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Preference for Natural Things in Preschoolers

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PREFERENCE FOR NATURAL THINGS IN PRESCHOOLERS

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Biophilia is a term coined by biologist E. O. Wilson to label his hypothesis that human beings have an innate affinity toward the natural world. Aspects of biophilia that have been researched to test Wilson's hypothesis include psychological-, aesthetic-, and spiritual correlates as well as the effect of technological advances on the expression of biophilia. Most of this research has been conducted with adults, but a few recent studies have focused on aspects of biophilia in school-age children and adolescents. The present study investigated aspects of biophilia in early development. Fifteen children enrolled in an urban preschool, and 27 children from a rural preschool, were shown a picture book containing paired images depicting natural things and their non-natural counterparts.

The preschoolers were asked which picture of each pair they preferred and their preferences were noted. Two specific hypotheses were tested. First, it was predicted that the children in this study would show a preference for natural things and as such display some degree of biophilia. The second hypothesis predicted that due to their generally greater exposure to subsistence derived from natural things, children from a rural environment would make a proportionally greater number of biophilic choices than children from an urban area.