ABSTRACT

TITLE:	The Psychology of Technology on Childhood Development: Reconnecting to Nature With Walkable Urbanism
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ABSTRACT: Over the past two decades, the presence of many forms of technology in children's lives is increasing while time spent in natural environments is simultaneously decreasing. Overexposure to technology is resulting in negative effects towards children's physical and psychological development. More of the time children spend is indoors, and away from nature due to homework, television screens, and parental anxiety about the potential threats of strangers. The disconnect between children and nature is raising concerns about sustainable living for future generations. The purpose of this research is to examine the cognitive, emotional, and physical importance of childhood exposure to nature. From disappearing access to natural areas due to increased population and urban sprawl to competition for television and computers, homework and other time pressures, this research analyzes the factors contributing to childhood alienation from the natural world. This research also determines what the cognitive, emotional, and physical consequences are of spending a limited time in nature, including literature on the rise in obesity and attention disorders. It also proposes policy recommendations for government leaders to establish and implement principles and guidelines to promote change in the current structural and educational approaches to strengthen the development of children within elementary and middle schools. This research concludes by bringing attention to the possibilities of nature based environmental education and sustainable urban planning to promote walkable cities. The experience of nature is a critical component of human physical, emotional, intellectual, and even moral development. Findings show that outdoor play has been linked to increases in students' grade point averages and more efficient classroom learning, as well as positive associations with children's physical fitness, concentration, memory, behavior, and school satisfaction. In addition, more walkable developments are beginning to offer neighborhood residents with easy access to public transportation while creating a good mix of housing, shopping and employment possibilities. Walkable communities also lead to more social interaction, physical fitness, diminished crime, and increased wellness, addressing many social and economic problems.