create positive and appropriately acting citizens, campers are taught and prepared for the future and interactions/challenges they will face in school and other societal institutions. Camp counselors, whose care and guidance has alloparental tendencies, are expected to encourage the campers to take appropriate risks in order to create a stronger sense of achievement and success while promoting community minded and also individually beneficial decision making.