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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUMMER CAMP EMPLOYMENT AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

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Introduction

Camping professionals have long claimed that summer camp employment provides camp staff with a number of benefits. The summer camp staff experience has been shown to have a positive effect on the staff members' personal, social and emotional growth (Bialeschki, Henderson, & Dahowski, 1998; DeGraff & Glover, 2002). Yet, some influential others such as parents and human resources professionals have questioned the wisdom of a college student spending a summer of "fun in the sun", working at a summer camp for low pay.

The concept of emotional intelligence has been recently gaining favor in the human resource management arena, and it may be a fruitful concept to apply to the potential benefits of summer camp employment. Emotional intelligence refers to a "type of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one's thinking and actions" (Mayer & Salovey, 1993, p. 433).

Many of the competencies that are necessary to be successful as a summer camp staff member, and are often developed through summer camp employment, fit within the framework of emotional intelligence. Summer camp staff members are often called upon to be patient, flexible, optimistic, empathetic, assertive, independent, and socially responsible. Each of these characteristics and competencies are included in measures of emotional intelligence. There appears to be a strong potential that the skills, competencies, and abilities developed and enhanced through summer camp employment align with the competencies included within emotional intelligence.

Linking summer camp employment with emotional intelligence is beneficial on two fronts. First, emotional intelligence provides a language and a framework to communicate beyond the camping profession about many of the core competencies of summer camp employment. In addition, since emotional intelligence is one of the emerging and leading indicators of personal and professional success (Goleman, 1998), previous studies that have linked the development of emotional intelligence competencies and life success may help build the bridge between summer camp employment and life success (Boyatzis, Goleman, & Rhee, 1999). The purpose of this study was to identify how the summer camp experience impacts staff members and to better understand if emotional intelligence is developed through summer camp employment.

Background

An estimated 10 million youth annually attend summer camps at more than 12,000 camps nationwide (American Camping Association, 2002). In addition to serving these youth, each season summer camps employ approximately 1,200,000 college students, teachers, doctors, nurses, and many others as summer camp staff members (American Camping Association,

2002). Few studies have considered the impacts of summer camp programs on staff members. While many traditionally think of summer camp programs serving the interests of campers and meeting the needs of parents, the summer camp staff experience is a significant component of summer camps programs.

It is valuable for camp directors and leaders in the camping industry to better understand how the camp experience impacts staff for several reasons. First, an understanding of the changes that take place throughout a summer camp experience can prove extremely beneficial in the recruitment of staff members. A 1995 survey conducted by the American Camping Association found that nearly 40% of camp directors indicated that staff recruitment and retention was their number one concern (American Camping Association, 1995). A working knowledge of the benefits of a summer camp position can assist camp directors in conveying these benefits to potential staff members, as well as influential others, including parents, peers, advisors, career counselors, and human resource professionals.

In addition, knowledge regarding summer camp's ability to promote changes that may contribute to one's life success can be critical. This knowledge could provide camp administrators with the ability to present a summer camp staff experience to potential staff members as an investment in their future. Employers in the seasonal job market are attempting to highlight skills, competencies, and abilities that can contribute to future employability. Potential seasonal staff are often on a quest for lifetime employability, hoping to acquire new skills that will assist in ensuring a lifetime of employment (Meister, 1998).

The 1998 Association of Independent Camps study that analyzed the perceived benefits associated with summer camp staff experiences was the first study to focus specifically on staff members, (Bialeschki et al., 1998). The results of the study indicated several positive personal and professional outcomes, including: positive relationships with other staff and campers, appreciation of diversity, interpersonal skills, group cohesion, leadership and responsibilities, role modeling/mentoring, technical skill development, personal growth, administrative skills, and teamwork. In addition to these positive outcomes, some negative external forces were mentioned, including: dealing with diversity, low wages, lack of time for self, negative perceptions of influential others, frustration with campers, cliques, and lack of director support.

Summer camp staff members are often asked, "When are you going to get a real job?" One of the participants in the Association of Independent Camps study said, "I had to defend [to my father] for a couple of summers why I was going to camp" (Bialeschki et al., 1998, p. 30). The authors suggested that a better understanding of how staff members grow and gain throughout a summer could prove extremely beneficial in dispelling some of the negative perceptions of influential others (Bialeschki et al., 1998).

A 2002 study was completed that attempted to gain a richer understanding of how the camp experience impacts seasonal staff, especially camp counselors, after five, ten, fifteen, or more years following the camp experience (DeGraaf & Glover, 2002). The impacts identified were varied and included such benefits as increased self-confidence, increased appreciation of nature, spiritual growth, as well as the development of specific skills (e.g., outdoor skills). Despite the variety of professions selected by former camp staff members, a large majority of respondents

(83%) cited the positive impact the camp experience had on their professional lives. Some respondents (35%) recognized the summer camp experience as a confidence builder as well as a tangible way to develop marketable skills. This emphasis on tangible work-related skills relates positively to the professional benefits (teamwork, leadership and responsibility, technical skill development, and administrative skills) identified by Bialeschki et al. (1998).

The Bialeschki et al (1998) and DeGraff and Glover (2002) studies are helpful in that they lay some of the groundwork for understanding the summer camp staff experience, yet more work needs to be done to help substantiate the benefits identified by both. As the market for seasonal staff continues to be competitive and as the general employment trends indicate increased competition for jobs, it is increasingly important for summer camps to be able to validate and justify the benefits and outcomes associated with summer camp staff positions. It is necessary to substantiate previously mentioned benefits with additional measures.

Emotional Intelligence appears to be a concept that is closely allied with the personal growth a summer camp job can provide for a camp staff member. The theory of emotional intelligence suggests that emotions play a significant role in our intellectual lives. The framework of emotional intelligence reflects how an individual's potential for mastering the skills of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management translates into personal and professional success (Goleman, 1998). Proponents of the concept of emotional intelligence have argued that IQ measures fail to account for or explain most of the variance in individual differences in life success. The implication of the theory of emotional intelligence is that measures of emotional intelligence may serve as more reliable and accurate predictors of life success than more traditional and conventional measures of cognitive intelligence, such as IQ (Goleman, 1995).

This study applied research findings related to emotional intelligence to the development of emotional competencies through a summer camp staff experience. Previous research has focused on the utility of emotional intelligence in explaining the differences between work-place performance levels. Employees performing at different levels have been compared in an effort to determine the ability of emotional intelligence levels to account for these differences (Cherniss, 2000). Emotional intelligence is seen to have the ability to predict who is likely to succeed and who is likely to fail (Goleman, 1998). Previous research has indicated that employees with the highest levels of emotional competencies, such as stress tolerance, problem solving, flexibility, and empathy, are very often the highest performing employees (McManus, 2001). Emotional intelligence encompasses competencies that are sought after by national employers and competencies that have been shown to be keys to success for CEOs and MBAs (Gowing, 2001). It seems appropriate to study the concept of emotional intelligence in the context of summer camp employment. The purpose of this study was to identify how the summer camp experience impacts staff members and to better understand if emotional intelligence is developed through summer camp employment.

Methods

This study utilized an empirical, quantitative approach as well as a qualitative approach. The BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory, EQ-i (BarOn, 1997), was selected as the primary instrument to collect quantitative data to measure and assess emotional intelligence for this

study. A secondary instrument that provided opportunities for qualitative responses was utilized to help the voices of summer staff employees have a platform within this study. The use of this second instrument is consistent with the recommendations of emotional intelligence experts to utilize additional assessment tools to help provide a more balanced and broader picture of a person's emotional intelligence (Gowing, 2001).

Data Collection

The EQ-i is the oldest and most well-known instrument available to assess emotional intelligence. In order to utilize the EQ-i, researchers are required to submit a purchaser qualification form to Multi-Health Systems Inc. (MHS), the company that produces the EQ-i. Qualifications for utilizing the EQ-i include; completion of graduate level courses in tests/measurement, prior training and/or experience in the use of tests, and completion of an advanced degree in an appropriate profession, such as psychology, psychiatry, or education (BarOn, 2000). Researchers are required to purchase the EQ-i Technical Manual, the EQ-i Administrators Guide, as well as the desired number of EQ-i item booklets and Response Sheets.

As a part of the EQ-i development, numerous statistical analyses were conducted to obtain information on its reliability and validity. Reliability analyses, utilizing seven population samples, considered both internal consistency and retest reliability, yielding an average internal consistency coefficient of .76 and an average retest reliability coefficient after one month of .85, indicating solid reliability (BarOn, 1997). Nine types of validity studies were conducted on each of the 15 emotional intelligence subscales, including: content, face, factor, construct, convergent, divergent, criterion-group, discriminant, and predictive validity. The results of these studies indicate that the EQ-i is a valid instrument (BarOn, 1997).

The EQ-i consists of 133 items, takes approximately 30 minutes to complete and is designed to measure emotional intelligence in individuals over the age of 16. The EQ-i utilizes a 5-point response set, ranging from 1 = "Not True of Me" to 5 = "True of Me", with the mid point 3 = "Sometimes True of Me". The reading level in English has been assessed at the North American sixth grade level, based on the Flesch formula (BarOn, 2000). A completed and scored EQ-i yields a total EQ score, five composite scale scores, 15 subscale scores, and validity scores.

A second instrument, the Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire, was designed for this study. This instrument assessed the perception of change for summer camp staff members among emotional intelligence competencies utilizing language and subscales that parallel the EQ-i. Participants were asked to both identify which emotional intelligence competencies changed the most as a result of summer camp employment and indicate which components or characteristics of the summer camp employment experience led to these changes. Research experts at the University of Minnesota reviewed the Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire, and a pilot test was conducted with university students and former summer camp staff members. The expert panel of reviewers provided critical feedback on various aspects of the instrument design. Feedback was received regarding the format, language, readability, and time commitment of the questionnaire. This feedback helped shape the questions and format the questionnaire.

This study was designed to include summer camps in the Upper Midwest geographic region and was limited to co-educational, residential camping programs with summer seasons lasting a

minimum of six weeks. Five camps were initially invited to participate in this study, and four of those camps agreed to participate. Each camp's director made independent decisions about their camp's participation. The camp that chose not to participate had a first year director that did not want to take on a new project during their first year.

Of the four participating camps in this study, two camps were in Michigan and two were in Wisconsin. Three of the camps in the study were YMCA summer camps and the fourth was a Presbyterian camp that utilized structures and procedures very similar to YMCA camps. The four camps in the study had seasons between 8 and 10 weeks and served youth 6-17 years of age. All of the summer camp staff members that directly and primarily served campers at the selected camps were eligible and asked to participate in this study. Summer camp staff members that did not primarily serve campers, such as maintenance, housekeeping, and food service staff, were not included in this study. In addition, junior counselors, counselors in training, and volunteer staff members were not eligible for inclusion in this study.

Meetings were scheduled with the interested camp directors and the primary researcher to review the logistics of administering the instruments for this study. During these meetings with the interested camp directors, the researcher provided examples of the EQ-i instrument and the Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire. Discussions between the researcher and the camp directors helped to clarify which staff members were eligible to participate in the study. A camp director script was prepared to provide clear and consistent directions for the summer staff members prior to completing the instruments. All necessary assessment materials (consent forms, administrator scripts, data collection instructions and guidelines, EQ-i item booklets, EQ-i response sheets, and Emotional Intelligence Questionnaires) were prepared, sorted, labeled, and delivered prior to the beginning of the summer season to participating camp directors along with postage paid addressed return envelopes. Reminder e-messages were sent out to camp directors two weeks prior to the summer season.

Participants in this study completed the EQ-i twice, once at the beginning of the 2003 summer camp season and again at the end of the summer season. All eligible participants were asked to complete the EQ-i during one of the first three days of staff training. The EQ-i was administered to staff members during large group meetings, such as staff meetings or meal times, and staff members worked independently to complete the EQ-i. It was critical that the assessment was conducted within the first few days of the summer camp program, as the summer camp culture can be established quickly and it is possible that staff members can experience personal changes at a very early stage of the summer camp employment experience.

At the completion of the summer season, all participants were again asked to complete the EQ-i. This post-test took place when the camp had completed 90% – 100% of the season. The final one or two days of a summer camp program can be hectic, with closing duties, rituals, and ceremonies. Therefore, the researchers provided a window of time for the post-test data to be collected. The primary researcher contacted all participating camps approximately 75% of the way through the summer season to provide a reminder of the post-test assessment and to help address any questions or concerns.

The Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire developed for this study consists of 4 questions and takes approximately 10 minutes to complete. Specific and consistent instructions accompanied the instrument and camp directors, or similar administrators, administered the questionnaire. The Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire was only administered at the end of the summer, and all eligible participants were asked to complete the emotional intelligence questionnaire when the camp had completed 90% to 100% of the season. This time frame matches the window provided for completing the EQ-i post-test, yet it was not necessary for staff members to complete the EQ-i post test and the emotional intelligence questionnaire concurrently. Participating camps were provided with postage paid addressed envelopes and asked to return the questionnaires to the primary researcher within one week of the completion of the summer camp season.

Summer camp staff at Camps A, B and C completed the EQ-i pre test and post test. A total of 60 out of 61 eligible camp staff completed the pre and post test EQ-i instruments (response rate of 98%). Summer camp staff at Camps A, B and D completed the Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire. A total of 49 out of 50 eligible staff in these camps completed this questionnaire (response rate of 98%). Logistical problems at Camps C and D prevented the camp directors from administering both the EQ-i and the Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire at these respective camps.

The respondents in this study (81 different camp staff at the four camps) included 15 from Camp A, 15 from Camp B, 31 from Camp C, and 20 from Camp D. The gender of respondents was 56% female and 44% male. They ranged from 18-30 years of age, with 53% in the 19-21 age range. Forty-three percent of the respondents were working at a summer camp for the first time, with the remainder being returning staff members with 2-12 years of experience.

Data Analysis

The researchers received a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet from MHS (company distributing the EQ-i) for data entry. All of the raw data from the participant's response sheets were entered into this spread sheet. The completed spread sheet was sent electronically to MHS. MHS then provided an electronic spreadsheet, which included the conversion of all of the raw data to standard, or normed, scores for each of the 15 subscales of emotional intelligence, the 5 composite scales of emotional intelligence, and the overall EQ score.

A descriptive analysis of all independent and dependent variables in the study was conducted. Independent variables included gender, years of summer camp employment, place of employment, and the components or characteristics of the summer camp employment experience that led to changes in emotional intelligence, as reported on the Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire. The dependent variables included total EQ scores, the five composite scales, and 15 subscales of emotional intelligence. In order to facilitate comparison among the respondent's scores, raw scores were converted to standard scores. EQ-i standard scores are calculated from raw scores such that each scale and subscale has the same mean score, 100, and standard deviation, 15, (BarOn, 2002). Table 1 offers basic interpretation guidelines for EQ-i scores.

TABLE 1
Interpretation Guidelines for BarOn EQ-i Scale Scores

Standard Score	Interpretive Guidelines
130+	Markedly High – atypically well developed emotional capacity
120-129	Very High – extremely well developed emotional capacity
110-119	High – well developed emotional capacity
90-109	Average – adequate emotional capacity
80-89	Low – under-developed emotional capacity, requiring improvement
70-79	Very Low – extremely under-developed emotional capacity
Under 70	Markedly Low – atypically impaired emotional capacity

Data analysis considered the means, standard deviations, and range of scores for all of the variables. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 11.5 program, as well as Microsoft Excel, were utilized to perform the analyses. An Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was utilized, as well as T-tests, to relate variables, compare groups, and detect significant differences. All procedures utilized an alpha level of $\leq .05$ as the acceptance level for significance. Alpha levels of $\leq .10$ are of interest for this study since it is exploratory and is the first study to use the EQ-i instrument with a summer camp staff population. The components and characteristics of summer camp employment that participants listed as leading to changes in emotional intelligence competencies were grouped by the primary researcher and two additional researchers into 13 categories.

Results

The 60 respondents who completed the EQ-i generated both a pre-test total EQ score and a post-test total EQ score. The pre-test total EQ average for the 60 respondents was 95.6 and the post-test average was 100.7 (see Table 2). There was a significant increase in emotional intelligence scores for these respondents from pre test to post test.

TABLE 2
Total EQ Pre- and Post-Test Scores

	Pre-Test		Post-Test		<i>p-value</i>
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	
Total EQ	95.6	15.2	100.7	11.9	.001

The 60 respondents who completed the EQ-i generated both pre-test and post-test scores for each of the five composite scales. There were significant differences on four of the five composite scales (see Table 3), from pre test to post test. There were no significant differences pre to post on the adaptability composite scale.

TABLE 3
Composite Scales Pre- and Post-Test Scores

	Pre-Test		Post-Test		<i>p - value</i>
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	
<i>Significant at the $p \leq .05$ level</i>					
Interpersonal	95.1	17.6	101.4	12.5	.0001
Stress Mgt.	99.2	13.7	103.5	12.5	.0030
Gnrl. Mood	99.1	14.4	104.2	11.3	.0030
Intrapersonal	96.2	14.6	100.8	12.4	.0050
<i>Not significant at $p \leq .05$ level</i>					
Adaptability	95.4	14.0	97.8	13.3	.1095

The 60 respondents who completed the EQ-i generated both pre-test and post-test scores for each of the 15 subscales. There were significant increases on eight of these subscales from the pre-test to the post-test (see Table 4). These eight subscales were: stress tolerance, self-actualization, social responsibility, optimism, empathy, happiness, interpersonal relationships, and flexibility.

TABLE 4
Subscales Pre- and Post-Test Scores

	Pre-Test		Post-Test		<i>p - value</i>
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	
<i>Significant at the $p \leq .05$ level</i>					
Stress Tol.	96.0	13.9	101.2	12.9	.001
Self-Act.	98.9	15.6	103.9	12.5	.001
Social Resp.	92.4	17.5	97.7	12.7	.008
Optimism	96.3	14.4	101.7	12.0	.015
Empathy	97.7	17.2	103.9	12.2	.023
Happiness	101.7	14.1	105.8	10.9	.023
Interper. Rel.	98.4	15.0	103.4	11.9	.030
Flexibility	97.6	11.9	101.0	10.2	.033
<i>Significant at the $p \leq .10$ level</i>					
Assertvns.	96.2	14.2	100.0	15.4	.056
Problem Solv.	94.1	17.3	97.4	16.1	.058
Emot. Self-Awr.	97.9	15.3	101.2	13.2	.069
Impulse Control	102.4	13.4	104.6	13.0	.080
Self Regard	97.5	15.8	100.9	13.6	.087
<i>Not significant at the $p \leq .10$ level</i>					
Independence	95.5	13.0	97.9	12.5	.148
Reality Testing	96.5	14.9	96.7	15.2	.898

This study included an analysis of gender, experience, and camp employment effects. When analyzing these three effects for the total EQ score, the five composite scale scores, and the 15 subscale scores, no significant differences were detected at the .05 level.

Forty-nine respondents completed the Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire. The questionnaire included four questions, three open-ended questions and one Likert-type question that asked the respondents to consider the 15 subscales of emotional intelligence and how they might have changed as a result of summer camp employment.

Question #1 on the Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire, was an open ended question, and asked respondents to: "Please list 3 – 4 ways in which working as a summer camp staff member has changed your life". Most respondents provided more than three ways in which they had changed, with the average number of ways listed being 3.1. A total of 23 different codes were established for the 49 respondents. Table 5 presents codes identified by more than 10% of respondents.

TABLE 5
Ways in which working as a staff member has been life changing

	Frequency (n = 49)	Percentage (100%)
Increased Empathy	21	46.7
More Assertive	15	33.3
Improved Interpersonal Relationships	15	33.3
More Optimistic	14	31.1
Higher Self Regard	13	28.9
Increased Happiness	9	20.0
Increased Stress Tolerance	9	20.0
Greater Flexibility	8	17.8
Exposure to Diversity	5	11.1
New Experiences	5	11.1

Question #2 on the Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire asked the respondents to consider the 15 subscales of emotional intelligence and to assess how they had changed, if at all, since the beginning of their summer camp employment. The 15 subscales were listed, with a brief one sentence description of each. The five point likert-type scale ranged from SD, Significant Decrease, to SI, Significant Increase. Responses to question #2 illustrate that the respondents felt as though they experienced increases along the majority of the 15 subscales (see Table 6).

Question #3 on the Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire asked the respondents the following:

Of the 15 factors listed in question #2, please select and list 5 factors that you feel have changed the most as a result of working as a summer camp staff member. Please take a minute and reflect on those factors and describe what programs, events, responsibilities, or characteristics of your summer camp staff experience led to these changes.

TABLE 6
Subscale changes since the beginning of summer camp employment

Subscale	Frequency (n = 49)			Combined Percentage (100%)
	Minor Increase (MI)	Significant Increase (SI)	MI & SI Combined (n=49)	
Empathy	24	19	43	87.8
Flexibility	25	18	43	87.8
Happiness	14	26	40	81.6
Assertiveness	24	14	38	77.6
Prob. Solving	29	8	37	75.5
Self Actualization	24	12	36	73.5
Soc. Responsibility	19	17	36	73.5
Interper. Relations	21	14	35	71.4
Optimism	17	18	35	71.4
Stress Tolerance	23	12	35	71.4
Self Regard	22	12	34	69.4
Emot. Self Awr.	18	13	31	63.3
Independence	22	8	30	61.2
Impulse Control	17	11	28	57.1
Reality Testing	17	6	23	46.9

Space was provided to list five factors, as well as the programs, events, responsibilities, or characteristics that led to the changes for each factor. Most respondents listed five factors with the average number of factors listed being 4.2. The four factors that were listed most often included; happiness, empathy, flexibility, and optimism.

Thirteen categories were established to help code the programs, events, responsibilities, or characteristics of the summer camp staff experience that respondents listed as leading to these changes. The codes listed most often included; the positive atmosphere of summer camp, being around kids, the lack of outside distractions, and the ability to observe and react to camper needs. Unique characteristics and attributes led to changes for the different factors listed.

Question #4 from the Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire asked respondents to: "Please share your thoughts on how spending 8-9 weeks as a summer camp staff member is different than spending 8-9 weeks at school or a more traditional 9:00 am – 5:00 pm position." A sampling of the most frequent responses includes:

- Camp is a lifestyle, not a job.
- Living and sharing a home with other people for 2 months is intense and intimate. You build friendships unlike any others.
- What is important in life becomes so vivid at camp.
- Working at camp is the hardest job I have ever had, and I love it.
- You learn by doing.

- It's the golden moment stuff. The little tiny things that make each day at camp so special.
- No air conditioning, mosquitoes, limited creature comforts, less downtime.
- The hours and the job responsibilities are the main differences.
- Spending 8-9 weeks at camp is different because you are outdoors, you are encouraged to try new things, make mistakes, hug your friends, and make people laugh.
- Your whole job is to make the world a better place by positively influencing the life of a child.

Participant responses to both the EQ-i and the Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire were utilized to determine if there was a relationship between summer camp employment and emotional intelligence, such that participation as a summer camp staff member leads to an increase in the participant's emotional intelligence. The EQ-i data provided pre and post scores for total EQ, composite scales of emotional intelligence, and subscales of emotional intelligence. The Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire data provided participants' perceptions of changes along each of the 15 subscales of emotional intelligence.

Both the EQ-i and the Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire assessed participant changes in the 15 subscales of emotional intelligence. The EQ-i findings are based on an established assessment instrument, while the Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire findings reflect participant perceptions regarding change in the 15 subscales. When comparing the eight subscales of emotional intelligence that demonstrated statistically significant changes according to the EQ-i data with the top eight changes found with the Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire, there are seven subscales common to both lists (see Table 7).

TABLE 7

Comparing EQ-i and Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire findings

EQ-i Significant Findings	EI Questionnaire Findings
Stress Tolerance	Happiness
Self Actualization	Empathy
Social Responsibility	Flexibility
Optimism	Optimism
Empathy	Interpersonal Relationships
Happiness	Assertiveness
Interpersonal Relationships	Social Responsibility
Flexibility	Stress Tolerance

Discussion

Even though this is an exploratory study, and did not use a control group for comparison, the results show a strong relationship between summer camp employment and the development of emotional intelligence. The results show that for the respondents in this study, an 8 – 10 week summer camp employment experience can lead to the development of emotional intelligence competencies. This study supports previous research regarding summer camp employment. Chenery (1994) reported the following outcomes for both campers and staff members: learning

specific activity skills, learning about oneself, learning about group living and interpersonal skills, having fun, and gaining an appreciation of nature.

This study found that summer camp staff members experienced many of the same outcomes as those reported by Chenery (1994). Staff reported opportunities to learn new skills and have new experiences. Improving interpersonal skills was reported as the second most common way in which summer camp staff members changed as a result of their summer camp employment. In addition, many staff members reported having fun, acting childlike, and appreciating the natural world as significant components of the summer camp experience.

This study confirmed many of the personal and professional outcomes found in the Bialeschki et al. (1998) study. Interpersonal relationships, exposure to diversity, leadership skill development, personal growth, positive interactions with children, and camaraderie were all mentioned by respondents in this study as outcomes of summer camp employment. Staff members commented on the responsibility and dedication required to serve as role models and mentors for youth.

The results of this study are in concert with the findings of DeGraff and Glover (2002). While this was not a longitudinal study and participants were not asked to specifically comment on professional and career development, many of the outcomes reported match with the findings of the DeGraff and Glover study. Assertiveness, optimism, and self regard were all competencies that increased as a result of summer camp employment that lead to increased confidence. Improved leadership skills and the ability to accept additional responsibility were both mentioned as outcomes by the participants of this study.

The primary emotional intelligence literature focuses on the implication that measures of emotional intelligence serve as more reliable and accurate predictors of life success than more traditional and conventional measures of cognitive intelligence, such as IQ (Goleman, 1995). Previous research focused on the utility of emotional intelligence in explaining the differences between work-place performance levels. Employees performing at different levels were compared in an effort to determine if emotional intelligence levels account for these differences (Cherniss, 2000).

Previous studies have demonstrated the ability of emotional intelligence to work as an independent variable and influence life success, where emotional intelligence has served as a valid predictor of life success (Mayer et al., 1998). These studies have established a strong correlation between emotional competencies and professional/career success (Goleman, 1998). This previous research has indicated that employees with the highest levels of emotional competencies, such as stress tolerance, problem solving, flexibility, and empathy, are very often the highest performing employees (Wagner & Sternberg, 1985).

This study applied research findings related to emotional intelligence to the development of emotional competencies through a summer camp staff experience. This research utilized the emerging view of emotional intelligence as the dependent variable. Rather than focusing on emotional intelligence as a predictor of work-place success, emotional intelligence was viewed as the dependent variable that could be influenced by the summer camp employment experience.

Several programs and studies have pursued this relationship, yet this was the first time emotional intelligence was utilized as the dependent variable in the outdoor education field (Sala, 2001).

Multiple studies have considered the relationship between emotional intelligence competencies and programs designed to help increase and enhance these competencies. The most common application of this approach is in the human resource field, where employers implement training programs and skill building trainings to help new employees increase their emotional competencies. Fortune 500 companies, government agencies, and non-profit organizations have all implemented emotional intelligence training programs for employees (Goleman, 1998). These organizations have found that intentional programs, from intense three day workshops to six month courses, have been able to significantly impact emotional intelligence competencies (Gowing, 2001).

This study considered summer camp employment as a program or experience that could significantly impact emotional intelligence. The data from this research indicates that a summer camp employment experience can lead to a significant increase in emotional intelligence competencies. Eight of the 15 emotional intelligence competencies demonstrated significant increases from the pre-test at the beginning of the summer employment period to the post-test at the end of the summer employment period.

Previous studies have established that particular emotional intelligence competencies can be critical for various employment arenas. Gowing (2001) found that the competencies most often possessed by successful CEOs included empathy, stress tolerance, flexibility, and problem solving. A national survey of employers found that six of the top seven traits that employers desired entry level applicants to possess were emotional intelligence competencies (Evers, Rush, & Bedrow, 1998). The three most desired capabilities and competencies corporations are seeking in the MBAs they hire are communication skills, interpersonal skills, and assertiveness (Gibbs, 2000). A 1997 survey of benchmark practices among major corporations, conducted by the American Society for Training and Development, found that four out of five companies are trying to promote emotional intelligence in their employees through training and development, when evaluating performance, and in hiring (ASTD, 1997).

The emotional intelligence competencies that demonstrated significant increases for the participants in this study, stress tolerance, self-actualization, social responsibility, optimism, empathy, happiness, interpersonal relationships, and flexibility, include many of the same competencies that human resource training programs and skill building workshops attempt to enhance and increase. The competencies that are sought after by national employers and the competencies that have been shown to be keys to success for CEOs and MBAs were developed and enhanced for the participants of this study through their summer camp employment experience. The application of emotional intelligence as a dependent variable within the outdoor education employment arena provides a new platform for describing summer camp employment as an investment in developing key work place competencies.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study hold useful and timely implications for camping professionals and the summer camp industry. In particular, the results will help camping professionals speak with

clarity about some of the benefits of working at a summer camp. Knowledge of these benefits will allow camping professionals to attract and recruit staff members, dismiss some of the negative perceptions of working at a summer camp, compete with other employers in a competitive employment market, and describe the summer camp staff experience as a valuable investment in the future.

To assist with articulating the benefits of working at a summer camp, information sheets, brochures, flyers, and talking points can be developed to help highlight the personal and professional values of working as a summer camp staff member. Camp administrators can build from previous marketing materials from the American Camping Association, claiming that not only do "Camps do kids a world of good", but also "Camps do staff a world of good." Leaders in the camping industry can utilize the findings of this study to place summer camp employment on a level playing field with other summer opportunities that have traditionally attracted and recruited career focused job seekers.

The connection between emotional intelligence competencies developed through summer camp employment and the importance of these competencies in the work place will speak loudly to influential others. Parents, peers, advisors, career counselors, and human resource professionals will appreciate the ability of a summer camp employment experience to enhance and improve valuable employability skills and competencies. Camp administrators can attempt to address these potential benefits through employment marketing efforts, summer camp brochures, and during the interview and selection process. College aged job seekers hoping to find a summer position that will be able to propel them into employability beyond graduation can look to the summer camp staff experience as an attractive option that has demonstrated the ability to significantly impact key employment competencies.

In addition, this research draws attention to the connection between the benefits or outcomes of working at a summer camp and the components or characteristics of the summer camp employment experience that lead to these benefits. The knowledge of how these elements are interrelated can assist leaders in the camping profession. The summer camp employment experience can be designed in such a way to attempt to maximize the components or characteristics, such as staff camaraderie and a positive community living environment, to help staff members realize the associated benefits, including empathy, happiness, and improved interpersonal relationships.

In addition, this research can inform practitioners of the importance of including the development of emotional intelligence competencies in staff training programs. A portion of the staff training week, which typically occurs the week prior to the arrival of the first campers of the summer, could be dedicated to raising awareness of the importance and relevance of emotional intelligence. Intentional programs and trainings can be implemented to help staff members work on and increase their emotional intelligence competencies. This may result in even more significant positive changes in emotional intelligence than those found in this study, which did not include any intentional training or education regarding emotional intelligence.

Research Implications

The results of this study contribute to the understanding of the relationship between emotional intelligence and summer camp employment. The findings extend beyond previous summer camp employment studies that primarily focused on anecdotal reports. The quantitative approach of this study brings the conversation about summer camp employment benefits to a different level and utilizes a new lens through which the benefits and outcomes of summer camp employment can be viewed.

For the past decade, emotional intelligence and its' component competencies, have been gaining momentum as a valuable and accurate predictor of success in the workplace. Previous studies have linked high levels of emotional intelligence with success in government, not for profit, and Fortune 500 companies. The results of this study could serve as a bridge between previous emotional intelligence research and additional outdoor education employment arenas.

An understanding of the composite scales and subscales of emotional intelligence would be required to utilize the theory of emotional intelligence in the outdoor education field. In addition, an awareness of when and how emotional intelligence competencies are utilized and relied upon in a summer camp employment setting would better prepare camping professionals to view where these competencies and summer camp employment intersect.

This study created several suggestions for future research utilizing emotional intelligence to analyze outdoor education employment outcomes and benefits. Some of the suggestions come directly from the limitations of this research, while other suggestions would expand the use of emotional intelligence for examining summer camp employment, as well as additional outdoor education employment.

One limitation of this study was the lack of a comparison group. A suggestion for future research would be to conduct a similar study with appropriate comparison groups, such as business and legal interns, day camp staff members, and summer school students. An additional suggestion would be to include a pre-pre-test assessment of emotional intelligence. This assessment would allow for three measurements of a participant's emotional intelligence, spaced at roughly 9 to 10 week intervals. The researcher could evaluate changes in emotional intelligence during a pre employment period as well as changes that occurred during the employment period. This additional assessment would allow for a comparison between two similar time periods with the same participants.

Another suggestion for future research would be to conduct a longitudinal study, which would provide an opportunity to track summer camp employees and report on future work place success. This study could be replicated looking at the relationship between summer camp attendance and emotional intelligence, utilizing the youth version of the BarOn EQ-i, which was designed for youth from 6 to 15 years of age.

An additional limitation that will likely influence utilization of the EQ-i by future researchers is the expense associated with utilizing the EQ-i. While the EQ-i, and it's associated costs, were appropriate and justified for this exploratory study, it may be beyond the financial means of many camping and outdoor education programs. The Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire, that

was developed specifically for this study, may be an appropriate and attractive alternative for research projects that lack the funding necessary to utilize the EQ-i. However, additional use of the EQ-i for studies involving summer camp staff members would be able to speak to an established audience familiar with the EQ-i and assist with assessing the reliability of this study.

Both quantitative and qualitative measures in this study indicated that there are several benefits of working as a summer camp staff member. The relationships uncovered by this research indicated that summer camp employment is more than a "fun in the sun" experience. Future studies will have the ability to move this research forward, better understand the potential benefits of summer camp employment, and advance the theory of emotional intelligence.

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