PARENTAL FEEDBACK:
PARENT’S PERCEPTION OF PEAK CAMP INFLUENCE ON CHILD DEVELOPMENT

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Kent State University College
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By

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The camp experience has been an important part of children’s lives for over 150 years. Unfortunately, insight from parents about opportunities for youth growth and development has not been systematically documented. Rather, more research exists concerning the value and benefits of camp experience from the perspective of camp staff and camper. PEAK (Playful Education & Adventure for Kids) Camp is accredited by American Camp Association, and it was in its 14th years in 2014. There has been no documented research about a PEAK Camp outcome study. The purpose of this study is to examine parents’ perception of their children’s summer camp experience in relation to attributes of youth development. This study utilized an online pre-test and post-test questionnaire to survey the PEAK Summer Camp 2014 parents’ perception to measure outcomes in six areas: Friendship Skills, Independence, Teamwork, Perceived Competence, Responsibility, and Problem-Solving Confidence.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The camp experience has been an important part of many children’s lives for over 150 years (Henderson, Whitaker, Bialeschki, Scanlin, & Thurber, 2007; Coutellier, n.d.; Barry, Laurie, & Deborah, 2011). Schools provide children with “academic equipment” for life, but summer camp often enables children to cultivate additional social, physical and emotional skills (Dimock & Hendry, 1929; Allen, 1973; Pritikin & Smith, 2014; Wilson & Hazelworth, 1990; Brsnnsn, Arick, Fullerton & Harris, 2000; Barry et al., 2011; Thurber, Scanlin, Scheuler, & Henderson, 2007; Bialeschki & Sibthorp, 2011; Nicholoson, Collins, & Holmer, 2004) before enter the real world. In many ways, summer camp is like an internship for life (Pritikin & Smith, 2014). There are 12,000 traditionally organized day and resident camps in the United States. 7,000 are resident (overnight) and 5,000 are day camps (American Camping Association (ACA), 2014; ACA, 2012). There are 2,545 accredited by the American Camp Association among 12,000 camps. Since 2002, the number of ACA day camps has increased by 69%, and resident camps have increased by 21% (ACA, 2014). When it comes to day and resident camp, a day camp operates only during a portion of the day (A. Ball & B. Ball, 2004), and except for an occasional overnight stay, campers return home to parents or guardians each night (Coutellier, n.d.). In contrast, a resident camp provides lodging and meals, and children typically stay for a week or more (A. Ball & B. Ball, 2004). Forty-seven percent of the camps in the U.S. are primarily resident (overnight) while 28% are
primarily day camps, and 26% offer both day and resident camps (ACA, 2011). This thesis was to examine parents’ perception of their child’s summer camp experience in relation to attribution of youth development in Northeast Ohio.

**Camp Facts**

Camp has become a part of the fabric of America (ACA, 2013). It is described as an outlet for individuals to develop skills and participate in many diverse physical, emotional, and educational experiences (Dimock & Hendry, 1929; Nicholoson et al., 2004) within a safe environment (Groves, 1981; Barry et al., 2011). Camp has placed a high value on caring and community, and it has been changing lives, allowing all children to feel successful (Thurber et al., 2007). It fosters development in children who are better equipped to become leaders in the twenty-first century as they can capitalize on learned skills such as independence, empathy, ability to work as part of a team, and life experienced through a broader world view (Howell, 2008). Campers’ daily educational life conjures up special series memories of activities, adjustments, relationships, and attitudes (Dimock & Hendry, 1929), for example: hiking, swimming, making friends, and providing life lessons for attendees (ACA, 2013). Participants’ social abilities and skills can grow and develop from variety of activities planned by camp staff to make camps attractive (Boyd, 1971; Tasse, 1978; Kelk 1994; Groves, 1981), and all of these can translate into a lasting self-confidence, an awareness of the importance of kindness, and a greater comfort in children voicing their opinions (ACA, 2010; ACA, 2013; Mishna, 2001; Barry et al., 2011).

The top five camp activities include recreational swimming, arts/crafts,
challenges/ropes, archery, and aquatic events. Eighty-seven percent of camps offer recreational swimming, 67% offer camping skills, 48% offer climbing/rappelling, 38% offer horseback riding, 78% offer team building, 47% offer community service, 23% offer farming/ranching/gardening, and 28% offer wilderness trips (“ACA Facts and Trends,” n.d.). Camp remains to be a very affordable cost for most everyone. Depending upon the choice of camp, the fee to attend a resident camp is typically around $690 per week, whereas a day camp usually costs $304 per week (“ACA Facts and Trends,” n.d.; A. Ball & B. Ball, 2004; “How to choose a camp,” n.d.). In terms of age, there is a wide range of participants who experience camp, from children as young as three participating in day camp to senior adults participating in family camps and senior camps (“summer camp trend,” 2013).

**Historical Overview**

The development of organized camping can be divided into four historical periods: (a) 1861-1920, the recreation phase; (b) 1920-1950, the education phase; (c) 1940-1970, the social orientation and reasonability phase; and (d) 1970 to present, the new directions phase. The different focuses represented by these phases have each provided experiential education opportunities to help boys and girls develop skills through camp activities (A. Ball & B. Ball, 2004).

Organized camps have been in existence since 1861, but day camp history is not as well documented or distinguished from resident camps (Coutellier, n.d.). Some early day camps may have operated on public lands or rented properties, existed only for a short period, or were not even defined as day camps (Coutellier, n.d.; A. Ball & B. Ball,
2004). Founded in 1918, Pierce Country Day Camp is believed to be the first documented day camp in the United States. More day camps started in the 1970s due to the need for affordable, quality day care. Many camps provided one-week programs, but campers began staying for multiple programs. Over the last decade-and-a-half, major cultural shifts have transpired in communities from which campers arrive (A. Ball & B. Ball, 2004; Coutellier, n.d.).

**Current Trends**

Each year, over 11.5 million children, youth, and adults attend camp (“outdoor activities,” 2013). Throughout previous decades, significant growth in the number and variety of camp programs offered to children and youth has occurred (Kelk, 1994; Dimock & Hendry, 1929). The United States experienced an “echo baby boom” as birth rates increased beginning in 1989. As a result, demand for traditional resident and day camps started to rise in 1996, particularly for traditional resident and day camps offering one to four week sessions (Zenkel, 2010). Whereas thirty years ago, few participants enjoyed supervised sports or paid sports instruction or any organized activities before the age of nine or ten, it is common for today’s four or five year olds to take part in organized activities (Zenkel, 2010). Since 2002, the number of ACA day camps has increased by 69% and resident camps by 21% (“ACA Facts and Trends,” n.d.). Because camps are having more participants, they now employ over 1, 500, 000 adults working in various positions. Further, an increase in the use of international staff to introduce campers to different cultures in the past ten years has transpired. Nearly 20% of staff members are from foreign countries (ACA, 2011).
To address competition, some day camps have added one or more different programs annually. However, sports and swimming has never changed as main activity (A. Ball & B. Ball, 2004). Coutellier (n.d.) had a report about day camp history, for example: In the 1980s and 1990s, karate enjoyed popularity, but now that yoga and dance are at the forefront, environmental concerns and nature experiences for children have been emphasized recently.

Parents’ expectations have likewise evolved in the last decade. They are more aware and concerned about the best practices, health and behavior, health foods, and what their children experiences daily (A. Ball & B. Ball, 2004). For example: children now have more allergies than in previous decades, causing some camps to eliminate peanuts from their kitchens. Staff members are usually trained to use of EpiPens and Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs), which are available at the day camp should there be an emergency (A. Ball & B. Ball, 2004). Currently, parents might look for less-expensive opportunities if the economy remains stagnant. In addition, there are more requests about shorter enrollment choices to enable family vacations or the chance to choose shorter specialties so children can attend more than just one camp (Coutellier, n.d.)

**Developmental Outcomes**

With increasing emphasis on responsible youth program management, camps wish to achieve certain outcomes (how the participant is benefitted by the camp experience) (Garst & Johnson, 2005). An outcome is defined as “the result or consequence” of an action (A. Ball & B. Ball, 2004). One of the largest opportunities that confronts the summer camps is probably in stimulating interest and appreciation in
activities which evoke zestful, intellectual, and emotional participation (Dimock & Hendry, 1929). In the last twelve years, the research on how youth with and without disabilities on a variety of developmental dimensions in their outdoor skills and personal development (e.g., social interactions, self-reliance, and self-esteem) in outdoor program (Brannan, Arick, Fullerton & Harris, 2000) has grown substantially, revealing how camps make significant growth for children (Moffitt, 2011; Dimock & Hendry, 1929).

Previous studies have categorized the most common outcomes. In 2000, Pittman, Irby, and Ferber had a study about the “Five C’s”: competence, confidence, character, connection, and caring. In 2003, there was an expansion and adaptation of the earlier “Five C’s” that the atmosphere, an environment where youth feel supported and empowered, distinguishes successful youth development programs from other successful programs for youth (Brooks-Gunn, 2003; R. Lerner, J. Lerner, Almerigi, & Theokas, 2005). Some other studies have investigated children’s camp experiences and have frequently identified growth in four domains: positive identity, social skills, physical and thinking skills, positive values, and spirituality (Nicholson, Collins, & Holmene, 2004; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Gambone, Klem, & Connell, 2002; Lerner et al., 2005; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003).

Youth can benefit from camp experience based on research and evaluation, but camps find research conducted in the academic way in cooperation with camp programs takes lots of time. So ACA provides an easy tool to perform the future camp outcome study needs (Sibthorp, Bialeschki, Morgan, & Browne, 2013). The Youth Outcomes Battery (YOB) is a tool that contains 11 subscales that are relevant to positive youth
development, and it can be customized and tabulated to different camps in a timely manner (“camp youth outcomes battery,” 2013; Sibthorp et al., 2013). These eleven scales have been validity and reliability tested (Sibthorp et al., 2013). They are: affinity for nature scale (AN); camp connectedness scale (CC); family citizenship scale (FCB); friendship skills scale (FR); independence scale (I); interest in exploration scale (IE); perceived competence scale (PC); responsibility scale (R); spiritual well-being scale (SW); teamwork scale (T); and problem-solving confidence scale (PSC) (ACA, 2013). Knowing these important scales can help camp programmers determine outcomes and benefits of their camps.

**Parents’ Perceptions of Camps**

There are two reasons to know the importance of parents’ perceptions of youth development at camp. First parents want what is best for their children. Most often, parents decide about camp participation for their children, and they have high expectations for their children’s camp experiences. Summer camps may provide a much-needed supplement to what children learn in schools and demand for quality day care (Coutellier, n.d.; Henderson et al., 2007; Howell, 2008) and thereby contribute to young people’s success (Dimock & Hendry, 1929; Dimock & Hendry, 1947). Second, the financial investment represented in summer camp reaches a rather formidable figure (Dimock & Hendry, 1929). Dimock and Hendry’s (1929) study showed that parents probably spend $100,000,000 every year in fees for their children attending camp. The figure is not entirely accurate but is calculated on the best statistics available at the present time (Dimock & Hendry, 1929). When this amount of money is devoted to
educational purposes, commensurate results should legitimately be expected and camps should provide a good return for their investment (Singer, 2011; Dimock & Hendry, 1929). Current parents of camp-age children are far more likely to seek to enrich the lives of their children through supervised, structured instructional, and enrichment programs (Zenkel, 2010). Thus, program directors should work to create a partnership with parents in the development of their children (A. Ball & B. Ball, 2004). Program directors can take valuable input from parents and change the camp programming to what parents think their children should be experiencing at camp. According to the ACA’s 2005 directions, parents want to ensure their children’s camp experience is safe and fun (ACA, 2005). Unfortunately, insight from parents about opportunities for youth growth and development has not been systematically documented. Rather, more research exists concerning the value and benefits of camp experience from the perspective of camp staff and campers (Bialeschki, Younger, Henderson, Ewing & Casey, 2002; Brannan et al., 2000; Chenery, 1991; Dworken, 1999; Marsh, 1999; Sekine, 1994). Only a few studies (e.g., American Camp Association (ACA), 1998; Dworken, 2001; Garst & Bruce, 2003; Michalski, Mishna, Worthington & Cummings, 2003) have accessed parents’ perceptions of camp experiences for their children.

**Kent State University’s PEAK Camp**

This study used the PEAK (Playful Education & Adventures for Kids) camp as a case study. PEAK Camp is accredited by the ACA (Kent State University (KSU), 2011). In its fourteen years, it has been offered by the Student Recreation and Wellness Center and provides a unique camper experience by tapping into campus resources. The camp
operates from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday with before and after care options available starting at 7:30 a.m. and ending at 5:30 p.m. Each session is facilitated by highly motivated and energetic students and professionals (KSU, 2011; KSU, 2015). The program in 2014 consists of nine five-day sessions stretching from June until August. According to Program Coordinator Phelan Fletcher, the PEAK Camp philosophy is to serve the needs of children between the ages of 6 and 12 with or without disabilities by opening doors to the wonders of art, entertainment, culture, nature, technology, socialization, and recreation within a university setting. The PEAK Camp brochure provides: “Camp activities are designed to help each camper become more independent, enhance self-confidence, develop self-awareness, and develop both mind and body in a fun and safe learning environment” (n.d.). At camp, participants engage in a range of activities each week, such as icebreakers, games, sports, arts, crafts, experiments, rock climbing, team building, and swimming. The PEAK Camp used nine themed sessions during the summer of 2014, including adventure quest, camping with the stars, to the future and back, among others. Children may choose one of the nine sessions or may join multiple sessions. The ratio rate between campers and counselors is 8:1. Ms. Fletcher indicated that each counselor is a Kent State University student with 40 hours of training prior to the beginning of camp, including certification by the American Red Cross in the use of CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation), AED (automated external defibrillator) for the Professional Rescuer, and First Aid; further, they have been trained to assist with EPI- Pen administration, where a life-saving dose of epinephrine is injected into the thigh of a child who is having a dangerous allergic reaction. They also complete a six-hour
training session to help them understand, recognize, and report child abuse and neglect. Fees to attend are dependent on University affiliation: $135 per week for those affiliated and $160 per week for campers not so affiliated. Previous customer satisfaction surveys suggest that 80% of the respondents were satisfied with the safe environment of PEAK Camp, and the children enjoyed their overall experience.

The Purpose of the Study

Parents’ feedback has proven important for programming, and it should be used in conjunction with staff and campers when making decisions about such things as registration processes and operational procedures (A. Ball & B. Ball, 2004). With this in mind, the purpose of this current study was to examine parents’ perceptions of their children’s summer camp experiences in relation to attributes of youth development. The perceptions of parents regarding the growth of a child attending PEAK day camp program of at least one week in duration were important elements in determining the value of camp experiences. The population of interest is parents of PEAK Campers for the summer of 2014. Parents of all campers were invited to complete pre-camp and post-camp surveys assessing parents’ perceptions of their children’s levels of development relevant to the outcomes that PEAK Camp strives to provide. The intent was to assess the changes that occur between surveys. Several benefits can be garnered from this study. First, this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge assessing the outcomes of summer camp. The results from the study, particularly as they related to day camp, can help the camp deal with both the developmental needs and the problems of a specific child. Second, this study’s results can be used by PEAK Camp to better
understand parents’ perceptions of the outcomes that PEAK strives to provide. Finally, this study can also help in the development of a plan for the branding of and marketing of PEAK Camp. To better accomplish this purpose, a more thorough review of previous research was needed. This is provided in the next chapter.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many of today’s children grow up under previously unknown pressures such as school stress and anxiety, friendship building, and so on. Possibly, camp is uniquely qualified to offset and relieve such pressures (Coutellier, n.d.). Camp is a natural extension of the classroom. Strategically planned and structured summer experiences challenge children, keep them involved, develop creativity and their talents, and expand their horizons (“The long-lasting,” 2013; A. Ball & B. Ball, 2004; Rossebo, 2014). This chapter discusses contemporary camp research trends and categorizes perceptions of campers, parents, and counselors about camp outcomes.

Contemporary Camp Research

Camps provide an intensive experience where young people interact with adults and peers while participating in activities that are well-structured as well as often new and different (Henderson, Whitaker, Bialeschki, Scanlin, & Thurber, 2006). Youth development organizations have a common commitment to young people’s physical, emotional, and educational growth and development (Nicholson, Collins, & Holmer, 2004; Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Longczak, & Hawkins, 2013; Witt, 2002). It is important to reflect on where camp research has been and where it is headed in the future as the 150th birthday of camping approaches (Bialeschki & Sibthorp, 2011) and to carefully re-examine the camp purpose and objectives of camp formulated more definitely and specifically (Dimock & Hendry, 1947). The outcomes of research and evaluations on summer camps traditionally show that youth benefit from the camp
experience (Coutellier, n.d.; Sibthorp et al., 2013). In 1929, Dimock and Hendry’s *Camping and Character* may have been the first systematic research on the outcomes of camp. This study was about 216 boys who attended the seven-week season at Camp Ahmek in Ontario, Canada for one or more summers between 1925 and 1928. The result was a rating from counselors, consulting psychologists, the camp director, and the authors themselves by pre-post survey. The result showed that most of the boys grew in multiple ways but some remained the same (Dimock & Hendry, 1929). Since the first outcome study, over the past decade, tremendous growth in the volume of camp-related research has occurred.

Several studies have shown that the beneficial effects of a single camp program like self-concept skills, self-actualization skills, social capital skills and self-esteem skills can be improved at camp (Hazelworth & Wilson, 1990; Michalski, Mishna, Worthington, & Cummings, 2003; Cartwright, Tabatabai, Beaudoin, & Naidoo, 2000; Yuen, Pedlar, & Mannell, 2005; Readdick & Schaller, 2005). Several studies showed camp facilities, camper curiosity, and eagerness to explore new experience (Browne, Garst, & Bialeschki, 2011), and one study about how camp experience can improve healthy belief (Seal, 2011; Roberts & Treasure, 1998). The largest camp outcome studies have been conducted in 4-H camps. The studies used pre-test and post-tests with campers’ self-evaluation methods. The result showed that campers developed thoughtful decision-making, wise use of resources, responsible citizenship, and positive leadership (Garst & Johnson, 2005; Garst & Bruce, 2003).
Another group of researchers has focused on children with identified problems, including behavior problems (Durkin, 1988, 1993), disease or chronic medical conditions (Zimmerman, Carter, Sears, & Lawson, 1987; Gillard, Witt, & Watts, 2011; Mary, Chris, & Kathleen, 1995; Pearson, Johnson, Simspon, & Gallagher, 1997; Meltzer & Rourke, 2005; Kaplan, McKey, Toraya, & Moccia, 1992; Meng, Tiernan, Bernier, & Brooks, 1998; Smith, Gotlieb, Gurwitch, & Blotcky, 1987; Michalski et al., 2003), family psychological maltreatment and dysfunction problem (Manly, Cicchetti, & Barnett, 1994; Lewicki, Goyett, & Marr, 1995), social skills deficits (Brannan, Arick, Fullerton, & Harris, 2000; Mishna, Michalski, & Cummings, 2001; Brookman, Boettcher, Klein, Openden, Koegel, & Koegel, 2003; Purvis, Cross, Federici, Johnson, & McKenzie, 2007). Results from these studies all support the conclusion that camp can reduce the recurrence of referral problems and promote children’s multidimensional growth (Christopher, Maarge, Leslie, & Karla, 2006) including health awareness and skill development (social competence, behavior problem, psychological, etc). Until 2005, ACA conducted the first comprehensive evaluation of the impact of residential camps on youth, and the result contributed systematic understanding of the impact of camping programs on youth. With over 5,000 families at 80 camps across the United States, the result of the study concluded that there is a significant impact on the social, cognitive, and physical development (ACA, 2005).

Because of different camp activities, the frequent remark about summer camp is how to measure youth skill development during this short summer day camp period (Dimock & Hendry, 1929; Dimock & Hendry, 1947) with its one-week to nine-week
period. However, previous research could not recognize the unique opportunities offered in camp programs to nurture positive youth development because there was not enough national scope in early studies and the diversity and nature of the camp (Thurber et al., 2007; Bialeschki & Sibthorp, 2011). For example, different settings, missions, and program designs make camps more diverse, and because of staff variation, evolving culture, and changing campers, camps are difficult to describe (Bialeschki & Sibthorp, 2011). ACA voiced a need for larger research studies on the value of the camp experience (Bialeschki & Sibthorp, 2011). Programs not only need reliable and valid measures but also need tools that can be customized, administered in the field, and tabulated and used to inform decision-making in a timely manner (Sibthorp, Bialeschiki, Morgan, & Browne, 2013). Because of this need, ACA has developed a YOB in 2013. While the battery was designed with camp settings in mind (e.g., nature-based context, residential nature, small group living, and youth focused) the measures are focused on strong youth development outcomes (“camp youth outcomes battery,” 2013). The current version of the YOB has 11 subscales: Friendship Skills (FS), Family Citizenship Behavior (FCB), Responsibility (RESP), Independence (IND), Teamwork Skills (TW), Perceived Competence (COMP), Affinity for Exploration (AE), Affinity for Nature (AN), Problem Solving Confidence (PSC), Camp Connectedness (CC), and Spiritual Wellbeing (SWB) (ACA, 2013; ACA, 2011). Sibthorp et al. (2013) had a study to establish norms and provide further evidence of the construct validity for the YOB in a single, comprehensive effort. The study was conducted with a total of 88 camps (44 day camps and 44 resident camps). All these camps were randomly selected from all ACA
accredited not-for-profit camps and invited to participate in two possible batteries of outcome instruments during the year from 2010 to 2011 with eleven camper outcomes. Battery A included the six shorter outcomes: FCB, COMP, RESP, IND, TW, PSC. Battery B included the rest of the outcomes. The battery A outcomes exhibited excellent reliability. Composite reliabilities ranged from a low of .89 to a high of .94. Internal consistency reliability ranged from a low of .90 to a high of .94. The Battery B also showed excellent reliability. Composite reliabilities ranged from a low of .90 to a high of .96. Internal consistency reliability ranged from a low of .90 to a high of .96. The results of this study largely supported the reliability and convergent validity of the subscales (Sibthorp et al., 2013). Without a doubt, camps and other youth programs can select the applicable and targeted outcomes for programs and compile a single questionnaire with a single set of instructions and consistent layout and appearance (Sibthorp et al., 2013; Sibthorp et al., 2010). The result from this study showing the convincing evidence that YOB can be used as an instrument for PEAK Camp study.

**Perceptions of Camp Activity**

The American Camp Association (ACA) conducted several studies on youth developmental outcomes of the camp experience. These studies sought to: measure youth development outcomes among campers as campers’ parents and staff perceived them; ascertain which camp program elements related to camper outcomes; develop measurement instruments and training materials for use in future evaluations; and use data to promote the role of camps in positive youth development (Henderson, Thurber, Whitaker, Bialeschki, & Scanlin, 2006; Bialeschki, Younger, Henderson, Ewing &
Casey, 2002; Brannan et al., 2000; Chenery, 1991; Dworken, 1999; Marsh, 1999; Sekine, 1994; Dworken, 2001; Garst & Bruce, 2003; Michalski, Mishna, Worthington & Cummings, 2003). A few studies were about day camp (Henderson, 2005). The following parts discuss benefits from campers, camp staff, and parents.

**Campers’ Perceptions of Benefits**

Summer camp is a good supplement for children’s school life. Because children already spend up to 180 days in school with an academic focus, summer camps enable children to participate in non-scholastic endeavors. Camp also enhances the experiences of students who are able to join activities outside of class (Bialeschki & Sibthorp, 2011). Most camps’ primary feature is that they offer recreation and creativity activities within a highly-structured environment. It is common to see that children mentioned that the benefits obtained at camp are making friends, trying new things, becoming more independent, being capable of self-care, taking care of their personal belongings, sharing work duties, and taking initiative on their own (Powell, 2003). Several statistically significant areas changed between pre- and post-camp assessment (Powell, 2003; Brannan et al., 2000; Garst & Bruce, 2003).

In 2005, Arnold, Bourdeau, & Nagele studied 849 campers from grades four through nine. This study employed the self-evaluated method where campers answered several questions related to their perceived life skill development, growth during the camp, and satisfaction with camp. To be specific, the survey asked campers about being away from home, managing free time, increasing life skill development, and so on. Using a retrospective pre-test and post-test, campers rated each item based on how they
felt before and after camp attendance. The results showed that residential camps are perceived to have a significant impact on social, cognitive, and physical development of youth campers (Arnold, Bourdeau, & Nagele, 2005).

Camp programs provide a unique ability for children to make gains in emotional and social functions while having fun with peers. Children preferred environments where they anticipated feeling understood and appreciated (Paris, 2008). Dworken’s (2001) study revealed that campers reported that they became more brave and able to attempt new things after their camp experiences. Children capitalized on the opportunity for new experiences such as riding a horse, taking care of animals for the first time, or expressing themselves through dance, music, or art. Initiating and developing these life-long interests and skills certainly impacts the choices youth make regarding future careers and how they spend free time.

Michalski, Mishna, Worthington, & Cummings (2003) researched a three-week therapeutic summer camp program. The study focused on three objectives of campers: self-esteem and self-confidence; decreasing children’s sense of isolation within a safe environment; and social competence. Campers’ evaluations showed that they rated themselves higher at the end of the summer than at the beginning as to self-control and co-operation. Additionally, Kruse & Card (2000) analyzed a conservation education camp. Campers rated their conservation knowledge, attitude, and behavior. Research results indicated that each camper perceived an increase in competence in these vital areas over the study period.

Not all previous research analyzing outcomes had been based on an established
survey instrument. There are two similar studies. Smith (2013) and Wallace (2011) collected previous camper feedback from letters, emails, cards, text messages, and facebook posts. Campers highlighted an incredible camp experience that played a role in shaping their lives and also preparing them for their futures, including leadership, group living, and new friends. Smith (2013) showed camper’s perspectives and how camp had influenced their lives in a host of different ways. With feedback from almost 200 campers, the researcher finalized four categories in which campers indicated that they benefited: friends; friendship; confidence; and independence. Camp has long been a fun experience for children, and they look forward to attending camp. Campers concluded from their own experiences that they have learned the true meaning of friendship; campers are also more open to trying new things, even if the new experiences appear difficult. For instance, some campers had never had the opportunity to try many of the activities prior to camp, like rock climbing and ropes, sailing, or waterskiing, but they did at camp, and in doing so they felt that they could succeed in other new activities in the future. Camp has always been a place that has meaning beyond just fun; for many campers, it can shape a better life style.

Since the Internet and other media have been adopted and integrated into the daily lives of an increasing number of young people, the impact of social media on the activities and on social relationships of the young generations attract a considerable amount of attention. While technology generates new patterns of expression and modes of communication, with the majority of adolescents, the Internet is used primarily for relationship formation and maintenance with existing friends (Mesch, 2009). The
downside of this is that youth occasionally do not know how to make friends in real life. As a result, most camps do not allow the use of any technology. One camper recalled one thing that really remained with him after camp was the excessive use of electronics in his life. Since camp, he tried his best to never use a cellphone when others were around him; he also endeavored to get to know friends better after his experience. Camp taught him how to make new friends and how to have a good time without electronics (Levine, 2011). Some campers mentioned that they have established close friendships with counselors. This enabled campers to have a whole new outlook on life.

The previous literature regarding what campers want to gain from attending camp showed that camp provides an experience for youth to grow socially, to develop important life skills, and experience nature—all in an enjoyable, hands-on setting (Arnold, Bourdeau, & Nagele, 2005). The literature overwhelmingly suggests that camp can shape who campers become and that campers can incorporate new core values from camp into their everyday lives (Collins, 2006).

**Counselors’ Perceptions of Benefits**

Every camp focuses on a unique way of teaching children about their personal worth while simultaneously giving them opportunities to experience many types of fun that they would typically never experience at home. Camp counselors conceive camping as a significant educational enterprise for the achievement of character outcomes (Dimock & Hendry, 1929). They are the group leaders, and they can make use of extensive opportunities to observe and get to know each camper (Collins, 2006). As such, their suggestions can provide parents with formidable insight about their children at
camp while they themselves are not present (Hill, 2002). Teachers’ value of knowledge and academics is quite important, and camp counselors often play the same role as teachers; counselors, however, are more focused on helping campers develop skills that make people more successful in relationships, careers, and families. Moreover, children can learn valuable life lessons when encouraged to work through their fears (Grace, 2014).

The counselor suggests that camps can build children in various ways: independence; and allowing children a chance to make decision on their own in a safe, caring environment. Counselors can help children with daily struggles, encourage them to attempt new things, and discover talents they did not know they had; camp also fosters new friendship among children who come from varying backgrounds, which helps children gain an understanding of how others live outside their communities. In a relaxed atmosphere, children make friends more easily while they play, and camps create life-long memories of different adventures in places they have never before experienced (Grace, 2014). From previous literature, Brannan and Fullerton (1999) further determined that counselors judged their campers to make the greatest growth in the areas of social interactions and communication. Camp gives children an opportunity to fail in an emotionally safe environment. Trying, failing, trying again, failing again, and continuing to try during camp activities fosters learning, growth, and resiliency (Rossebo, 2014).

Parents’ Perceptions of Benefits
Many parents see camp as a step toward helping their children become independent. If a child does not enjoy camp, parents may not send the child back the next year, but parents’ perceptions about opportunities for growth and development through camp experiences have not been systematically documented (Coutellier, n.d.). Parents have both a direct and indirect influence on how an adolescent spends his or her free time, and their effectiveness in helping children succeed is primary (Hutchinson, Baldwin, & Galdwell, 2003; Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Parental involvement in children’s education has a consistent, positive, and important relation to childhood achievement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Collins, Maccoby, Steinberg, Hetherington, & Bornsterin, 2000). Parents choose specific involvement activities (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Many parents recognize that occasional time apart from their children can be healthy, and parents hope these instances can help children gain a sense of independence (Henderson et al., 2007; Tugend, 2005). Sending children away for summer is not always an easy decision for parents. It is often hard when children go away to camp or an overnight trip for the first time. Campers’ first sleepover night can often mean a sleepless night for parents. But a longer absence of several days away from home, might give a rising teenager the precious freedom from what they see as nagging parents (Brennan, 2014).

The character traits that parents wish for their children, such as independence, confidence, friendship-building, resilience, character, grit, and so on, can often be learned at camp with the aid of competent counselors (Pritikin & Smith, 2014). These are real outcomes for children who enjoy quality camp experiences. Parents usually notice that
children gain the ability to get along with others, thinking and problem solving skills, independence, and teamwork after having taken part in camp (Brennan, 2014; Rossebo, 2014). Parents also think that camp experiences can provide unique youth development that cannot be gained in their daily lives at school or home. Parents are quite familiar with the outcomes and recognize the opportunity for children to grow in a distinct way. Parents tend to believe a week-long or longer experience at camp to be of great significance for youth development.

Dworken’s (2001) study focused on parents’ perceptions with two open-ended questions: what did your child gain or learn from his/her camp experience; and has attending camp made a difference in your child’s life. From the previous studies, researchers identified internal and external assets. The internal assets included a commitment to learning, positive values, social competency, and positive identity while the external assets included support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time (Henderson, Whitaker, Bialeschki, Scanlin, & Thurber, 2006). Internal assets were included in categories of commitment to learning, positive values, social competency, and positive personal identity. External assets were included in categories of support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time. The result showed that social competency is the most improved area. Parents’ comments ranged from the camp consisting of “sharing experience to get along well with people with different backgrounds, developing cultural competence with international staff, learning teamwork, respecting other people’s opinion and feelings, and making their own decision. Parents also noted an improvement in positive identity and values. A
significant portion of the parents reported that their children developed self-confidence in camp and became more independent.

Michalski et al. (2003) conducted a study of a therapeutic summer camp, focusing on the parents’ perspectives of how their children compared camp and school. It highlighted parental satisfaction with various aspects of the camp program. From the parents’ perspectives, campers displayed more cooperation, responsibility, and self-control after returning from camp, and their children displayed more self-control both immediately after camp and in the months since attending.

Brannan, Arick, Fullerton & Harris (2000) conducted and analyzed interviews with both the counselor and parent of each case study subject. The majority of the parents reported positive growth for their children in one or more developmental areas: social interactions, communication with others, responsibilities, self-reliance, self-esteem, participation in recreation, skill achievement, self-help, and respect for others. Campers’ parents completed an individual characteristics survey following camp to assess their child’s socio-emotional characteristics after camp.

Brannan and Fullerton’s (1999) study examined how parents judged their children to make the greatest improvement in self-reliance and self-esteem. The study used questionnaires with identical content and had trained research assistants interview counselors and parents on the growth in eight developmental areas: social interactions, communication with others, responsibilities, self-reliance, self-esteem participation in recreation, skill achievement, and self-help. In each developmental area, the research assistants asked counselors or parents if the camper’s behavior had decreased, stayed the
same, or improved. Counselors and parents compared the camper’s behavior from the first day of camp to the end of the camp session. From the results collected, campers’ changes were analyzed. An analysis of the counselors’ and parents’ judgments regarding campers growth (i.e., decreased, stayed the same, improved) revealed similar results. Overall, the vast majority of examples (97% of the descriptions recorded from the counselors and 96% of the descriptions recorded from parents) described improvement in camper performance that was associated with the camp experience. A summative analysis of all interview comments received from parents and counselors revealed increased independence as the predominant growth outcome from this case study. It is clear that independence was the one skill that improved the most. Whether it is a residential camp or a day camp, campers can learn skills and build friendships with new people without aid from their parents. In addition to observed youth development at camp, an interesting thing mentioned by Henderson et al. (2008) and Henderson et al. (2006) is that no matter what camp setting, scores rated by parents on all outcome constructs were relatively high on the pre-test camp survey, which suggested that parents already perceived their children to be functioning at fairly high levels before the camp experience. Surprisingly, this statement got approved again in PEAK Camp study. Campers’ skills were rated by parents fairly high on the pre-test survey in general. It is nice to see campers were so well development before the camp, however, it leaves limited room for post-test surveys in this research. Only Problem-Significant Confidence showed statistically significant differences in this study. It is worth noticing that parents’ bias could be a factor influencing the result.
Despite all the benefits of camp, parents are not always satisfied with their children’s camp experiences. A study by Michalski et al. (2003) showed that some negative comments usually came from parents whose children had previously attended the camp. Some disappointment arose from the fact that parents felt the camp failed to help their children improve their self-esteem or express emotions; another commonly-noted disappointment was that counselors did not effectively help the child work out problems.

From these studies, most parents, campers, and counselors viewed camp experiences as having had at the very least a mildly-positive impact. In some instances, parents expressed great enthusiasm for what they conceived as profoundly significant changes. For the most part, however, parents expressed cautious optimism that some noticeable, positive changes had transpired, even as children continued to struggle with personal issues. A handful of parents expressed concerns about camp or conveyed that their expectations had not been met.

More research has been written on occasion to help parents make decisions about camp. The ACA website features several articles written for parents to help them learn more about camp. These articles include several dimensions for choosing a camp: decision making; significant influence for campers; type of camp; history of the camp; relevant feedback from campers’ previous experiences; and so on and so forth. Unfortunately, not enough research mentioned parents’ thoughts about youth camp outcomes. Knowing parents’ perceptions of outcomes, which is largely missing from the current literature, can help people improve youth camps.
As discussed above, the current literature recognizes that even though many researchers have carried out studies on outcomes of summer youth camps, especially resident camps, not enough studies have investigated day camp, especially week-long camps with different themes. A review of the current literature rendered about twice as much research regarding resident camps as compared to day camps. Summer camp programs offer participants valuable opportunities for growth and development as campers experience a variety of psychological, social, emotional, and physical benefits (Byers, 1979; Kelk, 1994). Understanding how and why positive effects occur is of great importance. In consideration of this, the research proposed here intends to answer two important questions:

1. Are there any differences in the parent’s perceptions of their child’s behavior when comparing pre-camp and post-camp perceptions? (The following behavioral dimensions from the ACA will be assessed: friendship skills; independence; teamwork; perceived competence; responsibility; and problem-solving confidence.)

2. Does camp experience increase child’s preference for outdoor activity?

Two hypotheses were present:

Hypothesis 1: Parents notice the youth development in six dimensions after the camp experiences

Hypothesis 2: Child’s preference for outdoor activity can be increased after camp experiences
CHAPTER III
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Camps are usually most interested in the outcomes experienced by their youth and how this information demonstrates the impact of their camp as well as the influence of program improvement strategies. PEAK Camp started its 14th season at Kent State University in Kent, Ohio in 2014. To date, no studies have focused on PEAK Camp outcomes, so the PEAK Camp at Kent State was used as a case study in this research. There are three benefits to using a case study for camp research: First, case studies can focus on the outcomes, both negative and positive, for individual participants. Second, case studies are beneficial for program staff to understand outcomes for specific participants. Also, case studies can help staff to understand quantitative data in a more in depth way (Brannan & Fullerton, 1999).

This chapter describes the use of human subjects for this research and outlines the instrument design, sample selection, data collection, and data analysis techniques.

Human Subject Review

An institutional review board (IRB) is a group of people that monitors research designed to obtain information from or about human subjects (Leroy, 2011). The researcher involved in this study has completed human subjects training. The Kent State University IRB reviewed and approved the proposed methodology, data collection materials, invitation letter, and consent form for parents and assessed the risks and benefits to the participants in the research (Appendix E).
Sample Selection

Web surveys are becoming more ubiquitous because of the rapid advancement of Web technology (Shih & Fan, 2008). This study used an online survey for data collection. There were two reasons for using an online survey: First, it was an economical way of collecting data online (Cobanoglu, Warae, & Morec, 2001; Griffis, Goldsby, & Cooper, 2003); Second, it decreased the time cost because not only was it possible to send out the large amount of questionnaires in a short time period, but it also saved time with data input (Wright, 2005; Cobanoglu, Warae, & Morec, 2001; Griffis, Goldsby, & Cooper, 2003). Previously, a study by Cobangoglu et al. (2001) about response speeds, cost efficiency, and response rate with 100 as sample size showed that a web based survey was the fastest and the most cost efficient method compared to mail and fax methods. In terms of response speeds, the speeds for fax was an average of 4.0 days to respond followed by web surveys with 5.97 days to respond. The slowest method was mail surveys with an average of 16.46 days to respond. For cost efficiency including printing, organizing, and sending the surveys, the web method cost the least at $107.50, while the fax method cost $119.50, and the mail method cost $260.50. The response rate was 26.27% for mail, 17.0% for fax, and 44.21% for web. Web surveys appeared to be the most cost efficient method. Since most parents had easy access to the internet and since the online survey had been found to be a useful method of conducting research, web surveys were used for this study.

Study Design

The questionnaire included both a pre-test and a post-test. These tests included
questions about parents’ perceptions based on six dimensions of outcomes from YOB: Friendship skills (FR), Independence (I), Teamwork (T), Perceived competence (PC), Responsibility (R), and Problem-solving Confidence (PSC). The YOB was used because questions were short, concise, and could be individualized to a specific camp (“camp youth outcomes battery,” 2013). Also, the YOB was reliable with the validity of the subscales supported by Sibthorp et al. (2013). The YOB was also applicable to PEAK Camp’s age range, camp value, camp activities, and six subscales were chosen based on the decision of the camp’s Director, Ms. Fletcher. The questionnaire can be used for campers with or without disabilities.

**Questionnaire**

Based on the YOB format, a two-part questionnaire was developed. Pre-test part one consisted of demographic information about parents and children. Some questions about parents were such as: the role as caregiver, the relationship status. Some questions about children were such as: age, gender, and additional variables related to child behavior, for example: time engaged in outdoor activity outside the camp. The pre-test part two consisted of fifty-one questions that were divided into the six previously mentioned dimensions and adapted from surveying children to surveying parents, asking parents to rate their children using an easy 6-option status scale which was closest to statement (i.e., false= “completely disagree ”; Somewhat False= “Mostly disagree”; A little False= “slightly disagree”; A little True= “slightly agree”; Somewhat True = “mostly agree” to True= “completely agree ”). Post-test part one only kept additional
variables related to child behavior and the post-test part two was the same as the pre-test. In terms of part two, each specific dimension included between six to thirteen questions to evaluate parents’ perceptions in that area. Within the dimension of friendship skills (13 item scale) (Coefficient $\alpha = .921; N=13$), questions are combined to examine themes of communication, relationship building, empathy, and trust. In the dimension of independence (8 item scale) (Coefficient $\alpha = .903; N=8$), the questions came together around areas of problem solving, decision-making, and self-efficiency. The dimension of responsibility (6 item scale) (Coefficient $\alpha = .906; N=6$) asked a number of questions to evaluate perceived ownership of behavior. The teamwork dimension (8 item scale) (Coefficient $\alpha = .906; N=8$) looked at one’s ability to cooperate and collaborate and the ability to place group goals over individual goals. In the problem-solving dimension (8 item scale) (Coefficient $\alpha = .942; N=8$), questions are centered on the analysis and recognition of problems as well as planning to overcome them. Finally, the perceived competence dimension (8 item scale) (Coefficient $\alpha = .840; N=8$) examined one’s understanding of personal strengths. All the scales have been previously validated and current testing demonstrated strong internal consistency (Coefficient $\alpha \geq .840$).

Each survey took approximately 10 minutes to complete. Participation in this research study was voluntary and confidential. There was no obligation to participate and no penalties for not participating. Parents who did not want to participate in the survey did not have their PEAK Camp experience affected. As an appreciation for the time participants spent on this study, everyone who completed both surveys was entered into a drawing to win a free week of PEAK Camp for the 2015 summer.
Data Collection

There were nine sessions at the PEAK Camp during the 2014 season that ran from June 9 to August 15. Each session lasted for five days. First day of each session was Monday, and the last day for each session was Friday. Campers could choose any session(s) at the PEAK Camp to register, so they either registered consecutively or picked any combination of sessions. By using the PEAK database, an invitation letter was sent to parents for the online survey. To be specific, based on the PEAK Camp facts, there were three steps for collecting data. The first step is the recruitment e-mail. One week before each session started, the researcher checked the current session’s enrollment on the database and sent out invitation letters to all parents in each session. Campers who registered for multiple weeks only got one invitation letter before their first week started, and parents only needed to take the pre-test survey once. The online survey link was included in the email with a brief introduction to the study. For parents who did not respond to the first email, they received an additional email with survey link shown prior to the start of camp. A reminder email notification has a positive effect on response rate for the web survey (Kaplowitz, Hadlock, & Levine, 2004). Once the parents responded, they no longer received emails leading up to camp. The second step involved parents completing a consent form and pre-test. In the consent form, parents were notified of the purpose of this research, the confidential and voluntary nature of the survey, the lack of anticipated risks, and the opportunity to be involved in a drawing for free participation in PEAK Camp 2015. In the email that parents received, they were prompted with the link to the pre-test survey and had the option to start the pre-test. However, before taking the
survey, parents first needed to agree to the consent form. Without the agreement, parents were unable to begin the survey. The third and final step: Parents received a post-test survey one week after the campers finished their own session(s) at PEAK for the 2014 year. Thus giving parents a chance to observe any changes in their child’s attitudes and behaviors. Similar to the pre-test, within one month, two reminder emails were sent to parents who did not respond to the initial email in order to raise the response rate once campers finished. Information about the timetable for the survey is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

*Timetable for PEAK Camp and survey*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Pre test</th>
<th>Pre test reminder</th>
<th>Post test</th>
<th>Post test reminder</th>
<th>Post test reminder 2</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jun 9-13</td>
<td>Jun 5</td>
<td>Jun 7</td>
<td>Jun 23</td>
<td>July 7</td>
<td>July 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jun 16-20</td>
<td>Jun 12</td>
<td>Jun 14</td>
<td>June 30</td>
<td>July 14</td>
<td>July 21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jun 23-27</td>
<td>Jun 19</td>
<td>Jun 21</td>
<td>Jul 7</td>
<td>July 21</td>
<td>July 28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jul 7-11</td>
<td>Jul 2</td>
<td>Jul 5</td>
<td>Jul 21</td>
<td>August 4</td>
<td>August 11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jul 14-18</td>
<td>Jul 10</td>
<td>Jul 12</td>
<td>Jul 28</td>
<td>August 11</td>
<td>August 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul 28-Aug</td>
<td>Jul 24</td>
<td>Jul 26</td>
<td>Aug 11</td>
<td>August 25</td>
<td>September 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug 4-8</td>
<td>Jul 31</td>
<td>Aug 2</td>
<td>Aug 18</td>
<td>September 1</td>
<td>September 8</td>
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Surveys were administered to 152 campers enrolled at PEAK Camp during the summer of 2014, 58 parents replied only to the demographic section of the pre-test, 57 parents replied to the pre-test survey for a response rate of 37.5% and 50 parents replied to the post-test survey for a response rate of 32.89%. The survey was voluntary, and this fact could explain why there were seven less post-test replies compared with the pre-test
numbers and why one parent decided not to complete the pre-test or post-test. In terms of online survey response rate, Shin & Fan (2008) had a study that included thirty-seven published studies using online surveys method. The sample sizes varied considerably, with the smallest sample size being 110 and the largest sample size being 12,677. Across these thirty-seven sample sizes, the unweighted average response rate of web surveys was 34%. It indicated that the sample size of this study is reasonable for web survey.

Because the nature of the test was confidential, the study’s original design, to match an individual’s pre-test and post-test survey results by email address provided, resulted in a problem at the end of the survey. The problem being that parents used the same email for multiple children making it difficult to compare pre-test and post-test results. Only 11 participants from pre- and post- surveys could be match up by email and whose parents actually finished both surveys. The sample size ended up being too small for the comparison of individual campers. Thus, aggregate data was used. Through comparing the pre-test and post-test group data, the findings have been calculated and were shown in Chapter IV. In terms of the special problem of this study, suggestions for future studies are shown in Chapter V.

**Data Analysis Techniques**

All quantitative and qualitative data from all questionnaires were entered into SPSS. Missing data were treated conservatively: in cases where an item was missing, the score on that construct was not calculated, resulting in different sample sizes from pre-test to post-test. The analysis looked for significant differences between parents’ pre-camp perceptions and post-camp perceptions. The question of interest was whether their
children’s participation in camp produced a significant change in parents’ perceptions by comparing the pre-test and post-test results. To do this, an independent t-test was used before and after the camp.

Several steps are involved in interpreting the data:

First, the author accounted for all pre-test and post-test responses and compared the results of the means, standard deviations, and significant differences. This was done by calculating the sum of each domain with a 6-option status scale. Parents used a six-option scale to rate their child’s perceived skill development from pre-test to post-test. Picking one statement that the most describe the child’s skill (i.e., false= “completely disagree ”; Somewhat False= “mostly disagree”; A little False= “slightly disagree”; A little True= “slightly agree”; Somewhat True = “mostly agree” to True= “completely agree ”) of a particular domain. Based on what parents chose, the researcher converted six-option scales to number from 1 to 6 in order for data analysis (i.e., 1= “false”, 2= “Somewhat False”, 3= “A little False”, 4= “A little True”, 5= “Somewhat True” to 6= ‘True”) and found the mean. For example: there were thirteen items in the “Friendship Skills” domain. The results of all thirteen items were added up then the mean was calculated. The maximum score can be 78. Means close to 78 suggested all items were rated highly by all respondents.

Second, the mean value divided by the number of questions under each item. For example, there were thirteen questions in the “Friendship Skills” segment; the mean value was divided by thirteen: Pre-test score was 65.2982/13=5.029; Post-test score was: 66.6000/13=5.123. The same method applied to other dimensions. For the Independence
skill, the mean value was divided by eight, pre-test was: 40.2807/8=5.035; Post-test was: 40.4898/8=5.0612. For the Responsibility skill, the mean value was divided by six, pre-test was: 26.7018/6=4.4503; Post-test was: 28.1224/6=4.687. For the Teamwork skill, the mean value was divided by eight, pre-test was: 38.6842/8=4.835; Post-test was: 39.8163/8=4.977. For the Perceived Competence skill pre-test, the mean value was divided by eight, pre-test was: 42.2281/8=5.278; Post-test was: 43.1633/8=5.395. For the Problem-Solving Confidence skill, the mean value was divided by eight, pre-test was 35.6316/8=4.454; Post-test was: 38.2449/8=4.780.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This research was designed to discover parent’s perception of the potential outcomes their children might receive as a result of attending KSU’s PEAK Camp in the summer of 2014. The result of this study can help parents better understand the outcomes of the PEAK Camp experience and can also help camp administrators for future camp activities design. This study provided a starting point for further research about parents’ perceptions related to helping their children have positive and safe summer opportunities at PEAK Camp.

Demographic Characteristics and Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics and frequency distributions were employed for analysis of the participants’ characteristics. There were 58 (38.2%) parents who replied to the demographic questions, but one of them did not start the pre-test survey, so there were 57 (37.5%) parents replied who to the pre-test survey. The survey was voluntary, seven parents gave up the post-test, so there were 50 (32.89%) parents who replied to the post-test survey. Nearly 48 (82.8%) were mothers, seven (12.1%) were fathers, and three (5.2%) were other relatives. The majority of parents were married (89.7%), only six (10%) were separated, divorced, or in a relationship. From parents who reported, the sample included 34 (58.6%) first time campers, and 24 (41.4%) return campers. The sample included 31 (53.4%) male campers and 27 (46.6%) female campers, and two of the 58 total campers had disabilities (3.4%): one had a physical/motor disability (1.7%)
and one had a cognitive/intellectual disability (1.7%). The campers’ age range was from 6-13, which is comparable to the camp philosophy to serve the needs of children between the ages of 6 and 12. The majority of the campers were 6 to 9 years old (81.1%), and 58 (18.9%) were in the age group of 10 to 13 years old.

**Parents’ Perceptions on Children’ Skill Development**

The purpose of the first research question examined the impact of camp experience on children in the perception of the parents in six subscales. The results revealed that Problem-Solving Confidence group means was significantly different at a .05 level, which means youth outcome skill development especially Problem-Solving Confidence improved from PEAK Camp experience. However, no significant differences were shown for FR, I, T, PC, and R domains. Table 2 shows the Descriptive Analysis of the pre-test and post-test surveys on each of the subscales generated. The t-test compared pre-test to post-test mean value, T value, and SD value by group. When comparing pre-test and post-test means there was a significant difference (p< .05) on Problem Solving Confidence, meaning that Problem Solving Confidence improved over the course of PEAK Camp as rated by parents. Giving a close look at other different subscales, FR: the mean from pre-test to post-test changed from 65.2982 to 66.6000; I: the mean from pre-test to post-test changed from 40.2807 to 40.4898; R: the mean from pre-test to post-test changed from 26.7018 to 28.1224. T: the mean from pre-test to post-test changed from 38.6842 to 39.8163; PC: the mean from pre-test to post-test changed from 42.2281 to 43.1633. Overall, difference between means were very small and not significant. In all
instance, post-test means were higher than pre-test means. When the mean value was divided by the number of questions, the score was fairly high in all domains. For example: F skill score was from 5.029 to 5.123. Based on six-option scale, parents’ perception about children F was already close to the highest score. Same as rest of the domains, I skill score was from 5.035 to 5.061; R skill score was from 4.450 to 4.687; T skill score was from 4.835 to 4.977; PC score was from 5.278 to 5.395. The results showed that children were pretty well developed before PEAK Camp based on parents’ views, which left limited room at the post-test to improve. The hypothesis that children can develop skills in PEAK Camp from parents’ viewpoint was not entirely supported.

Table 2

Descriptive Analysis of six dimensions

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>M/# of items</th>
<th>t</th>
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Note. * p < .05
Note. ** the mean value was divided by the number of questions
The Impact of Camp Experience on Children’s Time Spending on Outdoor Activity

A secondary purpose of this research question was to test the relationship between camp experience and the time spending on outdoor activity after the camp experience.

Table 3

Descriptive analysis of outdoor physical activity from pre-test to post-test

<table>
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Note: N=56

No significant difference was shown for the question: “Does camp experience increase child’s frequency for outdoor activity? The mean values were very close. Looking down the Sig. column, the value was greater than .05. So there was no significant difference. This was expected with how close the mean values were.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to examine parents’ perceptions of their children’s PEAK Summer Camp experiences from one week up to nine weeks in relation to attributes of youth development. Online data collection lasted from June to September in 2014. Comparing the results of the pre-test and post-test by group, the analysis showed that the Problem-Solving Confidence showed a significant difference in this study among 57 participants. Sibthorp et al (2010) had a study about problem-solving confidence and camp experience. He defined the Problem-Solving Confidence as camper’s confidence in planning, deciding solution steps, and evaluating solutions for problems, and he found children’s abilities to resolve the problem can be improved after the camp. The PEAK Camp study demonstrates that Problem-Solving Confidence significantly improves during the enrollment in a camp. Even though Problem-Solving Confidence was the only skill that showed significant differences in results between the pre-test and post-test in this study, previous research suggests that individuals who have higher Problem-Solving Confidence also showed high skills in other psychological areas, such as people working under high levels of stress with good Problem-Solving Skills (Heppner, Witty, & Dixon, 2004). The five other domains did not show a significant difference because parents rated their children fairly high on the pre-test. There was little room for improvement. The researcher experienced a “ceiling effect” - a person scoring high initially would be mathematically and artificially limited in the degree of improvement possible. Discernible differences were found in parents’ perception of
Problem-Solving Confidence. The results for the five other domains are need further research. However, the data found from Problem-Solving Confidence was consistent with previous research on camp youth development outcomes. Besides, the fact that parents may have been biased due to having a favor for this camp or having a history with it (Henderson et al., 2007) is another reason that the results obtained in this study may have been favorable. About 21 (41.4%) campers had joined PEAK Camp more than one time before. This percentage of campers were already familiar with the settings or may have already developed skills from previous camp experience. In addition, parents and children usually work together to find a camp that best matches the child’s interests, abilities, and developmental needs. This fact might maximize the likelihood of positive outcomes.

Meanwhile, this study revealed the same problem that several other studies also reported. Parents already perceived their children to be well developed before the camp (Thurber et al., 2007; Henderson et al., 2005; Henderson et al., 2006; Henderson et al., 2008), which left limited room for the post-test.

The second research question was whether or not camp experience increased children’s preferences for outdoor activity. Summer day camps can promote a healthy lifestyle (Beets, Weaver, Beighle, Webster, & Pate, 2013). Because of the small sample size and the fact that some parents skipped the question, there were no significant differences shown from this study. A study by Zarret & Skiles (2013) suggests that summer day camps can be a key antidote to youth sedentary behavior during the summer months. In addition, the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans issued by the U.S.
Department of Health and Human Services recommend that children aged 6-17 years should have 60 minutes (1 hour) or more of physical activity each day. PEAK Campers spend time on physical activity already beyond these recommended times.

Overall, being limited by a small sample size, this study cannot answer all questions. The researcher gives future research suggestion, as follows.

**Limitations**

This study investigated parents’ perceptions of campers’ outcomes in an ACA accredited summer camp in North East Ohio for the summer of 2014. But this study was limited by two main factors that may have affected the results obtained.

First, this study only examined a single day camp with a relatively small sample size. The investigation of PEAK Camp may not be representative of a wider camp population. Besides, the study had a small sample size, which made it difficult to obtain significant statistics.

The second limitation was that the study only looked at parent perceptions of camp outcomes, but this study did not include camp counselors and campers evaluations based on camp experience. It limited reflections of camp outcomes from a larger group of people. Having used the YOB, the survey structure was not appropriate for parents. YOB’s original design was a self-assessment by youth attending a camp.

**Future Research**

The suggestions are given as follows for redesigned PEAK Camp studies to obtain better results. Suggestions are given in two categories: data collection and questionnaire design.
Data Collection

This study showed that results are difficult to match when some parents have multiple children but only use one email address for responses. Some questions unable to be answered included the relationship between duration of camp and individual campers skill development; the relationship between different themes of camp and children’s skill development; and the relationship between skill development and gender. But still, it is interesting to see that Problem-Solving Confidence showed significant difference by comparing as groups from the pre-test to post-test. There are two important aspects that future researchers need to keep in mind: anonymous studies and the matching of each individual’s pre-test and post-test results at the end. The author gives two possible ways for future researchers to achieve the goal. Instead of using parents email addresses to match individual surveys, because the researcher has no way to know if parents would use the same email address for children before the camp, future studies can use a number given to children to match them at the end. Two possible plans are shown:

Plan A: A unique number will be given to individual children. These unique numbers will be based on something that already means something to the children, so they will be able to remember it by the end of the summer. This given format number can be sent out together with pre-test and post-test survey invitations; the author has to highlight the format and parents have to input the number based on the format. The number is created by a given format using a child’s birthday (mmddyyyy) followed by their street address number. For instance, if a child has a birthday on September 28th 2011 and an address number of 1748, their unique number would be 092820111748. This
would allow each child to have a unique identifier that children or parents can remember by the end of the summer. There will be a spot on both surveys that parents will fill in with their child’s unique number. If the identifying number is missing, the survey may not be submitted. By doing this, the survey can be matched by these numbers at the end of the survey. The future researcher also needs to demonstrate it in IRB application form that the number will be only used to match participants from pre-test to post-test. The survey can still stay anonymous, and the camp administrator can only access the campers’ profile for identification. The researcher will be unable to see individual campers’ profiles, and the camp administrator will not share participant information with the camp researcher.

Plan B: Parents will be given a random number for each child when they register at camp. In order to help parents keep track of the number, the number will be sent out together with their camp registration confirmation letter via email/mail. The random given number can be: PEAKCAMP001, PEAKCAMP002, or camp staff can create the format by their own. The rest of the steps can be the same as plan A. A spot will be shown on pre-test and post-test surveys for parents to fill in the numbers. Parents can start the survey once they input the number.

Another way for data collection is that the researcher could use the “parents’ observation behavior checklist” form. Based on selected YOB, parents provide initial impressions before the camp and at the end of camp. The first day at camp, parents would be invited to fill out the form; the same form would be asked to fill out at the end of the camp.
**Questionnaire Design**

Demographic questions needed: another idea is future studies could measure individual families’ socioeconomic statuses as part of the demographic questions on the pre-test. There is an assumption raised in this study, but future research can answer: Is there a relationship between socioeconomic status and children’s skill development. Coutellier (n.d.) had a study about day camps serving a population that has fairly close access to the camp. PEAK Camp is affiliated by Kent State University. There are two different prices, fees for affiliated and non-community members, so it is assumed PEAK Camp serves some of the university staff’s children. To support this idea, demographic information can be added to check specific questions that include parents’ occupation, income, and distance from the camp. The reason for doing this is because Larson (2000) showed that children from a higher socioeconomic background get greater parental support and have more abilities, and because of that, these children tend to have more positive outcomes. In this study, parents rated children fairly high on the pre-test, which left limited room on the post-test for improvements. Future studies need to collect corresponding data to see if parents’ socioeconomic status (e.g: university faculty) has a positive influence on children’s skill development and to see if this theory also applies to PEAK Camp. Besides, qualitative factors can influence the results, such as purpose to joining the camp. The study could collect the purposes for each parent for letting their child join the camp in order to determine the result and the intended goals.

Some qualitative questions need to be added to see if any other variables might be a factor influencing the campers’ skill development, because children only stay at the day
camp from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm; the rest of the time they are with parents or guardians. Some questions can be: how much time do parents spend with children outside the camp for reading, playing games, etc.

Lastly, one possible idea would be to do a six-month follow up design as shown from several previous studies (Henderson, 2007; Henderson, 2005). Using the same survey, participants would fill out the survey after six months. With this type of design, researchers would be able to see the long-term effects of camp outcomes.

Apart from suggestions for current study design, future studies could include a wider variety of accredited and non-accredited camps to see if this study’s findings are representative of the greater population of camp professionals and camps. PEAK Camp was accredited by the ACA. Future study could include some non-accredited camps.

**Other Camp Types**

Future studies can focus on particular skill camps. Skill camps often focus on a set of particular activities. These specialty camps are those geared towards children with special interests, such as art camps (dance, music, film, fashion), education camps (computer, language, leadership), or sports camps (golf, horseback-riding, gymnastics). Different youth outcome development can be seen in these types of camp settings.

**Participants**

Future study can have an experimental group and a control group to check if the experimental group can yield different results in selected dimensions. Experimental groups would be campers, while the controlled group would be children in a similar age range nearby but not attending any organized camp setting at the same period of time.
Designed by the ACA, the future study can test YOB’s reliability and validity in non-American camp settings with different demographics and culture; such as youth camp outcomes in Asian camps.

**Conclusion**

The research questions were not entirely answered. By aggregate data analysis, Problem-Solving Confidence was the only one showed significant difference. To get better and fair result, suggestions were given for redesigned studies in the next chapter.
CHAPTER VI

OVERALL STUDY REFLECTION AND SUGGESTION

Conducting research and preparing a thesis often takes a lot of patience because of the many challenges that the student faces during data collection, analysis, and interpretation or transcription. This chapter includes a personal reflection of research design, in an attempt to provide useful advice for future researchers who want to conduct further research on PEAK Camp youth development.

Personal Reflection

The skills required for thesis writing are accumulated beyond initial graduate classes. The skills that were acquired from the overall process were independence, critical thinking, risk control management, and problem solving. From my point of view, the overall learning process can be divided into two steps: academic writing and conducting field research; both of these were beneficial to self-improvement in the English language. Language skill development occurred often by picking up suitable words or phrases to effectively articulate meaning and interpretation of the data. This is quite challenging for me with English as a second language. For example, the results in chapter five showed that the problem-solving confidence was the only area that had a significant improvement. Rather than saying the result of this study can add more knowledge to contemporary camp outcome research, it should be more appropriate to say that the study has contributed to research by showing the benefits of summer camps on the development of problem-solving confidence. One has to be mindful with overreaching phrases as not to misrepresent the results and state it based on the data.
Another example, one research question was whether or not camp experience can increase the child’s preference for outdoor activities. Based on the word ‘preference’, the questionnaire was originally designed to show that time spent at camp will change the child’s choice in deciding whether to participate in outdoor activity or not. However, the ‘preference’ was not the word I needed; the word ‘preference’ is not a suitable word and did not reflect the purpose and intention of the research questions.

The following section includes several complications with the data and research, as well as some suggestions for a re-designed study to avoid the limitations reached in this study.

**Original Study Design**

The difficulty in conducting critical outcome research is based on many factors that influence outcomes related to different themes, activities, number of session(s) of stay, gender and previously related camp experiences. Measuring and stating conclusively that a camping program causes a behavior change in a short period of time, such as during a 5-day camp experience, was the goal in this study. What I have learnt from original study design was how to identify research questions, collect a data set that provides a solid framework to answer my questions, find both the similarities and differences within data set, shape a concise and coherent narrative around the data, and make data easy to understand.

The study was originally designed in two parts, a pre-test and post-test, that were to be completed by parents of the camp participants and could be matched to the tests by email address. However, this evaluation method was inadequate. The data was flawed
due to several reasons, and the flawed data caused two research questions to remain unanswered. First, YOB was not used as its original camper self-reported design. The information lacked validity because of the misuse of ACA’s YOB that was originally designed for camp participants to measure their own development of skills in camp programs. By picking selected subscales from the YOB, the survey was completed by parents in this study. Second, data was skewed. It means data tends to have a long tail on one side or the other. Ideally, the normal distribution has no skew, it is perfectly symmetrical, and the mean is exactly at the peak. In this study, data was skewed because the score rated by parents in pre-test to children on six-option Likert scale was rated fairly high, the score was close to six. So, the mean value is greater than the median, a distribution that is skewed right. It is possible that the method wrongly applied the use of YOB, altering the original questions to suit the interviewee that could have unintentionally altered the study’s validity. It was difficult to ensure validity from parent’s perception of their own children’s development and growth. For participants that had high evaluations in the pre-test, there was little room for improvement for the future post-test, which shows a ceiling effect. This bias has been reported from other camp outcome studies and has been discussed in the last chapter. This bias could have been because of parents’ intention of justifying the decision to send their child to camp. This group of campers probably had already developed skills from previous camp experiences. The study was left unable to interpret data accurately due to the parents’ bias, hence the data gathered in this study was skewed.

Third, individuals’ results could not be paired accurately through email address
when parents had multiple children registered at PEAK Camp. The problem was that the pre-test and post-test could not tell which child the parent was completing the survey for while only providing one email address for multiple children. The design of the study allowed the parents to confidentially answer an online survey both before and after their children’s participation at PEAK Camp. The parents were not asked to provide names, telephone numbers, or addresses. The only information given was the email address of the parents used to send the online survey and for multiple reminders to complete the survey. The problem arose when a parent enrolled multiple children under the same email address, meaning the result could not be matched by individual results from pre-test and post-test. As an international student growing up without siblings, because of the one child policy in China, it was an assumption that parents have one child. One email address provided by parents for this child’s outcome survey completion would be an accessible way for a researcher to operate the study. The aggregate data was used, but it could not effectively be evaluated because of the inability to correlate the data of individuals even though it did show a significant increase amongst most participants in problem-solving confidence. The two research questions that were unable to be answered were: (a) What is the youth skill development between one-week camper and multiple-week campers; (b) Do different camp themes make a difference in campers’ behavior?

**Original Study Findings**

The study was intended to answer four research questions: (a) What are parents’ perceptions of their child’s skill development from pre-test to post-test in six dimensions; (b) Does camp experience increase the time spent on physical activity after the camp; (c)
What is the youth skill development between one-week camper and multiple-weeks campers; and (d) Do different camp themes make a difference in camper’s behavior? The current study did not produce the expected result because of limitations of the design that were not foreseen before sending out surveys. Without repeating demographic questions on the post-test, the surveys were unable to identify multiple children under the same email address. This is the result of not being able to compare the pre-test and post-test results by individual. This study could not answer two research questions: (a) What is the youth skill development between one-week camper and multiple-weeks campers; (b) Do different camp themes make a difference in camper’s behavior? The study answered the first research question of parents’ perception of children’s skill development from pre-test to post-test in six dimensions by aggregate data analysis. After the analysis of the aggregate data, the study showed that parents perceived a significant improvement in problem-solving confidence.

The study originally wanted to check whether participants’ growth differentiated between those who have stayed a week versus those who have stayed longer within the six dimensions. Campers can join either one week or multiple weeks at PEAK Camp summer 2014. The hypothesis was that longer camp experience will gain better skill development. However, the result relied on paired-up individual pre-test and post-test, and then compared different number of session(s) of stay by group; for example, one week campers’ skill development, two weeks campers’ skill development, and up to nine weeks campers’ skill development.

Another question that this study was unable to answer was: Do different camp
themes make a difference in camper’s behavior. PEAK Camp Summer 2014 had nine sessions with different themes each week. New sessions start from Monday, and last five days per week. Each theme had different activities to focus on, but with the same camp mission. Whether children still have equal chances to grow would be a question for future studies to consider and answer.

**Re-Design PEAK Camp Study**

The goal for re-design study would be to obtain objective data to answer the research questions.

**Participants of the Survey**

In the redesigned study, parents will not be the only source of evaluation of youth growth. ACA’ s YOB is age appropriate for campers’ self-evaluation. Campers complete surveys on beliefs regarding their own abilities, confidence, and social awareness across camp. Similar to this study, several studies also experienced a ceiling effect, and showed that there was little room for growth due to campers’ self reporting high initial ratings before the start of camp (Klassen 2007; Henderson et al., 2007; Thurber et al., 2007). In order to get better and fair results, a redesigned studies could include campers, parents, and camp counselors to complete pre-test, post-test, and an eight-weeks follow up survey to show how camp experience changed lives. The redesigned study data would show children’s skill development based on individual camp experience. The data could have an individual camper’s skill development report based on identified questions. When I interpreted data by different categories, such as number of session(s) of stay, gender, or age, I may find an entirely new or unexpected result. Besides that, a different
questionnaire could be used for each groups. YOB is an age appropriate measurement for campers’ self-report, it still can be used for campers self-evaluation. Redesigned surveys for camp counselors and parents could be developed differently from the campers’ surveys. Counselors and parents could finish an outcome checklist. By picking up one outcome to evaluate, questions can be combined with open-ended question and a six-option scale questionnaire. For example: Problem-solving confidence: when did Jane change exactly? What exactly was Jane like before camp? By combining feedback from three different groups of people, the data would be a relatively accurate reflection of youth development outcomes at camp overall.

The advantage of multiple evaluations can cover different facets from different groups of people’s perception about camp outcomes. The counselor would perceive campers’ development during the camp through observation and then compile a separate form evaluating the campers individually throughout their camp experience. The ratio rate of camp participants to counselors at PEAK Camp is 8:1. Each counselor would be assigned eight campers for observation throughout the week, paying close attention to the behavior, interaction, and development. To help counselors interpret the most accurate result of camper behavior, a research assistant will assist the whole procedures of observation. The camper would be given a paper-pen self-evaluation sheet that is an age appropriate form from YOB to show their own perceptions of growth; the parents would receive parents checklist to file before enrollment of the participant by email, and after the child has finished enrollment in the sessions and gone home, there would be a long-term evaluation. By comparing pre-test and post-test results of individuals, the report can
reflect youth outcome development at camp from academic view in various aspects and more finding would report from the study. Other measures to improve validity could further include examining counselor bias through weekly debriefing meetings.

**Method of the Survey**

Re-design could try mixed methods for collecting data. A mixed methods approach is effective when one of the methods cannot fully address the research questions. It enables integration of the data to provide a more complete understanding of the findings. Mixed methods include online survey, paper-pen survey, or interview. There could be a pre-test, post-test and eight weeks follow up survey that would need to be completed by parents, campers, and counselors. Surveys for parents would be sent out to parents’ email addresses. The online survey may still be an appropriate way of conducting surveys due to the ease of access. Another possible way to collect data would be to match participants by a given format number, this has already been discussed in the last chapter. Campers and counselors pre-test and post-test surveys would be handed out on the first day of the session and the last day of the session. Interview questions on the last day would be done by counselors to elicit a broader understanding of the effects of camp across the six domains. Interviewers would ask participants about their summer experience and then probe about the characteristic of those experiences relative to skill development. Each interview would be transcribed verbatim and read carefully to obtain rich, detailed descriptions of the summer experience.

Independent T-test and ANOVA software could be used for data analysis. The data could be matched up by individual participants, or could be observed by comparing
different groups. Either may yield different results.

**Expected Result from Re-Designed Study**

Each camper’s performance could be observed and reported from the study design by camper’s self-reports, and evaluation from parents and counselors. The tests will be reflective on the growth and skill development perceived by the campers, the parents, and the counselors. Several main flawed data problems should be solved; for one, parents would not be the only ones surveyed. Parents do not necessarily know how their children perceive themselves and their growth. Bias from parents’ report problem can be solved when counselors’ evaluations and campers’ self-evaluations are evaluated as well. The result will be more accurate and fair to reflect the children’s skill development from all facets. Campers might get better skills with longer camp experience or they might stay the same, and the result might also show which area can be developed the most, or some areas might not shown significant improvement as this study; different theme might not be a factor for skill development since activity’s designs are based on the same camp mission.

The redesigned study would be able to answer this study’s original research question. First: The relationship between different camp duration and skill development can be analyzed by evaluations from three dimensions: camper self-evaluation, counselor and parent evaluation. Depending on camp duration, and participant number of session(s) of stay, it may be applicable to divide campers into groups categorized by the number of sessions spent at a camp. Whether it be one week or multiple weeks, there shall be comparisons between these groups of individuals to determine whether number
of session(s) will influence skill development for youth. For example, the future researcher can divide the nine sessions of PEAK Camp into three segments. Children’s skill development based on number of session(s) of stay at camp can be observed by comparing these three aggregate groups. The first session to the third session would be considered as short stay campers group; the fourth session to the sixth session would be considered as medium stay campers group; the seventh session to the ninth session would be considered as long stay campers group. As hypothesized, campers may benefit from a longer camp experience. The long stay camper would have a longer time to develop skills taught in these three segments; possibly learning new material, and immersion of repetitive themes. A fully engaged participant can allow for less distraction and focus on the intense setting and purpose of the camp activities.

Second: The relationship between different theme and youth skill development. In terms of nine different themes and skill development, the effect of theme and children’s development would be answered by comparing each session in six dimensions by individual results. An evaluation would be given out once at the start day of the new section and the last day of that session to children, parents, and counselors. It would keep a record of the progress from the following week. No matter how many session(s) each camper joined, they would get an evaluation form before and after the session. Last but not the least, the redesigned study would be focused on campers in that particular year, for example: 2015 PEAK Summer Camp. However, campers who had attended PEAK camp before or who had developed skills from previous camp experience would be a variable, but this cannot be avoided.
Conclusion

In addition to the reflection of overall study design, several other suggestions are given to those who need tips to start a thesis.

Composition of a well-written thesis is dependent on the prior knowledge of the field of study, initial research design, data collection, analysis and interpretation. The researcher had a three months internship in an American resident camp setting in Maine, during summer 2013. The great passion to know more about youth development outcomes was the motivation to start this thesis.

Working close with committee members when proposing and conducting research will help students navigate their master thesis. Especially in the initial stages, there should be frequent meetings with committee members to generate ideas around the proposal. Identifying research questions, method, and design is the foundation of a study. Open communication is also a necessary for progress. Thesis time was the most fruitful period in my graduate study.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

INVITATION LETTER
Appendix A

Invitation Letter

Dear PEAK Summer camp parents:

As you may know, camp has been considered an important childhood experience for over 150 years. Camp activities enrich children in various ways and often have a lasting impact on their lives. Kent State University makes youth development through their PEAK Summer Camp a priority and is continually assessing the program.

You will soon be invited to participate in a Kent State University approved study. Participation will include completing two brief online surveys, one before your child attends PEAK Camp and one after. The purpose of the study is to assess your perceptions of how PEAK Camp may or may not benefit your child. Should you choose to participate, the information that you provide will be greatly helpful toward the development of this program and will be used to improve the camp experience.

Your invitations to participate will be sent via email from Ang Li, a graduate student in Kent State’s Recreation, Park and Tourism Management program. The subject line of the email will read: Youth development of PEAK Summer camp in 2014. The study will take only 15 minutes of your time. Furthermore, everyone who completes both surveys will be entered into a drawing to win a free week of PEAK Camp for the 2015 summer. Your ideas are very important to us. Therefore, please look for the invitation in your email and use the link provided within it to access and complete the online survey.

If you have any questions regarding youth development through PEAK Camp or this study, please contact Ang Li via email at ali6@kent.edu or via phone at 330-780-5019.

Thank you for participation.

Sincerely,

Ang Li
Recreation, Park and Tourism Management
College of Education, Health and Human Services
Kent State University
APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM
Appendix B

Consent Form

Study Title: Parental Feedback: Parent’s Perceptions of PEAK Camp Influence on Child Development

Principal Investigator: PI: Andrew Lepp
Co-Investigator and KSU student: Ang Li

You are being invited to participate in a research study. This consent form will provide you with information on the research project, what you will need to do, and the associated risks and benefits of the research. Your participation is voluntary. Please read this form carefully. It is important that you ask questions and fully understand the research in order to make an informed decision. You will receive a copy of this document to take with you.

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of parents’ perceptions of the potential outcomes their children might receive as a result of attending KSU’s PEAK Camp in the summer of 2014. Participation will include completing two brief online surveys; one before your child attends PEAK Camp and one after. To be specific, the study will examine six benefits of summer camp from six dimensions: friendship skills, independence, teamwork, perceived competence, responsibility, and problem-solving confidence. The survey typically takes 15 minutes to complete and is strictly anonymous.

There are no direct benefits from participating in the study. However, what we learn from the study will be greatly helpful toward the development of this program and will be used to improve the camp experience. Also, completing this questionnaire can help parents understand youth development which might occur from attending camp.

Participation is voluntary. Your decision to participate or not participate will in no way affect your child’s PEAK Camp experience and there are no penalties of any kind for not participating. The information from this study will be kept confidential. No personal information will be collected, and the data collected will only be used for this study. Any identifying information will be kept in a secure location and only the researchers will have access to the data. Research participants will not be identified in any publication or presentation of the research results; only aggregate data will be used.

There are no anticipated risks beyond those encountered in everyday life. If you do not wish to answer a question, you may skip it and go on to the next question. Overall the risk of this study is minimal.
As an appreciation for the time participants spend on this study, everyone who completes both surveys will be entered into a drawing to win a free week of PEAK Camp for the 2015 summer.

If you have any questions or comments or are curious about the results, please contact the primary investigator, Dr. Andrew Lepp by email (alepp1@kent.edu), phone (672-0218). Or you may contact the Director of KSU’S PEAK Camps, Phelan Fletcher by email (pfletch3@kent.edu), phone (672-0460) or in person (Kent State University Recreation Center). This project has been approved by the Kent State University Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or complaints about the research, you may call the IRB at 330.672.2704.

I have read this consent form and have had the opportunity to have my questions answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that a copy of this consent will be provided to me for future reference.

__________________________  ____________________
Participant Signature       Date
APPENDIX C

PRE-TEST QUESTIONNAIRE
Appendix C

Pre-test Questionnaire

Dear parents, you are invited to participate in this research survey. Participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from it at any time without penalty. This set of questions is designed to measure your child’s current level of development in six areas: Friendship Skills, Independence, Teamwork, Perceived Competence, Responsibility, and Problem-Solving Confidence. All data obtained will be anonymous. If you have any questions before completing this survey, please contact the researcher, Ang Li in the Hospitality and Tourism Management Program at Kent State University via email at ali6@kent.edu. Thank you for your time and assistance in the completion of this research.

Part I: Demographic

1. What is your role as this child’s caregiver?
   ○ Mother
   ○ Father
   ○ Other: __________________________

2. What is your relationship status? (Check one)
   ○ Single
   ○ In a relationship
   ○ Married
   ○ Separated
   ○ Divorced
   ○ Widowed

3. What is the gender of your child at PEAK Camp?
   ○ Female
   ○ Male

4. What is the age of your child? __________

   On a typical summer day, how much time does your child spend engaged in any outdoor physical activity (e.g. free play, sports, swimming, etc.) to the point that she/he sweats and increases her/his heart rate?

   Hours: __________________ Minutes: __________________

5. On a typical summer day, how much time does your child spend engaged in any screen based activity (e.g.: TV, computer, video games, iPad, iPod, DVDs, Netflix, Internet, etc.)?

6. On a typical summer day, how much time does your child spend engaged in any screen based activity (e.g.: TV, computer, video games, iPad, iPod, DVDs, Netflix, Internet, etc.)?
7. On a typical summer day, how much time does your child spend reading?
   Hours: ________________ Minutes: ________________

8. How many sessions has your child joined at PEAK Camp in 2014? (Click on all the session(s) for which you have registered)
   - Session 1
   - Session 2
   - Session 3
   - Session 4
   - Session 5
   - Session 6
   - Session 7
   - Session 8
   - Session 9

9. How many previous summers has your child attended PEAK Camp?
   - This year is the first time
   - 1 time
   - 2 times
   - 3 times
   - other ______

10. Does your child have any disabilities?
    - Yes
    - No

    If so, indicate the type of disability?
    - Physical/mobility
    - Social/ behavior
    - Cognitive/ intellectual
    - Sensory

Part II: Below are six outcomes that you may consider important for your child’s development. Please check the one that best describes your child.

Friendship Skills

1. My child is good at choosing people who would be good to be friends with
2. My child is good at talking to friends about things that are important to them
3. My child is good at listening carefully to things that his/her friends tell him/her
4. My child is good at talking to friends that are important to him/her
5. My child is good at getting to know his/her friends well
6. My child is good at understanding his/her friends' feelings
7. My child is good at trusting his/her friends
8. My child is trusted by his/her friend
9. My child enjoys being with his/her friends
10. My child is good at helping his/her friends have a good time when they are together
11. My child is good at finding ways to meet people who he/she wants to be friends with
12. My child is good at getting to know people who he/she might want to become friends with
13. My child is good at finding friends who like many of the same things that he/she likes
☐ False  ☐ Somewhat False  ☐ A Little False  ☐ A Little True  ☐ Somewhat True  ☐ True

**Independence**

1. My child is comfortable being away from my family
☐ False  ☐ Somewhat False  ☐ A Little False  ☐ A Little True  ☐ Somewhat True  ☐ True

2. My child can make good decisions even when members of our family aren't around to help him/her
☐ False  ☐ Somewhat False  ☐ A Little False  ☐ A Little True  ☐ Somewhat True  ☐ True

3. My child doesn’t need adults to help him/her do things
☐ False  ☐ Somewhat False  ☐ A Little False  ☐ A Little True  ☐ Somewhat True  ☐ True

4. My child can do things on his/her own
☐ False  ☐ Somewhat False  ☐ A Little False  ☐ A Little True  ☐ Somewhat True  ☐ True

5. My child is independent
☐ False  ☐ Somewhat False  ☐ A Little False  ☐ A Little True  ☐ Somewhat True  ☐ True

6. My child can solve problems without help from his/her friends
☐ False  ☐ Somewhat False  ☐ A Little False  ☐ A Little True  ☐ Somewhat True  ☐ True

7. My child can make decisions by his/her own
☐ False  ☐ Somewhat False  ☐ A Little False  ☐ A Little True  ☐ Somewhat True  ☐ True

8. My child can make decision without adults helping him/her
☐ False  ☐ Somewhat False  ☐ A Little False  ☐ A Little True  ☐ Somewhat True  ☐ True

**Responsibility**

1. My child accepts responsibility for his/her action
☐ False  ☐ Somewhat False  ☐ A Little False  ☐ A Little True  ☐ Somewhat True  ☐ True

2. My child thinks he/she owns up his/her mistake
3. My child doesn’t blame others for his/her mistakes  
☐ False  ☐ Somewhat False  ☐ A Little False  ☐ A Little True  ☐ Somewhat True  ☐ True

4. My child can try to make things right when he/she messes something up  
☐ False  ☐ Somewhat False  ☐ A Little False  ☐ A Little True  ☐ Somewhat True  ☐ True

5. My child can fix the problem when he/she makes a mistake  
☐ False  ☐ Somewhat False  ☐ A Little False  ☐ A Little True  ☐ Somewhat True  ☐ True

6. My child can apologize when he/she hurts someone's feelings  
☐ False  ☐ Somewhat False  ☐ A Little False  ☐ A Little True  ☐ Somewhat True  ☐ True

**Teamwork**

1. My child thinks he/she can be a good group leader  
☐ False  ☐ Somewhat False  ☐ A Little False  ☐ A Little True  ☐ Somewhat True  ☐ True

2. My child can help a group be successful  
☐ False  ☐ Somewhat False  ☐ A Little False  ☐ A Little True  ☐ Somewhat True  ☐ True

3. My child can be happy even when his/her group has decided to do something he/she doesn’t like  
☐ False  ☐ Somewhat False  ☐ A Little False  ☐ A Little True  ☐ Somewhat True  ☐ True

4. My child appreciates opinions that are different from his/her own  
☐ False  ☐ Somewhat False  ☐ A Little False  ☐ A Little True  ☐ Somewhat True  ☐ True

5. My child can place group goals above the things that he/she wants  
☐ False  ☐ Somewhat False  ☐ A Little False  ☐ A Little True  ☐ Somewhat True  ☐ True

6. My child can cooperate with others  
☐ False  ☐ Somewhat False  ☐ A Little False  ☐ A Little True  ☐ Somewhat True  ☐ True

7. My child can be a team-player in a small group
8. My child can get along with other people in a small group

Perceived Competence

1. My child is good at thinking of new things to do in his/her free time

2. My child is good at understanding new information

3. My child is good at doing art projects

4. My child is good at doing recreation activities

5. My child is good at doing recreation activities with other people

6. My child is good at meeting new people

7. My child is good at taking care of himself/herself

8. My child is good at learning new things

Problem-solving confidence

1. When my child has a problem, he/she knows the source

2. My child can look for the things that might be causing it when he/she has a problem
3. My child can stop and think about options before making a decision when she/he has a problem

4. My child can think of different ideas and combine some to make the best decision when she/he has a problem

5. My child can choose a realistic plan when he/she has a problem

6. My child can make a good choice about what to do when he/she has a problem

7. My child can check to see if the problem has gotten better after dealing with a problem

8. My child considers how it worked out after dealing with a problem

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire!
APPENDIX D

POST-TEST QUESTIONNAIRE
Appendix D

Post-test Questionnaire

Dear parents, thank you for completing the pre-test survey. You are now invited to participate in this the post-test survey for this research study. Participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from it at any time without penalty. This set of questions is designed to measure outcomes of the campers’ experiences at PEAK Camp in 2014. With this information, it is possible to measure the outcomes in six areas: Friendship Skills, Independence, Teamwork, Perceived Competence, Responsibility, and Problem-Solving Confidence. All data obtained will be anonymous. If you have any questions before completing this survey, please contact the researcher, Ang Li in the Hospitality and Tourism Management Program at Kent State University via email at ali6@kent.edu. Thank you for your time and assistance in the completion of this research.

Part I:

1. On a typical summer day, how much time does your child spend engaged in any outdoor physical activity (e.g. free play, sports, swimming, etc.) to the point that they sweat and increase their heart rate?

   Hours: ______________ Minutes: ______________

2. On a typical summer day, how much time does your child spend engaged in any screen based activity (e.g.: TV, computer, video games, iPad, iPod, DVDs, Netflix, Internet, etc.)?

   Hours: ______________ Minutes: ______________

3. On a typical summer day, how much time does your child spend reading?

   Hours: ______________ Minutes: ______________

4. Since the beginning of summer, has your child joined any camps beside PEAK Camp?

   □ Yes  □ No
   If so, what type of camp?

   □ day camp  □ residential camp

   How many days did your child spend there?
Days: ______________

5. Has your child participated in any overnight family vacations away from home this summer?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

If so, how many days long was your child’s vacation?
Days: ______________

Part II: Below are six outcomes that you may consider important for your child’s development. Please check the one that best describes your child.

Friendship Skills

1. My child is good at choosing people who would be good to be friends with

☐ False  ☐ Somewhat False  ☐ A Little False  ☐ A Little True  ☐ Somewhat True  ☐ True

2. My child is good at talking to friends about things that are important to them

☐ False  ☐ Somewhat False  ☐ A Little False  ☐ A Little True  ☐ Somewhat True  ☐ True

3. My child is good at listening carefully to things that his/her friends tell him/her

☐ False  ☐ Somewhat False  ☐ A Little False  ☐ A Little True  ☐ Somewhat True  ☐ True

4. My child is good at talking to friends that are important to him/her

☐ False  ☐ Somewhat False  ☐ A Little False  ☐ A Little True  ☐ Somewhat True  ☐ True

5. My child is good at getting to know his/her friends well

☐ False  ☐ Somewhat False  ☐ A Little False  ☐ A Little True  ☐ Somewhat True  ☐ True

6. My child is good at understanding his/her friends’ feelings

☐ False  ☐ Somewhat False  ☐ A Little False  ☐ A Little True  ☐ Somewhat True  ☐ True

7. My child is good at trusting his/her friends

☐ False  ☐ Somewhat False  ☐ A Little False  ☐ A Little True  ☐ Somewhat True  ☐ True
8. My child is trusted by his/her friend
   - False
   - Somewhat False
   - A Little False
   - A Little True
   - Somewhat True
   - True

9. My child enjoys being with his/her friends
   - False
   - Somewhat False
   - A Little False
   - A Little True
   - Somewhat True
   - True

10. My child is good at helping his/her friends have a good time when they are together
    - False
    - Somewhat False
    - A Little False
    - A Little True
    - Somewhat True
    - True

11. My child is good at finding ways to meet people who he/she wants to be friends with
    - False
    - Somewhat False
    - A Little False
    - A Little True
    - Somewhat True
    - True

12. My child is good at getting to know people who he/she might want to become friends with
    - False
    - Somewhat False
    - A Little False
    - A Little True
    - Somewhat True
    - True

13. My child is good at finding friends who like many of the same things that he/she likes
    - False
    - Somewhat False
    - A Little False
    - A Little True
    - Somewhat True
    - True

**Independence**

1. My child is comfortable being away from my family
   - False
   - Somewhat False
   - A Little False
   - A Little True
   - Somewhat True
   - True

2. My child can make good decisions even when members of our family aren't around to help him/her
   - False
   - Somewhat False
   - A Little False
   - A Little True
   - Somewhat True
   - True

3. My child doesn’t need adults to help him/her do things
   - False
   - Somewhat False
   - A Little False
   - A Little True
   - Somewhat True
   - True

4. My child can do things on his/her own
   - False
   - Somewhat False
   - A Little False
   - A Little True
   - Somewhat True
   - True

5. My child is independent
6. My child can solve problems without help from his/her friends
   - False  □  Somewhat False  □  A Little False  □  A Little True  □  Somewhat True  □  True

7. My child can make decisions by his/her own
   - False  □  Somewhat False  □  A Little False  □  A Little True  □  Somewhat True  □  True

8. My child can make decisions without adults helping him/her
   - False  □  Somewhat False  □  A Little False  □  A Little True  □  Somewhat True  □  True

Responsibility

1. My child accepts responsibility for his/her action
   - False  □  Somewhat False  □  A Little False  □  A Little True  □  Somewhat True  □  True

2. My child thinks he/she owns up his/her mistakes
   - False  □  Somewhat False  □  A Little False  □  A Little True  □  Somewhat True  □  True

3. My child doesn’t blame others for his/her mistakes
   - False  □  Somewhat False  □  A Little False  □  A Little True  □  Somewhat True  □  True

4. My child can try to make things right when he/she messes something up
   - False  □  Somewhat False  □  A Little False  □  A Little True  □  Somewhat True  □  True

5. My child can fix the problem when he/she makes a mistake
   - False  □  Somewhat False  □  A Little False  □  A Little True  □  Somewhat True  □  True

6. My child can apologize when he/she hurts someone's feelings
   - False  □  Somewhat False  □  A Little False  □  A Little True  □  Somewhat True  □  True

Teamwork

1. My child thinks he/she can be a good group leader
   - False  □  Somewhat False  □  A Little False  □  A Little True  □  Somewhat True  □  True

2. My child can help a group be successful
3. My child can be happy even when his/her group has decided to do something he/she doesn’t like

4. My child appreciates opinions that are different from his/her own

5. My child can place group goals above the things that he/she wants

6. My child can cooperate with others

7. My child can be a team-player in a small group

8. My child can get along with other people in a small group

Perceived Competence

1. My child is good at thinking of new things to do in his/her free time

2. My child is good at understanding new information

3. My child is good at doing art projects

4. My child is good at doing recreation activities

5. My child is good at doing recreation activities with other people
6. My child is good at meeting new people

7. My child is good at taking care of himself/herself

8. My child is good at learning new things

**Problem-solving confidence**

1. When my child has a problem, he/she knows the source

2. My child can look for the things that might be causing it when he/she has a problem

3. My child can stop and think about options before making a decision when she/he has a problem

4. My child can think of different ideas and combine some to make the best decision when she/he has a problem

5. My child can choose a realistic plan when he/she has a problem

6. My child can make a good choice about what to do when he/she has a problem

7. My child can check to see if the problem has gotten better after dealing with a problem

8. My child considers how it worked out after dealing with a problem
False □ Somewhat False □ A Little False □ A Little True □ Somewhat True □ True

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire!
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REFERENCES


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