

**2004 Camp Research Symposium
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**The Effect of a Leadership Development Program
on Leadership Self-perceptions of Counselors-in-training**

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The Effect of a Leadership Development Program on Leadership Self-perceptions of Counselors-in-training

Purpose: There has long been a call for and recognition of the importance of competent staff in residential youth camping. There has been a simultaneous search for the best method for developing new leadership in camps, yet there remains a dearth of research related to the best methods for developing leaders. This study, investigating leadership development through participation in a counselor-in-training program at a youth residential camp, adds to the understanding of how leadership skills and perceptions can be affected by a program specifically designed to enhance leadership development. Improvements can be made to existing leadership and counselor-in-training programs so that both learners and educators derive benefits.

The study provides information about the potential for targeted leadership education programs to enhance leadership development among counselors-in-training. Specific leadership areas examined include: communication, teamwork, decision-making, knowledge of self, and leadership roles.

Research Methods: The population for this study was 23 female adolescents who attended a two-week residential youth camp counselor-in-training (CIT) program during the summer of 2003. The camp, located in southern Illinois, is accessible to any counselor-in-training who wishes to come and acceptance is limited only by space restrictions.

The instrument used in this study to assess the self-perceived leadership skills of the students is the Leadership Skills Inventory (LSI). This instrument was developed at Iowa State University by Carter in 1980. The original instrument measured ten internal scales through 99 statements. The reliability coefficients of these scales ranged from a low of .41 to a high of .79. The LSI was refined by Townsend in 1983 and now consists of 21 statements describing various leadership and life scales. These correspond to the five internal scales for analysis: communication, leadership functions, making decisions, working with groups and understanding self. Responses were measured on a five point Likert-type scale ranging from A-“strongly agree” to E-“strongly disagree”. Several other researchers have recently refined the instrument, achieving reliability coefficients ranging from .63 to .83.

The study employed a quasi-experimental design. The control group consisted of female counselors-in-training who participated in the traditional CIT program focusing on teaching participants camp policy, how to be a contributing member of an activity area (swimming, canoeing, archery, stables, handicrafts, nature, or riflery), and the duties of a unit staff member (camper supervision, campfire programs, dining hall responsibilities). The experimental group participated in the traditional CIT program and received as a treatment the supplemental leadership development program which provided instruction and experience in communication, decision-making, teamwork, leadership roles, and self-understanding. The treatment program was developed and facilitated by the researcher.

Random assignment of participants to either the control group or the experimental group was not possible due to the nature of the program. However, the control group and treatment groups occurred in different two-week programs, so cross-contamination did not occur. The Leadership Skills Inventory was administered three times to each group: once at the beginning of the program as a pretest, at the end of the program as a “then” test, and at the program’s conclusion as a post test. Additional assessments of the participants’ leadership skills were made by the CIT director using the traditional camp evaluation methods.

Conducting Online Camp Research: The 2003 Summer Research Study as an Example

Objectives: 1) To examine quality of life and social comparisons for children with chronic illnesses attending disease specific camps. 2) To examine benefits/challenges of utilizing the Internet to collect summer camp research data.

Background Information: Research examining the psychosocial benefits of summer camps for children with chronic illnesses is limited and largely anecdotal. The first part of this study examined two concepts that have been infrequently considered in the camping literature, quality of life and social comparisons. Bringing together children who have a similar illness at camp provides an opportunity for campers to see how other children with their illness are doing, in terms of physical, emotional, and social functioning. By comparing themselves with other kids who understand the "illness experience," it is possible that a child's quality of life will improve. However, camp research can be challenging as no one wants to interfere with the child's camp experience and opportunity to just have fun. In addition, conducting research by postal mail or telephone before and after camp can be costly and yield significant missing data. Therefore, the second part of this study examined the usefulness of the Internet as a less expensive and more comprehensive way to collect data across multiple time points.

Hypotheses

1. Quality of life will improve after one week of summer camp.
2. Quality of life will be related to the frequency of social comparisons.
3. The Internet will provide a useful way to collect camp data at multiple time points.

Participants: 64 children who attended the Boggy Creek Gang Camp (BCGC) in the summer of 2003 participated in the study. Participants were 61% female, 70% Caucasian, and 89% return campers. Ages ranged from 13-17 years.

Procedure: A letter describing the study was sent to parents of campers one-month prior to camp. A unique numeric ID was included in the letter for the child to use when they logged onto the study website. If the child did not have Internet access, but wanted to participate in the study, they returned a pre-paid postcard and were sent the questionnaires by postal mail. Follow-up data collection occurred one-week and two-months after camp, with letters sent to participants at each time point.

Measures

- Pediatric Quality of Life Inventory (PedsQL; Varni, 1998). The PedsQL is a 23-item scale that measures the core physical, mental, and social health dimensions as defined by the World Health Organization. This measure has shown adequate internal consistency (Cronbach's alphas = .72 to .88).
- Social Comparisons. This scale was developed for this study, based on previous social comparison measures. There are 12 items that ask about the frequency of, need for, and direction of social comparisons (upward/downward). This measure showed adequate internal consistency in this study (Cronbach's alphas = .67 to .80).

Analyses: Within-subject repeated measures ANOVAs were used to examine changes in quality of life over time, and correlation analyses were used to examine the relationship between quality of life and social comparisons.

Results

1. Quality of life significantly improved one-week after camp. However, this change was not maintained two-months after camp.
2. Quality of life was significantly related to the frequency of upward social comparisons, with those who reported a poorer quality of life reporting more frequent comparisons with those who are "better off".
3. Using an Internet survey yielded a 40% response rate with no missing data.

Conclusions: Summer camps for children with chronic illnesses can help to improve perceived quality of life, likely through the use of social comparisons. In addition, by using the Internet, this study achieved a higher response rate than previously reported mail survey studies, and the data was likely to be more accurate as there were no missing responses. Practical implications of these findings are discussed in the summary.

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Conducting Online Camp Research: The 2003 Summer Research Study as an Example
Practical Implications Summary

IF YOU READ NO FURTHER, HERE IS THE TAKE HOME MESSAGE: Camp research continues to provide empirical evidence that disease specific camps are beneficial for children with chronic illnesses. To obtain financial support from donors and grants, research must be conducted. Internet studies provide a new way to conduct research that does not interfere with the camp experience. In addition, the Internet could be used to evaluate programs, and obtain end of the summer feedback from campers, counselors, and staff.

Part 1. Quality of Life and Social Comparisons

What did this study find? The first part of this study examined the impact of camp on perceived quality of life (QOL). The findings suggest that campers report improved QOL one week after camp. However, two months later, they returned to their pre-camp QOL.

What explains these results? One reason perceived QOL may have changed is because a disease specific camp allows for more realistic comparisons with other children. These comparisons lead to decreased social isolation and increased self-competence. This applies to the three QOL areas: physical functioning, emotional functioning, and social functioning. For example, camp provides kids a chance to realize that although they may be physically weaker than their “normal” school peers, compared to a child with a similar illness, their physical functioning is not so bad.

What does this mean for camp professionals?

- **Camp improves a child’s quality of life.** This study provides empirical evidence for one more reason that camp is not only good, but a worthwhile investment. You can take data like this and from other research studies to potential donors who say “show me the data.” With camps competing for limited resources, you need to be armed with facts that demonstrate why your organization is the best!
- **More experiences that bring similar children together are needed during the year.** The fact that these results were not maintained suggest that children need more opportunities to be exposed to similar others throughout the year. These “booster sessions” can include weekends, social outings, or single day sessions.

Part 2. Using the Internet to Conduct Research

This study provides support for using the Internet as a way to conduct camp research. In 1985, only 8% of homes in the United States had personal computers, and the Internet as we know it did not exist. In 2001, 66% of the United States population used a computer at home, work, or school, and 56% of the US population used the Internet.

Pros of Internet Research

1. **Does NOT interfere with the camp experience.** This study demonstrated that the Internet could effectively be used to collect data before, after, and at a follow-up point in time. This was done without disrupting the camp schedule, interfering with first day registration, or with the camp program in any other way.
2. **Less expensive than other methods.** The cost of conducting online research is significantly less than mail or telephone surveys. It has been suggested that postal mail surveys cost almost \$2 a unit. The 2003 Summer Research Study (SRS) would have cost approximately \$576 if it had been done with a mail survey. Web surveys cost a fraction of that, including the cost of Internet access and survey services. The 2003 SRS cost less than \$50 to conduct (my internet access was free at work and the survey service cost \$9.99/month), a savings of \$526!!
3. **Error-free results.** It is possible on Internet surveys to require participants to answer every question before they can continue. In addition, participants can give only one answer per question. Finally, the data is downloaded directly into a spreadsheet or data analysis program. All of this results in error-free data, with no missing responses.
4. **Increased response rate.** This study found a 40% response rate, which is significantly higher than previous mail survey studies that have found an 18-30% response rate. This is important as well if you are trying to collect end of the summer feedback forms from campers, counselors, and staff.

Cons of Internet Research

1. **Sample bias.** Internet users are not representative of the population as a whole. However, by including an alternate way for participants to be included (e.g., returning a postcard and receiving the survey by mail), all campers have the opportunity to participate.
2. **Outside influences on findings.** By doing a study on the Internet, the researcher has less control over the testing environment and other factors that may influence a child’s response (e.g., a parent looking over the child’s shoulder).

An Analysis of the Effects of Summer Camp Employment On Emotional Intelligence

Background: The purpose of this study is to identify how the summer camp experience impacts staff members and to better understand if emotional intelligence is developed through summer camp employment. Emotional intelligence refers to a “type of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one’s thinking and actions” (Mayer & Salovey, 1993, p.433). Developing a better understanding of the interface between summer camp employment and emotional intelligence (EQ) and of the potential long-term benefits associated with the organized camp staff experience could lead to a broader acknowledgment of the positive impact of organized camping on society. Uncovering and understanding these long term benefits are vital for camp administrators (DeGraff & Glover, 2002). The concept of noncognitive intelligence, which is measured by EQ, brings new depth to the understanding of intelligence and increases our ability to assess general intelligence (Bar-On, 1997). While cognitive intelligence is more strategic, one’s capacity to function, noncognitive intelligence is more tactical, one’s ability for immediate functioning. Noncognitive intelligence may help to predict success because it reflects how a person applies knowledge to the immediate situation. “In a way, to measure emotional, personal and social intelligence is to measure one’s ability to cope with daily situations and to get along in the world” (Bar-On, 1997, p.3).

An understanding of the changes that take place throughout a summer camp experience can prove extremely beneficial in the recruitment of staff members. The ability to attract large numbers of qualified applicants is often a challenge for summer camp directors (American Camping Association, 1995). A working knowledge of the benefits of a summer camp position can assist camp directors in conveying these benefits to potential staff members, through employment marketing efforts and during the interview and selection process. In addition, knowledge regarding summer camp’s ability to promote changes that will contribute to one’s life success can be critical. This knowledge provides camp administrators with the ability to present a summer camp staff experience to potential staff members, and influential others such as parents, peers, and college advisors, as an investment in the future. With the unemployment rate surging to 6.4% in June of 2003, its highest level in over nine years, employers in the seasonal job market are attempting to highlight skills, competencies, and abilities that can contribute to future employability. Potential seasonal staff are often on a quest for lifetime employability, hoping to acquire new skills that will assist in ensuring a lifetime of employment (Meister, J. 1998). Previous studies have been helpful in laying some of the groundwork for understanding the summer camp staff experience. Yet more work needs to be done to help substantiate the benefits identified in studies by Bialeschki, et al (1998) and DeGraff & Glover (2002).

Methods: The 6 residential summer camps of the Twin Cities YMCA in Minnesota were invited to participate in this study. The study was limited to residential camps, with summer seasons of at least 6 weeks, and to staff that work directly with campers. Housekeeping, food service, and maintenance staff, as well as junior counselors and counselors in training, were not included.

Data was collected utilizing the BarOn EQ-i, a self administered questionnaire that consists of 133 items and takes approximately 30 minutes to complete. The EQ-i is based on 20 years of research and is the oldest instrument utilized to help measure emotional intelligence. The EQ-i consists of 5 composite scales – Intrapersonal Scales, Interpersonal Scales, Adaptability Scales, Stress Management Scales, and General Mood Scales - which contain 15 subscales. A pre-post test design was utilized, where staff completed the EQ-i on either the 2nd or 3rd day of their summer season and then again when the camp had completed 90%-100% of their season. In addition, staff members were asked to complete an end of the season questionnaire. This additional questionnaire focused on the 15 subscales of emotional intelligence and gathered data that highlights changes that occurred within these scales from the beginning to the end of the summer camp season. Staff members not only indicated where changes occurred, but also linked these changes with specific programs, responsibilities, and attributes of their summer camp experience that led to these changes.

Practical Applications

Background: While an undergraduate student, I treasured my summers working as a summer camp staff member. During my spring semester final exams, the light at the end of the tunnel was knowing that shortly after packing up my books and cleaning out my closet I would be on my way to summer camp. Yet each year, without exception, someone – a parent, advisor, friend, or peer – would say to me “When are you going to get a real job?” Two decades later, potential staff members are still being asked the same question by people with influence. Staff that are considering returning to camp and new applicants that are pursuing a summer camp staff experience can find it difficult to defend the decision to spend a summer working with children in a summer camp setting. Why is it that many people do not consider summer camp employment a “real job”? What criteria are being used to make decisions regarding the worth of a summer experience? How does the summer camp staff experience influence a person’s future success?

Staff Member Benefits and Outcomes: This study aims to assess the benefits and outcomes of summer camp employment. The criteria selected to help make this assessment is the evaluation of changes in Emotional Intelligence (EI). EI encompasses many of the skills, attributes, and abilities that are often developed and enhanced through summer camp employment, such as: Flexibility, Problem Solving, Empathy, Emotional Self Awareness, Stress Tolerance, Optimism, Happiness, Interpersonal Relationships. Emotional Intelligence has credibility in the “real world”, with Fortune 500 corporations and human resources professionals, as an accurate indicator of employment success and leadership ability. EI has been seen to have the ability to predict who is likely to succeed and who is likely to fail. Research on EI has helped to demonstrate which human abilities make up the greater part of the ingredients for excellence at work, most especially for leadership. EI is considered the new yardstick against which essential human talents will be measured and advancement decisions will be made (Goleman, 1998).

Staff Recruitment: An understanding of the changes that take place throughout a summer camp experience can prove extremely beneficial in the recruitment of staff members. The ability to attract large numbers of qualified applicants is often a challenge for summer camp directors (American Camping Association, 1995). A working knowledge of the benefits of a summer camp position can assist camp directors in conveying these benefits to potential staff members, through employment marketing efforts and during the interview and selection process. In addition, knowledge regarding summer camp’s ability to promote changes that will contribute to one’s life success can be critical. This knowledge provides camp administrators with the ability to present a summer camp staff experience to potential staff members, and influential others such as parents, peers, and college advisors, as an investment in the future.

Staff Training and Development: This study not only provides information on some of the benefits and outcomes of summer camp employment, but also offers insights regarding which components, aspects, attributes, and programs of the summer camp staff experience lead to these specific benefits and outcomes. This rich information can help guide camping professionals as they plan for summer camp staff training. Camp directors can proceed with intentionality and purpose as they attempt to bolster and highlight the components, programs, and aspects of a summer camp experience that have been seen to contribute to an increase in staff members’ emotional intelligence levels.

Summary: The findings of this study will allow camping professionals, seasonal employees, and the camping community to clearly explain why summer camp employment is a “real job”. These findings will help the camping profession establish the bridge that connects and transfers the skills, talents, attributes, and abilities enhanced through a summer camp employment experience to life beyond summer camp. Summer camp employment not only provides fun in the sun and meaningful work, but also helps equip staff members with critical competencies that contribute to career and leadership advancement.

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The Unique Contributions and Impacts of the Camp Staff Experience

Purpose: The goal of the research was to ascertain the unique contributions and impacts that camps have made on individuals who have worked as camp staff. Professionals in the camping field know that many young adults, who have worked at camp, have gained the skills and confidence through those experiences that have made major impacts in their personal lives, careers and the leadership roles they hold in their communities. Attracting, training and retaining staff at camp has become a challenge due to the number of choices for summer employment and alternative experiences for young adults. Staffing was identified by the board of directors and the delegates at the 2001 national conference of the American Camping Association as one of the top strategic challenges. If we can more clearly articulate some of the benefits of the camp staff experience to prospective applicants, we would better be able to attract and retain young adults of the highest caliber to work with our campers.

Sample: A study was conducted with 188 camp staff representing 117 different resident camps primarily in the northeast. Staff reside during the year in 30 different states and 8 different countries. Eighty-seven camp staff had worked at camp during the summer of 2002 (current staff). The remaining 101 staff (former staff) had worked at camp previously, anywhere from one to 40 years ago; 45 from 1 to 5 years ago, 27 from 6 to 15 years ago, and 29 more than 16 years ago. The mean number of years that all staff had worked at camp was 5.74. The mean age of the current staff was 25.4 years and that of the former staff 35.9 years. For all staff 36.7% were male and 63.7% were female. The education level was quite high. For current staff, 62.8% had completed a BA or more with 17.4% having a MA or more. For former staff, 84.4% had completed a BA or more with 41.3% having a MA or more. Of all staff in the study, 43.1 % had participated in a counselor in training program (CIT) program.

Methods/Instruments: Participants completed an extensive questionnaire that elicited both quantitative and qualitative responses. They were asked to rate (1 – no impact, 2- moderate impact, 3 – much impact) how their camp experience made an impact on the development of their skills or attitudes in 17 different life skills areas. Questions about the impact of the camp staff experience on their relationships, career and educational choices, community involvement and volunteerism, and motivation to work at camp were also included. Open-ended questions relating to the uniqueness of camp and the benefits they received as well as general comments were completed with a great deal of thought. Given the large amount of information received, it seems like staff were extremely enthusiastic about their experiences and felt it valuable to share the details with others. The data was analyzed in a variety of ways. Means were calculated and compared for the 17 different life skills areas and a ranking was obtained for current and former staff groups. Percentages were calculated for most of the other questions. The qualitative data was grouped according to certain themes, providing most valuable “testimony” to the individual impact of the camp staff experience.

Results: There was not a lot of difference between the rankings for current and former staff. This supports the understanding that the life skills ranked are universal and can stand the test of time. For the purpose of this study, generalizations will be made on the combined data. The life skills with the highest mean scores, obtaining a ranking in the top four include leadership skills, sense of responsibility, ability to relate to children, and self-confidence. Those ranked five through seven include conflict resolution skills, group or team skills, and decision-making skills. The next grouping, ranked eight through ten included role models or mentors, people of different backgrounds and sense of life purpose. The rankings continue with sense of involvement in community, appreciation of the natural environment, administrative skills, developing creativity, parenting skills, volunteer commitments, and sense of spirituality. For the question regarding motivation to work at camp, the reasons with the highest percentages (92-86%) and clearly the top three included that it was fun, they wanted to work with children and they enjoyed being outdoors. A high percentage (51%) was also found for those saying they were a camper and always wanted to be a counselor and gaining skills for future employment, about a third of the participants chose camp because a friend encouraged them or they wanted to explore a new state or country.

High percentages of both current (56.7%) and former staff (64.7%) had not chosen a career before coming to camp. For current staff (73.8%) and former staff (51.7%) camp made an impact on their career choice. For about half of the participants, camp had made an impact on their educational choices. For current staff 45.8% have taken on leadership in professional organizations, and this has been the case for 57.4% of the former staff.

A very high percentage of camp staff are currently involved in their communities. Of the current staff 41.4% and of the former staff 63.8% currently do community volunteer work. Several (5.7% current staff, 10.6% former staff) have held elected office. More than a third have volunteered for their camp.

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Camp has made a huge impact on the friendships staff have made and kept for many years. The mean number of close friends they have for current staff is 8.75, former staff 1-5 years ago 7.44, 6 to 15 years ago 4.12, and even after 15 years, 2.78.

Practical Applications

This research has numerous applications for the camp director, individual staff members, and the American Camping Association. One of the motivations for this research was to gather information on specific life skills that camp staff gain at camp as well as other data that can be used to enhance marketing efforts for staff recruitment. The research supports the marketing messages that camp is a safe and nurturing environment, a caring community, and a vital element in education and enables us to better understand the benefits staff value from the camp experience.

Camp is a unique environment that provides many opportunities for personal growth. Each camp develops its own culture and individuals must learn how to work in a situation unlike any other. Camp also encourages risk taking and being open to opportunities to try new things. These might be learning new skills, working with children or people from different backgrounds or the responsibilities of holding a new job and being part of a team. Some of the personal benefits staff often mentioned that they gained at camp include independence, self confidence, morals and ethics, techniques in social situations, sense of humor, being more relaxed, responsibility, decision making, sense of life purpose, role models, compassion, commitment, respect and new interests.

It is important for staff to realize that many of the skills they learn at camp have been shown to be important factors of success in the workplace. In addition to some skills mentioned above, camp staff also recognized that they gained skills in problem solving, communications, organization, supervision and management, as well as flexibility, creativity, compassion, patience, a sense of humor, and work ethics.

Many staff are working at camp during times of transition in their lives. The results of this study clearly show that camp has had a major influence on career and educational choices. Camp provides a "testing ground" to try out new behaviors, develop interests which they may not have had the opportunity to explore, and a place where they can receive structured and compassionate feedback as well as support.

Several implications for staff training can be gleaned from the many comments from staff. When we understand who staff are and their greatest needs, camp directors can structure staff training opportunities to maximize the most learning. They can make the most of returning staff in a way that enables them to model the benefits they have received and promotes smooth integration of new staff. Through supervision and a process of self-evaluation staff can learn to identify what they have learned and how they will translate that back into "their world after camp". A large percentage of staff have been campers and also counselors in training.

Camps who "grow their own" staff have the opportunity to start the education and awareness process early. They can also take advantage of the incredible friendships that form and grow from year to year. Staff reported that the friendships they made at camp are quite different from others in their lives. Some of the special qualities they mentioned include that there is a great deal of respect and trust, the friendships seem more genuine and have a special bond or closeness, there is a lot of support, and friendships develop between people who in any other situation might never have thought they would have anything in common and be attracted to each other.

Camps need to remember that these connections and loyalty are important in their camp operation. Former camp staff often enjoy keeping in touch, play important roles in public relations through the recruitment of campers and staff, can fill a number of volunteer roles, and provide financial support. As shown in the research, a large percentage of former staff are active volunteers in their community establishing good community ties.

Translating the value of the camp staff experience for community leaders is important. Camps can be partners in community development. They can make an economic impact in the town, provide employment opportunities, or establish strong environmental awareness and stewardship programs. It is important to take the time to form good relationships with community leaders, for these can have lasting benefits for the camp and the community and in a time of crisis can be invaluable.

The applications of this research continue to be explored. As we continue to find out more about the impact of camp on the camper, it brings me to question if there is knowledge gained that is applicable to the impact of camp on staff as well.

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Bridging Schools to Camp Residential Outdoor Education Program Outcomes

Data Collection- The purpose of this study was to measure teacher perception of student learning resulting from exposure to the 2003 4-H Camp Palmer Outdoor Education program. Using a single page survey, with ratings from 1 (none) to 5 (most) of the students, teachers were asked to measure 13 indicators and respond to 3 open ended questions. The surveys were sent to schools one full week after their 3-5 day residential outdoor education experience. Surveys were sent in a packet to the school principal and each survey had the teacher's name on a sticky note.

Sampling- This survey was conducted in the spring and fall of 2003. The total number of participants attending Outdoor Education, including students, counselors and teachers was 1,045. The survey was sent to 50 teachers and 34 were returned. Of those returned half were from the spring and half were from the fall program.

Instrument Development- The list of 13 indicators was developed using the Outdoor Education program goals, Ohio State University Extension 4-H youth development key elements, expert opinion and historical information. *Indicators:* Learned new skills, Improved communications with peers, Improved communications with teachers, Increased decision making skills, Improved cooperation, Discovered new things that they were good at, Transferred skills learned at camp to the classroom. *Gained knowledge in subject areas:* Language arts, Social Studies, Math, Science, Art/Music, Physical Education.

Open ended questions: What was a highlight for your students while attending camp? What was the greatest impact the camp experience has had on your students? Additional Comments?

Findings-

1. After attending 4-H Camp Palmer's Outdoor Education program teachers rated the greatest gain in students in these indicator items: Learned new skills (4.63); Discovered new things that they are good at (4.48); and Improved cooperation (4.39).
2. The highest gains in subject areas were Science (4.45) Physical Education (4.38), and Art/music (4.12).
3. The overall ratings were high with the lowest average being for the indicators of: Increased decision making skills (3.9) and the subject area of Language arts (3.5).
4. The open-ended question identified gains in gross motor activities as highlights for the students. These activities are not normally found at school: Canoeing, archery, zipline, night hikes, reptile class taught using live snakes, evening dances.
5. The greatest impacts identified in the open question were realized in cooperation, communication, respect for one another, working together toward a common goal, being part of a group, and communicating.

Implications- Although this survey is specific to 4-H Camp Palmer, these findings provide insight and direction to other outdoor education providers seeking to measure specific program accomplishments and short falls. Here are some conclusions drawn from the survey:

- Classroom space is limited but camp space is open. Conducting lessons that require large spaces (fields, woods), specialized equipment (zipline, canoes, bows and arrows) or land features (lake, wetland) and involve gross motor activity make the camp/school experience unique.
- Outdoor Education can be broken up into two components: Classes and Living Together. As much effort should go into development of the Living Together Curriculum as goes into Classes. We need to be deliberate in developing this unique aspect of our program and marketing it to our schools.
- The 4-H Camp Palmer Outdoor Education program has a high approval rating in most indicators. The bridge between schools and 4-H Camp Palmer in northwest Ohio is strong.

2004 Camp Research Symposium
**4-H and School Based Outdoor Education Partnership:
Assessing Problem Solving and Teamwork Skills**

Purpose: The purpose of this research was to measure the impact of a 4-H and school based outdoor education partnership. The more specific focus of this study was to determine the impact of outdoor education on student ability to solve problems and work as a team.

Sample: The sample consisted of five, sixth grade classes and one, fifth grade class (221 students total) from an urban school district, in a Midwestern city who participated in an outdoor education partnership program. Of the 221 total students completing the survey, 157 surveys received parental consent to participate in this study.

Treatment: The outdoor education partnership is a three-day, two-night stay at a residential camp facility. The camp and school work together to provide a range of educational opportunities including team building, high element ropes course, canoeing, prairie, history, geology, stream, forest, and astronomy. Along with educational curriculum, these opportunities teach life skills such as problem solving and teamwork.

Methods/Instruments: The survey was developed using Purdue University, Cooperative Extension's 4-Fold Youth Development Model instruments. The problem solving and leadership instruments were shortened and changed into a retrospective pre-post survey format to reduce the time required to take the survey and to eliminate 'frame of reference' bias. The revised survey was reviewed by Evaluation Specialist, Dr. Kay Rockwell at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. The Camp Director administered the survey during the closing activities of each school's outdoor education program.

Results: This study provided qualitative and quantitative evidence that the outdoor education program resulted in increased student ability to solve problems and work as a team. Responses reflected ten general themes: trust, communication, getting along, new experiences, making friends, curriculum and activities, problem solving, teamwork, fun, and non-specific responses. The quantitative results were significant ($p < .001$) for all problem solving and teamwork questions and from all participant groupings (gender, grade level, school).

Practical Applications

Benefits to Camps: This study provides research that supports schools and organizations who hope to partner in providing outdoor education to youth. Many camps have facilities located in natural surroundings, ample educational resources and a need for increased participation and revenue. These qualities alone make pursuing an outdoor education partnership valuable.

Benefits to Schools: This study responds to a call by the National 4-H Council to include experiential education (ex: outdoor education) into 20% of existing school curriculums. Schools seek resources and support for the teaching of life skills (problem solving, teamwork, communication, leadership), as well as hands-on educational opportunities for youth.

Financial Applications: This study can assist in justifying school budget dollars being used for outdoor education due to the curriculum and impact provided to students. Camps may increase their revenue through this program by increasing off-season (spring, fall) programming, while maintaining a mission of providing summer camp programs.

Variables: The study focused on measuring the problem solving and teamwork abilities of outdoor education participants. The survey included demographic information about grade level, gender and school. These items helped in determining that the program showed impact for all grade levels, genders and schools that participated, therefore, allowing us to determine that these variables did not effect the overall impact individually.

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“Photovoice: Empowering Campers and Strengthening Camp Communities”

Description of the Research Process

Purpose: The purpose of the project was to empower young people and to collect qualitative data from campers who are already participants in a longitudinal study. The focus was to gather information from the campers’ photographs, discussions, and writings about the aspects of camp which are most meaningful to them. The intended camp outcomes will be compared to the outcomes experienced by this cohort of campers. The photographs and ideas generated through Photovoice will be shared with camp staff, campers, and supporters in order to take action on the themes expressed by the campers.

Sample: Forty-five rising seventh grade campers were chosen to participate in the Photovoice project. All campers are from inner city, low resource neighborhoods. This cohort of campers has been involved in a longitudinal outcomes study for three years. The focus of that study is to track the progress of the campers as well as determine which aspects of the program are positively impacting their development. All participants signed consent forms and agreed to have their work used for research and educational purposes.

Methods: Photovoice was developed by Caroline Wang, a public health researcher, as a “method that enables people to define for themselves and others, including policy makers, what is worth remembering and what needs to be changed” (Wang, 2003). The goals of the methodology are to give people the opportunity to express their ideas about their communities, facilitate discussion about personal and collective experiences, and impact decision-makers, through imagery (Wang et al., 2000). It is based on Paulo Freire’s empowerment education, which uses discussion to foster critical consciousness about one’s life experiences (Freire, 1970).

This methodology was used at a residential camp in New York in the summer of 2003. The project consisted of asking participants to express what camp means to them and how they generalize camp lessons to their home environments. Each child received two disposable cameras and each group had one camera to share. The campers participated in discussions sessions, writing exercises and the creation of photography displays. Over a three week period, campers in Session 1 attended five single gender workshops. Adjustments were made to the schedule after Session 1 to make it more fast-paced. Session 2 Photovoice consisted of four single gender workshops over a two week period. The campers in Session 1 chose to photograph the topic ‘What I like about camp’ and Session 2 campers chose ‘What is special to me at camp.’ The campers were given cameras to take home and asked to photograph things that remind them of camp and the lessons they learn at camp.

Results: The campers’ writings, photographs and discussions were coded and grouped into themes. The five main themes that have arisen out of the campers’ work are: 1. the beauty of the natural environment, 2. the great places at camp, 3. the people, particularly the staff and older campers who are role models and Camp Little Siblings who provide the opportunity to be role models, 4. parts of camp life, such as swimming, music, teamwork, and things only available at camp, and 5. feelings, such as the people are fun, nice, and helpful and respect and peace are present at camp. One of the most important results of the project is that the campers engaged in the process and with one another in order to articulate their perceptions of the camp experience.

References

- Freire, P., (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Seabury.
Wang, C. (2003). Retrieved from www.photovoice.com on April 21, 2003.
Wang, C., Cash, J & Powers, L. (2000) *Health Promotion Practice*. “Who Knows the Streets as Well as the Homeless? Promoting Personal and Community Action Through Photovoice.” Jan, 1(1): 81-89.

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Research Applications

Photovoice was developed in the field of public health but it holds many benefits for camp communities. Photovoice empowers campers to use their creative talents and express their ideas in order to show others what camp means to them. Campers choose a theme to photograph and then discuss and display their work. This process allows camp staff and sponsors to learn about the experiences of campers through their photographs, focused discussions, and writing. The information can be analyzed to determine whether the goals of camp programs are being met.

Camp communities can use this method to build their knowledge of how campers perceive the environment. Camper discussions about the photographs and the themes which arise provide a space for young people to think critically about the impact of camp on their lives.

Leading a Photovoice module offers benefits to camps and camp directors such as:

- empowering campers to reflect on their experiences at camp and share their thoughts with peers and adults,
- encouraging campers to learn to express their ideas through photography as well as communicate through writing,
- providing information to camp staff about how programs and the overall camp experience are impacting campers,
- “seeing” and recording the aspects of camp which are most meaningful to campers,
- offering insights into how to improve programs, use staff time most effectively, and allocate funding, and
- generating images and written materials that can directly show new camp families and sponsors how camp impacts the lives of young people.

Photovoice was implemented at a residential camp in New York in the summer of 2003. Campers chose to take photographs which related to the themes ‘What I like about camp’ and ‘What is special to me about camp.’ Once the photographs were developed, the campers talked about why they chose to take each picture, did writing exercises and created exhibits to display. The project also had a take-home component. The campers were asked to bring cameras home and take pictures that reminded them of camp or the lessons they learn there. Some of the main themes that arose from the data about the most well-liked things at camp were:

- The great places at camp- it is also important to note which program areas were *not* mentioned
- The people, particularly the staff and older campers who are role models and Camp Little Siblings who provide the opportunity to be role models
- Feelings, the people are fun, nice, and helpful and respect and peace are present at camp
- Parts of camp life, such as swimming, music, teamwork, and things only available at camp

It becomes clear by looking at their photos and writings that many of the campers’ most meaningful moments at camp are not readily obvious. For example, one theme that arose is the importance of eating meals together in the dining hall. More abstract concepts such as feeling free and having counselors that make them feel safe are also present in many pictures and writings.

Beyond statistics and stories told by adults, the photographs and captions written by campers allow outsiders and decision-makers to “see” through the eyes of young people. Photovoice participants are given the ability to change their environment by sharing with others what camp means to them.