

RESEARCH ROUNDUP



December 2014

Issue 3



Howdy! Welcome to the third issue of Research Roundup for The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp!

This issue is brought to you in part by Stephanie Williams, Research and Evaluation Intern from Springfield College in Summer 2014. Thanks, Steph!

The purpose of this newsletter is to share with you recent research about camps, children, youth and families living with serious and life-threatening illnesses, and similar research that can help increase your knowledge and skills in your work.

This issue focuses on research studies about camp and gender. The common thread through these studies is that girls and boys have more in common than they have differences. Still, some differences in outcomes do emerge based on how boys and girls experience the world, and these differences are useful to know when working to avoid stereotypes and promote positive youth development through camp.

Happy reading! Let's lasso some knowledge!

For more information, contact Ann Gillard at 860.429.3444, ext. 116 or Ann.Gillard@holeinthewallgang.org



Specialized summer camp for children with cancer: Social support and adjustment (2009)

Authors: Amy L. Conrad and Elizabeth M. Altmaier
Journal: *Journal of Pediatric Oncology Nursing*, 26(3), 150-157. doi: 10.1177/1043454209334418

Introduction: Research has shown that children with cancer adjust better with the presence of social support, and camps can be an important source of that support. This study investigated the social support and adjustment behaviors of children with cancer who attended an oncology camp. The researchers organized data based on gender and age to see if there were differences in social support received. This study is important because we should be aware of how girls and boys differ in their experiences with social support.

Methods: Parents of 14 female and 11 male campers completed a checklist measuring children's adjustment behaviors (behavioral/emotional problems, and externalizing, internalizing, and total behaviors). The researchers also measured how often children received three different types of emotional support: emotional/informational support when children are



given help to work through problems, emotional/esteem enhancing support when respect and concern is shown, and tangible rewards such as rewards or treats.

Results: Parents reported that girls received more emotional/informational support than boys. The most common type of social support was emotional/esteem enhancing support for both boys and girls, and both groups were higher in social support than a general sample of children. There were no gender-based differences in adjustment behaviors, and no differences in adjustment between this group and a general sample of children.

Recommendations for practice

1. Consider providing more opportunities for boys to talk about emotional/informational topics.
2. Continue to provide high levels of social support to both boys and girls.



The benefits of a camp designed for children with epilepsy: Evaluating adaptive behaviors over three years (2006)

Authors: Sandra Cushner-Weinstein, Madison Berl, Jay A. Salpekar, Jami L. Johnson, Phillip L. Pearl, Joan A. Canry, Marian Kolodgie, Audrey Scully, William D. Gaillard, and Stephen L. Weinstein
Journal: *Epilepsy & Behavior* 10 (2007) 170–178.

Introduction: Camps give children and adolescents the resources to change their feelings about their condition and the opportunity improve their quality of life. The aim of this study was to assess the impact of the camp experience over three years on socialization and independence of campers with epilepsy. This study is important because we need to understand the potential benefits of camp over time and if there are any differences based on gender.

Methods: Trained counselors completed pre- and post-camp assessments for each camper over three years. Questions measured campers' functional skills performed on a daily basis such as basic practices needed to take care of self and getting along with others. Data were analyzed along the lines of gender.

Results: Over the three years that this study was conducted, girls consistently rated above boys in three areas: cooperation, responsibility, and communication, although both groups showed improvement in these areas over time. Still, changes in functioning were mixed for girls and boys across different years. For all study participants, social interaction consistently improved each year of camp.

Recommendations for practice

1. Examine how girls' socialization is typically characterized by cooperation, responsibility, and communication and consider how girls are socialized in these ways while boys are not.
2. Consider providing explicit opportunities for boys to build skills in cooperation, responsibility and communication.

3. Clarify what “independence” or functional skills are desired from campers and implement activities and procedures intentionally designed to build those skills.



What do children most enjoy about summer soccer camp? Gender and group perceptions (2005)

Author: Rhys Jones

Journal: The Physical Educator, 62, 2-13.

Introduction: Some research shows that organized activities such as soccer camps can provide opportunities for children to increase self-esteem, well-being, and skills. However, the interests and preferences of participants have not been well-examined along gender lines. The purpose of this study was to describe what children identify as the most enjoyable aspects of a soccer day camp and to find out if children differ by gender in their responses. This study is important because we should increase our awareness of how boys and girls experience sports in different ways.

Methods: One-hundred day camp participants aged 7-12 (49 girls, 51 boys), answered a questionnaire about their age and gender, and aspects of camp they liked best.

Results: Boys gave more emphasis than did the girls to the first ranked major category of 'soccer games and skills.' Boys ranked the major category 'social experiences' in third place and 'learning focus' in fourth. In contrast, the girls group placed 'social experiences' and 'learning focus' in the reverse rank order. Girls gave greater emphasis to 'playing world cup' games than the boys who focused more on 'performing specific skills' than did the girls. Boys also gave more emphasis to 'watching videos' and 'meeting the coaches' than the girls. Girls gave more emphasis to 'interacting with peers' and 'taking super skill tests' than did boys.

Recommendations for practice

1. Explore how gender bias might influence enjoyment of participants.
2. Ensure that women and men are in a variety of leadership and mentoring positions in camps.
3. Consider how girls might particularly enjoy skill learning at camp.
4. Consider how media image usage might influence enjoyment of girls or boys.



Environmental and social-motivational contextual factors related to youth physical activity: Systematic observations of summer day camps (2013)

Authors: Nicole Zarrett, Carl Sorensen and Brittany Skiles

Journal: International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity, 10:63, 1-13.

Introduction: Youth risk of low physical activity is high during the summer months. Summer day camps can be ideal settings for reducing youth summer sedentary behaviors. However, it's unclear how camps can promote physical activity. The purpose of this study was to examine the relation between physical and social-motivational characteristics of camp settings and youth engagement in physical activity, and if there were any gender-based differences.

Methods: Systematic observations over four days in a two-week period at 4 summer day camps were conducted using the System for Observing Play and Leisure Activity in Youth (SOPLAY) and a social-motivational climate observation tool. Camps were assessed on level of youth physical activity (e.g., sedentary, moderate, vigorous), five physical features (e.g., equipment), eight staff interactions (e.g., encourage physical activity), and six social climate components (e.g., inclusive game).

Results: Highly engaging games and bullying related to boys' but not girls' physical activity. Positive peer interactions related only to girls' physical activity. There were small but significant effects of temperature (conducting activities inside when it's hot) and equipment (equal access) on girls' physical activity. For all campers, social climate features most significantly predicted physical activity.

Recommendations for practice:

1. Promote both girls' and boys' physical activity by requiring minimal management and involving continuous activity for all participants.
2. Provide optimal challenge (e.g., developmentally appropriate).
3. Help foster social connections.
4. Offer multiple types of physical activity opportunities that range in degree of competitiveness, focus on mastery/skill development, and promote collaboration, teamwork and friendship.



Pervasive patriarchal leadership ideology in seasonal residential summer camp staff (2012)

Authors: Luc Cousineau and Jennifer Roth
 Journal: *Leadership*, 8(4), 421-440. doi:
 10.1177/1742715012444052

Introduction: This study examined which qualities residential summer camp staff value in leaders, and explored whether women who work in the more home-like setting of resident camps face the same attitude and social barriers as women in other areas of outdoor recreation. This study is important because gender and leadership have not been closely considered in

residential summer camps, yet gender role expectations and stereotypes persist, even in light of the more nurturing requirements of camp leaders.

Methods: 24 male and female camp staff members participated in focus groups involving questions about perceptions that men and women have different styles of leadership, and if so whether they valued one more highly than the other.

Results: Even in the working environment of resident summer camps, where feminine-linked traits are required (nurturance, empathy, community-building, caring), participants showed a distinct gender bias in favor of males. To be appreciated as leaders, participants' responses indicated that women should be relational, communal, patient and kind, qualities usually associated with women's stereotypical caregiving role – a role that precludes them from leadership. According to participants, the most successful leaders employ traits associated with masculinity.

Recommendations for Practice:

1. Examine indicators of personal, cultural, and systemic biases against women.
2. Increase exposure of women in leadership roles to provide opportunities to re-perceive leadership.
3. Explore the utility and value of a variety of leadership styles.
4. Provide training on stereotypes and how to recognize and react to them.

