8-2010

'FIRST WE CRAWLED, THEN WE WALKED, NOW WE WANT TO RUN': AN EXAMINATION OF THE TRANSITION PROCESSES USED BY INCLUSIVE CAMPS

Teresa Tucker
Clemson University, teresa@clemson.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/all_dissertations

Part of the Recreation, Parks and Tourism Administration Commons

Recommended Citation
Tucker, Teresa, "FIRST WE CRAWLED, THEN WE WALKED, NOW WE WANT TO RUN': AN EXAMINATION OF THE TRANSITION PROCESSES USED BY INCLUSIVE CAMPS" (2010). All Dissertations. 612.
https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/all_dissertations/612

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Dissertations at TigerPrints. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Dissertations by an authorized administrator of TigerPrints. For more information, please contact kokeefe@clemson.edu.
"FIRST WE CRAWLED, THEN WE WALKED, NOW WE WANT TO RUN": AN EXAMINATION OF THE TRANSITION PROCESSES USED BY INCLUSIVE CAMPS

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management

by
Teresa W. Tucker
August 2010

Accepted by:
Dr. Francis McGuire, Committee Chair
Dr. Denise Anderson
Dr. M. Deborah Bialeschki
Dr. Gwynn Powell
Dr. Paul Riccomini
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation was to examine the transition processes camps undergo when including campers with disabilities into the organized camp from the perspective of key individuals who championed inclusion. Despite research that supports inclusion and knowledge of best inclusive practices, few camps have implemented the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in a purposeful way. Understanding the components that facilitate a camp’s adoption of inclusion and the roles people play to facilitate the inclusion process can provide camp professionals guidelines to ensure all campers have a positive inclusive camp experience. In this phenomenological study, in-depth interviews were conducted with 10 participants from eight organized camps.

The first manuscript examines the components that facilitated the transition process of camps becoming inclusive as derived from the experiences of the key individuals involved in this process. Findings from this study indicate four components that facilitated the transition process: advocacy, capacity for iterative development, ‘keyed in’ staff, and recognition of limitations. These components were integral elements in the camps’ shift toward adopting and implementing an inclusive camp program.

The second manuscript examines the roles “champions” played in facilitating the adoption of inclusion at camp. Champions serve as catalyst in an organization’s willingness to adopt a new idea or innovation such as inclusion. Findings indicate that champions served the following roles: Champions as Negotiators, Champions as Visionaries, and Champions as Architects. Thus by understanding the various roles of
champions, camp professionals may gain greater insight into how to become champions of inclusion themselves.
DEDICATION

Camp has always been a profound and powerful experience in my life. Camp has not only guided my research and career but has shaped the very essence of who I am. This dissertation is dedicated to all of the camp staff and campers that I have had the privilege and pleasure of working and playing with over the last 20+ years. I have learned from them valuable lessons in patience, respect, acceptance, and dignity. My life is indeed richer and fuller because of my experiences with them.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I might be the sole author on this dissertation but it “takes a village” to complete one. This dissertation could not have been accomplished without the assistance and guidance of others. First I would like to thank Dr. Fran McGuire for all of his support and encouragement. He always pushed me to strive for excellence. He is an exceptional teacher and mentor. I would also like to thank my other committee members: Dr. Denise Anderson, Dr. Deb Bialeschki, Dr. Gwynn Powell, and Dr. Paul Riccomini. Each of them has been unselfish in their willingness to share their time and expertise. I truly appreciated their insights on research, camps, and inclusion.

Next I would like to thank my family and friends. When I arrived at Clemson I did not know a single person. Throughout my time here, I have come to know so many amazing people who have been kind, generous, and supportive. They provided encouragement, laughter, and reality checks when I needed them the most.

Finally, I would like to thank my partner, Sherry. I don’t think she realized what she was getting into when we first met. During the whole dissertation process, she knew exactly when I needed reassurance, space to work through an idea, or just a good “kick in the butt” to stop procrastinating. For me, she has been and continues to be an amazing source of support and love. I am truly grateful that she is in my life.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TITLE PAGE</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER

### I. INTRODUCTION ................................................................. 1

Leisure as a Human Right ............................................................ 2
Legislation, Leisure/Recreation, and Individuals with Disabilities ...... 4
Defining inclusion ............................................................................. 8
Theoretical Framework for Inclusive Context ..................................... 9
Camp as a Context for Inclusion ....................................................... 12
Statement of Problem ........................................................................... 17
Study Rationale .................................................................................... 18
Statement of purpose ............................................................................ 20
Definition ............................................................................................... 21
Organization of Dissertation .............................................................. 22

### II. MANSCRIPT #1: “FIRST WE CRAWLED, THEN WE WALKED, NOW WE WANT TO RUN”: AN EXAMINATION OF THE COMPONENTS FACILITATING THE INCLUSION PROCESS AT CAMPS CHAPTER TITLE ........................................ 23

Abstract ............................................................................................... 23
Literature Review .................................................................................. 27
Methods .................................................................................................. 35
Findings ................................................................................................... 42
Discussion ............................................................................................... 56
Conclusion .............................................................................................. 65
Table of Contents (Continued)

III. MANUSCRIPT #2: PORTRAIT OF AN INCLUSION CHAMPION: AN EXAMINATION OF ROLES CHAMPIONS PLAYED IN AN ORGANIZED CAMP’S ADOPTION OF AN INCLUSIVE PHILOSOPHY ..................................................... 68

Abstract .......................................................................................................................... 68
Literature Review ........................................................................................................... 72
Methods ......................................................................................................................... 77
Findings .......................................................................................................................... 84
Discussion ..................................................................................................................... 94
Conclusion .................................................................................................................... 101

IV. CONCLUSION ........................................................................................................ 103

Chapter Overview ........................................................................................................ 103
Implications for Professionals ...................................................................................... 103
Implications for Research ............................................................................................ 106
Future Research ........................................................................................................... 109
Conclusion .................................................................................................................... 110

APPENDICES .............................................................................................................. 112

A: Interview Guide ...................................................................................................... 113
B: Champion/Camp Profile Form ................................................................................. 115
C: IRB Informed Consent Form ...................................................................................... 116
D: Description of Camps ............................................................................................. 117

REFERENCES ............................................................................................................. 120
## LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description of Participants and Camps</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Description of Participants and Camps</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Description of Participants and Camps</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

“Can I play?” This is a familiar question heard on playgrounds and schoolyards throughout the country. We all have a right to play. We assume that if we pay our membership fee to the YMCA that we will get to enjoy the privileges of membership such as using the facilities and participating in programs. We assume that our children will be able to attend the same camp we did when we were younger. We assume that we can not only participate in programs at the local recreation center but that we are welcomed there as valued members of the community. We assume that regardless of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or ethnicity, everyone gets to play. Or do they?

There are over 54 million people in the United States who have some level of disability (Brault, 2008). According to the Department of Education, over six million children between the ages of 3-21 receive special education services. Yet how many individuals with disabilities truly have the same level of access and opportunities to participate in recreation and leisure as compared to individuals without disabilities? Ideally, leisure should be one aspect of life in which everyone is valued and welcomed.

This chapter outlines the concept of leisure as a right for all; legislation that supports and mandates the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in all aspects of community life including recreation; the definition of inclusion; a theoretical framework for inclusive recreation; camp as a context for inclusion; the statement of problem; the study rationale; the statement of purpose; and the organization of this dissertation.
Leisure as a Human Right

Plato and Aristotle contended that leisure and happiness are synonymous and are corollary to well being (Sylvester, 1992b). Leisure provides sustenance and substance for a life worth living. Leisure is not a diversion to fill time but time that is fulfilling due to its meaningfulness to the individual (Richter & Kaschalk, 1996). Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle equated leisure with virtue, knowledge, and happiness (Goodale & Godbey, 1988; Sylvester, 1992a). From an existential point of view leisure is freedom to become. Leisure is the freedom to discover and define oneself (Goodale & Godbey, 1988). Beyond self-discovery, leisure affords everyone the freedom to develop their capacities to the fullest. To be free is to realize one’s abilities and capacities as a human being to the fullest potential (Hemingway, 1978).

According to the concept of distributive justice, the freedom of becoming lies in the equitable distribution of opportunities and access to capacity development encompassing physical, spiritual, social, and cognitive domains (Hemingway, 1987). In other words, descriptive justice includes the following: everyone has the right to socially valued goods such as education, leisure, and health; everyone should at least reach a minimum level of goods (if not beyond) so as to ensure quality of life; and everyone should have access to acquiring these goods (Hemingway, 1987). An important caveat of distributive justice is that no one loses out in a share of these goods. By bringing everyone up to the minimum level and beyond, we all benefit as individuals and as a society. In fact, Hemingway takes it a step further by stating that if people become deprived of these socially valued goods, not only are individuals deprived of
opportunities for expression and growth but society too is deprived of the unique contributions these people could have made (Hemingway, 1987). According to Hemingway’s description of distributive justice, everyone, regardless of whether or not she/he has a disability, is entitled to an equitable share in benefits and obligations afforded by society which includes leisure (Hemingway, 1987).

Along with the idea that leisure is the freedom to become, the importance and benefits of leisure cannot be underestimated. According to the World Leisure Recreation Association (1990), leisure offers opportunities for personal, social, and community growth. Leisure can promote international cooperation and understanding as well as influences quality of life for all. Furthermore, Moore and Driver (2005) compiled a comprehensive list of benefits of leisure based on an extensive review of scientific studies. In commenting on this list, Moore and Driver (2005) stated:

“A close inspection shows that the listed benefits pervade all aspects of human behavior and performance including mental and physical health; family and community relations; self-concept; personal value clarification; perceived personal freedom; sense of fitting in; understanding local, community, and national historical events and cultural characteristics; pride in one’s community and nation; learning of many types; performance in school and at work; sharing; ethnic identity; identities formed with sports and sport teams; formation of close friendships and systems of social support; spiritual definition; renewal, and facilitation; involvement in community affairs; local community cohesion and stability; environmental understanding and stewardship; and economic development, growth, and stability” (p. 28).

Leisure can provide opportunities for individuals in marginalized groups a means to assert their interests, needs, and voices (Henderson, Bedini, & Bialeschki, 1993). It is one thing to state that leisure is a right but often quite another, especially for individuals
with disabilities, to exercise that right. Historically people with disabilities, along with other marginalized groups, have not experienced this freedom in leisure. Some leisure scholars have characterized leisure as “perceived freedom”. However “perceived freedom” is a poor facsimile to actual freedom. It would be analogous to saying that a person exerts her/his freedom by participating in a segregated recreation program at the local community center. However, if a segregated program is the only choice a person has, are they truly free?

Oftentimes society does not seem to take into consideration the needs, wants, strengths, and desires of people with disabilities in relationship to leisure. Allison and Hibbler (2004) found that few recreation agencies had a systematic and integrated approach to addressing the needs of marginalized groups. When it comes to the allocation of resources, the “squeaky wheel gets the grease.” Unfortunately, the voices of individuals with disabilities are not often heard (Allison & Hibbler, 2004). Recreation and leisure is such an ingrained reality in our lives that we often take it for granted and underestimate its importance and relevance to our quality of life. Given the relationship of leisure to an individual’s well-being, are individuals with disabilities afforded the same opportunities and access to leisure?

**Legislation, Leisure/Recreation, and Individuals with Disabilities**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 is the most significant piece of legislation specifically addressing the civil rights of individuals with disabilities. The ADA mandates that individuals with disabilities cannot be discriminated against in areas such as housing, employment, transportation, health care, and recreation. ADA further
acknowledges that having a disability should not diminish the access and opportunities to participate fully in leisure and recreation.

For leisure and recreation professionals, parts 2 and 3 of ADA are the most relevant. Part 2 of ADA, Public Services and Transportation, outlines how public services must be accessible to individuals with disabilities. For example, city and county recreation departments must provide equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities to participate in any of the programs offered. If necessary, these departments must also provide “reasonable accommodations” to enable participation.

Similarly, Section 3 of ADA, Public Accommodations, prevents private entities that are open to the public from discriminating against people with disabilities. All facilities and programs must be “readily accessible” to individuals with disabilities. The implication is that private agencies/organizations must provide accessibility unless doing so would cause an “undue burden.” In the past, private organizations have used the “undue burden” clause as a rationale for not remodeling facilities or restructuring programs to include individuals with disabilities. The intent of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 is to provide both physical and programmatic access to services and facilities throughout the community for individuals with disabilities (Schleien, Ray, & Green, 1997). Individuals with disabilities have the right to equal opportunity to participate in recreation programs even when a segregated program or facility exists (Block, 1995).

In the same year as the passage of ADA, the Education of All Handicapped Act of 1975 underwent reauthorization. With this reauthorization, the name of this piece of
legislation was renamed Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Under IDEA, persons between the ages of 3 to 21 years of age are afforded the right to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) within the least restrictive environment (LRE). IDEA, along with subsequent reauthorizations in 1997 and 2004, provides students with equal access to the general curriculum. To support students with disabilities, IDEA makes provisions for “related services” such as speech therapy and nursing services.

Unbeknownst to many teachers and parents, students with disabilities can receive recreation service support under the category of “related services”. IDEA states that once a student with a disability reaches 16, a transitional plan is to be developed and initiated. The transition plan is designed to facilitate the movement of the student from the school community to the community at large. Objectives in a student’s transition plan can focus on developing skills in areas of employment, daily living, and of being a part of a community, including the development of recreation and leisure skills and knowledge on how to access recreation opportunities in the community.

An underlying intent of IDEA is that inclusive practices in schools should go beyond accomplishing academic and behavioral tasks within the classrooms. Students with disabilities should be included in a wide variety of activities throughout the entire school day. In addition to promoting academic success, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004) promotes physical, functional, and social inclusion for students with disabilities. With IDEIA, the provision of supplementary aids and services is also guaranteed for extracurricular and nonacademic settings. Court cases such as *Gaskin v. Pennsylvania* reinforced that inclusion is not restricted to academics.
An outcome of the settlement agreement in *Gaskin v. Pennsylvania* was that schools must display materials reflecting that all students are welcomed. This case supports the social inclusion of students with disabilities. Even with such a large emphasis on improving academic performance of students with disabilities, socialization is recognized as an integral and critical part of the school day. Social inclusion relates to individuals with disabilities having a sense of belonging and acceptance in a given environment. Social inclusion occurs when individuals with disabilities are treated as valued members of the community.

Play, recreation, and other social settings afford opportunities for students without disabilities to learn to accept their peers with disabilities (Scholl, Smith, & Davison, 2005). Social contact through inclusive recreation is an effective mechanism for improving attitudes towards students with disabilities by providing a context that bridges barriers of acceptance between individuals with and without disabilities in connecting people to people (Devine, 2004; Shank, Coyle, Boyd, & Kinney, 1996).

The intention of both ADA and IDEIA is to break down barriers, to dispel stereotypes, and to reaffirm that individuals with disabilities are valued, welcomed, and included in every aspect of society. However, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the civil rights legislation for people with disabilities, did not become law until 36 years after the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The right for children with disabilities to have free and equal access to education (PL94-142) has only been enacted since 1975. As far as rights go, individuals with disabilities have been low on the priority list in this country. Having
a disability should not exclude, interfere, or lessen the ability of a person to exercise her/his right to leisure (Hemingway, 1987; Sylvester, 1992b).

**Defining Inclusion**

An essential component to this study is the understanding and the conceptualization of the term “inclusion.” Webster’s Dictionary defines inclusion as “being a member of a larger whole: to encompass or embrace as part of a whole.” In the broadest sense, inclusion is a philosophy that promotes diversity, respect, and acceptance by valuing the abilities of all. Inclusion describes a concept beyond just having individuals with disabilities and without disabilities occupying the same physical space. Inclusion also encompasses social aspects of being a valued part of group or community (Smith & Hilton, 1997). Schleien, Ray, and Green (1997) defined inclusion as when individuals with disabilities are actively engaged in meaningful participation alongside peers without disabilities in age appropriate activities. Meaningful participation constitutes more than the mere appearance of individuals with and without disabilities occupying the same space. With meaningful participation, individuals with and without disabilities interact with one another in a shared activity. These activities should be age-appropriate regardless of where an individual is developmentally. For example, duck-duck- goose is an age appropriate activity for 5 yr olds but not a 15 yr old with a disability. When a 15 year old with a disability plays duck-duck–goose, that individual is perceived as being more child-like and less competent by peers.

More specific to recreation, “inclusion refers to empowering persons who have disabling conditions to become valued and active members of their communities through
sociocultural involvement in community-based leisure opportunities” (Sylvester, Voelkl, & Ellis, 2001, p. 223). Anderson and Kress (2003) further delineated the characteristics of inclusion which include acceptance and appreciation of others, accessible facilities for all, potential development of friendships through shared interests, availability of necessary accommodations and supports for all, and the creation of an environment where everyone is valued and welcomed.

**Theoretical Framework for Inclusive Context**

Although legislation supporting inclusion is an important first step towards acceptance of people with disabilities, social inclusion is difficult to cultivate. In order for effective inclusion to occur, inclusionary practices must also be based in context of a theoretical framework. Sylvester (1992b) stated that leisure and recreation theories can impact individuals with disabilities in the following ways: the possibility of improved leisure functioning, access to leisure opportunities, the right to leisure, and overall quality of life.

One of the major barriers for the inclusion of people with disabilities is the attitude of the public (Shank, Coyle, Boyd & Kinney, 1996). A role of inclusive leisure contexts is to bridge barriers of acceptance between people with and without disabilities by connecting people to people (Devine, 2004). Social contact through inclusive recreation can be the most effective mechanism for improving attitudes towards people with disabilities (Shank et al, 1996). Contact theory provides a framework for creating inclusive recreation for individuals with disabilities.
Based in social psychology, contact theory examines the correlation between interactions and attitudes. Particularly, it addresses intergroup contact as a means to reduce prejudice. In his groundbreaking work, The *Nature of Prejudice*, Allport (1954) states the criteria needed in an intergroup situation to promote a positive change in attitudes. According to Allport (1954), certain conditions must be present for social contact between different groups of people lead to favorable outcomes. Interactions that promote equal status for all individuals, promote the pursuit of common goals, promote cooperation over competition, and receive strong support by relevant authorities are the conditions stated by Allport (1954) that need to be present for positive attitudinal change.

The assumption cannot be made that contact alone will reduce prejudice. Amir (1968) pointed out that in order to achieve positive results for intergroup relations through contact, the conditions must be suitable to bring about the change. The direction of change depends on these conditions. Favorable conditions tend to reduce prejudice while unfavorable conditions can actually increase intergroup tensions and prejudice (Amir). Contact that is familiar and interpersonal, rather than unfamiliar and abstract, can contribute to more positive intergroup attitudes and social acceptance (Brewer & Kramer, 1985). Along with the original conditions proposed by Allport (1954), “friendship potential” is a necessary condition in the application of contact theory. Friendship potential, the fifth optimal condition, is characterized by the opportunity for members of the intergroup to become friends through close contact, self disclosure, and extensive and repeated contact (Pettigrew, 1998).
When a change of perception is desired, such as the case for inclusive leisure, contact theory can be utilized to explain and predict outcomes. Environments for leisure activities can be structured by recreation professionals so that people with and without disabilities can interact interdependently with frequent, meaningful contact (Devine & Wilhite, 1999). Anderson and Brown-Kress (2003) outlined principles, derived from contact theory, for structuring social integration of individuals with and without disabilities in recreation activities. These principles included: frequent and consistent opportunities to get acquainted (e.g., ice breakers), equal status (e.g., everyone contributes), mutual goals (e.g., team spirit), cooperation and interdependence (e.g. each person is an active part of the whole), receiving accurate information (e.g., create an atmosphere of open communication), and fair and tolerant norms (e.g., don’t “over help”). Ultimately, these principles promoted inclusion as well as friendship development.

In trying to understand the culture of social acceptance based on an understanding of social structures and behaviors, Devine (2004) conducted a study about inclusion from the viewpoint of individuals with disabilities. Findings from this study suggested mixed results in the role of an inclusive leisure context in social acceptance of individuals with disabilities (Devine 2004). Additionally, Devine and O’Brien (2007) conducted a study examining the utilization of contact theory at an inclusive camp. The purpose of this study was to understand the conditions of an inclusive experience as they relate to the quality of contact between campers with and without disabilities. Campers with and without disabilities were interviewed to gain their perspective of how the nature of
contact influenced their camp experience. The findings from this study indicated that the relationship between the quality of contact and the inclusive camp experience is very complex (Devine & O’Brien). The researchers found that the behaviors and attitudes of the camp staff, along with the nature of contact (structured or unstructured) had significant influence as to the campers’ perception of an inclusive camp experience (Devine & O’Brien).

Research on contact theory indicates that it can be an effective framework in promoting positive attitudes towards different groups. However research on contact theory as a framework for facilitating inclusive recreation experiences is somewhat limited. Contact theory is utilized as a rationale as to why camps were chosen as the specific context for this study. Camps have the potential to exhibit the essential components outlined in contact theory that can contribute to the creation of inclusive environments.

**Camp as a Context for Inclusion**

Taking into consideration the conditions outlined by contact theory as a framework for inclusive recreation, camp has the potential to possess, foster and support both physical and social inclusion. The American Camp Association (ACA), the predominant professional association and resource for camp professionals and organized camps, defines camp as:

“A sustained experience which provides a creative, recreational and educational opportunity in group living in the out-of-doors. It utilizes trained leadership and the resources of the natural surroundings to
contribute to each camper’s mental, physical, social and spiritual growth”


Camps utilize nature, community, and engagement in concert to achieve the goals of positive developmental growth.

In the introduction to Camp Camp: Where Fantasy Island meets Lord of the Flies, Roger Bennett stated that camp is such a different experience because it was “expressly designed to make sure everyone became part of a community” (Bennett & Shell, 2008, p.9). The concept of “community” denotes physical proximity with the creation of social capital. Social capital refers to “the connections among individuals-social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (Putnam, 2000, p. 19). Chenery (1993) asserted that camp is a community that represents the larger community on a more human scale. This creation of community and social capital at camp is fostered through the promotion of equal status, support by authority, cooperative experiences, mutual goals, and the intense and intimate nature of contact between campers and staff and between each other.

The concept of community goes beyond just sharing a cabin and includes stability, structure, positive norms and expectations. Researchers have found that camp provided a common ground where children developed shared meanings through participation and social learning thus facilitating the emergence and maintenance of community and social capital (Yuen, Pedlar, & Mannell, 2005). Campers gained an understanding of trust and cooperation through their experiences at camp (Yuen et al., 2005).
Camp is a sustained experience where people live, eat, sleep, and play together for an extended period of time. Summer camp is anything but a casual affair. Time together provides opportunities for friendships and a sense of community to develop. Because camp is a sustained experience, contact between peers is not superficial but rather deep and genuine in character. Along with a sustained experience, group living is a basic tenet of camp. Campers are put into group situations (cabin living, activity groups, group initiatives, ropes courses, etc.) where they learn to communicate, problem solve and cooperate with others, oftentimes with people they did not know before camp.

Camp’s effective use of group process can serve as a mechanism to mediate change and promote positive developmental growth. In a study looking at the use of camps as a context for social work interventions, the researchers found that campers’ social competence, self-confidence, and self-esteem increased after their experience at camp (Mishna, Michalski & Cummings, 2001). Because of the group nature of camp, campers also experienced a decreased sense of isolation. In ACA’s Directions study (2005), parents and staff, as well as campers, reported that the camp community offered an environment where campers become more equipped in making new friends and in getting along with others (Henderson, Schuler, Bialeschki, Scanlin, & Thurber, 2007). Research on social skills development at camp has yielded similar results. In a study on pre-adolescent youth, scores in the area of interpersonal skills such as cooperation, trust, and respect significantly increased for youth who participated in camp as compared to those who had not (Reefe, 2006). Group living in a camp context offers opportunities for
children and youth to build and cultivate relationships with their peers in a supportive environment.

Camp is a culture unto itself where the symbiotic relationship between the camper and camp community enhances a camper’s growth process. ACA’s Directions study (2005) found that in a weeklong camp experience (at least five days), campers experienced growth in the domains of positive identity, social skills, physical and thinking skills, and positive values and spirituality. Trained leadership is an essential part of camp and the creation of the camp community situates the camp experience. Time spent on training averages approximately 60 hours before campers even arrive at camp (Henderson, et al., 2007). Furthermore, the average counselor to camper ratio is 1:4 which is virtually unheard of in schools and most other youth programs (Henderson et al, 2007).

The interaction between campers and counselors is a major contributing factor to a meaningful camp experience for campers (Taniguchi, Widmer, & Duerden, 2007). These interactions facilitated campers re-evaluating their own potential. Counselors are not merely present but serve as role models, mentors, and confidants for campers. Researchers also found that camps’ greatest strength, as reported by campers, was in the area of supportive relationships with adults (ACA, 2006a). Supportive relationships and quality of contact with counselors was found to significantly contribute to a camper’s sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ramsing & Sibthorp, 2008).

Conventional wisdom would lead most to believe that camps naturally provide an experience where campers grow; however “camp is not inherently good without
purposeful and directed efforts by camp professionals” (Bialeschki, Henderson, & James, 2007, p. 770). Campers grow, and in some cases blossom, because of the intentionality of the camp programming and staff based on the camp’s philosophy and mission. Camp directors are perceived by staff, parents, and campers alike as a major authority figure at camp. They are often the ones who set the “tone” for the camp season. Furthermore, camp directors not only convey the mission and philosophy of the camp but are held accountable in implementing the camp’s philosophy and mission. Camp professionals such as directors and administrators support and guide the camp experience for campers and staff. This support from authority is a key condition outlined in contact theory that can influence positive attitudinal change between two groups.

Camps are contexts that are purposefully designed for the developmental growth of campers across physical, social, cognitive, and affective domains. Traditional camps offer experiences such as group living, team building initiatives, and opportunities for skill development. These experiences tend to foster interdependence, mutual goals and active involvement where all campers are viewed as essential contributors to the camp community. Because campers spend an intense amount of time together in the continual presence of trained leadership, camps present campers opportunities to develop relationships and connections with one another. Given the nature of camp, it can be an effective context to maximize the likelihood for the inclusion of individuals with disabilities.
Statement of Problem

The right to participate and to have access and opportunities for leisure is a human, as well as legal right. Both ADA and IDEIA implicitly and explicitly mandate the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in all aspects of society including leisure and recreation. Traditionally individuals with disabilities have had limited access and opportunities to leisure and recreation, thus restricting the acquisition of benefits that recreation offers to all in terms of quality of life. Inclusive recreation greatly expands opportunities for individuals with disabilities to experience leisure and serves as a mechanism to reduce prejudice and dispel stereotypes of individuals with disabilities.

Research on inclusion has demonstrated that inclusive recreation provides benefits for individuals with and without disabilities. These benefits include: acquisition of lifelong recreation and leisure skills; greater understanding and acceptance of others; increased communication skills; increased independence; preparation for a more global and diverse society; and other physical, cognitive, affective, and social benefits (Devine, 2006; Schleien et al, 1997). In specifically examining inclusive camps, the National Inclusive Camp Project (NICP) found that both inclusive resident and day camps provided similar benefits to campers with and without disabilities (Brannan, Fullerton & Arick, 2000). Utilizing the conditions outlined in contact theory, the nature and structure of the camp experience can provide an important context as well as increased opportunities for social and physical inclusion.

Despite research that supports the benefits of inclusion and knowledge of best practices and models, inclusion as an innovation/philosophy has not been embraced at the
national level in the organized camp profession. At the onset of the National Inclusive Camp Project (NICP) only 7% of ACA camps self-identified as “inclusion/mainstreaming” in their camp profile (Brannan, et al, 2003).

“Inclusion/mainstreaming” is the term used by the ACA to classify camp programs that serve campers with and without disabilities. However, the ACA does not provide a definition for this term thus leaving the term open for interpretation by camp administrators. Since the results of this study were released in 2000, the percentage of ACA camps that self-identified as “inclusion/mainstreaming” has remained unchanged (ACA, 2008). There is a need to understand how to diffuse and implement the philosophy of inclusion on a grander scale.

**Study Rationale**

Inclusion of individuals with disabilities is a “wicked” problem due to its philosophical and value laden nature. Wicked problems tend to be socially complex, highly controversial, and difficult to define. Additionally, solutions to wicked problems tend to require non-linear thinking with stakeholders to negotiate understanding and shared meaning about possible solutions (Patterson, 1998). Further compounding the wickedness of inclusion is that this concept could be considered an innovation. An innovation is “an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption” (Rodgers, 1995, p11). The newness of an idea or practice is not necessarily contingent on longevity of knowledge, although inclusion of individuals with disabilities is relatively new to the field of recreation and organized camping. The newness of an idea is based primarily on the individual’s perception (Rodgers, 1995).
According to Rodgers (1995), an idea or innovation such as inclusion has a difficult time getting widely adopted even in the presence of supportive research and knowledge of best practices. Diffusion is the “process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among members of a social system” (Rodgers, 1995, p 5). The diffusion of an innovation cannot be assumed to be a passive process of following a model or understanding best practices. More than likely, diffusion is a process where the structure and function of a social system such as camp is altered through negotiation and communication with stakeholders (Rodgers, 1995).

One reason why the diffusion of new ideas often fails is because of the failure to attract a champion. Innovation champions are critical to the successful diffusion of an innovation (Howell, 2005). Innovation champions are leaders who have the social, political, and/or interpersonal knowledge to influence the acceptance of innovative change (Glynn, 1996). They serve as a catalyst for the dissemination of new ideas and practices. For the purposes of this study, a “champion of inclusion” is an individual associated with a camp who facilitated the transition and implementation of an inclusive paradigm into an established camp.

Interestingly enough, most individuals do not evaluate the merits of an innovation based solely on research but rather often rely upon a subjective evaluation of an innovation that is communicated from other individuals like themselves who have previously adopted the innovation (Rodgers, 1995). “More effective communication occurs when two individuals are homophilous. When they share common meanings, a mutual subculture language, and are alike in personal and social characteristics, the
communication of ideas is likely to have greater effects in terms of knowledge gain, attitude formation and change, and overt behavior change” (Rodgers, 1995, p.19).

Homophily is similar to empathy in relation to one’s ability to project oneself into the role of another. Thus by understanding the experiences of champions of inclusion who facilitated the transition process, camp leaders and professionals of segregated programs can better understand how to become champions themselves and to identify and negotiate challenges with transitioning towards becoming an inclusive camp. The rationale for this study is to gain more insight into the transitional process that camp undergo when adopting inclusion from the champions’ insider perspective.

Statement of Purpose

Ideally, leisure should be one aspect of life in which everyone is valued and welcomed. A major driving force of this study is the desire to understand how to create an environment where campers with disabilities feel included in the camp experience. The purpose of this study is to examine the transition process of camps moving toward a more inclusive philosophy from the perspective of key individuals or “champions” that were responsible for the camps’ adoption and implementation of inclusion. In-depth information about the personal and environmental/situational contexts from the experiences of these “champions of inclusion” can provide a unique perspective on how camps become inclusive.

This study will address the following research questions:

Overall research question: What is the process for change needed to facilitate camps adopting and implementing inclusion?
Manuscript #1: What components facilitated the transition process of camps becoming inclusive?

Manuscript #2: What were the roles “champions” played in facilitating the adoption of inclusion at an organized camp?

By answering the research question and subsequent topical sub-questions, this study will contribute to the understanding of the transition process of camps becoming inclusive. Understanding the transition process from an insider’s viewpoint might assist other camp professionals with becoming more inclusive of campers with disabilities.

Definitions

The following definitions are used for the purposes of this study:

Camp: “A sustained experience which provides a creative, recreational and educational opportunity in group living in the out-of-doors. It utilizes trained leadership and the resources of the natural surroundings to contribute to each camper’s mental, physical, social and spiritual growth” (ACA, 1998, p. 89).

Champion: leaders who have the social, political, and/or interpersonal knowledge to influence the acceptance of innovative change (Glynn, 1996).

Diffusion: “process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among members of a social system” (Rodgers, 1995, p 5)

Inclusion: an on-going process where individuals with disabilities participate in a meaningful way in age appropriate activities and environments alongside their peers without disabilities (Schleien et al, 1997).
Innovation: “an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption” (Rodgers, 1995, p11).

**Organization of Dissertation**

This dissertation combines parts of a traditional dissertation with an article format. Chapter 1 serves as the introduction, abbreviated literature review and overview of this study. Chapter 2 is a proposed article for submission to a peer-reviewed journal. The purpose of this article is to examine the components that facilitated the transition process of camps becoming inclusive as derived from the experiences of the key individuals involved in this process. Chapter 3 is also a proposed article for submission to a peer-viewed journal. The purpose of this article is to examine the roles that champions play in facilitating the adoption of inclusion at an organized camp. Chapter 4 is a conclusion chapter bringing together material from both articles and how they are related to the overall research question. This chapter will also provide some recommendations for practitioners and researchers. Finally, four appendices have been included. Appendix A is the interview guide. Appendix B is the Champion/Camp profile form. Appendix C is the IRB approval form. Appendix D is a description of the camps used for this study.
CHAPTER TWO (MANUSCRIPT #1)

“FIRST WE CRAWLED, THEN WE WALKED, NOW WE WANT TO RUN”:
AN EXAMINATION OF THE COMPONENTS FACILITATING
THE INCLUSION PROCESS AT CAMPS

Abstract

Historically, people with disabilities have had limited access and opportunities to participate in leisure and recreation. Inclusive recreation can expand opportunities for individuals with disabilities to experience leisure and serve as a mechanism to reduce prejudice and dispel stereotypes (Devine, 2004; Shank, Coyle, Boyd & Kinney, 1996). Research on inclusive recreation has primarily focused on the outcomes of inclusion and the examination of inclusive practices. However, there has been limited research on inclusive recreation that relates to the development of contexts that break down attitudinal barriers and promote social inclusion. Using the conditions outlined in contact theory, camp experiences can provide an important context for social and physical inclusion (Allport, 1954). Despite research that supports inclusion and best inclusive practices, few organized camps have implemented inclusion into their programs. The purpose of this study was to examine the components that facilitated the transition process of camps becoming inclusive as derived from the experiences of the key individuals involved in this process. For this phenomenological study, in-depth interviews were conducted with 10 participants from eight organized camps. Findings from this study indicate four components that facilitated the transition process: advocacy, capacity for iterative development, ‘keyed in’ staff, and recognition of limitations. Practical implications for professionals are discussed.
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 is the most significant piece of legislation specifically addressing the civil rights of individuals with disabilities. The intent of the ADA is to provide individuals with disabilities with access to facilities, programs, and services offered in the community (Schleien, Ray & Green, 1997). This “access” encompasses a number of areas such as communication and transportation as well as community recreation and leisure services. Individuals with disabilities have the right to equal opportunity to participate in recreation programs even when a segregated program or facility exists (Block, 1995). Having a disability should not prevent, interfere with, or lessen the ability of a person to exercise her/his right to leisure (Hemingway, 1987; Sylvester, 1992).

A way for recreation and leisure organizations to increase access and opportunities for people with disabilities is organizations to provide inclusive recreation. In the broadest sense, inclusion is a philosophy that promotes diversity, respect, and acceptance by valuing the abilities of all. Inclusion describes a concept beyond just having individuals with disabilities and without disabilities occupying the same physical space. Inclusion also encompasses the social aspects of being a valued part of a group or community (Smith & Hilton, 1997). More specifically, inclusion is defined as when individuals with disabilities are actively engaged in meaningful participation alongside peers without disabilities in age appropriate activities (Schleien, Ray, & Green, 1997). In meaningful participation individuals with and without disabilities interact with one another in a shared activity. These activities should be age-appropriate regardless of where an individual is developmentally. Anderson and Kress (2003) further delineated
the characteristics of inclusion as acceptance and appreciation of others, accessible facilities, potential development of friendships through shared interests, availability of necessary accommodations and supports, and the creation of an environment where everyone is valued and welcomed.

One of the major barriers for the inclusion of people with disabilities is the attitude of the public (Shank et al., 1996). Play, recreation, and other social settings provide people without disabilities opportunities to learn to accept their peers with disabilities (Scholl, Smith & Davison, 2005). Social contact through inclusive recreation was found to be an effective mechanism for improving attitudes towards individuals with disabilities by providing a context that bridges barriers of acceptance between individuals with and without disabilities in connecting people to people (Devine, 2004; Shank et al., 1996).

For over 100 years, organized camps have contributed to the developmental growth of campers. Research reinforces camp as an important context for growth across physical, social, cognitive, and affective domains (ACA, 2005; Bialeschki, Henderson & James, 2007; Garst & Barry, 2003; Henderson, Bialeschki, Thurber, Schuler & Marsh, 2007). Despite the diverse nature of different camps, the overarching mission of camp is to assist youth in becoming successful and contributing adult members of society (Bialeschki et al., 2007). Campers, regardless of camp type or affiliation, become immersed in a “compressed world with its own rhythm and tradition” (Bennett & Shell, 2008, p. 12). Through the use of a sustained experience, group living, and trained leadership, camp creates a community that is sensitive to the developmental needs of its
members with the intent of enhancing the camper’s growth process. Furthermore, the community aspect of camp fosters an atmosphere in which the development of social capital provides campers with a foundation for learning how to be a part of a community as well as how to contribute to the greater community (Yuen, Pedlar & Mandell, 2005). Camps have the potential to possess, foster and support both physical and social inclusion. However there is limited research on how inclusion is accomplished at camps.

Research on inclusion has demonstrated that inclusive recreation provides benefits for individuals with and without disabilities. In specifically examining inclusive camps, the National Inclusive Camp Project (NICP) found that both inclusive resident and day camps provided similar benefits to campers with and without disabilities (Brannan, Fullerton, Arick, Robb & Bender, 2003). These benefits include: acquisition of lifelong recreation and leisure skills; increased knowledge and acceptance of others, increased communication skills; increased independence; preparation for a more global and diverse society; and other physical, cognitive, affective, and social benefits (Devine, 2006; Schleien et al, 1997).

Despite the research that supports the benefits of inclusion for campers with and without disabilities, inclusion has not been embraced at the national level in the organized camp profession. At the onset of the National Inclusive Camp Project (NICP) in 1997 only 7% of ACA camps self-identified as “inclusion/mainstreaming” in their camp profile (Brannan et al, 2003). Since the release of the NICP results in 2000, the percentage of ACA camps that self-identified as “inclusion/mainstreaming” has remained unchanged (ACA, 2008). In order for more camps to become inclusive, there is a need to
understand how to implement the philosophy of inclusion on a grander scale within the camp profession. The purpose of this study was to examine the components that facilitated the transition process of camps becoming inclusive as derived from the experiences of the key individuals involved in this process.

**Literature Review**

*Theoretical Framework: Contact Theory*

Although legislation supporting inclusion is an important first step towards acceptance of people with disabilities, social inclusion is difficult to cultivate. In order for inclusion to occur, inclusionary practices must also be based in the context of a theoretical framework. Considering inclusive recreation can be an effective mechanism for improving attitudes towards people with disabilities (Shank, Coyle, Boyd & Kinney, 1996), contact theory can provide a framework for creating inclusive recreation for individuals with disabilities.

Based in social psychology, contact theory examines the relationship between interactions and attitudes through intergroup contact as a means to reduce prejudice. “Whatever makes for…more intimate acquaintance is likely to make for increased tolerance…[T]rue acquaintance lessens prejudice” (Allport, 1954, p.489). As outlined in contact theory, the intergroup contact needs to occur in a situation that possesses specific criteria designed to facilitate an increase in positive attitudes between the groups (Allport). Social contact between different groups of people can lead to favorable outcomes when the interactions promote equal status for all individuals, promote the
pursuit of common goals, promote cooperation over competition, and receive strong support by relevant authorities.

In trying to structure equal status relationships, it is important to provide opportunities for reversing prior status differences without reinforcing them (Brewer & Kramer, 1985). Likewise, superordinate goals (common goals) make contact effective in reducing prejudice and group tensions as long as goals are not to the disadvantage of the outgroup (Amir, 1968). Contact that is familiar and interpersonal, rather than unfamiliar and abstract, can contribute to more positive intergroup attitudes and social acceptance.

Along with the original conditions proposed by Allport (1954), Pettigrew (1998) proposed “friendship potential” as a necessary condition in the application of contact theory. Friendship potential, the fifth optimal condition, is characterized by the opportunity for members of the intergroup to become friends through close contact, self disclosure, and extensive and repeated contact.

When a change of attitude is desired, such as the case for inclusive leisure, contact theory can be utilized to explain and predict outcomes. Environments for leisure activities can be structured by recreation professionals so that people with and without disabilities can interact interdependently with frequent, meaningful contact (Devine & Wilhite, 1999). Anderson and Brown-Kress (2003) outlined principles, derived from contact theory, for structuring social integration of individuals with and without disabilities in recreation activities. These principles included: frequent and consistent opportunities to get acquainted (e.g., ice breakers), equal status (e.g., everyone contributes), mutual goals (e.g., team spirit), cooperation and interdependence (e.g. each person is an active part of
the whole), receiving accurate information (e.g., create an atmosphere of open communication), and fair and tolerant norms (e.g., don’t “over help”). These principles have the potential to promote physical and social inclusion as well as friendship development.

In trying to understand how to create an inclusive environment within the context of leisure, Devine and O’Brien conducted a study examining the utilization of contact theory at an inclusive camp (2007). The purpose of this study was to understand the conditions of an inclusive experience as they related to the quality of contact between campers with and without disabilities. Campers with and without disabilities were interviewed to gain their perspective of how the nature of contact influenced their camp experience. The findings from this study indicated that the relationship between the quality of contact and the inclusive camp experience was very complex (Devine & O’Brien, 2007). The researchers found that the behaviors and attitudes of the camp staff, along with the nature of contact (structured or unstructured) had significant influence as to the campers’ perception of the inclusive camp experience (Devine & O’Brien, 2007).

Research on contact theory indicates that it can be an effective framework in promoting positive attitudes towards different groups; however research of contact theory as a framework for facilitating inclusive recreation experiences is somewhat limited. For this study contact theory was utilized as framework to rationalize why camps were chosen as the specific context. Camps have the potential to exhibit the essential components outlined in contact theory that can contribute to the creation of inclusive environments.
**Camp as a context for inclusion**

In the United States, approximately 10-12 million people, mostly children and youth, attend camp each summer. Camp, as defined by the ACA (1998), is:

“A sustained experience which provides a creative, recreational and educational opportunity in group living in the out-of-doors. It utilizes trained leadership and the resources of the natural surroundings to contribute to each camper’s mental, physical, social and spiritual growth” (p. 89).

Within this definition the themes of nature, community and engagement interconnect to cultivate developmental growth across a variety of domains. Camp could be a context that the potential to possess the conditions outlined by contact theory as a framework for inclusive recreation.

Roger Bennett stated that camp is such a different experience because it was “expressly designed to make sure everyone became part of a community” (Bennett & Shell, 2008, p.9). The concept of “community” denotes physical proximity along with the creation of social capital. Social capital refers to “the connections among individuals-social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (Putnam, 2000, p. 19). Chenery (1993) asserted that camp is a community that represents the larger community on a more human scale. This creation of community and social capital at camp is fostered through the promotion of equal status, support by authority, cooperative experiences, mutual goals, and the intense and intimate nature of contact between campers, between staff, and between each other.
The concept of community goes beyond just sharing a cabin and includes stability, structure, positive norms and expectations. Research has found that camp provide a common ground where children developed shared meanings through participation and social learning thus facilitating the emergence and maintenance of community and social capital (Yuen et al, 2005). Campers gained an understanding of trust and cooperation through their experiences at camp (Yuen et al., 2005; Reefe, 2006).

Because of the group nature of camp, campers also experienced a decreased sense of isolation. In ACA’s Directions study (2005), parents and staff, as well as campers, reported that the camp community offered an environment where campers become more equipped in making new friends and in getting along with others. Research on social skills development at camp has yielded similar results (Bialeschki et al., 2007; Garst & Barry, 2003; Henderson et al., 2007). In a study on pre-adolescent youth, scores in the area of interpersonal skills such as cooperation, trust, and respect significantly increased for youth who participated in camp as compared to those who had not (Reefe, 2006). Group living in a camp context affords opportunities for children and youth to build and cultivate relationships with their peers in a supportive environment.

Camp is a culture unto itself where the symbiotic relationship between the camper and camp community enhances a camper’s growth process. ACA’s Directions study (2005) found that in a weeklong camp experience (at least five days), campers experienced growth in the domains of positive identity, social skills, physical and thinking skills, and positive values and spirituality. Furthermore, Taniguchi, Widmer, and Duerden (2007) found that the interaction between campers and counselors was a
major contributing factor to a meaningful camp experience for campers. In ACA’s *Inspirations* study (2006a), researchers found that camps’ greatest strength, as reported by campers, was in the area of supportive relationships with adults. Supportive relationships and quality of contact with counselors were found to significantly contribute to a camper’s sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ramsing & Sibthorp, 2008).

However, the “magic” of the camp experience is not coincidence. Despite the assumption that camp is always an enriching experience, “camp is not inherently good without purposeful and directed efforts by camp professionals” (Bialeschki et al., 2007, p. 770). Campers grow, and in some cases blossom, because of the intentionality of the camp programming and staff based on the camp’s philosophy and mission (ACA, 2006b). Camp professionals such as directors and administrators support and guide the camp experience for campers and staff. This support from authority is a key condition outlined in contact theory that can influence positive attitudinal change between two groups.

As a follow up to their *Inspirations* study, ACA examined how intentionality by camps played a role in influencing the level of supports and opportunities for campers in areas such as youth involvement, safety, skill building, and supportive relationships. Camps that implemented changes in a holistic manner throughout camp structure, policies, and activities showed more improvement than those that did not (ACA, 2006b).

Many recreational programs exhibit aspects of camp’s definition; however, it is the synergy of all of camp’s components (growth, out-of-doors, trained staff, fun, creativity) that makes camp such a uniquely valuable experience. Research reinforces
camp as an important context for growth across physical, social, cognitive, and affective domains. Traditional camps offer experiences such as group living, team building initiatives, and opportunities for skill development. These experiences tend to foster interdependence, mutual goals and active involvement where all campers are viewed as essential contributors to the camp community. Because campers spend an intense amount of time together with the continual presence of trained leadership, camps offer campers opportunities to develop relationships and connections with one another. Given the nature of camp, it can be an effective context to maximize the likelihood for the inclusion of individuals with disabilities.

Evidence-based Practices that Facilitate Inclusion

Inclusion is a complicated process situated at the intersection of philosophy, values, attitudes, and practices. The physical presence of individuals with disabilities in camps and recreation programs is not enough. Although evidence-based inclusive practices have been widely studied within the field of education due to the mandate for inclusion under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004), research of inclusive practices in the field of recreation and leisure has been limited.

In one of the first studies of evidence-based inclusive practices in community-based recreation agencies, Schleien, Germ and McAvoy (1996) examined the relationship between recommended practices and their implementation. They found that agencies at the organizational level utilized inclusive practices such as adoption of an inclusive mission statement in conjunction with inclusive agency goals, collaborative program
planning, outreach, marketing strategies targeted to reach a wider audience, transportation assistance, staff training, and documentation of outcomes and interventions. Subsequent research on inclusive practices of community-based recreation agencies identified similar practices as those reported in this foundational study (Devine & Kotowski, 1999; Devine & McGovern, 2001, Klitzing & Watcher, 2005; Scholl, Smith & Davidson, 2005; Watcher & McGowan, 2002).

Specific to facilitating inclusion of individuals with disabilities into camps, there are relatively few studies available. From 1997 to 2000, the National Inclusive Camp Practices (NICP) study was conducted to examine the benefits of inclusion for campers with and without disabilities as well as to identify best inclusive practices within a camp context. This nation-wide study was the first of its kind to investigate inclusive practices in camps on a large scale. Combining quantitative and qualitative methods, the NICP study identified approaches to developing and implementing “best practices” for inclusion. This study identified similar evidence-based inclusive practices as those identified from studies of inclusive community-based recreation programs. Along with the importance of staff training, use of assessments, adaptation and modification of equipment and programs, and positive behavioral supports, communication and collaboration were also prevalent factors for successful inclusion (Brannan, Fullerton, Arick, Robb & Bender, 2003).

Despite knowledge and research about how to facilitate and create inclusive leisure environments and programs, inclusive recreation opportunities for individuals with disabilities are the exception and not the rule. Inclusion as a paradigm has not been
embraced on a large scale within the leisure profession. To gain an understanding of why inclusion has not been embraced as a paradigm, it is important to gather in-depth information about the personal and environmental/situational components that facilitated a camp’s adoption of inclusion from the firsthand experiences of these individuals who were essential to the success of the transition. Therefore the purpose of this study was to examine the components that facilitated the transition process of camps becoming inclusive.

Methods

Inclusion of individuals with disabilities is a “wicked” problem due to its philosophical and value laden nature. Wicked problems tend to be socially complex, highly controversial, and difficult to define. Additionally, solutions to wicked problems tend to require non-linear thinking with stakeholders to negotiate understanding and shared meaning about possible solutions (Patterson & Williams, 1998). Qualitative methods can address the complex nature and multiple dimensions of inclusion. A phenomenological approach was used for this study so as to understand “the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about a concept or phenomenon” (Creswell, 2003, p.51). The strength in phenomenology is not in the ability to predict outcomes but to describe in detail the complexity of an issue such as inclusion so as to gain a better understand of it (Siedman, 2006). Examining the transition of camps becoming more inclusive with campers with disabilities through the experiences of individuals directly involved can provide insights about inclusion from a unique perspective.
Understanding and describing the meaning of a phenomenon as experienced by a number of people is the purpose of phenomenology; therefore sampling is limited to only individuals who have experienced the same phenomenon. Since the aim of this study was to understand the components that facilitated the camps’ adoption of inclusion, only key individuals with intimate knowledge of that experience, such as camp directors, administrators, program directors, and others, were chosen for this study.

Participants

A two step process was utilized to gather a sample for this study. The first step was to find camps that met the criteria of being inclusive. Initially the American Camp Association database and the researcher’s personal/professional contacts within the camp community were used to locate camps that self-identified as inclusive. The researcher further contacted two organizations that provide funding for and training on inclusion to assist in the identification of inclusive camps. For the purposes of this study, camps were considered appropriate for this study if the camp originally started out serving primarily one population (campers with disabilities or campers without disabilities) and transitioned to become more inclusive (campers with and without disabilities). To qualify for this study, the inclusive camp needed to serve both campers with and without disabilities within the same program for at least three camp seasons. It was important that the camps in this study had undergone a transition toward inclusion, were successful, and had sustained it as an integral part of their camp. For example, camps that are currently undergoing an initial transition to becoming inclusive or camps that were initially inclusive were not considered for this study.
Although agency affiliation and camp type were not a major consideration for a camp to be identified as inclusive, the composition of the camper population was crucial. Camps were considered inclusive if at least 5-25% of the total camp population was comprised of campers with a diagnosed disability. This percentage reflects the literature which suggests the ratio of campers with disabilities to campers without disabilities should be consistent with the natural proportion of the general population (Anderson & Kress, 2003). For the purpose of this study, the range and type of disability were not critical but the camp had to possess documentation of disability.

If the camp met the criteria, the next step was to ask camp personnel to identify individuals they considered to be the person or persons instrumental in introducing and implementing the philosophy of inclusion for their camp. To qualify as a participant for this study, individuals must have been affiliated with the camp (whether seasonal or year round) during the transition process and must have been integrally responsible for the implementation of an inclusive process in their camp. Once the criteria were met then the potential participant was contacted to ascertain the person’s willingness to be a part of the study. Utilizing a snowball sampling technique, initial contacts recommended others who were potential participants for the study.

Initially 40 camps were contacted to be part of this study. Of the initial 40 camps, 22 camps never responded to requests to be involved in the study. Upon further screening, nine camps did not meet the criteria of an inclusive camp as outlined in this study. Of the nine remaining that met the criteria of an inclusive camp, one potential participant decided not to be interviewed. In the end, 10 individuals from eight
organizations were participants in this study. Two different organizations had two participants each because both individuals within each organization were identified by camp personnel as being intimately involved in the camp’s transition to becoming inclusive. All 10 individuals consented voluntarily to be a part of this study. If saturation of data was not achieved with the initial 10 participants, the researcher planned to continue searching for inclusive camps and appropriate participants for this study.

Inclusive camps in this study were comprised of day (n= 5) and residential camps (n=3). All of the camps were co-educational. Only one camp considered itself a specialty camp, specifically a “sports and arts” camp. The other camps considered themselves “traditional” camps that offered a wide range of activities for campers such as arts and crafts, swimming, sports and games, and nature-based activities. These camps were located in various parts of the country and were affiliated with different types of organizations. All of these camps included campers with primarily developmental disabilities (Attention Deficit with Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Asperger’s Syndrome, autism, Down syndrome, etc). To protect confidentiality pseudonyms were used for each participant. Table 1 outlines the participants’ pseudonym, positions at the time camp started to become inclusive, the type of camp, location of the camp, camp affiliation, and the year that the transition started.
### Table 2.1

**Description of Participants and Camps**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>Camp Director</td>
<td>Day</td>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>Parks &amp; Recreation.</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>Camp Director</td>
<td>Day</td>
<td>Mid-Atlantic</td>
<td>Private Non-Profit</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff</td>
<td>Camp Director</td>
<td>Day</td>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>Private School</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>Program Coordinator</td>
<td>Day</td>
<td>West Coast</td>
<td>Parks &amp; Recreation</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jake</td>
<td>Camp Director</td>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>Religious Non-Profit</td>
<td>1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindy</td>
<td>Program Coordinator</td>
<td>Day</td>
<td>West Coast</td>
<td>University affiliated</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rick*</td>
<td>Board President</td>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>Private Non-Profit</td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred*</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>Private Non-Profit</td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy^</td>
<td>Asst. Camp Director</td>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>Mid-West</td>
<td>Religious Non-Profit</td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maggie^</td>
<td>Coordinator</td>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>Mid-West</td>
<td>Religious Non-Profit</td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The (*) and (^) indicates that these individuals were from the same organization.

**Data Collection**

For the purpose of this study, in-depth interviews were conducted with research participants. In phenomenology, there is no predetermined number of interviews required to be conducted. The researcher keeps interviewing until saturation of data is reached. With saturation, no new information is being presented in the interviews and the researcher recognizes that the same concepts continue to emerge (Henderson, 2006). A total of 10 interviews were conducted in order to reach saturation for this study. The one-on-one interviews followed a semi-structured, open-ended format lasting between 55 to 116 minutes. Topics such as challenges (both personal and professional), staffing, programming, screening process, buy-in from stakeholders, professional journey, logistics and supports for inclusive camps were areas for discussion. All interviews were conducted via telephone and recorded with a digital recorder. All participants gave consent to being recorded.
Data Analysis

In qualitative research, there is a more cyclical or spiral flow in the analysis of the data rather than a linear one associated with quantitative data. Analysis begins as soon as the researcher conducts interviews with the participants. All interviews were transcribed verbatim. The primary researcher transcribed five out of the ten interviews. The remaining interviews were transcribed by research associates. The primary researcher reviewed all transcriptions while listening to the interviews to confirm accuracy. The core of the analysis process was the discovery or identification of themes in the data in order to describe the fundamental structure of the experience (Creswell, 2003).

Throughout the data analysis process, transcriptions were continuously read and reread. Mouskatas (1994) outlined steps of the data analysis process by utilizing a variation of the Stevick- Colaizzi-Keen method. First, all data were read thoroughly several times to obtain an overall general impression. After making note of general impressions, each interview transcript was read line by line to identify significant statements that are relevant to the components of a camp becoming inclusive. Every significant statement or perception was treated equally (Mouskatas, 1994). These units of relevant meaning were scrutinized carefully so as to eliminate repetitive and duplicate statements. The next step in the process was to develop tentative themes from these “meaning units”. These themes and subsequent data were analyzed to fashion the constituent themes. Individual structural descriptions were created from those themes and then a composite structural description was constructed. Finally, a general structural description of the phenomena as experienced by the participants was crafted.
To account for researcher bias, an *epoch* or bracketing process was utilized. Through bracketing, the researcher separated the phenomenon under investigation from her many years of experience working as a camp professional and as an advocate of inclusion for people with disabilities. During this process the researcher attempted in a purposeful and systematic manner through journaling to identify and question her presuppositions about the adoption of the inclusion process by camps (Moustakas, 1994). The bracketing process was not a onetime event but rather a continuous activity that the researcher engaged in throughout the research process, especially during the data analysis phase. In doing this, the researcher becomes more receptive to the phenomenon as it emerges (Moustakas, 1994).

To address credibility, the interviews were coded independently by the primary researcher and a research associate. Coding of themes was consistent between the two researchers. Any discrepancies between the researchers’ codes were discussed until an agreement was reached. The researcher associate also served as a peer debriefer whereby she reviewed and questioned the findings (Creswell, 2003). Furthermore, member checks were conducted as part of the data analysis. Member checks serve as a mechanism to establish trustworthiness and rigor (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Each participant received via e-mail a copy of his/her interview transcript and a list of themes with descriptions to verify accuracy and completeness. All participants were given the opportunity to clarify any information presented or to add new information. Any additions and changes were integrated into the data collection and analysis.
Findings

After analyzing the data, four major themes emerged in further understanding the components that facilitated the camp’s transition to becoming inclusive. These themes were: advocacy, capacity for iterative development, ‘keyed in’ staff, and recognition of limitations.

Advocacy

For camps to become inclusive, advocacy for this philosophy by individuals in leadership positions was required. These people served as catalysts in making the inclusion of campers with disabilities a reality at camp. These people were able to garner the necessary support and assistance to develop an inclusive camp. While acting as advocates, the participants in this study were able to infuse an inclusive paradigm into the camp’s philosophy and aligned it with the camp’s mission. According to all of the participants, an advocate(s) for inclusion was needed in order for their camp to make the transition towards being inclusive in a purposeful way.

Within the theme of advocacy, participants revealed their role as being advocates for inclusion even when they personally had no prior experience with it. For example, Jeff expressed his role as an advocate in making his camp more inclusive: “At first I was just kind of being a cheerleader for it.” He went on to share that initially he did not know what to expect and that it was hard for him to see the benefit of inclusion. Even though he had limited experience with people with disabilities, he recognized that his role was “to encourage my staff especially to keep working at it... to get them more information about inclusion...about disabilities so that we could make our program work better.”
Similarly Kim recognized that that once she understood more about inclusion, the more of an advocate she became: “this is really an important thing that we do because it’s ‘the right thing to do.’ It’s not because ADA is telling us we have to do it or legally because we are a city parks and rec we need to be doing this…” Kim realized that inclusion was a core value that should be a part of her organization. But bigger than being a value to be embraced by her agency, she later discussed how important it was that other institutions become more inclusive. For Kim, inclusion was “morally and ethically the right thing to do.” Others expressed similar sentiments about their belief that all kids, regardless of ability or disability, should have the right and opportunity to go to camp with their peers.

In taking on the role of advocate for inclusion, Jane became willing to confront a supervisor. She described how her supervisor approached her in wanting to start a camp for the siblings of participants in the agency’s therapeutic horseback program. Jane’s supervisor believed that since the agency already served only individuals with disabilities through the therapeutic horseback program, this camp would serve campers without disabilities. But Jane reminded her supervisor: “you know… the mission of this foundation is to serve persons with disabilities, so it’s pretty stupid to run a camp that doesn’t have persons with disabilities.” Her supervisor then voiced her concerns that the agency was not equipped to have an inclusive camp. Jane responded: “Well bullshit…that’s what I’m going to do. So get over it.” Although most of the participants were not as explicit in their advocacy as Jane, they all expressed their commitment to what inclusion meant in regards to the betterment of society.
Connecting the societal need for inclusion with their leadership position in the camp organization was a way participants in this study advocated for inclusion and moved their camps towards implementing it. Jake discussed that as a camp director basically “the buck stops with me” in matters related to the day to day operation of camp. He further described that he felt it was important that marginalized groups became a more integral part of society. He believed that as a camp director he could make that happen at camp. In talking with funders who were reluctant to donate money to support camperships for campers with disabilities, he told them: “Well this is what’s happening in the schools and society and you need to get on board with this.” He utilized his position at camp to help others understand the importance of inclusion.

The participants in this study were very humble about being advocates for inclusion. When asked if her camp would have implemented inclusion without her, Kim stated: “I think I was the right person at the right time…and at the right place at the right time.” Kim shared how her supervisor who had been part of the organization for 20 years was not able to make inclusion happen at camp. Kim further remarked: “I was new and fresh to the program…it’s not because I’m a miracle worker or anything…I was the right person at the right time to help be the catalyst for everything.” Most participants shared Kim’s sentiments.

The correlation of advocacy for inclusion and a camp’s willingness to infuse inclusion into their camp’s culture was best expressed when Fred was asked why he thought other camp programs did not provide inclusion, he responded: “I guess you need somebody who’s completely hooked on this thing to go ahead and pave the way…unless
you get some people who are on fire, it might not get done.” A major component of camps becoming inclusive was the advocacy for inclusion communicated to others by people in leadership positions within the organization.

**Capacity for iterative development**

This theme was defined as the ability to learn from one’s experiences through the process of trial and error while making adjustments along the way until one gets to the “right answer”. The process of a camp becoming inclusive does not happen overnight. How inclusion looked was unique to each camp and how each camp arrived at that “right answer” was also unique. Important was the organization’s capacity to have the time, flexibility and commitment to work through this process and learn from their experiences to arrive at their own “right answer”. This was clearly demonstrated by Jane when she stated: “over the years, the lessons we learned, we put down on paper where things should go and how you should do things.” Keeping accounts of what worked and what did not was a way participants began to learn from their experiences with inclusion.

Initially some organizations were able to develop their “right way” of inclusion unbeknownst to others within the organization. For example, Amy talked about how the parent organization did not even realize that the camp was becoming inclusive until systems were already developed, revised, and refined. Amy stated, “When we first started they (parent organization) didn’t even take a look or blink an eye at what we were doing…We were just able to develop it.” This statement illustrated that people within the camps were able to exercise their autonomy to become inclusive. Because of the participants’ position within the camp, they had the authority to make adjustments that
over time evolved into working systems for inclusion. Similarly, Jeff discussed how he
notified the Board that he was working with another agency on implementing an
inclusive program but for the most part it was “under the radar” regarding gradual
changes in camp policies and programs.

Part of the gradual development of an inclusive camp was the reworking or
further understanding of what inclusion actually meant. For example, Rick described how
initially the program for campers with disabilities was housed within their camp. He
described it as “camp within a camp” model having two separate administrations. As
conflicts arose from having two different camps at the camp, each program recognized
that making the two into one integrated program would benefit all. As he described it,
“We came up with a win-win solution.”

When Kim started to include campers with disabilities into her program, she
initially tried to have one counselor paired with one camper with a disability in a group of
kids. She believed that the job of the inclusion facilitator was to work with just that one
camper in the group with a disability. As she learned more about the inclusion process
and philosophy she made adjustments. She expressed her shift in perspective: “…and so
I went from that to really realizing it’s got to be a team process where those two staff join
together and you’re just increasing your ratio so you can help all of the kids.” Similar
experiences were shared by almost all of the participants.

Jeff also realized that his concept of inclusion gradually evolved. When he first
started out with inclusion he was placing campers with disabilities according to their
developmental level rather than by age because he thought “that was the right thing to
do…” He later described the shift he made regarding the grouping of campers: “we finally came to this new definition of inclusion meaning being with their peers not necessarily with their ability level then having staff understand that and seeing that it’s ok…” Jeff’s situation was a unique twist on how the idea of inclusion evolves. The camp understood the basic premise but went from making groups inclusive based on functional level to creating inclusive groups that were based on age and how much more valuable that experience is for all of the campers.

Another distinctive shift that occurred based on lessons learned and experience was moving from the notion of doing inclusion in a ‘prescribed’ way towards creating a positive experience for everyone. Kim illustrated this point when she talked about how she was so focused on doing inclusion “right” that she lost sight of the fact that kids with disabilities are kids first. Kim shared her experience with this: “I got away from the prescribed ‘we’ve got to this, this, and this because of the disability they have’ to just recognizing that they’re kids who just want to have fun…everything became much easier…”

Mindy’s camp also made a similar shift. She described how the camp moved away from primarily focusing on skill acquisition to focusing on how to facilitate a successful camp experience. She discussed how the atmosphere changed once the camp refocused its energy on creating the camp experience by stating, “I could encourage my staff to just have fun and play and you know, make sure that they’re having fun, and being silly. When I could tell them that, everything kind of felt like it fell into place.” Although skill development, knowledge of inclusive strategies, and programming were
important, participants in this study also remembered that camp is about fun and that it should be a fun experience for all.

Another area of capacity for iterative development came in the area of staff training. All subjects discussed in great deal the evolution of their staff training in regards to inclusion. The typical way most camps experienced this was illustrated by Jane, “The first training, there were only like three people…it was held at Applebee’s. The first training there was a lot of focus on disability.” Jane went on to describe how over the years inclusive concepts were infused throughout the staff training. Kim shared similar sentiments in the evolution of her staff’s training. She discussed how inclusion at first was a separate topic on the training agenda to the point where it became an integral part throughout the entire pre-camp experience.

Most camps had people designated as inclusion counselors or facilitators but it gradually became clear to camps that all staff needed training regarding inclusion. This too was an iterative process as Rick articulated, “All of our staff are now trained to be able to deal with special kids because you never know…so that was not done at first, it has evolved.” He further described that when all staff were not trained about inclusion he would often hear: “That child is not my responsibility because I’m not (inclusive) staff.” Upon hearing this, Rick realized that pre-camp training of staff was a critical time to get all staff to understand inclusion. He emphasized this by stating, “we understood that during two weeks of intensive staff training is when the team comes together …bonds and builds their teamsmanship so they’re all involved with the same purposes.” The statement reflected the experience of most camps in that the staff training had to evolve
to where all staff needed to be trained at various levels about inclusion for it to work at camp.

The general sentiment that encapsulated this theme of iterative development is from Rick who stated, “it wasn’t wrong then but it’s more right now.” For these organizations, the inclusion of campers with disabilities continues to be an ongoing learning experience regardless of the number of years the organization has been inclusive.

“Keyed in” staff

With the inclusion of campers with disabilities, more supervision of campers and more staff are needed. Staff provide the direct support for all campers and their buy-in of an inclusive philosophy was critical, as stated by Jeff: “…you have to have your staff get on board…they’re the ones making it happen…the most important thing is that you get the people that are working with the kids to understand what’s going on and value it.”

The participants in this study discussed various ways they “keyed in” their staff to inclusion. One of the basic ways they did this was by working with staff so they could have a fuller grasp of what inclusion truly was. Kim shared an example of her staff’s initial reaction to including campers with disabilities: “Staff were very nervous about it…I think again they really didn’t understand … But by the end of the 3 years I was there …everybody understands full inclusion.” Jeff further illustrated this point: “Just really getting that information out there to my staff about what we mean by inclusion…so it will be a little bit easier for them to understand and helping them understand in a practical way.” In helping her staff understand more about what inclusion was, Maggie
said that she “just tried to stay abreast of the new information, new techniques, new ways of supporting, and new ways of presenting the training.”

Staff training was a major mechanism used by camps to not only provide more information and training on inclusion but also to make staff more comfortable with turning the inclusive philosophy into a reality at camp. For Kim’s staff, as with most of the camps, their initial resistance to inclusion was “their own stereotypes and their fear that they were going to have kids in the program that they don’t know how to work with.” Sensitivity to staff’s feelings was important to getting staff buy-in about inclusion. Amy and Maggie discussed how they used part of their staff training to make staff more aware of their own feelings about campers with disabilities. As Amy stated: “you know just breaking down barriers, helping people to see where they’re at…that’s probably the most important time that we spend during pre-camp with counselors helping them recognize where they are personally.”

Similarly almost everyone discussed how they tried to make staff “comfortable” and “confident” in working with people with disabilities. Jane used role-playing and scenarios throughout her staff training to help with this process. For example, she had staff role-play what they would say to a camper without a disability asking a question about a camper with a disability. “What would you say? How would you react?” As Jane further stated, “these answers don’t just roll off the tongue.” In other typical areas of staff training (such as camper behavior, programming, waterfront, etc.), Jane, Kim, and others discussed how they had staff work through a variety of scenarios which involved both campers with and without disabilities. For the most part working with campers with
disabilities was naturally infused throughout the staff’s training. Even when a camp conducted separate trainings on inclusion, all participants expressed the importance of having all staff understand what inclusion is and what it looks like at their camp.

Supporting and training staff on inclusion did not stop once the campers arrived. Being responsive to the staff’s needs during camp was also an extremely important way to insure that staff stayed ‘keyed in’. Mindy discussed how she had an ongoing dialogue not only with her inclusion staff but with the program activity leaders as well. “That’s really important so that we can work together, problem solve, um, if anything comes up. I think you need buy-in from the general camp staff.” At Maggie and Amy’s camp, they have “inclusive floaters” who are there to support the staff in a more immediate way when issues arise. For example, if a camper needs a break from the group, the inclusive floater can be there to provide additional support for the group while the inclusion counselor supports the camper. Most camps used a collaborative, hands-on approach in working with staff during the camp session when problems occurred. The attitude was “we are here to support you to make this work.” Just as she wanted campers to be successful, Mindy pointed out, “You don’t want to set the staff up to fail.”

Equally as important in training the staff was the actual hiring process for staff. As camps became more inclusive, participants in this study discussed how they paid more attention in the hiring of staff. Jeff discussed how he is very upfront in the interview process about letting potential employees know that inclusion was a part of “what we do” and gives them an idea of what it looks like at his camp. Experience in working with people with disabilities was often brought up in the interview process; however it was
never a qualifier on whether or not one was hired. It served more as a means to gauge an applicant’s comfort level and/or interest in working with campers with disabilities. While most of the participants in the study sought out staff with experience, Jane relayed that sometimes hiring someone with more experience (i.e., a degree in special education) can backfire: “I think that what you learn, to become an educator, is specific to that situation and it does not always translate into this situation (camp).” Camps hired staff based on a combination of skill, fit with camp, and experience but also took into consideration a person’s “open-mindedness”, “willingness to learn”, positive “attitude” and the capacity to “get it” (inclusion). Gut reactions often served as the barometer of whether or not a person was hired for an inclusive camp. As Jane stated, “If I interview people and I see that they don’t get that, then I don’t hire them.”

According to Frank, the “continuity [of staff] is key” to infusing inclusion into the camp culture. Sara elaborated on this by stating: “…we pretty much keep the same staff, the key staff…they’ve been with us since we’ve done it (inclusion)…they know that this is just what we do.” At Maggie and Amy’s camp, they refrain from hiring a new counselor to work as an inclusion counselor. The rationale was that being “new” to camp is an overwhelming experience in itself without adding on the extra responsibilities. Most camps took the approach of transitioning returning staff into inclusion staff positions because they had already experienced inclusion at camp. Upon seeing the power and benefits of inclusion, returning staff often sought out those positions because they wanted to be more involved in an inclusive experience. Having returning or core staff who already experienced inclusion at camp further reinforced the infusion of inclusion into the
camp’s culture because “they bring so much year to year and they start to get inducted.” The ways camps hired, trained, and supported staff to “key in” on inclusion facilitated inclusion moving from something that is additional to the camp program toward something that was an integral part of “what we do.”

Recognition of limitations

Another factor that facilitated a camp’s transition to become more inclusive was recognition of limitations on the part of the camp. Camps needed to acknowledge their own limits in their ability to successfully support campers with disabilities in their program. They had to find a balance in establishing realistic goals of what they could provide for the campers while making it a positive and fun camp experience for all.

The participants in this study all believed that everyone should have the opportunity to experience camp but also understand that not every camp is for every child as exemplified by Jeff’s comment: “Again although we’re inclusive, we’re not a camp for everybody.” In starting to include campers in a systematic way, camps quickly realized that they could not successfully support all campers who applied to camp even though they wanted to, as illustrated by Sara’s comment: “the first year, we just thought this is a great idea,…we used the same forms …everybody was included. And we found out that we needed to step back, pull back a little bit and do some other things.” All camps in this study had similar experiences. Camps struggled with wanting to accept everyone but being realistic about what they as a camp and as a staff could accomplish and who they could support. Rick stated: “We’re drawing the line. They’ve (campers) got to benefit from being included.” However “drawing the line” was a process in and of itself. Camps
often took a “case by case” approach in making a determination of whether or not the camp was appropriate for the child.

One of things that camps did to better establish more realistic goals for including campers was the creation of a more thorough screening process for campers. Learning more about campers themselves was an important first step in camps understanding who they could and could not accept and support at camp. All camps in the study have revised their camper application and screening process extensively in the years since adopting inclusion.

Beyond just filling out the application form, camps used a variety of methods to determine if their camp was a good fit for the camper. Maggie and Amy discussed how they used to visit the camper at home prior to camp. This process was time consuming and they eventually moved to where they asked the camper and the family to “tour the camp, meet the counselor, and see the camp in action.” All participants in this study encouraged parents to visit camp with their child. Additionally, most camps held a camp information night where parents could learn about the camp and ask questions so as to make informed decisions about whether or not the camp would work for their child. Sara’s camp took a unique approach in that they held a mini-camp for potential campers so that they could get a small dose of camp prior to attending a full session. This served as a “practice run” so that staff could decide how or if even if they could support the camper while at camp.

Participants in this study relied heavily on partnering and communicating effectively with parents to ensure a good match between camper and camp. As Jake
reiterated when asked about his camp’s screening process, “I think the most important thing is good communication between the parent or guardian, way before the camp experience…so as to prepare the camp.” Most camps experienced a very cooperative relationship with parents’ willingness to share information. However, Sara shared her experience of parents’ reluctance to share information about their son/daughter for fear that their child’s application would not get accepted. She often explained to parents that the information was needed to figure how best to support their son/daughter at camp.

Examples of information that camps gathered included: Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), letters from teachers, reports from school psychologists, etc. A few participants conducted interviews with the parents and campers. Again, this information was used to assess if the camp could successfully support the child and in what ways they could do so.

Participants also recognized that there were some environmental constraints that could inhibit the inclusion process. Kim discussed how her camp program took place in an open city park where there were very few physical boundaries. She often made sure that parents understood that camp was “less structured and noisy.” And she asked parents, “Is this a setting your child is going to thrive in?” She went on to say, “We kind of put a process in place in how we worked with families with kids with special needs to make sure we find the right match for them.” Jeff shared a similar experience in how the physical layout of his camp could not accommodate campers with severe mobility impairments. In talking with parents, Mindy made sure parents knew the physical and social demands of a sports camp where there are “large noisy groups of kids.” She went
on to describe the “pull to accept everybody that knocks on the door. But the reality was that there are some kids that need a higher level of support, and can’t be provided in that kind of camp setting. And you don’t want to set them up to fail.”

Participants endeavored to make sure that they made “informed decisions” about who they could successfully include. They worked closely with parents so that they, too, could make decisions about the appropriateness of the camp for their child as Maggie’s comment illustrated: “They (parents) want their child to be supported and understand that we want that, too, and that we work really hard to do it.” As her camp was transitioning toward inclusion Amy would continually ask herself, “What do I see my limitations being and what do I see as my capabilities? You know, as a camp, what am I going to be able to do?”

Discussion

Although there is a growing body of knowledge on best inclusive practices, there is limited literature available on “how” an organization such as camp becomes inclusive. The findings in this study provided greater insight to the components that facilitate the camp’s transition process in becoming inclusive of campers with disabilities. Interviews of people who have actually gone through this process offer the camp professional an insider’s perspective on how inclusion became an integral part of a camp. In analyzing these interviews the prevalent themes were advocacy, capacity for iterative development, ‘keyed in’ staff, and recognition of limitations.

The support of authority was one of the original conditions proposed by Allport’s contact theory (1954) that facilitated the breakdown of attitudinal barriers between
groups of people. Interestingly all of subjects except one were not the ultimate authority at their camp but rather they were in middle management positions. They were able to use the power and authority of their position to advocate for the inclusion of campers with disabilities into the camp program and to garner support of inclusion from their supervisors. Because of the nature of their position as ones who provide staff training, deal with parents, and oversee the camp program, they set the tone for the camp. They had the responsibility to not only convey the mission and philosophy of the camp but were held accountable in putting the camp’s philosophy and mission into action. They were able to take their passion for inclusion and implement it at their camp.

Even though the concept of including campers with disabilities is not a “new” concept, it has not been widely adopted in the camp community. According to Rodger’s theory of diffusion (1995), one reason why a new idea does not get adopted is because it often fails to attract a champion. Innovation champions are critical to the successful diffusion of an innovation (Howell, 2005). Innovation champions are leaders who have the social, political, and/or interpersonal knowledge to influence the acceptance of innovative change (Glynn, 1996). They serve as a catalyst for the dissemination of new ideas and practices. Participants in this study served as ‘champions’ for inclusion at their camp. Their motivation to include campers with disabilities into their program was never based on the requirement to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. They were motivated because they believed it was “the right thing to do” and fit with the underlying philosophy of camp.
In this study, participants described how the camp had the capacity to find their “right answer” for inclusion. The “right answer” looked different for each of these eight camps. Considering that every camp has its own unique camp culture, it made sense that every camp found a unique way to become inclusive. The idea of inclusion was not to make the camp into something different but rather that inclusion was incorporated into the culture that already existed. There was no single path of becoming inclusive. For these camps it was the process of figuring out what worked, what did not, and how can they (the camp) make it better. The process took time, commitment, willingness to learn from experiences, and openness to the idea of learning new ways of doing things. These camps could be characterized as “nimble organizations.” Conner (1998) described nimble organizations as ones that are open to taking calculated risks, proactive in their approach to challenges, and continuously focused on growth and renewal. Even after camps developed systems to include campers with disabilities, they continued to modify and refine these systems. Including campers with disabilities cannot be a one shot deal. Camps, as an organization, must possess the ability to work through the process of including campers with disabilities in a more systematic and purposeful way. They must have the freedom to learn from their mistakes and take what they have learned to the next level.

Along with the capacity for iterative learning, the training of all staff is vital to the success of the inclusion process because it contributes to staff’s willingness to support inclusion (Schleien, et al., 1997). Research on inclusive practices in recreation supports the need for all staff to be trained on the philosophy of inclusion and inclusive strategies.
(Anderson & Kress, 2003; Devine & McGovern, 2001; Schleien, et al., 1997). The findings from this study were congruent with the research on staff training and inclusion. One unique aspect this study brought to light was the infusion of working with campers with disabilities into all aspects of the staff orientation. Additionally, the training did not focus solely on the acquisition of technical skills but also on working with staff in establishing a level of comfort and confidence in working with campers with disabilities. More importantly, this study highlighted the need for organizations to continuously support staff after staff training week is completed. The continuous and responsive support for staff during the camp session was critical to the staff’s buy in of inclusion. In turn, staff helped perpetuate the camp’s inclusive paradigm and was vital to making it a natural part of the camp’s culture.

*Implications for Professionals*

For most camps, the concept of inclusiveness and belonging are values congruent with their philosophy. In the American Camp Association’s definition of camp, the philosophy of inclusion fits with the ideals of camp. How to make that happen for a camp in a more practical way can be very complex. Intentionality is one key to making inclusion work for camps. Although the decision of whether or not a camper is appropriate for one’s camp is sometimes made on a case by case basis, camps and other recreation organizations would likely experience more success with the inclusion of individuals with disabilities if they developed a strategic plan for inclusion. This strategic plan needs to be reflective of the total camp experience. There are four essential areas to
examine in this strategic plan: the camp, the campers, the community, and the camp leadership.

In examining the camp component area of the strategic plan for inclusion, it is important for camp professionals to take a holistic view of its assets, capacities, and limitations. Camp professionals should consider specific aspects of the camp such as accessibility of facilities, staff training, current policy and procedures, and organizational structure. The findings from this study indicate the importance of staff buy-in. Although the camps in this study had varying staffing structures, they provided training on inclusive strategies for all of their staff regardless of position. Working with campers with disabilities should be infused into all aspects of the staff orientation. One way to do this is to provide a variety of scenarios for staff to practice how they would handle situations dealing with campers with and without disabilities. Additionally, this study indicates the need for organizations to continuously support staff after staff training week is completed. The continuous and responsive support for staff during the camp season helps to make the inclusive philosophy an integrated part of the camp’s culture.

Another area for consideration in the camp’s overall strategic plan for inclusion relates directly to the campers. For example, a review of the organization’s camper application and screening process should be taken into account. Questions such as “Does our current application provide us the necessary information about a camper with a disability? How will we acquire additional information needed to adequately assess whether or not our camp can provide any necessary supports for the camper?” are examples that organizations might begin to ask themselves. Along with the application
and screening process, camps should critically review organizational policies related to camper behavior to determine how inclusive they are. For example, if a camp has a “zero tolerance” policy for hitting, is there some flexibility within this policy to better address some extenuating circumstances for campers with and without disabilities? Finding ways for camps to learn more about the campers prior to their approval at camp as well as to review camper-related policies are important steps to understanding whom they can and cannot support at camp.

Camp professionals do not have to start from square one in creating an inclusive camp. Taking advantage of community resources available should be another aspect of the strategic plan. There are a number of organizations that provide training and even funding for inclusion. The professional camp community also is an ideal venue to network with other inclusive organizations that have gone through this process. Learning more about the mechanics and logistics of inclusion from others’ experiences can be a powerful tool.

Furthermore, the American Camp Association (ACA) needs to be instrumental in creating a more formalized network of support so camps can identify others who have gone through the learning process of becoming inclusive. ACA has supported research on inclusion yet they have not presented the camp professionals with a functional or even conceptual definition of inclusion. Specific to organized camps, ACA should present their community with a formal and practical definition of inclusion.

The last area to address in the strategic plan involves the leadership of the organization. Attitudes expressed by the leadership of the camp’s organization directly
influence how others (staff, parents, funders, etc) view the inclusion of campers with disabilities. Similar to staff, camp directors and administrators set the stage for a successful camp experience. Having camp professionals reflect on their own knowledge, assumptions, and understanding of what is meant by an inclusive camp are important aspects to examine. For example, a camp leader asking him/herself what do I want inclusion to look like at my camp can start this reflection process. Findings in this study suggest that the interpretation of inclusion shifted during the process of a camp becoming inclusive. Camp professionals need develop clear and specific goals for inclusion at their camp. For example, what should be the ratio of campers with disabilities to those without? It is not enough to say that the goal of our camp is to be inclusive; however, it seems that professionals in the field lack a working knowledge of this definition. The energy, attitude, and approach camp professionals exhibit regarding the inclusion of campers with disabilities can facilitate or hinder the process.

Another finding that came out of this study is that there is not one specific path to becoming inclusive. All of the camps in this study had their own unique organizational structure. Inclusion occurred differently at each of the camps. Furthermore, camps in this study needed some time to find their way and to navigate challenges as they surfaced. Time is necessary in order to discover what is going to work and to take into consideration the camp’s culture. As a camps strive to become more inclusive of campers with disabilities, camp directors, staff, and administrators should allow themselves some time and flexibility in learning what does and does not work.
Although implications for each of these areas were discussed separately, findings from this study indicate that camp professionals need to integrate aspects of the camp, the campers, the community and the camp leadership into the overall plan for an inclusive camp experience. Not only is each area important, but all areas together are essential for a camp to become inclusive of campers with disabilities. Just focusing on one, two, or even three of these areas is not enough. Inclusion is an on-going, complex process. A systemic approach to an inclusion plan can provide camp professionals with more realistic expectations of the inclusive process. Camp professionals view camp as a “welcoming” and “open” place where everyone can belong. The inclusion of campers with disabilities is one way to put that value into reality so that all can benefit from the experience.

**Limitations**

While learning more about components which facilitate a camp’s implementation of an inclusive paradigm, it is important to recognize some limitations of this study. One limitation is that the researcher relied on camp personnel to identify potential participants. In some cases participants self-identified as having been intricately involved in the transition process of the camp becoming inclusive. It is possible there were other individuals from the organization that were involved in this process but were not identified. Additionally some participants in this study reflected on events and circumstances that occurred several years ago. Three of the eight camps utilized in this study underwent the transition process at least 15 years prior to the time of this study. Four of the ten participants no longer work for the camp they discussed in this study. Considering one of the criteria was the camps had to have been inclusive for at least three
seasons, there could be inaccuracies in recalling events from the past. Finally, all of the camps only served children below the age of 18 in their programs. There could be different issues associated with the transition process of inclusion for recreation agencies that offer programs for adults.

Future Research

Research on how camps become inclusive is limited and there is still much unknown about the transition processes camps experience. All of the participants in this study were in administrative and leadership positions in the organization during the camp’s transition process towards inclusion. A closer examination of the role that leadership style and administrative position plays in this transition process could provide additional insight to the transition process. Furthermore, talking with parents, campers, staff, and other key stakeholders of the camps used in this study could provide a more holistic view of how the camps became more inclusive.

Although the exploration of contact theory was not the focus of this study, there is a need to further investigate the relationship of contact theory and inclusive recreation. Understanding how the conditions outlined in contact theory (support of authority, engagement in cooperative activities, focus on mutual goal, and the provision of time to get to know one another on a deeper level) can reduce prejudices and dispel stereotypes between individuals with and without disabilities by creating an inclusive leisure experience is an area that needs more attention.

Often a problem can be understood at a more in-depth level when it is looked at from the other direction. This study sought to understand why and how inclusion worked
for some camps. It could be helpful to investigate why and how it did not work for others. Studying camps that have tried inclusion but were unsuccessful is a recommended topic for future research. Finally, there is no way to know how many camps are systematically including campers with disabilities into their programs. There might be other camps that include campers with disabilities but do not consider themselves inclusive. A more accurate picture of inclusion at camps is needed in order to fully understand the state of inclusive camps.

Conclusion

As one participant in this study stated, “If inclusion was easy, everyone would do it.” Inclusion is not simply having campers with disabilities in the camp program. Being an inclusive camp is a delicate balance of campers’ needs, staff, camp culture, policies and procedures, parents, funding, preconceived beliefs, and values. The purpose of this study was to investigate components that facilitated a camp adopting and implementing the inclusion of campers with disabilities into camp programs. Camp professionals who were intricately involved in their camp’s transition towards inclusive camping provided a unique perspective on how camps can become inclusive. This study found that advocacy, capacity for iterative development, “keyed in” staff, and recognition of limitations were vital components during the camp’s transition process.

The process of including of campers with disabilities into camp programs starts before campers even apply to camp. In fact, this process should not start with the campers but rather with the camp developing a plan to make inclusion happen. Camps need to be intentional in their approach to inclusion. Having an advocate(s) for inclusion is an
important first step to becoming inclusive. This advocate serves as a catalyst to make inclusion happen in a more purposeful way. Additionally the camp should be willing to commit time and energy to making inclusion successful. Inclusion is an evolutionary, iterative process that does not happen overnight. Camps must be willing to learn and adapt to the campers’ and staff’s needs on a continual basis. The inclusion of campers with disabilities is doable in a variety of organizational structures. There is no ‘one size fits all’ approach. Camp professionals can use the experiences of others and the knowledge of proven inclusive strategies to guide them in figuring out what works best for their camp.

Successful inclusion requires “keyed in” staff. Inclusion requires more camper supervision and staff. Staff’s willingness to make inclusion a reality is contingent on the camps’ ability to provide training, responsive support, and an ongoing dialogue. Additionally, camps must recognize their own limitations and abilities in supporting campers with disabilities in their programs. They must balance an appropriate level of support for campers with the establishment of representative ratios of campers with and without disabilities.

Finally, the reality is that camps that have traditionally not served campers with disabilities are getting more and more applications from campers with disabilities. Utilizing the conditions outlined in contact theory, camp can be an important context where attitudinal barriers between people with and without disabilities can be diminished. The point of inclusion is not to alter the camp program or the essence of camp but instead to infuse it within the existing culture to make it a more seamless process. Camp can be a
place where campers learn to recognize commonalities and to accept others as being different. An inclusive camp experience for campers with and without disabilities encompasses the concepts that exemplify camps as “enriching lives, building tomorrows” (ACA, 2005).
CHAPTER THREE (MANSCRIPT #2)

PORTRAIT OF AN INCLUSION CHAMPION: AN EXAMINATION OF ROLES CHAMPIONS PLAYED IN AN ORGANIZED CAMP’S ADOPTION OF AN INCLUSIVE PHILOSOPHY

Abstract

Legislation such as the Americans with Disabilities Act mandates the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in all aspects of society. Research on the inclusion of campers with disabilities at camps has demonstrated both campers with and without disabilities benefit from an inclusive camp experience (Brannan, Arick, Fullerton & Harris, 2000). Despite research that supports inclusion and best inclusive practices; few organized camps have implemented inclusion into their programs. According to Rodger’s theory of diffusion (1995), one reason why a new idea does not get implemented is because it often fails to attract a champion. Innovation champions serve as catalysts for the dissemination of new ideas and practices such as inclusion (Rodgers, 1995). The purpose of this study is to examine the roles champions played in facilitating the adoption of inclusion at camp. For this phenomenological study, in-depth interviews were conducted with 10 champions from eight organized camps. Findings indicate that champions served the following roles: Negotiator, Visionary, and Architect. Thus by understanding the various roles of champions, recreation/leisure professionals may gain
greater insight into how to become champions of inclusion themselves. Implications and future directions for research are discussed.

The right to participate and have access and opportunities for leisure is a human, as well as a legal right. Both the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA, 1990) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004) implicitly and explicitly mandate the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in all aspects of society including leisure and recreation. Traditionally, individuals with disabilities have had limited access and opportunities to leisure and recreation, thus restricting the acquisition of benefits that recreation offers in terms of quality of life. Inclusive recreation greatly expands opportunities for individuals with disabilities to experience leisure and serves as a mechanism to reduce prejudice and dispel stereotypes of individuals with disabilities.

In the broadest sense, inclusion is a philosophy that promotes diversity, respect, and acceptance by valuing the abilities of all. Inclusion describes a concept beyond just having individuals with disabilities and without disabilities occupying the same physical space. Inclusion also encompasses social aspects of being a valued part of group or community (Smith & Hilton, 1997). Taking the concept of inclusion as an attitude or belief system even further, Schleien et al. (1997) identified specific characteristics within the definition of inclusion. These specific characteristics were: meaningful participation, age appropriate activities, and an individualized process. With meaningful participation, individuals with and without disabilities interact with one another in a shared activity. These activities should be age-appropriate regardless of where an individual is developmentally. Anderson and Kress (2003) further delineated the characteristics of
inclusion as acceptance and appreciation of others, accessible facilities for all, potential
development of friendships through shared interests, availability of necessary
accommodations and supports for all, and the creation of an environment where everyone
is valued and welcomed.

Research on inclusion has demonstrated that inclusive recreation provides
benefits for individuals with and without disabilities. These benefits include: acquisition
of lifelong recreation and leisure skills; greater understanding and acceptance of others;
increased communication skills; increased independence; preparation for a more global
and diverse society; and other physical, cognitive, affective, and social benefits (Devine,
2006; Schleien, Green & Ray, 1997). In examining inclusive camps, the National
Inclusive Camp Project (NICP) found that inclusive resident and day camps provided
similar benefits to campers with and without disabilities (Brannan, Fullerton, Arick, Robb
& Bender, 2003). The nature and structure of the camp experience can provide an
important context and increased opportunities for social and physical inclusion.

Despite research that supports the benefits of inclusion and knowledge of best
practices and models, inclusion has not been embraced at the national level in the
organized camp profession. At the onset of the National Inclusive Camp Project (NICP)
only 7% of ACA camps self-identified as inclusion/mainstreaming in their camp profile
(Brannan, et al, 2003). Since the results of this study were released in 2000, the
percentage of ACA camps that self-identified as inclusion/mainstreaming has remained
unchanged (ACA, 2008). A disconnect exists between what is known to be effective
inclusive practices and the camps implementing these practices. Consequently, there is a need to understand how to diffuse and implement an inclusive paradigm on a larger scale.

Although the concept of inclusion is not new, camps could perceive inclusion of campers with disabilities as an innovation. An innovation is “an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption” (Rodgers, 1995, p. 11). The newness of an idea or practice is not necessarily contingent on longevity of knowledge but rather on an individual’s perception of how “new” the concept is to him/her. Even though the concept of inclusive recreation has been present in the research literature for over decade, professionals in the field of recreation and organized camping have had limited experience with including campers with disabilities into programs.

How innovations become accepted and subsequently implemented is the premise of Rodger’s theory of diffusion (1995). Diffusion is the “process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among members of a social system” (Rodgers, 1995, p 5). One reason why the diffusion of new ideas often fails is because of the failure to attract a champion. Innovation champions are critical to the successful diffusion of an innovation (Howell, 2005). Innovation champions are leaders who have the social, political, and/or interpersonal knowledge to influence the acceptance of innovative change (Glynn, 1996). They serve as catalysts for the dissemination of new ideas and practices. For this study, a “champion of inclusion” is an individual who was instrumental in the transition and implementation of an inclusive paradigm into an established camp. The purpose of this study was to examine the roles these champions played in facilitating the adoption of inclusion at their camp. Thus by understanding the
various roles of champions, camp professionals may gain greater insight into how to become champions of inclusion themselves.

**Literature Review**

*Inclusive Practices*

Although evidence-based inclusive practices have been widely studied within the field of education due to the mandate for inclusion under the Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004), research of inclusive practices in recreation has been limited. Before discussing the research on inclusive practices in recreation, an examination of research on the extent of inclusive services provided by parks and recreation agencies can highlight the state of inclusion in community recreation. In a nation-wide survey of parks and recreation agencies, 41% of the 369 agencies surveyed reported serving individuals with disabilities in inclusive programs while 31% of agencies offered a combination of segregated and inclusive programs (Devine & Kotowski, 1999). Taking these results at face value, it would seem that inclusive services are wide-spread in community recreation; however the number of individuals served by these agencies was not reported. A limitation of this study was that the definition of inclusion was also left to the interpretation of the individual completing the survey.

In a subsequent study, Devine and McGovern (2001) found that only 13% of community-based agencies provided extensive inclusive services with 55% of agencies offering some inclusive services. Agencies that categorized themselves as providing only some inclusive services recognized the need to do more. In terms of numbers of individuals with disabilities served by agencies with inclusive services and programs,
researchers found the number to be surprisingly low (Klitzing & Watcher, 2005) suggesting that individuals with disabilities continue to be limited in access to more formal recreation programs.

In one of the first studies of evidence-based inclusive practices in community-based recreation agencies, Schleien, Germ and McAvoy (1996) examined the relationship between recommended practices and their implementation. They found inclusive practices existed at the organizational level. Organizational practices included: adoption of an inclusive mission statement in conjunction with inclusive agency goals, collaborative program planning, outreach, marketing strategies targeted to reach a wider audience, transportation assistance, staff training, and documentation of outcomes and interventions (Schleien et al, 1996). Subsequent research on inclusive practices of community-based recreation agencies identified similar practices as those reported in this foundational study (Devine & Kotowski, 1999; Devine & McGovern, 2001, Klitzing & Watcher, 2005; Scholl, Smith & Davidson, 2005; Watcher & McGowan, 2002).

The literature reflects that there is a growing body of research on evidence-based practices for facilitating inclusion in the field of recreation but very little research on inclusive camps. From 1997 to 2000, the National Inclusive Camp Practices (NICP) study was conducted to examine the gap between the camp’s adoption of an inclusive philosophy and practice. This nation-wide study was the first of its kind to investigate inclusive practices in camps on a large scale. Combining quantitative and qualitative methods, the NICP study identified approaches to developing and implementing “best practices” for inclusion. This study identified similar evidence-based inclusive practices
as gleaned from studies of inclusive community-based recreation programs. These practices included: staff training, use of assessments, adaptation and modification of equipment and programs, and positive behavioral supports. Additionally, the ability of camp personnel to communicate effectively and to collaborate with others were common factors for successful inclusion (Brannan, Fullerton, Arick, Robb & Bender, 2003).

Despite the knowledge and research about how to facilitate and create inclusive leisure environments and programs, inclusive recreation opportunities for individuals with disabilities are the exception and not the rule. Inclusion as a paradigm has not been embraced on a large scale within the leisure profession. To gain an understanding of why inclusion has not been embraced as a paradigm, it becomes necessary to understand how a concept such as inclusion becomes adopted by an organization.

Champions and the Diffusion of Innovation

According to Rodgers (1995), a new idea or innovation such as inclusion has a difficult time getting widely adopted even in the presence of supportive research and knowledge of best practices. Furthermore, the diffusion of ideas and innovations such as inclusion throughout an organization is typically a slow process. Factors that contribute to the rate of adoption include the compatibility of values and beliefs of the organization and the past experiences of the social system with the innovation (Rodgers, 1995). The rate of adoption is more rapid when individuals or organizations perceive that an innovation has greater relative advantage and compatibility than the status quo (Rodgers, 1995).
Diffusion of an innovation is a communication process. Rodgers (1995) found that the ability of an individual to informally influence others’ attitudes and behaviors in a desired way can accelerate the diffusion process. The term used by Rodgers (1995) to describe such an individual is “champion”. Champions play a critical part in determining whether or not an innovation will be adopted. Typically, champions are leaders who have access to a variety of constituents within organizations. However champions usually do not possess ultimate authority but rather use their networks to garner support for an innovation (Glynn, 1996). They possess skills, knowledge and clout to move the innovation from an idea to reality.

Most research on the champions of innovation has been conducted in the areas of management and technology. One of the earliest studies of champions was conducted to investigate the relationship between champions and technological innovations (Howell & Higgins, 1990). From this study, a model of champion emergence was developed based on the investigation of champions’ personality characteristics, leadership behaviors, and influence tactics (Howell & Higgins, 1990). This study was the first to demonstrate empirically that champions are informal transformational leaders. The behaviors exhibited by champions were congruent with those of transformational leaders as these behaviors include: conveying confidence and enthusiasm about an innovation, enlisting the support and involvement of key stakeholders, and persisting in the face of adversity (Howell, 2005). Howell (2005) identified specific characteristics of successful champions which included: continuously scouting for new ideas, adopting flexible role orientation,
viewing new ideas and innovations as opportunities to promote positive organizational outcomes, and using formal and informal channels to influence stakeholders.

Additionally, champions were service-oriented, problems solvers, welcomed change, and valued efficiency, learning, time management, and competency. Champions derived their reward from the success of the team. They also believed that the innovation was beneficial for the organization (Chursciel, 2008).

While research on champions has been focused primarily on their role in the adoption of a new idea, other research has focused on their role in the acceptance of evidence-based practices (Aarons, 2006; Dearing, 2004; Goodman & Stekler, 1989). Most innovations, despite obvious advantages, oftentimes never get adopted. In the healthcare field, research has concentrated on the connection between leadership and practitioners’ willingness to embrace evidence-based practices. Although the term “champion” is not used, the transformational leadership qualities examined in the research are congruent with description of champions. Aarons (2006) found that providers who worked with supervisors who exhibited more transformational leadership behaviors were less likely to perceive a gap between their current practices and evidence-based practices (Aarons, 2006). Additionally, providers who rated their supervisors higher on transformational and transactional leadership were more open to adopting evidence-based practices. Finally, leadership styles geared toward promoting adoption of innovation and change were found to be critical to the success of implementing evidence-based practices by practitioners (Aarons, 2006).
Research on champions and diffusion of innovations is still a major area of research in the technology field. This research is beginning to expand to other fields such as healthcare and disability studies. However, there is no research in the field of organized camp with regards to the diffusion of innovation or the adoption of evidence-based practices. Research on the role of champions and the diffusion of an innovation can help bridge the gap between what is known about evidence-based practices for facilitating inclusion and the implementation of inclusion at camp. The purpose of this study was to examine the roles these champions play in facilitating the adoption of inclusion at their camp.

**Methods**

Inclusion of individuals with disabilities is a “wicked” problem due to its philosophical and value laden nature. Wicked problems tend to be socially complex, highly controversial, and difficult to define. Additionally, solutions to wicked problems tend to require non-linear thinking with stakeholders to negotiate understanding and shared meaning about possible solutions (Patterson & Williams, 1998). Qualitative methods can address the complex nature and multiple dimensions of inclusion. A phenomenological approach was used for this study so as to understand “the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about a concept or phenomenon” (Creswell, 2003, p.51). The strength in phenomenology is not in the ability to predict outcomes but to describe in detail the complexity of an issue such as inclusion so as to gain a better understand of it (Siedman, 2006). Examining the transition of camps becoming more
inclusive with campers with disabilities through the experiences of individuals directly involved can provide insights about inclusion from a unique perspective.

Understanding and describing the meaning of a phenomenon as experienced by a number of people is the purpose of phenomenology; therefore sampling is limited to only individuals who have experienced the same phenomenon. Since the aim of this study was to understand the components that facilitated the camps’ adoption of inclusion, only key individuals with intimate knowledge of that experience, such as camp directors, administrators, program directors, and others, were chosen for this study.

Participants

A two step process was utilized to gather a sample for this study. The first step was to find camps that met the criteria of being inclusive. Initially the American Camp Association database and the researcher’s personal/professional contacts within the camp community were used to locate camps that self-identified as inclusive. The researcher further contacted two organizations that provide funding for and training on inclusion to assist in the identification of inclusive camps. For the purposes of this study, camps were considered appropriate for this study if the camp originally started out serving primarily one population (campers with disabilities or campers without disabilities) and transitioned to become more inclusive (campers with and without disabilities). To qualify for this study, the inclusive camp needed to serve both campers with and without disabilities within the same program for at least three camp seasons. It was important that the camps in this study had undergone a transition toward inclusion, were successful, and had sustained it as an integral part of their camp. For example, camps that are currently
undergoing an initial transition to becoming inclusive or camps that were initially inclusive were not considered for this study.

Although agency affiliation and camp type were not a major consideration for a camp to be identified as inclusive, the composition of the camper population was crucial. Camps were considered inclusive if at least 5-25% of the total camp population was comprised of campers with a diagnosed disability. This percentage reflects the literature which suggests the ratio of campers with disabilities to campers without disabilities should be consistent with the natural proportion of the general population (Anderson & Kress, 2003). For the purpose of this study, the range and type of disability were not critical but the camp had to possess documentation of disability.

If the camp met the criteria, the next step was to ask camp personnel to identify individuals they considered to be the person or persons instrumental in introducing and implementing the philosophy of inclusion for their camp. To qualify as a participant for this study, individuals must have been affiliated with the camp (whether seasonal or year round) during the transition process and must have been integrally responsible for the implementation of an inclusive process in their camp. Once the criteria were met then the potential participant was contacted to ascertain the person’s willingness to be a part of the study. Utilizing a snowball sampling technique, initial contacts recommended others who were potential participants for the study.

Initially 40 camps were contacted to be part of this study. Of the initial 40 camps, 22 camps never responded to requests to be involved in the study. Upon further screening, nine camps did not meet the criteria of an inclusive camp as outlined in this
study. Of the nine remaining that met the criteria of an inclusive camp, one potential participant decided not to be interviewed. In the end, 10 individuals from eight organizations were participants in this study. Two different organizations had two participants each because both individuals within each organization were identified by camp personnel as being intimately involved in the camp’s transition to becoming inclusive. All 10 individuals consented voluntarily to be a part of this study. If saturation of data was not achieved with the initial 10 participants, the researcher planned to continue searching for inclusive camps and appropriate participants for this study.

Inclusive camps in this study were comprised of day (n= 5) and residential camps (n=3). All of the camps were co-educational. Only one camp considered itself a specialty camp, specifically a “sports and arts” camp. The other camps considered themselves “traditional” camps that offered a wide range of activities for campers such as arts and crafts, swimming, sports and games, and nature-based activities. These camps were located in various parts of the country and were affiliated with different types of organizations. All of these camps included campers with primarily developmental disabilities (Attention Deficit with Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Asperger’s Syndrome, autism, Down syndrome, etc). To protect confidentiality pseudonyms were used for each participant. Table 1 outlines the participants’ pseudonym, positions at the time camp started to become inclusive, the type of camp, location of the camp, camp affiliation, and the year that the transition started.
Table 3.1

Description of Participants and Camps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>Camp Director</td>
<td>Day</td>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>Parks &amp; Recreation.</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>Camp Director</td>
<td>Day</td>
<td>Mid-Atlantic</td>
<td>Private Non-Profit</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff</td>
<td>Camp Director</td>
<td>Day</td>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>Private School</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>Program Coordinator</td>
<td>Day</td>
<td>West Coast</td>
<td>Parks &amp; Recreation</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jake</td>
<td>Camp Director</td>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>Religious Non-Profit</td>
<td>1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindy</td>
<td>Program Coordinator</td>
<td>Day</td>
<td>West Coast</td>
<td>University affiliated</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rick*</td>
<td>Board President</td>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>Private Non-Profit</td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred*</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>Private Non-Profit</td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy^</td>
<td>Asst. Camp Director</td>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>Mid-West</td>
<td>Religious Non-Profit</td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maggie^</td>
<td>Coordinator</td>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>Mid-West</td>
<td>Religious Non-Profit</td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The (*) and (^) indicates that these individuals were from the same organization.

Data Collection

For the purpose of this study, in-depth interviews were conducted with research participants. In phenomenology, there is no predetermined number of interviews required to be conducted. The researcher keeps interviewing until saturation of data is reached. With saturation, no new information is being presented in the interviews and the researcher recognizes that the same concepts continue to emerge (Henderson, 2006). A total of 10 interviews were conducted in order to reach saturation for this study. The one-on-one interviews followed a semi-structured, open-ended format lasting between 55 to 116 minutes. Topics such as challenges (both personal and professional), staffing, programming, screening process, buy-in from stakeholders, professional journey, logistics and supports for inclusive camps were areas for discussion. All interviews were conducted via telephone and recorded with a digital recorder. All participants gave consent to being recorded.
Data Analysis

In qualitative research, there is a more cyclical or spiral flow in the analysis of the data rather than a linear one associated with quantitative data. Analysis begins as soon as the researcher conducts interviews with the participants. All interviews were transcribed verbatim. The primary researcher transcribed five out of the ten interviews. The remaining interviews were transcribed by research associates. The primary researcher reviewed all transcriptions while listening to the interviews to confirm accuracy. The core of the analysis process was the discovery or identification of themes in the data in order to describe the fundamental structure of the experience (Creswell, 2003).

Throughout the data analysis process, transcriptions were continuously read and reread. Mouskatas (1994) outlined steps of the data analysis process by utilizing a variation of the Stevick- Colaizzi-Keen method. First, all data were read thoroughly several times to obtain an overall general impression. After making note of general impressions, each interview transcript was read line by line to identify significant statements that are relevant to the components of a camp becoming inclusive. Every significant statement or perception was treated equally (Mouskatas, 1994). These units of relevant meaning were scrutinized carefully so as to eliminate repetitive and duplicate statements. The next step in the process was to develop tentative themes from these “meaning units”. These themes and subsequent data were analyzed to fashion the constituent themes. Individual structural descriptions were created from those themes and then a composite structural description was constructed. Finally, a general structural description of the phenomena as experienced by the participants was crafted.
To account for researcher bias, an *epoch* or bracketing process was utilized. Through bracketing, the researcher separated the phenomenon under investigation from her many years of experience working as a camp professional and as an advocate of inclusion for people with disabilities. During this process the researcher attempted in a purposeful and systematic manner through journaling to identify and question her presuppositions about the adoption of the inclusion process by camps (Moustakas, 1994). The bracketing process was not a onetime event but rather a continuous activity that the researcher engaged in throughout the research process, especially during the data analysis phase. In doing this, the researcher becomes more receptive to the phenomenon as it emerges (Moustakas, 1994).

To address credibility, the interviews were coded independently by the primary researcher and a research associate. Coding of themes was consistent between the two researchers. Any discrepancies between the researchers’ codes were discussed until an agreement was reached. The researcher associate also served as a peer debriefer whereby she reviewed and questioned the findings (Creswell, 2003). Furthermore, member checks were conducted as part of the data analysis. Member checks serve as a mechanism to establish trustworthiness and rigor (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Each participant received via e-mail a copy of his/her interview transcript and a list of themes with descriptions to verify accuracy and completeness. All participants were given the opportunity to clarify any information presented or to add new information. Any additions and changes were integrated into the data collection and analysis.
Findings

After analyzing the data, three major themes emerged in further understanding the role of the champion in the inclusion process. These themes include the champion as a negotiator, a visionary, and an architect.

Champions as Negotiators

Champions recognized that they could not make inclusion happen on their own. Additionally, they understood the necessity of managing their own preconceived notions about inclusion in order for the camper with disabilities to have a successful and positive camp experience. Within the theme of champions as negotiators, two sub-themes emerged: negotiating with others and negotiating with self. The champions in this study served as negotiators to assist themselves and others in navigating the complexities of a camp becoming inclusive.

Negotiating with others

The desire to make inclusion happen and actually implementing inclusive systems are two distinct processes. Camp does not operate in isolation and many people play key roles in helping to create a beneficial camp experience for all. Champions of inclusion emphasized that it was important to collaborate with stakeholders so that the inclusion of campers was as “seamless” as possible. Negotiating with others, such as parents and staff, was critical to developing inclusion successfully.

Conferring with parents about inclusion and what it would mean for the camper was an important aspect of making inclusion work at camp. Parents, as Amy stated, “know their camper the best”. Parents have intimate knowledge of their camper regarding
the techniques that will work and the environment that will be the most beneficial for the camper. One way champions negotiated with parents was by providing an accurate portrayal of the camp. Kim described how she does this: “if the parent is not sure about it (camp)…I invite them to come and see it…the program in action, and then talk about it…” Having parents see the facilities and camp environment allowed them to determine for themselves if the camp was the best “fit” for the camper. Kim went on to ask the parents, “is this a setting your child is going to thrive in?” If the answer was “no” that did not automatically mean the camper could not attend camp. Instead it was typically followed by the statement, “let’s look at some of our smaller programs and see if that is going to be a better setting.” Along with Kim, other participants in this study expressed similar experiences that the ability to collaborate with parents was essential to making inclusion work at camp.

Equally important was the champions’ ability to garner the cooperation of their staff in developing the inclusion program. All subjects expressed that their staff were somewhat reluctant to having campers with disabilities. The staff were unsure of how inclusion would affect the camp’s programming, operation, and culture. Jane recalled when she first introduced the idea to her staff: “You could see it their eyes, some of them said ‘ok’ but they were terrified.” Jeff’s staff struggled more with “understanding whether or not there was a benefit for [inclusion].” But some staff were more vocal about their concerns about including campers with disabilities. Kim shared the reaction of her staff the first time she approached them about inclusion: “Well we’re not therapists… we
don’t know how to work with these kids.” Negotiating through these misconceptions and the initial opinions and fears of the staff was a crucial role of the champion.

Champions found that the two most important ways to elicit staff cooperation with inclusion was through training and support. All champions in this study ensured that their staff were adequately trained on inclusion and inclusive techniques. And once the campers arrived, continued support was equally as important. Jeff discussed a situation when a camper with a disability was having some behavioral issues. The staff was struggling with how to deal with the behavior. Jeff’s approach was: “no, it is not appropriate for everyone to do it (hitting), so let’s work together and see how we can help this camper maybe find better ways to express what they want to express.” By negotiating with his staff to discover alternative methods of working with campers, Jeff provided the needed support to resolve the issue. In another example, Mindy discussed her approach with staff: “I just honor their contribution to [inclusion]. I see it as a joint endeavor like we’re working together to integrate these kids…” These champions collaborated with their staff to become partners in the inclusion of campers with disabilities rather than taking a more authoritarian approach.

Although parents and staff were the primary focus for the champions, it was also important to negotiate, educate and enlighten financial backers, supervisors and agency administrators. The successful champions of inclusion were able to assist everyone in navigating the complex process. The inclusion of campers with disabilities into the program would not have been possible without the champions’ ability to obtain the support and cooperation of all stakeholders.
Negotiating with self

Champions of inclusion were able to negotiate with others but they also had to cope with their own preconceived notions about inclusion. The champions in this study valued inclusion as philosophy but had some interpersonal struggles that needed to be addressed. In order to make inclusion work at camp, these champions had to recognize their own limitations and misconceptions.

One area that was universally difficult for most of the participants was the conflict between an inclusive philosophy and the reality of making it happen at camp. Kim’s description of inclusion was “the right thing to do is to provide opportunities for all kids regardless of ability or disability.” But wanting to provide opportunities to everyone and having the resources to do so is not the same thing. When Jane was asked to define inclusion, she stated: “…we welcome everybody … we just welcome everybody.” But later when asked if she did admit all campers that applied, Jane expressed her frustration that she had to turn campers away because their level of need was greater than what the camp could provide. Similarly, Mindy shared her struggles with this conflict: “…it’s hard…I want to do everything I can but you have to be realistic…” Mindy’s and Jane’s sentiments were shared by all of the participants in the study. The champions wanted to provide a positive camp experience for all campers but ultimately they had to negotiate with themselves and their own values as to who could actually be included.

Champions had to come to terms with the realization that they could not include all campers into the camp program. They recognized that, as stated by Mindy, “we can’t use a one fits all model”. Champions negotiated this dilemma by taking into
consideration the demands of the camp, the needs of the individual, and the amount of support available. This was exemplified by Kim’s comment: “…every child comes to camp with different needs…so to me it seems like we’re going to be able to figure this one out too.” Kim’s point was that camps adjust to meet the needs of all campers regardless of ability. They already have to “figure out” how to work with campers without disabilities; therefore they should try to “figure out” how to work with campers with disabilities. Another example of this was when Maggie discussed how she determines which campers with disabilities get to attend camp: “So there’s definitely a lot of case by case …because we want everybody to come but we also want to make sure that we can support them.” These examples typified how champions negotiated through the conflict between being idealistic about inclusion and being realistic on who could be successfully included. The champions turned the focus on successful accomplishments so that both the camper and the camp had a positive experience with inclusion.

Jake had a more unique experience in coping with some of his own preconceived ideas related to inclusion. Jake had to come to terms with his belief in the philosophy of inclusion while recognizing the benefits of segregated programs for campers with disabilities. Prior to his camp becoming inclusive, Jake’s camp offered a week of camp for just campers with disabilities. Most of these campers had severe disabilities that required greater medical attention. As the camp began to adopt inclusion, previous campers with severe medical needs could no longer be supported in the context of an inclusive camp due to their high level of needs. Jake struggled with creating opportunities for other campers with disabilities while at the same time having to exclude campers that
they had previously served. He saw the benefit of inclusion for campers but he also saw that campers with disabilities could benefit from being with people who “were just like them and shared similar types of experiences.” Jake wanted to balance the idea of offering both an inclusive and segregated camp experience. As Jake described: “…that would be the ideal solution…giving the children with special needs a choice of coming to a program…where every kid there is just like them…or they can go to an inclusive program where it’s people of all different backgrounds.”

Jake’s ability to negotiate through this struggle was unique in this study but could possibly be more prevalent as camps that have previously provided experiences for campers with disabilities move towards inclusion.

In summary, a positive, successful, and inclusive camp experience is influenced by the champions’ ability to negotiate with parents and staff to become a vital part of the process. Maggie stated: “it’s not that inclusion is over here and the rest of camp is over here.” Negotiating with parents, staff and themselves to recognize and address the needs and concerns can facilitate successful inclusion at camp. By engaging and collaborating with all stakeholders, the champions of inclusion were able to make informed decisions for the camp and the campers.

**Champions as Visionaries**

This theme describes the champion’s role as someone who foresees the positive outcome of inclusion for campers with and without disabilities. They function as advocates of inclusion because they inherently believe it serves the ‘greater good’. These champions of inclusion viewed themselves as idealistic and that the inclusion of campers
with disabilities into camp was a matter of principle. Amy stated: “It’s fun to watch them grow and benefit from camp and being included. I guess for me, a very philosophical thing is I know that’s not the way the world works…it’s the way the world works here.” Amy, like other champions, envisioned the inclusion of campers as fulfilling a societal need. Champions of inclusion connected their camp’s philosophy and mission with the necessity for inclusion of campers with disabilities. An example of this came from Jane’s experience when she explained the value of being inclusive to others. She told them that at camp “we are creating the next generation of children who will grow and will have the same [accepting] attitude.” She went on to describe how helping children without disabilities value the inclusion of children with disabilities could create a “ripple effect through society.” Jake reinforced this notion through his belief in “the need to bring disenfranchised groups into general society.” He stated “I wanted to replicate that at camp.” Similarly, Amy expressed, “…at camp I feel it’s our responsibility to make it happen and make that work.”

Furthermore, champions in this study also viewed inclusion as the “right thing to do”. Kim shared her experience that it was like a “light switch went on”. She described how the inclusion of campers with disabilities was not something she was “forced to do” but that she needed to do, because “it’s morally and ethically the right thing to do.” Other champions shared similar experiences. Fred talked about the move from two separate programs into one inclusive camp. He stated how this merger “… fulfilled our destiny” in making camp a place where all campers learn “to accept others as being different, and to feel that being different is alright…” Additionally, Maggie discussed how “an
inclusive environment is a part of everyone’s experience.” She did not ignore the challenges that including campers with disabilities presents but described it as “not everything’s perfect but that’s how life is…that’s how we want camp to be, too.” In Maggie’s view, as well the view of the subjects in this study, inclusion is “what everyone should be doing.” When other camps have told Maggie that they do not do inclusion because “other camps do that”, she remarked that it’s not the same as not being able to offer an activity such as sailing or horseback riding, “[inclusion] is bigger than that.” For these champions inclusion should not be looked upon in the same regard as a specialized program or activity. To them inclusion was more important. Rick referred to the inclusion of campers with disabilities at camp to be, “like life under a magnifying glass.” Their vision of inclusion was one in which campers have the opportunity to realize that they are simply kids, wanting to have fun.

Champions believed strongly that camp is a perfect context that fits naturally with the value of inclusion. Part of their vision was ensuring that their camp continue to maintain their “open”, “positive”, and “supportive” foundation for campers with disabilities. For example, Jeff discussed how his camp was always “non-competitive.” The aim of his camp was to challenge campers on a personal level and “to grow on their own and seek their interests.” Jeff remarked that even before his camp became inclusive, the “kids that come here don’t come to be judgmental...” and that camp “naturally lends itself to being very open and caring of everyone.” Similar to Jeff’s experience, Mindy discussed how at her camp they “were already starting from a really good place.” Her camp did not tolerate bullying and teasing so logically, an inclusive environment had a
great chance of succeeding. In making the camp inclusive she commented: “those values are already a part of the camp culture so we just kind of build from that.”

Champions in this study envisioned camp as a reflection of how the world should work.

Champions as architects

In order to make their vision of camp a reality, champions in this study served as architects in facilitating a more inclusive camp. Just as architects design, plan, and create the construction of a building, champions played a similar role in the construction of the inclusive camp environment. The camp environment was not only the physical landscape; more importantly, the camp environment included the construction of an atmosphere that is conducive to the inclusion of campers with disabilities into the camp program. This camp environment or culture must be created through the intentional actions of the champions of inclusion.

For champions in this study, designing an inclusive camp environment was probably one of the easiest aspects of the camp’s transition to inclusion. Many champions built upon what already existed at their camp. Fred discussed that at a residential camp, campers had to get to know each other “on a personal, close level.” Campers eat, sleep, and live together. Fred stated that the nature of residential camp encouraged campers of all abilities, as well as the camp staff, to become “in touch with their fears, wants, and needs, and everything else…” Jake also emphasized that by living with people with different abilities; residential camps were a conducive setting to “foster attitudes of tolerance” among all campers because they probably do not have “that amount of sustained contact in the rest of society.” As opposed to school or other recreation
contexts, champions believed that camps offered all campers “opportunities for growth…from social to basic recreational skills to independence to confidence.” All champions expressed that their camps’ environment and culture had laid the groundwork upon which to facilitate the inclusion of campers with disabilities.

Even though most camps had a solid foundation, champions had to design ways to make inclusion of campers with disabilities an integral part of the camp. According to Amy, “you make your own little mini world.” She further stated that with camps “we are really molding people and we can say, ‘This is what camp is about’.” Jane took this idea to another level when she stated: “I hope to create a culture [with inclusion] as opposed” to taking a “this is my way or the highway” attitude. She reiterated “being open minded is good but being prepared is good too.”

The adoption and implementation of an inclusive paradigm required intentionality and planning on the part of the champions. Kim shared how she retrained staff to answer the phone. Previously when staff received a call from a parent of a camper with a disability, their immediate response was to refer them to other camps that served “those kids.” In adopting an inclusive philosophy, Kim worked with her staff to address the same inquiry with a “these are the camps we offer...let’s talk more to which camp is right for your child” approach. Interestingly enough, Jeff expressed that he was somewhat taken aback when he realized that “we didn’t need to restructure everything to make inclusion work at camp.” Similarly Jane described how she infused inclusion into her staff training:” …we stop at a trailhead and I’ll say, ‘Now let’s imagine we have children and some of the children have this disability and they’re having this issue… What are
you going to do?" She went on to discuss how she takes her staff through each program area describing different scenarios involving campers with and without disabilities. Infusing inclusion into everything the camp already did in areas such as staff training, registration of campers, handling of phone inquiries, and using ‘person-first’ language were ways that champions served the role of an architect. With the continuity of staff and the fact that campers with disabilities were included in the program year after year, inclusion became a “part of what we do” at camp.

**Discussion**

While a plethora of research exists on the roles of champions in the areas of business, technology, and management, research on champions has been limited in the social sciences. Furthermore, no research on champions currently exists in the field of recreation or organized camps. According to Howell (2005), champions are needed to serve as a catalyst in making an idea or innovation into a reality. The findings in this study provide greater insight into the roles that champions play in making a camp more inclusive for campers with disabilities. Champions served the role of negotiator, visionary, and architect in order to bridge the gap between the knowledge of evidence-based inclusive practices and the creation of an inclusive camp.

Champions in this study recognized that in order for inclusion to take place at camp, staff, parents, and others such as supervisors and financial supporters, needed to be “on board”. To make this happen, champions had to be able to negotiate with all parties to reach an understanding of what inclusion would mean for the camp, the camper, and staff. Champions utilized a cooperative and collaborative approach to ensure that
stakeholders were an integral part of the inclusion process. Because each group had varying needs for and concerns with inclusion, champions had to communicate what inclusion would mean for camp in a variety of ways. For parents, champions discussed the importance of the needs of the camper matching those of the camps’. With staff, champions communicated that the staff had support and that their input was valued. Being able to communicate to varied groups in dynamic ways is congruent with Rodger’s (1995) concept of diffusion of innovation as a communicative process with key members of a social structure. Champions tailored messages about inclusion to the group they were negotiating with for support. As camp directors and administrators, champions in this study already possessed some level of skill and expertise at negotiating with a range of groups to elicit cooperation, assistance and support. Camp directors and administrators often serve as the main contact person for parents, campers, financial supporters, and supervisors. Therefore communicating the value of inclusion at camp was not a struggle for these champions.

The greater struggle for these champions was overcoming their own preconceived notions about inclusion. Champions found themselves balancing a desire to give all kids an opportunity to experience camp and the recognition that they could not meet the needs of all campers. One participant was conflicted about having to turn away campers with disabilities he previously served. He continued to struggle with believing in inclusion as a philosophy because he also acknowledged the benefits of a segregated program. Other champions had to readjust their definition of inclusion. One way that these champions negotiated through these challenges was through more training on inclusion by other
organizations such as the National Training Center on Inclusion. Another way was through their experiences of having campers with disabilities at camp. They continued to learn each summer and built upon those experiences. Figuring out ways to relinquish some of their own preconceived ideas was essential in order for champions to move forward in the process of inclusion.

Champions also served the role of visionary. Being a visionary meant that they recognized the inclusion of campers with disabilities was not only fulfilling a need at camp but a societal need as well. Champions brought and shared that vision to their camps. “The fundamental components of a champion’s capacity to introduce [innovation] successfully are the articulation of compelling vision…” (Howell & Higgins, 1990, p.331). Champions believed in the inclusion of campers as “the right thing to do” as opposed to merely complying with the ADA. They viewed themselves as advocates for the inclusion cause and believed inclusion positively impacts the lives of all campers. Despite this visionary role, champions did not view themselves as extraordinary. Champions emerge when the right conditions intersect with the right type of person to move an organization in a new direction (Hamner, Hall, Timmons, Boeltzig & Fesko, 2008). In fact most participants in this study claimed that they “just happened to be the right person at the right time” as stated by Kim. The champions believed that everyone should have the opportunity to experience camp. They believed that all campers could make a contribution to the group, to the camp, and to society at large. Creating and sharing a vision with others is characteristic of transformation leadership. Transformation leaders strive to inspire others in making the vision a reality.
Furthermore, this study found that champions of inclusion at camp served the role of architects of the camp environment and experience. Despite the variety and diverse nature of camps, the overarching mission of camp is to assist youth in becoming successful and contributing adult members of society (Bialeschki et al., 2007). Campers, regardless of camp type or affiliation, become immersed in a “compressed world with its own rhythm and tradition” (Bennett & Shell, 2008). Due to their positions within the camp organization the champions in this study could control and manipulate the experience, as Amy noted, “if you want that [inclusion] to be a part of your experience, you can be in charge of that.” Research conducted by the American Camp Association (2006) found that a key aspect to the successful camp experience lies with the intentionality of the camp programming and staff. Additionally, camps that implemented changes in a holistic manner throughout camp structure, policies, and activities showed more improvement than those that did not (ACA, 2006). Despite the assumption that camp is always an enriching experience, “camp is not inherently good without purposeful and directed efforts by camp professionals” (Bialeschki et al., 2007, p. 770). Champions of inclusion in this study were intentional about including campers with disabilities into camp. It is also important to recognize that initially most of these champions did try to “fly by the seat of their pants”. They quickly learned that in order for inclusion to be a positive camp experience for all, they had to prepare the staff, the camp and themselves to make it as ‘seamless” as possible. Their approach was that inclusion should be infused in all aspects of camp even in how camp staff answer the phone, as noted in Kim’s experience. Findings from this study reinforce the importance of carefully constructing
and designing the camp environment so that inclusion is a part of a successful and positive camp experience for all.

*Research Implications*

Camp directors and administrators serve champions of camp. Staff, parents, and campers perceive camp directors as a major authority figure at camp. They are often the ones who set the “tone” for the camp season. Furthermore, camp directors not only convey the mission and philosophy of the camp but also are held accountable to implement the camp’s philosophy and mission. Camp professionals such as directors and administrators support and guide the camp experience for campers and staff. In order for them to be champions of inclusion, it is important to understand that inclusion of campers with disabilities cannot be a “one shot” deal.

An implication of this study is the additional insight gained about the theory of diffusion of an innovation. Rodgers defined diffusion as the “process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among members of a social system” (Rodgers, 1995, p 5). Participants in this study served as negotiators in getting other stakeholders to buy into the camp becoming inclusive. The findings in this study provide additional support to the body of knowledge on the theory of diffusion as a communicative process. Additionally, findings from this study support previous research on the role of champions as catalysts in an organization’s willingness to become inclusive. This study suggests that diffusion theory can be a viable theoretical framework for gaining insight on the dissemination of inclusive practices in the field of recreation. As a theoretical framework, diffusion theory could bridge what is known about inclusion
and implementing inclusive practices thus facilitating the process of recreation and leisure organizations providing more access and opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

As visionaries and architects of inclusion, the role of champions goes beyond wielding influence over various constituents to adopt inclusion. Champions can additionally play a pivotal role in the creation of inclusive recreation experiences. The idea of champions as more than communicators but also creators of environments conducive for innovation can add to the body of research on diffusion. Furthermore, the champions in this study all held positions of authority within the organization. The support of authority was one of the original conditions proposed by Allport’s contact theory (1954) that facilitated the breakdown of attitudinal barriers between groups of people. Most research on contact theory has focused on the nature and quality of contact between groups. However, the question of how intense does the support of authority need to be for attitudinal change and what level of authority is appropriate remains largely unexamined. Findings from this study suggest that champions in the role of visionary and architect need to be actively engaged in not only constructing an inclusive environment based on the other conditions of contact theory but in the promotion of the philosophy and implementation of inclusion. They view the inclusion of campers with disabilities as the right thing to do. Participants use their positions of authority to garner support and make necessary adjustments within the organizations to make inclusion happen. The idea that the support of authority goes beyond providing a passive stamp of approval or
modeling acceptance adds to the knowledge on the relationship of contact theory and inclusive recreation contexts.

Limitations

A limitation of this study was the use of the term “champion”. The term “champion” was used because it is the term reflected in the literature on the diffusion of innovation (Rodgers, 1995). More importantly the term was chosen because it accurately depicts the part these individuals played in making their camps inclusive. Although the term was explained to participants, “champion” is not a term used in the field of recreation and organized camps to convey transformational leadership qualities. Participants in this study were passionate about camp and inclusion but were very reluctant to be perceived as “champions.” For the most part, they felt that including campers with disabilities at camp was the way camps should work. They never considered themselves extraordinary compared to their counterparts. Consequently, there could have been some misinterpretation of the concept.

Future Research

Despite this limitation, there are some recommendations for future research. Investigating the roles of professionals who already primarily serve individuals with disabilities in segregated programs as the transition towards providing inclusive services would be an area that could offer a different perspective on champions’ roles. It would be interesting to investigate and identify champions of inclusion in other recreational settings such as community-based programs. Research on how organizations can foster champions of inclusion would also be another area for potential research. Future research
on the implementation of evidence based inclusive practices utilizing Rodger’s diffusion theory as a theoretical framework is also needed. Finally, studying camp professionals who have tried inclusion but were unsuccessful would be a recommended topic for future research.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the roles of champions who facilitated a camp’s adoption and implementation of inclusion. By interviewing camp professionals who served as champions of inclusion, this study provides a unique perspective to other camp and recreation professionals on how they could become champions of inclusion. Based on these interviews, the themes of champions as negotiators, champions as visionaries, and champions as architects were present.

In order to be a champion of inclusion, one must be able to negotiate with others to gain support and assistance throughout the inclusion process. Additionally, the champion must be able to get past his or her own preconceived ideas about inclusion in order to move forward. This does require some time and education on the champion’s part. Furthermore, champions should have a vision of what camp should be for all campers. They should strive to inspire others to share in that vision. Along with vision, it is important that champions deal with inclusion in a systematic and intentional way. Inclusion cannot happen only at the program level but must occur at the organizational level as well. There is no ‘one size fits all’ approach. Camps must figure out what works best for them. Camp professionals need to design an environment where all campers are welcomed and valued. Camp can be an important context where barriers between people
with and without disabilities can be broken down. It can be a place where campers learn to accept others as being different. As camps start to get more and more applications from campers with disabilities, the challenge will be to make inclusive camping a reality.
CHAPTER FOUR
CONCLUSION

Chapter Overview

The purpose of this study was to examine the transition process that camps took to become inclusive from the perspective of key individuals who championed inclusion. This chapter will connect the research questions from Chapters 2 and 3 to the overall research question of this dissertation. A summary of professional and research implications are presented. Finally, directions for future research in the area of inclusive recreation will be addressed.

Implications for Professionals

Findings from this study suggest that instigating an inclusive recreation experience remains a very complex process. The planning, preparation, and commitment on behalf of the organization are critical to an inclusive recreational experience. Creating an inclusive camp experience starts prior to the camper application process. Ideally, it should start with the organization developing a plan for being inclusive. Intentionality is a key to making the inclusion of individuals with disabilities a positive and successful experience for all. Professionals wanting to be inclusive in a systematic way need to consider the assets, capacities, and limitations of the camp and organization. The findings in this study indicate that the development of a camp-wide strategic plan for inclusion can facilitate the transition process of camps becoming more inclusive. For example, review of the organization’s camper application and screening process is an area that camp professionals should consider in the development of a strategic plan for inclusion.
Questions such as “Does our current application provide us the necessary information about a camper with a disability? How will we acquire additional information needed to adequately assess whether or not our camp can provide any necessary supports for the camper?” are examples that organizations might begin to ask themselves regarding their application and screening process. Finding ways for camps to learn more about the campers prior to their approval at camp can be an important step in recognizing whom they can and cannot support at camp.

Along with the application and screening process, camps should critically review organizational policies to determine how inclusive they are. For example, if a camp has a “zero tolerance” policy for hitting, is there some flexibility within this policy to better address some extenuating circumstances for campers with and without disabilities? Another area that should be considered in a strategic plan for inclusion is staff training and support. Although the camps in this study had varying staffing structures, they provided training on inclusive strategies for all of their staff regardless of position. Working with campers with disabilities should be infused into all aspects of the staff orientation. One way to do this is to provide a variety of scenarios for staff to work through to practice how they would handle situations dealing with campers with and without disabilities. Additionally, this study indicates the need for organizations to continuously support staff after staff training week is completed. The continuous and responsive support for staff during the camp season helps to make the inclusive philosophy an integrated part of the camp’s culture.
Just as important as an organization’s creation of a strategic plan for inclusion is the understanding that the process of inclusion is an on-going and evolutionary process. The findings from this study support the idea that there is “no cookie cutter” path to becoming inclusive (Schleien, Miller & Shea, 2009). Camps in this study needed some time to find their way and navigate challenges as they surfaced. Time is needed to discover what is going to work considering one’s camp’s culture. Findings from this study can assist camps in realizing that they do not have to restructure the camp in order to make inclusion happen. Inclusive recreation is more about the infusion of inclusiveness into an existing organization. Camps can and should still maintain their own culture and further recognize that an inclusive camp can exist within a variety of organizational structures.

Although the path to becoming inclusive was unique for each camp in this study, findings suggest that the creation of a support network for inclusion is an important aspect of learning what will work for their particular organization. Camps benefit in “jumping the learning curve” for inclusion by establishing relationships with organizations outside of their own. Organizations such as the Bubel Aiken Foundation provide funding opportunities for camps wanting to include individuals with disabilities in recreation programs such as camps. The intent of the grants is to provide recreation organizations such as camps some financial support as work through the possible challenges of infusing the inclusion of individuals with disabilities into a more seamless process. Along with financial support, outside organizations can provide important training on inclusive practices such as respectful accommodations, staff training, and
development of positive behavioral supports to facilitate the inclusion process. Camps and other recreation organizations should also reach out to outside organizations similar in nature to their own to learn from them about what can work. Furthermore, the American Camp Association (ACA) needs to be more instrumental in creating a more formalized network of support so camps can identify others who have gone through the learning process of becoming inclusive.

Finally this study establishes the importance of formalizing a definition of inclusion in a more practical way. Findings in this study suggest that the interpretation of inclusion shifted during the process of a camp becoming inclusive. There is literature within the recreation field that provides a clear definition of characteristics of inclusion; however it seems that professionals in the field lack a working knowledge of this definition. Having academic programs that provide future recreation and leisure professionals with a more definitive and practical definition of inclusion could be one way to address the issue of misinterpretation. Currently ACA has supported research on inclusion yet they have not presented the camp professionals with a functional or even conceptual definition of inclusion. Specific to organized camps, ACA should present their community with a formal and practical definition of inclusion.

**Implications for Research**

Even though this study was exploratory, there are some important implications for research. Findings from previous research on inclusive practices in recreation support the need for all staff to be trained on the philosophy of inclusion and inclusive strategies (Anderson & Kress, 2003; Devine & McGovern, 2001; Schleien, et al., 1997). The
training of all staff is vital to the success of the inclusion process because it contributes to staff’s willingness to support inclusion (Schleien, et al., 1997). The findings from this study were congruent with the research on staff training as well as other inclusive practices such as the establishment of collaborative relationships and the need for an organizational-wide commitment to inclusion.

The exploration of contact theory was not the focus of this study but findings from this study provide more insight into the influence of authority. The support of authority was one of the original conditions proposed by Allport’s contact theory (1954) that facilitated the breakdown of attitudinal barriers between groups of people. Most research on contact theory has focused on the nature and quality of contact between groups. Previous research has paid little attention to the nature of authority’s support other than modeling acceptance of others (Devine, 2004). Findings from this study further support the importance of this role. However, the question of how intense does the support of authority need to be for attitudinal change and what level of authority is appropriate remains largely unexamined. Findings from this study suggest that the authority figures served as advocates for inclusion. They view the inclusion of campers with disabilities as “the right thing to do.” Participants use their positions of authority to garner support and make necessary adjustments within the organizations to make inclusion happen. This study suggests that the people in positions of authority need to be actively engaged in not only constructing an inclusive environment based on the other conditions of contact theory but in the promotion of the philosophy and implementation of inclusion. The idea that the support of authority goes beyond providing a passive
Another implication of this study is the additional insight gained about the theory of diffusion of an innovation. Rodgers defined diffusion as the “process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among members of a social system” (Rodgers, 1995, p 5). Participants in this study served as negotiators in getting other stakeholders to buy into the camp becoming inclusive. The findings in this study provide additional support to the body of knowledge on the theory of diffusion as a communicative process. Additionally, findings from this study support previous research findings on the role of champions as catalysts in an organization’s willingness to become inclusive. As architects of inclusion, the role of champions goes beyond wielding influence over various constituents to adopt inclusion. Champions can also play a pivotal role in the creation of inclusive recreation experience. The idea of champions as more than communicators but also creators of environments conducive for innovation can add to the body of research on diffusion. Furthermore, findings for this study suggest that diffusion theory can be a viable theoretical framework for gaining insight on the dissemination of inclusive practices in the field of recreation. As a theoretical framework, diffusion theory could bridge what is known about inclusion and implementing inclusive practices, thus facilitating the process of recreation and leisure organizations being able to provide more access and opportunities for individuals with disabilities.
**Future Research**

Research on how camps become inclusive is limited and there is still much that is not known about the transition processes camps experience. All of the participants in this study were in administrative and leadership positions in the organization during the camp’s transition process towards inclusion. A closer examination of the role that leadership style and administrative position plays in this transition process could provide additional insight to the transition process. Furthermore, talking with parents, campers, staff, and other key stakeholders of the camps used in this study could provide a more holistic view of how the camps became more inclusive.

Additionally there is a need to further investigate the relationship of contact theory and inclusive recreation. Understanding how the conditions outlined in contact theory (support of authority, engagement in cooperative activities, focus on mutual goal, and the provision of time to get to know one another on a deeper level) can reduce prejudices and dispel stereotypes between individuals with and without disabilities by creating an inclusive leisure experience is an area that needs more attention.

Often a problem can be understood at a more in-depth level when it is looked at from the other direction. This study sought to understand why and how inclusion worked for some camps. It could be helpful to investigate why and how it did not work for others. Studying camps that have tried inclusion but were unsuccessful is a recommended topic for future research. Finally, there is no way to know how many camps are systematically including campers with disabilities into their programs. There might be other camps that include campers with disabilities but do not consider themselves inclusive. A more
accurate picture of inclusion at camps is needed in order to fully understand the state of inclusive camps

This study was one of the first to look at “champions” in the context of camp. Examining the role of “champions of inclusion” in other recreational contexts could be an area for future research. Research on how organizations can foster champions of inclusion would be another area for potential research. Future research on the implementation of evidence based inclusive practices utilizing Rodger’s diffusion theory as a theoretical framework is also needed.

Finally, only one of the participants in this study had a segregated camp program for campers with disabilities. Finding out the experiences of individuals who had previously served primarily campers with disabilities but are moving towards inclusion could yield an interesting perspective. Investigating camps as they are just starting the transition process could be considered for future research.

Conclusion

This study examined the transition process camps experience in adopting and implementing an inclusive paradigm. As the study indicates, this process is not easy and straightforward. Considering that each camp found its own unique way to navigate this process, there is no “cookie cutter” way to make inclusion happen at camp. However, the findings of the study did indicate some common themes that all of the camps experienced. Furthermore, champions play an important role in working through this process with the camp. Finally, the reality is camps that have traditionally not served campers with disabilities are getting more and more applications from campers with
disabilities. Utilizing Allport’s contact theory and Rodger’s theory of diffusion as conceptual frameworks, camps can be an important context where attitudinal barriers between people with and without disabilities can be diminished. The point of inclusion is not to alter the camp program or the essence of camp but instead to infuse it within the existing culture to make it a more seamless process. Camp can be a place where campers learn to recognize commonalities and to accept others as being different. Inclusive camps are one way to open access and opportunities for campers with disabilities to experience the unique environment that is camp. An inclusive camp experience for campers with and without disabilities encompasses the concepts that exemplify camps as “enriching lives, building tomorrows” (ACA, 2005).
Appendix A

Interview Guide

Date of interview_________________ Start time of interview______________________ Finish time of Interview_____________
Consented to interview being recorded______________

What does inclusion mean to you?

Throughout this process was your vision of inclusion ever changed? If so, how?

What were your experiences with people with disabilities prior to advocating for inclusion in your camp?

What experiences or events led you to want your camp to adopt inclusion?
What experiences or events led the camp toward adopting inclusion?

What was your goal in having the camp become inclusive?

How do you determine if inclusion has been successful for your camp?

What considerations/supports needed to be in place in order for campers with disabilities to be included in your camp program?

Describe how you operationalized inclusion at your camp? How did the way your camp operated change because of inclusion? Policies? Staff training? Recruitment? Marketing?

What did inclusion look like at your camp?

Approximately how many campers with disabilities are served by your camp in a season? What are the nature of their disabilities? Did that ever change over time?

What criteria did you/your camp establish for a camper with a disability to be included? What was rationale for establishing that particular criteria? Did that change over time?

How did you screen campers to determine if they were appropriate for your camp? How did you arrive at your screening process?

How did you/your camp balance the ratio of campers with disabilities to campers without?
Was there a “fear factor” of having campers with disabilities in your camp program? If there was, how did you address it?

Was there ever a point where you/your camp became a victim of your own success? How did you/your camp deal with that?

How did you get other stakeholders (parents, staff, administrators, etc) buy-in for an inclusive camp?

What was the most challenging part about implementing inclusion at your camp?
What were some of the challenges you encountered in implementing inclusion?
How were these challenges negotiated?

What aspects of the transition prove to be the smoothest?

What was the most rewarding aspect for you about including campers with disabilities into the camp?

What did you learn by going through this process of transition with your camp?

What advice would you give to others who wanted to include campers with disabilities into their programs?

If you could do it all over again, what would you do differently?
Appendix B

Champion/Camp Profile Form

Name of Champion: _______________________________________________________

Name of camp/organization: _______________________________________________

Location of camp: _________________________________________________________

Current position: __________________________________________________________

Position at the start of inclusion process: ____________________________________

Type of camp: _____________________________________________________________

Affiliation: _______________________________________________________________

Accredited by ACA: _________________________________________________________

Number of sessions per summer: ____________________________________________

Length of session: _________________________________________________________

Ages of campers served: ____________________________________________________

Approximate number of campers total: _______________________________________

Approximate number of campers with disabilities: _____________________________

Types of disabilities: _______________________________________________________

Campers w/ disabilities participate alongside peers: ____________________________

Year inclusion program started: _____________________________________________

Title of inclusive program (if different from camp name): _________________________

Additional notes: 
Appendix C

IRB Informed Consent Form

Consent Form for Participation in a Research Study Clemson University

The examination of the transition processes used by inclusive camps

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Dr. Fran McGuire and Teresa Tucker on inclusive camps. The purpose of this research is to examine the transition process of camps towards serving campers with and without disabilities in the same program from the perspective of key individuals or “champions” that were responsible for the camps’ adoption and implementation of inclusion.

Your participation will involve answering questions about how your camp transitioned to serving both campers with and without disabilities in the same program from your perspective. The amount of time required for your participation will be approximately 1 to 2 hours per interview.

There are no known risks associated with this research. Additionally, there are no known benefits to you that would result from your participation in this research. However gaining a better understanding of how a camp can become inclusive by sharing your experience could benefit the camp profession.

We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. Pseudonyms will be used so that your identity will not be revealed in any publication that might result from this study.

In rare cases, a research study will be evaluated by an oversight agency, such as the Clemson University Institutional Review Board or the federal Office for Human Research Protections, that would require that we share the information we collect from you. If this happens, the information would only be used to determine if we conducted this study properly and adequately protected your rights as a participant.

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You will not be penalized in any way should you decide not to participate or to withdraw from this study.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Dr. Fran McGuire at Clemson University at 864-656-2183. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Clemson University Institutional Review Board at 864.656.6460.

Consent

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give my consent to participate in this study.
Appendix D

Description of Camps

Camp A- Sara’s Camp
Camp A is a co-ed day camp that serves children between the ages of 7-12. The camp has four sites located throughout a predominately rural school district in the Southeast region of the United States. The camp is part of a private non-profit organization but partners with the school district and local recreation department for use of facilities and the recruitment of staff. Approximately 20% of the camper population has a diagnosed disability. Campers with primarily developmental disabilities are included in the camp program. Additional staff support in program areas facilitates the inclusion of campers with disabilities. Camp A combines recreation with education by offering activities such as cooking, science, art, media, computers, games, drawing, and crafts.

Camp B- Jane’s Camp
Camp B is an outdoor, co-ed inclusive day camp that serves all children with or without disabilities between the ages of 7-13. The camp is located on 600 acres of a state park in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Camp B is affiliated with a private non-profit organization that initially offered therapeutic horseback riding programs for individuals with disabilities. Approximately 25% of the camper population has a diagnosed disability. Types of disabilities that campers have include Down syndrome, ADHD, autism spectrum, deafness, and ODD. Camp B does not utilize “inclusion counselors” but rather shifts support for campers based on campers’ needs. Camp B offers activities such as drama, crafts, archery, kayaking, swimming, fishing and nature.

Camp C- Jeff’s Camp
Camp C is a co-ed day camp that serves girls and boys from pre-school through eighth grade. We offer campers a variety of experiences, each of them pointing toward the goal of self-discovery and enrichment in an atmosphere of fun. The camp is affiliated with a private school located in the suburbs of major metropolitan in the Southeast. Camp C is accredited by the American Camp Association. Approximately 10% of the camper population has a diagnosed disability. Campers with primarily developmental disabilities are included in the camp program. Camp C partners with another local non-profit organization for additional staff support to facilitate the inclusion of campers with disabilities. The partnering agency not only provides staff but they also handle the registration process of the campers with disabilities. Campers spend the majority of time out of doors in active and reflective nature-based programming. Camp C consists of a structured recreational program focusing on self improvement, personal responsibility, and environmental respect.
Camp D - Kim’s Camp
Camp D is a co-ed day camp that serves children between the ages of 7-14. The camp is part of the local parks department located in the suburbs of a metropolitan city on the West Coast. The day camp has multiple sites scattered throughout the town. Approximately 10% of the camper population has a diagnosed disability. Campers with primarily developmental disabilities are included in the camp program. Additional staff support in program areas facilitates the inclusion of campers with disabilities. Camp D offers activities including art, dance, drama, crafts, games, kayaking, reading, outdoor adventures, songs, swimming, sports, skateboarding, sailing, surfing, cheerleading, science, and wakeboarding.

Camp E - Jake’s Camp
Camp E is a co-ed resident camp for youth between the ages of 7-15. The camp is affiliated with a national religious non-profit youth organization. Camp E is located in a rural area of the northeast region of the United States. Campers live in rustic cabins and are grouped by chronological age categories. The typical camper population at is approximately 110 per week with 10% of the population diagnosed with a disability. Types of disabilities that campers have include physical, developmental, and behavioral disabilities. Camp E does not utilize “inclusion counselors” but rather shifts support for campers based on campers’ needs. Camp E offers traditional camp activities such as swimming, boating, arts & crafts, sports, drama, nature/environmental education, and games.

Camp F - Mindy’s Camp
Camp F is a co-ed, active outdoor day camp for youth between the ages of 7-13. This camp is located on the campus of a major university on the West Coast. Camp F categorizes itself as a sports and arts camp with an emphasis on skill development. Camp F is accredited by the American Camp Association. All campers are encouraged to try a variety of activities such as swimming, soccer, lacrosse and volleyball. Approximately 7% of the camper population has a diagnosed disability. Types of disabilities that campers have are primarily high functioning autism or Asperger’s. Campers with disabilities register for a separate program that works on social skill development in combination of integrating campers into the overall camp program. Camp F utilizes designated staff to provided additional support for campers with disabilities in all camp activities. All campers are grouped according to age and choose among activities offered.
Camp G- Amy & Mindy’s Camp
Camp G is a co-ed resident camp for youth between the ages of 7-16. The camp is affiliated with a national religious non-profit youth organization and is accredited by the American Camp Association. Camp G is located on over 300 acres of woods within the Midwest region of the United States. Campers live in rustic cabins and are grouped by chronological age categories. Ten percent of the camper population has been diagnosed with a disability, predominately developmental disabilities. Camp G utilizes designated inclusion staff to provide support for campers with disabilities based on campers’ needs. Camp activities include: outdoor cooking/fire building, swimming, canoeing, campfires, games, sports, nature, faith hour (parables), hiking, horseback riding, scripture, handicrafts, climbing tower, dance, low ropes challenge, camp-out, cook-out, drama, and archery.

Camp H- Rick & Fred’s Camp
Camp H is a co-ed resident camp for youth between the ages of 7-17. The camp was intentionally affiliated with the 4 H extension program of a state located in the Northeast region of the US. The camp eventually became incorporated into a private non-profit organization. Camp H is accredited by the American Camp Association. Campers live in cabins and are grouped by chronological age categories. Ten percent of the camper population has been diagnosed with a disability, predominately developmental disabilities. Campers with disabilities sign up for a separate program but only for intake and assessment purposes. Camp H utilizes designated inclusion staff to provide support for campers with disabilities based on campers’ needs. All campers participate in traditional camp activities.
REFERENCES


American Camping Association (2005). *Directions: Youth development outcomes of the camp experience*. Martinsville, IN: ACA.


H.R. 1350, Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004


