

5-2015

Don't Turn On The Light!: Exploring Summer Camp Professionals' Perceptions and Camp Policies on Ghost Stories

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DON'T TURN ON THE LIGHT!: EXPLORING SUMMER CAMP PROFESSIONALS'
PERCEPTIONS AND CAMP POLICIES ON GHOST STORIES

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

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

by
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May 2015

Accepted by:
Dr. Gwynn Powell, Committee Chair
Dr. Robert Bixler
Dr. Teresa Tucker

ABSTRACT

Exploring Summer Camp Professionals' Perceptions and Camp Policies on Ghost Stories

Varying opinions exist among camp professionals regarding whether ghost stories should be shared or prohibited in a summer camp setting. Summer camps offer a controlled and safe environment for campers to challenge limits and conquer fears (Ventrura & Garst, 2013). Ghost stories can be used as a method to hook campers into the program and build community within the camp (Higgins, 2008). However, not all campers may be emotionally equipped to handle ghost stories resulting in perceptions of the camp being an unsafe and scary environment (Ellis, 1981). The purpose of this study is to explore attitudes, philosophies and policies about ghost stories at camp in order to stimulate an explicit discussion of the rationales behind the professional judgment used when determining if ghost stories should be shared at camp.

A paper survey and a focus group were used to explore perceptions about camp policies, professional philosophies, ghost story settings and definitions. Using a convenience sample, a total of 87 professionals in the camp field were surveyed. Findings suggest three overarching philosophies regarding ghost stories at camp: Prohibited, Tolerated, and Actively Allowed. A three-tiered ghost story definition tool that is centered on emotional impact was developed for camp professionals to use when determining their stance on ghost stories.

Findings from this study can to be used by camp professionals, alongside Evidence-Informed Practices, to assist in professional judgment when determining

whether or not ghost stories are appropriate for camp. To aid in this judgment, a decision tree was developed using camp specific questions to provoke conscious thought before permitting or prohibiting ghost stories at camp.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my parents, Joe and Robin Blanton. I am so blessed to call you my parents. Without your constant love, endless support and encouragement, this feat would have been impossible. Thank you for believing in me and pushing me to go further in my life and education that I would have dreamt myself capable.

I would also like to dedicate this to my siblings, Abigail, Amelia and Charlie. I would not be who I am today without each one of you pushing me to be my best. I cannot imagine my life without each of you goons in it.

I love you all and hope I have made you proud.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

There are many individuals whom I would like to thank for their contributions to this research project. First, a very large thank you to my committee members, Dr. Gwynn Powell, Dr. Robert Bixler and Dr. Teresa Tucker, for your endless patience, knowledge of the field and constant encouragement. I did not know that I was capable of actually completing an entire research study, but with each of your guidance and “gentle” nudges, I was able to make this a reality.

I would like to thank my family members, who listened to both my triumphs and failures with an open and supportive ear. Even though you could care less about ghost stories at summer camp, continual advice, ideas and endless support kept me going. Looks like now I get to officially keep my computer.

I would like to thank the wonderful people whom I have met during the pursuit of this degree. A strong support system and bonds were made as we all trudged through this painful and difficult feat together. Thank you for being a shoulder to lean on, an ear to bounce ideas, eyes for endless revisions and hearts to make the friendships full of laughter, love and memorable late nights.

Lastly, I would like to thank “Stump Girl” and her infamous story, which sparked the debate between Dr. Dorothy Schmaltz and Dr. Gwynn Powell. It was this debate that ignited the idea behind this entire research project. Without Stump Girl, I would not have had the idea to explore ghost stories at summer camp.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview

Every year, over 11 million youth and adults in the United States attend a residential or day camp. There are more than 12,000 camps in the United States; of those camps, approximately 2,400 are accredited by the American Camp Association (ACA). The ACA is the largest camp industry in the United States and serves over 9,000 members involved in residential and day camps and youth development professions (American Camp Association, 2010). The ACA community strives to focus on physical, social and emotional growth, active participation and building community (American Camp Association, 2013). Their desired camp outcomes are described as those that will effectively encourage youth to participate in “risk taking, valuing the resources nature offers, maintaining healthy lifestyles and learning through a variety of fun and life-changing experiences” (Ball & Ball, 2012, pp. 21).

Research has shown that summer camps can have positive effects months, or even years, after the individual camper’s experience. Some of these positive effects include increases in self-esteem, exploration, peer relations, independence and social comfort (Ventura & Garst, 2013). Parents have expressed to the ACA, that after attending just one session of camp, their child is generally willing to be more responsible, stand up for what they know is right and be more giving (American Camp Association, 2013).

To reach desired outcomes, camps can use programs and activities, which vary depending on their camp philosophy and the types of youth being served. Common camp

programs include, but are not limited to, wilderness/camping skills, recreational swimming and sports, arts and crafts, teambuilding and community service (American Camp Association, 2010). Some programs offer structured activities that allow campers to learn and apply specific skills taught by instructors. Others are based on more recreational components and are less structured. These activities allow for youth to discover and practice new skills on their own.

One iconic aspect of camp is the campfire, also known as an assembly or gathering. This specific program is often used for individual camp traditions. Other times, the staff, counselors and campers share skits, songs, jokes, the day's accomplishments and stories.

Storytelling is a long-standing part of the campfire program tradition. Stories have been passed down around a fire long before written language was used to document them (Parkinson, 2001). Often staff and counselors gather together and share tales with campers. These stories range from camp histories and humorous tales to legends and ghost stories (Parkinson, 2001).

Ghost stories are a popular genre of stories in our society, especially among elementary youth (Higgins, 2008). Embedded in our culture (Goldstein, Grider & Thomas, 2007), ghost stories can be used as one method to hook campers into the program (Higgins, 2008). Camp staff can draw on the unfamiliarity of the surrounding environment for campers and reputations of the unknown that lurk in the surrounding area (Ellis, 1981).

However, drawing upon the unknown in an already unfamiliar area could be a source of fear and anxiety for some youth. Some may dwell on the potentially scary elements of the ghost story and become frightened. They may not be able to separate elements of the story that are factual from fictional, thus grounding the story in reality and turning it into a negative experience (Ellis, 1981).

The idea of sharing ghost stories with youth has been a source of debate among camp staff and professionals in the camp profession. Some feel ghost stories are a part of the camp tradition, while others believe they are harmful to campers' psychological and emotional wellbeing (Ellis, 1981). Gaps in research have been found regarding the role ghost stories play at camp and the effects of sharing them with campers. There are also gaps regarding the variety of definitions explaining the spectrum of ghost stories. This study explored the attitudes and philosophies of camp professionals and camp policies about sharing ghost stories at camp, as well as, how camp professionals define a ghost story.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore attitudes, philosophies and policies regarding whether ghost stories should be shared at camp or banned. This exploration was designed to inform professional judgment and help stimulate explicit discussion and rationales for camp professionals when determining to share or ban ghost stories at camp. Discoveries from this study will be used to provoke conscious conversation, helping camp professionals answer the question "Why or why not?" rather

than simply falling back on previously established policy, documented best-practice or tradition.

Objective

The objective of this study was to explore the overarching research question: What are camp professionals' attitudes, philosophies and policies of ghost stories at summer camp? To help answer this question four more questions were developed:

1. In what camp settings are ghost stories being told?
2. Are there policies that determine what stories can and cannot be shared at camp?
3. What are camp professionals' philosophies and rationales regarding the absence or presence of ghost stories at summer camp?
4. How do camp professionals define a ghost story?

Summary

In this chapter, a brief overview of ghost stories and their debated role in summer camps was discussed. The purpose of this study was to explore attitudes, philosophies and policies of ghost stories at summer camp to help stimulate a conscious conversation among camp professionals. The core objective of this study was to answer the overarching question "What are camp professionals' perceptions of philosophies and policies of ghost stories at summer camp?" using four sub-questions.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Overview

Prior to conducting this study, an extensive search of previous literature regarding ghost stories and summer camps was conducted. This chapter will provide an overview of the current research relating to this study. Understanding 1) summer camp history, 2) camp outcomes, 3) horror literature and media, 4) role of storytelling 5) ghost stories at summer camp will highlight the importance of this study.

Summer Camp History

Summer camps have been in existence for over 150 years in the United States (Henderson, Witaker, Bialeschki, Scanlin, & Thurber, 2007). The first known camp, Gunnery Camp, was established in 1861 in Washington, Connecticut, founded and operated by Frederick W. Gunn and his wife, as a home school for adolescent boys. Gunn, as the main provider, took the boys into the wilderness for two weeks, where they camped, fished and hunted together (Campora, 1998).

Ernest Balach founded the first documented organized camp, Camp Chocorua, in 1881 in New Hampshire. Balach focused his camp on bringing adolescent males into the wilderness for periods of time (Smith, 2006). However, unlike Gunnery Camp, Balach focused on the boys having to take initiative for building and maintaining their own shelters and food sources. The campers were required to learn self-reliance rather than

dependence (Smith, 2006). Both Gunnery Camp and Camp Chocorua helped shape a triad of characteristics that most camps today still follow: 1) away from home in an 2) outdoor/ recreational setting where the 3) campers live as a community (Campora, 1998).

With this triad of characteristics in mind, United States camps grew a considerable amount because of the changing American social structure in the last quarter of the 19th century (Smith, 2006). From 1860 to 1920 school headmasters created programs emphasizing the importance of taking youth out of an urban setting and allowing them to directly experience the elements of nature (Campora, 1998; Smith 2006). There was the hope that by connecting campers with character-building nature forces, the weight of urban industrialization would lighten and they could develop more complete personalities (Smith, 2006).

Fewer than 100 organized camps were documented at the turn of the century in the United States. However, by 1918, more than 1,000 organized camps existed, due, in large, to G. Stanley Hall and his book entitled *Adolescence*. This book offered “scientific evidence” that youth immersion into nature was not only educational, but a necessary part of a healthy development. This “evidence” brought enough creditability for camps to become a popular avenue for youth to attain escape from the urban city (Smith, 2006).

The camp world offered many things that most other places could not. A paradox between the camp world and outside world was developed. Camp offered an escape from the ever-changing, industrialized city and allowed youth to relish in the simplicity and naturalness of the wilderness. Experiences felt more realistic in the quiet nature that held very few of the distractions that the city life brought. Campers could clarify values,

experiment and determine, for themselves, which were worth taking back into the real world (Smith, 2006).

While the fundamentals of camps remained the same, the focus tended to change with the times. During World War II, camps advertised themselves as a sanctuary from the horrors of the war. They sought to offer protection from the physical, social and emotional harms the war brought. This idea of a sanctuary began to change quickly when it became apparent that youth could not completely separate the effects of the war from the sanctuary of camp (Smith, 2006). The focus of camps moved from a sanctuary to a place of great patriotism and military training (Campora, 1998).

During the 1950's, -60's and -70's the focus reformed again from militarism to a place of natural healing from the psychological terrors the war had brought (Campora, 1998). Barbra Ellen Joy, a prominent camp figure in the 1950's, stated camp professionals should embrace the healing approach of camp so campers would be, "able to resist the pressures of modern life which seem to conspire to crush him and to make him conform to a stereotype set by the government and public pressures (Smith, 2006, p. 85)."

No matter the specific goals of each camp, connecting youth with nature has been a core element of camps from the beginning. Over the last 150 years, the camp industry has grown exponentially from a single camp run by a headmaster and his wife to a thriving industry of thousands of camps across the United States. To help unite the constantly growing industry numerous organizations arose, including the American Camp Association (ACA).

American Camp Association

Founded in 1910, the ACA is the largest organized camp association in the United States. The word camp is defined by the American Camp Association (ACA) (1998) as “a sustained experience which provides a creative, recreational and educational opportunity in group living in the out-of doors. It utilizes training leadership and the resources of the natural surroundings to contribute to each camper’s mental, physical, social, and spiritual growth,” (p. 3). This modern definition recognized the broadened role camp played as it evolved throughout history into a more youth development focused institution.

With over 2,400 accredited camps, the ACA has united camps to serve a single mission: “Enriching the lives of children, youth and adults through the camp experience” (American Camp Association, 2010). The ACA community “promotes active participation, caring relationships, and focus on the emotional, social, spiritual, and physical growth of the individual (Ball & Ball, 2012, pp. 21).” Through various activities, the ACA strives for outcomes that will help meet those growths.

Camp Outcomes

ACA accredited camps have desired outcomes that align with the theory of Positive Youth Development (PYD). PYD seeks to reduce bad behaviors by reducing negative individual, social and environmental characteristics youth encounter while viewing youth as a valuable asset rather than a liability (Campora, 1998). PYD prepares youth to face challenges and to help them become socially, morally, physically,

cognitively and emotionally capable in society. The core focus is to prepare youth for long-term achievement rather than a short-term fix. Through empowerment from authority figures, youth are encouraged to take ownership and responsibility of their actions (Witt & Crompton, 2011).

Studies have been conducted on positive outcomes of both residential and day camps. Residential camps are defined as those in which youth stay overnight, the camp staff run the programs and are responsible for youth supervision and care 24 hours a day (Ventura & Garst, 2013). Day camps are defined as a camp that provides activities and care for children only during the day (Merriam-Webster, 2014). Approximately 47% of ACA accredited camps are strictly residential, 27% are strictly day camp and 26% have both day and residential camps (American Camp Association, 2010).

A study conducted by the ACA found that residential camp experiences resulted in greater positive outcomes over day camps in areas related to supportive relationships, skill building, and safety. Campers who attended for-profit and religious camps in general tended to gain more in areas related to supportive relationships and skill building. Campers who attended sessions at a residential camp lasting longer than four weeks tended to show an increase in supportive relationships and stronger ability to build skills. Two common positive outcome themes emerged from the overall results: individual growth and community growth (American Camp Association, 2006).

Other research has focused on the individual gains of youth who attend camp. Youth, parents and camp professionals report growth from pre to post camp experiences (Campora, 1998). Growth among campers showed increases in self-esteem and self worth

and leadership (American Camp Association, 2013). Campers feel more adventurous with approximately 74% of campers completing activities they were originally afraid to try.

Although some campers experienced some mild homesickness, most reported to have gained a new sense of autonomy and independence at camp. Approximately 96% of campers shared that camp helped them make new friends and build social skills. There was also a significant increase from the pre- to post-camp experience with campers' intentions of returning to camp the following summer (McAllister, 2012). A study conducted by Philliber (2005), indicated that most of these positive outcomes were still evident six months after the individual camp session.

While camps help youth develop individual skills, they also help build a strong, positive sense of community (American Camp Association, 2013). The perceived sense of connectedness and willingness to intervene among youth, or collective efficacy, has a strong impact at camp. Campers who feel they are part of a group are theoretically empowered to positively influence the behaviors of those around them (Smith, Osgood, Caldwell, Hynes, & Perkins, 2013). These newly formed relationships can help dissolve stereotypes and build a trusting community within the camp. Opportunities, which are not always offered in other non-camp settings, may arise, giving youth an opportunity to step up and develop leadership skills (Philliber, 2005).

Storytelling

Stories are the unique identity of a community (Higgins, 2008). They encompass a variety of genera: myths, legends, fairytales, adventures, oral histories and ghost stories. From stories, a researcher can learn in-depth knowledge about cultural patterns and structures of various societies (Nelson, et al, 2008). The first stories began as oral traditions (Parkinson, 2001). A storyteller would share a personal or learned experience offering a new perspective to the listener (Scott, 2011). Basic social values, skills and wisdoms are passed down through stories and spread through travelers on the road or by an evening campfire.

Storytellers, in all genera, take the listener on a journey. They set up an opposition between facts and interpretations, as well as, between reality and fiction (Scott, 2011). Experienced storytellers help the listener to organize space and mark off mental boundaries, but also allow listeners, if willing, to transcend those boundaries in a safe and controlled manner. The storyteller provokes thoughts through details and expands the listener's mind to places and situations that have never been considered (Scott, 2011).

Horror Literature and Media

Twenty-first century media delights society with stories full of horror and gore (Goldstein, Grider & Thomas, 2007). Many relish in the thrill and are excited by their strong responses after viewing horrific movies (Tudor, 1997). Research has shown that

both males and females are intrigued by horrors and the supernatural world (Campora, 1998).

While studies have described what youth are frightened of, little known research has looked into the effect of gruesome movies and novels on youth. Horror novels, especially those containing the supernatural, are particularly popular with both males and females and are considered part of the fantasy genera. Fantasy stories always include at least one element that goes against the laws of physics and at least one element of the impossible (Campora, 1998). One researcher, Campora (1998), shared that horror novels can offer an opportunity for some youth to deal with their fears in a controlled manner. The storyteller can create a safe context for exploration within the mind of the listener. The listener can imagine they are on the edge of a disaster, but with a sense of control. This escape and cautious exploration can help some youth deal with irrational fears (Campora, 1998).

Children's Ghost Stories and Urban Legends

The ghost stories that children typically share are not the gruesome versions of blood and monsters that the media tends to offer. The stories offered by media typically align more with an urban legend, which are stories with the goal to thrill and frighten the listener through detailed imagery. They often have a historical setting and are more difficult to discern truth (Goldstein, et al, 2007). Typically, urban legends are left open ended, leaving the listener to ponder every possible ending (Parkinson, 2001). An urban

legend story shares the haunted reputation of the setting in great detail, not always making it clear to the listener which parts of the story are fictional (Ellis, 1981).

Like urban legends, children's ghost stories are narratives that deal with the supernatural dead or undead. However, children's ghost stories are shorter in length, vague in descriptive detail and conclude with a punch line. Typically, monsters and supernatural creatures are never described in elaborate detail, thus allowing the listener to manipulate the images on their own (Goldstein, et al, 2007). Many children begin their storytelling at a young age with various ghost stories they heard from older siblings or peers (Higgins, 2008). The emotional response contained in the term scary is vague and can cover reactions from sheer delight to pure terror (Goldstein, et al., 2007).

Research on ghost stories and their impact on youth is limited. Children as early as elementary age have been reported to share ghost stories with each other (Armitage, 2006). They tend to share them among peers, usually at night and away from immediate adult interference (Goldstein, et al, 2007). The stories follow the same general pattern. The child storyteller often portrays him or herself as the protagonist and the supernatural being as the antagonist. Adults, if present in the story, are typically portrayed as flat, background characters. These stories are set in haunted houses or cemeteries and end with a comic surprise. Many children who tell ghost stories will practice them with one another until they master the structure that prepares them to share more complicated and detailed stories. The youth practice their storytelling skills until they master the formulaic sequencing and structure of the narrative. Typically around the age of ten to twelve, youth begin to stop sharing these types of children's ghost stories with their peers and

begin to share more psychologically disturbing and sophisticated tales requiring more skill (Goldstein, et al, 2007).

Children do not always hear these stories from just their peers. According to Goldstein, et al. (2007), older siblings are the most common source of ghost stories. However, there are events, especially in a camp setting, where youth are told ghost stories by older campers or camp professionals. Older storytellers, who are involved with telling urban legends rather than ghost stories, often are unaware that younger children need less detail (Goldstein, et al., 2007).

Ghost Stories at Camp

There is disagreement in the camp world, and the outside world, as to whether ghost stories should be shared at camp. Some believe the idea behind sharing ghost stories in a camp setting is to create a space of limbo, or a place where youth are hovering between belief in the story and disbelief (Ellis, 1981). This can be a challenging task, as every camper is different and is difficult to gauge the boundary between what is just enough to keep them on the edge of their seats and what pushes them over the edge. To help campers cope and feel safe within the story, a “scapegoat” can be used. A scapegoat is anything that the storyteller attributes as a magical object or gesture offering safety within the story, such as touching a magic stick (Ellis, 1981) or a pair of shoes placed just right under the child’s bed (Higgins, 2008). This scapegoat can offer a safe space between the supernatural beings in the ghost story and the listeners (Ellis, 1981).

Ghost stories can allow youth to challenge and define the boundaries of the real world in a safe manner (Ellis, 1981). From the beginning, many stories toy with supernatural beings and anthropomorphism, or the portrayal of what is not human in terms of human characteristics. These characters do not represent the complete personalities of the objects or animals they actually are. They must be abstract enough to have representative characteristics of human beings as well (Strang, 1997).

Most youth understand that the talking animals in the story are not representative of all animals because the characters do not fully represent the complete personalities of either animal or human (Strang, 1997). They are most often seen as cartoons in the eyes of children. The same may be said for children's ghost stories (Goldstein, et al, 2007). Some children can keep an emotional distance from the supernatural beings by being able to manipulate the vague details of the story into images they can handle (Armitage, 2006). Children may then be able to control and face their fears of the unknown safely. They can relish in their fantasy and imagination rather than the confrontation with the unknown (Goldstein, et al, 2007).

According to Armitage (2006), a liminal space, or threshold, can be created in stories, where the youth can be transferred into a place of spatial understanding between the areas of known safety and unknown danger. An environment is developed, that lends itself to the setting for the story, helping the child conquer the unknown without adult help. Ghost stories can be used, for some youth, as a way to personify real fears and anxieties and develop mechanisms to conquer fears in reality (Armitage, 2006).

Some suggest ghost stories can be used as a way to build community. Hall (1973, p. 255) explains how youth will, “willingly suspend disbelief in supernatural haunts and horrors” so they can join the excitement and feel like a part of the group. The idea that safety lies in numbers will bring a group of campers closer together to work towards overcoming the fear of the story. However, for this to work effectively, there still has to be the underlying knowledge that the story was just a fabrication and not set in reality (Ellis, 1981).

While ghost stories may be used as an avenue of conquering fear for some children, not all will be able to overcome the fear the story may provide. If the ghost story being told is not recognized as a fabrication, it can easily turn into a negative experience (Ellis, 1981). According to Ellis (1981), some children will take these stories literally, rather than recognizing them as a form of entertainment. If the child accepts the incidents as real, they may come to fear for their personal safety, as well as, reject their surrounding as a safe environment (Ellis, 1981).

Evidence-Informed Versus Evidence-Based Practice

There is debate among professionals, in all fields, as to the role best practices play. Particularly in medical fields, the idea of Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) is to enhance effectiveness, efficiency and accountability within the workplace. It is intended to support knowledge sharing and co-operation between professionals (Nevo & Slonim-Nevo, 2011). However, EBP does not necessarily fit well in fields where problems are individualized, contextual and not well defined (Mullen & Streiner, 2004). In these

environments, Evidence-Informed Practice (EIP) is becoming a more appropriate approach (Nevo & Slonim-Nevo, 2011).

EIP allows for knowledge and decisions within the practice to be enriched by prior research rather than being limited to it (Epstein, 2009). Through EIP, practitioners are encouraged to be knowledgeable about current research and integrate it appropriately into their work along with professional judgment, situational context and values of the organization. EIP takes a client-centered approach by using empirical evidence to help make the best creative and constructive decisions while still upholding to the client's preferences (Nevo & Slonim-Nevo, 2011). It is with an EIP approach, this study will provide new information regarding ghost stories so camp professionals can make an informed decision based on the current research, context and structure of their individualized camp.

Summary

Having been in existence in the United States for over 150 years, camps have evolved from a small group of adolescent boys escaping urban bounds to a thriving industry with over 2,400 ACA accredited camps (Henderson, et al, 2007; American Camp Association, 2010). ACA accredited camps unite to serve a core mission through a variety of activities, including storytelling (Ball & Ball, 2012). Often times, youth develop their storytelling skills by sharing ghost stories with peers (Goldstein, et al, 2007). Ghost stories are part of the fantasy genera, containing both an element of the supernatural and an element that defies the laws of physics (Campora, 1998). A

disagreement exists within the camp world, as to whether ghost stories should be shared with campers or banned. Some believe ghost stories allow campers to challenge and define the boundaries of the real world in a safe context, while others feel ghost stories can be psychologically harmful if the camper does not realize it is a fabrication (Ellis, 1998). It is through Evidence-Informed Practices that camp professionals can use empirical research, as well as the context of their individualized camp and population being served, to make professional judgments on ghost story policies (Nevo & Slonim-Nevo, 2011).

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodology used to accomplish the research objectives of this study. This study used a mixed methods approach with a questionnaire and a modified focus group. This section will discuss 1) IRB approval, 2) sample selection, 3) questionnaire, 4) focus group and 5) data analysis.

Approval for Human Subject Involvement

An exempt review application was submitted to the Clemson University Institutional Review Board on August 27, 2014. Approval was given on September 12, 2014 to involve human subjects in this study (Appendix A).

Sample Selection

Camp professionals in the United States were chosen as the target population for this study. A research technician recruited a convenience sample of participants at the ACA Fall Southeastern Camp Conference on September 21-24th, 2014 in Savannah, Georgia. The letter granting permission to conduct research at the conference is in Appendix B. The conference attendees included approximately 150 camp professionals from different camps in the Southeast United States. An eye-catching table, staffed by two research technicians with the questionnaires and focus group information, was set up

near the check-in station to catch potential participants' attention. A script was referenced to systematically recruit participants who walked by, requesting their participation in both the questionnaire and focus group. A large poster was hung behind the table to provide detailed information about the focus group. A copy of the poster can be found in Appendix C. Participants were offered a ghost story themed pencil as a thank you for completing the questionnaire.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed based upon the research questions. Questions were used to measure constructs, describe the structural features of camps and characteristics of respondents. Original questions were developed to offer the insight of camp professionals regarding ghost stories.

Two pilot tests were conducted. The first was with two graduate level students who had little knowledge of the camp world. This test was done to ensure appropriate grammar, layout and flow of questions. The second pilot test was conducted after corrections from the first pilot test had been made. The test participants included a mixed group of graduate students with varying knowledge of the camp world. The goal of this pilot test was to determine whether the questions provided insight into the study's research questions. Based on feedback, a few minor changes relating to spacing were made to the layout before finalizing and printing the questionnaire.

The questionnaire aimed to gain an understanding of attitudes towards ghost stories being shared with campers and reasons those stories are shared or restricted.

Questions about camp policies regarding ghost stories were also asked. The three-page questionnaire, “Attitudes, Opinions and Policies of Ghost Stories Shared at Camp,” consisted of twenty-one “check your answer” questions, five open-ended questions and seven Likert Scale statements. The questionnaire was divided into three sections: 1) camp policy and practice, 2) personal philosophy and 3) demographics. The instrument used is in Appendix D.

Camp Policy and Practice Questions

Camp Policy and Practice questions aimed to gain an understanding of what role, if any, ghost stories play in summer camps. Five questions were used to meet the research objective to learn whether camps actually allow ghost stories to be shared. The first four questions asked about storytelling traditions at the respondents’ camps and whether a policy existed prohibiting ghost stories. These questions were answered by checking one of three boxes: “Yes”, “No”, or “I Don’t Know”. Question 5 asked about the camp’s attitude towards ghost stories being shared. They answered by checking one of three boxes: “Prohibited”, “Tolerated” or “Encouraged”.

Question 6 sought to discover what settings ghost stories are shared, the group size and who are the primary storytellers. Participants were asked to check any of the six listed responses that applied to their camp. These responses included, but were not limited to: “None”, “Not allowed in large groups, but more lenient in small groups” and “In large groups by staff (lodge, assembly, whole campfire circle, dining area, etc.”

Questions 7 and 8 were open ended. Participants were asked to explain their camp policy and philosophy on ghost stories in detail. These two questions allowed the opportunity for clarification to the policy and procedures questions previously asked.

Personal Philosophy

The personal philosophy section aimed to gain an understanding of individual opinions pertaining to ghost stories being shared at camp. Question 9 asked for the participant's general stance of ghost stories in a camp setting. They were asked to check the box associated with one of three responses, "Prohibited", "Tolerated" or "Encouraged", they felt most accurately described their attitude.

Question #10 consisted of a Likert Scale with responses ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). These seven statements were used to determine personal beliefs about ghost stories being shared at camp. Opinions were asked with the first six statements, which related to appropriate ghost-story settings, ages of campers allowed to listen and who is allowed to share the ghost stories. The final statement asked specifically if the participant agreed with their camp's philosophy regarding ghost stories.

Questions #11 and #12 were written in an open-ended manner. Participants were asked to write about their personal philosophy of sharing ghost stories at camp. They were also asked to describe their definition of what is ghost story.

Demographics

The Demographics section asked questions relating to age, gender, ethnicity, experience in the camp industry, if their current camp is ACA accredited, professional position in camp, state camp was located and age range of campers. This section of the questionnaire provides data that were used to determine if region, age or career experience played a role in personal philosophies related to ghost stories at camp.

Once participants completed the questionnaire in its entirety, they were thanked for their participation and asked if they would partake in a focus group on the following day. If interest was shown, they were asked to write their last name on a sign up sheet. They were also asked to write their camp name to ensure multiple professionals from the same camp were not present so a more varied response of policies could be generated. Once their name and camp was listed, they were handed an envelope with questions that would be discussed in the focus group. They were asked to write their responses to the questions on a provided worksheet prior to the start of the focus group.

Focus Group

The purpose of the focus group was to discuss personal definitions, pros and cons of ghost stories at summer camp through an in-depth discussion. One focus group was conducted on the second day of data collection. The focus group used the Nominal Group Technique (NGT).

Nominal Group Technique

NGT is a group process to ascertain individual opinions and judgments within a group setting. This method can be used to identify elements of a problem especially when there is a political, social or cultural element involved (Delp, Thesen, Motiwalla & Seshardi, 1977). NGT is a four-step process:

1. Written responses to a specific question, completed individually.
2. Round-robin explanation of ideas and recording of responses.
3. Group discussion of answers to clarify meaning.
4. Voting on which idea is considered most important (Delbecq, Van de Ven & Gustafson, 1975).

This focus group technique was chosen to ensure that a potentially controversial issue could be discussed without heated conflict or power imbalances (Delbecq et. al, 1975). Participants had the opportunity to offer their own ideas and opinions without influence of participants around them.

Focus Group Agenda

A focus group was scheduled on the second day of data collection. The focus groups had a maximum cap of 15 participants to allow for more discussion to take place. Participants who signed up for the focus groups were given a sealed envelope containing two documents. First, information about when and where their focus group would take place. Second, a two-page worksheet entitled “Let’s Talk About Ghost Stories”, with three questions to be discussed in the focus group. The worksheet can be found in

Appendix E. Participants were instructed to answer the three open-ended questions in a written format on the worksheet prior to meeting. They were also asked to bring the completed worksheet with them to the focus group. The three questions participants were asked to answer are as follows:

1. What types of stories do you feel make a good camp story?
2. What is your definition of a ghost story?
3. In a camp setting, what are the pros and cons of sharing a ghost story with campers?

A total of six participants attended the focus group. Upon arrival, participants were asked to seat themselves in a circle to create an atmosphere for an open discussion. A few of the participants did not have the opportunity to answer the questions prior to the start. Five minutes were given to write down their answers to the questions prior to the start of the focus group. A brief introduction was then given by the facilitator explaining the purpose of the study and verbally request permission to audio record the focus group using a voice recorder.

Once permission was obtained, the focus group began with participants reading aloud the written answer to the first question on the worksheet. This process continued with each participant in a round robin fashion. Answers were typed verbatim in a Microsoft Word Document and displayed on a projector for the participants to see and reference to during the discussion, which would take place after each participant shared his or her answer.

The discussion was an open-floor format lead by the participants. They were encouraged to converse between themselves about the answers they had provided and

displayed on the screen. The facilitator would offer follow up questions when clarification was needed. Topics from the discussion were typed and displayed for participants to view and approve. After the discussion, participants were asked to identify the top two topics they deemed most important from the discussion, their original ideas or ones learned, and write them on the worksheet. The entire process for the first question lasted about 15 minutes.

The same process, round robin answering and discussion, followed for questions two and three. The focus group, in its entirety, lasted approximately 35 minutes. At the conclusion of the focus group, the participants were thanked and asked to place their worksheet back in the envelope and hand in to the facilitator.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for this study was a two-step process. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the breakdown of quantitative responses on the questionnaire. Means and frequencies were calculated using SPSS and used to describe the demographic breakdown of participants, attitudes of both camps and professionals and Likert scale statements.

Chi-squared testing was conducted using a $p > 0.05$ level of significance to determine any statistically significant relationships between demographic factors and personal and camp attitudes/philosophies of ghost stories. Chi-square testing was also conducted to determine any significant relationships between personal philosophies and camp philosophies.

Qualitative data retrieved in the discussions from the focus group and written responses from the questionnaire were analyzed using three rounds of coding. First, a priori coding divided the responses into pre-existing categories supported by literature. Second, axial coding was completed to unearth core concepts within the set a priori codes. Third, data were broken down further using selective coding to determine the important concepts from the axial codes. The selective codes were then used to develop frameworks for ghost story definitions and attitudes (Creswell, 2013).

Summary

This chapter described the research sample, process of data collection and data analyzing techniques. Participants were asked to provide their personal opinions and their camp's policies regarding ghost stories being shared at camp with a questionnaire and focus group using the NGT method. Quantitative data were analyzed for descriptive statistics and any statistically significant Chi-square relationships. Qualitative data were analyzed with a priori, axial, and selective coding to discover key themes and topics.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Overview

The purpose of this study was to explore camp professional's attitudes, philosophies and camp policies regarding ghost stories being shared with campers in the camp setting. This chapter provides the results of the study, providing insight each of the four research questions.

Description of Participants

A total of 86 camp professionals participated in this study, representing approximately 57.3% of the conference attendees. Of the 86 participants, 59.3% female and 37.2% were male. Over three quarters (84.5%) of the participants described their ethnic group as White/Caucasian, 9.5% described themselves as African American/Black and 4.8% as Hispanic/Latino.

The ages of participants ranged from 19-67 years. Nearly two thirds of participants fell between the ages of 20-29 years (32.7%) and 30-39 years (30.4%). Approximately 18.7% of participants were between the ages of 40-49 years and 10.6% between 50-59 years. The remaining 8.2% were participants under the age of 20 years, over 60 years, or unidentifiable. When describing their personal camp experience, 40.7% described themselves as Mid-Career, 31.4% as Starting-Career and 24.4% as Late-Career (Table 1).

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Variable¹	Categories	Percent
Gender	Female	59.3%
	Male	37.2%
	Missing	3.5%
Ethnic Group	White/ Caucasian	84.5%
	African American/Black	9.5%
	Hispanic/Latino	4.8%
	Asian/Pacific Islander	0.0%
	American Indian	0.0%
	Other	0.0%
	Missing	1.2%
Age	20-29	32.6%
	30-39	30.4%
	40-49	18.6%
	50-59	10.5%
	60-69	3.5%
	Under 20	2.2%
	Missing	2.2%
Camp Experience	Mid-Career	40.7%
	Starting-Career	31.4%
	Late-Career	24.4%
	Missing	3.5%

¹ N=86

Description of Camps

Nearly 90% of the camps represented were located in the Southeastern Region of the United States. Florida had the largest representation with 36%, followed by Georgia (26.6%), North Carolina (16.3%) and South Carolina (9.3%). Over half (51.2%) of the camps represented were described as being solely residential camps. Almost one third (29.1%) were described as both residential and day camps and 15.1% as solely day camps. Approximately 72% of the camps represented are currently ACA accredited and 18.6% serve campers with special needs (Table 2).

Table 2

Represented Camps' Demographics

Variable¹	Categories	Percent
Location by State	Florida	36.0%
	Georgia	26.6%
	North Carolina	16.3%
	South Carolina	9.3%
	Missing	4.6%
	Washington	1.2%
	Oregon	1.2%
	Wyoming	1.2%
	New York	1.2%
	Tennessee	1.2%
	Massachusetts	1.2%
Camp Type	Residential	51.2%
	Both Day and Residential	29.1%
	Day Camp	15.1%
	Missing	4.6%
ACA Accredited	Yes	72.1%
	No	24.4%
	Missing	2.3%
Serve Special Needs	No	75.6%
	Yes	18.6%
	Missing	3.5%
	I don't know	2.3%

¹N=86

Participants were asked to classify their camp using as many descriptors that accurately fit. Nearly three fourths (72.1%) of the camps described themselves as For-Profit camps and 17.4% as Non-Profit. Over one third (34.9%) indicated their camp as being coed, 14% as all female and 2.3% as all male. Only 12.8% described themselves as religious camps. Ages of campers served ranged as follows: 73.3% served 5-7 year olds,

82.2% served 8-10 year olds, 93% served 11-13 year olds, 81.4% served 14-17 year olds and 20.9% served campers 18+ years olds (Table 3).

Table 3

Description of Camp Classifications and Age Ranges

Variable¹	Categories	Percent¹
Classification of Camp	For-Profit	72.1%
	Non-Profit	17.4%
Camper Population	Coed	34.9%
	All Female	14.0%
	Religious	12.8%
	All Male	2.3%
Age Range of Campers	11-13 years	93.0%
	8-10 years	87.2%
	14-17 years	81.4%
	5-7 years	73.3%
	18+ years	20.9%

¹Multiple responses possible, therefore the percentages add up to greater than 100%.

Summary

A total of 86 camp professional participated in this study. Participants were predominately female (59.3%), Caucasian (82.6%) and between the ages of 20 and 39 (63.1%). Approximately 40% described their camp experience to be Mid-Career. Nearly 90% of camps represented are located in the Southeastern United States. Over half were described as being residential (51.2%) and nearly three-fourths (72.1%) are ACA accredited.

Research Question One

Overview

The following results were used to answer the first research question “Are there specific policies that allow or prohibit specific stories shared at camp?” This section will provide an overview of results regarding 1) storytelling traditions, 2) camp philosophies and 3) camp policies.

Storytelling Tradition

Nearly three quarters (70.9%) of participants shared that their camp has a tradition of sharing stories and 27.9% shared that ghost stories were a part of this tradition (Table 4).

Table 4

Stories as a Tradition at Camp

Variable ¹	Categories	Percent
Stories Part of Camp Tradition	Yes	70.9%
	No	26.7%
	Don't Know	1.2%
	Missing	1.2%
Ghost Stories Part of Tradition	Yes	27.9%
	No	67.4%
	Don't Know	3.5%
	Missing	1.2%

¹N=86

A chi-square test was performed, using $p < 0.05$ level of significance, to determine the relationship between storytelling traditions and ghost storytelling (Table 5). The data shows that camps with a ghost-storytelling tradition were more inclined to also have a general storytelling tradition. A statistically significant relationship was found, $p = .02$, however it is not valid due to cell sizes being less than five count.

Table 5

Storytelling and Ghost Storytelling Chi-square

			Ghost-storytelling tradition:			
			Yes	No	I don't know	Total
Storytelling tradition:	Yes	Count	23	34	3	60
		Expected	17.1	40.7	2.1	60
	No	Count	1	22	0	23
		Expected	6.6	15.6	0.8	23
	I don't know	Count	0	1	0	1
		Expected	0.3	0.7	0	1
			Asymptotic Significance			
Pearson Chi-Square			0.02			

Camp Attitude and Philosophy

Over half (55.3%) of the camps represented stated, at their camp, their attitude regarding ghost stories was “tolerated” (Table 6).

Table 6

General Camp Attitude to Ghost Stories

Variable¹	Categories	Percent
Attitude Toward Ghost Stories	Prohibited	31.6%
	Tolerated	55.3%
	Encouraged	13.2%

¹N=86

Using data from open-ended responses on the questionnaire, three categories were discovered to describe the varying philosophies:

1) Strictly prohibited under all circumstances

- a. Camp should remain a safe place
- b. Camp should be a positive experience
- c. Staff does not know past experiences or upbringing of campers
- d. Negative response from parents of campers

2) No Known Philosophy

3) Ghost stories shared must follow specific guidelines

- a. Only specific staff or campers may share stories
- b. Must be age appropriate
- c. Specific stories about camp history or culture
- d. Light and funny, intent not to scare even though potentially frightening elements may be present

Chi-square testing was completed to determine if any relationships existed between the overall camp philosophy and various classifications of camps. No statistically significant relationships were found regarding camp philosophy and classifications of the camps.

There was no statistically significant relationship ($p=.93$), when testing for a Chi-square relationship, between philosophy of ghost stories and whether the camp identified

as being seasonal (Table 7) but, the test was invalid do to cell size frequency being less than five count.

Table 7

Camp Philosophy and Seasonal Chi-square

			Seasonal Not Checked	Seasonal Checked	Total
In camp, I believe ghost stories should be mostly:	Prohibited	Count	17	2	19
		Expected	7.1	1.9	19
	Tolerated	Count	34	4	38
		Expected	34.3	3.7	38
	Encouraged	Count	13	1	14
		Expected	12.6	1.4	14
			Asymptotic Significance		
Pearson Chi-Square			0.93		

There was no statistically significant relationship ($p=.92$) when testing for a Chi-square relationship between the overall attitude of ghost stories at camp and whether or not the camp identified as being year round (Table 8) but, the test was invalid do to cell size frequency being less than five count.

Table 8

Camp Philosophy and Year-Round Chi-square

			Seasonal Not Checked	Seasonal Checked	Total
In camp, I believe ghost stories should be mostly:	Prohibited	Count	2	17	19
		Expected	2.1	16.9	19
	Tolerated	Count	4	34	38
		Expected	4.3	33.7	38
	Encouraged	Count	2	12	14
		Expected	1.6	1.4	14
			Asymptotic Significance		
Pearson Chi-Square			0.92		

There was no statistically significant relationship ($p=.15$) when testing for a Chi-square relationship between the overall attitude of ghost stories at camp and whether or not the camp identified as being ACA accredited (Table 9) but, the test was invalid do to cell size frequency being less than five count.

Table 9

Camp Philosophy and ACA Accreditation Chi-square

			Is your camp accredited by the ACA?		
			Yes	No	Total
In camp, I believe ghost stories should be mostly:	Prohibited	Count	16	7	23
		Expected	17.3	5.7	23
	Tolerated	Count	29	11	40
		Expected	30.1	9.9	40
	Encouraged	Count	10	0	10
		Expected	7.5	2.5	14
			Asymptotic Significance		
Pearson Chi-Square			0.15		

Approximately 90% of the camps represented in this study are located in the southeastern United States. There was no statistical relationship ($p=.46$) using a Chi-square between the overall attitude of ghost stories at camp and the state it is located in (Table 10) but, the test was invalid due to the cell size frequency being less than five count.

Table 10

Camp Philosophy and Location Chi-square

			Loc										
			GA	SC	FL	NC	WVA	OR	WY	NY	TN	MA	Total
In camp, I believe ghost stories should be mostly:	Prohibited	Count	6	2	4	7	1	1	0	1	0	0	33
		Expected	6.4	1.8	7.9	4	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	22
	Tolerated	Count	13	4	16	5	0	0	0	0	1	1	41
		Expected	12	3.4	14.8	7.4	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.3	0.6	41
	Encouraged	Count	2	0	6	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	9
		Expected	2.6	0.8	3.3	1.6	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	9
			Asymptotic Significance										
Pearson Chi-Square			0.46										

Camp Policy

Over half (55.3%) of all the responses indicated that ghost stories are “tolerated” at their camp and 62.4% indicated campers could share ghost stories with each other. One quarter (25.6%) of camp professionals shared that their camp had a policy prohibiting ghost stories being shared at camp. Of that 25%, nearly 60% shared that the policy prohibiting ghost stories is strictly enforced at their camp (Table 11).

Table 11

Ghost Story Policy at Camp

Variable ¹	Categories	Percent
Prohibiting Policy	Yes	25.6%
	No	61.6%
	Don't Know	12.8%
(If YES to previous question)		
Is policy enforced?	Yes	59.1%
	No	40.9%
Ghost stories are mostly	Prohibited	31.6%
	Tolerated	55.3%
	Encouraged	13.1%
Ghost stories share by campers	Yes	62.4%
	No	27.1%
	Don't Know	10.5%

¹N=86

Through qualitative data analysis regarding specific philosophies for ghost stories being shared at camp, five categories were discovered to describe the varying policies:

- 1) **Prohibited under all circumstances**
- 2) **Discouraged verbally, but not prohibited**
 - a. Shared by campers
 - b. Small group settings
- 3) **Only shared with specific age groups**
 - a. Ages 12+
- 4) **Permission from director must be obtained**
 - a. Staff or campers may share
 - b. Stories must be appropriate by age
- 5) **Only specific ghost stories allowed to be shared**
 - a. Stories about camp history/traditions
 - b. Old folk tales with potentially scary element

From the above philosophy categories, numbers 2 through 5 were not mutually exclusive, resulting in complex philosophy responses from camps. However, camps with a “prohibited under all circumstances” philosophy did not combine their philosophy with any of the other categories.

Research Question Two

The following results were used to answer the second research question “In what settings are ghost stories shared with campers?” This section will provide an overview of results regarding the 1) locations ghost stories is being shared and 2) who the storytellers are.

Locations

Questionnaire participants were asked to check all responses that applied to their specific camp facility. The response “In small groups by campers” had the highest response rate at 30.2%. Closely followed was “In small groups by staff/guests” and “In large groups by staff” with 25.6% response rate for each. “None” had a response rate of 26.7% (Table 12).

Table 12

Locations Ghost Stories Can Be Shared

Statement¹	% Checked	% NOT Checked
NONE	26.7%	73.3%
Not allowed in large groups, but more lenient in small groups.	43%	57%
In small groups by campers (cabins, living areas, around a small fire, etc.).	30.2%	69.8%
In small groups by staff/guests (cabins, living areas, around a small fire, etc.).	25.6%	74.4%
In large groups by staff (lodge, assembly, whole campfire circle, dining area, etc.).	25.6%	74.4%
In large groups by campers (lodge, assembly, whole campfire circle, dining area, etc.).	11.6%	88.4%

¹N=86

Research Question Three

Data from the open-ended answers from the questionnaire and the focus group were used to answer the third research question “How do camp professionals define a ghost story?” This section will provide an overview of the three categories that arose from through a priori coding: 1) setting 2) characters 3) theme of story and 4) emotional response. These categories were previously established from the Goldstein, et al. (2007)

definition of a child's ghost story. A three-tier framework of ghost story characteristics and their emotional impact on the listener follows.

Setting

Two specific settings were stated in regards to where the ghost story takes place and all settings were placed at nighttime. The most common setting was on the camp facility, i.e. campfire circle, cabins, lake, places of assembly, etc.; particularly the areas of camp categorized as "spooky". The second setting discovered was the "camp surroundings". This consists of the areas around the camp facility, i.e. woods/forest around the camp or abandoned areas.

Characters

The most commonly stated characters in the data that were collected were those of a supernatural state. Ghosts or spirits was the most popular character described, specifically those who had a connection to the camp. Other characters mentioned were monsters, vampires, goblins, and zombies. No protagonist characters were described.

Theme of Story

Participants described ghost story definitions using other categories of stories. The most popular category was "history", followed closely by legend and mystery. Opposing views were found in regards to the element of truth behind the story. A few

participants described a ghost story as being fictitious, while other as a story “with elements of truth”.

Emotional Impact

The emotional impacts of the listener ranged from light and airy to scary and disturbing. A three-tier framework of emotional impact on the listener was developed using the definitions participants offered (Table 13). Each tier provides the storyteller’s goal for the emotional response elicited from the listener. Further characteristics of the story are provided to help the storyteller reach the emotional impact goal.

Table 13

Camp Ghost Story Framework

	Tier One	Tier Two	Tier Three
Storyteller Emotional Goal	To bring entertainment to the listener(s).	To bring a thrill to the listener(s).	To bring heightened sense of fear to the listener(s).
Characteristics	Funny	Spooky	Scary
	Light-hearted	Enhanced suspense	Disturbing/ Gruesome
Camp Connection Goal	Build creativity and a positive connection to camp.	Build elements of disbelief about surrounding and events.	Build unsure/unsafe feelings of surroundings.

Research Question Four

The following results were used to answer the fourth research question “What are camp professionals’ personal philosophies and reasons in regards to sharing ghost stories at camp?” This section will provide an overview of results regarding 1) overall attitudes of camp professionals 2) philosophies 3) ghost story pros and cons and 4) relationships by gender.

Overall Attitudes

Nearly half (45.3%) of the participants indicated that they tolerate ghost stories being shared at camp (Table 14).

Table 14

Camp Professional’s Attitudes Frequencies

Variable¹	Categories	Percent
Attitude Toward Ghost Stories	Prohibited	22.1%
	Tolerated	45.3%
	Encouraged	16.3%
	Missing	16.3%

¹N=86

Chi-Square testing, with a .05 level of significance, was conducted to identify any potential relationships between overall camp attitudes and overall camp professional attitudes. A statistically significant relationship, $p < 0.0001$, was discovered (Table 15). Overall, camp professionals personal attitudes agree with the attitudes of the camp they

work for in regards to the telling of ghost stories, however the test was invalid due to the cell size frequency being less than five count.

Table 15

Camp Attitudes and Personal Attitudes Chi-square

		In camp, I believe ghost stories should be mostly:			
		Prohibited	Tolerated	Encouraged	
At my camp, ghost stories are mostly:	Prohibited	Count	11	5	1
		Expected	4.8	9.3	2.9
	Tolerated	Count	7	28	3
		Expected	10.7	20.8	6.5
	Encouraged	Count	0	2	7
		Expected	2.5	4.9	1.5
		Asymptotic Significance			
Pearson Chi-Square		<0.001			

A Likert scale was used to determine specifics within camp professionals' attitudes (Table 16). Approximately 47% disagreed with the statement "I believe ghost stories are appropriate for all campers in the camp setting. A little less than half (44.2%) had neutral feelings regarding ghost stories becoming part of their camp's tradition. Over a third (36%) agreed that ghost stories are appropriate for youth ages 13 and up. Forty-three percent disagreed with the statement that ghost stories should be forbidden at camp. Thirty-six percent disagreed with the statement regarding ghost stories only being shared by staff in the cabins. Thirty-eight percent disagreed with the statement pertaining to only campers being allowed to share ghost stories in the cabins, not staff.

Table 16

Likert Scale Frequencies

Variable¹	Categories	Percent
I believe ghost stories are appropriate for all campers in the camp setting.	Strongly Disagree	22.1%
	Disagree	46.5%
	Neutral	15.1%
	Agree	12.8%
	Strongly Agree	1.2%
	Missing	2.3%
I believe ghost stories should be shared as part of the camp tradition.	Strongly Disagree	10.5%
	Disagree	17.4%
	Neutral	44.2%
	Agree	20.9%
	Strongly Agree	4.7%
	Missing	2.3%
I believe ghost stories are appropriate ONLY for youth 13 and up.	Strongly Disagree	9.3%
	Disagree	16.3%
	Neutral	27.9%
	Agree	36.0%
	Strongly Agree	5.8%
	Not Applicable	1.2%
	Missing	3.5%
I believe ghost stories should be forbidden at camp.	Strongly Disagree	18.6%
	Disagree	43.0%
	Neutral	16.3%
	Agree	9.3%
	Strongly Agree	7.0%
	Not Applicable	1.2%
Missing	4.6%	

¹N=86

Table 16 continued

Likert Scale Frequencies

Variable¹	Categories	Percent
I believe it is ok if ghost stories are shared by staff in the camper cabins, but NOT at public assemblies or gatherings.	Strongly Disagree	16.3%
	Disagree	36.0%
	Neutral	26.7%
	Agree	15.1%
	Strongly Agree	3.5%
	Missing	2.4%
I believe it is ok if ghost stories are shared by campers in the cabins, but not by staff.	Strongly Disagree	12.8%
	Disagree	38.4%
	Neutral	32.6%
	Agree	11.6%
	Strongly Agree	2.3%
	Missing	2.3%

¹N=86

Professional Philosophies

Qualitative data collected from the questionnaire were coded and analyzed for themes. Responses given can be broken down into three main themes: Prohibited.

Tolerated, and Actively Allowed. Rationales of each theme can be found in Table 17.

Table 17

Professional Philosophies Rationale

Prohibited	Tolerated	Actively Allowed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camp should be viewed as a safe place and ghost stories will make campers feel unsafe or uncomfortable. • Creates an overall atmosphere of fear at camp. • Can impede growth and have negative effect on campers. • Counterproductive towards goals of camp. • Do not know the campers’ backgrounds or beliefs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discouraged verbally, but will not stop campers from sharing amongst themselves. • Must be handled with extreme caution: i.e. appropriate age group, appropriate setting, and appropriate story. • Must be supervised 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be fun and sometimes a good thing if handled correctly i.e. appropriate age group, appropriate setting, and appropriate story. • Part of the camp tradition and history • Offer prior camper warning and an appealing alternate activity for those who do not wish to participate.

Ghost Story Pros and Cons

Qualitative data were collected from the focus group regarding pros and cons of sharing ghost stories with campers. “Allowance of creativity and expression” was voted, by the participants, as the leading pro, while “creating an unsafe space at camp” was the top con. Table 18 describes the leading pros and cons from the discussion.

Table 18

Pros and cons of Ghost Stories

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowance for creativity and expression • To share camp’s history and traditions • Great practice for better storytelling • The privilege of being able to share the traditional “camp ghost story” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can bring negative energy, creating barriers and atmosphere of an unsafe space at camp. • Campers may have difficulty distinguishing truth and fiction • Potentially bring long term damage if the “scare” is not resolved. • May bring up past experiences in child’s life

Relationships by Gender

Chi-Square testing, with a $p < .05$ level of significance, was conducted to determine any potential relationships between gender and personal philosophy. No significant relationships were found between gender and attitudes (Table 19) or gender and philosophy based Likert statements but, the test was invalid due to the cell size frequency being less than five count.

Table 19

Gender and Attitudes Chi-square

			Gender		
			Male	Female	Total
In camp, I believe ghost stories should be mostly:	Prohibited	Count	8	11	19
		Expected	7.2	11.8	19
	Tolerated	Count	14	24	38
		Expected	14.5	23.5	38
	Encouraged	Count	5	9	14
		Expected	5.3	8.7	14
			Asymptotic Significance		
Pearson Chi-Square			0.91		

A statistically significant relationship, $p=.91$, did not arise when determining the Chi-square relationship between gender and the Likert scale statement “I believe ghost stories are appropriate for all campers in the camp setting.” Gender does not play a statistically significant role when determining if ghost stories are appropriate for all campers (Table 20) however, the test was invalid due to the cell size frequency being less than five count.

Table 20

Gender and Likert Statement 1 Chi-square

			Gender			
			Male	Female	Total	
I believe ghost stories are appropriate for all campers in the camp setting.	Strongly Disagree	Count	6	13	19	
		Expected	7.2	11.8	19	
	Disagree	Count	17	21	38	
		Expected	14.4	23.6	38	
	Neutral	Count	4	9	13	
		Expected	4.9	8.1	13	
	Agree	Count	3	8	11	
		Expected	4.2	6.8	11	
	Strongly Agree	Count	1	0	1	
		Expected	0.4	0.3	1	
				Asymptotic Significance		
	Pearson Chi-Square			0.47		

A statistically significant relationship, $p=.76$, did not arise when determining the Chi-square relationship between gender and the Likert scale statement “I believe ghost stories should be shared as part of the camp tradition.” Gender does not play a statistically significant role when determining if ghost stories as a camp tradition (Table 21) but, the test was invalid due to cell size frequency being less than five count.

Table 21

Gender and Likert Statement 2

			Gender			
			Male	Female	Total	
I believe ghost stories should be shared as part of the camp tradition.	Strongly Disagree	Count	2	7	9	
		Expected	3.4	5.6	9	
	Disagree	Count	7	8	15	
		Expected	5.7	9.3	15	
	Neutral	Count	14	22	36	
		Expected	13.6	22.4	36	
	Agree	Count	6	12	18	
		Expected	6.8	11.2	18	
	Strongly Agree	Count	2	2	4	
		Expected	1.5	2.5	4	
				Asymptotic Significance		
	Pearson Chi-Square			0.76		

A statistically significant relationship, $p=.54$, did not arise when determining the Chi-square relationship between gender and the Likert scale statement “I believe ghost stories are appropriate ONLY for youth 13 and up.” Gender does not play a statistically significant role when determining minimum age group of campers who are allowed to hear ghost stories (Table 22). However, the test was invalid due to cell size frequency being less than five count.

Table 22

Gender and Likert Statement 3 Chi-square

			Gender			
			Male	Female	Total	
I believe ghost stories are appropriate ONLY for youth 13 and up.	Strongly Disagree	Count	1	0	1	
		Expected	0.4	0.6	1	
	Disagree	Count	2	6	8	
		Expected	3	5	8	
	Neutral	Count	7	7	14	
		Expected	5.2	8.8	14	
	Agree	Count	9	14	23	
		Expected	8.5	14.5	23	
	Strongly Agree	Count	10	20	30	
		Expected	11	18.9	30	
				Asymptotic Significance		
	Pearson Chi-Square			0.54		

A statistically significant relationship, $p=.08$, did not arise when determining the Chi-square relationship between gender and the Likert scale statement “I believe ghost stories should be forbidden at camp.” Gender does not play a statistically significant role when determining if ghost stories should be a forbidden genera (Table 23) but, the test was invalid due to cell size frequency being less than five count.

Table 23

Gender and Likert Statement 4 Chi-square

			Gender			
			Male	Female	Total	
I believe ghost stories should be forbidden at camp.	Strongly Disagree	Count	0	1	1	
		Expected	0.4	0.6	1	
	Disagree	Count	7	9	16	
		Expected	6	10	16	
	Neutral	Count	9	27	36	
		Expected	13.5	22.5	36	
	Agree	Count	8	5	13	
		Expected	4.9	8.1	13	
	Strongly Agree	Count	5	3	8	
		Expected	3	5	8	
				Asymptotic Significance		
	Pearson Chi-Square			0.08		

A statistically significant relationship, $p=.59$, did not arise when determining the Chi-square relationship between gender and the Likert scale statement “I believe it is ok if ghost stories are shared by staff in the camper cabins, but NOT at public assemblies or gatherings.” Gender does not play a statistically significant role when preference in location of where ghost stories are being shared (Table 24) but, the test was invalid due to cell size frequency being less than five count.

Table 24

Gender and Likert Statement 5 Chi-square

		Gender			
		Male	Female	Total	
I believe it is ok if ghost stories are shared by staff in the camper cabins, but NOT at public assemblies or gatherings.	Strongly Disagree	Count	6	8	14
		Expected	5.3	8.7	14
	Disagree	Count	11	20	31
		Expected	11.7	19.3	31
	Neutral	Count	8	14	22
		Expected	8.3	13.7	22
	Agree	Count	5	6	12
		Expected	4.5	7.5	12
	Strongly Agree	Count	0	3	3
		Expected	1.1	1.9	3
			Asymptotic Significance		
	Pearson Chi-Square		0.59		

A statistically significant relationship, $p=.84$, did not arise when determining the Chi-square relationship between gender and the Likert scale statement “I believe it is ok if ghost stories are shared by campers in the cabins, but not by staff.” Gender does not play a statistically significant role when determining if ghost stories should be shared by campers or staff members (Table 25) but, the test was invalid due to cell size frequency being less than five count.

Table 25

Gender and Likert Statement 6 Chi-square

			Gender			
			Male	Female	Total	
I believe it is ok if ghost stories are shared by campers in the cabins, but not by staff.	Strongly Disagree	Count	5	6	11	
		Expected	4.2	6.8	11	
	Disagree	Count	11	22	33	
		Expected	12.5	20.5	33	
	Neutral	Count	9	17	26	
		Expected	9.8	16.2	26	
	Agree	Count	5	5	10	
		Expected	3.8	6.2	10	
	Strongly Agree	Count	1	1	2	
		Expected	1.8	1.2	2	
				Asymptotic Significance		
	Pearson Chi-Square			0.84		

Out of the six chi-square tests completed, using a $p > 0.05$ level of significance to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between gender of the camp professional and Likert Scale statements about personal philosophies of ghost stories at summer camps existed, no significant relationships were found.

Relationships by Perceived Career Level

Chi-Square testing, with a $p > 0.05$ level of significance, was conducted to determine any potential relationships between perceived career experience and personal philosophy. Statistically significant relationships were found in five of the six tests run.

A significant relationship, $p = 0.01$, arose when comparing perceived career experience with the Likert statement “ I believe ghost stories are appropriate for all campers in the camp setting” (Table 26). According to these results, camp professionals who define themselves as Starting Career were more likely than Mid to Late Career professionals to believe ghost stories were appropriate for campers of all ages. However, the test was invalid due to cell size frequency being less than five count.

Table 26

Career Level and Likert Statement 1 Chi-square

		Camp Career Experience				
		Starting	Mid	Late	Total	
I believe ghost stories are appropriate for all campers in the camp setting.	Strongly Disagree	Count	2	7	9	18
		Expected	5.9	7.7	4.4	18
	Disagree	Count	13	18	8	39
		Expected	12.8	16.6	9.5	39
	Neutral	Count	8	3	2	13
		Expected	4.3	5.5	3.2	13
	Agree	Count	4	7	0	11
		Expected	3.6	4.7	2.7	11
	Strongly Agree	Count	0	0	1	1
		Expected	0.3	0.4	0.2	1
			Asymptotic Significance			
	Pearson Chi-Square		0.01			

A statistically significant relationship, $p=.37$, did not arise when determining the Chi-square result between perceived career experience and the Likert scale statement “I believe ghost stories should be part of the camp tradition.” Career level does not play a statistically significant role when determining if ghost stories should be part of the camp tradition (Table 27) but, the test was invalid due to cell size frequency being less than five count.

Table 27

Career Experience and Likert Statement 2 Chi-square

			Camp Career Experience				
			Starting	Mid	Late	Total	
I believe ghost stories should be shared as part of the camp tradition.	Strongly Disagree	Count	1	4	4	9	
		Expected	3	3.8	2.2	9	
	Disagree	Count	4	5	6	15	
		Expected	4.9	6.4	3.7	15	
	Neutral	Count	15	17	4	36	
		Expected	11.9	15.4	8.8	36	
	Agree	Count	6	7	5	18	
		Expected	5.9	7.7	4.4	18	
	Strongly Agree	Count	1	2	1	4	
		Expected	1.3	1.7	1	4	
				Asymptotic Significance			
	Pearson Chi-Square			0.37			

A significant relationship, $p=0.03$, arose when comparing perceived career experience with the Likert statement “ I believe ghost stories are appropriate ONLY for youth 13 and up” (Table 28). According to these results, camp professionals who define themselves as Starting and Mid Career were more likely than Late Career professionals to believe ghost stories were only appropriate for campers ages 13 and up. However, the test was invalid due to cell size frequency being less than five count.

Table 28

Career Experience and Likert Statement 3 Chi-square

		Camp Career Experience				
		Starting	Mid	Late	Total	
I believe ghost stories are appropriate ONLY for youth 13 and up.	Not Applicable	Count	0	0	1	1
		Expected	0.3	0.4	0.2	1
	Strongly Disagree	Count	1	1	6	8
		Expected	2.7	3.5	1.9	8
	Disagree	Count	7	7	4	14
		Expected	4.7	6	3.3	14
	Neutral	Count	8	12	3	23
		Expected	7.7	9.9	5.4	23
	Agree	Count	13	13	5	31
		Expected	10.3	13.4	7.3	31
	Strongly Agree	Count	2	2	0	4
		Expected	1.3	1.7	0.9	4
			Asymptotic Significance			
	Pearson Chi-Square		0.03			

A significant relationship, $p < 0.001$, arose when comparing perceived career experience with the Likert statement “I believe ghost stories should be forbidden at camp” (Table 29). According to these results, camp professionals who define themselves as Late Career were more likely than Starting or Mid Career professionals to believe ghost stories should be forbidden at camp. However, the test was invalid due to cell size frequency being less than five count.

Table 29

Career Experience and Likert Statement 4 Chi-square

			Camp Career Experience				
			Starting	Mid	Late	Total	
I believe ghost stories should be forbidden at camp.	Not Applicable	Count	0	1	0	1	
		Expected	0.3	0.4	0.2	1	
	Strongly Disagree	Count	5	5	6	16	
		Expected	5.2	7	3.8	16	
	Disagree	Count	18	16	2	36	
		Expected	11.7	15.8	8.6	36	
	Neutral	Count	2	5	6	13	
		Expected	4.2	5.7	3.1	13	
	Agree	Count	0	7	1	8	
		Expected	2.6	3.5	1.9	8	
	Strongly Agree	Count	1	1	4	6	
		Expected	2	2.6	1.4	6	
				Asymptotic Significance			
	Pearson Chi-Square			<0.001			

A significant relationship, $p < 0.001$, arose when comparing perceived career experience with the Likert statement “I believe it is ok if ghost stories are shared by staff in the camper cabins, but NOT at public assemblies or gatherings” (Table 30). According to these results, camp professionals who define themselves as Mid Career were more

likely than Starting or Late Career professionals to believe ghost stories are ok if told in small settings only by staff.

Table 30

Career Experience and Likert Statement 5 Chi-square

			Camp Career Experience				
			Starting	Mid	Late	Total	
I believe it is okay if ghost stories are shared by staff in the camper cabins, but NOT at public assemblies or gatherings.	Strongly Disagree	Count	2	3	9	14	
		Expected	4.6	6	3.4	14	
	Disagree	Count	8	18	4	30	
		Expected	9.9	12.8	7.3	30	
	Neutral	Count	13	4	6	23	
		Expected	7.6	9.8	5.6	23	
	Agree	Count	3	9	0	12	
		Expected	4	5.1	2.9	12	
	Strongly Agree	Count	1	1	1	3	
		Expected	1	1.3	0.7	3	
				Asymptotic Significance			
	Pearson Chi-Square			<0.001			

A significant relationship, $p < 0.001$, arose when comparing perceived career experience with the Likert statement “I believe it is ok if ghost stories are shared by campers in the camper cabins, but NOT by staff” (Table 31). According to these results, camp professionals who define themselves as Starting or Mid Career were more likely

than Late Career professionals to believe ghost stories are ok only if told by campers and NOT staff. However, the test was invalid due to the cell frequency being less than five count.

Table 31

Career Experience and Likert Statement 6 Chi-Square

		Camp Career Experience				
		Starting	Mid	Late	Total	
I believe it is okay if ghost stories are shared by campers in the cabins, but NOT by staff.	Strongly Disagree	Count	1	3	7	11
		Expected	3.6	4.7	2.7	11
	Disagree	Count	8	14	10	32
		Expected	10.5	13.7	7.8	32
	Neutral	Count	14	11	2	27
		Expected	8.9	11.5	6.6	27
	Agree	Count	4	6	0	10
		Expected	3.3	4.3	2.4	10
	Strongly Agree	Count	0	1	1	2
		Expected	0.7	0.9	0.5	2
			Asymptotic Significance			
	Pearson Chi-Square		0.01			

Summary

This chapter discussed the results found in this study. Of the 86 participants, 59.3% described themselves as female and 82.6% as White/Caucasian. Over 60% of the

participants were between the ages of 20 and 39 and about 40% described themselves to be Mid-career. Over 90% of the camps represented are located in the southeastern region of the United States and nearly three-quarters are ACA accredited. One quarter of the camps stated they had a policy regarding ghost stories, but only 59% of those with a policy actively enforce it.

Chi-square tests were used to determine any statistically significant relationships between camp professionals and ghost story philosophies as well as camps and ghost story philosophies. While statistically significant relationships existed between perceived career experience and the Likert scale philosophy statements, the tests were invalid due to cell size frequency being less than five count.

Through a priori, axial and selective coding, five camp philosophies regarding ghost stories arose: 1) prohibited, 2) discouraged, 3) only specific ages, 4) obtained permission and 5) only specific stories. Three camp professional philosophies also arose: prohibited, tolerated and actively allowed. A three-tiered ghost story framework was developed with specific characteristics, camp connection goals and storyteller emotional impact goals ranging from entertainment to a heightened sense of fear.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to explain in detail the results from the data and conclusions that were determined. Implications of this study and recommendations for how it should be done differently if replicated are discussed. Lastly ideas for different directions this research could take in the future are explored.

Summary of Results

In this section, a brief summary of the results of this study will be discussed. The results can be broken down into two topics: 1) overview of participants, 2) camp and personal attitude 3) camp and personal philosophy and 4) policy.

Overview of Participants

A total of 86 camp professionals, ranging in ages from 19-67, participated in this study. Eighty-two percent identified themselves as Caucasian. Approximately 41% shared their perceived career level to be Mid-Career.

Nearly 90% of the camps represented are located in the Southeastern portion of the United States. Of these camps, over half (51%) described themselves as being strictly residential camps. Approximately 72% identified as being ACA accredited.

Attitude

Over half of the camps represented and 45% of camp professionals held a *tolerant* attitude toward ghost stories being shared at their camp. A chi-square test was conducted determining if a statistically significant relationship was present between camp attitudes and camp professionals' personal attitudes. A significant relationship, $p < 0.01$, was found. This relationship shows that camp professionals tend to agree with the attitudes their camp has on ghost stories and vice versa. Aligning attitudes between camps and professionals regarding ghost stories is important because it shows that both the camp and professional are striving toward the same goal. If the camp attitude does not align with that of the professional, it may result in termination of employment or an unhappy working environment.

Philosophy

While the overall attitude of camp professionals was "tolerant", participants expressed that they disagreed with ghost stories being shared with all age groups at camp. They were more apt to agree with ghost stories only being shared with campers above age 13. A majority held a disagreeable or neutral attitude when it came to the ghost story teller being either staff or campers and the ghost stories being shared in smaller groups or camper cabins.

Chi-square tests, using $p < 0.05$ level of significance, were used to determine any statistically significant relationships between the philosophy Likert scale statements and

gender. Of the six statements cross-tabbed with gender, none were found to hold a statistical significance.

Multiple significant relationships were discovered when comparing the philosophy statements with perceived career experience, however the tests were invalid due to insufficient cell size. Camp professionals were asked to describe their perceived career experience by choosing one of three options: Early Career, Mid Career, or Late Career.

Chi-square tests were conducted. The following Likert statements about who should hear a ghost story and who should share a ghost story at camp had a statistically significant relationship:

1. I believe ghost stories are appropriate for all campers in the camp setting. (p<0.01)
2. I believe ghost stories are appropriate ONLY for youth 13 and up. (p=0.03)
3. I believe ghost stories should be forbidden at camp. (p<0.001)
4. I believe it is okay if ghost stories are shared by staff in the camper cabins, but NOT at public assemblies or gatherings. (p<0.001)
5. I believe it is okay if ghost stories are shared by campers in the cabins, but NOT by staff. (p<0.01)

Participants who described themselves as being *Starting Career* were more apt to support ghost stories being shared at camp with older campers, where as *Mid Career* and *Late Career* were less likely to support ghost stories being shared. This could be due to lack of professional experience in the camp environment. More experienced camp

professionals may have had an opportunity to witness effects of ghost stories on youth which shaped a less tolerant attitude than those who are just beginning their career.

Policy

Twenty-nine percent of the camps expressed they had a policy regarding ghost stories at camp. However, of those 29%, only 59% shared they actually enforced the policy. By not enforcing the policy, the camp indirectly acknowledges a more tolerant attitude to ghost stories being shared.

Summary

This section described an overview of the results found in this study. Participants were predominately Caucasian and described as Mid Career. Over half of the camps represented were strictly residential and nearly three fourths are ACA accredited. Attitudes of both camps and camp professionals were found to have a statistically significant relationship when tested using a Chi-square test. Statistically significant relationships between the philosophy based Likert statements and perceived career level were described. In regards to policies at camp, less than a third of camps have a specific policy about ghost stories.

Discoveries in the Findings

The following section details specific findings, which arose from the open-ended responses on the questionnaire and focus group responses. These findings are intended to

inform camp professionals of current research that should be considered when making a professional judgment about sharing ghost stories at summer camp. The three overarching philosophies of both camps and camp professionals will be described in detail. Findings from ghost story definitions and the three-tiered framework will also be explained. Tips on how to handle ghost stories at camp and an explanation of whether ghost stories are good or bad will be given.

Camp and Personal Philosophy

For both camp philosophies and personal philosophies, the range of responses can be broken down into two main categories: Not Allowed and Allowed. The category “Allowed” can be broken down further into two subcategories: 1) Tolerated and 2) Actively Allowed.

Not allowed. Both camps and professionals with an overall philosophy of ghost stories being *Not Allowed*, felt that under no circumstances should a ghost story be shared at camp. Further explanations were given to support this philosophy with both the questionnaire and the focus group. Those with this philosophy feel that camp should be a safe place and bringing ghost stories into it would create an atmosphere of fear within their camp. Ghost stories can impede the growth of the camper and be counterproductive towards the overall goals of their camp. Responses supported Ellis’ (1981) views of the negative affects of ghost stories when told to campers who do not view the story as a fabrication, but rather rooted in reality. It was also expressed that the past history of the

camper is not always known. Bringing in a ghost story could potentially bring up past experiences causing the camper become emotionally unsafe

Tolerated. Both camps and professionals who hold a tolerant attitude towards ghost stories at camp have no written policy against the stories, however the camp professionals discourage them verbally and are hesitant to allow when campers ask to share them. Campers or staff members are allowed to share ghost stories, but extreme caution and supervision, is to be taken. Generally, permission from the director must be granted before the story can be shared. These stories are only shared with campers of a certain age, most commonly ages 12 and up and in smaller group settings. Some camps expressed only very specific ghost stories can be shared, usually those pertaining to a history of the camp.

Actively allowed. Professionals and camps with an *actively allowed* attitude feel ghost stories could be used as a positive tool for reaching the camp's goals. They feel ghost stories have a rich tradition and history at camp. Ghost stories are not encouraged, but allowed when the campers ask for them as long as certain criteria, like camps that have established a ghost-stories-tolerated philosophy, are met: Ghost stories are not for everyone. Prior to the ghost story being shared, campers must be given an opportunity to choose to not listen. An appealing alternate activity must be offered so campers do not feel pressured into listening to the story if they are uncomfortable with it.

Summary. Three camp professional philosophies were presented in this section: 1) Prohibited, 2) Tolerated and 3) Actively Allowed. These philosophies are arose from the perceived definition of a ghost story ghost stories and their personal philosophy. The

next section “Ghost Story Definitions” will define the range of ghost story definitions that arose.

Ghost Story Definition

Overview. A variety of ghost story definitions were obtained through both the questionnaire and focus group. Using categories, previously established by Goldstein, et al. (2007), the definitions of ghost stories provided by research participants were coded. While the setting, characters and themes for ghost stories were found to be relatively consistent with Goldstein et al. (2007), the perceived aspect of emotional impact on the listener is expanded.

Camp ghost story framework purpose. A three-tiered framework was developed, by this author, based on the emotional impact the storyteller wished to elicit from the listeners. Each tier has an emotional impact goal, characteristics of the story and a camp connection goal that contribute to the storyteller reaching the desired emotional goal for the listener. Both tier one and tier three are supported through the existing literature by Goldstein, et al. (2007). Tier two arose from the data found in both the open response answers from the questionnaire and the focus group responses.

The overall purpose for this framework is to help camp professionals determine, if they choose to share a ghost story at camp and what ghost story to tell. Comparing the desired story to the each of the framework’s tier characteristics will help the camp professional determine if the story meets their goal for sharing with the campers. Camp philosophies and missions must also be taken into account when determining what ghost

stories to share, if they are allowed. Camps with a ban on ghost stories may wish to reconsider their policy after examining the different levels and goals provided by the ghost story framework. The same may be said for camps that actively allow ghost stories to be shared with campers, but may be doing so in a negative manner.

This framework is intended to offer new information for to camp professionals' to use when making decisions regarding the types, if any, of ghost stories allowed to be shared. The following sections will explain each tier of the framework.

Tier one. Storyteller Goal: To bring entertainment to the listener(s).

Tier one is similar to the child's ghost story definition previously described by Goldstein, et.al. (2007). These ghost stories are meant to be funny and light-hearted. They are not full of details and generally end with a comical punch line. They bring the listeners to laugh and offer great entertainment and engagement. These ghost stories can provoke a fond connection between the listeners and the camp and foster creativity within the listener. While the intention of these stories is to entertain, discretion is still warranted because the subject is still that of a ghost story and the mindset of campers cannot be completely predicted.

Tier two. Storyteller Goal: To bring a thrill to the listener(s).

Tier-two ghost stories are a little spookier than tier-one ghost stories, however they are generally not frightening to the listener. These stories have more detail, but still leave a majority of the imagery up to the listener. They bring an enhanced state of suspense, thrilling the listener with uncertainty, but not terror. These stories bring elements of disbelief. They are neither rooted completely in fiction or reality. Listeners

join in the thrill and linger in a limbo together between belief and disbelief in their surroundings.

Tier three. Storyteller Goal: To bring a heightened sense of fear to the listener(s).

Tier three ghost stories supports the existing literature and definition of an urban legend Goldstein, et al. (2007) describes. Ghost stories in this tier are intended to be scary and negatively impact the camps overall goals. They are tied to reality with detailed, gruesome and disturbing images. They often leave the listener with unsure unsafe feelings of their surrounding environment.

What to Remember When Campers Share Ghost Stories With Other Campers

While some camps have a strict policy on ghost stories at camp, campers still find a way to share them with each other. Important to remember is the level of the individual storyteller's skills when it comes to sharing these stories. Younger campers may not necessarily have the developed skillset to share a tier three ghost story, even if their goal is to terrify their fellow campers (Higgins, 2008). However, if it is an older camper sharing the ghost story, they may not know where to draw the line regarding detail, especially if their goal is to terrify the younger campers. Below are a few tips that arose from the data, to be used with Evidence-Informed Practices, to help alleviate those tier three, or even tier two, ghost stories from camp.

Make the policy known. First, if the camp has a policy regarding ghost stories, it is important to make it known to the campers, counselors, staff, volunteers, etc. If the

policy strictly prohibits ghost stories, camp professionals must follow through with predetermined actions, otherwise the policy may need to be revised.

Campers and staff need to know the reason why the rule is in place. Campers, counselors, staff, etc. may be more apt to follow the policy if an explanation is given. Understanding why the policy is in place may help make a difference in whether a ghost story is shared at a camp with a prohibiting policy.

Plan b: a scapegoat. Even though a policy may be present and explanations for its existence given, some still choose to share a ghost story with campers who may not be emotionally equipped to handle them. Predetermined actions may be taken with the storyteller, however what should be done to help the terrified camper who listened to the story? Offer an established “scapegoat” strategy within the story, to help bring the camper back to a safe reality at camp (Higgins, 2008). This scapegoat can be anything you establish as having a safety effect: a “magical” stick or other object, specific hand movement or dance, a prayer, a song, or even an explanation of events. Something that will help tie the camper back to a safe reality.

Offer specific stories. Some camps have designated stories that can be shared either in a small group setting or at an all-camp assembly. For those campers who want to share a ghost story, offer one of the previously approved ghost stories for them to share. The camper will not only have a chance to share a spooky tale, but also gain experience and practice their storytelling skills. If the camp has a strict policy against ghost stories, offer another legend-based story for the camper to share so they still get the experience.

Should Ghost Stories be Allowed or Prohibited?

The purpose of this study was to explore camp professionals' attitudes, philosophies and camp policies in order to elicit a conscious conversation about ghost whether ghost stories should be shared at camp or banned. The data that has been collected was not intended to confirm whether ghost stories should be allowed or prohibited in a camp setting.

Alternate Programming Consideration

Like any activity provided at camp, both pros and cons for the activity exist. It is important to consider alternate activities in addition to ghost stories. Weighing both the pros and cons of sharing the ghost story, if the camp mission allows, alongside alternate activities will provide new avenues for activities that may meet the same end goals. Camp professionals should consider all options and choosing which is best, given the camp mission, population of campers being served and current circumstances. This reflection will help provoke a conscious thought as to what the objective of the activity really is.

Using Professional Judgment

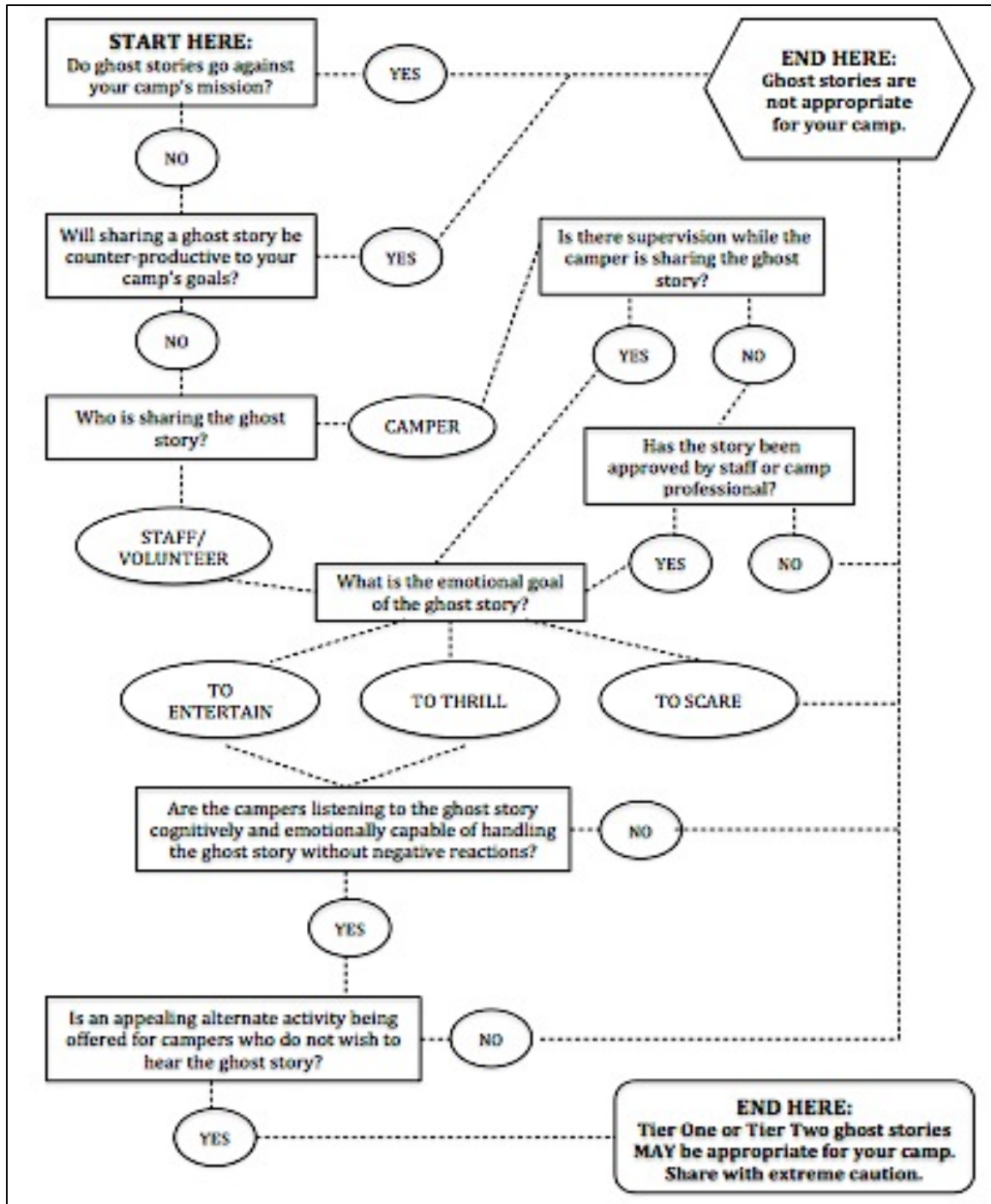
While not all ghost stories are the same and some can be used to positively impact campers, they may not be appropriate for all camps. The storyteller must understand the psychographics and demographics of the group and choose a story with a purpose,

whether it is a ghost story or not. Using the data found in this study, individualized camp goals, population being served and professional judgment informed by Evidence-Informed Practices, camp professionals can determine specific policies that best suite the context of their camp.

Figure 1 provides a decision tree to help aid in professional judgment when determining if a ghost story is appropriate in individual camp settings. This tool can be used with camp professionals, camp staff, counselors, volunteers, etc. It is important to think through each question thoroughly to determine whether sharing a ghost story is appropriate. This decision tree is not meant to be the only determining factor when deciding to share a ghost story at camp. Camp professionals must continually evaluate whether to share a ghost story, as circumstances at camp are infinite and ever changing.

Figure 1

Ghost Story Decision Tree



Summary

According to the data collected, it cannot be confirmed whether ghost stories are good or bad in the camp setting. The best thing to do is to understand what they are how they align with camp goal. A variety of ghost story definitions were provided based on data. Using those definitions, a three-tiered ghost story definition framework was developed to help a storyteller choose a ghost story that will elicit a specific emotional reaction from the listeners. The three emotional impact goals are 1) to entertain, 2) to thrill and 3) to bring a heightened sense of fear. A decision tree was designed to provoke thoughts about questions to consider when deciding whether or not to share a ghost story. Level one and two ghost stories are the most appropriate in the camp setting, but only if the camp mission allows.

While the camp professionals may understand the potential negative affects a ghost story may have, some campers or staff who are unaware of the emotional impact a level three story can have may share them with campers. If that is the case, a few tips were provided. Be sure to make policies known. If campers, staff, volunteers, etc. are all made aware of the specific policy and still ghost stories are shared, have a plan B. by offering a predetermined “scapegoat” to help bring the camper back to a safe reality. If your camp holds a tolerant attitude towards ghost stories and campers really want to share one, have specific stories that have been approved ready. It is also important to weigh the pros and cons of ghost stories and consider alternate activities that may meet the same end goals as ghost stories

Limitations

Like any study, limitations were present. This section identifies the specific limitations to this study regarding the 1) data collection site, 2) sample size, 3) number of focus groups and 4) questionnaire.

Data Collection Site

Due to Savannah, Georgia having a rich history of haunted tales, many of the conference attendees initially thought this study was actually an advertisement for ghost tours around the city. It took a little more effort to get participants to stop and listen to an explanation of the study. Once they found out what it was about, most were willing to participate. In the future, when setting up the data collection table, it would probably be helpful to state boldly that this is a data collection site rather than a booth soliciting tours. Also, if the data collection site changes cities, it would be important to know if that city has a haunted history and plan the collection table accordingly.

Sample Size

Due to the overall conference being a regional conference, there were approximately only 150 potential participants. A total of 87 participant questionnaires were used in this study. With this small number, it was difficult to complete Chi-square testing. Many of the cells did not meet the minimum cell size of five responses when formatted into a crosstab, thus decreasing confidence in and not offering a true representation of the sample.

Number of Focus Groups

In the original proposal for this study, two focus groups were suggested. Due to lack of interest, timing and competitive alternate opportunities, the first focus group, which was set at 7:00 am on the second day of data collection, was canceled. Only one participant showed up and he was asked to participate in the second scheduled focus group at 10:00 am the same day.

If this study were to be conducted again, focus group meeting times would specifically take place during free time when no alternate sessions or activities are provided. While neither of the focus groups were set during session times, the first took place during an open round-table breakfast discussion and the second during the exhibit hall hours. A few of the focus group participants expressed they could not stay for the full 45 minutes because they needed to be elsewhere.

Another avenue that can be explored is setting up individual interviews with interested participants. Multiple time slots would be suggested and they would have the freedom to choose what time works the best. The only downfall to this route would be no group discussion. Often in a group discussion new areas are explored. Thoughts can be sparked based on comments of other participants, leading the discussion to new topics.

Questionnaire

One specific question on the questionnaire asked the participant to mark where they felt they were in their career: Starting Career, Mid Career or Late Career. There was no explanation given to set defining parameters. The interpretation was left completely

subjective to the participant. If years of experience had been asked, it may have been more difficult to gauge where participants actually were in their career. Five years could mean working one week a summer for five summers, working a full summer for five summers, or working year round for five years.

After taking the questionnaire a few participants felt it was biased towards ghost stories being appropriate at summer camps. However, the questionnaire was written in a positive manner, but opportunities to disagree were presented with each question. In hindsight, the researcher realized an explanation should have been offered.

Summary

This section explained the limitations this study. Confusion regarding the purpose of the study being about personal attitudes and philosophies and camp policies and not ghost tours was explained. Limitations due to small sample size, alternate programming that took preference to the second focus group and feelings of a biased questionnaire were described.

Future Research

This section explores the possible directions for future research. Four possible directions this study could take in the future are explained: 1) nation wide replication, 2) exploring the relationships found, 3) stories as a tool to achieve goals and 4) actual camper responses to ghost stories.

National Study

This study was limited to only the southeastern region of the United States. Conducting a modified version of this study nation-wide would help describe how camps throughout the United States view ghost stories being shared with campers. The previous questionnaire would be edited by eliminating irrelevant questions thus decreasing its length. A question will be added asking the participant to explain what kinds of stories are shared at their camp and their purpose.

Exploring Relationships

Data showed a significant relationship in the alignment of attitudes of the camp and attitudes of the individual camp professionals despite the insufficient cell size. Exploring which variable influences the other would bring insight as to how these policies and philosophies were originally developed. Was it the camp professional shaping the camps attitude or the camp shaping the professionals'?

Data also showed a significant relationship between camp professionals perceived career experience and philosophies of ghost stories at camp. Exploring the rationale for the shift in attitudes across the perceived career levels can offer insight to why this relationship is significant. Is there a shift that happens as a professional becomes more experienced? Does age play a role?

Stories as a Tool to Achieve Goals

Are stories, ghost or not, used as a tool to achieve camp goals? Exploring what kind of stories are being shared and their specific purpose will bring forth new information to stimulate an explicit conversation about their use and value. This proposed research question will explore camps that *do* use ghost stories to build community or achieve camp goals, as well as, the camps that *do not* use ghost stories. This proposed study would investigate the questions: What stories are they using and what is their rationale? Does their population of campers served play a role on what stories they use to achieve goals? Are stories used at all? Exploration of storytelling at summer camp in general and its purpose in a camp setting will bring forth new information to consider when camp professionals are making professional judgment about what stories should be shared at their camp.

Actual Camper Emotional Response

What do campers really think about hearing ghost stories at camp? This current study specifically focuses on perceived emotional responses camp professionals feel campers have when hearing ghost stories. This future study can be built upon by exploring campers' actual emotional and physical responses and whether or not ghost stories affect their perceived safety of their environment at camp. Understanding what the youth are really thinking when they hear these stories can offer a new perspective to the debate of ghost stories being shared at camp.

Summary

Overall, camps and camp professionals tolerate ghost stories. There is a significant relationship between career experience and philosophy of ghost stories at camp. Three philosophies of ghost stories emerged: Prohibited, Tolerated and Actively Allowed. A three-tiered framework for ghost stories also arose from the data with emotional impacts of the listener varying from entertained to highly frightened. A decision tree was designed with questions to be taken into consideration prior to deciding whether a ghost story should or should not be shared at camp.

Limitations for this study primarily dealt with the location of data collection and target population. Future research was also explored taking this study a step forward by completing it nation wide and examining the significant relationships discovered in greater detail and exploring what campers actually think about hearing ghost stories in a camp setting.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Institutional Review Board Approval

Validation of IRB2014-303: Exploring Summer Camp Professionals' Opinions and Attitudes on Ghost Stories at Camp

Nalinee Patin

To: Gwynn Powell; Ariel Caitlin Blanton

Friday, September 12, 2014 4:51 PM

Dear Dr. Powell and Ms. Blanton,

The chair of the Clemson University Institutional Review Board (IRB) validated the protocol identified above using exempt review procedures and a **determination was made on September 12, 2014** that the proposed activities involving human participants qualify as **Exempt under category B2**, based on federal regulations 45 CFR 46. This exemption is valid for all sites with a research site letter on file. **Your protocol will expire on August 31, 2015.**

The expiration date indicated above was based on the completion date you entered on the IRB application. If an extension is necessary, the PI should submit an Exempt Protocol Extension Request form, <http://www.clemson.edu/research/compliance/irb/forms.html>, at least three weeks before the expiration date. Please refer to our website for more information on the extension procedures, <http://www.clemson.edu/research/compliance/irb/guidance/reviewprocess.html>.

No change in this approved research protocol can be initiated without the IRB's approval. This includes any proposed revisions or amendments to the protocol or consent form. Any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects, any complications, and/or any adverse events must be reported to the Office of Research Compliance (ORC) immediately. All team members are required to review the "Responsibilities of Principal Investigators" and the "Responsibilities of Research Team Members" available at <http://www.clemson.edu/research/compliance/irb/regulations.html>.

The Clemson University IRB is committed to facilitating ethical research and protecting the rights of human subjects. Please contact us if you have any questions and use the IRB number and title in all communications regarding this study.

Good luck with your study.

All the best,
Nalinee

Nalinee D. Patin
IRB Coordinator
Clemson University
Office of Research Compliance

Appendix B

Letter of Permission



August 26, 2014

Gwynn Powell, Ph.D.
Clemson University PRTM
296 Lehotsky Hall
Clemson, South Carolina 29634

Dear Gwynn,

We are happy to collaborate on the proposed research project exploring camp professionals' attitudes regarding ghost stories at camp.

Ariel Blanton is welcome to set up a table beside registration to distribute and collect her questionnaire. In addition, we will provide her space to conduct the two focus groups.

Our conference is September 21-24, 2014.

Thank you for your interest in promoting research to support camp professionals.

Sincerely,

Katie Johnson
Southeastern Field Office Executive Director
American Camp Association

*American Camp Association, Southeastern Field Office
463 Johnny Mercer Blvd, Suite B7 #286, Savannah, GA 31410
Phone 765-342-8456 Fax 704-288-4402
www.ACacamps.org/southeastern*

Focus Group Poster

WANT TO TALK ABOUT GHOST STORIES?

If you are interested in participating, please sign up for one of the two focus group.

- First come first serve.
- You may only participate in ONE focus group session.
- Only ONE member from your camp may participate in each focus group.

“Let’s Talk About Ghost Stories”

Focus Group 1

Time: Tuesday
7:30-8:45 AM

Place: Ossabow
Room

Focus Group 2

Time: Tuesday
10:00-10:45 AM

Place: Ossabow
Room

Appendix D

Questionnaire

Attitudes, Opinions and Policies of Ghost Stories Shared at Camp

YOUR CAMP POLICY AND PRACTICE

DIRECTIONS: Please use your current camp, or have a specific camp in mind, when checking your answer to the following questions.

1. Is story telling part of your camp's tradition? Yes No I Don't Know
2. Are ghost stories part of your camp's tradition? Yes No I Don't Know
3. a. Is there a policy that prohibits ghost stories? Yes No I Don't Know
b. If yes, is the policy strictly enforced? Yes No I Don't Know
My camp has no policy
c. If yes, are there age guidelines for sharing ghost stories (i.e. prohibited with younger campers)?
Yes No I Don't Know
4. Are campers allowed to share ghost stories with each other? Yes No I Don't Know
5. At my camp, ghost stories are mostly: Prohibited Tolerated Encouraged
6. In what setting are ghost stories being shared with campers? (check all that apply)
None (not allowed)
Not allowed in large groups, but more lenient in small groups
In small groups by campers (cabins, living areas, around a small fire, etc.)
In small groups by staff/guests (cabins, living areas, around a small fire, etc.)
In large groups by staff (lodge, assembly, whole campfire circle, dining area, etc.)
In large groups by campers (lodge, assembly, whole campfire circle, dining area, etc.)

7. If your camp has a **policy** on ghost stories, please describe it below.

8. Please explain your camp's **philosophy** on ghost stories below.

YOUR PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY

9. In camp, I believe ghost stories should be mostly: Prohibited Tolerated Encouraged

10. **DIRECTIONS:** Please check the appropriate box for each statement below.

My Beliefs	Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I believe ghost stories are appropriate for all campers in the camp setting.	N/A					
I believe ghost stories should be shared as part of the camp tradition.	N/A					
I believe ghost stories are appropriate ONLY for youth 13 and up.	N/A					
I believe ghost stories should be forbidden at camp.	N/A					
I believe it is okay if ghost stories are shared by staff in the camper cabins, but NOT at public assemblies or gatherings.	N/A					
I believe it is okay if ghost stories are shared by campers in the cabins, but not by staff.	N/A					
I agree with my camp's philosophy/policy regarding ghost stories	N/A					

DIRECTIONS: Please answer each of the following questions in as much detail as you can provide.

11. What is your **personal philosophy** in regards to sharing ghost stories at camp?

12. What is your **definition** of a ghost story?

YOUR PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY

9. In camp, I believe ghost stories should be mostly: Prohibited Tolerated Encouraged

10. **DIRECTIONS:** Please check the appropriate box for each statement below.

My Beliefs	Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I believe ghost stories are appropriate for all campers in the camp setting.	N/A					
I believe ghost stories should be shared as part of the camp tradition.	N/A					
I believe ghost stories are appropriate ONLY for youth 13 and up.	N/A					
I believe ghost stories should be forbidden at camp.	N/A					
I believe it is okay if ghost stories are shared by staff in the camper cabins, but NOT at public assemblies or gatherings.	N/A					
I believe it is okay if ghost stories are shared by campers in the cabins, but not by staff.	N/A					
I agree with my camp's philosophy/policy regarding ghost stories	N/A					

DIRECTIONS: Please answer each of the following questions in as much detail as you can provide.

11. What is your **personal philosophy** in regards to sharing ghost stories at camp?

12. What is your **definition** of a ghost story?

Appendix E

Focus Group Worksheet

Let's Talk About ...

Directions: Please answer the questions below with your own personal opinion. Wait...we will talk about this when we are in the room. Please, do not discuss with anyone.

1. What types of stories do you feel make a good camp story?

2. What is your definition of a ghost story?

3. In a camp setting, what are the pros and cons of sharing a ghost story with campers?

Pros	Cons

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