

5-2010

CAMP MAGIC: EXPLORING THE IMPACTS OF WORKING AT CAMP ON IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

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CAMP MAGIC: EXPLORING THE IMPACTS OF WORKING AT CAMP ON
IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science
Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management

by
Stacey Marcus
May 2010

Accepted by:
Dr. Denise Anderson, Committee Chair
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ABSTRACT

A better understanding of the staff experience may provide camps with the knowledge necessary to more effectively recruit and retain staff. Current literature finds that working at a camp can stimulate the cognitive and social development of staff yet there are unanswered questions about specific aspects of camp that stimulate this development. Exploring the life stage of emerging adulthood in which counselors fall can provide clues into their identity developmental needs. Emerging adults often experiment with identity through different work roles (Arnett, 2004). The purpose of this research is to gain a richer understanding of the camp counselor experience and examine if camps provide an environment for developmental growth of staff members consistent with the unique aspects of the developmental stage of emerging adults.

The experience of camp counselors was investigated through Moustakas's (1994) transcendental phenomenological method. Data was collected from eight female camp counselors through a semi-structured, one-on-one interview process. The data was analyzed by identifying significant statements and clustering those statements into themes. The results of the phenomenological analysis produced a structure of the lived experience of camp counselors. Three themes with sub-themes emerged: 1) career development with sub-themes leadership, job skills, working with others, and responsibility for others; 2) identity with sub-themes self-realizations and self-awareness and gaining confidence and independence, and 3) networks with sub-themes new friends, new connections, and support. The structural description details the emotional and

mental process the counselors went through during their work experience, their impact on identity development, and their relation to the needs of the life stage.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my dad, who was proud of me no matter what experience I chose to endeavor.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would, first and foremost, like to thank my committee for being ever so patient with me throughout this very long process.

I would also like to thank my family and friends for enduring the good and the bad of the past five years. Without your constant love and support, I could have not accomplished this goal, as well as many others.

A special thanks needs to go to Rob Bixler for constantly giving me many opportunities, guidance, and support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|------|
| TITLE PAGE | i |
| ABSTRACT..... | ii |
| DEDICATION..... | iv |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS | v |
| LIST OF TABLES..... | viii |
| LIST OF FIGURES | ix |
| CHAPTER | |
| I. INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| Emerging Adulthood..... | 1 |
| Identity and Work | 4 |
| Summer Camp and Counselors..... | 6 |
| Summary | 7 |
| Statement of Purpose | 7 |
| Definition of Terms | 8 |
| Delimitations..... | 9 |
| Outline of Chapters..... | 10 |
| II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE | 11 |
| Emerging Adulthood..... | 11 |
| Identity Exploration Through Work | 13 |
| Work Experiences in Emerging Adulthood..... | 19 |
| Studies on the Experiences of Camp Counselors | 22 |
| Summary..... | 27 |
| III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY | 28 |
| Conceptual Framework of a Phenomenology..... | 28 |
| Research Participants | 31 |

Table of Contents (Continued)

| | Page |
|--|------|
| Field Methods and Procedures..... | 32 |
| Data Management and Analysis | 34 |
| | |
| IV. RESULTS | 39 |
| Overview of the Research Process..... | 39 |
| Themes..... | 42 |
| Career Development | 42 |
| Identity | 52 |
| Networks..... | 61 |
| Conclusion | 68 |
| | |
| V. DISCUSSION..... | 70 |
| Summary..... | 70 |
| Comparing and Distinguishing Findings of the Research with Prior Studies..... | 71 |
| Future Research | 78 |
| Limitations of the Study | 78 |
| Implications | 79 |
| Conclusion | 80 |
| | |
| APPENDICES | 81 |
| A: Interview Questions | 82 |
| B: Letter to Camp Directors | 84 |
| | |
| REFERENCES | 86 |

LIST OF TABLES

| Table | | Page |
|-------|-------------------|------|
| 1 | Participants..... | 41 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| Figure | | Page |
|--------|------------------------------------|------|
| 1 | Categories of Identity Status..... | 18 |
| 2 | Data Analysis..... | 37 |

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“Somewhere between adolescence and adulthood there occurs in human development an age which is physically and psychologically impossible. It is that unfathomable stage known as ‘Camp Counselor’, a creature undefined by psychologists, misunderstood by camp directors, either admired or doubted by parents, and unheard of by the rest of society.”

From "What is a Camp Counselor", Camping Magazine March 1965, P.M. Ford

Emerging Adulthood

Within industrialized countries, the transition into adulthood is becoming longer and longer. Men and women are taking more time to take on adult roles (Arnett, 2004). Arnett (2000) has shown that men and women in their late teens and early twenties are delaying adulthood. Since the 1970s, there has been a four-year rise in the typical age of marriage for men and women. By the year 2000, the average age for marriage was 27 for men and 25 for women. Many couples are waiting until their late 20s to have children (Arnett, 2004). In addition to getting married at a later age, men and women are choosing to participate in many different work experiences before committing to a fulltime career. While young adults are no longer living at home with their parents, they are not fully self-sufficient. They are still dependent on their parents for certain needs, such as financial stability (Arnett, 2000). Arnett looked at not being fully self-sufficient

yet having independence at the same time as being a different life stage of development than adolescence and adulthood.

After years of research on adolescents, Arnett (2000) began to wonder what it means to move from adolescence to adulthood. After talking with many college students, he found that just because a person finishes college, gets married and has children, he or she may not feel like an adult (2004). He looked at existing development theories and found holes in Erickson's (1968), Keniston's (1971) and Levinson's (1978) development theories. All identified a period in one's life that is not adolescence and also not adulthood; however, none gave a name to the time period. Erikson's theory of human development or life cycle theory is not entirely based upon physiological changes, but rather a conflict between opposites in which a person must find some resolution. Each stage is a challenge for a person and a person must find a balance between the two forces or a psychosocial crisis occurs. Erikson described the conflict in adolescence as being one of identity versus role confusion while the conflict in young adulthood is intimacy versus isolation. In Erikson's young adulthood stage, a person achieves sexual maturity and the giving and receiving of love, trust, and support, which is the intimacy needed for a relationship with another. The opposite force of isolation includes those feelings of being excluded from relationships with others. Erikson acknowledged in his theory that there is perhaps another stage between adolescence and young adulthood but does not name this stage or prescribe it a crisis. Erikson identified the presence of this other stage primarily in industrialized societies because they often allow for a prolonged adolescence

in which there is a time for people to experiment with different social roles while trying to find a place in society.

Levinson and Keniston also identified a prolonged adolescence in their development theories. Keniston believed that calling such a large array of ages (13-25) “youth” has been causing problems for the recognition of another life stage for this prolonged adolescence. As society changed in the 1960’s and 1970’s, the term youth did not fit with the age group of the late teens and early twenties. Youth was more commonly associated with a younger age group. Even though Keniston recognized this, he also did not give a name to the age group of the late teens and early twenties. Arnett referred to this “prolonged adolescence” and identified distinct characteristics of this stage that moves beyond the adolescence stage but not quite into the stage of young adulthood. He named this stage emerging adulthood. Emerging adulthood is distinct because it is almost “role less.” By this he means that individuals in this life stage does not necessary identify with any one role. This age group moves in and out of activities and jobs, and is often considered unpredictable (Arnett, 2000).

Emerging adulthood as a developmental stage is not characterized by physical or demographic characteristics, but rather by qualities. Arnett (2000) identified three areas in which emerging adults are looking to change in order to transition into adulthood: accepting responsibility for one’s self, making independent decisions, and becoming financially independent. Emerging adults are also exploring ideas and beliefs outside of how they grew up. Erikson and Keniston concluded that identity exploration takes place in adolescence, but in industrialized societies, this development seems to take place after

adolescence. Men and women explore identity through love, work, and worldviews and try out a variety of possibilities before finally deciding on certain ones. Arnett called this the age of possibilities and the age of instability (2004).

Emerging adults are not only in a “role less” stage of life, they are also in a time of identity exploration. Erikson stated that in adolescence the central conflict is identity versus role confusion. He also stated that because adolescence in those industrialized societies is prolonged then the search for identity is prolonged as well. Therefore, identity exploration becomes an essential force for emerging adults (Arnett, 2000).

Identity and Work

The search for one’s identity can take almost a lifetime to figure out; however according to sociologists and psychologists prime identity development is in adolescence. Arnett agreed but added that one’s identity continues to develop after adolescence. In emerging adulthood, identity development is characterized by explorations in three areas: love, worldviews or ideologies about the way the world works, and work. Work is often seen as the place for identity formation because a person learns the skills that he or she is good at and what kind of career he or she might want to have (Arnett, 2000). Often an emerging adult will try many different jobs before settling on one. These different jobs, from a cashier to an intern in a financial company help a person learn about him or herself and also may lead to further personality and identity development (Blustein et al., 1989).

Although a starting point for many for career explorations, the classroom can only provide so many answers about the work experience. College classes can provide some skills and knowledge about employment, but experience at a job is sometimes the best way to learn the rest. In the transition from school to work, university students have identified certain skills such as relationships with colleagues, basic skills such as writing and spelling, and time management as areas in which they lack skill when starting a job (Cieslik & Simpson, 2006). These skills cannot often be learned from the traditional classroom work and this may be the reason why many college programs require an internship.

Internships are often a large part of work exploration in emerging adulthood. They provide a short-term work experience in a certain area for a person to acquire work experience and to learn about a career outside of the classroom. Internships can bridge the gap between school and employment and provide the opportunity for students to test their skills in the work world and bring back skills to the classroom (Knouse et al., 1999). With work experiences being a key to identity development, career satisfaction, and success, internships are often a way to achieve identity (Arnett, 2000). However, an internship may not be the best fit for a student or may not be available in his or her field of interest. Because of these circumstances, students must turn to other forms of employment to gain experience. For example, because school is not held in the summer, an education major might see the option to work with children in a different setting such as a camp as a way to gain related work skills.

Summer Camp and Counselors

Each summer, thousands of young adults choose to leave the comforts of their own homes to take on the responsibility of leading children. Popular media have created the camp counselor image as party centered, relationship hungry, and carefree and have created the camp image as being a place to party, have relationships, and live carefree while getting paid. This image has become very exaggerated and unrealistic and many young adults do not think of the benefits from working in a camp environment beyond being lazy and away from parents.

Being a camp counselor is very different than the image the media project. While the role of a camp counselor is that of being caretakers of children who provide a safe environment for fun, they also take on many other roles while working at camp. They are often leaders, programmers, office assistants, therapist, mediators, and role models (Waskul, 1998). With these immense responsibilities and little time away from them, camp counselors often go through a self-described “change” through learning more about themselves, as well as learning what they do and do not enjoy. In addition, they also learn a great deal about their strengths and weaknesses (DeGraaf & Glover, 2003). By gaining these new perspectives about themselves, they are able to discover more about their own identity.

Despite the beneficial identity development outcomes from working at camp, camps struggle to recruit staff. They must compete with summer school, study abroad, travel, internships, and high paying jobs in their efforts to recruit staff members. A better

understanding of the camp counselor's experience and how it may contribute to identity development and how it may meet the needs of emerging adults, may provide camps with the knowledge to more effectively recruit and retain staff.

Summary

This review introduces the concepts of emerging adulthood, the role of work in identity development, and counselors in a camp setting. While the research suggests that work and work exploration are part of an emerging adult's identity development, research about particular work experiences and identity development is lacking. Studies about the work experiences that exist about camp counselors within camp research are also lacking. While studies have looked at the benefits of working at camp many years after the counselors experiences, have studied group cohesion of staff within the camp setting, and camp researched how camp meets the needs of children (DeGraaf & Glover, 2003; Powell, 2004; Verven, Schwaab, & Young, 1993), research has not looked at how camp meets the needs and desires of those who work as counselors. Camps are able to attract campers because they know what they want, but they are not able to recruit staff because they do not understand how camp can meet the needs of emerging adults, such as having responsibility for one's self, making independent decisions, and learning more about what they enjoy. This lack of understanding may result from gaps in the research about emerging adults and particular kinds of work experiences. With the summer options for emerging adults numerous (summer school, travel, internships, jobs), camps will need to develop new methods for recruiting staff members.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was twofold: First, to gain a richer understanding of the camp experience for camp counselors working at a residential camp by using the phenomenological method. Second, to examine if camp provides an environment for developmental growth of staff members consistent with the unique aspects of the developmental stage of emerging adults. To fulfill these purposes, the following research question was addressed: From the perspective of the camp counselor, what is the experience of working at camp?

Definition of Terms

Camp Counselor: An individual trained to work with children at a camp

Epoche: A process in which a researcher describes then sets aside as much as possible his or her own experiences with the phenomenon (Creswell, 1998).

Phenomenology: Research with the aim to “describe” a particular phenomenon from the perspective of the researcher (Groenwald, 2004).

Qualitative Research: “An inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem” (Creswell, 1998, p. 15).

Residential Camp: A sleep away camp where children stay for a period of time and are involved in recreational activities.

Semi-Structured Interview: A prepared list of question developed to guide the interviewer and interviewee through a discussion.

Significant Statements: Statements pulled from the interview data shared by the participants (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004).

Staff Training: The period of time before the campers arrive when camp employees learn about the camp and their duties.

Subjective Change: A change not marked by demographics, such as age, but rather qualities of character (Arnett, 2000)

Summer Camp: A place that offers group shelter and organized recreation for children, adults or families (Waskul, 1998).

Themes: Groups of significant statements that are non-overlapping and share the same meaning (Creswell, 1998).

Traditional Camp: A camp that does not specialize in any one activity, but does provide a general program experience of many different activities.

Delimitations

This study was delimited in the following ways:

Camps: The camps selected were within a 60 mile radius of Clemson University. Each camp is run by a different parent organization.

Camp Directors: The directors contacted for the study emailed the staff themselves asking for participation. The volunteers' information was then sent to the researcher.

Outline of Chapters

This thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter one is an introduction and includes background information, a discussion of identity and work, the research question, the definitions of important terms relative to the study, and study delimitations. Chapter two is a review of the relevant literature and focuses on emerging adulthood theory, the development of identity through work, women in work, and summer camp literature. Chapter three focuses on the methods and procedures of this study including a discussion of the conceptual framework of a phenomenology, a description of the participants, data collection procedures and data analysis procedures. Chapter four reports the results of the data analysis grouped into meaning units of themes. Chapter five includes a discussion of the findings, relevance to current research, and ideas for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The following sections discuss the previous literature in the following areas: (a) emerging adulthood, (b) identity explorations through work, (c) work experiences in emerging adulthood, and (e) studies on the experience of camp counselors.

Emerging Adulthood

The turn of the twentieth century brought many changes to America and to other industrialized societies. The twentieth century brought war, protest, and modern medicine. America emphasized individualism and materialism (Arnett, 1998). Marriage and family characterized adulthood. Today, turning 18 in industrialized societies is considered taking adult status according to most laws; however turning 18 does not mean that on that day a person takes on all of the roles of an adult. Individuals 18 years old and older are taking longer to take on adult responsibilities and these adult responsibilities are being spread farther and farther along the continuum of adult development (Sherrod, Haggerty, & Featherman, 1993).

Emerging adulthood is a stage of identity exploration, instability, and self-focus, and is characterized by feelings of being in a dilemma, although having many possibilities (Arnett, 2004) and can be identified as the “bridge between adolescence and adulthood” (Arnett, 1998, p.17). Arnett (2000) placed emerging adulthood between the

ages of 18 and 25. Within this stage an emerging adult has the opportunity to explore what kinds of adult roles he or she wants to take on.

Emerging adults experience new freedoms that they did not have in adolescence. For this age group, this is usually the first time they have lived away from home. They do not experience complete independence from their parents, as they still rely on them for financial needs and a place to call home with ever changing living situations. They also still rely on their parents for help with major decisions. Most emerging adults do not feel as if they have reached the stage of adulthood, but do not feel that they are still adolescents (Arnett, 2000). In order to finally transition into adulthood, emerging adults seek to accept responsibility for one's self, make independent decisions, and obtain financial independence. These transitions are seen by emerging adults as the steps needed to become a young adult. Realistically, transitions into adulthood are not characterized by age, physical changes and changes in social roles but rather subjective changes in beliefs, needs, and desires (Arnett, 1998).

For emerging adults, accepting responsibility for one's self means just that. It means accepting responsibility for all individual actions and decisions (Arnett, 1998). Becoming an adult means relying on one's self for most everything (Arnett, 2004). Making independent decisions means making the acceptable decisions and making decisions to take care of one's self. It also means having the confidence to make life decisions. Along with independent decision-making, financial independence also means becoming an adult. Most emerging adults do not consider themselves an adult until they are paying for everything themselves because it means complete independence from

anyone and allows for independent decision-making. According to past studies, in the mind of an emerging adult, being an adult means being self-sufficient, self-reliant, and independent (Arnett, 2001). This means finding a career, making his or her own decisions about finances, who to be in relationships with and how to live, and developing his or her own set of beliefs and ideas. In a study done of university students by Berzonky and Kuk (2002) found that,

The more self-exploration the students had engaged in, the better prepared they were to operate in a mature, autonomous, and self-directed manner without continually needing to look to others for reassurance and emotional support (p. 92).

Their findings coincide with the desires of emerging adults to make independent decisions and take responsibility for themselves. Berzonsky and Kuk also found that without clear goals, university students were not able to make independent decisions easily and they could not prioritize or schedule time well. Being able to make independent decisions and take self-responsibility is needed to make the transition into adulthood.

Identity Exploration Through Work

Emerging adulthood is considered the age of identity exploration particularly through love, work, and worldviews or ideology (Arnett, 2000). For instance, as a person moves away from adolescence, dating becomes more serious and more intimate. Romantic relationships last longer, and there is often more time spent alone as a couple

which may include living together. This type of exploration helps emerging adults identify what type of person they might most enjoy sharing a life with and what works and does not work in relationships. Emerging adults also explore identity through exposure and receptiveness to new ideas and concepts, or worldviews about anything from religion to politics and beliefs and values. New environments, such as college or work and living away from home for the first time present an individual with new ideas and views. A person takes time to consider the different ideas and values and decide with which ones he or she most agrees. The transition from the parents' home to a university setting or to living in a place on their own has an affect on identity processing for emerging adults (Berzonsky & Kuk, 2000). Even if a person does not go to college, he or she is likely to explore new worldviews and decide which worldviews are best suited for them as part of becoming an adult (Arnett, 2000).

The last area for identity exploration is work. Choosing a job or a career is a step in making independent decisions and taking on responsibilities that a person needs to make the transition into adulthood. In order to make those decisions, a person usually explores different employment opportunities and work settings. In adolescence, work is primarily a tool to earn money to pay for more stuff and to have fun. In emerging adulthood, work becomes much more than that. Work becomes a way for an emerging adult to explore career options and explore skills he or she is good at and what he or she might enjoy doing as a career. It also becomes a time to experiment with identity (Arnett, 2000). With the need to have a steady income out of college decreasing because of increased parental support, getting a "career" oriented job is no longer a necessity. Many

emerging adults are still supported by their families. This is especially true for the American middle class and for urban areas in economically developing countries. Support from families depends on one's socioeconomic status and life circumstances. In the American middle class, this may mean having the opportunity to attend post secondary education and for someone from a low income or disordered family, this period of life may mean a chance to change everything. The period of emerging adulthood has increased as the economy has become more globalized and opportunities for emerging adults have multiplied. There are many different kinds of work available to this group. Jobs in factories or moving on to higher education are not the only opportunities available (Arnett, 2004). Emerging adults have a chance to explore identity in many different work venues.

For an emerging adult, jobs are transient. This group does not stay at jobs for long and will often pick jobs that are short term. This type of "job-hopping" allows emerging adults to find out what type of job is the best fit. "Job-hopping," allows for exploring identity by finding what he or she likes doing and what he or she may be good at. Job exploration also does not necessarily coincide with choice of college major; thus, different jobs give more options and more skills than does just getting a degree. The discovery of the perfect job or the perfect career and a work identity is part of identity development in emerging adulthood. Job exploration is done in many ways within emerging adulthood. Often, jobs will be picked just to pay for living expenses while that "true identity" emerges. Sometimes an emerging adult will just "fall into" a job. An

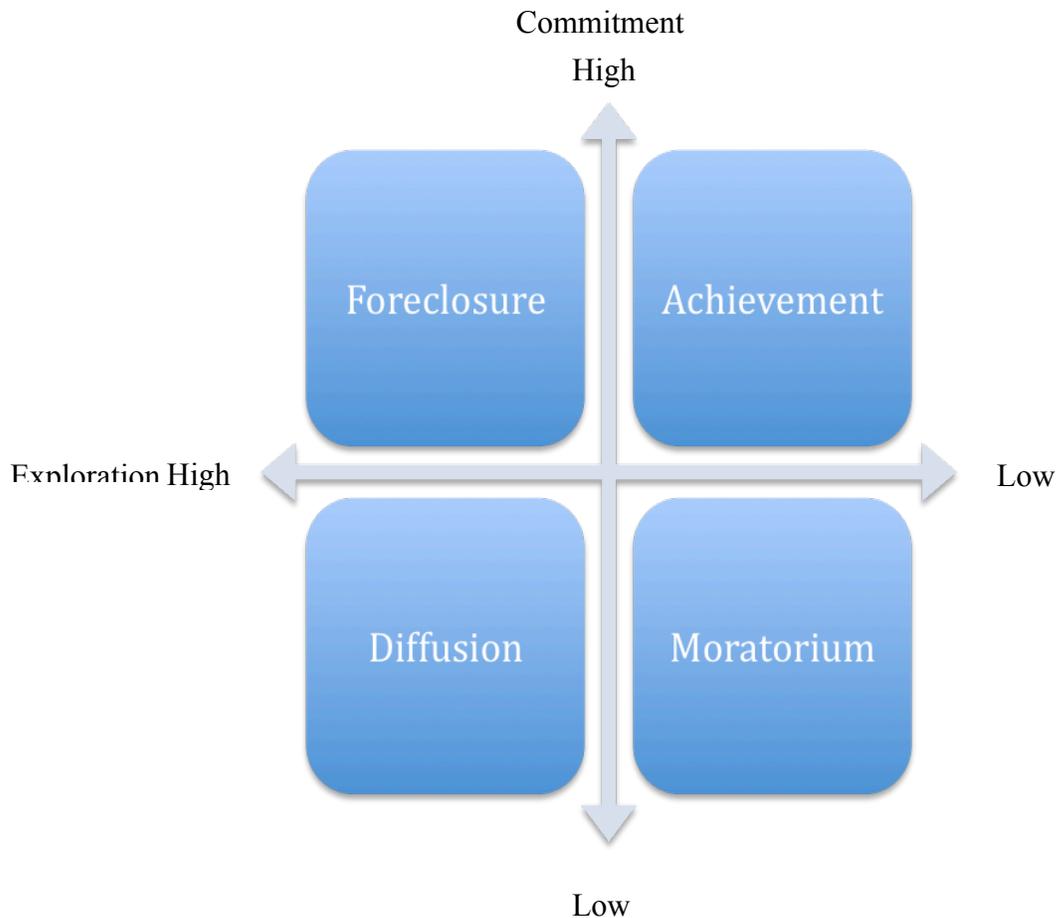
opportunity presents itself, such as through a friend or through a temp agency, and the emerging adult takes the random opportunity (Arnett, 2004).

As emerging adults drift in and out of different jobs, they must finally make the decision to choose one of the options for the long term. Working several different jobs helps eliminate the career choices one does not want. For emerging adults, choosing a career and knowing what the future holds is not a concern. People in this age group are still trying to figure out who they are, rather than what to do in life. They are searching for a work identity that fits their own identity. This identity can be discovered through many different venues, such as random jobs and parents' inspiration. Although discovery about a job can come from knowing about their parents' jobs, this may or may not be the perfect fit for them (Arnett, 2004).

The development of identity is a process and the development of identity through work is found through different phases. Marcia (1980) elaborated on Erikson's theories of identity confusion and resolution and identified four classifications of exploration and commitment to an identity. Within the classification system, exploration refers to when one's values and ideas are being reevaluated and commitment means a commitment to a role or a value. Marcia stated that these are not stages but a process that everyone goes through yet not in any particular order. Going through some or all of these processes of identity development leads to a commitment to a role. These statuses of exploration fall into four categories: identity moratorium, identity foreclosure, identity diffusion, and identity achievement. Identity moratorium involves exploration but not commitment. Most emerging adults seem to fall into this category: different possibilities are pursued

but no decision has been made. Identity foreclosure is the category in which people have made a commitment to a certain choice but did not explore other options before making that commitment. This might be a person who chose a career early and committed to it. Even though exploration is believed to be healthy for identity development, some people still have a healthy identity development process with an early commitment to a career. Identity diffusion is the status in which a person makes no commitment and has not explored or sorted through his or her options because the amount of options may seem so overwhelming. Identity achievement is the status that unites exploration and commitment. This does not necessarily mean that identity development is completed. Exploration will still continue and one will still seek to continue to find work he or she enjoys (Marcia, 1980). The figure below shows the different statuses and their relationship to commitment and exploration (Arnett, 2004, p.161).

Figure 1: Categories of Identity Status



Emerging adults usually fit into one category based upon their work experiences. Most emerging adults' work or jobs fit into the category of identity moratorium because most are exploring several different identities through work yet not making a commitment (Cote, 2006; Arnett, 2004). Career exploration is seen as the "central ingredient in the identity formation process" (Blustein, Devenis, and Kidney, 1989, p.197). In their study, Blustein, Devenis, and Kidney found that exploring different career paths is a way for

young adults to learn more about themselves; career explorations are associated with identity explorations.

Work Experiences in Emerging Adulthood

Because most emerging adults are in the status of identity moratorium, they often choose transient or seasonal work. However, jobs also become more and more serious and hold a purpose for individuals. The purpose for most individuals is finding the “right” job or a job that fits with the individual’s needs and desires. This means moving in and out of different jobs, with an average of about seven to eight jobs worked in the process of finding the “right” job. This process of finding the right job can take several years. Jobs are sometimes chosen as a means of survival (making money to pay for life necessities) after moving out of the home, through college, or post college career exploration. Even jobs meant as the beginning of a career can seem like they are not the right fit. Eventually, most emerging adults find work that is satisfying. This usually happens in the later stages of emerging adulthood and into early adulthood. Most people in the early stages of emerging adulthood cannot answer the question of where they see themselves in 10 years because they do not yet know their identity. Taking on responsibilities, such as marriage and family, will often make the answer to that question more definite because of the obligations to more than just one’s self (Arnett, 2004).

There are external influences that affect an emerging adult’s job choice and eventual career choice. Different social-contextual experiences such as family, friends, school, and work influence emerging adults in different ways (Messersmith et al., 2008).

Parents influence emerging adults by setting an example with their careers; many emerging adults follow in the same career path as their parents (Arnett, 2004). Parents are often sources of support, encouragement, assistance and the initial exposure to a specific career (Messersmith et. al., 2008). Mortimer, Zimmer-Gembeck, and Holmes (2002) found that parental or family experiences with work can have both negative and positive consequences. Positive experiences included knowing someone in the business who could help get a foot in the door and seeing a career make a parent happy made the job seem worthwhile. Negative influences and experiences stemmed from parents not pushing their children to stick with a job and the parents themselves constantly changing jobs. While many may ultimately follow the path of a parent, some find that following the path of a parent does not fit with their developing identity (Arnett, 2004).

School, work, and friends are other sources of influence over job choice (Levine & Hoffner, 2006; Mortimer et al., 2002). Friends or other forms of social networks influence a person in that they may know someone with a connection to a job or have a friend with a job opening. This kind of job opportunity does not always fulfill the quest for an identity, but it does provide income and experience. Another way emerging adults are influenced in their job choices is by pursuing the type of job someone that they admire holds (Arnett, 2004).

For many emerging adults, dreams of owning their own business or being a successful artist or musician are very appealing. They perceive that these kinds of jobs mean being your own boss and working fewer hours than a typical job. This is often not true and many of these dreams are not realized because one is not willing to put in the

hard work needed to fulfill these dreams or do not have the required talent and skills (Arnett, 2004).

As discussed earlier, emerging adults in college are looking for jobs with more to offer than just money; they also want a job with meaning and a job that can provide experience for the future in a career and in personal management, such as management of time and money. Emerging adults often try out some non-traditional forms of employment throughout college, such as work programs like AmeriCorps, working in other countries, or taking time off from school to work in an internship program. Most of these work experiences are short term and can often be volunteer work. Because emerging adults in college do not have as many responsibilities as young adults with new families, short-term jobs, internships and volunteer programs create interesting opportunities for emerging adults to discover and develop their identity (Arnett, 2000).

Internships fit into the process of identity moratorium because internships usually require a short-term commitment while allowing for a student to explore his or her work identity. Internships give emerging adults opportunities to gain experience and job skills while still in college. This may give them an advantage over those who have no experience and can open up opportunities for networking with others. Many college students believe that adding an internship experience to a college degree will help them learn more about the work environment (Knouse, Tanner & Harris, 1999). Often graduating students can attain certain jobs because of their previous connection with a business or organization. Knouse, Tanner and Harris looked for a relationship between internships with both college performance and job opportunities at graduation within a

business school. Results of their study found that those who had internships graduated college earlier than those without internships. More students with previous internship experience had jobs upon graduation than those who had no internship experience although internship experience did seem to only have an advantage immediately after graduation. Over time, this advantage decreases. Having an internship even seemed to improve some academic performance by improving time management skills and self-discipline (Knouse, Tanner & Harris, 1999). Results of this study relate directly with the desires of an emerging adult to have more responsibility for one's self and finding which job one is best at and also enjoys. Finding a job one enjoys may also speed up the transition into young adulthood and the commitment to an identity role.

Studies on the Experiences of Camp Counselors

Stress about career development and the development of career maturity drive many students to seek out experiences that may help make decisions about a career. Many college programs foster career development by requiring work experience as part of the requirements for graduation. During this time, emerging adults will often pick a job or internship that they believe they will most enjoy or have always had a dream of doing. These internships, practica, and jobs provide ways for emerging adults to gain work experience before they make a commitment to a certain career. This "try before buying" idea helps narrow down career choices and allows the emerging adult a chance to refine and hone in on their skills abilities learned in the classroom. This can help with career development and make emerging adults more viable when looking for a job after

graduation. Working a summer job provides an opportunity for emerging adults to work short term in different potential occupations and in the process of identity moratorium. Working at a camp and being a camp counselor fits into the area of identity moratorium because it gives counselors a chance to explore many different identities without making a long-term commitment. Those who have worked at camp have cited instances at camp where they learned something new about themselves or have changed their career desires based upon their experiences.

DeGraaf and Glover (2003) looked at how working at a camp had affected the seasonal staff many years after their work experience. The purpose of their research was to help inform the recruitment process, help administrators create a better work environment for the staff, and to help develop the concept of Benefits Based Management through understanding how the camp experience may impact staff. They interviewed staff who had worked at a Christian based residential camp; subjects were chosen from staff who had worked there between five to forty-plus years. The researchers found four distinct themes in their analysis: motivations for working at camp, personal impacts, professional impacts, and reflections on camp. These themes were then divided into sub themes. Participants in the study identified individual experience, working with kids, encouragement from friends, fun, and working outdoors as the top motivators for working at camp (Degraff & Glover, 2003). Personal impacts of the camp experience were increased self-confidence, increased appreciation of nature, and the development of life skills. Professional impacts of the camp experience were that some of the participants changed their career aspirations to education. Some participants cited camp

with helping form many career skills, such as speaking, people skills, and working within groups of co-workers. They noted that a limitation in their study was only interviewing staff from a Christian based camp, and results could vary at different kinds of camps (Degraff & Glover, 2003). Working at camp helped the participants with the development of both their careers and their lives. Even though working with children or in the outdoors was not the career many participants ultimately decided on, they were able to take what they learned and apply it to almost every part of their lives. Degraff and Glover's findings fit with Marcia's identity processes in that the work experiences helped lead the participants to know more about themselves and their own abilities. After going through the process of identity moratorium, many of the participants were able to move into the process of identity achievement by committing to a major or a career, while still exploring their own identities.

Not only are camp counselors able to explore their own identities, but also how their identities are developed within a social setting and a community. Waskul (1998) studied how camp staff created communities, social roles, and identities within their staff community and how those newly created identities combined with their preexisting identities and social roles. Summer camp counselors often have to change their view of their roles after arriving to camp from the one that has been developed in the media. Waskul found that among staff, there is not a constant set of expectations of the conditions (social roles and identities) of working at a camp. Camp identities and social roles came through during the staff training process. As the camp work became more and more routine, roles and identities became more normalized and became "who" they were

at camp. Both the development and dissolution of the camp community happened quickly and many staff found leaving their roles and identities behind to be difficult. The experience shows that camp staffs “not only create a localized social world, but become attached to it, and ultimately are transformed within it (if even for a fleeting moment)” (Waskul, 1998, p. 50). The development of new identities and the ability to let go of ideals made the participants realize the types of roles they can have in a future career.

The outcomes or benefits of working at camp related to identity development depend on a person’s perception of what exactly happened while working at camp. Bialeschki (1998) looked at the camp staff experience by conducting focus groups to gain an understanding of counselors’ perceptions of their experiences. She found positive outcomes in the areas of relationships, diversity, skills, group cohesion, leadership and responsibilities, mentoring, personal growth, and teamwork. She also found some negative outcomes of the camp experience in the areas of wages, diversity, time for self, perceptions of influential others, safety, and medications. These outcomes impacted the positive benefits of being a staff member. However, all of the focus groups noted that working at camp was definitely beneficial in both professional and personal aspects of life. Bialeschki advised that camp directors should use the positive benefits to recruit staff and supervise staff. This information about benefits can also be used to work with parents to understand that working at camp has value for young staff members. While most emerging adults choose jobs based upon their own interests, support and

encouragement from parents might make those job explorations easier to do and will facilitate the emerging adults to develop his or her career identity.

Similar to Bialeschki, Jacobs (2004) looked at the benefits and outcomes of working at camp. Jacobs studied the effects of camp employment on the emotional intelligence of staff. His results showed an increase in emotional intelligence of camp staff. He found that the work environment, atmosphere, leadership, responsibilities, difficult situations, and the outdoors led to this change in emotional intelligence (Jacobs, 2004). These changes in emotional intelligence help the staff members to manage themselves and manage problems and solve them as they come about. Jacobs cited practical implications of the results in the areas of staff recruitment, training and development. Training to increase emotional intelligence can help raise staff member awareness of the seriousness of the job and assists with making safe choices for everyone. In the mind of an emerging adult, part of becoming an adult is accepting responsibility for one's self. If an emerging adult can gain responsibility for one's self in a professional setting, he or she may be able to transition that to a personal setting and making a person feel more like an adult and able to take on adult roles. Changes in emotional intelligence to better manage themselves and other problems help the counselors take on the responsibility of themselves, thus giving the counselor a sense of their own identity or the identity they want to achieve. Changes in emotional intelligence can also affect career maturity by making an emerging adult more ready to enter the work force and take on all the responsibilities of that job and the transition from college to work.

Summary

This chapter has reviewed the theory of emerging adulthood, identity development through work with in emerging adulthood, the kinds of work experiences in which emerging adults engage, and previous research on summer camp counselors. Research about emerging adults finds that work exploration is part of identity development. Continued identity development will help emerging adults achieve their desires of making independent decisions, taking responsibility for one's self, and achieving financial independence. Work explorations in this time period are often short periods of work that give emerging adults a taste of different career options and help them discover what they enjoy and what they are good at. While research suggests that work explorations are part of identity development, research lacks where specific work experiences can meet the needs and desires of emerging adults.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand meaning of the experience of the camp counselor. The purpose of a methods section in a qualitative study is to present the course of action needed for the study, and to demonstrate the researcher is capable of conducting this study, as well as to show design flexibility. In order to do these things, this chapter discusses the methods that were used to conduct the study. It includes information about the: 1) conceptual framework, 2) sampling and participants, 3) fieldwork methods and procedures, and 4) data management and analysis. This chapter is divided into two sections: the first is the conceptual framework, and the second is the research procedures.

Conceptual Framework of a Phenomenology

A phenomenological study is a method used to “describe the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about a concept or the phenomenon” (Creswell, 1998, p. 51). There are two central questions that drive a phenomenological study: What were the group’s experiences with the phenomenon? And in what context or situation did they experience it?

A phenomenology works as a method by which to answer these questions. Husserl (1975) called this method a phenomenology because it “utilizes only the data available to the consciousness – the appearance of the objects” (p.39). Husserl

then went further to explain that a transcendental phenomenology is “ ‘transcendental’ because it adheres to what can be discovered through reflection on subjective acts and their objective correlates” (p. 23).

There are five functions of a transcendental phenomenology (Farber, 1943, p. 568)

1. It is the first method of knowledge because it begins with the things themselves, which are the final court of appeal for all we know. It is a logical approach because it seeks to identify presuppositions and “put them out of play.”
2. It is not concerned with matter of fact but seeks to determine meanings.
3. It deals with both real essences and with “possible” essences.
4. It offers direct insight into the essence of things, growing out of the self-giveness of objects and reflective description.
5. It seeks to obtain knowledge through a state of pure subjectivity, while retaining the values of thinking and reflecting.

In order to gain the knowledge of the consciousness of others and ascribe meaning to them the researcher must follow “ an organized, disciplined and systematic study” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 103). First, the researcher must understand the philosophical approach behind a phenomenology. The researcher does this by gaining knowledge about old and new philosophies. This understanding of philosophy helps the researcher understand how a person experiences a phenomenon. The second task a researcher must do is write research questions that will ask individuals to describe their experience and

can explore meaning in their experience. The third task is to collect data from those who have experienced the phenomenon. This is usually done in an interview format in which the individuals describe their experience for the researcher. The fourth task is data analysis. The researcher must read through the statements and identify those that are similar and ascribe meaning to the phenomenon. The final task is that the researcher must express the essence of the experience in a way that will make the readers feel as if they understand what it may be like for someone to experience the phenomenon (Creswell, 1998).

The research question in a phenomenology “grows out of an intense interest in a particular problem or topic ... Personal history brings the core of the problem into focus” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 104). Given the intricacies of the camp environment and the nature in which relationships are formed and learning is done, what is the camp experience really like for camp counselors? There is a lack of clarity on the actual experience of a camp counselor because there are so few published studies exploring camp counselors’ experiences. A phenomenological study devoted to understanding emerging adults lived experiences as camp counselors best lends itself to following purpose: First, to gain a richer understanding of the camp experience for camp counselors working at a residential camp by using the phenomenological method. Second, to examine if camp provides an environment for developmental growth of staff members consistent with the unique aspects of the developmental stage of emerging adults. To fulfill these purposes, the following research question was addressed: From the perspective of the camp counselor, what is the experience of working at camp?

Research Participants

Participants were located through criterion or purposive sampling, which means all individuals must meet a certain criterion (Creswell, 1998). The sampling was aimed at identifying the individual experiences of those who lived the phenomenon. The sample represents people who have experienced the phenomenon, in this case, being a camp counselor. Participants were located through several different sites. Criteria for sites were that each camp was co-educational, offered one to four week programs, and offered a traditional camping experience. Each individual interviewed for the study had worked at a residential camp for at least one summer season and had completed at least one year of college. Originally, the age range of camp counselors to be interviewed was between the ages of 18 and 20 years old; however the age range was expanded due to the interest of the participants and the definition of emerging adulthood. Previous camp experience for the staff member was delimited to camp as a child and not as an adolescent.

Camps fitting this search criteria condition in a 60 mile radius of Clemson University were chosen. The Appalachian Mountain area has a very dense camp population. Many different kinds of camping experiences are available and the camps in this area commonly attract counselors from all over the country. Out of the camps fitting the criteria, five were randomly selected about obtaining staff contact information. A letter explaining the research and what was needed from each director was sent to each camp. A follow up phone call was made to each director to give a more in depth explanation of the research. Each camp director was asked to supply information and

permission to contact their staff members who, from the summer of 2007, fit the criteria. Camp directors contacted their own staff that met the criteria informing them of the study and asking for volunteers for participation. The directors then passed along the information of those who agreed to be interviewed. Contact with the participants happened initially through email to arrange a date and interview time. Counselors who responded to the director's emails about participation were all female. Additional participants were located through a university's recreation department. The counselors who volunteered were also all female. Therefore, results for the study only discuss the meaning of the camp counselor experience for women who are emerging adults.

Field Method and Procedures

For a phenomenological study, in depth interviews are the primary source of data collection. The number of interviews can range anywhere from just one to as many 300. A common suggestion for the amount of interviews needed is 10 because it seems to be the average amount at which the researcher reaches saturation of the data. A total of eight interviews were conducted in order to reach saturation for this study. Interviews must be long enough for the participants to be able to describe their experience and interviews can take anywhere from one hour to three hours (Creswell, 1998). Creswell identified seven steps in the procedure of interviewing:

1. Identify participants by the criterion sampling set for the study.
2. Determine the type of interview most practical and most useful for answering the research questions.

3. Record the interviews with sufficient recording devices.
4. Design an interview procedure; for example, make a form with space under each question for answers or for notes.
5. Determine a place for conducting the interview.
6. When meeting with the participant, obtain consent for participation.
7. During the interview, stay with the question, but allow for other questions that may arise during the interview. The interviewer should listen rather than talk (p. 123-124).

Data collection for this study was conducted through one-on-one interviews. Interviews were controlled by semi-structured interview format (See Appendix A) to allow the interviewee to be able to describe her experience. All interviews were recorded and then transcribed verbatim for data analysis. Each participant was asked to give consent to participate in the study and be recorded. For the convenience and comfort of each participant, the interview took place in a location of her choosing.

Getting an interviewee to open up and share his or her experience can prove to be troublesome. Participants were made to feel comfortable sharing their experiences and feelings with as much description as possible. There were a few ethical concerns in getting these descriptions, such as the presentation of self, rapport building and reciprocity, and the researcher perspective (Schram, 2006). There were several ways in which the researcher addressed these concerns. First, the researcher presented herself not only as a researcher but also as a former camp staff member. Second, the researcher explained exactly what the research was about and how the results were to be used. Final

results were to be made available to them if the participants should want them. Third, in order to gain rapport and reciprocity, the researchers role in the interview was more of a listener with few notes being made during the interview. Last, there was potential for the researcher's experience as a staff member to cause subjectivity during the interviews.

The researcher's understanding that each camp has a culture and environment all its own that frames the experience for each participant was critical to the interview process. This was expressed through the telling of talking briefly about the researcher's own experience at camp by telling stories, responsibilities, and positions held while working at camp.

Each subject in this study participated in a one on one interview either in person or on the phone. All interviews were recorded with a Belkin iPod Recording Device. Each interview was then transferred to a computer for storage under the date of the interview to ensure confidentiality.

Data Management and Analysis

Data management is one of the most important parts of a phenomenology. Data were collected through the use of the Belkin iPod Recording Device. After each interview, the recording was copied onto a computer and saved on the computer as well as an external storage unit to ensure the data were not lost or tampered with. Also after each interview, the data were transcribed and saved for analysis at the completion of each interview. Notes about each interview were also made after the completion of each interview. The transcriptions were then coded into themes.

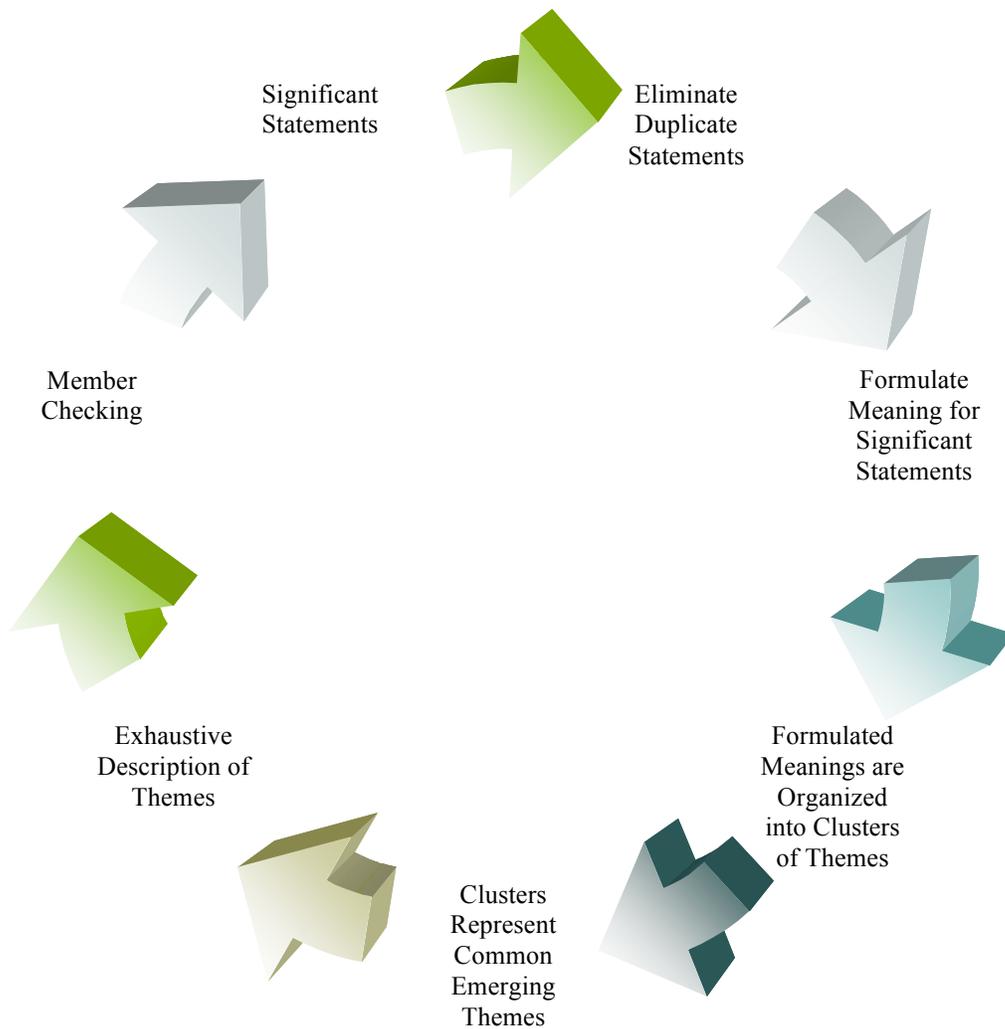
Data analysis in a phenomenology is a systematic and structured process. Once saturation is reached during data collection, analysis can begin in order to find the essence of the phenomenon. Moustakas (1994) describes ways of analyzing phenomenological data. Before data analysis can happen, the researcher must describe his or her own experiences with the phenomenon. This is done in an epoche. This process allows for the researcher to focus on the participants' experiences and not her own by setting aside as much as possible all previous experiences. (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). This process also allows the researcher to not take any positions or make determinations about the results of the study (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). Once the epoche is done, data analysis can begin. The first step in analysis is called horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994). This is a method in which significant statements are chosen out of the data and listed. These statements are ones that struck the reader as important.

The list that is developed is non-repetitive and nonoverlapping (Creswell, 1998). The second step after horizontalization is grouping the statements into "meaning units." In this step, irrelevant, repeated and overlapping statements are removed from the list (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). The remaining statements are then organized into a more textual description by grouping them by themes or meaning unit. This is a description of "what happened" or "what did the participants experience" (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). The third step is the structural description. In this step, the researcher must develop "how" or "in what context" the phenomenon was experienced (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). During this process, the researcher seeks "all

possible meanings and divergent perspectives, varying the frames of reference about the phenomenon, and constructing a description of how the phenomenon was experienced” (Creswell, 1998, p. 150).

The fourth step is creating an overall description of the “essence” of the experience (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). The last step is a member check (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). This is a process by which the researcher brings his or her results to the interviewees to “judge the accuracy and credibility of the account” (Creswell, 1998, p. 203). Analysis does not end until the member check is complete and the interpretation is deemed accurate. The graphical representation below is an adaptation of the steps of data analysis described by Creswell (1998). The figure describes the process.

Figure 2: Data Analysis (Creswell, 1998)



Member checking is part of triangulation of the data. Triangulation of data is important to ensure the data is credible. Triangulation is the process of “corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective” (Creswell, 1998, p. 202). Credibility of the data is improved by employing more than one method to check

the data, such as member checking. This study used individual interviews, member checking and peer debriefing to triangulate the data.

Using individual interviews is a way to triangulate because it gives the participants the chance to enhance data. The richer and thicker the description, the easier it is for readers to transfer the interpretation to other settings. The individuals were able to provide information about their personal experiences. This gave the study a rich detail relating to the research questions. Member checking is a process that “involves taking data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions back to the participants so that they can judge the accuracy and credibility of the account” (Creswell, 1998, p.203). After completing the transcription and preliminary coding, copies of quotations and coding were sent via email back to the participants. The participants were asked to send back any critique or new interpretations of the analysis. They were specifically asked if there was anything that did not represent their experiences. Suggestions and corrections were made before a final coding and interpretation of the data.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The current study aimed to uncover the ways in which the camp environment and working as a camp counselor support the needs and desires of an emerging adult. The results of this study are presented in the following order: overview of the research process, background of the study, and the prevailing themes found in the data. The predominant themes were brought about from the discussions with the participants. The themes that emerged from the data are how camp enhanced the participant's career development, the development of identity throughout the summer, and networks made through meeting new people during the summer.

Overview of the Research Process

Three major themes became apparent when coding the data: *career development*, *identity* and *networks*. The major themes embodied and expanded into sub-themes related to the research questions. The sub-themes in career development included gaining leadership, learning job skills, learning to work with others, and taking responsibility for others. The sub-themes in identity are the experiences the participants went through that helped them make self-realizations and gain self-awareness, confidence, independence, and learn new ideas. Lastly, the sub-themes in the major theme networks include participants making new friends and connections, and gaining support for themselves and supporting others.

Summaries of each theme are accompanied by the actual words of each participant. Reporting actual words of each participant allow for greater understanding of the participant experience as a camp counselor. Each counselor's words create an accurate depiction of working at a camp and allow the reader to understand the experiences of these women and the pleasures and challenges they encountered as camp counselors. There were eight participants in the study. They ranged from ages 18 to 25 years old and included college freshman to college graduates. Pseudonyms were used to provide confidentiality for the participants. Table 1 provides an overview of the participants.

Table 1: Participants

| Participant Name *pseudonyms | Age | Year in School | Major | Years worked at camp | Collection Method |
|--|------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Heather | 25 | Graduate | Recreation and Leisure Studies | 1 | Phone Interview |
| Laurie | 20 | Junior | Education | 1 | Phone Interview |
| Karen | 20 | Junior | Education | 1 | Face to Face Interview |
| Mary | 21 | Junior | Education | 2 | Phone Interview |
| Amy | 18 | Freshman | Psychology | 1 | Face to Face Interview |
| Sanders | 25 | Graduate | Education | 2 | Phone Interview |
| Alice | 20 | Sophomore | Education | 1 | Phone Interview |
| Melissa | 22 | Senior | Recreation and Leisure Studies | 1 | Phone Interview |

Themes

The major themes found within the data were: *career development*, *identity*, and *networks*. The theme of career development incorporated sub-themes based upon what the participants gained from working at camp. Sub-themes under career development include *gaining leadership*, *learning job skills*, *working with others*, and *taking responsibility for others*. The *identity* theme was broken down into sub-themes through the participants' accounts of self-discovery. Sub-themes under the theme include *self-realizations and self-awareness* and *gaining confidence and independence*. The last major theme, *networks*, was broken down into three sub-themes: *new friends*, *new connections*, and *support*.

Career Development

The category *career development* represented the participants' thoughts about what they felt they gained from working at camp that is applicable to their future careers. Mary, a 21 year old junior majoring in education, expressed that “camp was such a valuable experience for me, which I knew because I love camp, but like it just kind of reiterated that for me, but I’m actually kind of looking into like wilderness therapy programs, or like, um, outdoor education programs, I’d really like to work for the future, combining outdoors with learning.” The participants expressed that the camp environment enabled them to develop or enhance their current leadership skills through leading their camper groups and peers. Most of the participants expect to become teachers and expressed that they were able to gain many job skills through their

responsibilities at camp. The career development theme also explored the relationships the participants had with their fellow counselors and superiors. Lastly, through working with others, the participants developed bonds with their campers and learned responsibility for others.

Leadership

All of the participants felt that leadership was a major part of their camp experience. "I know I can be a leader," stated by Karen, a 20 year old junior majoring in education, and was a sentiment felt by many of the participants. Karen also used her new leadership abilities to lead people in other areas of her life. Because she had led her camper groups in programs and in her cabin group, she felt she could lead and advise rushees of the Greek system at her school. In her school's Greek system, a Pi Chi is a person who leads and advises new students hoping to join a sorority:

I would definitely say I can't go to an interview without mentioning camp ... like I said I'm going to be a Pi Chi, and, um, I interviewed for Pi Chi and they asked me why I felt ... I was ... qualified to be a Pi Chi and all I could say is, I have been a camp counselor for two years, and this is sort of like being a camp counselor for freshmen in college...

The participants learned that leadership is not only about advising and helping others but showing that you are interested in the activity that is happening at the time. If the counselors looked and acted disinterested in the program or activity going on, it showed their campers that participation is not necessary and a negative attitude is acceptable.

Mary stated this was a part of camp that can make a difference for everyone around her:

The biggest challenge for me was always being present ... it was really easy getting your teeth in the same thing every day, um, and it's just very easy to just slack off and not be present you know, you can go through the motions, whatever. Basically the more you're into it, the more the campers will have fun...

Positive attitudes and being “present” are not only important traits for being a leader for others, but also when being led. Heather, a 25 year old college graduate who majored in recreation and leisure studies, had a negative leadership experience with the person directly above her:

The program director at the time was pretty useless and he knew full well that I had no camp experience. I had no [youth organization] experience. I had no climbing experience. He knew all of that, but um if I went to him, he never gave any clear guidance and he would basically just say well you have to deal with it.

She was able to learn about what made a good leader by seeing exactly what made a bad one. Her experience in trying to get her program director to help her with a problem counselor did not work out so well:

[I would say to my program director] I have written a staff member up or this is the problem I continue to have, he would never step in and go okay why don't we sit down with your little department and see if we can figure this out. That never happened.

She believes her experience helped her in her current job and school because she understands the qualities of a good leader. Alice, a 20 year old sophomore majoring in education, was able to attain similar outcomes with her leadership experiences. Alice worked as part of the leadership team at her camp and has been able to translate her experience to school and work.

[Leadership team meetings] taught us about how to run a meeting, um how to deal with conflicts between counselors, ... how to approach different issues, how to set expectations early, things like that I think that was helpful, and that I definitely used.

She believes that being a leader is helpful working with others, “it teaches you, like, confidence, when people come to you.” Mary also gained confidence from being a leader and working with others and felt she “finally got to learn how to say things ... in a positive way.”

Job Skills

Most of the participants plan a career of teaching and many are currently working in the classroom for school credit and gaining the experience of working with students and program planning. When asked about how working at camp can help in the future, the participants responded by talking about how working at camp has helped them in the classroom. Karen knew that working at camp would provide another way to learn about working with children and would provide her with experience she can use in her future career:

Because I am an elementary education major, I was like, I need to do something during the summer that relates to kids and I can't intern, because they're on summer break too, so what would the best thing be? [sic] And I always have like heard that there are residential camps, but I have only ever been to church camps and so I heard that Camp Fest... was coming to [my school], and I couldn't go, so I actually took it upon myself to research every camp...

Sanders, a 25 years old college graduate and majored in education, stated she learned about new ways to work with kids in the classroom:

I mean obviously being able to sit there and teach the activities that I was [teaching] is huge, its more practice with teaching and its obviously all the stuff we were doing at camp was very physical and active and the girls were using their bodies for stuff and so um that was kind of a big one because as a teacher you always want to try and find ways that students can do their homework or get involved with it physically if that makes sense [in a] more of a kinesthetic way.

Along with learning how to teach activities in different ways, the participants learn about new ways to communicate with their children and also about children's emotions.

Laurie, is a 20 year old college junior majoring in education, expressed the difference in her classroom experience before camp and after camp:

I'm just a lot more capable of making a difference and understanding where to go or like how to approach a situation with a kid. I have a lot

more understanding of why kids are the way that they are and I'm a lot more understanding of why maybe Johnny is acting out.

Teaching and classroom skills were not the only skills gained by the participants from working at camp. Heather found her position at camp helped to refine old skills and develop new ones:

Because I was the climbing director and there was such an emphasis on safety, um it made me focus on the details. I became a lot more detail oriented after working there. You know if you are checking 200 feet of rope for a tiny little snag [it makes you more responsible] ... I have always been a fairly responsible person, but that [safety checking] definitely helped with organizational skills and being detail oriented ...

Heather also stated that her position at camp helped to develop new skills, "Being in a position of authority, even though it was only over ... a few younger kids, you know that was a good experience, you know that helped me work with people in a challenging situation."

Working with Others

The participants felt that one of the most valuable skills gained by working at camp was an understanding of how to work with others. Each participant understood that knowing how to work with others can help any career. Amy, an 18 year old freshman majoring in psychology, understood the value of her position when she stated, "... I gained people skills, like working with people my own age, but then also different skills

working people that are younger than me and people that are above me.” Sanders expressed a similar sentiment about working with people of all ages and also adding the counselors have to work with their campers who are dealing with the same experience: “we deal with it [working and living with new people] with each other and then we go look at the girls in our cabins who are having to combat that too.” Sanders understood that similar to her cabin of girls she is also working with a camp full of women and that all of them are going through same things, such as living in a group setting, living with other people may have never met before, and participation in activities that may push someone’s level of comfort. Amy explains that the campers see how the counselors interact with each other and it is important to work together in a positive way to set an example for the campers, “... the kids [saw] how we worked with each other because that was always a big issue was communicating with each other and cooperating and getting along and not fighting.” Laurie said that working with others was understanding that another person might have a different opinion about a situation. At her camp her cabin is a shared building divided by a bathroom. The campers can hear and know what happens on the other side. Melissa, a 22 year old senior majoring in recreation and leisure studies, had to gain an understanding that each counselor has a different way of doing things:

Some other counselor might think [night time is] a great time to have cabin bonding and it’s just hard to keep the rules when someone else is doing it differently. So having respect for how they feel even if it does contradict how you’re doing things.

For Heather, working with others at camp was difficult for her. She not only had difficulty working with her superior, she also had difficulty with staff members under her:

There was one girl in particular who was incredibly and openly resentful towards me because she thought she should be the climbing director. She was not 21 years old yet and by guidelines to be the director, you have to be at least 21.

Heather had to learn how to work around the resentment towards her to create a positive and safe experience for the campers. She says this is an invaluable skill to have because not everyone you work with is going to like you, but despite that, the job must still get done. Sanders also understood doing what was necessary to get the job done. In her case she was helping a camper learn to dive. Working with this camper was one of Sanders's favorite experiences that summer:

“I promise I am going to try, I am going to get it, Sanders” and one day the best part was she was like, “Sanders, do you think we could get someone over here with a camera so that we could take a picture of me diving so that my mom can see it on the internet?” So she did get it and it was wonderful. She was able to overcome that obstacle and she was able to swim to the rope and back and passed her swimming class and it was just really a neat experience for me to be able to share that with her.

Responsibility for Others

Because being responsible for others will be a part of their careers for most of the participants, gaining a sense of responsibility for others is what they will need in the careers they intend to pursue. A responsibility for others will help them understand safety, risk management, laws, and rules set up for different jobs. Karen had this realization during her first year at camp:

Because you're put into a situation where this is real, like you are the sole responsibility of these children, like your sole responsibility is these children's lives, like anything could happen, and you have to really set it all up. Like you have to set the rules up, you have to tell them what to do, it's bigger than being a teacher, because it's not a 7am-4pm job, it's a 4pm-7am job. Like, [I am still working] when they're sleeping.

She goes on to say "I'm really like, 'Wow, how did I have so much responsibility over these girls, here I am in college, like, so it's really interesting.'" The participants knew that working at camp meant more than just a summer job and more than just something for themselves. Once the participants figured out that they were not just working at camp for their own needs, they gained an understanding that their actions influence others. They were responsible for their own behavior because the campers would learn from it. The participants explained that one of the best ways to show appropriate behaviors to do that behavior. If the counselors want the campers to behave in a certain way then they must also exhibit those behaviors. Amy remarked that everything she said and did was being watched and she is responsible for part of campers learning of proper behavior:

I guess just like recognizing that every action I make and everything I say is influencing these girls and just trying to live out the Girl Scout law and the promise in what I'm doing and especially interacting with the other adults that were there and just showing them you know what it's like to, you know, have relationships and um, just be that example and try to follow through with what we are trying to teach them and if I'm you know telling them this how you're supposed to be and this is you know the way to grow up and be a responsible young woman, then I need to live that too and so just remembering to watch my actions and to say to be that example for the girls.

Heather shared a similar thought when she thought about the end of camp and everything the campers would be taking back with them. They are not only taking home new experience but also new ideas about how to act and what being an adult is:

I remember [at a camp fire] I was sitting there thinking, you know these kids are obviously taking a lot home with them this week and that made me feel really good and that made me feel like this was worth it and the whole thing was a good experience.

Overall, all of the participants felt their experience working at a camp provided numerous beneficial outcomes despite all of the challenges and hardships they faced while working. Each woman felt they developed new skills and refined current ones just through responsibilities and expectations expected of them. The women expressed that

they felt ready to move into their desired career and now had the confidence to do well in that career.

Identity

Through working at camp the women went through processes of self-discovery. Through work and through their relationships with others the participants learned a great deal about themselves. Experience with others and the camp environment resulted in the participants having self-realizations and as a result become more self-aware. New surroundings and new experiences helped the participants become more confident. New experiences in a job and with others brought about new outlooks about their lives and the how the world works. This outcome is congruent with the life stage, emerging adulthood. For example, Amy knows that camp helped her find out more about herself even though she didn't expect it:

I changed a lot this summer and really grew and I didn't expect that to happen. I thought oh, it will be a job and I will do it for 2 months and then I will go back to real life, but it's really changed me, and you know, different relationships I have with people and understanding situations and how to deal with them.

Self-realizations and Self-awareness

Each counselor was asked about her biggest challenges while working at camp. Many of the women reflected inward and talked about their personalities. The reflection

on themselves was a challenge because they realized certain things about themselves they may have not liked. They worked through that challenge by realizing more about themselves, and how they work with other people and different personalities. Laurie became more aware of herself through the eyes of others. This awareness of herself and her personality has helped her and will continue to help her when working with others and in different places:

I have to be aware of myself and how I'm being perceived by others and it's not a huge thing that's like constantly on my mind; it's almost second nature and I feel like that's something that can flow into every other job or every other aspect of your life is always being um, trying to be the upstanding person that you know you really are and trying to get to know yourself a lot more, you know it helps in every situation.

Sanders realized she really liked to be in control of every situation and, yet recognized that when working with children, it is hard to control every aspect of the day:

I didn't realize I was a control freak until being a counselor because, especially a new counselor, cause I didn't know how things went and I wanted things to go by the book and I think part of that also has to be my background as a teacher because if things are not in line then I am the one who is going to get in trouble with it and it took me a while to realize that, um, at camp its not that serious. It's obviously like you said you don't want to kill anyone, that's huge, but you know, if they're clothes aren't, you know little things that would pop up that would cause me great

anxiety are not that bad. It took me a little while to realize that and that probably would be my biggest, challenge letting go of the control thing. Part of maturing is the realization that one person cannot do everything by his or herself and each girl learned that it is okay to ask for help and relinquish some of the control over every situation. Amy liked to have control of her surroundings, activities, and food, but working at camp made her realize she has to work with what she has and rely on help from others:

It was kind of one of those things where you get thrown into a situation where you're not very comfortable but you have to make it work. But there were a lot of times where I felt really uncomfortable, but I just had to make it work and it got really stressful and you get sick and you get tired of being at camp and the camp food is not always good and just going through those situations and learning that it's okay to rely on other people and work together to get it done and make it through the week.

Amy goes on to talk about being in uncomfortable situations and how she realized that what she says and does can have an impact on other and perhaps sometimes the best way to handle a situation is to not say anything at all:

I think a lot more before I talk, I hope. I'd like to think I do just because you never know what you say, how it's going to impact other people and I learned that a lot at camp. I am a very open minded, outspoken person, um, and sometimes things don't need to be said so I guess that has

impacted me now I guess just watching what I say and my idea is not always the best.

Amy goes on to say that she realized it is okay to listen to other people and consider their ideas instead of just doing what she thinks is best:

Sometimes, your ideas are not the best ideas and it's okay to listen to other people and that has played into my job at [camp] and my other job [at the mall]. Just that sometimes I know what I am doing is probably the best way of doing it, but its okay to let other people tell you that one of the other ways might work out better.

When asked about how they felt about themselves at camp, the women expressed that they actually felt really good about themselves and felt as if their self-esteem was so much higher than in their "regular" lives. Laurie talked about how the environment of camp made her realize that her self-esteem was very low and that she had trouble dealing with stressful situations. She learned she can deal with those situations and she learned she could be happy with her choice of working with children:

I've never had a better feeling of myself. I am easily stressed out and am very hard on myself and think that's why I'm such a diligent worker because I'm usually kind of a perfectionist when it comes to the work that I do, um, so throughout school it can be really, really hard on me and, um, a little detrimental to my self-esteem, so at camp, um, I still have that same mentality but being around people kind of the same work ethic and they're really hard workers, but at the same time they're really positive

and outgoing and happy and great, like the support system was just amazing. Like I couldn't help but feel great about what I was doing and I knew I was making an impact on, you know, these girls' lives and it was just a great feeling. And I've been through a lot in my personal life for about the year or two leading up to going to camp and camp was like the huge accomplishment for me. Just knowing that I really can do this and be happy doing what I love to do.

Laurie also realized what makes her frustrated and how she can deal with those frustrations to make herself happy. She learned how to make herself calm:

I'm a lot more understanding and ... actually I know myself a lot better and I understand why I may get frustrated at things. I just know me better than I have before and so I'm a lot better dealing with people and confronting people when I have an important issue to bring up and I'm just a lot more level headed when it comes to dealing with people in difficult issues.

Looking inward, Mary noticed how she can over think different things and her over thinking prevents her from acting, "I am a philosophy major, um so I tend to like over think, like every time usually I'm very much in the head you know, I always think about something, it's to a fault, basically." Mary also realized she was thinking too much about how she felt about her campers and knew she had to change it:

...instead of I should love my campers, why should I love, you know asking yourself those kinds of questions I just should, you know what I mean? So it kind of made me more of like a feeling person...

Karen had a different kind of realization about herself because of her work with children. She realized through her interactions with her campers and how they treated her, she realized she treated her mother very much in the same way while growing up. She started to understand how the treatment of her campers affects her, and she thought about how her words and actions affected her mother. She had a difficult time with one of her campers and called her mother right after:

I was like, are you joking with me, like so baffled that I was being talked to like that. And, I mean, I called my mom and I was like, "I am so sorry like I apologize for all the years that I spoke to you like that. Because I know how it feels!" And my mom was laughing in the background.

Learning about themselves, the participants felt they knew more about who they are and who they want to be. This brought the participants closer to discovering their own identity.

Confidence and Independence

As the counselors gained more self-awareness, they also gained more confidence. They gained confidence to be themselves and not worry about what other people thought. They felt as though they were able to be themselves for the first time in their lives and have carried that feeling past camp. For example, Sanders gained the confidence to wear

an amusing outfit for the Fourth of July. She felt as if she was in the perfect place to be different:

It was just kind of this fun experience to walk into the dining hall for breakfast and everyone was like, “Sanders, where did that come from? Where did you get it?” and so it kind of just became this huge joke and being able to kind of let kind of let my hair down and put on this silly jumper and act like there’s nothing going on and this is totally normal and, um, everyone just kind of laughed at that one and to you know just kind of be a kid again almost.

They also gained more confidence in their abilities to be camp counselors and to be leaders. They could see the results of doing a good job and this helped them to know that they can do the job of being a counselor. Mary talked about how she felt at camp:

I just definitely felt very capable; um you know whenever you are presented with challenges and you kind of feel like you do a good job that’s always a confidence booster. Um, definitely the staff was there to tell you if you were doing a good job, that was helpful.

These women also built confidence in their abilities. The participants who were working towards being teachers discussed that they could work with children and develop and program for them. The others working on a different major than education know they want to work with children or will work with children in the future. Laurie had doubts before camp about being a teacher and continuing with her program. She felt it would be too difficult:

For a while I was having to be like am I going to be able to be a good teacher, will I be able to do this, its really difficult now, but after camp um I had no doubt in my mind that I could do it ...

Their new confidence in themselves also led them to gain more independence. For instance, they felt they had the abilities to do the job without being dependent on another to be there. Laurie decided to work at camp with her best friend. As the summer progressed, Laurie's best friend was asked to leave camp because she was not doing the job she was supposed to be doing. Laurie was left with the choice to stay at camp or go home with her friend. The senior staff at camp helped make her feel confident enough to stay at camp without her friend:

People like Lilly and Robin were constantly telling me that I was doing a really great job and they were really surprised and happy that um I had come there because I was like the new girl at camp and so I thought about it and Jessie, my best friend, was like you don't have to leave like this is my problem. There is no reason why you should be punished for it and um I just decided to stay and take the challenge, which ended up being one of the best decisions I've ever made.

Amy also gained independence through working at camp. She was very dependent on her mother for her own medical care because she needed regular care. Her experience at camp helped her transition better to college where she would have to rely on herself:

I am a lot more independent now ... I have a lot of health issues and things like that and before that I was so dependent on my mom taking care of me

and getting me to the doctor and things like that and now when I get sick it's like, you know, Amy you take medicine and move on. You know, it happens. Um and physically I am a little bit disabled so just at camp I guess I learned a lot that it's okay to have limitations and I learned a lot of those limitations when I tried to push them a little too far, but it's okay not to be able to do everything and just be like hey guys you know I am going to sit this one out because I can't do it today or it's not going to work. And just being, I guess I am a lot stronger at saying no ... but I guess before camp I was really dependent and always wanted to be around people. Um, I kind of fed off of other people I guess. And then through camp, not only was I taking care of myself, but I was taking care of other people. Um, so I guess that kind of changed my whole like outlook on, you know, I guess I grew up a lot this summer and some of the girls I worked with too told me that at that staff dinner ... but now I do feel a lot more independent and it's okay not to talk to mom everyday on the phone and it's okay to you know do things for yourself and that's a really good thing.

Each counselor was aware of the amount they learned about themselves through their experience at camp and changed habits as a result. Working in such a close environment caused them to reflect inward and think about their own behaviors and how their behaviors can influence others.

Networks

Camps hire staff from all over the country, and some hire from all over the world; therefore counselors can be introduced to a diverse array of new people. These participants were able to make new friends at work. The women also made many new connections with their administrative (i.e. director or senior staff) staff members, their campers and their co-workers giving them new networks of contacts for help, jobs, or advice. Lastly, the new networks have provided a system of support while working at the camp as well as after camp has ended.

New Friends

Any work environment may employ different people from many backgrounds and cultures. While the work environment can force bonds between people, both *living* and *working* together can sometimes forge an unbreakable bond. These women were able to make new friends because of a shared experience. Sanders expressed why it is possible to make friends at camp so easily:

We were all more or less there to have fun and to have a good summer and that we all kind of knew that as much as it was for the girls, we got to enjoy a lot of it too and to make these great friendships that we all have and have a chance to share in something like camp, is a pretty big experience to share.

Sanders now has, as she says, “just a huge network of friends out there” because she worked at camp. Amy expanded her friendships across the ocean, “we had an

international counselor, Mandy, from South Africa, and we got really close.” Working at camp let her meet a person she might never have met anywhere else. She talked about introducing her new friend to new experiences:

She came to my house and my family and I just got really close to her and we would have fun on our nights off. We went bowling one night. She had never done that before. And corndogs, she had never eaten those before.

She was able to learn through her relationship with Mandy that “relationships are really important and friendships are important and I know that especially coming back to school.” Her experience taught her the value of all of her friends and she believes she needs to cherish and nurture those relationships. As in Amy’s case, time off seemed to be a time when the counselors could bond the most with others. Mary reflected on what she and her friends would do on their time off:

... the interesting mix with people which was really fun, and then interact, we have two days off a week, one short day and one long day, um so that was the time when we could like bond and just go to waterfalls, or take hikes, or you know go see a movie or go out to dinner, so like definitely my days off were a huge time where I could like bond with the other counselors as peers instead of as like co-workers.

Karen also made her best friends at camp during her time off. Time off from camp gave the counselors a chance talk about camp freely, let off steam and learn about the other

staff members in a casual setting. Karen and her friends got very close during their time off:

I would have to say like that a lot of our big memorable moments have been days off because especially this summer, I made my best friends this summer. I got to know them last summer, I made them this summer. And so it was really good to have those same girls back together and get to go on days off and um just really like to go to random people's houses.

Karen went on to express how much her friendships mean to her and how far they are willing to go to see each other. The popularity of sites such as Facebook and MySpace has made staying in touch and keeping updated with each other much easier. For them, it makes getting together even more fun and easier to plan more often.

We talk probably about twice a month, we try to, Facebook is an awesome, awesome thing. It has been an awesome, awesome thing for us. Um, my first summer we didn't go see each other, we talked about it, but never did. [After] this summer we've seen each other three or four times already, like, it's only November. So we've made it a point. We've just become like best of friends and can talk about, like you said, about anything now.

The women feel as if these friends are their best friends. They are able to be open up and be themselves in front of them because they have seen them at their best and their worst.

New Connections

Friendships are not the only connections made at camp. These counselors not only interacted with their peers but with people who can be much older and much younger than them. Amy became close with two of her campers and remember fondly their fun in the cabin:

They were just crazy, kookie, off the wall. They thought they were ponies, but we got really close and Friday was just amazing because they drew me pictures and were like okay we're going to send you letters and just seeing how that relationship played out. And I ended up seeing them a couple of weeks ago when I was at work and they were just so excited to see me. And just knowing that I made a lasting impression on those girls and who knows how long that is going to last and they might not remember my name or remember what I look like, but they are going to remember, you know, that summer at camp when someone paid them a little special extra bit of attention.

She found that just as she was able to influence them, they were able to also influence her. She enjoyed knowing that she might be a positive influence in their lives "...the relationships I made with the girls and being able to influence them and just showing them a positive role model." Sanders found new connections in the other staff members. She was able to bond with them on a staff training rafting trip:

They always do a rafting trip and so that is always kind of fun and we have a little bit of training still in the morning, early on in the morning and

then before lunch they get us out and we head out and go for a raft trip so it ends on a really positive note, you know a big end to kind of bond everyone if you will.

Sanders did not get close to every staff member but she was able to connect with them because they shared the experience of rafting. She explained, “There’s going to be people that you don’t like or don’t get along with and that’s life.” She also went on to say that despite these things “I think anyone can work on learning to deal with people with all of our differences and being able to get along and finish things you know positively.”

Support

Making connections at camp provided these women with a support system in order to make it through the summer. Working at a camp can be frustrating, hard, and exhausting at times. Without the support of others, many of these women say they would not have lasted the summer. Karen explained why it was so important to have the connections at camp:

You have your high school friends, your college friends, and your camp friends. And your high school friends are the friends your mom made you [make], your college friends, you had a say in making them, you have four years to know them. And then you have your camp friends. You didn’t have a say in who they were, you were put in with these girls and you

have about two days to become best friends with them because you are going to need them for the next 10 weeks.

She understood that in order to have the support of her co-workers, a certain bond must be made. After Laurie's best friend had to leave camp, her new network helped her through a very difficult time:

She left and [we] lived in the same town and we had driven down to camp together and um I didn't want to be stranded without a vehicle I guess and I was just kind of a little weary of being 9 ½ hours away from home without a car so, um, I had to drive back to Virginia with her and then back to camp, um, within a matter of like 24 hours. So that was really challenging, um, it was really hard because I wasn't expecting her to have to leave. Um, so I drove back to camp by myself, um, it was a very long drive, it was very stressful and when I got back to camp at 10:00 the night before the second session of girls were coming and I didn't have a JC in my cabin yet ... so I basically had the entire cabin to get ready in a matter of 2-3 hours which is not a lot of time. So that was very challenging and I was very stressed out, um, but everyone was aware of my situation.

Everyone on the hill, everyone in the camp and a couple of cabin counselors came over and asked me if I needed any help and, um, people came over and helped me make my beds at 11:30 at night and they were really supportive. I didn't get a whole lot of sleep that night so I was finishing up everything and, um, when the girls came the next day I was

still really tired but I was running on adrenaline, I was really excited to have a new set of girls there, but it was really hard for me to be without my best friend there and I was still trying to cope with that, but a lot of people were aware of that, and that first day of being with her and running on no sleep and running under a lot of stress, people were very, very supportive to the point where I was, um, just overwhelmed with the kindness they were showing me.

After Laurie's friend left, she realized that she would need support elsewhere. She turned to her director for that support and after camp has continued to talk with her about her life decisions:

For me personally, Lilly and I would sit down about once every two weeks or so, and just have a [chat] ... sometimes it would just be a venting session where I would just vent about what I was worried about, but a lot of times she was giving me advice and helped me through what I needed to go through or ask if there were any questions that I had.

Asking for help was one of the hardest things for these women. They had to learn to trust and respect each other enough in order to ask for help. Amy learned the importance of "just having that support system and really learning that it's okay to go to other people for help and they're there and that's why were there was to support each other."

Overall each counselor believed the friends and connections they made at camp are lifetime connections. Despite differences, these women were able to find at least one person at camp who they felt they could be open with and trust. Even if the women did

not become close with everyone, they shared an experience that no one outside of it can understand.

Conclusion

When asked how she would describe camp, each counselor said it was almost unexplainable. Laurie said “I get really excited and basically the only way I can really describe it is to say it was the best experience of my life.” Mary shared a similar feeling about camp:

I love camp, I basically just say how much I love it. And if they ask me why, I tell them the people, you know, it’s just an incredible place to work, like the staff is amazing. Um, leadership really sets the tone for the rest of the counselors, um, and I just cannot...so much. Every day was so packed and so fun, it was just an awesome experience for me...

Alice also stated that trying to explain her experience is hard:

It really has become a second home. I feel like it’s the best thing I’ve ever done, um. But it’s hard, too, because a lot of times I feel like I don’t talk about the camp experience to people that don’t know camp because I don’t feel like you can really understand if you haven’t been in that environment you know and you don’t really like understand how much you go through in the summer and what it means to you.

Each of these women believe they had an unforgettable experience that they feel has changed them in a positive way. They feel as if they are ready for life after college and

know they can flourish because of their summer away. Their experience brought them closer to themselves in a way they had never experienced before. Each woman believed she will use her experience to help her in her endeavors for the rest of her life. Their experiences will help them in future employment and future social settings. They gained valuable job skills such as working with others, responsibility and leadership. The participants gained self-awareness and self-confidence that they believe will help them recognize their abilities and limits. Lastly, they believe their new social networks are going to stay with them the rest of their lives.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Summary

This study aimed to gain a greater understanding of camp counselors' experiences at residential camps by focusing on the following research question: from the perspective of the camp counselor, what is the experience of working at camp?

In the first chapter, the researcher gave a brief overview of some of the main concepts to be discussed in the literature review. The brief overview looked at the theory of emerging adulthood, the link between identity and work, and the link between working and camp and the development of identity. The researcher also presented the research question that guided my study.

In chapter two, the researcher presented in depth the theory of emerging adulthood and provided a view of cultural change in developed countries with regard to development. This cultural change has made the road of identity development longer and, therefore, the road to adulthood longer. Identity development is achieved through many ways, but work is a common way most emerging adults explore different identities. The chapter concluded with a brief discussion of emerging adults' work experiences and examined past studies of camp counselors.

Chapter three carefully laid out the conceptual framework for a phenomenology. From there, the chapter went on to discuss the methods necessary to conduct the study. These methods included how to sample a population and recruit participants, how to

conduct interviews for a phenomenology, and the process for discovering the themes buried in all of the data.

Chapter four revealed the themes and subthemes the researcher found within the raw data. It was discovered that no matter what kind of camp experience the participants had during their summer, each one felt working at camp added to their lives in some way. The main themes of career development, identity, and networks developed out of discussions about the counselors' lives before camp, during camp, and after camp.

The final chapter will summarize what was discovered about the experience of camp counselors at camp and after camp and its relevance to the current literature discussed in chapter two including a discussion of the methods and the limitations of those methods. Finally, the chapter will conclude with recommendations for future research.

Comparing and Distinguishing Findings of the Research with Prior Studies

Research on the work habits of emerging adults is focused on work choices and benefits of those choices as a whole rather than looking at the specific jobs of the age group (Arnett, 1998). More specifically, the research does not differentiate between males and females. Camp research about counselors looks mainly at training methods for staff and staff members' relationships and influence with campers and has not discussed the differences between male and female counselors. Because only women volunteered to participate, this study looked specifically at camp as a work environment for female counselors who are emerging adults. The data of this study are discussed below.

Emerging adulthood is a period of time when an individual is searching for independence and adulthood by accepting responsibility for one's self and by making independent decisions (Arnett, 2000). All of the women expressed how their camp environments enabled them to develop these attributes of growing up. Every one of them expressed that working with children and having responsibility for their well-being helped them gain responsibility for themselves. Each counselor learned she must have responsibility for her own actions because her actions have an affect on others. The women's self reflection made them realize they must take responsibility for themselves and display appropriate behaviors and habits because they are an influence on their campers. This responsibility for herself carried on after the end of camp. Each woman said she accepted responsibility for themselves in school, work, and relationships. They all learned that no one else is responsible for them doing their schoolwork or getting good grades or getting home safe or just getting up in the morning. They learned that they do not need lean on others for everything.

Much of the job of being a counselor for these women was making the large and small decisions that affected their lives and the lives of their campers. While the camp environment dictates a set of rules and a schedule, the participants had the freedom to make many decisions within those boundaries. These women cited that just deciding to work at camp was the first independent decision they had ever made. For many of them, the decision made them more independent of their parents as they no longer relied on them for summer housing or summer funding. Some of the participants cited that certain events at camp caused them to make the decision to stay at camp or to leave. They knew

that no matter which they chose, they would have to live with that choice because no one else could tell them what to do.

Independent decision making is also an important step in career development in creating career maturity, and thus moving into adulthood. Luzzo's (1995) study on gender differences in career maturity of college students reveals that women differ from men. The study found that female students had greater decision making skills than men and they showed a stronger correlation between attitudes about work and vocational aspirations as compared to men. It was also revealed that there was a difference between the men and women in career planning. Women approached getting a career with a well-planned method for attaining a certain career; the males approached getting a career with a less planned process to get to their desired career. However, because the women also perceived difficulty with attaining their career, financial planning and gender barriers, they were more motivated to make better plans for getting their desired careers (Luzzo, 1995). The camp environment allowed the participants to take those steps that transitioned them from emerging adults to adults. Taking responsibility for one's self and making independent decisions made them more self-sufficient.

Consistent with the research (Arnett, 2004), these women were looking for more in a summer job than something to just make money. Every woman in this study talked about ways working at camp has made a difference in themselves and different parts of their lives. Each felt as if she had learned something about herself, the work world and about relationships. Women with work experience in adolescence and emerging adulthood are more likely than women who do not work early in life to gain an

attachment to a career while working after college. They may be more likely to have the identity status of identity foreclosure rather than identity moratorium. Women with early work experience are more likely than women without work experience to attain careers and keep them at an earlier age (Alon et al., 2001). Work experience gained towards the end of college creates a more stable career for a woman. Gaining the work experience early also helps the likelihood of being hired. Women who have less work experience and inconsistent work experience may be considered unstable and less desirable by employers and are only able to find jobs with work that is itself unstable (Alon et al., 2001).

Most of the participants in the study chose to work at camp because of their career choice or major choice at school. The participants said they were looking for something more “than just a summer job.” It was a chance for them to experience a job before actually developing it as a career. The women in the study believed that working at camp only solidified their major and career choice and helped them with their career development plans. Many of them had chosen early in their college careers to major in education. These women thought that working with children in an education setting was what they wanted to do for the rest of their lives. The women said the job helped them use and refine many of the skills they had learned in the classroom about working with children and teaching children. For the other majors, their camp job also helped solidify the choice of working with children in a recreational or psychological setting. Early work experience in emerging adulthood helped these women develop career maturity.

Working at camp not only solidified their choices but also brought forward some realities about their choice to work with children. While working at camp they had to work with many different kinds of children from many different backgrounds. Many spoke of the trouble they had with a child or a group of children and after talking with their campers' parents, they began to understand the children's backgrounds. As a teacher, the participants will have to battle with their students' home lives. The participants also learned that part of working with children is that it can sometimes be heartbreaking.

Similar to research on internships (Eyler, 1995; Siegel & Rigsby, 2001), those who went back to student teaching after working at camp felt they were happier with their job and more energetic while doing it. They had been able to refine some of their skills and learn what skills they were best at. They were able to bring many of their new techniques to their classrooms. They also said they felt more confident in their abilities and used that for classroom control. This new confidence also extended to other jobs held by the participants.

In addition to feeling more confidence on the job, the participants mentioned they felt more confident in the classroom because they were able to relate a real world application to what they were learning in the classroom. This finding is consistent with the research done by Knouse, Tanner, and Harris (1999). Being able to triangulate between their new job skills, the classroom, and their career aspirations, has helped them focus their goals for after graduation.

For these women, working at camp seemed to have a great impact on their identity. As described in the identity theme, the participants explained that they felt a difference in themselves from before they worked at camp. They explained that their responsibilities and relationships helped them to learn more about themselves, and many of them were surprised by this development. The identity development of counselors seemed to stem from three areas: self-reflection, interactions with others, and the job.

Consistent with Arnett's emerging adulthood theory (2000), these counselors engaged in time of self-reflection or self-focus. Many of the participants mentioned that they often would sit and reflect on themselves and their actions. A common topic brought up in the interviews was that the women learned they had problems with needing to be in control of every situation. This self-reflection helped them let go of control in certain situations. This self-focus also helped them to change some habits for better daily living. Each participant was asked about life after camp once they had gone back to school. They each said that they became better at time management, had better study habits, and took better care of themselves. According to Arnett (2004), this is essential in order to gain an "understanding of who they are and what they want from life." (p. 13).

Part of being in the stage of emerging adulthood is meeting new people and expanding socially and professionally. Emerging adults are looking for networking opportunities and close relationships and want to experience a variety of relationships before choosing whom to make commitments (Collins & Van Dulmen, 2006). The participants said that if they had not worked at camp, they would not have met the people they did. These interactions with others helped the participants reflect on what kind of

person they wanted to be by deciding on the kinds of people they wanted to be friends with or have connections (Collins & Van Dulmen, 2006).

As discussed in Chapter 2, emerging adults try many jobs to find out what they are good at and what they enjoy (Arnett, 2000). Consistent with Marcia's (1980) classification system, the women in this study are in the stage of identity moratorium in that they are exploring different jobs and different skills through their work at camp but they have not made a full commitment to anything. The counselors felt as if they were learning about themselves by learning about what they did well. Working at camp had also opened them up to exploration in the areas of relationships and new ideas (Arnett, 2000). The women felt that through working at camp, they were able to meet others with different ideas and opinions than they held. This helped them to reflect on their own ideas and expand or change them. Some of the counselors spoke of a change in the activities they participated in while working at camp and after they went back to their after camp lives. Commonly, the counselors would spend their time off hiking or camping with their friends they had made at camp. Some noted that in school they never have a chance to get outside other than for regular exercise. Working at camp allowed the counselors the option to "commune" with nature and engage in the outdoors. Some of the participants are involved with different clubs and organizations at school or outside of school. They mentioned taking on more of a leadership position within in those organizations. They credited their experience at camp and learning better leadership skills and developing their confidence in order to take on new positions.

Future Research

Research on specific types of employment in emerging adulthood is sparse. Research on camp counselors as a whole is even more limited. Based on the methods and findings of this study there are several recommendations for future research concerning this topic. This study only looked at a female population. Future research should look at both a male and female population to compare and contrast the experiences. Another way to expand the research would be to replicate this study to include all types of residential camps and day camps, such as religious camps and activity-focused camps (ex: sports camps). A greater understanding of all types of counselors' perspectives will lead to a better understanding of the counselor experience. An inclusion of focus groups and interviews with the counselors' superiors to learn what the directors hope to give the counselors and what the counselors actually gain by working at camp. Focus groups will provide richer forms of data because the participants will be able to expand on each other's comments. These kinds of interviews will also help directors with their recruitment practices and training programs and tailor the information to fit the needs of the counselors. Research of this kind can also be used to evaluate training programs that are specifically designed for emerging adults.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited in the following ways: First, the participants were chosen because they were the ones who responded to their camp directors' emails. Second, the study was intended to include males, but the participants who responded to the emails

were all female. A comparison was not able to be made between male and female counselors. Third, most of the participants plan on being teachers after college. Different choices in majors may have provided even more support for working at camp as apart of career development. Last, not every interview could be done in person. The phone interviews did not allow recording of facial expressions. Facial expressions and hand jesters often help tell stories and give researchers and idea of that the participants feel is important.

Implications

The insights and understandings that surfaced as a result of the study have potential value for use in the camping industry. Specifically, knowledge about the impact of camp on the people who work there could help camps promote themselves as a serious choice for college students. Additionally, camps can begin to identify themselves to college students as places to learn and gain real world experiences instead as an alternative to summer school or summer internships. After recruiting, directors can use the knowledge gained to restructure their training programs to deal with the stresses they may have not known about. As camp directors well know, working at camp often brings many positive experiences in a very stressful environment. Understanding the experiences of the counselors can bring insight to the camp directors about what really happens at camp.

Conclusion

This study aimed to provide a greater understanding of female camp counselors' experiences at residential camps. It did this through using the participants' own words to provide a rich description of their experience while working at camp. Three major themes emerged from their interviews: career development, identity, and networks. Every counselor felt that working at camp benefited their lives and met their own needs and desires of learning responsibility for themselves, making independent decisions, and learning more about themselves contributing to their own identity development.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. What position did you hold at camp? What did your duties include?
2. What are some of your prior experiences working with youth?
3. What did you feel or see when you first arrived onto the camp property?
4. When you talk about your camp experience to your friends and family, what do you tell them?
5. What was the most surprising about your experience?
6. Tell me about your favorite programming experience. Tell me about the process to make that experience happen.
7. Tell me about staff training. What did the camp do to prepare you for your job?
8. Was there any continued training and can you give me examples of those trainings?
9. Did you feel prepared for the job? What parts of training really prepared you for your job.
10. What is your most memorable moment from camp?
11. What do you remember being the most challenging aspect of your job and how did you cope with that challenge?
12. Did the camp philosophy impact how you functioned as a staff member?
13. Tell me about some of the interactions you had with other staff members. What was your favorite? What was the most challenging?
14. What role has your camp experience played in this past year of school?
15. Has your experience influenced your choice of study or choice of occupation? If yes, how did it influence those choices?
16. How has the camp experience influenced your personal life?

17. In your opinion, does working at camp provide you with an experience necessary for future employment, and if so, how?

Appendix B

Letter to Camp Directors

| Dear Camp Director

Have you ever wondered what the camp experience is like through the eyes of your new staff? As a former staff member, this is an area of interest to me. Camp has been a summer tradition for me almost my whole life. I went through the ranks of camper to counselor and, finally, to director. My experiences at camp have led me to question if mine is the similar to others.

I know this is a busy time of year for you, so I'm only asking for a few minutes of your time. I'd like to collaborate with you to identify a few former staff that I could contact to participate in an interview. Together we can learn more about the staff impressions of the camp experience.

The Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management department at Clemson University has a commitment to conduct research and continually strives to create innovative projects that make a recognized contribution to the field. As a masters student in community recreation management my goal is not only innovative research but also to find strategies that contribute to the management of summer camps.

With the appeal of summer school, summer travel, and internships, camps have seen new competition in recruiting staff members. Camps must position themselves in a way to recruit and retain staff. A better understanding of the staff experience may provide camps with the knowledge necessary to more effectively recruit and retain staff. Gaining knowledge of the needs, desires, and abilities of the age group that camps try to appeal to will help with developing techniques for recruitment and staff training.

Research in the area of camps and particularly in the area of training is needed. According to Marge Scanlin of the American Camp Association "Research is needed in effective staff training strategies. We need to understand how to help young staff build leadership and positive peer relationships among campers. And we need to know if leadership development is a function of staff behavior or program structure." Understanding the experience of the camp counselor is essential to create effective training strategies.

I would like a list of your past staff members who meet certain criteria to ask them about their staff experience and training. Commitment of the staff member will include participation of a one to three hour interview session consisting of questions about his or her experiences as a counselor and particularly his or her experience with staff training. Results will be shared through articles for the camp professional community.

I'm looking for staff who are at least 18 years of age, and have worked no more than two years at any camp, and any prior camp experience was at a young age. The counselors must also be currently enrolled full time at a university.

I will be contacting you on _____ through both email and telephone to discuss the criteria for possible counselors. Your part in this research is crucial, but

not time intensive. All I need from you is a list. Results will be given to all participating camps at the end of the study. Thank you for your time and consideration in participation in this study.

Sincerely,
Stacey Marcus

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