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Multimodal Homesickness Prevention

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Factors that Motivate Parents to Enroll Children in Summer Camp Programs

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The influence of sense of community on summer camp staff retention

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Camp Counselor Motivations for Choosing Summer Resident Camp Employment

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Results of a Study of the Ohio 4-H Camp Counseling Experience and Implications for Programming

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Impacts of Wilderness-Based Expedition Trips on Participants' Self Esteem

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Youth and their time spent outdoors

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Retaining qualified staff: Organizational culture and place attachment in a New Hampshire residential summer camp

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Essential to the Mission: Positioning the Camp Experience within the Organization

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Weaving the Seeds of Pastoral Vocation

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Multimodal Homesickness Prevention

Chris Thurber

Abstract

Homesickness is the distress or impairment caused by an actual or anticipated separation from home. It is characterized by preoccupying thoughts of home and attachment objects. In its severe form, homesickness is subjectively distressing and has clinically significant cognitive, emotional, and behavioral sequelae. This study provided 75 boys who ranged in age from 8 to 16 years and who were 1st-year campers at an overnight summer camp with an inexpensive, multimodal homesickness prevention package. Results suggest that combining environmental information, psychoeducation, social support, explicit coping instruction, caregiver education, practice time away from home, and surrogate caregiver training can reduce homesickness and associated behavior problems. These data support the theory that novelty reduction, attitudinal shifts, preseparation coping enhancement, and supportive social environments diminish the negative emotional intensity of homesickness.

Introduction

Although homesickness is an ancient phenomenon, no preventive interventions have yet been empirically tested. However, more than 30 empirical studies have documented the risk factors for homesickness, which include little previous experience away from home, insecure attachment to caregivers, low perceived control, preseparation negative attitudes, social disconnection, and significant cultural and environmental shifts. A combination of psychoeducation, coping instruction, novelty reduction, attitude enhancement, practice separation, preseparation contact with the new environment, and specialized surrogate caregiver training was hypothesized to significantly reduce homesickness intensity and associated behavior problems. The goal was to create an inexpensive, portable prevention program that any camp could use.

Methods

Participants were all boys who ranged in age from 8 to 16 years (mean age = 13.3 years, $SD = 1.7$ years) who camped at a traditional, residential, boys' summer sports camp that offered 2-week sessions. Three months prior to the start of camp, all prospective 1st-year camper families ($n = 80$) received two illustrated color booklets.

The first booklet (16 pages) aimed to enhance positive attitudes and familiarize boys with the camp; the second booklet (12 pages) aimed to educate parents and children about homesickness phenomenology and provide instructions on empirically validated ways to cope with it. One month later, one of several veteran camp staff members called these families to communicate his enthusiasm about their enrollment and answer questions they had about life at camp and coping with homesickness.

At camp, self-report questionnaires were administered every other day to assess campers' moods, levels of homesickness, and satisfaction with camp. Cabin leaders completed rating scales at the end of the session to assess problematic behaviors.

Results

Compared to a demographically equivalent sample of first-year campers who did not receive this multimodal intervention, the first-year campers in this sample were less homesick, enjoyed camp more, and evidenced fewer behavior problems. (See Figure 1.)

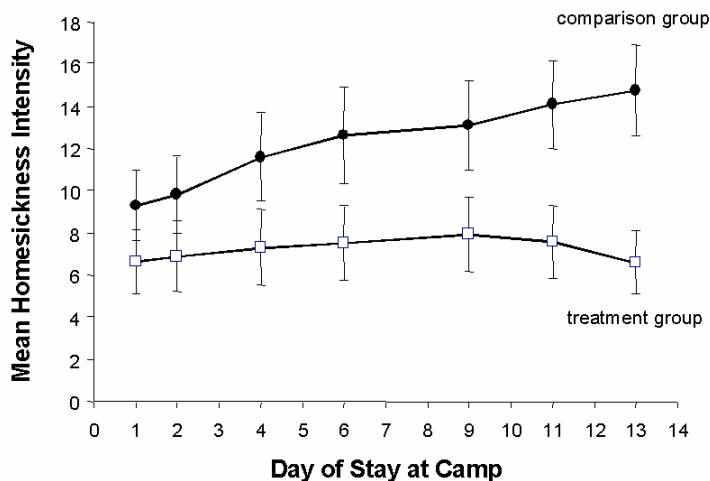
Conclusions

- Severe homesickness is preventable in first-year campers.
- A combination of normalizing homesickness, teaching children ways to cope, encouraging practice time away from home, coaching parents not to make “pick-up deals,” providing social support, and educating children about the upcoming camp experience works by: *reducing novelty, increasing positive attitudes, bolstering coping competence, and building social connections.*
- At a cost of only \$10 per camper, this is an efficient, powerful, portable intervention that any camp could use to reduce homesickness.

Practical Applications

In order to maximize camper’s adjustment and minimize the intensity of their homesickness, the camp needs to take a number of steps:

1. **Design ways to familiarize new campers with camp *before* their arrival.** A major component of the written materials campers received in this study was provision of factual information—both in text and photos—about camp.



2. **Give kids information about the most powerful ways to cope with homesickness.** This information (available in *The Summer Camp Handbook*, by Thurber & Malinowski) increases campers’ confidence in their ability to deal with this developmentally normative phenomenon.
3. **Encourage practice time away from home.** Once children have the information in Step 2, they need to put it to use in the months *before* camp. This could be a weekend at a friend’s house or several day’s at a child’s grandparents.
4. **Discourage “pick-up deals.”** Most children will ask their parents, “What if I feel homesick?” Unfortunately, parents sometimes tell kids “If you feel homesick, I’ll come and get you.” This situation paralyzes your staff and becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Orientation materials must clearly delineate to parents how destructive these “pick-up deals” are.
5. **Promote social connection.** Whether through a pre-camp phone call, a new camper / returning camper buddy system, or other mechanism, camps must design a program wherein new campers feel immediately connected to their peers and surrogate caregivers.

Factors that Motivate Parents to Enroll Children in Summer Camp Programs

Jeff Jacobs

Research Process

Purpose:

The purpose of this study was to assess the factors that motivate parents to enroll their children in summer camp programs.

Sample:

The respondents for this study were adults picking up their children during the 2004 summer camping season from Camp Henry, a traditional summer camp. Camp Henry serves over 1,300 campers each summer, with most campers attending for a one-week session. Campers range in age from 7 to 17.

The respondents for this study were adults picking up their children during the 2004 summer camping season at Camp Henry, a residential, non-profit, co-ed summer camp located in western Michigan. Camp Henry is owned by a Presbyterian church and operates utilizing a traditional summer camping model. Camp Henry serves over 1,300 campers each summer, with most campers attending for a one-week session. Campers range in age from 7 to 17 and come predominately from families living within 200 miles of the camp, which encompasses the area between Chicago and Detroit.

Methods/Instruments:

As adults arrived to pick up their children from camp, they were asked to complete a questionnaire. Completed questionnaires were collected from adults responsible for picking up 48% of departing campers. Of the adults that were asked to participate in this study there was a 92% response rate. The instrument that was used for this study was a self-administered questionnaire that focused on the factors that influenced a parents' decision to select Camp Henry as well as the camper benefits that were most important to parents. The question on motivational factors considered nine different attributes and utilized a five-point liker scale. The question on camper benefits considered 11 different aspects and utilized the same five-point liker scale.

Results:

The Top Five factors that motivate parents to enroll children in summer camp programs are ranked as follows:

1. Quality of Staff & Counselors
2. The Camp's Reputation
3. Programs and Activities
4. Facilities
5. Mission or Program Emphasis

The Top Five camper benefits that are most important to parents are ranked as follows:

1. Increased Self Esteem
2. Respect for Others
3. Fun/Enjoyment
4. Positive Role Models
5. Increased Independence

Practical Applications

The camping industry is becoming more and more competitive. In an effort to “fill beds”, camps have taken on aggressive and innovative marketing campaigns, including; new and improved web sites, highway billboards, and large screen advertising at movie theaters. Yet, several camping professionals and board members will admit to being out of touch with the needs and wants of generation Y, and therefore may be missing the mark with their marketing efforts. In order to be more effective, camping administrators need to know what factors are motivating parents to send their children to summer camp, what benefits are most important to them, and what do they see as the future priorities of summer camping. The old camp mission statement, written 40, 60, or 80 years ago may no longer resonate with today’s campers and parents. While camp traditions remain important, and core values may continue to be the bedrock of camping programs, a new wrapper may be in order to help put some muscle back in the mission and help align a camp’s marketing program with the youth and parents of today.

Camping Professionals should:

1. Pursue strategies that will increase the likelihood of their program delivering the **Top Five** camper benefits.
2. Ensure that marketing and promotional materials emphasize the **Top Five** factors that motivate parents to enroll children in summer camp programs.
3. Conduct a local study to assess the motivational factors and camper benefits most important to their parent population.

Role of Research:

Research is only helpful for professionals and practitioners if it is able to inform practice and lead to enlightened decisions. The results of this research have the potential to influence and inform the camping industry and to encourage all camping professionals to revisit mission statements with an eye toward targeting the needs and interests of the campers and parents of today.

Camp Director:

It can become a major balancing act trying to honor and maintain past traditions with the demand for cutting edge technology and state of the art programming trends. Camp directors have suffered by both pandering to the “trends of the day” and clinging too tightly to the traditions of the past. Each camp director will need to decide on his/her own how best to create a shared vision of summer camping that can capture the interest of both campers and staff. The ability to gather information from our constituents through evaluations will provide valuable guidepost for this vital process.

Parents:

This study provides valuable information for camping professionals as they strive to be more intentional about creating marketing strategies that can effectively reach parents and address desired camper benefits.

Summary:

The findings of this study will allow camping professionals to better understand what parents are looking for in summer camp programs. This information will help shape marketing and recruitment efforts. In addition, the results provide an opportunity to fine-tune mission statements in an effort to make them more powerful and meaningful as camping professionals attempt to create a shared vision of camping that all stakeholders, including parents and campers, can rally around.

Camp Counselor Motivations for Choosing Summer Resident Camp Employment

Mark Roark

Research Process

Rationale and Purpose

Camp administrators face many issues limiting their recruitment of quality camp staff every year. Some issues include the trend of declining birthrates, the growth of the temporary employment industry, the multiple responsibilities of camp administrators, and the location, living arrangements, and daily schedule of summer resident camps. Previous research indicated the need for more information regarding the motivations of camp staff. Hoff, Ellis, and Crossley (1988) concluded that there is a need to understand how to attract, motivate, and retain seasonal recreation employees. They suggested that leisure agencies might use Herzberg's Motivation Hygiene Theory as a basis for designing strategies for recruitment, job design, and development of seasonal personnel.

The purpose of this study was to examine the degree to which motivation and hygiene items influence personal decisions to become summer resident camp counselors.

Sample

Study participants were employees of Illinois resident camps accredited by the American Camp Association. Camps were randomly selected. The counselors ($N = 190$) were young men ($n = 57$) and young women ($n = 132$). The average age of the respondents was twenty-one. They worked at camp an average of 1.75 summer seasons and sixty-one percent were first year counselors.

Methods/Instruments

***Study Design.* This study, which used a survey research design, investigated the affect of the independent variables of age, gender, education, and number of years on staff with motivation and hygiene items as the dependent variables. The study occurred during the 2000 summer camp season.**

Instrument. The instrument was a survey questionnaire comprised of thirty-three items and a four-point, level of importance, Likert-type scale. Five camp administrators with responsibilities for recruiting summer camp staff reviewed the questionnaire for content validity. The coefficient alphas for the motivation items, $\alpha = .80$, and the hygiene items, $\alpha = .84$, were calculated.

***Data-Gathering Procedures.* Using cluster random sampling procedures, administrators from each camp were asked to administer the questionnaire to his or her counselors who were eighteen years of age or older. Eight of eleven camp administrators returned (i.e., 73 percent) questionnaires. The total questionnaires deemed usable were 190.**

Data Analysis. The mean responses for the motivation and hygiene items were rank ordered indicating the level of importance for counselors choosing summer resident camp employment. The data of this study were also quantitatively analyzed by comparing the influence of gender, age, education, and number of years on staff on the motivation and hygiene items. The parametric test for this study was a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to compute mean differences. The ANOVA compared the mean differences with each independent variable. If statistical significance was reported, post hoc analyses were performed using Tukey's HSD to identify the significance between the attributes of the independent variables.

Results

The top five rank ordered means of the thirty-three items were as follows: (a) Personal satisfaction and enjoyment ($M = 3.76$), (b) opportunity to be a role model for youth ($M = 3.74$), (c) opportunity to work with youth ($M = 3.70$), (d) opportunity to meet people and make new friends ($M = 3.69$), and (e) opportunity for personal growth ($M = 3.67$).

Practical Applications

What are you doing this summer? Many prospective summer employees, some of whom are being recruited for summer camp positions, hear this question each spring across the United States. A question many camp administrators ask is, “What motivates counselors to choose summer resident camp employment?” The findings of this investigation may offer a better understanding of why some choose resident camp positions. The following recommendations may assist camp administrators with recruiting prospective counselors.

Administrators should **market camp counselor positions using the top five** most important considerations. The top five most important considerations to camp counselors for choosing summer resident camp employment, according to this study, are ranked as follows: 1) Personal satisfaction and enjoyment, 2) Opportunity to be a role model for youth, 3) Opportunity to work with youth, 4) Opportunity to meet people and make new friends, and 5) Opportunity for personal growth. In regard to these top five considerations, counselors want camp positions that offer an opportunity to exhibit altruistic qualities, expand their social network, and challenge them personally.

Administrators should **design programs that are challenging and successful** by training and allowing staff to teach activities that are familiar and unfamiliar resulting in the personal growth of staff. For example, performing a camp skit with which they are familiar, as well as those that are not familiar will keep them oscillating their psychological comfort and growth zones providing them with opportunities and personal challenges for psychological success.

Intentionally build community among staff. Staff, as a whole, want to have a sense of belonging in their camp community. It is important for staff to build community among themselves by reuniting and sharing their experiences with other staff. It might benefit camp administrators to intentionally provide time during the summer for these staff interactions to occur. Staff swims, craft night, ultimate frisbee, movie night, or a cookout are examples of staff activities that could be implemented.

The opportunity for advancement was more important to twenty-two to twenty-three year olds than to eighteen to nineteen year olds. This implies that the goals of twenty-two to twenty-three year olds are more focused on developing career skills while eighteen to nineteen year olds are not as career focused because they are in an earlier stage of personal and professional maturation. Accordingly administrators should **design programs with positional progression** allowing for personal growth to occur for staff and specifically tailor job responsibilities to match career goals for twenty-two to twenty-three year olds. In the case when progressive positions are not feasible, camp administrators should support their staff in future career endeavors with employment references.

Despite the fact that parental influence on a counselor’s choice to work at camp was ranked last, it was significantly more important to third year staff than to any other staff. This implies that parental influence plays a role in the choice for a second year staff person to return for a third year to work at camp. Contributing to this may be the fact that parents typically believe it is time their child should get a “real” job and earn money to begin gaining “real” life experiences. It would behoove camp directors to **send a letter of appreciation to the counselors’ parents** who may be returning for their third year. This letter should deliver the significance of their son or daughter’s professional and personal development they are acquiring through summer camp experiences.

Results of a Study of the Ohio 4-H Camp Counseling Experience and Implications for Programming

Niki Nestor McNeely and Theresa M. Ferrari

Research Process

Purpose. Camping has a long history within 4-H. However, most research in the field of camping has focused on camper outcomes. Considering the amount of resources invested, significance of the counselor's role, and concerns for accountability, this descriptive-correlational study sought to identify the contributions of 4-H camp counselor participation to positive youth development.

Sample. The study was designed as a census of the population ($N = 2,575$) of youth who served as volunteer camp counselors at 4-H residential and day camp programs. There was a 30.25% response rate of camp counselors ($n = 779$). The findings provided a snapshot of who Ohio 4-H camp counselors are through the demographic data collected. It told us that three-fourths of the counselors were female and one-fourth was male with the average age of 15.7 years. The median grade was 10th grade. The counselors reported an average of nearly eight years of 4-H membership and four and one-half years of previous 4-H camp participation as a camper.

Methods/Instruments. Data were collected with two instruments, one developed by the researcher, which described the duration, intensity and breadth (Chaput, Little, & Weiss, 2004) of the camp counseling experience. The Youth Experiences Survey (YES; Hansen & Larson, 2002), was used to measure the extent to which 4-H camp counselors experienced personal and interpersonal development through their participation in the camp counseling experience, as well as the extent of negative experiences they may have encountered. The instrument measured six domains of personal and interpersonal development, as well as five negative aspects, totaling 70 items organized into 17 subscales. All used a four-point response scale, ranging from 1 (*Not at all*) to 4 (*Yes, definitely*). The positive scales had Cronbach's *alphas* ranging from .72 to .87 with the exception of Identify Exploration (.54). Negative Experience scales ranged from .59 to .82. These figures are consistent with those reported by Hansen and Larson (2002).

Results. 4-H camp counselors participated from one to six years with a mean of 2.2 years ($SD = 1.21$). They spent an average of 20 hours in planning and training sessions. In addition, they spent more than 13 hours in camp preparation beyond countywide training and planning. Most spent between four and five days at camp. Three-fourths reported they had taught two or more formal topics, and over half were required to prepare lesson plans. Two primary areas of responsibility were supervision in cabins and in groups. More than 60% provided leadership to an average of 2.42 committees, and nearly 90% reported having served on 2 to 3 planning committees.

The counselors reported a high level of Teamwork and Social Skills, Initiative, Identity, and Interpersonal Relationships (scale $M_s = 3.10 - 3.55$). To a lesser extent, they are reported having experiences related to developing Basic Skills and Adult Networks (scale $M_s = 2.60 - 2.96$, except for Emotional Regulation, $M = 3.26$). They reported a very low level of Negative Experiences (scale $M_s = 1.11 - 1.44$), although several items had a higher frequency—presence of cliques, stress, unfair workload, interference with family activities, and presence of controlling adults.

There was a significant positive relationship between the number of years as a camp counselor and the development of Leadership and Responsibility. The longer teens were camp counselors, the higher the mean score was on the YES Leadership and Responsibility scale.

Practical Applications

The current research is consistent with past studies that document positive outcomes for 4-H camp counselors (Forsythe, Matysik, & Nelson, 2004; Garst & Johnson, 2003; Weese, 2002), but extends previous research by viewing it within the framework of organized youth activities (Hansen, Larson, & Dworkin, 2003). This study was unique in describing the experience in terms of a multifaceted view of participation that reflected significant intensity, duration, and breadth. This view of participation is important because Bronfenbrenner & Morris (1998) argued that if such activities are to be effective in enhancing development, they must take place on a regular basis, over an extended period of time, and become increasingly more complex. This certainly was evident in the camp counseling experience. Accordingly, positive outcomes related to adolescent development were demonstrated.

This research suggests several important implications for those who work with camp programs:

1. Ensure that stakeholders understand that the camp counseling experience provides unique opportunities to promote positive youth development.
2. Capitalize on the potential to promote camp counseling as a workforce preparation experience. Specifically, camp counseling helps youth to develop valuable workforce skills, particularly leadership, teamwork, initiative, and interpersonal skills. Facilitators can assist camp counselors in recognizing the importance of these skills now and in the future, and design training accordingly.
3. Areas where counselors identified negative experiences should be addressed through modifications to counselor training and the supervision provided by adults facilitating the camp program. Additional focus on team building, purposeful mixing of counselors, and discussion of ethical questions prior to camp may help to address some of these negative experiences.
4. Youth development professionals must deliberately include a variety of interesting and challenging activities as part of the camp counseling experience, as well as provide a balance of structure and youth ownership. In doing so, the opportunity exists to increase the youth development benefits.

The 4-H camp counseling experience provides a rich context for positive youth development.

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Impacts of Wilderness-Based Expedition Trips on Participants' Self Esteem

Tomas Amodio and Sarah Richardson

Purpose

The primary purpose of this study was to analyze the effect of wilderness-based expeditions on the self-concept of adolescents participating in expeditionary length trips at Camp Manito-wish, Y.M.C.A. The study assessed pre- and post-trip changes to self concept and explores the effects of pre-trip motivation, trip length, program modality, post-trip satisfaction, and participant gender on these changes. The six research questions guiding this study asked if there was indeed a self-concept change after a wilderness experience. And if so, which of these factors were essential in influencing that change.

Sample

The population is composed entirely of campers participating in Manito-wish summer 2002 Outpost trips. These trips include the Isle Royal (14 day backpacking trip), Pioneers (14 day canoe trip), Georgian Bay (14 day sea kayak trip), Westerns (25 day backpacking trip), Mariner (25 day sea kayak trip), and the Expeditionary Backpacking (43 day backpacking trip). The programs the campers participated in ranged from 14-43 days in length and the campers' ages ranged from 14-19. All are single sex trips of four to six participants, led by one leader. The total population was 103, with a sample size of 94, and a response rate of 91.3%. This included all participants on all trips including the one trip that was not surveyed upon return from their trip due to time constraints. All participants in the Outpost program were either invited to attend after having participated in a prior Manito-wish experience, or were invited after completing an interview process.

Methods/Instruments

The data collection consisted of a two part written surveys administered before and after the camper's wilderness expedition. Additionally demographic and trip characteristics were acquired through camp resources. Within 24 hours of their arrival at Manito-wish, campers were administered two surveys. The first of these surveys, 1996 Revised Version of the Tennessee Self-Concept Survey (TSCS), was used to judge the participants' level of self-concept before embarking upon their wilderness experience (described below). The second survey, administered at the same time as the initial TSCS, was Driver and Tocher's (1996) Recreation Experience Preference (REP) scale (described below). This scale was used to assess the respondents' leisure motivations prior to participating in a wilderness expedition. This scale was administered at the same time as the first TSCS was administered. The participants then took part in a 14 to 43 day wilderness-based expedition. Within 24 hours of returning from this experience the participants re-took the TSCS in order to assess the level of change in self-concept as a result of participating in the wilderness-based expedition. The participants also took Monz's satisfaction survey (described below) in conjunction with the second TSCS in order to measure their level of satisfaction with the wilderness-based expedition they had just experienced.

Results

Findings indicated that participation in Camp Manito-wish, Y.M.C.A. Outpost program increased self-concept in all ten dimensions tested, nine to a statically significant level. The results of the study indicate that of the independent variables tested (pre-trip motivation, post-trip satisfaction, trip length, program modality, and gender), trip length and trip type are not indicators of a propensity toward positive change in self-concept.

Practical Applications

The findings of this study indicate that participation in a wilderness-based expedition has a positive effect upon adolescent self-concept as shown in the pre-post data. Participation in Camp Manito-wish, Y.M.C.A Outpost's program improved the overall self-concept in all ten areas studied by the TSCS, although only nine of the ten dimensions showed a level of statistical significance. The surveying methods used in research identified three variables that had a significant effect upon this increase in self-concept, gender, pre-trip motivation, and post-trip satisfaction, while trip type and length had no significant impact upon self-concept change. These results are a reconfirmation of the literature; wilderness-based expeditions do increase participant self-concept (Wright 1982; Gillett, Thomas, Skok, & McLaughlin 1991; Hazelworth & Wilson 1990; Ewert 1983; Ewert 1989; Hattie, Marsh, Neil, & Richards 1997; Carson & Gillis 1994; Neill & Richards 1998).

What does this mean to camp directors and other professionals? First and foremost it reinforces the positive benefit of wilderness experiences for adolescent growth. It furthers the belief and research that points to the increased benefits of wilderness for our female participants. The hinge here is the wilderness experiences, there needs to be access to this wilderness. There needs this immersion into the wild, not necessarily of length but of quality. This research found no difference in self-concept change between a 14 and 45 day trip, meaning that there is an optimal trip length for change to occur and it is somewhere shorter than this, a subject of further research.

The relationship between pre-trip motivation and change in self-concept yields an interesting result for recreation programs. The research showed that the strongest motivation for participants was to be with similar people, this area also resulted in a significant change in self-concept. With the knowledge that Manito-wish Outpost program is comprised almost entirely of previous Manito-wish campers, the data lends to the importance that adolescent place on these friendships, be they only for a few weeks every summer. We need to foster these friendships, during the summer and the off-season, in order to perpetuate camper retention and keep the beds full.

While the research indicates that this significant change in self-concept occurring in a program with an overall high degree of participant satisfaction, this is limited in that there were no negative responses to participant satisfaction and this research can not show if self-concept change occurs with a less than exemplary wilderness experience.

It is a unique combination of these and additional variables that cause the outcomes we as recreation professionals seek as a result from an experience within our programs. It is through this understanding of the outcomes our programming has upon our consumer base that we are able to adjust and advance our programming in order to further our missions as individual programs. It then is up to us to continue researching. It is through research isolating individual and multiple outcomes that we will be able to understand what causes self-concept growth and be able to program for specific growths.

Further research is needed in order to more clearly identify and define the aspects of the wilderness experience and their participants that produce these increases in self-concept. Recommendation for future research include analysis using additional variables and outcomes, the inclusion of a control group, and the inclusion of additional longitudinal post-tests to measure retention of effect.

Youth and their time spent outdoors

Kate Weidner and Mike Leigh

Research Process

How do people begin their interest in outdoor recreation, specifically camping? Originally interested in the non-user, we decided instead to find out in an exploratory study if camping is a major part of the program for Girl Scout troops in the Raleigh-Durham area of North Carolina.

As a project for our Outdoor Recreation class at N.C. State University, we developed an initial survey instrument and tested it on about 40 Girl Scouts at an outdoor event. It was important that we begin with a definition of camping so that the survey participants all started off with the same notion of camping. For our survey instrument, we defined camping as “spending one or more nights in the outdoors sleeping in a tent, cabin with no running water or electricity, or under the stars.” We focused on Girl Scouts between the ages of 8 and 15 so that they could, for the most part, read the questions on their own with minimal help from us or their Troop Leaders.

Those who had been camping were asked to complete the full survey at their own pace. Those who had not been camping received a very similar, but shorter survey. If girls had questions, they were answered individually. Questions in the survey included ones about their Girl Scout experience, camping experience(s), favorite aspects of camping, perceived benefits from camping, age, years of Girl Scout membership, and camping decisions influences.

Approximately 40 Troops were contacted and 19 troops have been surveyed. Troop size varied quite a bit ranging from two to 22 girls. To date, 128 girls have been surveyed. Analyses of the current data have given us the following information. Of these, 124 or 99.8% had previous camping experience. Only four girls had never been camping before. The mean age of respondents was 11.4 years with a range of 8.5 to 16 years. Mean years of Girl Scout membership was 5.43 years with a range of 0 to 11 years. Nearly all (97%) of the girls wanted to camp again with the Girl Scouts and 98% would like to camp with their family.

Of the girls first camping experience 56% where with the Girl Scouts, 39% them camped with family for the first time. Reviewing these figures, it is clear that, many girls first experience camping was with the Girl Scouts. Of the girls who have camped with the Girl Scouts, 65% have also gone camping with there family. We do not know if the child’s positive experience influences the parents’ interest in camping. It does seem that some girls would not have a camping experience if it were not for their involvement in Girl Scouting.

Girls were asked “How did you feel about going camping the first time?” The response scale was 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree).

<u>Statement</u>	<u>Mean</u>
I looked forward to camping.	1.63
I was excited about going.	1.77
I was nervous.	3.53
I felt like I had to go.	3.81
I was worried.	3.92

Camping seems to be a highly anticipated event. Girls seemed to be slightly nervous as opposed to worried about their first camping trip

Practical Applications

Girl Scout councils should support troop camping to aid in the progression to day and resident camping opportunities. Councils could aid by making outdoor training friendly to adults who do not have camping experience, creating tools that Troop Leaders could use to teach girls camping skills, and by offering trainings often and in a variety of areas. Councils should also have a progression of outdoor activities for troops to sign up for. By planning half day events for young girls at council camp properties, girls can learn about the outdoors and get used to the environment. They could progress to the next level of overnight camping.

Other agency camps and private camps could partner with local Girl Scout troops. Girl Scout councils can be quite large with some of the constituents living closer to your camp than to their own Girl Scout sponsored property. By offering your property as a training or event site, you can find new customers for your site. Girl Scout troops are interested in sites for weekend camping.

By finding out if your campers engage in outdoor recreation beyond what they do when they are on your site, you might be able to find ways to reach new customers for your camp.

By researching expectations that your campers have about camp and the outdoors, you might be able to alleviate fears that they might have about the unknown. Your marketing to youth should be on their level and address their concerns about what camp and the outdoors environment at camp might be like.

**Retaining qualified staff:
Organizational culture and place attachment in a New Hampshire residential summer camp**
Jason Bocarro

Purpose

Over ten million children experience the independence of summer camp each year (ACA, 2004), due to the dedication of individuals who devote their summers to supporting a positive experience for young people at American summer camps. These camps currently employ more than 1,200,000 professionals, college students, and others as counselors, program/activity leaders, unit and program directors/supervisors, and support services (ACA, 2003). Some of these employees maintain a faithful bond with their camp, returning year after year. For the most part, camp staff turnover is high (Waskul, 1998), which poses a series of challenges for any program. A greater understanding of camp culture and how it leads to staff retention and attrition rates will allow camp directors and administrators to address the issue and importance of staff quality. Indeed research within the positive youth development field (Yohalem, 2003) has shown a direct correlation between low staff turnover rates and high program quality. Thus, understanding and addressing issues of staff turnover and staff development should be a critical component of any camp director's mandate. This issue was raised more recently by the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2002) in a report that surmised that although there is knowledge about the basic conditions that promote adolescent health and development, there is little knowledge as to how to put these ideas into practice in the context of community-based youth programs in general. Over the past decade, retaining qualified staff has been one of the greatest challenges in the camping industry. Parents demand that camps provide their child with a safe environment and give them a sense of security (ACA, 2002). A staff member who takes responsibility to help create that safe environment for their kids is needed now more than ever. Unfortunately for employers, the temporary job market for people ages 18 to 24 is growing and their expectations for higher wages are rising (Crossen & Yerkes, 1998; DeGraaf, 1996). Camps are reconsidering how they can market their program to potential staff, despite immense responsibility for marginal salaries. To address the issue of staffing, this exploratory study sought to understand the organizational culture and attachments to a place that influence former campers and employees to return as staff members for multiple seasons. It also sought to provide camp directors with an understanding of the salient structural context that guides decisions for staff hiring and staff decisions to return. In addition, it sought to provide a contextual description of the key factors that cultivate an environment conducive to staff attachment to a particular camp. Research based literature on both organizational culture and place attachment served as the foundation of this study.

Methods & Sample

A summer camp in the North East was chosen for this study because of the high number of staff who consistently return each summer (the year of this study 90% of the staff were returning). The camp defines itself as a traditional residential camp emphasizing positive youth development and offering programs for youth aged 8 to 17, accommodating approximately 460 campers per year. Camp sessions range from one to four weeks in length. Twenty six staff members were interviewed individually at a time convenient for each of them. Each interview was taped and lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. All interviews were transcribed verbatim. Furthermore, field notes were recorded daily throughout the summer to gain understanding of the culture identify emerging themes and were used to add context to the interviews and aid in developing new questions as new themes emerged. Observing daily events allowed the researchers to develop a deeper understanding of the culture and to add to the richness of the data.

Data Analysis

In his review of major qualitative studies, Creswell (1998) lists triangulation, peer review, and debriefing as the primary verification procedures most typically used. Themes were identified using a constant comparison method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) whereby four members of a research team separately analyzed all transcribed interviews. The four researchers individually grouped all the statements from the interviews into clusters of common themes. This process of investigator triangulation (Denzin, 1978), where several different researchers separately analyze and code the data, added validity to the research process because it allowed the researchers to utilize multiple sources, perspectives, and methods to corroborate results.

Results

Four prominent themes emerged out of this study relating to the cultivation of a culture by the staff management that facilitated a high staff retention rate. One of the most prominent factors was the degree of time and investment placed upon staff training and development. Staff were thought of and referred to as educators rather than camp counselors. This gave staff more of a sense of making a difference in the lives of the participants they were serving as well as a feeling of professionalism. Staff discussed being impressed at the amount of professional development and training that was offered and how much thought and effort went into training. One of the main motivating factors for most of these staff was the increasing professionalism communicated throughout their experience (from the hiring process right through to the end of the summer). This gave staff a greater sense of credibility and for many they talked about how this helped them to translate many of the skills acquired to future careers. The second theme was the philosophy and consistency exhibited by key staff in full-time leadership positions who continuously modeled the youth development framework throughout all aspects of the program. This began during the hiring process and continued through staff training and also throughout the summer, with built in educational reference groups while camp was in session so that the camp directors and leadership could use “real examples” The third theme was the importance placed upon the development of healthy relationships between staff and how staff felt supported through these relationships. Staff discussed how they felt physically and emotionally safe throughout their time because these relationships help them to experiment and grow professionally. Finally, staff felt empowered because they were bestowed with a sense of duty to create and build the community in which they lived. Thus, many staff constantly discussed feeling “ownership” over the community they lived and worked in.

Practical Applications

How can we get those staff to come back next summer? Many camp directors, after wrapping up another successful summer, have little time to relax before thinking about the following year. Having spent months recruiting, training and developing a cohort of staff, directors wonder what they might do to entice staff to return. The findings of this case study may offer some insight as to how directors can create a culture that encourages staff to return. Undeniably there are organic factors that make camp an attractive environment for social groups of young people (the majority of whom are between 18-24 years old) with similar values. These factors (such as the social nature of camp, socializing with like-minded individuals, etc) are often not a bi-product of direct management action but rather a naturally occurring process. However what this study showed were four motivating factors (described above) that bonded staff to camp that were in the realm of organization and management actions. In many cases this superceded some of these natural processes. For example staff talked about returning even if good friends were not because they were attracted by the prospect to further develop their skills the following year or excited to be given the opportunity to learn in a different role with the same mentorship and guidance. So how can some of the findings be useful to camp directors? First, **communicate your organization’s philosophy through both actions (e.g., staff training) and messages/marketing (e.g., hiring process, brochures)** so there is minimal disconnect between expectations and reality. In the battle to attract quality staff, inconsistent messages are sometimes received resulting in attrition of staff, or weak attachments to place. Second, **set aside time throughout the summer to communicate and reaffirm critical principles and philosophy of organization.** In this case, the directors firmly believed in the positive youth development framework and would communicate the principles throughout staff training, discussing how implementing the framework leads to success for children both in a camp environment and beyond. Throughout the summer and while sessions were in progress, reference groups were held with staff to revisit key components of staff training, seeing how they were playing out “real” situations. This notion of setting aside deliberate time DURING camp sessions was surprisingly one of the most popular and valuable aspects that staff discussed. Third, **present staff with real opportunities to attain skills (both tangible and intangible) that staff can use in future careers.** Although in many cases, camps cannot compete financially with other job opportunities available, staff discussed the valuable skills that they could use (such as expensive certifications, access to workshops during staff training, opportunities to try out/learn new skills and continued staff mentorship and growth throughout the summer). Indeed the relationships cultivated between summer staff and full-time directors was one of the factors that elicited stronger attachment. Finally, **offer sequential job challenges to entice returning staff.** Often directors would communicate potential opportunities for the following year before staff left. That way, staff they wanted to return might be enticed and could plan ahead of time especially if returning would mean other personal and/or professional sacrifices (delay of full time job, moving to a different location, juggling other employment/education opportunities).

Essential to the Mission: Positioning the Camp Experience within the Organization

K. Dale Adkins

Rationale and Purpose:

In today's environment for the professional camp administrator, it is increasingly a challenge to interpret to multiple audiences the value and purpose of the camp experience. The challenge does not end there but becomes more critical when the camp's parent organization is questioning the validity and viability of the camp experience within the context of the overall mission and purpose of the agency/organization. Within basic leisure programming theory (Rossman and Schlatter, 2004), determining what is delivered and provided must always be related to and support the overall mission of the organization.

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of the camp within the context of the agency's organization and structure and its relationship to the agency's purpose.

Method

Sampling. The sampling method used was purposive sampling. The camp professional and the audiences that could lend insight to the future and viability of the camp experience and services within the life of the organization shaped the sampling procedure. Three groups to interview included: summer seasonal administrative staff; full-time year around camp staff; and organizational staff at related service centers. The years of affiliation with the camp included staff with almost one year to 42 years.

Data Collection. The structured interviews occurred within the context of the camp setting with each person on an appointment basis over the course of several weeks during the summer of 2004. The interviewer was the instrument that sought to find insight and themes that would allow the camp to better position itself with the parent organization. The two guiding questions for the project were:

1. How do you think the parent organization perceives camp?
2. How can camp strengthen its relationship to the parent organization?

Data Analysis. The richness of the interviews allowed the staff to convey thoughts and feelings about the context of camp and perceptions that could give direction to the camp professional. Through triangulation of information among staff the data could be confirmed or clarified to add to the understanding that was being sought. As interviews were conducted the interviewer coded the interviews and actively identified themes and ideas that were related that could assist the camp in strengthening its relationship with the parent organization.

Finding Statements. From the interviews conducted and the data collected and analyzed some common themes emerged that the camp can use to better interpret how it "fits" or contributes to the mission and overall purpose of the parent organization.

1. Staff relation to the parent organization impacts perceptions.
2. The need for increased communication between camp and parent organization.
3. The level of involvement by staff with the camp shapes attitudes.
4. The camp must discover approaches to show how the camp facility and program complement what the parent organization is doing.
5. The camp needs to develop collaborative experiences/programs with other departments within the parent organization to gain greater visibility internally.
6. The camp must change perception of the parent organization regarding the camp as being essential to the mission and purpose of the parent organization.

Practical Applications

Why are more camps closing? Why is the camp experience not valued within an agency or organization? Why are more agencies and organizations considering the elimination of the camp experience as a youth development opportunity? The answer to these questions may in part be answered by the ability to show a relationship to the bigger picture of what an organization is doing or is about. The leadership by the camp professional is key to making this connection. The camp professional is in the position to interpret to the multiple audiences that must constantly be nurtured and maintained at all times.

Camp administrators must **spend time with the seasonal summer administrative staff** to help them understand the dynamics of the camp and its relationship with the parent organization. The further removed the summer administrative staff are from the day-to-day operation of camp, the more challenging it is for them to understand why professional staff from the parent organization are not around during the summer. The camp administrator is pivotal in clarifying and assisting summer staff when questions are being asked.

Camp administrators **need to be intentional in creating venues** for the parent organization professionals to be on property during the summer camp experience. The old adage of “out of sight, out of mind” possibly contributes to a perception that camp is not important to the summer staff. The intentionality of visits and presence on camp property while programs are going on could contribute much to staff morale and project a message that what you are about is important. This awareness by summer camp staff by the professional staff of the parent organization that the camp experience is valued would do much to bridge the communication gap of never hearing or seeing anyone from the main office.

The camp may or may not need to do anything different from what it is already doing. The staff with direction from the camp administrator may need to **reframe or reinterpret what is being done** that communicates to the parent organization that the camp experience is contributing to the overall purpose and not a drain on resources. The paradigm shift in today’s world of camp, particularly with nonprofit camps, is essential to be able to continue and remain on the landscape of services to youth and their families.

Even with changing or presenting what a camp does may not be enough to avoid elimination from the service delivery of the parent organization. It is incumbent upon camp administrators to **seek partnerships within the parent organization structure** and show support to and enhancement of what others are doing. The camp experience and property need to become essential to what others are doing as opposed to always being viewed on the receiving end.

Weaving the Seeds of Pastoral Vocation

Cheryl Gans

Research Process

Rationale and Purpose

The field of organized camping needs documentation showing an understanding of the spiritual impact of those who participate in the camp experience. Each summer participants of all ages attend camps, retreats, and mission trips then return home with stories and life changing experiences. An individual regardless of age engages God in a different way at camp beyond their home church setting lead by parents and pastors.

The foundation for theological reflection in this paper centers on the doctrine of the Incarnation with an understanding of worship in the reformed tradition. The Incarnation teaches that children are important because God came as an innocent child. God enters the world as Jesus confined in a human body for the purpose of understanding human challenges. The Incarnation cracks open the door for those desiring to see God's presence in the world.

The purpose of this study is to reveal how adults with previous camp experience reflect on those experiences and how these memories shape their lives and desire to enter ministry as a vocation.

Sample

The study was a qualitative study looking at the camp experience as a foundation for choosing pastoral ministry as a vocation. This exploratory study provided a sample of seven participants with open ended questions concerning the impact of their spiritual formation as a result of their camp experience. The participants ranged in age from 31-56. Geographically the participants were located primarily in the southeast and northeast. Membership in the American Camp Association was held by five participants.

Research Themes

This research reveals five themes resulting from this type of reflection. They are God moments, prayer, God's presence, worship, and trust activities. God moments occur at any time of day during camp. God is revealed while looking intently at creation and finding enjoyment and wonder in all that God created in the natural environment. These activities occur spontaneously through the day. Prayer is a central factor in the camp experience because it occurs as a result of God moments. When campers and staff experience God the natural response is prayer. The leadership at camp usually directs and nurtures the prayer experience. Campers learn to pray continuously while living in a supportive and nurturing environment. There are many opportunities for prayer and campers learn how to pray with others and nurture their growing relationship with God. Thus, God's presence is revealed to the children who take time to look. God is more present in different locations around camp, within people, and within the natural environment. Worship is a natural result of an encounter with God. When a person experiences God they are drawn to offer prayers of praise and thanksgiving. Camps with God intertwined into their programming naturally have opportunities for worship services. Structured worship teaches the faith tradition and lifts praises to God through music and singing, prayer, talks, etc. God enjoys hearing creation sing praises. The final theme is trust activities. This research shows that God is present in activities where trust is vital and necessary. The two main trust activities with a spiritual focus are backpacking and the ropes course.

Camp nurtures the spirit within the individual. Just like fire is needed to open the seeds of the Longleaf pine tree to initiate new growth; the camp experience prepares the foundation of a person's life so that the seeds of faith can be planted and nourished. When the time is right God reveals the memory of the camp environment that nurtured the seeds leading to the desire to pursue ministry as a pastoral vocation.

Practical Applications

Does the camp experience make a spiritual difference in the lives of those that attend? The answer is yes. The camp experience provides a nurturing setting where campers, staff, and directors experience God's love and gain a desire for sharing that unconditional love with others. Camp provides an alternative setting to experience God through the natural environment and corporate worship. As a result participants become aware of God's claim on their lives which lead to a life long commitment of ministry as a vocation.

There are many ways camp directors can spread the seeds of God's unconditional love. One way is to encourage camp staff to stop for **God moments** during the camp day. By teaching staff the importance of seizing the moment and talking with campers about God's creation they may carry this memory into other aspects of their lives. During staff training stop to look at animals, insects, and plants found in God's creation. Ask the staff questions about what they see. Teach the staff to share with campers the joy of hugging a tree or smelling a flower, watching clouds, etc. The response will likely be a prayer of thanksgiving for what is experienced in God's creation.

Teach staff how to incorporate **prayer** into all aspects of the camp experience. Start each day with a prayer using the entire body. For example, have all staff stand up and raise their arms to the sky. In a loud voice offer praises to God for their arms, legs, ears, nose, eyes, etc. Have them touch the part when they offer praises. Next offer prayers for the breath of life. Encourage them to whisper or shout, "I love you God" when they inhale. Then when they exhale have them repeat, "Praise be to God". As a camp director, model prayer through personal study of Scripture and teach staff to do the same. The campers may then model the behavior and desire to respond in the same way. When challenging situations arise teach staff how to diffuse situations through prayer. Prayer mixed with laughter can diffuse an angry situation and turn it into an opportunity for thanksgiving.

Look for God's presence in the natural environment. During staff training give each staff member a journal and suggest they look for and write down every day three things they see in nature and camp that remind them of **God's presence**. During evening devotions refer to the lists made by the staff and offer prayers. Incorporate times during staff training for individual reflection and silence. The staff can then teach campers how to abide in God's presence and see silence as a gift.

Nurture leadership skills in staff and campers through active participation in corporate **worship**. Give staff and campers responsibilities as leaders in worship that nurture their spiritual gifts. Include everyone in the music making and singing during worship. Place a simple instrument (stick, spoon, pots & pans) in their hands and let them experience the rhythm of the tune while praising God. Teach praise songs and sing them all day long.

Develop nurturing physical, mental and spiritual relationships through participation in **trust activities**. Pack backpacks and go on a day or overnight hike. Talk about dependence and ways to trust God and others. Provide staff with basic initiative games that develop trust and teamwork to reduce anxiety before entering a ropes course. Teach staff how to develop trust within their camper groups by providing safe physical touch, words of encouragement, and spiritual awareness.