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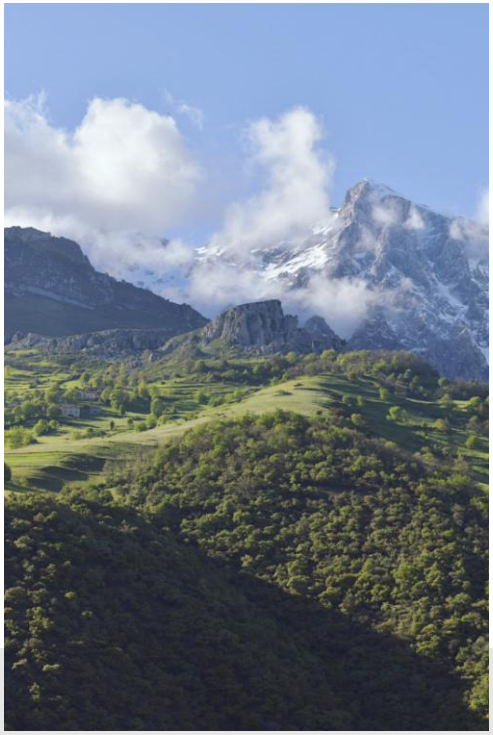
Capturing experiences in the outdoors using social networking sites through photo-elicitation

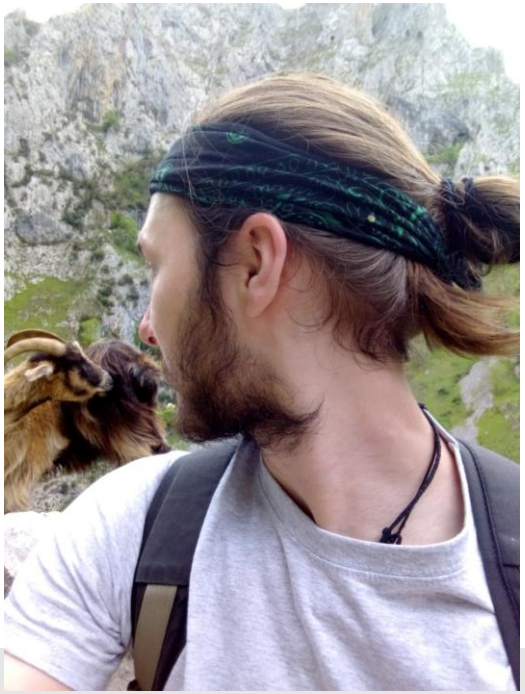
Dr Heather Prince, Associate Professor

Pilot study (McClurg, 2017)

Exploring gender differences in the selection and posting of photographs on social media (Facebook and Instagram)

- Females spend more time and presence on SNSs than males (Frison and Eggermont, 2016; Vermern, 2015)
- Females - more emotional and sentimental graphics; Males more 'joke images' or images that reflect more independence (Dominick, 1999)
- Pictures of males included active, dominant and independent attributes; Female users included attractive and dependent attributes (Rose et al., 2012)





Pilot study (McClurg, 2017)

Interpretive phenomenological research to investigate the ways in which people capture their experiences in the outdoors through photographs, and how they select those to post on social networking sites (SNSs)

- Four males, four females (18-21); 2 activity days (canoeing and rock climbing)
- One photograph of each experience that they would post on SNS
- Analysis of photographs via symbolic interaction (Askan et al., 2009) & coding
- Semi-structured interviews post outdoor experiences with each participant

Data were in eight categories and four themes:

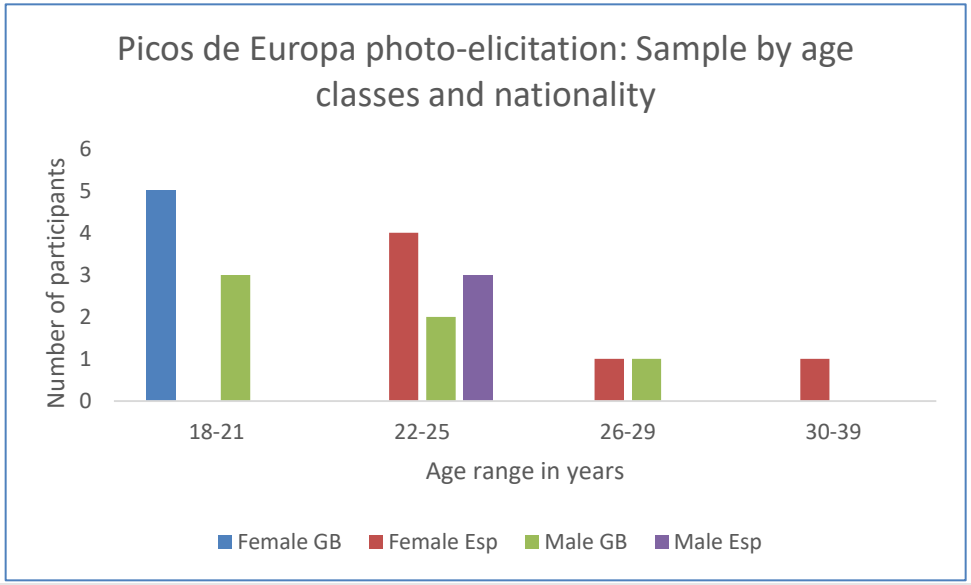
- Outdoor activity
- Outdoor environment
- Themselves
- Friends

Females were more likely to take photographs of the environment and edit these for colour enhancement

Males were more likely to take photographs of the outdoor activity and friends and were unlikely to edit them

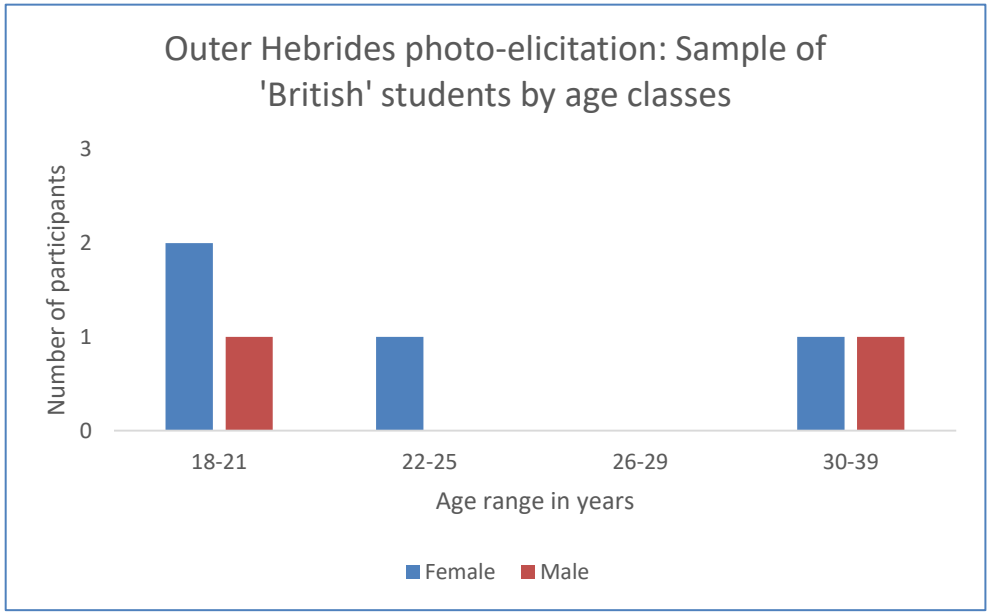
Further research (cultural influence)

- Same methodology & method (data collection post-experience) (May, 2018)
- Picos de Europa, Northern Spain: one activity day (mountain walking) (11 females, 9 males: 5 British females, 6 Spanish females , 6 British males, 3 Spanish males)

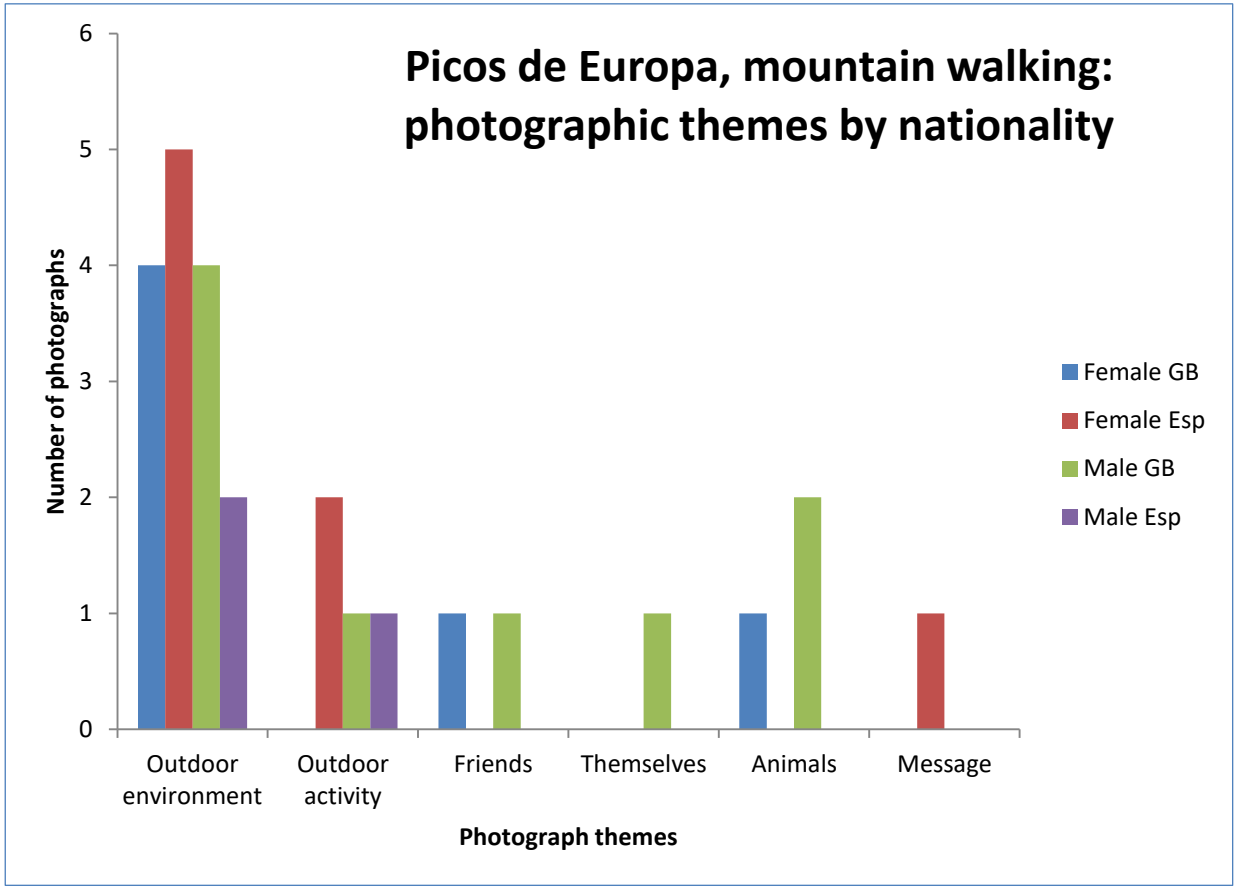


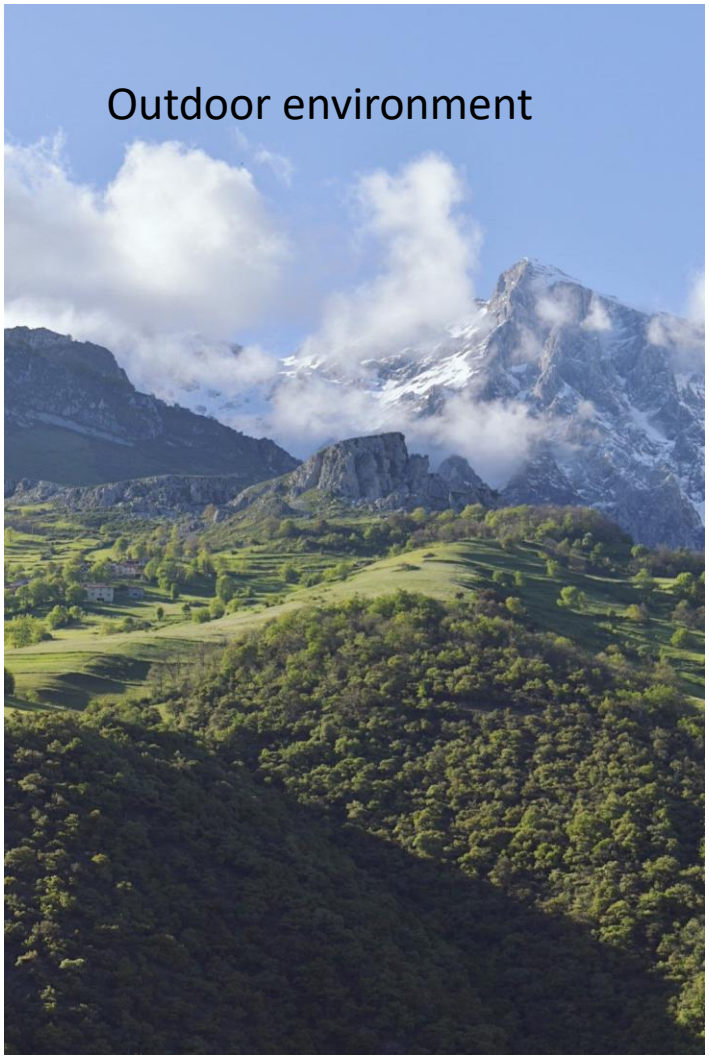
Further research (extended outdoor experience)

- Same methodology & method (data collection post-experience) (July, 2018)
- Outer Hebrides, UK: five day expedition (sea kayaking) (4 females, 2 males)



Results


Picos de Europa, mountain walking: photographic themes by nationality
Number of photographs
0
1
2
3
4
5
6
Outdoor environment
Outdoor activity
Friends
Themselves
Animals
Message
Photograph themes
Female GB
Female Esp
Male GB
Male Esp


Outdoor environment

Outdoor environment/animals

MUERTE & DESTRUCCION
Outdoor environment/message

Sea kayaking: 3/6 (1 male, 2 female) students took the same view from the same place

Others were also environment/activity focused, one on the environment

Editing - for ‘saturation’, ‘sharpness’ and ‘size’:
“to enhance detail rather not distort reality”
“to improve/strengthen what I am trying to express with a photo”
“for my blog”

Similar numbers of females and males edit or do not edit from both cultures

Few differences (qualitative analysis) between photographic themes, although three English students would post photos of animals, one Spanish student would post a photo with a message

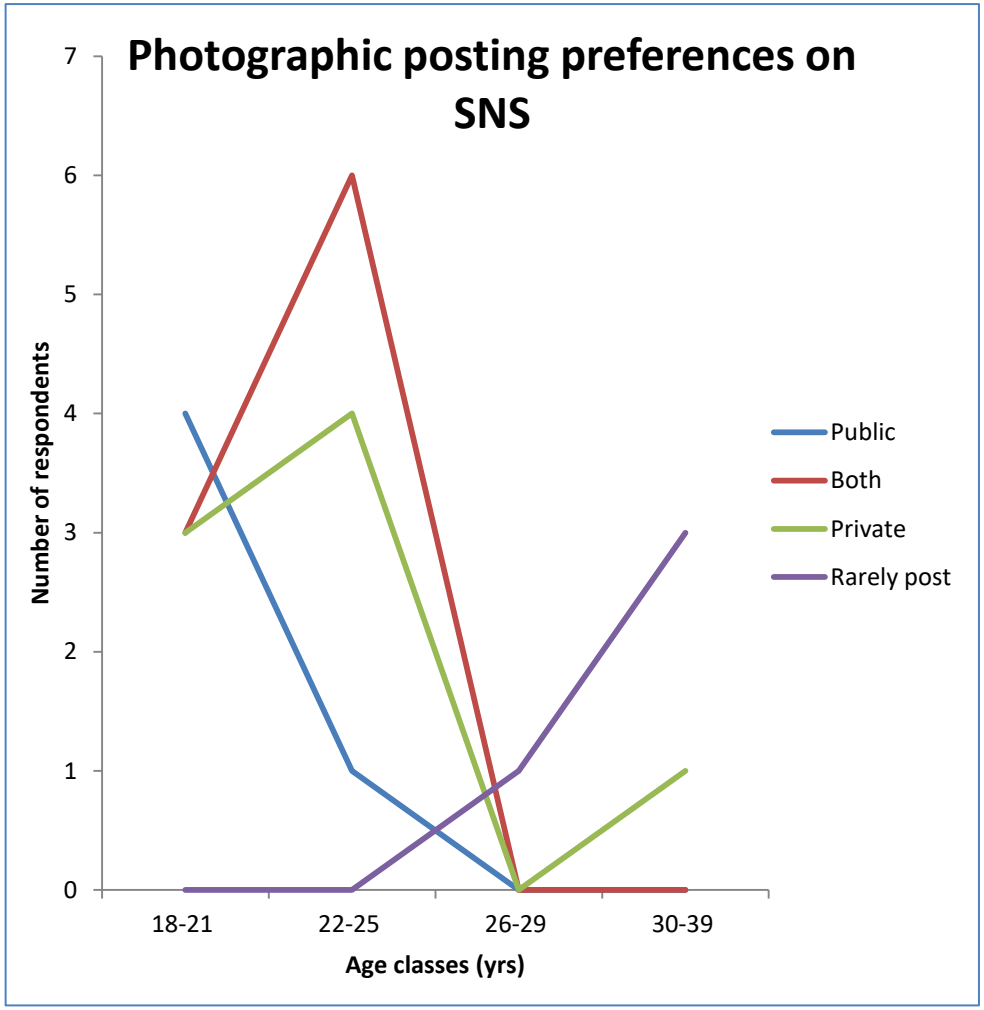
Photo elicitation interviews

Most frequently cited **reasons** for taking photographs:

- to capture/document memories
- to show family/friends
- for the views/picturesque

No differences between male and female responses

Evidence in older students (22-25) of more extrinsic motivations, particularly amongst Spanish males:
"to see others enjoying what is new to them"
"to encourage others to value nature more"
"taking photographs is a fusion between man and nature"



Older students rarely post or post to private (closed) sites

Taking photographs seems to have deeper meanings particularly for older students including:

- their **value**

  "I don't think that a photo can ever fully reflect an experience. It is literally a snapshot of an experience. It often reflects a beautiful place but not always the experience as a whole" (F, Esp, 26-29)

- **where** they post them (or not) and **why**

  "I would like to think it would encourage more people outside/to experience beautiful places" (M & F, Esp, 22-25; F, GB, 18-21)

- **meanings**

  "Photography can have a deeper meaning as an art form, means of expression, and as a way to process an experience" (F, Esp, 26-29)

  "Seeing photos afterwards adds new perspectives I didn't think about before" (F. GB, 30-39)

- **extrinsic** understanding of landscapes, particularly Spanish students

  "we do not know many places that surround us and people are not aware of landscape degradation" (M, Esp, 22-25)

- **function** of SNS

  "I am not so keen to live in the public age as I feel that this dilutes the experience in some way and we are losing the act of storytelling" (M, GB, 30-39)

  "A lived diary" (M, GB, 30-39)

Conclusions (so far…)

- No differences between genders in the theme of a photograph posted on SNS was found in this larger sample (through qualitative analysis)
- Students posted photos to share to capture/document memories to share with family and friends, and for their aesthetic value. (as in Loeffler,2004 a,b). No differences between males and females, although evidence of extrinsic values particularly amongst Spanish males
- For older students, there is evidence of deeper meaning in photographs and where and why they do or do not post them on SNSs; younger students see the meanings in the same way as their reasons for taking photographs and posting them

Conclusions (… so far, continued)

- This research showed differences in the meaning of taking photographs with the ages of students, why they took them and shared them on SNSs or not
- Have SNSs and the possibilities offered for sharing to a wide audience if so desired, made some students interrogate more deeply the meanings of photographs and the reasons for taking them and sharing them, or not?
- Why is it that younger students do not see a deeper meaning (beyond memories, capturing the moment and sharing with family and friends)? Have they lived with SNSs all their technological lives? Or, are they not yet mature enough to see or reflect on any deeper meanings?

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