

## FACTORS RELATED TO THE DEVELOPMENTAL EXPERIENCES OF YOUTH SERVING AS 4-H CAMP COUNSELORS

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### Abstract

*The purpose of this study was to investigate the developmental experiences of high-school-aged 4-H youth volunteering as counselors at Louisiana 4-H summer camps. A total of 288 counselors from 10 different camping sessions participated in the study. The Youth Experiences Survey 2.0 and the Developmental Experience Survey measured the personal characteristics and developmental experiences of 4-H camp counselors. The results showed that Louisiana 4-H summer camp counselors are active 4-H club participants. Counselors indicated that the highest level of experiences occurred in the areas of Teamwork and Social Skills, Positive Relationships, and Initiative Experiences. Black counselors had higher-level experiences in all aspects of the camping experience. Participation in perceived 4-H leadership and life skill activities had a positive association with Positive Relationships. Multiple regression analyses showed that gender explained a small amount of the variance; females had higher-level experiences in Positive Relationship and Teamwork and Social Skills and males had higher-level experiences in Negative Experiences. The results of this study show that serving as a 4-H camp counselor leads to significant positive experiences. These experiences may enhance counselors' ability to develop positive leadership and life skills that should be valuable tools in their future.*

### Introduction/Theoretical Framework

The Louisiana State University AgCenter (LSU AgCenter) 4-H Youth Development Program is a youth-serving program noted for developing youth potential (Burnett, Johnson & Hebert, 2000; Phelps, 2004; Sarver, Johnson, & Verma, 2000). These virtues are taught through several avenues, with 4-H agents perceiving the annual 4-H camp as having the highest educational value out of all Louisiana 4-H activities (Burnett et al., 2000). Camping programs are used by 4-H and other organizations across America to provide the experiences needed to develop positive life skills and establish leadership traits in every youth who participates (Forsythe, Matysik, & Nelson 2004; Garst & Bruce, 2003; McNeely, 2004).

Youth development organizations strive to employ numerous life skill and leadership activities that enable youth to develop and practice these skills (Damon, 2004; Dworkin, Larson, & Hansen, 2003; Hansen,

Larson, & Dworkin, 2003; Small & Memmo, 2004). The 4-H camp counselor experience allows youth the opportunity to learn and practice these life-long skills and serve as a mentor and role model to younger youth, while respecting and working along with peers of different cultures and demographics (Forsythe et al., 2004). The youth that serve in this capacity as summer camp counselors are viewed as adults (Lee & Murdock, 2001); therefore, every effort to enhance their abilities to serve as counselors should be evaluated by 4-H staff, and findings should be interpreted to provide better quality training opportunities to prepare these youth that serve as camp counselors. In addition, in order for 4-H to continue making claims of quality programming to the public, evidence must continually be provided that supports this assertion. As 4-H continues to allocate local, state, federal, and private funds to advance the mission and goals of 4-H camping programs, 4-H must document the impacts these camps have on youth.

Although research has been conducted on 4-H programs and youth development, very few of these studies have been aimed directly at camping programs (Astroth, 1996; Boyd, Herring, & Briers, 1992; Burnett et al., 2000; Harder, Lamm, Lamm, Rose, & Rask, 2005; Lerner et al., 2005b). Most camping studies evaluated participants' satisfaction along with camp improvement and camp program development (Dworken, 2001). In addition, studies conducted at 4-H camps have centered on elementary and middle school youth. A study addressing the developmental experiences of youth serving as 4-H summer camp counselors was needed.

Camping enhances the affective, cognitive, behavioral, physical, social, and spiritual growth of youth (Garst & Bruce, 2003). After continued positive research findings, the American Camping Association (ACA) placed an emphasis on integrating youth development outcomes into all phases of organized camping (ACA, 2006). Camping programs and organizations in recent years have begun showing how positive youth development is a key component to the camping program (ACA, 2006; Dworken, 2001; Forsythe et al., 2004; Garst & Bruce 2003; Garst & Johnson, 2005; McNeely, 2004;).

Positive youth development theory has emerged in the youth development research and literature that indicates youth who have mutually beneficial relationships with the relationships and institutions in their social world are on their way to a future of positive contributions to self, family, community, and society (Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas, & Lerner, 2005a). However, some confusion exists about the term "positive youth development." Positive youth development has been described in three different ways: (1) the natural process of development, (2) a category of programs and organizations that provide activities to promote youth development, and (3) a philosophy characterized by positive asset building orientations that build on youths' strengths rather than deficiencies (Small & Memmo, 2004). As new research emerges on positive youth development, there is a growing push to incorporate positive youth development concepts and positive experiences into youth

programs and activities (Damon, 2004; Hansen et al., 2003; Lerner et al., 2005a; Park, 2004a; Park, 2004b; Small & Memmo). "The field of positive youth development focuses on each and every child's unique talents, strengths, interest, and future potential" (Damon, 2004, p.13).

In the past, youth needs have been addressed by putting efforts on prevention and correcting problems. The new approach is to look at youth as resources and manage them to become productive citizens by addressing positive experiences (Lerner et al. 2005a). Two key strategies in preventing youth problems are reducing or eliminating risk factors or to promote protective factors (Small & Memmo, 2004). Three areas positive youth development programs should address to provide a better lifestyle to youth are: positive subjective experiences, positive individual traits, and positive institutions (Park, 2004b). Positive youth development aims to understand educating and engaging youth in productive activities as opposed to correcting or treating them for negative behaviors (Damon, 2004).

Camping programs in 4-H, like many other organizations, are known for their youth development standards (Forsythe et al. 2004; Garst & Bruce, 2003; Garst & Johnson, 2005; Lerner et al., 2005a; McNeely, 2004; Sarver et al., 2000). Several states have begun looking at studies to measure the leadership and life skill development of their youth on a statewide basis, and camping programs may be a good venue in which to accomplish this goal when statewide camping initiatives are conducted statewide. States have begun investigating the benefits of 4-H camp counseling on youth (Forsythe et al.; Garst & Bruce; McNeely), and these studies have compiled evidence that participating in the 4-H camp counselor experience is a positive developmental experience for youth.

Forsythe et al. (2004) studied the impact of the 4-H camp counselor experience in Wisconsin. The top eight skills identified were leadership, people skills/working with youth, communication, patience/tolerance, responsibility, teamwork, problem solving, planning and organizing. Leadership was the leading skill as reported by 36% of the counselors, followed by people

skills/working with youth with 27% of counselors reporting that this skill increased. When asked what made being a 4-H camp counselor unique, the top three responses were understanding and working with children, responsibility, and role modeling. By participating as a 4-H camp counselor in Wisconsin, more than 93% of the youth indicated they learned at least one skill they could use in their community in a leadership role (Forsythe et al., 2004).

McNeely (2004) used the Youth Experiences Survey 1.0 (YES) to determine the outcome of personal, intrapersonal, and negative experiences associated with the camp counselor experience. Counselors rated the positive experience domains in the order of teamwork and social skills, initiative, identity, interpersonal relationships, basic skills, and adult networks. The domain with the highest mean was teamwork and social skills. Adult networks was the lowest ranking domain. Negative experiences had lower means than experiences considered as positive.

Garst and Johnson (2005) indicated that 4-H camp counselor participation positively affected counselors' development of leadership skills. Their study showed that by serving as a counselor, teens became more aware of themselves and others. They also developed better mentoring relationships with campers. The researchers identified three ways that being a camp counselor helped the counselors learn more about themselves. It allowed counselors to: become more responsible for themselves and the youth under their supervision, overcome shyness and become more confident talking in front of large groups, communicate effectively to campers and to adults in camp, and learn how to manage and problem-solve stressful situations.

Garst and Bruce (2003) conducted a study to determine the outcomes of 4-H camping in Virginia. Among the highest skills youth attained at 4-H camp were the ability to make new friends, take better care of themselves, and be independent. Other strong life skills noted were improved self-confidence, improved communication skills, improved leadership skills, and becoming more responsible. The results from this

study suggested that, through participating in the Virginia 4-H camp program, intermediate and short-term life skills were positively developed (Garst & Bruce).

### **Purpose and Objectives**

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the developmental experiences of high-school-aged 4-H youth who volunteer as counselors at the LSU AgCenter's 4-H summer camps. The objectives formulated to guide the research were:

1. Describe 4-H summer counselors on selected personal characteristics;
2. Determine counselor participation in selected leadership and life skill development opportunities prior to serving as 4-H camp counselors;
3. Describe the developmental experiences of 4-H summer camp counselors as described by the Youth Experience Survey (YES) 2.0;
4. Determine if a relationship exists between the seven YES developmental experiences scale means and selected personal characteristics of 4-H camp counselors; and
5. Determine if selected personal characteristics explained a significant proportion of the variance in the seven YES 2.0 developmental experience scale means.

### **Procedures**

#### *Population*

The target population consisted of 310 4-H members serving as counselors for the 2006 4-H summer camp; the target population was also the accessible population. Two-hundred and eighty-eight counselors participated in the census of the population for a 93% response rate. The study was conducted at the physical location of camp at its conclusion while all counselors were still serving as camp counselors.

#### *Instrumentation*

Two instruments were used to collect data, the Youth Experiences Survey (YES)

2.0 (Hansen & Larson, 2005) and the Developmental Experience Survey, developed by the researcher. The YES 2.0 allowed the researcher to measure counselors' perceptions of positive youth development experiences during 4-H camp as well as negative youth developmental experiences that may have occurred. Hansen and Larson reported that the instrument was designed with substantial youth input. Convergent validity was established by using correlations to determine correspondence between students' and adult leaders' reports on the students' experiences. The only exception noted in the validation process related to "... experiences related to emotions and adult networks that are likely beyond the scope of adult leaders' observations" (Hansen & Larson, p. 6). The internal consistencies for the seven YES 2.0 scales ranged from .73 to .90; all scales possessed extensive or exemplary reliability according to Robinson, Shaver, and Wrightsman (1991).

The Developmental Experiences Survey was used to obtain data on the personal characteristics of counselors. Exploratory factor analyses were conducted on the scales in the YES 2.0 to determine if the items in each of the seven scales contributed significantly to the measurement of the factors represented by each scale. A minimum factor loading of .35 was used as recommended by Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black (1998). Based on a sample size of 288, a factor loading of .35 was required to produce statistically significant factor loadings based on an alpha level of .05 and a sample size of 250-349. Factor loadings for the items in the seven scales ranged from .37 to .81 (Table 1), all being acceptable according to Hair et al. based on a sample of more than 250 subjects. The results of the exploratory factor analyses and the internal consistency analyses indicated that all scales were reliable and items within each scale measured components of a common construct.

#### *Data Collection and Analyses*

Data were collected weekly at the conclusion of the ten 2006 summer camps. A paid camp staff member who completed a data collection training session administered

the surveys to camp counselors. The data were collected using Zoomerang<sup>®</sup>, a web-based online survey tool. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the data relative to Objectives 1-3.

For Objective 2, a total participation score was computed for each counselor at camp using years of participation in four activities, namely, Junior Leadership Conference, 4-H University, 4-H Club Officer Role, and Parish Junior Leadership Program. Participation points were applied to events according to the level of leadership and life skill opportunities gained through participating in these events as assigned by an expert panel of four state 4-H extension faculty. For Junior Leadership Conference, participants received four points for each year of attendance; 4-H University added three points for each year of participation; participation in the Parish Junior Leadership Club added two points for every year of participation; and counselors who were 4-H club officers received one point for every year of participation.

For Objective 3, data for the YES 2.0 scales were collected using an anchored scale: "1- Not at All", "2- A Little", "3- Quite a Bit", "4- Yes, Definitely". Factor analyses were conducted to confirm the quality of the constructs and internal consistency of each scale was measured using Cronbach's *alpha*. For Objective 4, Pearson product-moment or point bi-serial correlations were calculated and Davis descriptors (1971) were used to report the magnitude of association (effect size).

Multiple regression was conducted for Objective 5. The grand mean of the YES 2.0 scale was used as the dependent variable and the variables age, gender, ethnicity, years in 4-H, years as 4-H camp counselor, hours of camp counselor training, and participation in 4-H were used as independent variables. The variable ethnicity was dummy-coded for white and black 4-H camp counselors; the ethnic categories Asian, Hispanic, and Other were not to be used in the analysis due to the small number of subjects from these ethnic groups. No multicollinearity existed since none of the tolerance values were below .19 (Hair et al., 1998). Effect sizes were interpreted using Cohen's (1988) effect size descriptors for multiple regression.

## Results

### *Objective 1: Personal Characteristics of Summer Camp Counselors*

The mean age of participating 4-H camp counselors was 16.26 ( $SD = 1.15$ ). The ages ranged from 13 years to 19 years. The largest groups of counselors were those who were 16 or 17, with each age category including 87 counselors (30.2%). Only 2 counselors (.70%) were 13 years of age.

Counselors were asked, "How many years have you been a 4-H Summer Camp Counselor?" The mean number of years that counselors had served was 1.59 years ( $SD = .83$ ), with a range from one to four years. It was the first year as a counselor for most of the respondents ( $n = 166$ , 58.5%). The mean number of years that the counselors had been 4-H members was 6.89 ( $SD = 1.88$ ). More than two-thirds of the counselors (222 or 77.6%) were white; the next largest group of counselors was black (42 or 14.7%). More than half were female (166 or 58.2%). More than half (159 or 57.0%) had received 6 to 10 hours of training while more than one-fourth (78 or 28.0%) had received 1 to 5 hours of training, 18 (6.4%) had received 11 to 20 hours of training, 12 (4.3%) had received 20 or more hours of training, and 12 (4.3%) had not received any training.

### *Objective 2: Counselor Participation in Leadership and Life Skill Development Opportunities*

The second objective was to determine counselors' participation in selected leadership and life skill development opportunities prior to serving as 4-H camp counselors. The leadership and life skill development opportunities selected were Junior Leadership Conference, 4-H University, Parish Junior Leadership Program, and 4-H Club Officer Role.

The mean number of years a counselor attended Junior Leadership Conference was 1.03 ( $SD = .97$ ) with a range from zero to three years. The largest group of counselors ( $n = 114$ , 39.6%) had participated in Junior Leadership Conference one time. Ninety-nine counselors (34.4%) indicated they had never been to Junior Leadership Conference. The mean number of years (times)

counselors attended 4-H University was 2.53 ( $SD = 1.77$ ) with a range from zero to seven years. The largest group of counselors ( $n = 69$ , 24.0%) indicated they had attended 4-H University for three years.

The mean number of years camp counselors were involved in their parish junior leadership clubs was 2.73 ( $SD = 1.78$ ) with a range from zero to six years. The largest group of counselors ( $n = 58$ , 20.1%) indicated they had been involved in their parish junior leadership club for three years. Fifty-one counselors (17.7%) indicated they had participated for four years, while only 16 (5.6%) had participated for six years.

The mean number of years counselors served as 4-H club officers was 3.72 ( $SD = 2.71$ ) with a range from zero to nine years. Forty-six counselors (16.0%), the largest group, indicated they had only been club officers for one year.

The mean participation score was 21.1 ( $SD = 10.9$ ). The participation score ranged from 0 points to 54 points. Seven counselors (2.5%) indicated they had not participated in any of the four leadership and life skills development opportunities; one counselor (.4%) had a participation score of 49, which was the highest participation score reported.

### *Objective 3: Youth Experiences*

The third objective was to describe the developmental experiences of 4-H camp counselors as measured by the YES 2.0. The scale grand means were interpreted as follows: 1.00-1.49 = "Not at All", 1.50-2.49 = "A Little", 2.50-3.49 = "Quite a Bit," and 3.50-4.00 = "Yes, Definitely." The grand means for six of the seven scales (Identity Experiences, Initiative Experiences, Basic Skill, Positive Relationships, Team Work and Social Skills, and Adult Networks and Social Capital) were between 2.50 and 3.49, which indicated that counselors had "Quite a Bit" of experiences in these specific areas (Table 1). The scale Negative Experiences had the lowest mean of 1.91 ( $SD = .73$ ) which indicated that counselors perceived they had "A Little" experience in the situations described by the items in that scale. The scale Team Work and Social Skills had the highest mean score of 3.27 ( $SD = .58$ ) which showed counselors

perceived they had more positive experiences in that area.

*Objective 4: Relationships  
Between Construct Means and  
Personal Characteristics*

Table 2 shows the correlations between the personal variables and the seven scale means from the YES 2.0 instrument. Davis (1971) descriptors were used to interpret the magnitude of the correlation coefficients: .01-.09 = "negligible association," .10-.29 = "low association," .30-.49 = "moderate association," .50-.69 = "substantial association," .70 or higher = "very high association." Ethnicity had a low statistically significant association with Identity Experiences ( $r_{pb} = .17$ ), Initiative Experiences ( $r_{pb} = .21$ ), Basic Skill ( $r_{pb} = .19$ ), Team Work and Social Skills ( $r_{pb} = .16$ ), Positive Relationships ( $r_{pb} = .15$ ), Negative Experiences ( $r_{pb} = .21$ ), and a moderate statistically significant association with Adult Networks and Social Capital

( $r_{pb} = .32$ ). This indicated that black counselors tended to have higher-level experiences than white counselors.

Gender had a low statistically significant association with Positive Relationships ( $r_{pb} = .24$ ), Team Work and Social Skills ( $r_{pb} = .24$ ), and Negative Experiences ( $r_{pb} = -.19$ ). This indicated that females tended to have higher-level experiences than males in the situations relating to Positive Relationships along with Team Work and Social Skills, and that males tended to have more experiences than females in situations related to Negative Experiences.

Participation in 4-H leadership and life skills activities had a low statistically significant association with Positive Relationships ( $r = .12$ ). This indicated that counselors who participated in more 4-H leadership and life skills development opportunities tended to have higher-level experiences in the situations associated with Positive Relationships.

Table 1

*Factor Loading, Internal Consistency and Descriptive Statistics for Youth Experiences Survey 2.0 Scales and Items*

Scale Items	Factor Loading	Grand <i>a</i>	<i>M</i> / Item <i>M</i>	Grand <i>SD</i> / Item <i>SD</i>
<b>Identity Experiences (N = 283)</b>		<b>.73</b>	<b>2.76</b>	<b>.66</b>
Tried doing new things	.55		3.22	.84
I do things here I don't get to do anywhere else	.37		2.83	1.01
This activity has been a positive turning point in my life	.73		2.78	1.02
Tried a new way of acting around people	.61		2.73	1.13
This activity got me thinking about who I am	.83		2.59	1.03
Started thinking more about my future because of this activity	.75		2.45	1.04
<b>Initiative Experiences (N = 280)</b>		<b>.90</b>	<b>3.02</b>	<b>.62</b>
I put all my energy into this activity	.61		3.43	.71
Practiced self discipline	.69		3.26	.87
Learned to focus my attention	.68		3.21	.88
Learned to push myself	.70		3.15	.94
Learned about setting priorities	.73		3.09	.90
Used my imagination to solve a problem	.60		3.00	.95
Observed how others solved problems	.70		2.96	.88
Learned about organizing time	.67		2.95	.95
Learned about developing plans for solving a problem	.72		2.93	.84
Learned to consider possible obstacles when making plans	.74		2.92	.88
Learned to find ways to achieve my goals	.74		2.70	.99
I set goals for myself in this activity	.71		2.66	1.01

Scale Items	Factor Loading	<i>a</i>	Grand <i>M/</i> Item <i>M</i>	Grand <i>SD/</i> Item <i>SD</i>
<b>Basic Skill (N = 273)</b>		<b>.84</b>	<b>2.70</b>	<b>.66</b>
Communication skills	.68		3.22	.96
Learned that my emotions affect how I perform	.61		3.02	.97
Learned about controlling my temper	.58		2.95	1.05
Became better at handling stress	.66		2.94	.96
Athletic or physical skills	.55		2.83	1.04
Became better at dealing with fear and anxiety	.71		2.71	1.06
Artistic/creative skills	.64		2.65	1.08
Skills for finding information	.71		2.47	1.03
Academic skills (reading, writing, math, etc.)	.69		2.08	1.00
Computer/Internet skills	.64		2.06	1.14
<b>Positive Relationships (N = 274)</b>		<b>.81</b>	<b>3.21</b>	<b>.57</b>
Made friends with someone of the opposite gender	.62		3.66	.65
Learned I had a lot in common with people from different backgrounds	.70		3.48	.76
Made friends with someone from a different social class (someone richer or poorer)	.68		3.40	.87
Got to know someone from a different ethnic group	.68		3.35	.85
Learned about helping others	.74		3.35	.82
Learned to stand up for something I believed was morally right	.71		3.12	.95
We discussed morals and values	.56		2.76	1.06
I was able to change my school or community for the better	.60		2.56	1.02
<b>Team Work &amp; Social Skills (N = 274)</b>		<b>.88</b>	<b>3.27</b>	<b>.58</b>
Learned about the challenges of being a leader	.77		3.46	.75
Others in this activity counted on me	.71		3.45	.73
Had an opportunity to be in charge of a group of peers	.65		3.41	.85
Learned how my emotions and attitude affect others in the group	.78		3.33	.81
Learned that working together requires some compromising	.75		3.32	.81
Learned to be patient with other group members	.68		3.29	.84
Learned that it is not necessary to like people in order to work with them	.61		3.26	.87
Became better at sharing responsibility	.79		3.19	.80
I became better at taking feedback	.67		2.99	.91
I became better at giving feedback	.62		2.98	.89
<b>Adult Networks &amp; Social Capital (N=278)</b>		<b>.86</b>	<b>2.63</b>	<b>.79</b>
Got to know people in the community	.68		2.92	1.00
This activity increased my desire to stay in school	.70		2.88	1.12
Came to feel more supported by the community	.75		2.79	1.06
This activity helped prepare me for college	.77		2.65	1.06
This activity opened up job or career opportunities for me	.77		2.48	1.10
I had good conversations with my parents/guardians because of this activity	.73		2.39	1.07

Scale Items	Factor Loading	<i>a</i>	Grand <i>M/</i> Item <i>M</i>	Grand <i>SD/</i> Item <i>SD</i>
This activity improved my relationship with my parents/guardians	.79		2.31	1.08
<b>Negative Experiences (N = 279)</b>		<b>.87</b>	<b>1.91</b>	<b>.73</b>
This activity has stressed me out	.57		2.39	1.24
There were cliques in this activity	.64		2.18	1.16
I get stuck doing more than my fair share	.69		2.10	1.10
Other youth in this activity made inappropriate sexual comments, jokes, or gestures	.68		2.05	1.15
This activity interfered with doing things with family	.66		1.95	1.08
Demands were so great that I didn't get my assignments done	.63		1.84	1.04
Felt like I didn't belong in this activity	.80		1.61	.95
Was discriminated against because of my gender, race, ethnicity, disability, or sexual orientation	.81		1.57	.99
I felt left out	.81		1.52	.92

*Note.* Scale: 1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Quite a Bit, 4 = Yes, definitely. Scale interpretation: 1.00-1.49 = Not at all, 1.50-2.49 = A little, 2.50-3.49 = Quite a Bit, 3.50-4.00 = Yes, definitely. All Cronbach's *alphas* reported in the table represent extensive or exemplary reliability according to Robinson et al. (1991).

Table 2  
Correlations Between Youth Experiences Survey 2.0 Scale Means and Personal Characteristics of 4-H Summer Camp Counselors

Personal Variables	Youth Experience Scales							
		Identity Experiences	Initiative Experiences	Basic Skill	Positive Relationships	Team Work and Social Skills	Adult Networks and Social Capital	Negative Experiences
<b>Age</b>	<i>r</i>	.078	.084	.069	.104	.063	.075	.011
	<i>p</i>	.194	.165	.255	.086	.302	.211	.850
	<i>N</i>	281	278	273	274	274	278	279
	Interpretation	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.
<b>Gender<sup>a</sup></b>	<i>r<sub>pb</sub></i>	.054	.117	.019	.237	.243	.053	-.188
	<i>p</i>	.369	.051	.749	.001	.001	.380	.002
	<i>N</i>	280	277	272	273	274	277	278
	Interpretation	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	Low	Low	Negl.	Low
<b>Ethnicity<sup>b</sup></b>	<i>r<sub>pb</sub></i>	.174	.214	.193	.148	.159	.318	.207
	<i>p</i>	.005	.001	.002	.019	.011	.001	.001
	<i>N</i>	260	258	253	254	253	258	258
	Interpretation	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Moderate	Low
<b>Years in 4-H</b>	<i>r</i>	.064	.035	.050	.054	.101	.052	.019
	<i>p</i>	.290	.558	.416	.379	.096	.394	.756
	<i>N</i>	278	275	271	272	271	275	276
	Interpretation	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.
<b>Years as Camp Counselor</b>	<i>r</i>	-.054	-.114	-.070	-.035	-.078	-.037	.001
	<i>p</i>	.371	.058	.251	.567	.202	.543	.998
	<i>N</i>	279	276	271	272	272	276	277
	Interpretation	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.
<b>Hours Camp Counselor Training</b>	<i>r</i>	-.007	.092	-.011	.043	.081	-.022	-.044
	<i>p</i>	.907	.131	.859	.480	.188	.720	.472
	<i>N</i>	275	272	267	268	268	272	273
	Interpretation	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.
<b>Participation in 4-H</b>	<i>r</i>	.096	.101	.079	.122	.114	.079	.087
	<i>p</i>	.109	.095	.198	.045	.060	.195	.149
	<i>N</i>	278	274	267	268	270	272	274
	Interpretation	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	Low	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.

Note. Interpretations according to Davis (1971) descriptors: .01-.09 negligible association, .10-.29 low association, .30-.49 moderate association, .50-.69 substantial association, .70- or higher very high association. Negl. = negligible. Statistically significant correlations are in bold font for easier identification.

<sup>a</sup>1 = male, 2 = female. <sup>b</sup>1 = white, 2 = black.

*Objective 5: Variance in Youth  
Experience Survey Scale Means  
Explained by Selected Personal Variables*

The fifth objective was to determine if selected variables explained a significant proportion of the variance in the seven YES 2.0 developmental experiences scale means. The variables used in these analyses included: age, gender, ethnicity, years in 4-H, years as a 4-H counselor, hours of camp counselor training, and participation in selected leadership and life skill development opportunities. All variables had tolerance values above .19 indicating multicollinearity did not exist in any of the models (Hair et al., 1998). Cohen's (1988) effect size descriptors for multiple regression were used to interpret the amount of variance explained in each model.

Effect size was interpreted as follows: .0196-.1299 = small effect size, .1300-.2599 = medium effect size, and >.2600 = large effect size (Cohen, 1988). These analyses are summarized in Table 3.

For all regression analyses, black counselors had higher level or more experiences than white counselors for each of the constructs, including the negative experiences construct. For the Positive Relationships and Teamwork and Social Skills scales, female counselors had higher-level or more experiences than male counselors for each of the constructs, with exception of the Negative Experiences construct for which females had lower-level or fewer negative experiences. The effect size for each of the analyses was small.

Table 3  
*Summary of Multiple Regression Analyses of YES 2.0 Scale Means by Selected Personal Variables*

Scale	<i>N</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	Explanatory Variables	Cumulative <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	Cohen's (1988) Effect Size
Identity Experience	245	5.52	.02	Ethnicity	.02	Small
Initiative Experience	242	9.76	<.01	Ethnicity	.04	Small
Basic Skill	238	6.49	.01	Ethnicity	.03	Small
Positive Relationships	239	8.57	<.01	Gender	.05	Small
				Ethnicity	.07	
Teamwork & Social Skills	240	10.08	<.01	Gender	.05	Small
				Ethnicity	.08	
Adult Networks and Social Capital	242	24.31	<.01	Ethnicity	.09	Small
Negative Experiences	243	8.49	<.01	Gender	.04	Small
				Ethnicity	.07	

*Note.* Scale: 1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Quite a Bit, 4 = Yes, definitely.

### **Conclusions, Recommendations, Implications and Discussion**

The Louisiana 4-H summer camp counselors are active participants in 4-H club activities throughout the year at the club, parish, and state levels. This supports the finding of Garst and Johnson (2005) that youth who serve as camp counselors are active in 4-H programs at all levels in addition to serving as camp counselors.

In general, youth have ample positive experiences while serving as camp counselors. Counselors have "Quite a Bit"

of positive experience in all areas measured by the YES 2.0 instrument. Counselors had high experiences in Team Work and Social Skills, Positive Relationships, and Initiative Experiences. Serving as a 4-H camp counselor is associated with significant positive experiences that may enhance a counselor's ability to develop positive life skills and leadership assets that may be valuable tools in a youth's future. The 4-H camp experience provides an ample environment for positive youth development and provides an environment with minimal negative experiences. This is similar to the

findings of Hansen et al. (2003), who found youth participating in organized youth activities reported high-level experiences for the constructs Initiative, Identity, and Teamwork and Social Skills. Similarly, McNeely (2004) reported high-level experiences for Time Management, Effort, Problem Solving, Teamwork and Social Skills, and Interpersonal Relationships.

Black counselors have higher-level experiences in all constructs measured by the YES 2.0 instrument. This supports results from Seevers and Dormody (1995), who found that minority 4-H members had higher youth leadership life skills development scores than non-minority 4-H members. Females have more experiences in Positive Relationships and Team Work and Social Skills; however, males have slightly higher negative experiences. This also supports the findings of Seevers and Dormody, who found that gender explained a small amount of the variance for scores on the Youth Leadership Life Skill Development Scale.

As participation in 4-H leadership and life skill development opportunities increases, so do experiences with Positive Relationships. As counselors attend more hours of camp counselor training, they have more problem solving experiences.

Years as a 4-H club member, age, and school grade are not associated with developmental experiences among 4-H camp counselors. McNeely (2004) found only one positive significant relationship between years serving as a camp counselor and development of Leadership and Responsibility experiences. However, as the years serving as camp counselors increased among Ohio 4-H camp counselors, the mean scores for the construct of Leadership and Responsibility increased. Age, school grade, years as a 4-H member, years as a 4-H summer camp counselor, hours of camp counselor training, and participation in 4-H leadership and life skill development opportunities did not explain any variance in the positive or negative experiences of camp counselors.

#### *Recommendations*

The following recommendations are most applicable to 4-H camping programs

and possibly to other youth camping programs that use volunteer camp counselors. Other camping programs may wish to consider these recommendations if they want to aim their youth camping programs in a direction that will achieve a high level of positive youth development.

Extension faculty should work to have administrators, legislators, financial supporters, parents, 4-H leaders, and other relevant stakeholders understand the importance and context of the camp counselor experience. Stakeholders can use the findings of this study to document that the camp counselor experience develops and promotes positive youth development. So, these results should be made available and shared with stakeholders, including the wider public.

With an increasing emphasis being placed on positive youth development and additional funds and resources being allocated to support statewide camping programs, a state camping specialist should be hired to concentrate on increased development of knowledge and skills in the areas of camping and youth development. This person could develop counselor-training programs and train volunteers, leaders and counselors before arriving at camp. This position would not only validate the commitment to advancing 4-H camping programs in Louisiana, it would also provide 4-H with staff dedicated to incorporating youth development concepts into all facets of camping, thus making the camping experience higher in quality and a greater service to Louisiana youth. By better preparing leaders and counselors, 4-H advocates a better environment for positive experiences through the camping experience.

The results of this study show that hours of camp counselor training has a low association with the level of experiences as camp counselor. The quality and focus of counselor training should be improved, with a focus on handling stress, managing workloads, and increased communication skills, as these are the areas in which counselors had negative experiences. Stress was the highest rated negative experience subscale, which indicated it is an area needing further development.

Ethnicity was a variable that proved to be significant in the results of this study. What causes ethnicity to play such an important role in the developmental experiences of camp counselors? Is there a clear explanation why black counselors report higher level experiences than white counselors? A study looking at ethnicity in 4-H at the local level could help determine if black counselors are representative of the black 4-H population. In addition, a study addressing the perceptions of counselors based on their ethnicity in a variety of areas related to 4-H may determine if ethnicity plays a role in one's perception of his or her experiences in 4-H.

Examining the role that adult camp staff, agents, and leaders play in the developmental experiences of counselors would help camping program leaders better understand what makes camp an environment for positive youth development. Do adults play a role in the positive or negative experience of youth serving as camp counselors? A study to evaluate the experience of youth serving as counselors along with their perception of adults serving as staff or leaders could help determine how counselors perceive adults as a part of the counselor experience.

#### *Implications and Discussion*

How do adults perceive the developmental experience of counselors as opposed to the perception of developmental experiences by counselors? Do some counselors tend to report lower experiences than actually gained? A study in which youth report their developmental experiences combined with an adult assessment of counselor experiences would allow one to look at counselors' experiences from both a youth and adult perspective concurrently.

Do youth who serve as camp counselors for multiple years tend to have higher developmental experiences with each additional year of service? Why do youth who continue to serve as camp counselors choose to return to camp multiple summers? A longitudinal study to determine the effect camp has on counselors who serve multiple years could offer findings that may provide answers to this question.

This study has shown that more research should be conducted on camp counselor experiences. Conducting studies that answer the questions mentioned above may help to further improve the quality of the 4-H camp counselor experience.

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