"THE EXPERIENCE OF A LIFETIME": ALUMNI PERCEPTIONS OF THE DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFER OF LIFE AND WORKFORCE SKILLS IN THE OHIO 4-H CAMP COUNSELOR PROGRAM

A Thesis

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By

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ABSTRACT

Ohio 4-H invests significant resources in its camping program, and a new leadership structure named camping as a priority area. Past research suggests that camp counselors develop life skills, yet the perspective of alumni regarding transfer of learning has not been explored. The goals of this research was to ask 4-H camp counselor alumni about their experiences as a 4-H camp counselor, the life and workforce skills gained through their experience, the impact the camp counselor experience had on their career choice, and the unique aspects of being a 4-H camp counselor as compared to the rest of the 4-H experience.

This study used qualitative methods to collect data from adults (ages 18 and over) who had been 4-H camp counselors in Ohio. Focus groups were used to collect data from this sample ($n = 30$). Eighteen of Ohio’s 88 counties were represented. The average age of the participants was 22 and the average number of years the alumni were counselors was 4 years.

Overall, 4-H camp counselors thought their experience was fun and enjoyable, yet challenging. They believed they developed important life and workforce skills needed for the 21st century. More specifically, decision making, planning and organizing, communication, interpersonal skills, teamwork, and leadership were skills most
mentioned. The alumni believed that the camp counseling experience had both indirect and direct impacts on their choice of a career. Unique aspects of being a camp counselor compared to other experiences in 4-H were that camp takes place in a different environment where there is little competition. Camp counselors also have the opportunity to be role models and develop a sense of identity.

In conclusion, camp provides a developmental context for adolescents to thrive. The skills and qualities learned through this experience are transferred to other contexts of life such as a student or employee or as a community member. The development of these skills and qualities takes place in a fun environment, an often overlooked dimension of youth programs. The results of this study will be used to develop training materials and will be shared with important stakeholders.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The Ohio 4-H program was founded over 100 years ago in 1902 when A. B. Graham began what was known then as a boys’ and girls’ agricultural club. Today, the boys’ and girls’ agricultural clubs are known as 4-H clubs. 4-H clubs offer learning experiences for over 300,000 Ohio 4-H youth where they can participate in organized and hands-on experiences (Fox, 2003). These experiences may include 4-H projects, workshops, fairs, and camps (Deel, 2002). 4-H camping is one of the primary organized and hands-on methods to deliver content in the Ohio 4-H program (Black, Elliot, Horton, & Plymale, 1994).

In 1919, the first 4-H camp was conducted in Ohio by R. Bruce Tom, 4-H Agent in Summit County (Deel, 2002). Today, there are 15 camp facilities in Ohio where 4-H campers and counselors attend 4-H camp. Twelve of those camp facilities are owned and operated by the county 4-H program, 4-H camp corporations, or Ohio State University Extension (McNeely, 2004). One objective of the Ohio 4-H camping program is the development of life skills and more specifically the development of responsibility, social skills, and leadership. Other objectives of the 4-H camping program are for campers and
counselors to live with positive role models, use leisure time wisely, develop self-esteem, and understand and appreciate nature and the outdoors (Black et al., 1994).

Camping has been considered an "effective, extensive, and intensive" method of delivery (Black et al., 1994, p. 6-3). The Ohio 4-H camp counseling program consists of approximately 2,500 camp counselors and mostly targets the teen population with the average age of 15.7 years and a range from 12-20 (McNeely, 2004). Ohio 4-H camp programs typically are short-term (about 5 days) residential camps held throughout various camps in Ohio; in addition, many counties conduct day camps that are staffed by teen camp counselors. Roles of the counselors vary somewhat from county to county and camp to camp. However, many have similar responsibilities such as monitoring a cabin or group and leading or being part of camp committees. The significant resources invested in the 4-H camp counselor program include financial resources to support a camp facility and staff as well as time from the county Extension Educator, his or her paid staff, and the counselors.

**Problem Statement**

In 2004, the Governor of Ohio allocated new funding equaling $1.6 million for Ohio State University Extension. Some of the funds were provided to develop workforce and life skills, leadership skills, and an enhanced ethic of service and citizenship in youth as well as to increase the abilities of volunteers to work with youth. These goals were meant to be accomplished through day and/or resident camping, community clubs, after-school programs, or school enrichment (Smith, 2004). In addition, Ohio 4-H Youth Development created a new leadership and development structure that focused on seven priority areas. Among those priorities areas are after-school programs, Cloverbuds,
clubs, school enrichment, teen leadership, volunteerism, and camp. The roles of each priority area team is to lead program and curriculum development, facilitate human resources from 4-H professionals, increase financial resources for priority areas, and create professional development opportunities (King, 2005). Because camping has been named one of the priority areas, this provides justification for conducting research on camp counselors.

Camp as a delivery method for 4-H youth development has also been effective for teen camp counselors. Research has suggested that camp provides developmental benefits for teens and adult staff as well (Garst & Bruce, 2003). Research studies have been conducted on a variety of camp counselors and staff in other states around the nation. These studies have been conducted on a variety of audiences including 4-H and non-4-H, paid and volunteer, and young adults and teens. A variety of research methods have been used to conduct this research as well.

In Ohio, a study was conducted on the experiences of Ohio 4-H camp counselors. Camp counselors reported a high level of developmental experiences in teamwork and social skills, initiative, identity, and interpersonal relationships. However, the counselors in this study reported only moderate understanding of the application of experiences they had as camp counselors to other contexts in their lives, such as the workforce (McNeely, 2004).

Other studies conducted on camp counselors have indicated that overall the camp counseling experience is positive. Studies specify that camp counselors gained life skills as a result of the experience (DeGraff & Glover, 2003; Dworken, 2004; Forsythe, Matysik, & Nelson, 2004; Garst & Johnson, 2003; Weese, 2002). The development of
life skills have been consistent no matter what audience has been studied (4-H vs. non-4-H, teens vs. adults), the research method (open-ended interviews, focus groups, and surveys), and the duration of the activity (a few days to several years).

To be more specific, two life skills gained in many studies are the development of responsibility and leadership (Dworken, 2004; Garst & Johnson, 2003; Forsythe et al., 2004; James, 2003; McNeely, 2004; Toupence & Townsend, 2003). Once again, the development of responsibility and leadership has been consistent no matter what audience has been studied, the research method, and the duration of the activity. Other skills have been noted, but the same skills are not consistent throughout each study.

A trend in America has focused on the development of skills for a career (SCANS, 1991). In addition, recent legislation such as the No Child Left Behind Act has left little time in schools to help students develop important skills related to the world of work (Pittman, Irby, Yohalem, & Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2004). This gives 4-H an opportunity to focus on developing such skills in youth because it is an out-of-school time organization with a focus on hands-on learning experiences. Thus, 4-H is able to provide structured activities in which youth voluntarily participate; and these activities may help them to develop skills that are valued by employers.

Research studies have asked camp counselors if they believe they are developing important skills for the workforce. So far, the study results have been conflicting. Forsythe et al. (2004) found that their teen camp counselors believed they were developing skills for the workforce and community life. However, McNeely (2004), who studied teens as well, found that teens reported lower mean scores when they were asked about the application of the skills learned at camp compared with scores they reported for
other developmental experiences. In another study, alumni were asked about their camp
counseling experience and how it applied to employment opportunities and careers
(Brandt, 2005). These alumni did not believe that the camp counseling experience
opened up other employment opportunities for them. They also believed that the camp
counseling experience did not encourage them to consider a career working with
children. All of these studies used quantitative or open-ended surveys. These conflicting
results suggest that it is necessary to further study the issue of how the camp counseling
experience is applicable to the skills needed for work and community life.

Preparing youth for the workforce is a major concern in our society (Ferrari,
1997). The skills needed for the workforce today are different from the skills needed 30
years ago (SCANS, 1991) and employers are concerned about unprepared youth and
adults entering the workforce (Ferrari, 1997; 2003). Furthermore, many jobs available to
youth offer little opportunity for the development of autonomy and initiative as well as
little interaction with adults (Bryant, Zvonkovic, Raskauskas, & Peters, 2004).
Therefore, it is important for society to find effective ways to prepare youth for the
workforce.

Also, only a few studies have addressed the influence the camp counselor
program has had on choosing a career path (DeGraaf & Glover, 2003; Dworken, 2004).
Both DeGraaf and Glover (2003) and Dworken (2004) studied adult camp staff alumni
rather than teens who volunteer as camp counselors. The duration of these experiences
was longer and the camps were not 4-H camps. Therefore, it is important to ask 4-H
alumni who were counselors during their adolescent years if their camp experience had
an influence on their career choice. This is different from asking adult camp counselors
because it is more likely that they already had a career choice defined and choose to work at camp during college summers to develop skills related to their careers (specifically education) as opposed to trying to determine a future as a teen.

As stated previously, camp counselors in some studies did not realize the extent to which they are learning skills for their future in the workforce or as a community member. Learning transfers best when it takes place in the context of real situations (Taylor, 1997). Transfer of learning is important because stakeholders, including funding sources, parents, and 4-H advisory board members, must know that the time and financial investments they are giving are helping 4-H youth become competent, caring, and contributing members of society. Therefore, the research questions proposed below seem necessary to further define the impacts of the Ohio 4-H camp counseling program.

**Research Questions**

The following questions were the focus for this study:

1. How do camp counselor alumni perceive their camp counseling experience?
2. What is the impact of the 4-H camp counseling experience in relation to the development of personal, community, and work skills?
3. To what extent has the camp counseling experience impacted the career of camp counselor alumni?
4. What are the unique aspects of being a 4-H camp counselor compared to other 4-H experiences?
Definitions

The following definitions were used in this study:

*Alumni* are individuals who have graduated from a particular school, college, or other educational institution or organization (Neufeldt & Sparks, 1990).

*Decision making* is the process or act of making a decision (Ferrari, 1997). It involves defining the problem, generating possibilities, reviewing these alternative, selecting a course of action, and evaluating the appropriateness of the action taken.

*4-H youth development* is Extension’s youth development program. 4-H is a learning laboratory where youth, with the assistance of caring adults, explore the world and develop the life skills necessary for successful transition from childhood into adulthood (Astroth, 2003). A variety of methods are used to deliver the 4-H program.

*4-H camp* is described as a physical place, in the out-of-doors, where educational and developmentally appropriate experiences are conducted. The 4-H camp program includes a variety of activities such as crafts, games, physical activity, and other recreational activities (McNeely, 2004). Camps may be day camps or resident camps where 4-H campers and counselors live together in cabins.

*4-H campers* are youth, primarily ages 9 through 13, in Ohio who participates in the county 4-H camp program (McNeely, 2004).

*4-H camp counselors* in Ohio are male and female adolescents who volunteer their time for approximately five days at county-sponsored residential camps, and in some counties, at day camps. They receive an average of 20 hours of training to prepare them for their camp responsibilities. They monitor cabins, plan and lead programs at camp, and teach educational sessions at camp (McNeely, 2004).
4-H Extension educator is the professional staff person who gives leadership to the 4-H program and 4-H camp program in each county. The 4-H Extension educator also creates and facilitates camp counseling training before camp.

Identity is described as the subjective feeling of being the same person in different places and in different social situations (Kroger, 2000).

Initiative is defined as the capacity for autonomous action (Larson, 2000).

Interpersonal skills are described as having the ability to work with others through communication, cooperation, negotiation, sharing, empathizing, leading, and listening to others (Pittman & Wright, 1991; SCANS, 1991).

Leadership is the ability to communicate thoughts, feelings, and ideas to justify a position. Leaders encourage, persuade, convince, or motivate individuals or groups (SCANS, 1991).

Life skills allow individuals to respond to situations they experience in order to live a more productive and satisfying life. Life skills are not domain specific, but they are applicable in more than one setting (Ferrari, Hogue, & Scheer, 2004; Hendricks, 1996).

Responsibility is something or someone a person has made a commitment to take care of (Ferrari, 1997).

Transfer of learning is the human transmission of thinking and reasoning from one context to another (Barnett & Ceci, 2002).

Teamwork is doing things with other people to reach the same goal (Ferrari, 1997).
Workforce preparation is the process of preparing to enter the world of work (Ferrari, 1997). It includes focused awareness, exploration, and decision making activities that can happen in the home, in club programs, and in classrooms (Ferrari, 1997).

Workforce skills are skills, similar to life skills, that are important for individuals to possess to be successful in a variety of jobs. These include communication, leadership, decision making, responsibility, and interpersonal skills (Ferrari, 1997).

Assumptions

It was assumed in this study that:

1. The alumni who participated in the study were 4-H camp counselors in Ohio who were at least 18 years old.

2. The respondents answered all questions honestly and did not hold back important information.

Limitations

Limitations of the study included:

1. The sample was not drawn from the entire population of former Ohio 4-H camp counselors because no central records are kept that would aid in defining the population. It was not deemed feasible to undertake such an exhaustive process. Therefore, participation in the study was limited to only the Collegiate 4-H members who volunteered and to those whose names were given by the 4-H Extension Educators as potential participants.

2. The study design used only allowed for alumni to participate within a certain time frame. It did not allow for those to participate who had other prior commitments.
on the evening the focus group was held. Also, the design allowed only those to participate who were residing in a particular region of the state.

3. The research method was useful in gaining depth of the subject, but not breadth.

4. The study was a small sample of the entire population of 4-H camp counselor alumni. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to the entire population.

**Significance of Study**

In the summer of 2004, the Governor of Ohio gave a significant amount of legislative dollars to the Ohio 4-H Program to conduct educational programming and in particular to help youth develop skills for the workforce. The focus on developing skills for the workforce comes at a time when public schools are experiencing increased pressure to meet academic standards and have little time to focus on workforce skills. This creates an opportunity for community youth organizations like 4-H Youth Development to assist youth in developing these skills. At the same time, the Ohio 4-H Program created a new leadership and development structure that named seven priority areas of Ohio 4-H, with camping named as one of these areas.

Research on camping has been conducted on a variety of audiences including 4-H and non-4-H, paid and volunteer, and young adults and teens. The results from this research have yielded knowledge about positive developmental outcomes and experiences. Camp counselors gain positive life and workforce skills including skills in leadership and responsibility. Camp is also an opportunity for identity development where youth can explore opportunities to determine potential career paths. However, the results are conflicting when counselors are asked questions regarding whether they
believe they are developing important skills for the workforce and other contexts of their lives.

All of this comes at a time when there are decreasing financial resources and 4-H professionals are asked to be accountable for the programs that they do conduct. No research has been conducted in Ohio with alumni who have had the opportunity to reflect on their years as a 4-H camp counselor. Therefore, with the limited research conducted on camp counseling in Ohio and increased focus on development of skills for the workforce and other context of life, the proposed study seems necessary to further define the impacts of the Ohio 4-H camp counseling program.

The results of this study will be used to help 4-H professionals understand if counselors really are developing important skills for the workforce and as a community member. These results will be reported to important stakeholders who are interested in youth's development of skills for the workforce and other contexts of life. Finally, these results will be used as 4-H Extension Educators develop camp counselor training materials to provide an intentional way of helping the counselors realize the outcomes of their experience.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

4-H Youth Development programs provide an intentional process that promotes positive outcomes by providing opportunities, relationships, and support for youth. These programs help youth acquire the life and workforce skills necessary to meet the challenges of transition from childhood to adolescence and into adulthood. 4-H Youth Development uses experiential, research-based educational programs to help youth become competent, caring, confident, connected, and contributing citizens of character (Astroth, 2003). The 4-H camp counseling program is one example of a 4-H youth development program that helps youth develop in this way.

This chapter begins with a discussion of Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) Ecological Theory of Human Development with examples of how camp counseling fits with this theory. Changes that occur during adolescent development and concern over what adolescents do during unstructured hours of their day are discussed next. Studies of life skill development in 4-H are then presented. In addition, literature that has discussed workforce skills and 4-H programs available to help youth develop workforce skills is
presented. Then presented is research on campers and camp counselors. Finally, the chapter ends with a description of the concept of transfer of learning and how that concept applies to developing skills as a camp counselor.

**Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Theory of Human Development**

*Description of Theory*

In order for 4-H youth to develop skills, they need assistance from many sources: families, schools, neighborhoods, and the culture surrounding them (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory of human development proposes that human development occurs between the individual, other individuals, objects, and symbols (Gilman, Meyers, & Perez, 2004) and does not occur in a vacuum (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Development occurs within the individual’s immediate environment and the environment not immediately surrounding them over an extended period of time (Gilman et al., 2004). The ecological theory consists of five systems: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem, and the chronosystem. The *microsystem* is described as the setting where an individual lives. Beyond simply the physical setting, this is where the individual experiences activities, roles, and interpersonal relationships with others within the settings of family, peers, school, and neighborhood. The 4-H camp setting is an example of a microsystem. The *mesosystem* is described as the connections between two or more microsystems. For example, the mesosystem describes the relationship between the individual’s family experiences and the individual’s school experiences. The *exosystem* is described as settings that do not involve the individual directly as an active participant, but the individual is affected by what happens in these other settings. An example of the exosystem is a parent’s workplace. If the parent
receives a job promotion that requires more travel, it will reduce the interaction between the parent and child that occurs in the family setting. The *macrosystem* is described as the culture in which an individual lives. Culture is the behavior patterns, beliefs, and other products of a group that are passed from generation to generation. The *chronosystem* is a time factor that describes the pattern of events and transitions over the life course (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Santrock, 2001).

The term *proximal process* is used to describe the process of development over time through interaction between an evolving biopsychological human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate external environment. To produce development, these interactions must become progressively more complex (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). In other words, active participation in one’s environment allows one to develop skills. For example, camp counselors who are active leaders of their group are likely to develop skills such as communication, working with others, and decision making, and as they take on more responsibilities over time in this role, their development is likely to be enhanced.

*Application of Ecological Theory to Camp Counseling*

Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological theory of human development is applicable to the developmental opportunities at camp. The microsystem is characterized by activities, interpersonal relationships, and roles. The camp setting is an example of the microsystem where camp counselors experience a variety of activities, develop interpersonal relationships, and hold different roles. The camp counselor engages in a variety of activities including caring for campers, teaching crafts and games, and leading songs and other group activities. These activities occur in a structured and routine
environment in close quarters with others. The camp counselor has the opportunity to interact and develop relationships with others including adult staff, other counselors, and campers. These individuals may socially influence the thoughts and behavior of the camp counselor. The camp counselor may take on new roles that are likely to be different from those played in their home or school environment. The camp counselor works on committees with other counselors to help in planning camp programming. They may take on different roles in the committee including being a leader of the group or stepping back and letting others be the leader. Camp counselors are also leaders of their cabin and group of campers.

The mesosystem involves the relations between the Microsystems or connections between contexts. The blending of youth from different school districts is an example of the mesosystem. While in the camp setting, campers and camp counselors meet and interact with others from different school districts and learn about the culture in each school district. This in turn influences their interactions once they are no longer in the camp environment. Another example of the mesosystem is the role camp counselors play at camp and after camp. The counselor may have developed relationships with other counselors and campers at camp. These relationships may continue after the camp experience as friendships with counselors and as role models for campers.

Examples of the exosystem in relation to camp are the decisions made about 4-H programs by advisory boards. Financial support from funding officials such as the state legislature and county commissioners is another example of the exosystem. The standards established by the American Camp Association (ACA) affect the camp counselor because they have to meet those standards if the camp is accredited. For
example, ACA standards require that camp counselors must have at least 24 hours of training prior to camp. Camp counselors must meet this expectation or they are not allowed to serve as counselors at camp. Although these decisions made by advisory boards, funding officials, and other stakeholder groups are not made directly in the camp counselor’s environment, the camp counselor is indirectly affected by these decisions by the opportunities they create and the standards that must be met.

An example of the macrosystem is the value placed on the development of workforce skills in youth. Society believes that it is important for youth to develop into competent adults and the camp counselor role is an example of where adolescents can develop workforce skills. The camp culture is another example of the macrosystem. The camp culture includes structured and routine activities in a supportive environment. Also, traditions, such as particular songs and activities, are part of every county and camp, and these traditions are part of the camp experience.

Returning to camp another year is an example of the chronosystem. Returning to camp gives the camp counselor another year to further develop workforce skills and relationships with others. This development also influences the camp counselor in other aspects of their life. The camp counselor may learn that they enjoy working with children and decide to look into studying child-related careers in college. Camp provides a setting where camp counselors experience different activities and roles, and have the chance to develop interpersonal relationships with others of different age groups and from different communities and schools. Their experiences are affected by the decisions made by stakeholders such as 4-H advisory boards, and how society views
youth and camps. Thus, ecological theory illustrates how the camp setting provides a place for positive adolescent development.

**Adolescent Development**

Adolescence is the critical time period between childhood and adulthood where many developmental changes occur (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Gambone & Arbreton, 1997). Perhaps the biggest changes in adolescent development are the biological changes. Because of the onset of puberty, changes such as body shape, development of primary and secondary sex characteristics, fertility, increased libido, and brain structure occur. Cognitive changes include the increased ability to think abstractly, to consider hypothetical and real situations, to consider multiple dimensions of a problem at once, and to reflect on oneself and on complicated problems. Social development is another change that occurs during adolescence. The focus changes to peer-related social, sports, and other extracurricular activities. Activities with peers, peer acceptance, and appearance may take precedence over school academic activities. Community programs provide a safe place for adolescents to practice cognitive skills and explore themselves with diverse activities and people. These changes are linked to changes in sexual interest, cognitive and physical capacities, and emotional well-being (Eccles & Gootman, 2002).

The adolescent time period can be a time for growth and discovery or fear and failure (Gambone & Arbreton, 1997). It is when adolescents need to develop the attitudes, competencies, values, and social skills that will help them be successful adults. It is also a time to avoid another course of development, such as delinquent behavior, that may limit their future potential (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992; Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Understanding what is needed by adolescents to successfully
navigate this time period is important for people who work with adolescent youth (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). It is widely believed that time spent in positive activities may help adolescents make a successful transition from childhood to adulthood (Gambone & Arbreton, 1997).

**Development of Identity, Meaningful Roles, and Initiative**

Identity is a developmental process believed to be a crucial step towards becoming a productive, happy adult (Berk, 2000). Mid-adolescence, the time between the ages of 15 through 17, is an intense phase of identity development (Kroger, 2000; McIntosh, Metz, & Youniss, 2005). Adolescents focus on one-to-one love relationships, experiment with expressions of sexuality, consider potential vocations, and participate in community roles. Adolescents achieve identity status when they are clearly set on self-chosen values and goals. They have a sense of psychological well-being and have a clear direction of their life (Berk, 2000).

To help adolescents achieve identity, it is important to expose them to different environments (Kroger, 2000). However, more structured environments such as school, work, and church activities provide fewer options for identity development (Barber, Stone, Hunt, & Eccles, 2005). Community organizations, like 4-H youth development, expose adolescents to different environments for exploration (Berk, 2000). Within these settings, adolescents find meaningful values, roles, and life goals that facilitate the identity-formation process (Berk, 2000; Kroger, 2000).

Opportunities to hold meaningful roles are important to adolescents. Adolescents engaged in meaningful roles assume responsibility while using their talents (Pittman & Wright, 1991). The roles must be novel and creative, yet challenging. Adolescents who
hold meaningful roles are more likely to grow in competence and motivation (Eccles & Gootman, 2002).

Opportunities should also be available for adolescents to develop initiative. Adults are expected to take initiative in the workplace and in their personal lives. However, adults do not innately possess initiative and it is important that adolescents have opportunities for initiative development. Typically, adolescents in the United States do not have the opportunity to develop initiative because the majority of their time is spent in schoolwork and unstructured leisure (Larson, 2000). The development of initiative has been found to occur in extracurricular activities such as sports, art lessons, or community organizations (Larson, 2000). Larson proposes that there are three criteria for development of initiative in youth programs: intrinsic motivation, concerted engagement in the environment, and temporal arc. Intrinsic motivation is the experience of wanting to be in an activity, concerted engagement in the environment is being actively involved in the environment, and temporal arc involves directed effort towards a goal over time.

The camp counselor role provides a significant context to hold meaningful roles and to develop initiative and identity (McNeely, 2004). Camp counselors hold meaningful roles in caring for and teaching campers and working with others to plan camp programs. This exposure to new and different roles likely aids in the identity formation process because camp counselors are trying out new and challenging things. Furthermore, these roles and responsibilities help counselors develop skills in initiative.
Out-of-School Hours

Concern arises when out-of-school hours are the biggest blocks of time for adolescents (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992) and adolescents in the United States have more discretionary time than young people in both Europe and Asia (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). About 40 percent of adolescents’ time awake is discretionary, or not committed to other activities such as eating, school, homework, chores, or working for pay (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992). Much of the rest of the time is spent in unstructured activities such as watching television or “hanging out” with friends (Ferrari, Anderson-Butcher, & Jackson, 2003). Youth left in unstructured settings, without the supervision of adults, are more likely to engage in risky behavior such as drinking alcohol or using drugs (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). It is important for schools, families, and communities to provide accessible, developmentally appropriate activities for youth during their non-school hours (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992).

Community programs, such as 4-H Youth Development, provide support and a structured environment for adolescents (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Structured activities are sometimes called extracurricular activities. Extracurricular activities are structured, voluntary activities led by one or more adults who provide opportunities for youth to share experiences and build specific skills. These activities typically take place in the context of a group of peers with similar interests (Miller, 2003).

Participation in structured activities during nonschool time is associated with positive outcomes (Eccles & Barber, 1999). Adolescents who are involved in prosocial activities are more likely to attend college (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Zaff, Moore, Papillo,
& Williams, 2003), vote, and volunteer (Zaff et al., 2003). In addition, involvement in extracurricular activities has been linked to lower rates of dropping out of school (Zaff et al., 2003) and higher levels of academic achievement (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Zaff et al., 2003). Particular outcomes of academic achievement include consistent attendance in school and aspirations to continue education beyond high school (Miller, 2003).

Involvement in extracurricular activities allows adolescents to be part of a supportive social network, interact with competent adults, and develop and enhance personal strengths. Involvement in extracurricular activities has also been associated with the formation of self-concept and has predicted greater life satisfaction (Gilman et al., 2004).

Dworkin, Larson, and Hansen (2003) believe that adolescents are agents in their own development. Development is not something that adults do to youth (Eccles & Barber, 2002). In other words, youth learn from their mistakes and evaluate how things could have gone better. Through participation in extracurricular activities, youth gain knowledge and skills and these knowledge and skills help them successfully navigate through the adolescent time period. Thus, these activities provide the setting in which positive youth development can occur.

In Ohio, camp counselors are volunteers who are involved in structured activities facilitated by competent, caring adults. The camp counseling experience takes place in a supportive environment where camp counselors interact with peers who have similar interests. The time spent volunteering as a camp counselor allows opportunities for adolescents to gain knowledge and skills, and such productive engagement would give them less time for potentially engaging in risk behavior. Thus, the experience of being a
camp counselor contains the features that would provide youth with a positive context for development.

**Life and Workforce Skills**

Some educational practitioners and researchers have argued that experience in extracurricular activities may have positive effects on the development of life skills (Marsh & Kleitman, 2002; Sibthorp, 2000). While there are many models that exist, there is not one particular model that has been accepted as the standard to use. However, when comparing these models, there is some commonality about the skills needed to be successful. Life and workforce skills are essentially the same set of broad based skills. They are sets of skills, including interpersonal, decision making, and communication skills, that are important to meet workplace needs as well as to be an active participant in the community and positive human development (Ferrari, 2003). A review of the literature on life and workforce skills is presented in the following section.

**Life Skills Models**

Within 4-H, two commonly used models contain categories that are used to describe life skills, the Targeting Life Skills Model and the Four-Fold Youth Development Model. A description of each follows, and Appendix A includes a more detailed comparison between both models.

**Targeting Life Skills Model.** The Targeting Life Skills Model is described as an inclusive model for all life skills (Hendricks, 1996). The Targeting Life Skills Model identifies categories of life skills, which are divided on the basis of the four H’s in the 4-H clover -- head, heart, hands, and health. Two general categories are included under each of the four H’s. Included under head is thinking and managing, under heart is
relating and caring, under hands in working and giving, and under health is being and living. Within each of the life skills categories are specific life skills. The Targeting Life Skills Model provides a developmentally appropriate description of each life skill. This assists youth program planners in creating developmentally appropriate learning activities for the target audience to achieve identified outcomes.

The Four-Fold Youth Development Model. The Four-Fold Youth Development Model is an evaluation system intended for youth development programs (Barkman & Machtmes, 2000). The system is based on both theoretical and empirical research (Barkman & Machtmes, 2000; Barkman & Machtmes, 2002). The model focuses on the development of the individual's skills in hands, heart, health, and head. It combines the best of four existing models, the SCANS Workforce Preparation model (SCANS, 1991), the Science Process Skill model (National Network for Science and Technology, 1997), Iowa State University’s Targeting Life Skill model (Hendricks, 1996), and the Search Institute’s Internal Assets model (Leffert & Scales, 1999), into one model. The resulting model contains a total of 47 skills. From this framework, tools have been designed to measure whether educational programs helped youth develop skills. Through a process of pilot testing, instruments suitable for youth aged 10 and older have been created for several of the skills, including communication, responsibility, leadership, teamwork, making decisions, and planning and organizing. The model is web-based (http://www.four-h.purdue.edu/fourfold) and thus cost effective for youth development programs. Users of the Four-Fold Youth Development Model need Internet access to print relevant materials from the website (Barkman & Machtmes, 2000).
Studies of Life Skills

The development of life skills is important regardless of the model used to define life skills. High quality youth development experiences require a careful plan to encourage the development of life skills (Hendricks, 1996). Programs such as 4-H Youth Development provide an intentional process that promotes positive outcomes by providing opportunities, relationships, and support for youth. 4-H activities promote the acquisition of life skills (Astroth, 2003; Cantrell, Heinsohn, & Doebler, 1989; Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992). These skills will help them develop into capable, caring, competent, and caring adults (Astroth & Haynes, 2002).

A number of studies have looked at the development of life skills as a result of participating in different 4-H programs. Studies have been conducted with 4-H alumni both at the national and state level and with 4-H youth in specific programs and projects. Life skill studies have also been conducted asking 4-H members and parents about their perceptions of life skill development when the 4-H members were currently enrolled in the 4-H program or activity. Overall, these studies indicate that participation in 4-H activities is positively related to the development of life skills. However, these studies have not used a common framework from which to view life skills, making comparisons somewhat difficult.

Alumni studies. Several studies have been conducted assessing the development of life skills in alumni. These studies are unique because they ask the alumni about their perceptions of the experience after time has passed. Because few studies that have been conducted with camp counselor alumni could be located, other studies with 4-H alumni were reviewed. This included those on overall national and state 4-H programs and
specific programs and projects; they are presented below from earliest to most recent. Overall, the studies have suggested that alumni perceive they have developed important life skills as a result of their membership in 4-H. A limitation to these studies is that alumni may not remember every detail about their experience and may view the experience through rose-colored glasses. However, this research design is perhaps better than a pre-test before the experience and a post-test after the experience because the members were not aware of the skills they gained before the experience and typically participation occurs across multiple years and developmental stages. Finally, these studies give alumni a chance to reflect on their experience.

Studies of overall national and state 4-H programs. Ladewig and Thomas (1987) found in their nationwide quantitative alumni study that youth development programs, in particular 4-H Youth Development, do make a difference in helping youth develop life skills. The 4-H alumni believed they had the opportunity to develop communication and leadership skills and most notably cooperation skills. 4-H alumni also believed that as a result of their membership in 4-H, they gained knowledge, skills, and feelings of self-worth.

In Indiana, a study using both quantitative and qualitative methods reported that the overwhelming majority of alumni believed that 4-H made a positive difference in their lives as adults (McKinley, 1999). The alumni believed that 4-H impacted their choice of a career and their educational training. More than 69% of the 4-H alumni have completed some type of college degree and a variety of occupations were represented among the alumni in the study. The 4-H alumni believed they developed important life skills. The specific life skills mentioned include a sense of responsibility, self-confidence
and self-worth, leadership, ability to relate to others, personal goal development, communication, problem solving, willingness to volunteer, and decision making abilities. The Indiana 4-H alumni were asked to rank the areas of 4-H that made the most impact on the development of life skills. The areas of most impact were opportunities to compete in 4-H, 4-H projects, awards and prizes received, other 4-H members, adult 4-H leaders, exchange trips and the opportunity to travel, and 4-H club meetings.

In Maine, recent alumni (those who had graduated from 4-H within the last five years) and adult volunteers were asked about their perceived development of life skills in a qualitative study (Gagne, Lobley, Fitzpatrick, Jones, & Phelps, 2004). Questions were asked about whether 4-H helped the alumni and adult volunteers develop life skills in accepting people who are different, community service, making healthy choices, learning job skills, record keeping, communicating, and making decisions. Both alumni and adult volunteers believed they developed important life skills. However, the specific skills both these groups mentioned were different from each other. More than 70% of the alumni mentioned that 4-H helped them develop life skills such as accepting people who are different, community service, and making healthy choices. However, in addition to community service and making healthy choices, more than 70% of adult volunteers mentioned developing skills related to jobs, record keeping, communicating, and making decisions. The majority of the adult volunteers did not believe they developed skills in accepting people who are different. From this question, the authors of this study concluded that adult volunteers are developing more skills compared with 4-H alumni.

In Oklahoma, life skills and aspects of 4-H that influenced the development of life skills were measured among 4-H alumni who were involved at the highest levels of
participation (Maass, Wilken, Jordan, Culen, & Place, 2004). Overall, the quantitative study found that 4-H contributed at a significantly higher level to life skill development than other youth development organizations. The specific skills learned included public speaking, community service volunteering, self-discipline, responsibility, teamwork, cooperation, marketable skills, self-esteem, social skills, citizenship, self-motivation, contributions to group effort, wise use of resources, keeping records, sharing, leadership, goal setting, communication, learning to learn, problem solving, service learning, planning and organization, critical thinking, concern for others, nurturing relationships, decision making, managing feelings, healthy lifestyle choices, and disease prevention. The most influential aspects of 4-H included 4-H trips, 4-H projects, opportunities to compete in 4-H, adult 4-H leaders, other 4-H members, awards and prizes received, and 4-H club meetings.

**Studies of specific 4-H program delivery methods.** Fox, Schroeder, and Lodl (2003) studied how alumni perceived their membership in 4-H clubs, which is a specific 4-H program delivery method, and how that membership influenced the development of life skills. The mixed model study found that membership in 4-H clubs influenced the development of skills such as technical skills, communication skills, personal/social skills, and leadership skills. More specifically, 4-H club involvement had the most influence on the development of responsibility. Other specific skills gained through involvement in 4-H clubs were the ability to handle competition and the ability to meet new people.

**Studies of 4-H projects.** Two studies have been conducted with alumni in 4-H animal science programs. In Ward’s (1996) qualitative study, the alumni indicated that
their participation in animal science programs influenced the development of life skills, with the highest response given to accepting responsibility. Other skills that received high responses were life skills related to asking questions, decision making, relating to others, maintaining records, public speaking, and having a positive sense of self-esteem. These important life skills were learned at animal science events such as shows and judging activities. Furthermore, Nash and Sant (2005) conducted a qualitative and quantitative study with alumni who participated in 4-H animal judging programs. The overwhelming majority of the alumni in the study believed that the animal science judging program had a positive influence on them. More specifically, the alumni believed that they developed important life skills such as communication, decision-making, problem solving, self-discipline, self-motivation, teamwork, and organization. These skills helped prepare the alumni for the workforce. However, relatively few alumni (about 1/3) believed that the animal science judging program prepared them to think on their feet.

Overall, alumni believed they developed specific life skills, personal qualities, and the understanding to serve others through membership in 4-H, although these skills and qualities did not occur in all studies. The specific skills most mentioned were interpersonal and communication skills. Other skills that came out in the studies were leadership and responsibility, problem solving and decision making, planning and organization, resource management (i.e., record keeping), and goal setting. The development of personal qualities such as acceptance, self-worth, self-esteem, self-discipline, and the ability to handle feelings were also outcomes that were present in the
studies. Finally, learning how to serve others was another theme that emerged from the results of the alumni studies.

These differences in results may have occurred because of the design of the study and the particular questions that were asked. The questions could have been open-ended where the respondents could freely answer the questions, or the questions could have been more structured where the respondents could only give answers to the more specific questions. Some of the questions could have focused more on different aspects of a program such as the development of self-confidence and self-esteem or community service. In addition, a unique aspect of alumni studies is that they ask questions of people who were most likely in the program for several years. These people are likely to have a better quality experience with 4-H because they continued to participate in the program compared with those who may have participated for a more limited time.

**Life skill studies of current 4-H members.** Several studies have been conducted with participants while they were 4-H members. An impact study using a survey asked 4-H participants about their perceptions of life skill development in Pennsylvania (Cantrell, Heinsohn, Doebler, 1989). The quantitative study compared potential differences based on the level of participation within 4-H. The teens believed that they gained more skills when they assumed leadership roles than from general participation. Also, the teens gained more skills at succeeding levels of participation (from club to county and from county and beyond).

In 2001 a national impact study was conducted. 4-H and non 4-H participants were compared in Montana (Astroth & Haynes, 2002). The quantitative study found that 4-H youth were more involved as leaders in helping their families, neighborhoods, and
communities. 4-H members were also more likely to set goals, try new things, and take responsibility for their actions. Additionally, 4-H youth were more likely to develop practical and useful skills that will help them develop into capable, competent, and contributing adults. Such skills include good record keeping skills, speaking with ease in front of others, knowing how to organize their work, knowing how to plan ahead, and managing money wisely.

Other quantitative studies of 4-H members who participated in animal science projects, in particular swine and beef projects, have found that members are developing positive life skills (Boleman, Cummings, & Briers, 2004; Gamon & Dehegedus-Hetzel, 1994). Gamon and Dehegedus-Hetzel (1994) created a study asking randomly selected Iowa 4-H members about the development of life skills and swine subject-matter skills. The 4-H members who were part of the study sample believed that they developed life skills and swine subject-matter skills through their participation in swine projects. Boleman et al. (2004) asked parents of 4-H beef project members in Texas about life skills and found that 4-H youth were developing responsibility, self-discipline and self-motivation, and decision making skills. According to their parents, beef project members also learned how to set goals for themselves and learned more about the livestock industry. Finally, through participation in beef projects, they believed that 4-H members built positive self-esteem.

Studies of life skill development of 4-H Cloverbuds (Ohio 4-H members ages 5 to 8) have been positive (Ferrari, Hogue, & Scheer, 2004; Scheer & Lafontaine, 1999). An initial quantitative study was conducted surveying Ohio 4-H Extension Agents and Program Assistants, 4-H volunteers, and parents of 4-H Cloverbuds about their
perception of the life skills developed. The majority of professionals, parents, and
volunteers believed that the Cloverbud program was improving life skills (self-esteem,
making friends, making choices, learning skills, physical skills) for five-to-eight year olds
(Scheer & Lafontaine, 1999). A subsequent qualitative study was conducted that asked
Ohio parents of 4-H Cloverbuds about their perception of their child's development of
life skills as a result of being involved in the Cloverbud program. The study results
indicated that parents thought their children were developing life skills. Learning to learn,
social skills, self-care (personal safety and using resistance skills), self-direction
(managing and self-responsibility), and gaining self-confidence were skills that parents
perceived their children were learning in the 4-H program. Developing these skills was
perceived to be very important by the parents and parents believed that these skills went
beyond 4-H and would carry over into the future (Ferrari et al., 2004).

Several themes emerged in all life skills studies (i.e., general studies of alumni,
project and program specific alumni studies, and studies asking 4-H members about their
perception of life skills gained while they were current 4-H members). Specific life skills
mentioned were interpersonal, communication, leadership and responsibility, problem
solving and decision making, planning and organization, resource management (i.e.,
record keeping and money management), information acquisition (i.e., learning subject
matter), and goal setting. Thus, current members, alumni, and program stakeholders
identified life skills that were gained through 4-H participation and this skill development
was not limited to one aspect of the program.

Intensity and duration seem to be factors in the development of life skills. The
greater the involvement in 4-H activities, the more life skills 4-H members developed
(Astroth & Haynes, 2002; Boyd, Herring, & Briers, 1992; Cantrell, Heinsohn, & Doebler, 1989). In addition, more years of participation in 4-H is associated with the development of life skills (Ladewig & Thomas, 1987).

There are a few limitations in the life skills studies. Selection bias is a potential limitation (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002). The studies recruited participants who were readily available and they were more likely to be participants who had positive experiences because they were still associated with 4-H. It is more difficult to find participants who have dropped out of 4-H or have moved out of state. Also, especially with the alumni studies, presumably the participants had to have enjoyed the 4-H experience to continue their membership. Finally, results of many of the studies were based on self-report from the participants and objective measures were not used to obtain results (Ary et al., 2002). Astroth and Haynes (2002) created a more rigorous study design to help counter these limitations. They asked a randomly selected group of students high quality (both valid and reliable) questions. The study also compared students who were active in community activities, including 4-H, versus those who were not active in community activities. These studies do help us understand that there are many aspects of a 4-H program and 4-H members develop a multitude of life skills that are carried over into other contexts of their lives by participating in these programs. However, studies have not investigated the process by which this occurs.

**Workforce Skills**

In the last 30 years, the skills required of youth to succeed in the economy have changed radically, but the skills taught in schools have not changed at the same pace (Murnane & Levy, 1996; SCANS, 1991). The Secretary’s Commission on Achieving
Necessary Skills (SCANS) report from the Department of Labor concluded that American high school students need to develop a new set of competencies and foundation skills if they want to enjoy a productive and satisfying life. The SCANS report also found that all companies must raise their standards for performance and the nation’s schools must become high performing organizations (SCANS, 1991). Several authors have written about the new basic skills needed by today’s workers since there are increased standards for students, companies, and schools (Murnane & Levy, 1996; Pittman et al., 2004; SCANS, 1991). These new basic skills include academic skills as well as skills such as communication, problem solving, and working with others.

Murnane and Levy (1996) believe that employers are looking for more skills in addition to the skills they have always looked for - reliability, a positive attitude, and a willingness to work hard. The new skills include competency in reading and mathematics. Other skills, once called “soft” skills because they are not easily measured on standardized tests, include the ability to work with others of diverse backgrounds, the ability to communicate both orally and in writing, and the ability to use personal computers including the ability to carry out word processing tasks. These skills are necessary to meet workplace needs (Murnane & Levy, 1996).

Pittman et al. (2004) wrote about soft skills that they called “twenty-first-century skills.” The “twenty-first-century skills” can be summed up into three broad categories: information and communication skills, thinking and problem-solving skills, and interpersonal and self-directional skills. More specifically, categories include skills in information and media literacy, communication, critical thinking and systems thinking.
problem solving, creativity and intellectual curiosity, interpersonal and collaboration, self-direction, accountability and adaptability, and social responsibility.

The Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS, 1991) has suggested that high school youth should be proficient in five competencies and three foundational skills. These five competencies and three foundational skills, shown in Table 2.1, are believed to be necessary for people in all jobs from auto mechanics to accountants and lawyers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competencies</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Identifies, organizes, plans, and allocates time, money, material and facilities, and human resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>Participates as a member of a team, exercises leadership, negotiates with others, teaches others new skills, serves clients/customers, and works with diverse populations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>Acquires, evaluates, interprets, and communicates information; use computers to process information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems</td>
<td>Understands complex inter-relationships, designs or improves systems, and monitors and corrects own performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Selects technology, applies technology, and maintains and troubleshoots equipment</td>
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**Foundational Skills**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foundational Skills</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic Skills</td>
<td>Skills related to reading, writing, performing arithmetic and mathematical operations, and listening and speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking Skills</td>
<td>Skills related to creativity, making decisions, solving problems, visualizing, self-directed learning, and reasoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Qualities</td>
<td>Individual displays responsibility, self-esteem, social skills, self-management, and integrity and honesty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SCANS, 1991

Table 2.1: SCANS Competencies and Foundational Skills

In summary, the SCANS skills are more than basic academic skills. They are skills that will help youth enter adulthood successfully. New legislation, such as the “No
Child Left Behind Act," is challenging all educational institutions to increase their academic standards and to further develop the moral, physical, civic, social, and vocational aspects of youth. The increased demands on educational institutions give community organizations the opportunity to be viewed as important partners in education (Pittman et al., 2004).

Community organizations, such as 4-H youth development, have the opportunity to intentionally create experiences related to workforce preparation (Ferrari, 2003). Additionally, the most effective way of learning skills is in context or within the real environment in which the skills will be applied (SCANS, 1991; Pittman et al., 2004). Youth believe that they learn skills for the job through hands-on experience or extracurricular activities (Pittman et al., 2004).

Programs and curriculum related to workforce preparation are available within the 4-H program. *Wild Over Work (WOW!*)) is a 4-H curriculum that includes a series of, experiential learning activities focusing on workforce preparation and life skills that can be used with youth aged 5 to 12 in 4-H clubs, after-school programs, and classrooms. The curriculum provides a way for youth to develop workforce skills as they explore what is needed for workplace success, their interests, and potential career choices (Ferrari, 1997). Another example is a workforce preparation program has been embedded into the curriculum at Adventure Central, a 4-H after-school program located in Dayton, Ohio. The program provides experience and training for older youth to volunteer outside of school. Examples of places where youth volunteer their time include local kitchens, gardens, and childcare facilities. The youth are provided gift certificates for their volunteer time. Youth also reflect on their experiences by writing in journals
and learn about interviewing for jobs and resume writing (Cochran, 2005). These programs and curriculum are examples of how the 4-H program intentionally creates experiences related to workforce preparation.

**Camping Research**

The Ohio 4-H Program uses a variety of delivery methods to help youth develop life and career skills. One program, the Ohio 4-H camping program, has received relatively little attention in regards to research. Research about camping has focused primarily on the outcomes of campers. Little research has been conducted on camp counseling, and more specifically, 4-H teen camp counselors. As far as camp counselors, recent research has looked at the skills and experiences gained by 4-H teens and young adults as a result of being a 4-H camp counselor in several states (Ohio, Virginia, Kentucky, Wisconsin, Oregon, and Georgia). One of the first 4-H camp counselor studies focusing on outcomes was conducted in Georgia in 1996. During the past three years, five additional 4-H studies have been conducted. It is speculated that the sudden interest in 4-H camp counselor research is because the type of studies has changed. First, rather than descriptive studies, the trend in research has been to focus more on youth development outcomes in general. Second, today programs are more accountable for their program effectiveness. Other research studies about camp counselors (i.e., not 4-H-specific) have looked at the motivation for serving as a camp counselor and the changes that occur as a result of being a camp counselor in seasonal residential camps. A brief summary of research on campers is followed by a review of camp counselor studies.
Research on Campers

In Virginia, a statewide survey was administered to 4-H campers and parents of 4-H campers that asked about the perceived benefits of 4-H camp (Garst & Bruce, 2003). 4-H campers believed they developed life skills, and those areas receiving the highest ratings included camp that helped them make new friends, develop new skills (in general), and become more independent and caring for themselves. In addition, parents were given a survey before and after camp and asked to rate their child on the development of different life skills. Comparisons were made and the skills that had significant differences were the parents believed their camper took care of his/her things, shared work responsibilities, and took initiative. Overall, Virginia 4-H campers and parents of campers believed that youth campers were benefiting from camp and were developing immediate and short-term life skill behaviors.

The American Camp Association (ACA) in 2005 published a report on their research project designed to measure the outcomes of the camp experience. Eighty accredited ACA camps, which included day and resident camps, one-week and multi-week camps, single-gender and co-ed camps, private and agency camps, for-profit and nonprofit camps, and religious and non-religious-affiliated camps, completed a survey for the study. Parents and children between the ages of 8 and 14 from more than 5,000 families completed surveys before, after, and six months following camp. Camp counselors and camp directors were also asked to participate in the study by completing observational checklists early and late in the camp session and writing detailed descriptions of the camp and the camp program. Results from the study indicated that camp is a positive tool to be used in youth development. Campers reported significant
growth in four domains of positive identity, social skills, physical and thinking skills, and positive values and spirituality. More specifically, campers became more confident and experienced increased self-esteem, children developed social skills and made new friends, children grew more independent and exhibited leadership qualities, children were more willing to try new things, and, at some camps, children grew spiritually (Burkhardt, Henderson, March, Thurber, Scanlin, & Whitaker, 2005).

These studies suggest that campers, parents, camp counselors, and camp directors believe that camp is a positive developmental experience for campers, both 4-H and non-4-H. If camp is a positive experience for campers, then what about camp counselors?

**Research on Camp Counselors**

Camp counselors stay in cabins with campers, plan programs for campers, teach classes, and lead recreation (McNeely, 2004; Purcell, 1996). Meier and Mitchell (1983) wrote about the characteristics that a good counselor should possess. Such characteristics include an appreciation and liking for people; possession of empathy, persistence, and leadership skills; being mature but youthful in spirit, and an enjoyment of being outdoors. Several studies have been conducted on camp counselors. Alumni studies are presented first and then studies of current camp counselors are presented.

**Alumni studies.** A qualitative study assessed the impacts of camp on seasonal camp alumni (DeGraff & Glover, 2003). Personal impacts included several skills related to working with others, increased self-confidence, and increased appreciation of nature. The seasonal camp alumni also believed that camp was a tangible way to develop marketable skills and others noted the development of a sense of vocation. More specifically, half of the seasonal camp alumni had entered the teaching profession.
In Oregon, 205 4-H camp counselor alumni who were camp counselors as adolescents at summer resident camps were studied (Brandt, 2005). A survey questionnaire was sent to alumni who had experienced 4-H camp within the last 1 to 21 years. Results of the study indicated that 4-H camp counselors developed skills in working with others and contributing to a group, learned how to be a role model, and developed leadership skills and self-confidence. Other results of the study discovered that camp counselors decided to volunteer as camp counselors because they looked up to their camp counselors and wanted to be like them. Many believed that being a camp counselor was one of the most important activities in which they had participated in 4-H. However, the 4-H camp counselors did not believe that camp had taught them to handle emergency situations, had encouraged them to consider working with children as a career, or had helped them gain knowledge on child development. Furthermore, the majority of camp counselors did not believe that camp counseling opened up other employment opportunities for them.

*Studies of current camp counselors.* 4-H camp counselors were studied in Georgia (Purcell, 1996). The quantitative study looked at 88 4-H camp counselors, ages 17 through 21, and the development of their leadership life skills. The study found that there was not a significant difference between the scores on the pretest and posttest of the survey, because the pre-test scores were already high. In other words, Georgia camp counselors believe they have already learned leadership skills before their camp counselor experience. The study did find, however, that there was a strong correlation between gender and higher leadership skill development. Females are more likely to have developed leadership skills than males. In addition, similar to other studies, this
study found that the longer a person was involved in 4-H, the more like the individual was to have developed leadership skills.

Toupence and Townsend (2000) conducted a quantitative study of counselors who attended or were employed by a wilderness-based youth camp. The researchers found that counselors who were part of the wilderness-based youth camp showed an increase in their self-perception of leadership life skills. These leadership life skills were communication, making decisions, and working with groups.

A 4-H camp counselor study conducted in Kentucky found that counselors experienced overall positive effects as a result of the teen leader training and camp experience (Weese, 2002). This qualitative study examined the effect of camp counselor teen leader training and camp experiences on former and current (ages 14-18) camp counselors. The teens felt that the camp counselor experience taught them life skills such as responsibility, planning, and decision making. The counselors felt that they gained these life skills as a result of making decisions and caring for campers. The counselors also developed an understanding of cultural competency, or the ability to understand and be comfortable with people of different cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds. Positive feelings of self-esteem was another positive experience teens gained as a result of the successful application of skills such as conflict resolution, problem-solving, working together as team, dealing with different personalities, and behavior management techniques. The results of the study did not produce all positive results, however. Some camp counselors experienced negative feelings as a result of their appearance or personality. Resistance skills, or the ability to say “no” to risky behavior, were skills not
learned by all former camp counselors. Current camp counselors, however, did not admit to engaging in these risky behaviors.

Garst and Johnson (2003) looked at how participation in the Virginia 4-H camp counseling programs impacted the development of leadership and other life skills. The counselors reported in a qualitative study that being a counselor helped them understand children and learn to be patient with them. In addition, counselors developed skills such as communicating with children and adults, being more responsible for themselves, and learning how to solve problems in stressful situations.

In Ohio, a quantitative study was conducted on the personal and interpersonal experiences of 4-H camp counselors (McNeely, 2004). The counselors were adolescent males and females ages 12 to 20 who volunteered many hours outside of camp in addition to the actual time (approximately 5 days) during the camp session. Results indicated that camp counselors have positive experiences at camp. Counselors reported a high level of experience in teamwork and social skills, initiative, identity development, and interpersonal relationships. The area associated with the duration of the camp counselor experience was the development of leadership and responsibility; that is, these scores increased as the number of years of camp counseling increased. The scores for negative experiences, such as stress, negative peer influences, negative group behavior and inappropriate adult behavior, were low. It is interesting to note that the study also found that the camp counselors might not be recognizing the extent to which the skills they learned at camp are applicable to other contexts of their lives, such as for a career or as a community member, as evidenced by mean scores in the moderate range.
A qualitative study conducted in Wisconsin on 4-H camp counselors concluded that serving as a camp counselor is a significant leadership experience (Forsythe, Matysik, & Nelson, 2004). Furthermore, counselors learned important skills that can be used in community involvement and in a future career. Specific skills mentioned that will prepare them for those roles was leadership, communication, working with others, responsibility, problem solving, and planning and organizing. The counselors believed the unique aspects of camp were understanding and working with children, gaining responsibility, and being a role model.

Dworken (2004) studied, using both qualitative and quantitative methods, the life skills of current and former camp staff at 117 different resident camps. Questions were asked about the development of life skills, and the impact the camp experience had on relationships, career and educational choices, and community involvement and volunteerism. The life skills with the highest scores included leadership skills, sense of responsibility, ability to relate to children, and self-confidence. The majority of camp staff believed that camp made an impact on their career choice. Also, many of the camp staff performed community work outside of camp and more than a third have volunteered at camp.

Other studies have looked at other ways that camp changes camp staff and what motivates camp counselors and staff to be part of camp. An ethnographic study of Girl Scout camp staff (ages 20-50) found that camp staff benefit from camp (James, 2003). In particular, staff members developed friendships with other staff members, had the opportunity for leadership, and enjoyed camp rituals. Adolescents and young adults (the majority between the ages of 17 to 25 years old) were motivated to work at a camp.
because of the opportunity to meet other people, work with others, and have fun (DeGraaf & Edginton, 1992).

Overall, studies of individuals who serve as camp counselors show that they are developing important life and career skills. Several trends are apparent from reviewing this body of literature. First, teamwork and social skills were skills that camp counselors seemed to develop in many of the studies (Brandt, 2005; DeGraff & Edginton, 1992; DeGraff & Glover, 2003; Dworken, 2004; Forsythe et al., 2004; Garst & Johnson, 2003; McNeely, 2004; Toupence & Townsend, 2000). Another skill that seemed to be consistent in many of the studies was the development of responsibility (Dworken, 2004; Garst & Johnson, 2003; Forsythe et al., 2004; McNeely, 2004; Weese, 2002). Other skills that were consistent in the studies were the development of communication skills (Forsythe et al., 2004; Garst & Johnson, 2003; Toupence & Townsend, 2000), decision making skills (Garst & Johnson, 2003; Weese, 2002; Toupence & Townsend, 2000), and leadership skills (Brandt, 2005; Dworken, 2004; Forsythe et al., 2004; James, 2003; McNeely, 2004; Purcell, 1996). McNeely (2004) and Purcell (1996) noted that duration played a factor in the development of skills. In other words, the longer the camp counselor is engaged in their role as a camp counselor, the more skills or the greater the level of skills they develop. Finally, camp counselors felt that as part of their experience they had an increased sense of self-confidence (Brandt, 2005; DeGraff & Glover, 2003; Dworken, 2004). All of these results were found in both quantitative and qualitative research studies.

Other results that only appeared in one study were the development of initiative and identity (McNeely, 2004) and knowledge of different cultures (Weese, 2002),
increased appreciation of nature (DeGraff & Glover, 2003), development of marketable skills (DeGraff & Glover, 2003), and the chance to enjoy camp rituals (James, 2003), and have fun (DeGraaf & Edginton, 1992). Only two studies specifically examined negative experiences. The negative experiences examined in both studies, lack of resistance skills, stress, negative peer interaction and group dynamics, and inappropriate adult behavior, were low (McNeely, 2004; Weese, 2002). Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that, under the right conditions, camp counselors develop life skills.

Conversely, results of a few of the studies were conflicting. McNeely (2004) found that mean scores were moderate for counselors who believed that they were developing skills for the workforce and other contexts of their lives. However, the counselors in another study believed that the camp counseling experience was preparing them for a future job and leadership roles in their community (Forsythe et al., 2004). Furthermore, camp counselors in a third study felt that camp had made an impact on their choice of a career (DeGraff & Glover, 2003). In contrast, Brandt (2005) found that the camp counseling experience did not open up employment opportunities for the former counselors that she surveyed. These conflicting results suggest that this is a topic worthy of further examination.

**Transfer of Learning**

One of the goals of educational programming is to apply what is learned in one context to another context (Haskell, 2001). If application does not occur, the goals of education and training are not achieved (Taylor, 1997). This idea of using knowledge in one context and applying it to another is called *transfer of learning*. Transfer of learning
has also been referred to as the “so what” or “now what” phase of the learning process (Cafarella, 2002; Taylor, 1997).

The 4-H program uses a model called the experiential learning model to describe how learning is transferred. There are five steps (Experience, Share, Process, Generalize, and Apply), but the model can be summarized into three main stages: do, reflect, and apply. Table 2.2 gives a description of each step of the experiential learning model.

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<th>Apply</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Generalize</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Apply</strong></td>
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Source: Carlson & Maxa, 1998

Table 2.2: Experiential Learning Model Used in 4-H Youth Development

The concept of transfer of learning is supported by behaviorist theory. In other words, the skill or idea that is transferred can clearly be seen in behavioral changes in knowledge, skill, or attitudes (Cafarella, 2002; Macaulay, 2002). Haskell (2001) proposed that there are six levels of transfer: nonspecific transfer, application transfer, context transfer, near transfer, far transfer, and displacement or creative transfer. *Far*
transfer is the level of transfer used to most appropriately describe the transfer of skills learned as being a camp counselor and those applied to situations outside of camp such as personal experiences and workforce skills. That is, the idea of far transfer is applying what is learned in one situation to another that is quite dissimilar than the original (Haskell, 2001). In far transfer situations, the context of learning differs from the context of application (Taylor, 1997).

Transfer of learning, which includes far transfer, does not always take place. All learners in a learning environment have different personal experiences, backgrounds, motivational levels, and attitudes and values. These characteristics influence what they learn and what they apply to their lives (Cafarella, 2002). Other factors that may influence the transfer of learning are content and context. Content refers to the information to be learned (Barnett & Ceci, 2002). Learners may or may not learn the content, or it may be that the facilitators were not successful in teaching the content. Content is transferred depending on whether the content is a specific fact or routinized procedure. Context refers to when and where learning is transferred from and to (Barnett & Ceci, 2002). Learning transfers best when the learning takes place in the context of real situations (Taylor, 1997).

A variety of strategies and techniques have been suggested for the successful transfer of learning. Cafarella (2002) suggested using individual learning plans, support groups, networking, action research, or reflective practice. Mayer and Wittrock (1996) suggested using the problem-solving method for successful transfer of learning. The problem-solving method encourages learners to solve problems related to the content they are learning (Mayer & Wittrock, 1996). To further ensure the transfer of learning, it
is the job of the facilitator to intentionally help the learners reflect on their learning. One way this can be accomplished is through asking comparison questions about the content the learners are learning at that point in time and how the content can be applied in other contexts (Williams, Papierno, Makel, & Ceci, 2004).

In Ohio, 4-H camp counselors did not seem to fully realize the impacts the camp counseling experience may have on their lives in relation to developing skills for the workforce and other contexts of life (McNeely, 2004). The idea of transfer of learning was presented in this chapter because the skills learned in one context, camp and the camp counseling experience, can be applied to other contexts of a camp counselor’s life (i.e., skills for a career or as a community member).

Summary

Adolescence is a period where youth experience many physical, cognitive, and emotional changes. To help adolescents successfully navigate their teen years, they need assistance from many sources including families, schools, neighborhoods, and the culture surrounding them. These support systems are what Bronfenbrenner (1979) described to be present in his ecological theory of human development. Camp and camp counseling are believed to provide a setting for positive adolescent development.

The adolescent time period is when adolescents are exploring the world around them and searching for where they fit. It is possible for some adolescent youth to have more unstructured time and this is time where they have the chance to explore their identity and learn important life and workforce skills. Opportunities should be available to adolescents to hold meaningful roles so that they can learn life and workforce skills.
Studies of alumni and current 4-H members indicate that they learn important life and workforce skills necessary for the 21st century as part of their 4-H experience. However, few studies have examined whether alumni of 4-H camp counselor programs believe they have developed life and workforce skills. Does the time adolescents spend in a structured activity like 4-H camp counseling allow them to transfer the skills gained to other contexts of their lives such as the working world and as a community member? These questions can be investigated in a study of camp counselor alumni.
CHAPTER 3

METHODS

This qualitative study was designed to examine alumni perceptions about the skills gained and transfer of these skills to other settings as a result of participation in the Ohio 4-H camp counseling program. Questions were generated and focus groups were used to gather qualitative data to answer these questions. This chapter gives a description of qualitative research and focus groups and describes the data collection procedures and study participants.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research investigates the quality of relationships, activities, situations, or materials (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000). It is often used when little is known about the phenomenon being studied (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The data in qualitative research are collected in the form of words or pictures instead of numbers (Ary et al., 2002; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Qualitative research is often used because the insights, perceptions, and explanations are more important than numbers (Krueger, 1994). The human investigator is used as the instrument and the data are often interpreted as they are collected (Ary et al., 2002; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000).
Focus Groups

Focus groups are a qualitative type of research. Focus groups have been described as a group interview. A trained moderator asks the group questions while the group answers the questions (Ary et al., 2002). The groups are not discussion or decision-making groups, and they do not have to reach consensus on the topic (Patton, 1990). The object of focus groups is to get high quality data in a social context where participants can consider their own views as well as the views of others (Patton, 1990).

Focus groups are useful when there is little information available about a topic (Ary et al., 2002; Morgan & Krueger, 1993) and insight is necessary for exploratory or preliminary studies (Krueger, 1994). In Ohio, no research has been conducted on 4-H camp counselor alumni. Therefore, it seems necessary to begin learning about this topic through focus groups. Focus groups allow the researcher to gain insight into what the research subjects are thinking (Ary et al., 2002).

There are several advantages and disadvantages of focus groups. As far as advantages, focus groups take place in a group setting that is more enjoyable for the participants (Morgan & Krueger, 1993; Patton, 1990) and inhibitions are often relaxed (Krueger, 1994). The group setting helps the participants to focus on the most important topics (Patton, 1990) and allows the moderator, if needed, to ask more questions about unanticipated issues (Krueger, 1994). In focus groups, data can be collected from more people in less time compared to other qualitative methods (Patton, 1990). In addition, compared to survey methods, focus groups provide faster results and are relatively low cost (Krueger, 1994).
As far as disadvantages, there is less control over the group interview and diversions may occur (Krueger, 1994; Patton, 1990). Some focus group participants tend to be more verbal while others are not as verbal (Patton, 1990). Also, focus groups vary considerably in the responses they give. One group can be lethargic, boring, and dull while another can be exciting, energetic, and invigorating. Focus groups are more difficult to assemble because they require participants to come to a designated place at a prescribed time. Finally, data from focus groups are more difficult to analyze (Krueger, 1994).

Focus groups consist of participants who have certain characteristics in common that relate to the topic of the focus group (Krueger, 1994). Authors have typically suggested that focus groups consist in size from 6 to 10 people (Ary et al., 2002; Krueger, 1994). However, focus groups can range from 4 to 12 participants (Krueger, 1994). Nevertheless, focus groups should be small enough so that everyone can take part in the discussion but large enough so that there are diverse opinions (Ary et al., 2002; Krueger, 1994).

Focus groups are considered to be valid if they are used for a problem that is suitable for focus group inquiry (Krueger, 1994). They are believed to have high face validity because the comments from the participants are believable (Krueger, 1994). Focus groups are conducted several times to identify trends and patterns in perceptions (Krueger, 1994). They are conducted until the data reaches a point of data saturation. This is the point where no new information has been collected (Morgan, 1998). The point of data saturation also helps determine the sample size (Ary et al., 2002).
Data Collection and Study Participants

Approval for this study was sought and obtained through The Ohio State University Institutional Review Board (Protocol Number 2004B0186). Four focus groups were conducted involving a total of 30 participants. Participants for the study had to have been volunteer 4-H camp counselors in Ohio as teens and currently be at least 18 years old at the time of the study. The subjects for the study were recruited somewhat differently for each group. Below is a description of the recruitment procedures and how many participants were part of each focus group.

One method for collecting subject names for this study was through key informants. Key informants are described as sources of information that the researcher cannot experience (Patton, 1990). I contacted the president of The Ohio State University Collegiate 4-H Club and the county 4-H Extension Educators to fill the role of key informants. The president of Collegiate 4-H was contacted because she knew how to facilitate the process of contacting former 4-H camp counselors in her club. The county 4-H Extension Educators were contacted because they are the individuals who work with and know the camp counselors in their county. Another method for collecting subject names for this study was through snowball or chain sampling. Snowball or chain sampling occurs when the initially selected subjects suggest names of others who would be appropriate for the sample. This occurs when the potential sample is not centrally located but scattered throughout different sites (Ary et al., 2002; Krueger, 1994). A few study participants were recruited by snowball or chain sampling. The detailed methods of recruiting participants are further described below.
Focus Groups #1 and #2

Recruitment strategy. Two focus groups were simultaneously held at The Ohio State University campus in the Agricultural Administration building, rooms 328 and 111. Members of Collegiate 4-H were recruited for the first two focus groups. A total of 16 participants signed up to participate in one focus group. Thus, two focus groups were formed to create a manageable size so participants could have the opportunity to share their opinions. I attended a regular, evening meeting of this club and explained the purpose of the study and the criteria for inclusion. Interested members were asked to sign up. A few weeks later, e-mail was sent out over the Collegiate 4-H listproc, which has a total of 179 names, asking members for their participation in the study (Appendix C). This recruitment strategy was used to broadcast the criteria to all Collegiate 4-H members who met the criteria. I attended another Collegiate 4-H meeting to make an announcement to the individuals who had agreed to participate. E-mail was sent to the participants prior to the focus group as a reminder (Appendix E).

Study participants. At the initial recruitment meeting, 14 members signed up to participate in the first focus groups. Five individuals responded to the e-mail that was sent out over the Collegiate 4-H listproc. One individual responded to the e-mail and indicated that she was interested in participating in the focus groups, but the date did not work out.

When I attended the second meeting to remind the participants about their agreement to attend the focus groups, three more individuals signed up. A total of 30 participants were recruited. This number is generated from those who responded to the requests to participate. Before the focus groups began, two individuals who had agreed
to participate in the focus group had e-mailed me indicating that they would no longer be
able to attend the focus groups due to prior engagements. One individual attended the
focus group without letting me know of his intentions of participating. In all, 16
individuals participated in the two focus groups with Collegiate 4-H members, with 8 in
each group.

A total of 13 females and 3 males participated in Focus Groups #1 and #2, with
the average age being 21. The average number of years the participants had been a
member of 4-H was 10 years. The average years of attendance as a camper was five
years and the average years as counselors was four years. These focus groups were
diverse in the counties they represented as a 4-H camp counselor as 14 different counties
were represented. Two participants were from Henry County, two participants were from
Clinton County, and the remaining participants represented different counties across the
state including Fayette, Fulton, Holmes, Huron, Perry, Putnam, Richland, Ross,
Van Wert, Warren, and Wood. One participant represented both Allen and Auglaize
Counties. Seven camp counselors camped at 4-H Camp Palmer, three camped at 4-H
Camp Clifton, two camped at Camp Ohio, and the remaining represented camps such as
Camp Conger, Camp Graham, Richland Rural Life Center, and Tar Hollow.

The participants in these focus groups were asked to indicate their major. Five
participants indicated that they were in majors where they could work in education one
day. Others were in majors where they could work with people such as nursing,
aricultural communications, communications, student affairs, human resources, and
sociology. Finally, two participants had indicated that they were studying English and
another participant was studying animal sciences. The instrument used to collect these demographic questions is located in Appendix I.

**Focus Group #3**

**Recruitment strategy.** Focus Group #3 was held in Northwest Ohio at the Ohio State University Extension Office, Wood County. I met with the 4-H Extension Educator in Wood County to develop a list of former camp counselors. I used a script to help me describe how they could help facilitate the process of recruiting participants (Appendix B). The 4-H Extension Educator was asked to name individuals who were at least 18 years old, had been an Ohio 4-H camp counselor, and were still living in the Northwest Ohio area. After a list was generated, I called individuals on the list seeking their participation (Appendix D). When an individual agreed to participate, a confirmation letter was sent to the participants (Appendix E). The evening before the scheduled focus group, a phone call was made to the participants reminding them that they had agreed to participate in the upcoming focus group (Appendix G).

**Study participants.** For Focus Group #3, a list of 31 former 4-H camp counselors was generated. I contacted 18 individuals and nine individuals agreed to participate. The individuals who could not participate explained that they had other work and family obligations that kept them from participating. One individual who had originally agreed to participate called me and explained that he had a work commitment that would keep him from participating. Overall, eight individuals participated in the focus group.

The demographic questions sheet was used to obtain demographic data (Appendix I). A total of five females and three males were represented in Focus Group #3 with an average age of 24. The average number of years the participants were a member of 4-H...
was 10 years. They had been both a camper and a counselor for an average of over four years. Three counties were represented in the group with five participants from Wood County, one participant from Allen County, and one participant from Marion County. The participants had camped at two camps: seven camped at 4-H Camp Palmer and one camped at Camp Ohio.

Participants in Focus Group #3 were asked to indicate their current occupation. Half of the group was currently in the field of education or studying to be in education. Other participants were involved in occupations not related to education including information technology, veterinarian, small business owner, and maintenance.

**Focus Group #4**

**Recruitment strategy.** Focus Group #4 was held in the southern part of Ohio at Canter's Cave 4-H Camp in the Harrison 4-H Leadership Center. I met with the 4-H Extension Educator in Jackson County to explain the study. The county Extension Educator generated a list of former 4-H camp counselors who were at least 18 years old and who were residents in Jackson County or surrounding counties. I used the same subject recruitment procedures as described for Focus Group #3.

**Study participants.** For Focus Group #4, a list of 20 individuals was generated. Every individual was contacted and six individuals were able to attend the focus group. The other individuals who indicated they could not attend, although they seemed excited about the opportunity, explained that they had other commitments such as work and class.

Four males and two females represented Focus Group #4. The average age was 23 years and the average membership in 4-H was eight years. Six years was the average
for years as a camper and three years was the average for being a camp counselor. Both Jackson County (total of 4 participants) and Gallia County (total of 2 participants) were represented among the group. The participants in the group had camped only at Canter’s Cave 4-H Camp.

In Focus Group #4, three people were involved in education through formal and nonformal education. The other half of the participants was involved in service-oriented occupations such as working in retail stores or as a plumber. A few of the participants who were involved in the service-oriented occupations were students in school hoping to become veterinarians.

**Overall Description of Study Participants**

A total of 30 participants were part of the study, with 20 female representatives and 10 male representatives. The average age was 22 years. Nine years was the average number of years of 4-H membership. The average number of years the participants were 4-H campers and 4-H camp counselors was five years and four years, respectively. Eighteen of Ohio’s 83 counties that have 4-H camp programs were represented. Out of the 15 camps where Ohio 4-H camps are conducted, 8 were represented. The participants overwhelmingly represented the field of education, including formal and nonformal education. Table 3.1 provides the number and characteristics of each focus group.
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<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Focus Group 1 &amp; 2</th>
<th>Focus Group 3</th>
<th>Focus Group 4</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number recruited</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual number of participants</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age range</td>
<td>18-28</td>
<td>19-30</td>
<td>18-28</td>
<td>18-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (mean)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years as 4-H Member (mean)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years as a 4-H Camper (mean)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years as a 4-H Camp Counselor (mean)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Counties Represented</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of 4-H Camps Represented</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Number and Characteristics of Focus Group Participants

**Procedures for Focus Groups**

Each focus group was held at a location that the participants could easily find. Tables and chairs were set up in a square and the participants were seated evenly around the table. Krueger (1994) described that tables and chairs were desirable because they allowed participants to lean forward on the tables and participants were better able to maintain eye contact with one another.

A moderator team, or a team that consisted of a moderator and an assistant moderator, facilitated all of the focus groups (Krueger, 1994). The role of the moderator was to lead the group in discussion by asking the questions and directing the flow of the conversation. The script the moderator used is located in Appendix F. The assistant moderator took comprehensive notes of the discussion and operated the tape recording equipment. The focus groups were taped recorded and a microphone was set in the middle of the table to record responses to the questions.
Different moderator teams were used for some of the focus groups. Because the Collegiate 4-H group required two focus groups to be conducted simultaneously, a moderator and assistant moderator with experience in conducting focus groups were solicited. I, as the researcher, briefed the groups on their role in the focus groups. For one of the Collegiate 4-H focus groups, the data did not record on the tape. Consequently, my advisor and I analyzed the data from the information the assistant moderator recorded. My advisor and I served on the other moderator teams. For one of the Collegiate 4-H groups and Focus Group #4, I was the moderator while my advisor was the assistant moderator. For Focus Group #3, my advisor was the moderator and I was the assistant moderator.

Refreshments and drinks were provided at every focus group meeting. This helped create a more relaxing environment (Krueger, 1994) that helped the participants feel more comfortable. As an incentive to participate and as a token of my appreciation for their participation, participants were given a $5.00 gift card to a local retail store such as Target or Wal-Mart after completion of the focus group. The function of the incentive was to encourage participants to attend (Krueger, 1994), although I found that many participants were willing be part of the focus groups without an incentive. Finally, a thank you letter or e-mail was sent to the focus group participants after the session (Appendix J).

Instrumentation

A variety of questions such as introductory, transition, key, and ending questions were used during the focus groups to gather data to answer the overall research questions. A list of the focus group questions can be found in Appendix H. Introductory questions
introduce the topic of discussion and provide an opportunity for the participants to reflect on past experiences (Krueger, 1994). The introductory questions asked participants to reflect on their favorite part of being a camp counselor and what motivated them to be a camp counselor. Connecting the introductory questions and the key questions are the transition questions. The transition questions asked participants to define life skills and explain their career goal and what they were doing to reach that career goal. Key questions are the most important questions in regards to the data (Krueger, 1994). The key questions asked the participants to describe their camp counseling experience, the life and work skills gained and how they have been able to apply those skills to their current lives, the activities that helped the counselors develop those skills, and how the camp counseling experience has influenced the decision of a career. Finally, the ending questions bring the discussion to a close (Krueger, 1994). The ending questions asked participants to describe what was unique about being a camp counselor and to add any additional comments that may not have been shared throughout the conversation.

All of the questions were structured as open-ended questions. By using open-ended questions, the participants respond to the questions based on their experiences. In other words, participants were allowed to say what they were thinking. Dichotomous questions, or questions that can be answered with a simple “yes” or “no” response, were not asked because they do not elicit responses that facilitate a lot of discussion within the group (Krueger, 1994).

**Researcher as Self**

Because gathering qualitative data uses the researcher as the key instrument in analysis, the researcher interprets the data (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000). In other words,
the researcher is the key analysis research tool because she organizes, interprets, and categorizes the qualitative responses. Thus, the researcher must be aware of past experiences and how those experiences may impact the data analysis. This has been referred to as theoretical sensitivity (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

I, as the researcher, have had personal and professional experience working with the Ohio 4-H camp counselor program. My personal and professional experience allows me to have insight into the Ohio 4-H camp counseling program and helps me understand what is important in the data and gives it meaning. Below is a description of my experiences related to camp counseling.

In 1999, I began my 4-H camp counseling career as a counselor for Wood County 4-H Camp. My roles and responsibilities as a camp counselor included planning activities for campers, monitoring a cabin of 20 girls, and leading a group of 30 campers in camp activities. I continued my roles in 2000 as a camp counselor for Northwest Ohio Conservation Camp and Wood County 4-H Camp.

In 2001, I was hired as a 4-H Student Assistant in Wood County. My roles and responsibilities before camp included duties such as attending bi-monthly camp counselor training meetings and mentoring counselors in the planning phases of camp, creating a camp craft for the campers, and purchasing and packing supplies for camp. My roles and responsibilities during camp included teaching eight sessions of the craft activity, assisting camp counselors in implementing activities and programs, and monitoring dining hall activity. I have carried out these roles and responsibilities for the last four years.
Because I have had these experiences, I have knowledge of what happens at camp and the planning phases before camp. My experiences with camp have been overwhelmingly positive. However, it is important for me to remain open to others’ perceptions of their experiences. Camp programs are managed differently in every county. They vary in the adult leadership and the resources available to them such as staff, camp facilities, and program supplies. They also vary to some extent in terms of the roles and responsibilities granted to camp counselors.

**Analysis**

After the completion of each focus group, I transcribed the tapes by recording exactly how each participant responded to the questions. To protect the participants’ identity, I developed a two-number labeling system such as 1(1). The number outside of the parentheses indicated the participant number and the number in the parentheses indicated the focus group number. My advisor and I were the only individuals who had access to the original tapes and uncoded data.

Open coding was used to analyze the data. Open coding is defined as the “process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 61). My advisor and I analyzed each sentence using a line-by-line analysis. Line-by-line analysis requires close examination of each phrase and word in each sentence (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). We discussed each “chunk” of the data until we agreed on the appropriate coding. “Chunks” of data can vary in size from single words, phrases, sentences, or whole paragraphs (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Two frameworks were considered when categorizing the data. Categories from the SCANS Report (1991), which focuses on competencies, skills, and personal qualities
related to the workforce, and the Youth Experiences Survey (YES) instrument (Dworkin, Larson, & Hansen, 2003; Hansen & Larson, 2002), which focuses on personal and interpersonal experiences, were compared and categories were created (Table 3.2). These instruments were compared because the SCANS Report discusses what business people indicated they were looking for from individuals entering the workforce, and the YES instrument was chosen because it is comprised of developmental experiences available to youth involved in organized activities. After comparison, my advisor and I found that the categories in both the SCANS Report and the YES instrument matched up very closely. However, one category of the personal experiences in the YES instrument, the development of identity, did not match up with any of the categories from the SCANS Report. The YES instrument focuses on developmental experiences while the SCANS Report focuses on workforce skill development. Thus, we were able to use the SCANS categories, with the addition of identity development, as a coding framework for the questions that involved skill development and transfer. The definitions of these categories aided my advisor and me in the coding process.

After analyzing the data from the four focus groups, we determined that the data had reached saturation. Thus, we stopped data collection at this point.

Once each question was analyzed through open coding process, the data were reviewed for overarching themes. Finally, I created a conceptual model to represent the skill development and transfer process that was suggested by the data.

Peer Review Process

Validity concerns the accuracy or truthfulness of the qualitative findings. The researcher must present the findings as accurately as possible. One way of establishing
validity in the research findings is through consensus. Consensus is defined as ‘agreement among competent others that the description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics are right’ (Ary et al., 2002, p. 452). The peer review process is one way of establishing validity. In the peer review process, colleagues or peers are provided with the raw data and the researcher’s interpretations of the data. The reviewer then considers whether the interpretation is reasonable (Ary et al., 2002). In this research study, one colleague who has had over 25 years of experience working with 4-H Youth Development and had conducted research on camping programs was asked to review the interpretations of the data. Our colleague reviewed the interpretations of the data and thought that a few themes could have been combined. Upon further discussion, we decided to keep the themes in their original place. Our colleague believed that the results were valid based on her experiences.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCANS</th>
<th>YES Instrument</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Manages Resources</strong></td>
<td><strong>Time Management</strong> - organize time and prioritize activities (Initiative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resources</strong></td>
<td><strong>Goal Setting</strong> - set goals and learn ways to achieve goals (Initiative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifies, organizes, plans, and allocates resources</td>
<td><strong>Feedback</strong> - give and take feedback (Teamwork &amp; Social Skills)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- <em>Time</em> - Selects goal-relevant activities and ranks them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- <em>Money</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- <em>Material and facilities</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- <em>Human resources</em> - distributes work accordingly and provides feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Interpersonal Skills</strong></th>
<th><strong>Group process</strong> (Teamwork and Social Skills)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interpersonal</strong></td>
<td><strong>Leadership and Responsibility</strong> (Teamwork and Social Skills)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works with others</td>
<td><strong>Diverse Peer Relationships</strong> (Interpersonal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Participates as a member of a team</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Teaches others new skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Serves clients/customers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Exercises leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Negotiates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Works with diversity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Acquisition of Information</strong></th>
<th><strong>Cognitive skills</strong> - skills for finding information (Basic Skills)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquires and uses information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Acquires and evaluates information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Organizes and maintains information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Interprets and communicates information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Uses computers to process information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Understands Networking and Social Systems</strong></th>
<th><strong>Integration with family and linkages to community and work</strong> (Adult Networks and Social Capital)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Systems</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understands complex inter-relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Understands systems - knows how social, organizational, and technological systems work and operates effectively with them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Monitors and corrects performance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Improves or designs systems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Technology Skills</strong></th>
<th><strong>Cognitive Skills</strong> - computer and internet skills (Basic Skills)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Technology</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works with a variety of technologies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Selects technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Applies technology to task</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Maintains and troubleshoots equipment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued

Table 3.2: Comparisons of SCANS Report and Youth Experiences Survey (YES) Instrument
### Academic and Communication Skills

**Basic Skills**  
Reads, writes, performs arithmetic and mathematical operations, listens and speaks  
- Reading  
- Writing  
- Arithmetic/Mathematics  
- Listening  
- Speaking

**Cognitive Skills** - academic skills and communication skills (Basic Skills)

### Problem Solving

**Thinking Skills**  
Thinks creatively, makes decisions, solves problems, visualizes, knows how to learn, and reasons  
- Creative Thinking  
- Decision Making  
- Problem Solving  
- Seeing Things in the Mind's Eye  
- Knowing How to Learn  
- Reasoning

**Cognitive Skills** - artistic and creative skills  
(Basic Skills)  
**Problem Solving** (Initiative)

### Personal Qualities

**Personal Qualities**  
Displays responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, and integrity and honesty  
- Responsibility  
- Self-Esteem  
- Sociability  
- Self-Management  
- Integrity/Honesty

**Effort** - Put effort into activity (Initiative)  
**Prosocial Norms** - help change others for the best, stand up for personal beliefs  
(Interpersonal)  
**Diverse Peer Relationships** - made friends with those who are different than myself  
(Interpersonal)  
**Emotional Regulation** - positively handle stress and anxiety, control own temper (Basic Skills)

### Other

**No comparable category**

**Identity** - explore new things and ways of acting; learn more about self and thoughts about future

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*Note:* Adapted from SCANS (1991) and Dworkin et al. (2003) and Hansen & Larson (2002). Table organized from the workforce development perspective (SCANS, 1991). Words in italics indicate the competency and the words in parentheses indicate the scale the competency was located in the YES Instrument. One category for the YES instrument, Identity Development, did not fit SCANS categories.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The findings reported here are based on four focus groups with a total of 30 former Ohio 4-H camp counselors. These counselors spent from one to six years as a counselor and are now young adults, either attending college or in the workforce. This chapter answers each of the research questions by presenting the research question first followed by the focus group questions developed to answer the research question. The data are synthesized and presented under each research question.

Research Question #1: Perception of Camp Counseling Experience

Favorite Part of Being a 4-H Camp Counselor

4-H camp counselor alumni were asked about their favorite part of being a camp counselor. Many of the alumni\(^1\) gave descriptions about how they enjoyed working with others. Alumni enjoyed developing relationships with different age groups of campers and other counselors from other schools and teaching campers skills and watching those campers learn skills. A number of responses were related to helping and watching

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\(^1\) Although *alumnus* and *alumni* are masculine singular and plural respectively, these terms are used throughout the document.
campers develop at camp as well as from year to year. Alumni talked about how they enjoyed helping homesick campers “come out of their shell” and watching the campers make friends. One alumnus described the favorite part of her experience as “watching the kids grow from year to year and to see them come back and to see how they changed.”

Also, alumni just liked being at camp and getting away from reality. Alumni described how much they enjoyed having fun with the campers and watching the campers have fun at camp.

Furthermore, many alumni enjoyed being a role model to the campers. They liked it when campers remembered them when they would see them at the fair or at the store. One alumnus described how she especially enjoyed being a role model to those campers who didn’t have role models in their lives. Another alumnus described how she looked up to her counselors as a camper and so that when she was a counselor, she knew she was a role model for her campers. Table 4.1 outlines the themes present in this question.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes Generated</th>
<th>Data to Support Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working with Others</td>
<td>Helping campers with their development (i.e., make friends with kids from different places, watching campers come out of their shell) 5(3), 3(3), 7(3), 4(1), 6(1), 3(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working with several age groups 5(4), 1(1), 2(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working with people 5(4), 1(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working with younger kids 2(4), 6(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interacting with campers, watching their development 1(3), 2(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Watching campers change at camp from year to year 4(2), 6(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relationships in general 6(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching others, watching them learn 4(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building skills in workshop 7(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Model</td>
<td>Kids remember you 2(3), 5(1), 7(1), 2(2), 5(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Especially for kids who don’t have a role model 6(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Looked up to counselors 8(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>Having fun 1(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Watching kids have fun 2(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being here at camp and all of the activities 1(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Away from reality 8(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting others</td>
<td>Meeting others from different schools 7(3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. First number indicates the code number for the individual, second number in parentheses represents focus group number.*

Table 4.1: Favorite Part of Being a 4-H Camp Counselor

**Description of the Camp Counseling Experience**

Overwhelmingly, the alumni described their 4-H camp counseling experience as fun, positive, and rewarding. The experience was rewarding because the counselors, once again, enjoyed being a role model to the campers. When one alumnus looked back at her years as a camper and counselor, she said “I want to be just as special to the kids as they [her counselors] were to me when I was a camper.” The counselors also thought the experience was rewarding because they liked the responsibility that came with their role of watching over the campers.

The alumni also described their experience as a learning experience. The experience was the first time they got to try out new roles such as leading others, teaching
campers, and taking care of campers. Through their role, the counselors felt they gained confidence in leading others too. Trying out new roles also helped a few of the counselors decide that they would like to work with children in the future as a teacher. Two alumni even described their experience as an “experience of a lifetime,” or one of the best experiences of their lives.

One reason why being a camp counselor was one of the best life experiences was because of the opportunity to meet others from around the county. At camp, campers and counselors bond with one another. One alumnus stated, “At camp and as a camp counselor, you don’t have the differences and the cliques that you have at school, everybody’s one, everybody’s equal.”

The counselors also felt that camp affected their lives. One alumnus said, “4-H molded who I am, but camp is what got me there.” Another alumnus described his experience as a time for personal growth. Finally, another alumnus said that she experienced a challenging event at camp. As a result of dealing with that situation, she gained confidence in herself as a counselor and believes she can do anything after that experience.

Although the counselors have described camp as an overall positive experience, they did describe challenges that existed. One alumnus did not realize the amount of planning that is required by counselors before going to camp. Other alumni described the challenges in working with a variety of different campers and the developmental needs of campers. As another alumnus described, working with campers at different camps is challenging because they have different needs. Some campers can function on their own without a lot of counselor supervision, while others, like those who have been diagnosed
as having ADD (attention deficit disorder), require more attention from the counselors. Another challenge in working with campers is dealing with the different developmental needs. Describing this challenge, one alumnus said, "...another little camper runs up to you, you know, and just needs a hug because she misses her mom and dad and it makes her feel better."

Alumni agreed that the camp counseling experience was exhausting. One alumnus said, "...you look back at the end of the week and you are so glad that you experienced it but it's just really tiring." But the alumni also agreed that there is so much energy at camp and it is important to keep up that energy because the campers look up to the counselors to set the tone. Table 4.2 outlines the themes that emerged in this question.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Themes Generated</strong></th>
<th><strong>Data to Support Themes</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Learning Experience</td>
<td>Diversity, teamwork ?(1), teaching campers 5(2), leadership ?(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Experience of a Lifetime” ?(1), 4(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learned to lead 4(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adventure to learn new things never done before 2(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learn to take care of kids 5(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Developmental learning experience 1(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Role</td>
<td>First leadership role ?(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experience confidence ?(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learned I wanted to be a teacher ?(1), ?(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First adult-like role ?(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewarding</td>
<td>Campers look up to you 6(3), 2(2), ?(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rewarding 5(4), 1(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Given responsibility 3(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hard work pays off 6(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Impacts made on campers 1(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhausting/Energy</td>
<td>Exhausting 3(4), 1(3), 3(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Energy at camp 3(3), 1(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Building</td>
<td>Got to know others 4(4), 4(3), ?(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lasting friendships 6(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bonding experience/no cliques 6(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>Fun 3(4), 4(3), 2(2), ?(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive 1(2), ?(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity Development</td>
<td>Affected my life ?(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Camp molded who I am ?(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal growth 4(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I can do anything after that” confidence 8(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td>A lot of work (planning) 2(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working with diverse campers 7(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working with developmental needs of campers 2(2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: First number indicates the code number for the individual, second number in parentheses represents focus group number. Question mark indicates speaker could not be determined.*

Table 4.2: Experience of Being a 4-H Camp Counselor

**Summary for Research Question #1**

Being a 4-H camp counselor was a fun and memorable experience for alumni.

They found the experience required a lot of energy, was exhausting and challenging, but rewarding. Alumni felt they developed personal qualities and learned more about themselves. Furthermore, one of their favorite parts of the experience was working with
others and being role models for youth. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 outlines the themes that emerged for Research Question #1.

**Research Question #2: Development of Life and Workforce Skills**

*Life and Workforce Skills Gained*

Alumni were asked to reflect on the life and workforce skills they believed they had gained through their camp counseling experience. The skills were categorized based on the definitions given in the SCANS Report (1991) and the YES Instrument (Hansen & Larson, 2002). A chart comparing these two frameworks, with definitions used to assist with categorizing the data, was presented previously in Chapter 3.

The alumni believed that they developed skills in teamwork and how to get along with others. The alumni learned about all roles of teamwork and how groups fit together. One alumnus understood teamwork as, “leading the groups or just standing back and helping.” When working together as a team, the alumni believed that they learned to accept others and others’ ideas; as one alumnus stated, “You learn to accept new ideas, you learn to accept other people and your idea may not be the only way.” Other benefits of working together as a team included learning to trust others, learning dynamics of relationships, and learning group and one-on-one interaction skills.

In addition to working with others, alumni believed that they learned leadership skills. One alumnus stated, “Not only learning to work with other people but being able to step out and lead other people” is what she had gained. The alumni believe that they learned how to lead when it was their turn, to follow when it was their turn, and to delegate.
Skills in communicating were also learned as part of the 4-H camp counselor experience. Alumni noted that they learned how to talk differently to campers and their peers in order to communicate their message. The alumni also learned how to talk to campers in sensitive ways, such as if campers did not realize they were doing something wrong or if a camper was homesick. Other skills learned through being a camp counselor related to communication were public speaking and public relations, or being an advocate for camp in the community.

Alumni learned planning and organizational skills also. Alumni talked about the importance of planning and to always hope for the best. They also talked about learning how to prioritize tasks at camp and to multi-task to manage the day. One alumnus stated that being a camp counselor was the "first time managing my time differently."

Decision making and making quick decisions were other skills gained. As one alumnus stated, "You might have 30 or 40 kids in your tribe that want to be entertained and you have to entertain them and so it teaches you some pretty quick on your feet thinking." The alumni also talked about making unpopular decisions at times. Other qualities developed as a result of being a camp counselor were responsibility, perseverance and effort, patience, independence, flexibility, and displaying a positive attitude. Table 4.3 outlines the themes present in this question.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Examples of Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Communication skills 5(3), 5(1), 2(1), 7(2), 2(2), 6(4), 3(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview skills 5(3),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public speaking 2(2),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public relations 6(4),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explaining in sensitive way 7(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Qualities</td>
<td>Responsibility 5(3), 8(2),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive attitude 5(2),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perseverance/effort 8(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with Others</td>
<td>Accepting others 1(3), 6(4), 3(4),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trusting 1(1),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dynamics of relationships 6(1),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group and one-on-one interaction 6(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Leading 3(3), 6(3), 4(1), 5(4), 4(4),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Delegating and following 4(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning/Organization</td>
<td>Prioritizing 6(3),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time 7(1),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multi-tasking 6(3),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Planning 4(1),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prepare for worst/hope for best 5(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Teamwork 3(3), 2(2), 1(4),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How groups fit together 2(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making</td>
<td>Making unpopular decisions 7(1),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Making quick decisions, improvise “thinking on your feet” 3(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>Adapt to different situations 6(1),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learn to improvise because we don’t have all the resources 3(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patience</td>
<td>Patiently explain what campers were doing was wrong 7(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>Have to be independent because of being away from home 3(4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. First number indicates the code number for the individual, second number in parentheses represents focus group number.

Table 4.3: Life and Workforce Skills Gained Through Camp Counseling

Application of Skills Gained from Camp Counseling

Alumni were asked whether they were able to apply the life and workforce skills they learned at camp to their current lives. The skills and examples of how those skills have been applied are presented in Table 4.4. Leadership came out as the most prominent skill gained as a result of being a camp counselor. Communication, teamwork, and organization were other skills gained through the camp counseling experience. Other skills mentioned were interpersonal, time management, flexibility/adaptability, and
responsibility. The skills mentioned were skills reflective of those needed in the workforce according to the SCANS Report (1991) or developmental experiences in the YES instrument (Dworkin et al., 2003). Furthermore, the alumni clearly could see that the skills they learned as part of being a camp counselor were applied to their daily lives as a student, employee, or community member. Of the 30 participants in the study, 24 were students at the university level. The remaining participants were involved full time in the workforce. Many made indications that they were still involved in the community somehow as a volunteer.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Application of Skill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Used in extracurricular clubs such as collegiate 4-H 4(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leading group projects in college 6(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>As a manager, leading and delegating tasks at a job site 3(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taking the lead in a job even when co-workers have the same responsibility 4(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using leadership skills in role as a resident hall advisor 4(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Felt more prepared to fulfill a paid summer job responsibility as a camp counselor 6(1), 5(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Volunteer as a mentor and role model for children at Big Brothers/Big Sisters 2(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Being able to bring everyone’s ideas out in group meetings 7(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speaking in front of others 3(4), 6(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apply public relations skills when selling something or getting others involved 2(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use communication skills as public relations chairperson in club 2(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learned to give different directions to children and peers 3(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Working with different personalities in close quarters such as offices 6(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When working in projects, changing individual ways of thinking or acting in order to accomplish group goals 5(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working with others to bring out group’s ideas 6(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learn how groups fit together 4(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stepping up and meeting people 6(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Used in current job when answering multiple questions in a “controlled” chaos environment 5(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organizing different events at the same time at work 7(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Balancing and planning time for going to class, homework, other activities, and fun 7(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use planning skills everyday as a resident hall advisor 4(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>Taking the initiative to meet new people and establish relationships 6(4), 4(4), 1(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dealing with different personalities in different situations 6(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Getting along with others in group living situations was easier 3(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Management</td>
<td>Help in managing time between class, work, homework, and fun 5(2), 7(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>Being a teacher, when a lesson plan fails, coming up with something different to do with the students 1(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Learned how to be an adult and be responsible for children 6(4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. First number indicates the code number for the individual, second number in parentheses represents focus group number. Skills categories from SCANS Report (1991).

Table 4.4: Examples of Application of Life and Workforce Skills
Camp Counseling Activities Influential in Skill Development

Alumni were asked about what activities before, during, or after camp they believed were most influential in developing life and workforce skills. The training sessions held before camp helped one alumnus feel more comfortable in her role as a camp counselor. The training sessions also gave her confidence in knowing that she was a good counselor.

Many of the alumni believed that one of the most influential activities at camp was actually working with the campers. Being given the responsibility of leading campers as a teenager was important to the alumni. Working with the campers to execute plans and helping the campers work together are examples of these activities. Learning how to manage child behavior, especially in the cabins, was another aspect of directly working with the campers that helped the alumni develop skills.

Teaching campers in a group setting was another aspect of being a camp counselor that helped in developing skills. As one alumnus stated, "Group dynamics was a big thing that you learned from that because you are almost always teaching in a group." More specifically, the alumni recalled teaching activities such as dancing, songs, and games as helpful. Teaching these activities helped the alumni to develop skills in meeting other people, to use initiative in starting activities, and to smile and be cheerful when teaching these activities.

The team initiatives activities allowed the alumni to actually observe how the campers and counselors worked together. Planning activities together as a group was another influential aspect that was helpful in developing skills. As one alumnus stated,
"We had one goal and we had to figure out now to achieve that goal. We had to work with others to decide between 50 fun theme ideas."

The opportunity to reflect on each day and the entire week of camp was important to several of the alumni. One alumnus explained that after a day of camp, the reflection activities helped her think about the day and how she fit into camp and the world. Another alumnus thought reflecting at the conclusion of the entire camp was helpful in thinking about what went well and what did not go well and how activities at camp could be improved. She later continued to say "...and I think that was one of the things that helped me develop life skills that are applied to later life." Table 4.5 outlines the themes present in this question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Categories</th>
<th>Data to Support Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working with Campers</td>
<td>Actually working with kids to execute plans, to help them work together; guide 4(1), 5(4), 4(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dealing with behaviors, cabins at night 3(4), 4(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organizing resources, planning to teach; accepting responsibility for 5(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How you dealt with it made a difference in others’ attitudes 6(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being put into different roles/being responsible/feeling that comes with 1(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Actually doing it at camp (dances) being in front of group, taking initiative 2(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching in a group setting 4(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Songs/games 7(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Influenced positive attitude 7(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Helped meet others 1(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>What went well/what didn’t; different views 2(3), 8(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Planning</td>
<td>Group planning with peers prior to camp 3(3), 4(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Initiatives</td>
<td>Actually allowed you to see how kids work together 2(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior Training</td>
<td>Feel comfortable; at camp, know I was a good counselor 6(4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note*. First number indicates the code number for the individual, second number in parentheses represents focus group number.

Table 4.5: Camp Counseling-Related Activities that Influenced Life Skill and Workforce Development
Summary of Research Question #2

Alumni described their camp counselor experience as one where they had gained so many skills at one time. Through this experience, they had developed a wide variety of skills and personal qualities that are necessary for success in the world of work. More specifically, such skills included planning and organizing, decision making, communication, getting along with others, teamwork, and leadership.

Research Question #3: Impact on Career Choice

Influence of Camp Counselor Experience on Career Goal

Alumni were asked how they believed being a camp counselor may have influenced their choice of a career. Some alumni believed that there was a direct influence, while others believed camp made more of an indirect influence on their career goals.

The alumni who felt that camp directly influenced their choice of a career found out that they liked working with people, in particular children. One alumnus felt that working with people at camp further developed the social skills she had already. Other alumni felt that the opportunity to be around children provided a real experience in working with children. From that experience, a few of the alumni discovered what age groups they liked to work with. These alumni learned that they wanted to be a teacher as a result of the camp counselor experience. As one alumnus stated, “I think camp definitely prepared me for being a teacher.” Another alumnus stated that “working with kids and working with people is what drew me to the field [of education].” Finally, one alumnus enjoyed camp so much that, in the future, she and her fiancé would like to start a camp or become administrators of a camp.
Several of the alumni went on to become paid staff at camp. Although being a member of permanent camp staff was not their final choice of a career, it was a stepping stone where they turned the skills learned as a 4-H camp counselor into paid employment. Furthermore, some alumni continued to volunteer as adults at camp. The volunteer staff became active members in the community and found the camp experience to be rewarding since they continued their relationship with camp.

A few of the alumni did not necessarily want to be teachers, but wanted to be a positive force in children's lives. The alumni felt that they learned to see the good in all children at camp and wanted to continue working with children for that reason. As one alumnus stated, "...I try to see the good in every kid, you know, and I think that 4-H camp definitely taught me that as well it is just seeing the good in every kid and knowing that they have that potential, they are just kind of mixed up..."

Other alumni did not believe that 4-H camp had a direct influence on their career choice. Rather, they believed that 4-H in general and 4-H projects had an influence on their career choice. Projects such as nutrition and animal science influenced the career choice of the alumni who participated in the study. 4-H also taught one alumnus that she loved people and children and wants to become a professional organizer one day.

Indirect influences on career choices were evident. Being a camp counselor helped the alumni learn more about the environment in which they wanted to work. One alumnus found that she did not want a structured work environment. Some alumni discovered the exact type of working environment they wanted to be part of including in a job setting where one can be a nurse and working with international programs and bringing 4-H to developing countries. Furthermore, others learned what roles they would 81
like to play in the work environment. Some alumni learned that they wanted to take a leadership role in the work environment instead of taking orders from others. As one alumnus stated, "...I decided that I really liked kids and I could be around them all day but I also decided that I like having a say in things so the job I have now [as a child care facility manager] is a good blend of things."

Alumni learned about what they wanted to look for in a job. A few alumni discovered that they enjoyed working with people and they wanted to help others as well as themselves. Another alumnus originally wanted to be an Extension educator, however, he further explained that he wanted that "reward at the end of the day" feeling and thought that could be accomplished in other ways such as being a politician.

"I am blaming my indecisiveness on a career choice on 4-H," is what one alumnus jokingly said about her experiences in 4-H. In other words, 4-H gave her a lot of exposure to new experiences and a wide variety of skills. Other alumni believed that 4-H exposed them to different things and they got to test out different roles and fields of study. Furthermore, 4-H helped one alumnus determine that he did not want to work with children everyday and decided to enter the business field. Table 4.6 outlines the themes present in this question.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes Generated</th>
<th>Data to Support Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Influence</td>
<td>One of leadership vs. following orders 5(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence type of job/environment/what to look for in job</td>
<td>“Reward at the end of the day” feeling 6(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional organizer – 4-H taught love of kids and people 5(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t want structured environment 3(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working with kids and being boss 3(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working with people and help others/self 7(1), 6(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Team building/training 6(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>International 8(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nurse-job setting 2(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Power/listening, being in charge 6(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4-H more generally influences career direction 7(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4-H project influenced 1(2), 2(2), 5(2), 4(2), 7(2), 1(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Help be a positive force in kids’ lives 7(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>From helping kids at camp and seeing that it could be done</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Direct Influence | Teacher “camp prepared me for being a teacher” 1(3), 6(3) |
|                 | By being around kids, by providing real experience |
|                 | “See the good in every kid” taught be camp 1(3) |
|                 | Develop skills that were already there – to work with people 2(3) |
|                 | Learned what age group 4(1), 2(1), 3(1) |
|                 | Middle school teacher 5(4), enjoyed working with kids |
|                 | Start or direct camp 1(3) |
|                 | Met husband at camp |

| Identity Development | Got exposure and got to test different things out (identity) 6(4), 2(4) |
|                      | What I didn’t want to do 4(4) |

| Skill Development | Gave me a wide variety of skills 8(1), 6(4) |

*Note: First number indicates the code number for the individual, second number in parentheses represents focus group number.*

Table 4.6: Influence of Camp Counselor Experience on Career Choice

**Summary of Research Question #3**

The camp counseling experience has had both direct and indirect influence on the choice of a career. In addition, being a camp counselor was where counselors learned more about themselves and developed a sense of identity. They learned what they like to do as well as what they do not enjoy.
Research Question #4: Unique Aspects of 4-H Camp Counseling Experience

Uniqueness

Camp counselor alumni were asked what, if anything, they believed was unique about being a 4-H camp counselor as opposed to all of their other 4-H experiences. A few alumni believed that being a camp counselor was the best opportunity to serve in a leadership role. One alumnus stated that being a camp counselor was one of the few opportunities in 4-H in where one “signs on” as a leader. Furthermore, one alumnus believed that the opportunity to be a leader at 4-H camp made a greater impact on her than any other aspect of 4-H. Another alumnus described his experience as being looked up to as a leader by the campers at camp and that carried on throughout the summer because he helped younger 4-H members with their animal projects.

The alumni believed that the relationships developed at camp between the camp counselor and the campers were more intense. This was due to the opportunity to work one-on-one with people. This was also partly due to the close living arrangements at camp and 24/7 nature of the experience. Because of this, there are fewer boundaries at camp.

Another unique aspect of being a camp counselor was the opportunity to be a role model. The alumni learned that not only are they role models at camp, but they are also role models after camp. They gave descriptions of running into campers at the fair, and not quite remembering their names, but knowing that because of how the youth reacted to them they were role models and they had to act accordingly. Another alumnus talked about how she enjoyed watching her campers grow. She felt being a camp counselor was unique because camp counselors are contributing to camper success later in life.
The new physical environment at camp is what makes 4-H camp a different experience than other 4-H experiences. One alumnus described her camp counseling experience as her “summer vacation.” Furthermore, activities that 4-H members may experience are only at 4-H camp. For example, one alumnus stated, “...Not everyone has a zip line in their backyard.” There is no other experience in 4-H where campers and counselors are forced to live together. One alumnus stated, “If you’re not enjoying your cabin experience, you are stuck in there for a week and you are going to have to grow and learn how to deal with whatever bad things are going on.”

The opportunity to interact with people of different ages and backgrounds was another unique aspect of camp. Every individual has the chance to interact and share with peers and those who are younger and older than they are. Also, the alumni expressed that camp brings campers and counselors together from different clubs and schools. “We had a sports rivalry between two high schools...4-H helped bring schools together.” Everyone at camp is out of his or her comfort zone. Furthermore, there is less judgment and more acceptance of others.

Another strong theme that emerged was that camp is not about competition and it is about building team spirit. This is different from other aspects of 4-H. As one alumnus stated, “It [camp] is not like other aspects of 4-H where some of us come out as winners and some come out as losers.” Another alumnus was thankful that she got to be part of camp, because “if we didn’t have that experience [of being together at camp], we would still have that biased judgment [of always being competing enemies in 4-H].”

Alumni also felt that being at camp and being a camp counselor helped them learn more about themselves. For example, one alumnus spoke about being silly in skits,
where “you have the opportunity to laugh at yourself and you find out who you really are.” Another alumnus stated, “You learn from campers because they had cliques and it made me realize that this is how I really am and it opened my eyes.”

Alumni felt that the responsibility given to them at camp was greater than responsibility given in other aspects of 4-H. This “authentic responsibility” came from being responsible for cabins of campers in a 24-hour-a-day living situation. One alumnus explained this responsibility by saying “I feel like a mother, father, brother, sister; you have to make sure that they take a bath and take their meds.”

Being a camp counselor at camp is one 4-H experience where one can gain so many skills at one time. One alumnus explained it as “you pick up a lot of life skills throughout your life but I think that when you are a camp counselor, there is no one time that you learn or use more life skills than any other time.” Another alumnus talked about how she believes after her camp experience, that anything can be done, “I left being a camp counselor thinking anything could be done, like anything, that is something that I didn’t get from my projects or the fair or any other aspect [of 4-H].” And finally, there is no other experience like being a camp counselor. The camp counselor experience is an “experience of a lifetime.” Table 4.7 outlines the themes present in this question.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes Generated</th>
<th>Data to Support Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team Spirit</td>
<td>No winners and losers 6(4) No competition 6(4), 2(2), 2(3), 1(3) Brings different people together from different schools and clubs 5(2), 2(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Responsibility 6(3) &quot;Mother, father, brother, sister&quot; 2(4) 24/7 daily living 2(4), 1(4), 5(2), 2(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>You “sign on” as a leader from the start 4(4) Being looked up to because of that leadership role 1(4) Greater leadership than any other 6(4) One-on-one 4(2) opportunities, intense relationship 6(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Management</td>
<td>No judgment/acceptance 7(2), 8(2) Group management 5(2) Out of comfort zone 1(1) Brings people together 6(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill Development</td>
<td>“Gain so many life skills at one time” 5(4), 4(4), 6(3) Like no other experience, can’t get anywhere else (zipline in backyard) 4(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>“Experience of a lifetime” 6(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity Development</td>
<td>Be yourself (silly); find out who you are 3(2), 6(2) Career 2(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Relationships</td>
<td>Build more intense personal relationships, partly due to daily living 7(2) Opportunity for one-on-one 4(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Environment</td>
<td>Different physical environment 4(3) Can’t run away from camp 4(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Model</td>
<td>Role model at camp and afterwards 2(1), 5(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacation</td>
<td>Getting away “vacation” 5(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>“Anything can be done, no is not an option” 3(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaningful Role</td>
<td>Contributing to someone else’s development 8(3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: First number indicates the code number for the individual, second number in parentheses represents focus group number.*

Table 4.7: Unique Aspects of 4-H Camp Counselor Experience

**Summary of Research Question #4**

Camp presents unique opportunities over and above the rest of the 4-H experience. Being a 4-H camp counselor provides a unique opportunity to contribute to someone else’s development. Counselors learn to work with different age groups and school groups. This provides opportunities for the development of interpersonal skills by working cooperatively and breaking barriers among these groups. Another unique aspect
of being a 4-H camp counselor is that counselors develop an attitude that "anything can be done." Much of this development occurs in a different physical environment where nature surrounds and the media is not present. Some alumni have called this a "vacation" and the "experience of a lifetime."

**Themes Across Research Questions**

Several themes were apparent across the research questions and Table 4.8 outlines which themes were present across each of the research questions. To derive the common themes, my advisor and I together reviewed the data. We then collapsed the categories across research questions.

Alumni found that the experience was challenging yet enjoyable and rewarding. They felt that being a camp counselor helped them personally develop qualities such as perseverance and time management. Alumni enjoyed being role models. Camp is a context where counselors learn more about themselves, which helped them develop a sense of identity. Furthermore, the alumni learned skills that are valued in the 21st century workforce. Not only did alumni learn these skills, but they were transferred from one setting to another. This means that the alumni reap the benefits years later. The skills are transferred because alumni are engaged in the camp counseling experience with appropriate structure and guidance. These are unique contributions that are part of the total 4-H experience.
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</tbody>
</table>

^ indicates theme not mentioned by alumni in focus groups

Table 4.8: Themes Across Research Questions

Figure 4.1 describes what is happening within the 4-H camp counseling experience, based on the themes derived from this study’s data. As adolescents, camp counselors are highly engaged in their roles and activities at camp and have the opportunity to develop interpersonal relationships. The roles are interesting and challenging, which make them intrinsically motivating. As a result of their experience, camp counselors believe they develop teamwork and social skills, initiative, identity, and interpersonal skills (McNeely, 2004). The skills from this experience are then transferred over time to other contexts of their lives. As shown in the data presented here, camp counselors years later believed that their experience has helped them develop personal qualities as well as learn important life and workforce skills for the future that they are currently putting to use in their roles as students and workers. The camp counselors may be able to apply these skills as a student, in a job that is a stepping stone to their careers, or in their eventual careers once they have completed their education. The camp
counseling experience also helped the alumni learn more about themselves and assisted them in developing a potential career choice. This all happened across the dimension of time, and was aided by various transfer of learning strategies that, intentionally or unintentionally, were part of the camp counseling experience.
Figure 4.1: A conceptual model: The 4-H camp counseling experience

Total 4-H Experience

- Teamwork and Social Skills
- Initiative
- Identity
- Interpersonal Skills

Transfer of Learning

- Produces Developmental Gains
- Life and Workforce Skills
- Potential Career Choice

World of Work (School) And Community
Conclusion

The objectives of this study were to answer four questions: (a) describe camp counseling experience, (b) understand the life and workforce skills gained and how those skills have been applied, (c) identify if the camp counseling experience influenced a career choice, and (d) recognize the unique aspects of being a 4-H camp counselor. Results from the study indicate that the Ohio 4-H camp counselor program helped adolescents develop personal qualities and identity as well as skills that are needed for success in the 21st century workforce. The development of these qualities and skills takes place in a fun environment, an often-overlooked dimension in youth programs.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The overall purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the experiences and skills gained as part of the 4-H camp counselor experience. The objectives were to: (a) understand how camp counselor alumni perceived their camp counseling experience, (b) determine the impact of the 4-H camp counseling experience in relation to the development of life and workforce skills, (c) become aware of the extent to which the camp counseling experience impacted the career choice of camp counselor alumni, and (d) recognize the unique aspects of being a 4-H camp counselor as compared to the total 4-H experience. This chapter discusses the findings of the study; limitations; and implications for theory, future research, and practice.

Camp Counseling as a Context for Positive Youth Development

Based on the findings from this study, the experience of being a camp counselor at a 4-H camp is a context for positive youth development. Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) theory of human development states that within the microsystem individuals need to experience a variety of roles, activities, and interpersonal relationships. The alumni, through their responses to the questions, gave examples of how they believed they had...
meaningful roles, activities, and interpersonal relationships within the camp counseling experience. Alumni described being in important roles where they were responsible for planning and carrying out camp activities and caring for campers. Alumni agreed, looking back now, that they could not believe that adults placed so much trust in them and allowed them to fill these roles. Counselors described being engaged in fun activities where they had the opportunity to lead others. Finally, counselors learned to work with and develop friendships with campers, other counselors, and adults. These roles and activities become progressively more complex over time as alumni took on more responsibility and learned more about themselves. This idea of progressively complex roles and activities over time is consistent with what Bronfenbrenner (2005) called proximal processes. Bronfenbrenner contends that these proximal processes are what produce development.

Alumni described their experience as fun yet challenging. Many of the alumni indicated their motivation for being a camp counselor was because they perceived the experience to be fun and because when they were campers they had looked up to their counselors as role models. This somewhat contrasts with what Larson, Jarrett, Hansen, Pearce, Sullivan, Walker, and Wood (2005) found in their study of extracurricular activities. When they asked youth why they chose to participate, their initial reasons were extrinsic. For example, they joined because they wanted to please their parents, hang out with friends, or fulfill community service hours. Only after participating in the program did the youth report that their reasons for participation had changed to more intrinsic motivations. Alumni in the present study gave examples of both intrinsic and extrinsic reasons for choosing to become a camp counselor. Opportunities to be at camp
and with peers are examples of extrinsic motivators. Once the alumni were at camp, they got to experience new roles and activities. They gave examples like being silly with campers and feeling a sense of satisfaction when campers understood what they were teaching them. One alumnus even described how he liked flying down the zip line, something that cannot be experienced on a daily basis. Being engaged in new things that cannot be done outside of a program is what Larson et al.'s (2005) study found to be intrinsic motivators. Alumni were motivated to be camp counselors because it was exciting, fun, and enjoyable.

One of the reasons why alumni felt that their experience was enjoyable was because they liked being role models. Being a role model, a common theme found throughout the study, is consistent with other literature on camp counseling. In a quantitative study asking resident camp counselors about their motivation to be employees at camp, one of the top responses for being at camp was the opportunity to be a role model for youth (Roark, 2005). Furthermore, in other studies, camp counselors learned how to be role models (Brandt, 2005) and they enjoyed being role models (Forsythe, Matysik, & Nelson, 2004).

Even though the alumni described their experience as fun and enjoyable, they also thought that it was challenging. The alumni described how working with campers was challenging in that they had different developmental needs and problem behaviors. They also thought the experience was challenging because they were exhausted but had to keep their energy up for the campers. Czikszentmihalyi’s (1975, 1990) theory of flow describes how growing out of challenging experiences increases internal motivation (Larson et al., 2005). It is evident that the alumni were internally motivated by the
experience because they came back year after year, sometimes even as permanent staff members. Csikszentmihalyi's theory also describes that when the skills people possess are matched to the challenges of the activity, the experience is described as exciting and fun and people are absorbed in the activity (Larson et al., 2005). Within the camp experience, camp counselors are supported by caring adults who assist with challenges. Thus, the adults are able to help the counselors overcome challenges, which increases the internal motivation of counselors.

*Camp Counseling as a Context for Life and Workforce Skill Development*

This study sought to understand the extent to which camp counselors are developing skills for the workforce and other contexts of their lives, viewed from the perspective of alumni who were one to six years removed from the experience. In part, it is an extension of McNeely's (2004) study of Ohio 4-H camp counselors. In McNeely's study, many of the teen camp counselors were not entirely aware that they were developing skills that had applicability for the workforce and other context of their lives. Likewise, Brandt (2005) found that many camp counselors did not believe that the experience had opened career or other employment opportunities for them. Perhaps this is because counselors viewed the camp counselor job very narrowly (i.e., they are not going to be a camp counselor as a career when they get older), and because they did not see the broad applicability that the skills gained have for other types of jobs. Furthermore, they may be unaware of the skills that employers desire of their employees in a workplace setting. However, the findings of the present study are in line with those of Forsythe et al. (2004) in terms of camp counselors' belief that they were developing skills for the workforce and community.
There are a few reasons why the conflicting results may have occurred among these studies. The responsibilities and expectations placed on 4-H camp counselors may be different from state to state. Thus, counselors may have different roles, activities, and interpersonal relationships within their camp counseling experience. That is, states may vary on the degree to which counselors are responsible for planning camp programs and caring for campers. Based on Bronfenbrenner's theory (1979), it is believed that when counselors have more responsibilities, they have more opportunities for developmentally-enhancing experiences. Furthermore, the training aspects may be different from state to state. The theory of transfer of learning states that reflection is an important step in helping counselors apply what they learned in one setting to another. The training in some states may be more intentional about the transfer of learning process than others. The age of the counselors at the time they were asked questions (i.e., teens) could have produced different results. According to Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development (1952), the formal operational stage of cognitive development is when youth ages 11 to 15 begin to think more abstractly. However, the development of abstract thought may occur later than age 15 and sometimes it does not occur at all (Santrock, 2001). Although many camp counselors are generally ages 15 and older, they may not have cognitively developed ways to think abstractly or they simply were not able to project themselves into the future at the time when they were asked questions. Finally, the way the questions were asked could have elicited different responses depending on whether they were closed- or open-ended questions.

It is evident from the results of this study that alumni who were camp counselors as teens developed important skills for the workforce and other contexts of their lives.
The specific skills most mentioned were decision making, planning and organizing, communication, interpersonal skills, teamwork, and leadership. The life and career skills found in this study are consistent with the skills found in other studies examining camp counselors’ skill development (Brandt, 2005; DeGraff & Edginton, 1992; DeGraff & Glover, 2003; Dworken, 2004; Forsythe et al., 2004; Garst & Johnson, 2003; James, 2003; McNeely, 2004; Purcell, 1996; Toupence & Townsend, 2000; Weese, 2002) as well as for youth in other organized activities (Dworkin, Hansen, & Larson, 2003). These specific skills are also consistent with those needed for the 21st century workforce (SCANS, 1991) and with the workforce skills thought to be needed to effectively manage organizations (Brody, 2000). Alumni believed that they learned these skills because they were given real responsibilities. They indicated that it was actually working with the campers and other counselors to plan and execute camp programs that helped them develop skills, which relates to transfer of learning. Furthermore, experiential learning literature supports that the best way to learn is through the actual experience.

The alumni accomplished camp planning and execution and learned these skills with the assistance of caring adults. This assistance is consistent with what Vygotsky called the zone of proximal development (Berk, 2000). The zone of proximal development is described as the range of tasks that a child cannot handle alone but can be accomplished with the help of adults or more skilled peers. Scaffolding is a technique used to help youth accomplished tasks. It is described as changing the level of support when teaching others. In other words, adults provide the appropriate amount of assistance according to the current level of performance for the child. Adults at camp provide scaffolding as they help camp counselors grow into their roles and responsibilities. They do this by assisting
counselors in planning camp and offering advice when a camper challenges a counselor. Thus, camp counselors at camp overcome challenges and learn skills needed for life and the workforce.

Camp Counseling as a Context for Identity Development

The development of identity was a common theme found throughout each of the research questions. When extracurricular and community activities enable adolescents to take on responsible roles they allow for identity exploration, a necessary part of achieving identity. As such, they also serve as vocational training programs that immerse adolescents in the real world of adult work (Berk, 2000).

The Ohio 4-H program, and the 4-H camp counselor program in particular, are examples of community activities that may help adolescents explore and achieve their identity. The Ohio 4-H program offers a wide variety of opportunities for exploration through different subject matter projects and learning laboratories. Camp counselors are given real world, adult-like responsibilities such as caring for a cabin of campers, leading groups, and carrying out plans for an activity. Alumni in this study gave explanations that camp was a personal growth opportunity for them and it molded their ideals and goals. Camp also gave the alumni exposure to test different things out and they got to determine what they did and did not like to do in relation to a work environment. Finally, camp was an opportunity to test out different ways of acting, such as being silly with other campers.

The opportunity for identity development was consistent with findings of other studies of camp counselors. A study of adolescent 4-H camp counselors found that they had high mean scores in the areas of identity exploration and identity reflection.
Furthermore, a study of employed camp staff members found that the opportunity for personal growth was one of the top five reasons why staff members wanted to work at camp (Roark, 2005).

It is evident that the camp context is a place for identity development. However, although there are a few studies that support that camp is a context for identity development, research on camp and camp counselors has not focused primarily on the development of identity. Other studies of different types of youth programs support the idea that identity development can occur in youth programs (Dworkin, Hansen, & Larson, 2003; O'Connor, 2005). Supportive contexts that engage youth in positive activities, give youth appropriate responsibilities and leadership roles, and provide a positive social context are key ingredients in helping youth develop identity. These key ingredients are present within the camp counselor program and support the idea that camp is a context for identity development. This finding deserves further consideration in future research.

**Camp counseling as a context for vocational identity development.** Vocational identity is one aspect of identity development (Berk, 2000). The alumni believed that volunteering for the camp counselor experience helped them learn more about themselves and the type of environment is which they would like to work. Some alumni believe that camp and camp counseling had a direct influence on their career choice while others gave examples of how the experience had more of an indirect influence on a career choice. It is theorized that adolescents who volunteer to be part of extracurricular activities (such as camp counseling in the present study) are provided with an opportunity to learn about themselves and others as well as what they believe they are meant to do (Barber, Stone,
Hunt, & Eccles, 2005). Furthermore, camp counselors in another study did believe that camp made an impact on their career choice (Dworken, 2004). Having the perspective gained by being at least several years removed from the experience could have provided the needed insight into this aspect of their career development.

**Transfer of Learning from Camp to Other Contexts**

Alumni were highly engaged in the experience of camp counseling. They were involved in different aspects of camp including the planning process before camp as well as teaching and leading campers and other counselors at camp. As evident from the data in this study, camp counselors have the opportunities to debrief and reflect on their days and the entire week of the camp. Furthermore, camp counselors then applied what they learned in the camp setting to other contexts of their lives. In other words, camp counselors took what they learned in the camp setting and transferred that knowledge and skills to their current lives in higher education, the workforce, and the community. This idea of being engaged in an activity, reflecting on the activity, and applying the concepts learned in that activity to another context is consistent with the experiential learning model used in 4-H youth development (Carlson & Maxa, 1998).

The Ohio 4-H camp counselor program appears to do an exceptional job of engaging camp counselors in the camp counseling roles and activities. However, the camp counselor program may not always be as intentional about following through on the reflection part of the experiential learning model. In McNeely's (2004) study, many Ohio 4-H camp counselors did not realize the extent to which they were developing certain skills. Years later, however, alumni who were part of the camp counselor experience did see that they had developed skills for the workforce and other contexts of
their lives. It is speculated that camp counselors think through the reflection process on their own and thus this is why they are able generalize and apply the skills they learned as being a camp counselor to their current lives. Not all counselors may engage in this process to the same extent. If the process was more intentional, then more counselors may see the extent to which they are developing certain skills and the potential applications of them. Authors have written about transfer strategies that can be used to apply to the workplace. Strategies include practicing the opportunities during the training (being engaged in the activity), designing a peer coaching component, developing an action plan, and allowing time for reflection (Gardner & Korth, 1997). These strategies are much like those of the camp counseling program in that counselors are fully engaged in their roles and they develop an action plan for camp activities.

Camp Counseling as a Unique Experience

Being a role model for young campers was a unique aspect of the camp counseling experience. Camp counselors pay special attention to campers by working with them through one-on-one interaction. The campers learn to look to the counselors to guide them and the counselors do realize that they are making impacts on the campers. Counselors found this aspect of camp to be particularly rewarding. The 4-H program is a unique program where role model relationships can develop. In 4-H, one of the many program delivery methods, the 4-H club program, as well as camp, bring youth ages 5 to 19 together. These youth have some of the same focused goals in mind when they are in these programs. Bringing a diverse group of youth together in regards to age is different from age-specific sports (i.e., high school sports, youth summer baseball) and youth organizations such as Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts because these groups segment their
Youth into age groups. Youth who are different in age can make friends and learn from those of different ages.

Making friends from another school was another unique aspect of being a camp counselor. It is thought that friendships develop between different school districts because the counselors have some of the same interests related to camps and their role as counselors puts them in a situation where they must work together to make the best camp possible. This is referred to as the development of a leisure culture, or the confluence of peers and activity participation (Barber, Stone, Hunt, & Eccles, 2005). Working with others at camp is an intense experience that further develops those friendship bonds. Counselors relate that these friendships that are formed at camp continue for many years. In fact, participating in the focus groups gave counselors who had not seen each other for while the opportunity to connect with each other.

Limitations

The sample used in this study was limited to those who volunteered to participate from the Collegiate 4-H group and by the names given by the 4-H Extension Educators as potential participants. Overall, a relatively younger age group comprised the sample for this study, primarily because they were more accessible. Alumni who were camp counselors years ago are likely to have more life commitments such more demanding work and family responsibilities, thus they were unable to attend a scheduled focus group. Although the data received were rich data, they cannot be generalized beyond the group who participated in the study. Although only four focus groups involving 30 camp counselor alumni were held, the individuals who participated represented a cross-section across different counties and different years of participation. This suggests that the
findings are not an artifact of one particular outstanding camp program; the nature of the experience seems to cut across location and time. Furthermore, these data are believed to be valid, because steps were put into place for a peer review analysis. In order to reach a broader population, a different research method, such as a survey, would need to be used. This would allow camp counselor alumni to provide information about their experiences at their own discretion. Also, the research method used in this study was useful in gaining depth of the subject, but not breadth.

Several of the study participants went on to become members of paid staff at camp. Consequently, these study participants had more experience with camp and may not be able to differentiate their experiences and development of skills between their counselor roles and their paid staff roles. However, continued participation in camp reinforces the idea that camp is a positive experience. In the future, attempts could be made to limit those from the study who went on to be members of paid staff at camp, or to otherwise take that aspect into account in the study design.

Implications

This study has several implications for theory, future research, and practice.

Implications for Theory

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory of Human Development (1979) is useful for understanding what is going on in the camp counselor experience. This model helps us realize the importance of roles, activities, and interpersonal relationships within the microsystem. Furthermore, the model helps us recognize how the other systems within the ecological model interact with one another in an effort to create positive contexts for youth development.
The transfer of learning body of literature helped in understanding the processes that occur during the camp counseling experience. By using this perspective, the current research indicates that learning does transfer from one context to another. Specifically, learning can transfer from one context -- camp and being a camp counselor -- to a completely different context, the world of school, work, and community, which is consistent with the definition of far transfer (Barnett & Ceci, 2002). These theoretical frameworks can inform the implementation of effective camp counselor programs as well as their evaluation.

Camp is a context where adolescents (i.e., camp counselors) try out new and different roles and different ways of acting, which aids in identity development. The identity development literature is important in helping youth development professionals understand that meaningful roles and activities aid in the development of identity. This information can be applied as 4-H and youth organizations develop new programs and intentionally implement meaningful roles and activities for youth into programs.

**Implications for Future Research**

The study generated additional questions to be explored to add to the body of research about camp counselors. First, based on the findings of the present study, a survey research study could be designed to ask camp counselor alumni questions about their experiences. Themes generated from this study could form the basis for questions on such a survey. A survey would allow more alumni to participate, which will create more data and help researchers learn more about camp counselors' experiences.

A more systematic way of following up with camp counselors after their experience should be put into practice year after year. A statewide evaluation instrument
should be created so that the same set of data is collected from each county. By doing this, 4-H Extension professionals can learn overall what camp counselors are learning from their experience and which counties may be strong in their programs and which counties may need to made adjustments. Overall, this will strengthen 4-H camp counselor programs as well as the entire 4-H camping program.

Another area of research that needs to be addressed is how training for camp counselors is being conducted in Ohio. Research questions could look at the techniques used in training and how that training aids camp counselors in developing skills, using concepts from transfer of learning research as a framework.

Finally, adults play an important role in helping camp counselors develop skills. Are the 4-H Extension Educators and volunteers effectively leading camp counselors? Do adults find the balance between supporting camp counselors, but not allowing camp programs to fail? Do adults value the camp experience and recognize its developmental significance? A study directed to the adults who facilitate camp programs could address these questions.

Implications for Practice

This study has several implications for practice. First, 4-H Extension professionals and adult volunteers need to reflect on how they work with teen camp counselors. The literature suggests several practices to use when working with teens to help them develop skills in working with others and to develop initiative (Larson, Hansen, & Walker, 2005; Walker & Larson, 2004).

1. *Follow camp counselors’ lead* – Adult leaders such as 4-H professionals and volunteers should follow the direction and goals set by teens. The adult
leaders should ask camp counselors for permission before giving help. This technique builds ownership in camp counselors. Giving ownership to camp counselors may set the group up for failure. However, adult leaders should view failure as a learning experience for camp counselors and should not step in immediately in every circumstance.

2. *Ask guiding questions.* Adult leaders should intentionally ask camp counselors questions that help clarify suggestions or filter out ideas. Questioning also helps camp counselors evaluate whether a proposed idea would be appropriate, fun, or interesting. Moreover, questioning is a non-threatening technique that can provoke camp counselors to think more deeply and strategically while keeping ownership.

3. *Provide intermediate structures.* When camp counselors are having difficulty structuring their work, adult leaders need to intervene to some extent. Helping camp counselors break their work into manageable steps to reach realistic goals and deadlines is an example of intervening.

4. *Monitor to keep youth on track.* Methods of monitoring include observing and asking questions, and supporting through behind-the-scenes tasks. Checking up on the progress of camp counselor work is another way of monitoring. Intervening in more direct ways may be required to keep camp counselors on track. Monitoring requires careful intervention to ensure that adults support rather than undercut camp counselor ownership.

Camp counselor training materials should include a more intentional use of transfer of learning strategies to help transfer knowledge from the camp setting to other
contexts of a counselor’s life. The literature suggests that these strategies may include using the problem-solving method, creating individualized learning plans, and reflecting on lessons and experiences of being a camp counselor. Reflection can happen daily and/or at the conclusion of camp.

It is important to communicate the message to stakeholders, including state legislators and county officials, that camp is more than fun and games. From the evidence of this study, the camp counseling experience is a workforce development and preparation program. The 4-H camp counseling program is preparing Ohioans with leadership and workforce skills that will help them in a job setting, which will help strengthen Ohio’s economy. Furthermore, the results of this study aligned with one of the goals set by the Governor of Ohio for 4-H in that the 4-H program should focus on the development of life and workforce skills. In addition, results from a recent study that assessed the economic impacts the Ohio State University Extension has had on Ohio, indicated that youth who are encouraged by their 4-H educational experiences and continue with further education are more likely to earn a higher income and consequently generate more income for the State of Ohio (Batelle, 2005).

Conclusions

This study focused on the developmental context camp provides to develop skills for the 21st century workforce. The Governor of Ohio and the Ohio 4-H program have made the development of workforce skills and camp programs amongst the priorities for 4-H programming. This comes at a time when schools are being held more accountable for academic standards and have little time to help youth develop skills necessary for the
workforce. In addition, programs such as 4-H youth development are being held more accountable for program outcomes as financial and staffing resources decrease.

The camp counselor experience and camp provides a positive context for youth development. Alumni, when looking back at their camp counseling experience, were able to see that they did develop skills at camp that they were able to use in their current lives as students, employees, or in the community. Camp counselors learned more about themselves throughout the experience, which helped them achieve a sense of identity. They perceived both direct and indirect influences on their career choices. Furthermore, unique aspects of being a 4-H camp counselor was that they enjoyed being role models to young campers and there was little competition at camp compared to the rest of the 4-H experience. An underlying theme found throughout the entire study was that alumni thought that camp was fun. Moreover, some counselors have described it as the “experience of a lifetime.” As one alumnus stated, “You’ve just got to come and find out what it is all about.”
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APPENDIX A

COMPARISON OF TWO 4-H LIFE SKILLS MODELS

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<tr>
<td>Valuing diversity</td>
<td>Accepting differences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Building relationships</td>
<td>Nurturing relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caring for others</td>
<td>Concern for others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Being empathetic</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Health</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Being responsible</td>
<td>Self-responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing self-esteem</td>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing yourself</td>
<td>Managing feelings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practicing integrity and character</td>
<td>Self-discipline/Character</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developing a sense of purpose</td>
<td>--</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developing a positive view of future</td>
<td>--</td>
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<tr>
<td>Utilizing resistance skills</td>
<td>--</td>
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<tr>
<td>Being resilient</td>
<td>Resiliency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing stress</td>
<td>Stress management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Making healthy lifestyle choices</td>
<td>Healthy lifestyle choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preventing personal injury</td>
<td>Personal safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressing emotions positively</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preventing disease</td>
<td>Disease prevention</td>
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<td>Marketable skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning through community service</td>
<td>Community service volunteering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering</td>
<td>Community service volunteering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a responsible citizen</td>
<td>Responsible citizenship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working in a team</td>
<td>Teamwork/Contributing to group effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercising leadership</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completing a project/task</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivating yourself</td>
<td>Self-motivation</td>
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Note: -- indicates skill was not included.
Source: Barkman & Machtimes, 2000; Hendricks, 1996
APPENDIX B

TELEPHONE SCRIPT FOR CONTACTING EXTENSION EDUCATORS

1. Contacting the potential county
Hello, may I please speak with (first and last name of 4-H Extension Educator)?

If the Extension Educator is not available, identify self as a graduate student in the Human and Community Resource Development program at The Ohio State University seeking to conduct focus groups with 4-H camp counselor alumni. Determine if there is a better time to contact him/her.

2. Explaining the project

Hello, my name is Janel Digby and I am calling from The Ohio State University. I am putting together focus groups of former 4-H camp counselors. I am looking for former 4-H camp counselors who were counselors in Ohio and who are at least 18 years old. Can you help us recruit participants?

If the 4-H Extension Educator is not available to help, thank the person and end the call.

If the 4-H Extension Educator is available, continue with:

Let me tell you a little more about what we're planning to do.

I will be conducting a focus group. Focus groups are similar to group interviews with 4-10 individuals sharing their experiences as a 4-H camp counselor. Former 4-H camp counselors would meet together one time and answer questions. The focus group should last approximately 90 minutes and refreshments will be provided.

The session that we are trying to set up is during the weeks of (list possible days/dates) at (possible times).
We want to find out more about the former 4-H camp counselor’s perceptions of their experiences as a camp counselor as well as how their experience is applicable to their current personal and work life. There is no direct benefit to the participant, but the information provided will help us to better understand the benefits and opportunities provided by camp counseling, and ultimately will be used to improve the overall Ohio 4-H camp counseling program. The information gained from the focus group will be kept confidential and will only be used for the project. We will not be selling anything, and we will not sign up anyone for anything else. As an incentive for participation, we will give $5.00 gift certificates to each participant to be used at <retail store>. Does this sound like it would work for you?

3. Scheduling the session

In order to identify the counties and educators helping with the data collection, I will need an e-mail stating that you have agreed to participate in the study and that you will provide a list of potential participants for us to contact. This verifies that I have permission to use your county and your participants.

We would like to find a convenient location for the meeting where parking is adequate and most former counselors will be familiar with the location. Is there a room or building that can accommodate this? We are looking at these dates (list). We would start at (time) and end by (time)? If we are able to have a focus group in your county, are you able to provide a list of possible former 4-H camp counselors? Do you have any contacts as to who may provide quality information and are trustworthy individuals? It is very important that we have everyone show up.

The group will consist of 4-10 other people, all former 4-H camp counselors. Most of the time will be spent sharing their experiences in a group discussion.

We will tape record the session so that we are clear on what everyone said. We will keep the tape and anything said will be kept completely confidential. We don’t expect anyone to be saying anything too threatening, but even so, our first priority is to protect his or her privacy.

Also, I want to emphasize that once the participants come to the session, anything they do will be completely voluntary. They will be free to leave at any time for any reason.

I’d like to thank you for your time. We’ll be looking forward to the list of possible participants to contact for the focus group. Thanks again.

Good bye.
APPENDIX C

RECRUITMENT E-MAIL SENT TO COLLEGIATE 4-H

Were you a 4-H camp counselor in Ohio? If you were, your help is needed! My name is Janel Digby and I am a master's student here at The Ohio State University and the Ohio 4-H Office conducting research on Ohio 4-H camp counselors. I am looking for individuals who were 4-H camp counselors in Ohio and who are currently at least 18 years of age.

To gather data for my research, I am using focus groups. Focus groups are like group interviews, where each of you will have the opportunity to answer questions based on you experiences as a 4-H camp counselor. This is a one-time session and will last approximately 90 minutes. Your participation is voluntary and the information that is obtained will be held confidential. The session will also be audio taped to ensure we collect each person's answers and to verify this information accurately. There is no direct benefit to you, but the information you provide will help us to better understand the benefits and opportunities provided by camp counseling, and ultimately will be used to improve the overall Ohio 4-H camp counseling program.

The focus groups will take place Wednesday, January 26, 2005 at 7:00 p.m. At a later date, I will let you know where you will be meeting (but the meeting place will be somewhere on campus). I will provide pizza and drinks for you while you participate in the focus groups. For your participation, you will also receive a $5.00 gift card to Target.

If you are interested and available to participate and did not sign up at the previous Collegiate 4-H meeting, please e-mail myself, Janel Digby, at jdigby@ag.osu.edu and provide your name and phone number by Friday, January 14, 2005. I will be contacting you at a later date to confirm your participation. Even if you sign up, you may withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. If you know of others who are former Ohio 4-H camp counselors here are Ohio State, I would be interested in obtaining their contact information. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me via e-mail, jdigby@ag.osu.edu, or phone, 614-292-4444.

Thank you for your time!

Janel Digby
OSU Graduate Student
Department of Human and Community Resource Development
APPENDIX D

4-H CAMP COUNSELOR ALUMNI TELEPHONE RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

1. Contacting the potential participant
   Hi, may I please speak with Mr./Mrs./Ms. (name)?

2. Explaining the project

   Hi, my name is Janel Digby and I am calling from The Ohio State University. I am a
   master’s student in the Department of Human and Community Resource
   Development. <Name>, the 4-H Extension Educator in <county name> County, has
   provided your name to me because you were a 4-H camp counselor and are a good
   candidate to be part a project to complete my master’s thesis. I am looking for former
   Ohio 4-H camp counselors who are least 18 years old.

   I will be conducting focus groups. Focus groups are like group interviews with 4-10
   individuals who will be sharing their experiences as a 4-H camp counselor. You
   would be getting together with other former 4-H camp counselors from your county
   to answer questions about your experiences. You would only have to meet one time.
   The focus group should last approximately 90 minutes and refreshments will be
   provided.

   Can I tell you a little more about this?

   The focus group session that I am trying to set up is on <day> at <time>. Is that
   something that can fit into your schedule?

   If the participant is not available, thank the person and end the call.

   If the participant is available, continue with:

   I want to find out more about your 4-H camp counseling experiences and how the
   skills you gained from those experiences are applicable to your personal and work
   lives. The information will be confidential and only used for the project. I will not
be selling your anything, and I will not try to sign you up for anything else. There is no direct benefit to you for your participation. However, the information you provide will help us to better understand the benefits and opportunities provided by camp counseling, and ultimately will be used to improve the overall Ohio 4-H camp counseling program. As an incentive for your participation, I am giving a $5.00 gift certificate to each participant to be used at Target. Does this sound like it would work for you?

3. Scheduling the session

The focus group will be at <location, probably the Extension Office meeting rooms> and, again, it will be on <date>. We would start at <time> and end by <time>. If I do put your name down, it is very important that we have everyone show up. Do you feel you can come?

It is also very important that you are there by <start time>. Will you have any problems getting there on time?

Again, we will provide refreshments.

The group will consist of 4-10 other people, all former 4-H camp counselors. You will be sharing your experiences as a 4-H camp counselor with other former 4-H camp counselors. I will be moderating the session and asking questions.

I will tape record the session so that we have accurate information on what was said. The information on the tape will be kept confidential. I do not expect anyone to say anything too threatening, but even so, the first priority is to protect your privacy.

Also, I want to emphasize that one you come to this session, anything you do there will be completely voluntary. You will be free to leave at any time for any reason.

I would like to mail you a letter confirming your participation in this focus group, along with a map, parking information, and a reminder of the date and time. What is the best address to send that information to? (get mailing information or e-mail)

I will call you back the evening before the focus group to remind you about it and answer any last minute questions. Is this the best number to contact you? When is a good time to call?

I would like to thank you for your time. I'll be looking forward to seeing you on <date>. Thanks again.

Good bye.
APPENDIX E

E-MAIL/MAIL REMINDER TO FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Dear <participant>,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the Ohio 4-H camp counselor focus groups. The focus groups will held <date>, beginning promptly at <time>. You will be meeting in <meeting place>. Please remember that refreshments will be provided for your participation.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me by e-mail, jdigby@ag.osu.edu, or phone, 614-292-4444.

Thanks again,

Janel Digby
OSU Graduate Student
Department of Human and Community Resource Development
APPENDIX F

FOCUS GROUP FACILITATOR SCRIPT

Welcome

Good evening. Thank you for coming out this evening. My name is <moderator name> and <title of moderator>. Assisting me is <assistant moderator>, <title>.

Why the participants were selected

We have invited each of you to share your experiences of the Ohio 4-H camp counselor program. You were selected because of your experience as a 4-H camp counselor in Ohio and because you are at least 18 years old. We are interested in what you have to say about the Ohio 4-H camp counselor program. I would like to have all of you sit where we have provided name tents for each of you.

Your participation in this study does not yield direct benefits to you. However, the information you provide will help us to better understand the benefits and opportunities provided by camp counseling, and ultimately will be used to improve the overall Ohio 4-H camp counseling program. As a token of my appreciation for your participation, I will provide a $5.00 gift certificate to be used at <retail store name>.

Guidelines

We will be discussing your experiences of the Ohio 4-H camp counselor program and how those experiences have helped you in your personal, community, and work lives. There are no right or wrong answers and we encourage each of you to answer each question. Please feel free to share your opinions even if yours are different from others. The purpose of this discussion is to get your thoughts, not to reach consensus.

Before we begin, I want to mention a few things. Please allow one person to speak at a time. Please speak clearly and at a level where everyone can hear you. We will be tape recording the session because we do not want to miss any important information you
have to share. We will use names on a first name basis. In our reports, there will not be any names attached to the comments from today's group. Your information will be kept confidential. No one other than the researcher and transcriber have access to raw data. The data will also be coded when transcribed based on individual responses. The tapes will be destroyed after analysis. Our time together is voluntary and if for any reason you need to leave, it will not have any consequence on your participation. However, if you remain for the entire focus group, I will assume you have agreed to participate.

My role is to ask each of you questions as well as listen to your comments and to facilitate the discussion. I will not be participating in the conversation. Each of you will converse with each other in answering the questions. Because there are several questions, I may have to move things along when several things are shared. I may also probe some of you for comments because it is important to hear what each of you has to say. So as we begin, I would like to learn more about each of you.

**Conclusion**

After asking for any questions, comments, or conclusions. Thank the group for their time.

I’d like to thank each of your attending today. The information you have provided is valuable to the Ohio 4-H camp counselor program. For your participation today, I have provided a $5.00 gift certificate for each of you to <retail store>. Have a good evening and a safe trip home. Thanks again.
APPENDIX G

TELEPHONE REMINDER CALL TO FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Hi, may I please speak with (name)?

My name is Janel Digby calling from The Ohio State University. I just want to remind you that we are looking forward to seeing you tomorrow from <time> at the <location> room <number> to talk about the Ohio 4-H camp counselor program.

I will see you then. Thanks again.

Goodbye.
APPENDIX H

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Opening Question

1. Please tell me your name and your favorite part of being a camp counselor. Let’s start with you (name of one person).

Questions

Transition What motivated you to be a 4-H camp counselor?

Key How would you describe your 4-H camp counseling experience?

Transition Have you heard the word life skills within conversation or reading about 4-H?

a. If yes, then when you hear the words life skills, what key words come to mind? (Get out definition)
b. For those who have not mentioned having heard the words life skills, what would be your definition in your own words?

Key What do you believe are the life skills you learned through being a 4-H camp counselor?

Key What skills do you believe you have been able to apply to your current life as a student and/or employee?

Key What activities do you think were most influential in helping you develop life skills?

Transition What is your career goal?

Transition What are you currently doing to reach that career goal?

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**Key**

How has the camp counseling experience impacted your choice of a career?

**Key**

Now that you have looked back at your camp counseling experience, how do you view the adults who worked with you as a camp counselor? In other words, is there something you realize now that you did not know before?

**Final Questions**

In thinking about all that you gained from being in 4-H, what was unique about being a 4-H camp counselor that you didn’t experience from the rest of the 4-H program?

Is there anything else you would like to discuss about being a 4-H camp counselor?
APPENDIX I

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

Ohio 4-H Camp Counselor Alumni Research Study
Demographic Information

Please answer the questions below. All information will be kept confidential.

Name______________________________

Current Age________________________

Gender____________________________

4-H and Camp Counselor History
1. How many years were you a member of 4-H? ________________________________

2. How many years were you a 4-H camper? ________________________________

3. How many years were you a 4-H camp counselor? _______________________

4. Which county did you represent as a 4-H camp counselor? _______________________

5. Which camp did you camp as a 4-H camp counselor? (ex. 4-H Camp Palmer, Camp Ohio, etc.) _______________________

Current Activities
1. What is your current occupation? ________________________________

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APPENDIX J

THANK YOU LETTER/E-MAIL SENT TO FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

<date>

Dear 4-H camp counselor focus group participant,

Thank you for giving your time to reflect on your experiences as a 4-H camp counselor. The information you have provided is valued and will be used as Ohio 4-H continues to focus on the camp counselor program.

Once again, thank you for your time. I really appreciate your support.

Sincerely,

Janel Digby
OSU Graduate Student
Department of Human and Community Resource Development