A Structural Model of Camp Director Practices and Outcomes: Does Intention Toward Program Outcomes Matter?

Barry A. Garst
Ryan J. Gagnon

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Although intentionality has been explored within the camp literature, evidence of the effectiveness of intentionality for producing specific positive youth outcomes is mixed. While some empirical studies have produced findings indicating that intentionality enhanced youth growth and development, other studies have produced the opposite result. This study explored the potential relationship between intention toward program outcomes and corresponding parent observed outcomes resulting from the camp experience.

A sample of 13 camp directors and the 2,952 parents they served completed surveys exploring the relationships between camp practices and youth development outcomes. The director survey included questions about their levels of camp industry experience, education level, practices related to intentionality and youth outcome achievement, staff training strategies, staff return rate, and staff characteristics. The parent survey included questions about parent and child demographics as well as parent perceptions of their child's growth and skill development as a result of the camp experience.

After confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) verified the reliability and validity of the outcomes measure, the hypothesized relationships were tested using structural equation modeling (SEM) to determine if camp director intention had a meaningful influence on growth as a result of the camp experience. The study findings suggest that intentional targeting of outcomes in many instances does not make a meaningful difference in observed developmental outcomes. Out of five program outcomes measured (i.e., communication, responsibility, self-regulation, attitude, and exploration), no outcomes were meaningfully influenced by director intentionality. Additionally, director practices, including staff adaptation of programs, youth engagement, youth-leading activities, and youth involvement in the design of activities, had no statistically or practically meaningful moderational influence on observed growth as a result of attending camp. However, in spite of these somewhat contradictory findings, positive and meaningful pre-to-post camp growth was noted in all outcomes of interest (e.g., communication, responsibility, self-regulation, attitude, and exploration), suggesting that the unique context residential summer camp provides may be the greatest influence on youth socio-emotional growth. This study makes an

important contribution to the body of empirical evidence about the relationship between director intentionality and positive youth development. Limitations, study relevance, and future directions are explored.

AUTHORS: Barry A. Garst and Ryan J. Gagnon are with the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management at Clemson University, BGARST@clemson.edu

Introduction

A strong body of evidence suggests that well-designed and delivered youth programs positively enhance developmental outcomes for youth (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2002; Eccles & Gootman, 2003). However, as indicated by the escalating investigation into the outcomes associated with youth development programs, programs are not equally impactful. Some research suggests that programming with intention is more likely to produce positive youth outcomes, when compared with a more laissez-faire approach in which positive youth outcomes are not planned, but might result due to happenstance (Walker, 2006; Walker, Marczak, Blyth, & Borden, 2005). Given the limited investigation into the role and pervasiveness of intentionality within the youth development field, this study examines intention within the context of a common youth development experience, residential summer camp.

An intention is a distinctive attitude (beyond an ordinary desire and belief) that is "intimately related to endeavoring and action" (Bratman, 1987, p. 30). Although frequently used as a buzzword within the youth development field, the practice of intentional programming often alludes youth development program providers (Perkins & Borden, 2003; Walker et al., 2005). Furthermore, because many youth development programs have not anchored their programs to theory-driven program models (Walker et al., 2005) that can guide program planning, implementation, and evaluation, many program providers find it difficult to act with intention. When youth program providers are intentional with regard to how a program is implemented, they understand how to balance evidence-based and best practice information in advance of, as well as within the emerging moment of, the youth program (Walker et al., 2005). The challenges associated with intentional programming, from building an underlying program theory (Lerner, 2005), and establishing the right programmatic elements, (Walker, 2006) to properly preparing frontline staff (Tierney, Grossman, & Resch, 1995), can be found across the field of youth development.

Intentionality has emerged as a frequent topic within the camp literature, from examinations of intentionality (Bialeschki, Lyons, & Ewing, 2005; Henderson et al., 2005) that emerged from the American Camp Association's (2005) national study of the developmental outcomes of camp experiences, to more contemporary studies of intentional camp programming designs (Gillard & Watts, 2013; Mainieri & Anderson, 2015). Camp researchers have noted that "understanding how outcomes might be influenced, produced, or otherwise enhanced may allow camp program providers to bring a greater level of intentionality to their efforts—producing camp experiences most likely to positively impact youth" (Garst, Gagnon, & Whittington, 2015, p. 3). At a time when few camps actually intentionally target programs or initiatives to address specific youth issues and correspondingly measure the results using formal evaluation processes (American Camp Association, 2011), there continues to be a need for more research to guide intentional programming in camps (Henderson, Oakleaf, & Bialeschki, 2009).

Unfortunately, camp research on the effectiveness of intentionality for producing specific youth outcomes is mixed. Although some empirical studies have produced findings indicating that intentionality to outcomes has enhanced youth growth and development in areas such as camp connectedness, environmental stewardship, friendship skills, reading enjoyment, and leadership (Browne, Garst, & Bialeschki, 2011; Garst & Ozier, 2015; Mainieri & Anderson, 2015; Roark, Gillard, Evans, Wells, & Blauer, 2012), other studies have produced the conflicting results (Henderson et al., 2005). Moreover, some studies that purported to examine intentionality did not explicitly operationalize or measure the construct (Bialeschki et al., 2005; Dahl, Sethre-Hofstad, & Solomon, 2013) and so their contribution to the literature associated with camp-related program intentionality may be limited.

With these conflicting findings and gaps in prior research in mind, the purpose of this study was to explore the potential relationship between intention towards program outcomes and corresponding parent observed outcomes resulting from the camp experience. Our guiding hypotheses for this study were: (1) H1: Camp director intention toward outcomes will have a direct positive effect on youth outcomes and (2) H2: Camp director practices will have a direct positive effect on youth outcomes.

Literature Review

Camp Experiences and Youth Programs

Defining camp experiences and programs. Camp experiences have been defined as "organized experiences in group living in the outdoors that use trained leaders to accomplish intentional goals" (Henderson, Bialeschki, & James, 2007a, p. 755). The duration and structure of camp experiences can vary. Day camp programs generally last between 6 to 8 hours, while residential programs last between one to eight weeks. The structure of camp experiences can reflect both highly structured (Mainieri & Anderson, 2015) and free-choice models (Schmalz, Kerstetter, & Kleiber, 2011). (For a complete discussion of the structural characteristics of camp experiences see Garst, Browne, and Bialeschki, 2011).

Camp experiences can also be thought of as a youth development "program." Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003) noted that the most effective youth development programs increased participants' exposure to "supportive and empowering environments where activities create multiple opportunities for a range of skill-building and horizon-broadening experiences (p. 94)." The importance of supportive and empowering environments and skill building activities has been supported by the camp literature on positive youth development (PYD).

Camp experiences and PYD. To better describe elements indicative of a PYD experience, the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (NRCIM) outlined common features of positive youth development settings (Eccles & Gootman, 2003), which included physical and psychological safety; appropriate structure; supportive relationships; opportunities to belong; positive social norms; support for efficacy and mattering; opportunities for skill building; and integration of family, school, and community efforts. These features, also found in the conceptually similar essential elements of positive youth development (Peterson et al., 2001) and the supports and opportunities of the Community Action Framework for PYD (Gambone & Connell, 2004), have guided much of the research associated with PYD in camps.

Using the Community Action Framework for PYD, the American Camp Association (ACA) (2006a) examined program supports and opportunities that contributed to positive youth development in the areas of supportive relationships, safety, youth involvement, and skill building (Gambone, Klem, & Connell, 2002). A mixed gender sample of 7,645 youth aged 10–18 identified the extent to which they experienced optimal growth during their camp experience. The results indicated that supportive relationships (69% optimal) and skill building (41% optimal) were the areas most impacted by the camp experience, perhaps reflecting the quality of relationships between youth and adult staff and the

importance of providing youth with opportunities to build skills through interesting, challenging, and progressive activities. Significant literature has since emerged supporting camp as a positive youth development setting that helps youth build skills (summarized in Garst et al., 2015) as well as positive relationships and social capital with caring adult staff (Bialeschki, Henderson, & James, 2007; Clary & Ferrari, 2015). Because of the sustained, immersive nature of the camp experience (Thurber, Scanlin, Scheuler, & Henderson, 2007), frontline camp staff may be particularly influential on the youth they supervise, teach, and lead.

Intentionality and Youth Programs

Theory of intentionality. Intentions are distinct attitudes that drive action (Bratman, 1987). The concept of intentionality has been applied to community-based youth development programs as a way to frame how positive youth development outcomes could be better achieved through sound strategies of youth engagement. With the intent of crafting a model to guide intentional youth programming, Walker et al. (2005) developed the theory of developmental intentionality to focus on the design and daily implementation of effective youth learning opportunities. According to this theory, intentionality is defined as "deliberate, strategic decisions to create opportunities that maximize developmental outcomes" (p. 401) that are the responsibility of the youth development organization and staff. The theory of intentionality emphasizes three principles: (1) intentionality: programs are most effective when they focus on long-term developmental outcomes; "shaping learning opportunities that help youth shape themselves" (p. 400), (2) engagement: youth should be actively engaged in their own learning, and (3) goodness of fit: youth engagement arises when there is a good fit between young people and their learning opportunities. The main proposition of the theory is that in community-based youth programs intentionality is necessary for achieving both immediate and long-term developmental outcomes beyond what would happen by chance (Mahoney, Larson & Eccles, 2005; Walker et al., 2005).

Camp research on intentionality. In one of the first discussions of intentionality in camp research, Marsh (1999) conducted a meta-analysis of 22 youth development, recreation, and camp studies that examined self-constructs (i.e., self-esteem, self-concept, self-perception). The camp-specific findings indicated that these experiences positively influenced self-construct across all youth age groups in the review. Marsh proposed that camps focusing on enhancing self-constructs were more likely to show positive change. Referring to Marsh's study, Henderson et al. (2005) suggested that "deliberate programming done in camps to enhance self-constructs more often resulted in camper growth" (p. 1).

Roark et al. (2012) studied the effect of intentionally designed experiences on friendship skill development among twenty 11- to 12-year-old sixth grade students using the SAFE (Sequential, Active, Focused, and Explicit) programming model (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007). The learning situations they studied integrated a sequence of experiential activities to focus on social skill development in addition to activity facilitation language scripted so staff could focus on friendship skill outcomes. Roark et al. (2012) found that these intentional and guided experiences resulted in increases in reported friendship skill levels. Although this study's small sample size makes generalizing to larger samples impossible, the SAFE model suggested an example of how intentionality might be applied to programming practices.

Intentionality was a key concept in ACA's examination of program improvement in camps (American Camp Association, 2006b). In this examination, over 2,200 youth from 23 camps provided survey data that allowed camps to assess their organizational practices and structures, and implement improvement strategies in lower than optimal "supports and opportunities" areas. Camps that intentionally implemented changes across three areas of organizational practice (i.e., structures, policies, and activities) were twice as successful at producing positive changes in PYD outcomes compared with camps that addressed only one or two areas. For example, changes in organizational structures included low youth-to-staff ratios, and modifications to organizational activities included providing youth with interesting skill-building activities as well as opportunities for decision-making. This study

demonstrated that intentionality across organizational structures, policies, and activities led to increases in positive youth outcomes.

Although research suggests the strong role of program intentionality for producing youth outcomes in camps, intentionality is not consistently supported in the literature. For instance, Henderson et al. (2005) reported on the results of ACA's national study of the developmental outcomes of camp experiences, and noted that "no relationship was found between the camp's goals and the camper outcomes" (p. 3). Even with these mixed results regarding the role of intentionality, a general trend is evident calling for structured curricula and programing models that infer greater intentionality toward the achievement of organizational, youth, or staff outcomes (Browne et al., 2011; Garst & Ozier, 2015; Mainieri & Anderson, 2015). It is within this context that the potential relationship between intention towards program outcomes and corresponding parent observed outcomes resulting from the camp experience are explored.

Method

Participants

In the summer of 2015, a convenience sample of camp directors and parents of children attending those camps were recruited to participate in a study exploring the relationships between camp director practices and outcomes associated with the camp experience. Directors representing thirteen residential camps that were also members of a regional youth camping association completed a director survey (described below). Of the 13 overnight camps represented, five were for-profit camps and nine were nonprofit camps. Three camps were operated by a national youth-serving agency, six were operated independently, and four camps were religiously affiliated. Camp sessions offered by the participating camps ranged from five days to four weeks. Most of the camps offered traditional programming (i.e., swimming, arts/craft, canoeing, nature studies), and two offered specialized programs (i.e., technology and environmental education).

Parents were contacted by directors using the email address parents used when they registered their child for camp and asked to complete a parent survey (described below) at the end of their child's camp experience, and a week later directors sent a reminder email to nonrespondents. The combination of the two emails plus an incentive (entry to win a $100 gift card) resulted in a total sample of 2,952 respondents for a 23.04% response rate (total potential $N = 12,064$). A post-data collection power analysis indicated that given the number of potential independent variables (≈ 14) and desired effects (30% of variance explained by director intention scores; $\alpha = .80$) that a suitable minimum sample size was 728 respondents (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). Parents who had multiple children attending camp were screened out from the survey after providing their first response. Parent and child descriptive information can be found in Table 1.

Instruments

Director survey. Camp directors completed an 85-item electronic survey at the end of the camp season that included questions related to their levels of camp industry experience, education level, practices related to intentionality and youth outcome achievement, staff training strategies, staff return rate, and staff characteristics (see Table 2 for descriptive statistics from the director survey). The survey items related to intentional practices and outcome achievement were developed after a review of prior research into program intentionality (see Walker et al., 2005). as well as factors that influence outcomes of the camp experience including staff characteristics, program adaptation, and youth involvement. Items about staff characteristics (adapted from Gagnon, Garst, & Stone, 2015) included "It is important for my staff to follow program plans to achieve positive outcomes" measured on a 1-7 scale. Intentionality toward outcomes was measured with the question, "To what degree does your camp intentionally target the following outcomes for the youth you serve?" measured on a 1-7 scale. Items about camp outcomes were adapted from a survey investigating the parental influences on the camp experience by

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Gagnon and Garst (2015); this adapted survey was also utilized in the parental measure described in more depth below. Strategies associated with intentionality were measured on a 1-7 scale by asking directors, "To what degree do you use the following strategies as part of your programming practices?" with items that included "Encourage staff to follow a daily program guide," "Provide youth with choice related to their camp activities" and "Encourage staff to modify camp activities to better achieve outcomes."

Table 1

Parent and Child Sample Descriptive Information (N = 2,952)

Childs Age in Years	M = 11.30 years (SD = 2.44, Mdn = 11, range 5 - 18)	
Child Gender	Female = 1,980 (67.1%) Male = 964 (32.7%)	
Child Ethnic Group	European Origin (n = 2,687, 91.2%) Latino Origin (n = 79, 2.7%) Asian Origin (n = 36, 1.2%)	Multiple Ethnicity (n = 101, 3.4%) African American (n = 37, 1.3%) Native American (n = 5, .2%)
Parent Gender	Female = 2,488 (84.7%) Male = 449 (15.3%)	
Annual Household Income	M = $204,992.38 ($SD$ = 77,825.10, Mdn = $225,000, range = $12,500- $275,000)	
Parent Ethnic Group	European Origin (n = 2,779, 94.1%) Latino Origin (n = 27, .91%) Asian Origin (n = 67, 1.3%)	Multiple Ethnicity (n = 29, 1.1%) African American (n = 37, 1.3%) Native American (n = 6, .2%)
Parent Education	High School (n = 28, .9%) Associates Degree (n = 69, 2.3%) Master's Degree (n = 966, 32.9%)	Some College (n = 79, 2.7%) Bachelor's Degree (n = 1,334, 45.4%) Doctorate/Ph.D. (n = 464, 15.8%)

Table 2

Director and Camp Descriptive Information (N = 13)

Director Education Level	Bachelor's Degree n = 9 (69.2%)	Master's Degree n = 2 (15.4%)	Doctorate n = 2 (15.4%)	
Director Experience Level	M = 19.15 years, SD = 3.65			
		Mean (SD)		Mean (SD)
Director Intention Level	Cooperation	5.92 (.277)	Communication	5.54 (.660)
	Exploration	5.69 (.480)	Attitude	5.85 (.376)
	Self-Regulation	5.54 (.519)		
Director Practices	Youth Leading Activities	4.54 (.967)	Staff to Camper Ratio	5.5 Campers to 1 Staff (.577)
	Percent of Returning Staff	63.8% (11.9%)	Youth-Staff Program Design	4.08 (.862)
	Pre-Camp Staff Training (Days)	7.08 (2.87)	In-Service Staff Training (Days)	5.85 (4.56)
	*Encourage Staff to Adapt Programs	5.54 (.519)		

Parent survey. Parents of children attending one of the sampled camps described above completed an electronic 121-item survey with questions describing both parent and child demographic information and parent perceptions of their child's growth (i.e., skill development in areas including responsibility, exploration, self-regulation, attitude, and communication) as a result of the camp experience. This survey, based on a version developed by Gagnon and Garst (2015), explored how parenting style may influence outcomes associated with the camp experience; however, in this study only the outcome measures were utilized. Information (e.g., the results of the confirmatory factor analysis) about the outcome measures can be found in Table 3.

Table 3

CFA Results

Construct/Variable	M (SD)	β	ǫ	α	AVE
Pre-Camp Outcome Parental Observations Measures. All items prompted with "My child…"					
Communication			.874	.880	.640
…participates in a discussion.	4.19 (.746)	.848			
…communicates well with others.	4.18 (.726)	.874			
…shares thoughts and ideas verbally.	4.22 (.743)	.845			
…asks questions.	4.23 (.709)	.602			
Responsibility			.849	.851	.548
…takes responsibility for his / her own actions.	3.98 (.766)	.726			
…takes care of his / her own things.	3.72 (.855)	.675			
…shares work responsibilities.	3.91 (.796)	.719			
…follows through when asked to do something.	3.81 (.852)	.797			
…follows directions.	4.07 (.761)	.777			
Self-Regulation			.847	.847	.588
…handles success and failure.	3.81 (.767)	.791			
…manages disappointment well.	3.56 (.885)	.813			
…deals effectively with conflict.	3.66 (.836)	.757			
…doesn't get frustrated easily.	3.53 (.952)	.702			
Attitude			.891	.894	.672
…has a good mental attitude.	4.26 (.679)	.845			
...has a generally "positive" view on life.	4.28 (.716)	.866			
…is more hopeful about the future.	4.12 (.691)	.761			
…shows a positive attitude when around others.	4.27 (.661)	.802			
Exploration			.823	.825	.572
…participates in new learning experiences.	3.97 (.806)	.809			
...is curious about new topics and subjects.	4.09 (.715)	.545			
…seeks challenges beyond his / her comfort zone.	3.61 (.909)	.788			
…is willing to try new experiences.	3.92 (.807)	.847			

β: standardized coefficient (factor loading); **ǫ**: Joreskog's Rho; **α**: Cronbach's Alpha; **AVE**: Average Variance Extracted.

Researchers have noted potential problems with using parents' perceptions of camp-related youth outcomes. For example, Henderson, Whitaker, Biakeschki, Scanlin, and Thurber (2007c) suggested that parents were not at camp during their child's camp experience and therefore their perceptions are not informed by direct experience. Henderson et al. (2007c) also reflected that parents may be biased toward believing that they registered their child in a growth-producing experience. Although we acknowledge that parents may be influenced to some degree by bias, in this study parents were surveyed instead of youth because we recognized that children would be poor observers of their own growth and that a strong social desirability bias (i.e., selecting a higher rating on an outcome to appear more attractive to oneself or others) or a reference bias (i.e., selecting an inaccurate rating because of differing standards of comparison) (West, 2014) would impact the accuracy of their self-report. As Paulhus and Vazire (2007) point out, "Even when respondents are doing their best to be forthright and insightful, their self-reports are subject to various sources of inaccuracy" (p. 228). To avoid this source of inaccuracy, parents were surveyed about their perceptions of their child's growth based on their observations of their children after camp.

The outcome measures utilized a retrospective pre-test design (Marshall, Higginbotham, Harris, & Lee, 2007) where parents were asked to reflect on their child's behavior prior to the residential camp experience and following the camp experience. For example, parents were presented with the item "my child listens to the opinions of others" and asked to rate their child on that behavior both before and after the camp experience on a 1-5 Likert style scale with one representing strongly disagree and five representing strongly agree.

Analysis

Scale validation. Prior to exploring the potential relationships, the parental outcomes survey (pre-camp measure) was analyzed to ensure that it was psychometrically valid and reliable utilizing confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in EQS 6.3 software. As director

measures were formative in nature (reflecting characteristics rather than an opinion or belief) they were not included in the CFA. At a basic level, factor analysis is a procedure where the correlations or covariances[1] between observed variables (in this case the questions on the survey) are examined in terms of their relationship with each other and with unobserved latent variables in this study referred to as factors (Field, 2013). In this study a multi-stage CFA was utilized, more specifically the original measurement model was specified with all items orientated toward theorized factors. Then through multiple stages the model was then re-specified for issues such as error, items with poor unidimensionality, items with unusually high or low covariances, and questions that are redundant with others in the same factor and thus highly correlated (Brown, 2015). Beyond the item level analyses, the quality of model fit was examined with fit indices such as the comparative fit indices (CFI), the root means square error of approximation (RMSEA), the standardized root means square residual (SRMR), and the model chi-square (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Marsh, Hau, & Wen, 2004).

The final CFA of the scale resulted in the removal of 14 items from the original 35-item scale proposed by Gagnon and Garst (2015) for a total of 21 items in the outcome measure. Due to issues with nonnormality including kurtosis, skewness, and respondents who had no variation within their responses (e.g., only selecting one response choice throughout the survey) a total of 16 respondents were removed from the survey. Given the exploratory nature of the study and large sample size, missing data analyses (e.g., FIML) were not utilized for study analyses, but exploratory usage indicated no modification to study conclusions, nor systematic missingness within the data set (e.g., MNAR). The final overall goodness-of-fit indices suggested the final five-factor solution fit the data well: $\chi^2(179) = 1537.187$, $p \leq .001$, SRMR = .043, RMSEA = .057 (90%, CI .054 - .059), and CFI = .952.

As evidenced by Table 3, the five factors demonstrated good convergent validity as indicated by factor loadings, average variance extracted (AVE) scores, and reliability as supported by Joreskog's Rho (ϱ) and Cronbach's Alphas (α). Note that Cronbach's Alpha is reported due to its heavy use in the social sciences. Joreskog's Rho is a better reliability measure than Cronbach's alpha in SEM, as it is based on factor loadings rather than correlations between observed variables (for more information see Chin, 1998). Discriminant validity, or the degree to which factors measured distinct constructs, is evidenced in Table 4 with between factor correlations.

Table 4

Between Factor Correlations

|	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5
F1. Responsibility	1				
F2. Exploration	.446*	1			
F3. Self-Regulation	.689*	.546*	1		
F4. Attitude	.600*	.542*	.674*	1	
F5. Communication	.466*	.508*	.449*	.631*	1

Note: * indicates $p \leq .001$

Results

Structural Models

This study was concerned with the moderational influence of director intention towards specific and independent outcomes, and therefore we explored five separate models (see Figure 1) concurrent with our outcomes of interest. The final structural models

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[1]The final covariance matrix is available upon request from the lead author.

exhibited good fit as evidenced by the overall goodness-of-fit indices (see Table 5). Figure 1 presents the standardized coefficients (β) for the paths between observed indicators, corresponding latent factors, and the paths between the independent variable and the dependent variables (e.g. factors). Paths that were statistically significant, but practically meaningless, are excluded from the model (e.g., a direct effect of .003 and a $p \leq .001$) to ensure that conclusions of the reader are not drawn from statistical significance, rather from the effect sizes.
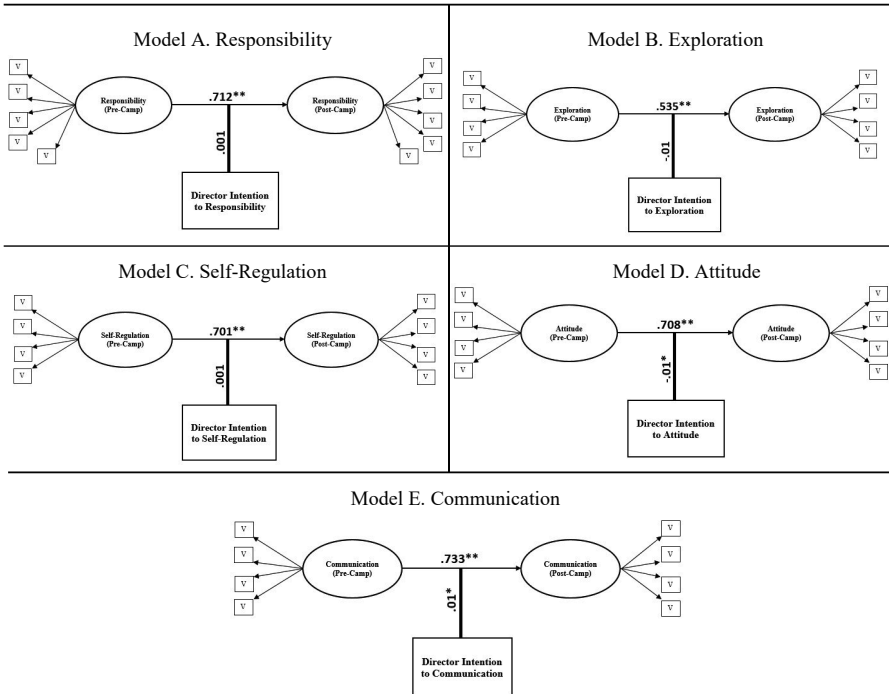
Figure 1. Moderational Models of Intention and Camp Growth.
Note: *indicates $p \leq .05$ ** indicates $p \leq .001$. All fit indices provided in Table 5. All error terms and item loadings (see Table 3) excluded for parsimony of presentation.

Table 5

Summary of Fit Indices for Measurement and Moderational Models

	χ^2 (df)	CFI	SRMR	RMSEA (90% CI)
Measurement Model	1537.187* (179)	.952	.043	.057 (.054, .059)
Moderational Model A: Responsibility	890.267* (94)	.967	.031	.059 (.055, .062)
Moderational Model B: Exploration	603.760* (57)	.974	.030	.067 (.062, .072)
Moderational Model C: Self-Regulation	447.838* (57)	.976	.040	.057 (.052, .062)
Moderational Model D: Attitude	590.225* (57)	.976	.026	.063 (.058, .068)
Moderational Model E: Communication	424.312* (57)	.975	.029	.053 (.048, .057)

Note: * indicates $p \leq .001$

 Relationship Testing

This study's primary goal was to examine whether or not camp directors' level of intention had a meaningful influence on outcomes. Our first hypothesis was that camp director intention toward specific outcomes (e.g., responsibility, exploration, self-regulation, attitude, and communication) will have a positive moderational effect on the growth resulting from the camp experience. More specifically, as director intention score rises so will the observed growth resulting from the camp experience. Out of five youth outcomes measured in this study, responsibility, exploration, self-regulation, attitude, and communication, there were no statistically meaningful moderational relationships present. More specifically, camp director score had no meaningful influence on the rate of observed growth. Our second hypothesis was that camp director practices (e.g., staff-to-camper ratio, youth involvement in programming decisions, percent of returning staff) would have a meaningful influence on the rate of observed change. Similar to our first finding, we found no meaningful effect of camp director practices on the rates of observed growth.

However, in spite of the nonmeaningful moderational effects of both director intention and director practices, there remained evidence of significant and meaningful observed growth as a result of the residential camp experience in all five constructs of interest. More specifically, parents reported meaningful growth in responsibility ($\beta = .712$, $SE = .016$, $p \leq .001$), exploration ($\beta = .535$, $SE = .015$, $p \leq .001$), self-regulation ($\beta = .701$, $SE = .016$, $p \leq .001$), attitude ($\beta = .708$, $SE = .015$, $p \leq .001$), and communication ($\beta = .733$, $SE = .015$, $p \leq .001$).

Discussion

This study explored the potential relationship between intention towards program outcomes and corresponding parent observed outcomes resulting from the camp experience. The findings suggest that in many instances intentionality to PYD outcomes does not make a meaningful difference in developmental outcomes, at least not when those outcomes are measured from the perspective of parents. This study makes an important contribution to the body of empirical evidence about the relationship between director intentionality and PYD based on data collected from one of the largest samples of camp parents to date. These findings both affirm and contradict existing literature, which reflects the conflicted nature of intentionality in the camp literature; sometimes intentionality has been associated with positive youth outcomes (Bialeschki et al., 2005; Roark et al., 2012) and other times it has not (Henderson et al., 2005).

This study also examined camp director practices associated with parental perceptions of youth outcomes. Surprisingly, we found no meaningful influence of director practices—including the director's staff to camper ratio, how directors involved youth in program decisions, how directors supported staff in adapting programs as needed, and the percentage of staff that directors retained—on outcomes that parent observed following the camp experience. These findings appear to run counter to prevailing wisdom within the youth development (Gambone et al., 2002) and camp literatures (Henderson et al., 2007b) promoting youth involvement as a feature of positive youth development settings.

The failure to find a meaningful influence of staff adaptation of programs (as one of the director practices studied) on youth outcomes was also unexpected. The need for program adaptation in informal settings like camps and other out-of-school time programs is commonplace, where staff can face a variety of environmental and programmatic factors (such as limited resources) that make program changes necessary. A broad literature suggests that programming models that encourage staff to adapt programs as needed to meet participants' needs will result in improved program outcomes (Larsen & Samdal, 2007; Mowbray, Holter, Teague, & Bybee, 2003), a proposition not supported by this study. However, it is also true that most adaptations to programs by staff are a result of poor logistical fit and are rarely aligned with a program's goal or overall theory of change (Moore, Bumbarger, & Cooper, 2013). In other words, in this study staff adaptation of programs may not have been well aligned with, nor reflective of, directors' overall program goals and the implementation of those goals, which may explain the lack of influence of staff adaptation on parents' observed outcomes.

As we consider this study's findings relative to the influence of director intention toward outcomes on parents' observed outcomes, we need to be cautious not to throw the baby out with the bathwater. The significant and meaningful observed growth reported by parents in all outcome areas (e.g., responsibility, exploration, self-regulation, attitude, and communication), although not directly related to the goal of this study, is noteworthy. As this study represents one of the largest studies of parents within the camp literature (e.g., Baughman, Garst, & Fuhrman, 2009; Henderson et al., 2007c; Michalski, Mishna, Worthington, & Cummings, 2003), the study findings offer strong evidence that the programmatic and operational elements necessary for positive youth development were provided by the targeted camps.

For instance, self-regulation has become an important outcome within the camp literature and has received considerable attention over the past decade through the lens of self-determination theory (Ramsing & Sibthorp, 2008; Roark, Ellis, Wells, & Gillard, 2010; Schmalz et al., 2011). This perspective suggests that autonomy-supportive contexts such as camp may help young people develop self-regulation skills like managing emotions and handling success and failure appropriately. This study adds to the literature suggesting that camp experiences are effective for building self-regulation skills in youth.

Parents' observed changes related to attitude change is also important. Camp program providers are well positioned to make a potentially lasting influence on youth by focusing on attitude change. For example, helping youth improve their attitudes toward new experiences, people different than themselves, and even their own capabilities could change their willingness to try new things, to be open to the perspectives of people who look and talk differently than they do, and to challenge their own perceived limitations. Taken together, changing a young person's attitudes may prepare them to better adapt to an increasingly diverse world, rich with new and challenging experiences.

Limitations

Three limitations are acknowledged. First, there was limited variation in directors' ratings of their intention toward specific program outcomes. That is, directors tended to indicate targeting all outcomes and that all program outcomes were equally important. In the future, a forced choice or other outcome prioritization strategy should be used when surveying camp directors about their intention toward outcomes. Second, this study involved a homogenous sample of parents who tended to be white, highly educated, and have above-average wealth. Although prior research indicates that this demographic profile may represent the majority of camp population (Gagnon & Garst, 2015), the lack of diversity in the sample may make the study findings unique to camps serving youth and parents matching this demographic profile. Third, the data collection strategy used with both directors and parents reflected a self-reported web survey approach. Self-report has a number of inherent weaknesses from the perspective of the person completing the survey, including: response bias, image management, lack of understanding, and lack of introspective ability (Austin, Gibson, Deary, McGregor, & Dent, 1998); however, it is possible that some of these weaknesses were mitigated due to the anonymous nature of both surveys.

Future Directions

Intentionality is ripe for future study. A distinction can be made between doing something intentionally and intending to do something, and the differences can be thought of in terms of goals and side effects. If a person performs an act with knowledge that it will have a certain effect, then the person deliberately caused the effect (a goal directed change). But it is possible that a person could achieve a certain effect by intending to do something else entirely (a change because of a side effect). So, under certain conditions a person could do something intentionally while intending to do something else (Bratman, 1987). If we apply this logic to youth development orientated programming, it would be interesting to explore how program providers may be (un)intentional in their delivery and facilitation of PYD programs and services that causes positive changes to emerge as a side-effect.

Research on intentionality also needs to continue to examine specific director practices that reflect what intention actually looks like; this level of operationalization has been missing from the camp literature. As noted earlier, approaches such as Durlak and Weissberg's (2007) SAFE model offer promise in this regard through the deconstruction of intentionality into specific components such as sequencing focus and scripting. Furthermore, data collection methods beyond self-report surveys will also help to illuminate how directors may intentionally target youth outcomes and the effects of such intention. Observations of program implementation (Mainieri & Anderson, 2015) as well as in-depth interviews with directors regarding intentional practices can provide information that better explains findings from studies such as the one reported here. This work could culminate in the development of a new measure of intentionality within the context of youth development programs.

Future intentionality research would also benefit from a closer look at the relationships between staff training quality and depth and the outcomes experienced by program participants. It is clear that skilled and competent staff are critical for providing high-quality PYD programs (Yohalem, Pittman, & Moore, 2006), and through quality training and education necessary competencies for staff effectiveness can be developed (Mahoney & Warner, 2014). Some research supports that staff are more successful when they have access to consistent, high quality training (Huebner et al., 2003), particularly in camp settings in which staff may not arrive with the necessary knowledge or skills (Henderson et al., 2007b). With this in mind, we need to better understand how staff training practices reflect intentionality and the extent to which staff training that focuses on intention towards outcomes actually influences received outcomes from the perspective of program participants or other stakeholders.

Staff retention is another critical dimension of high-quality youth development programs that may be a factor in the relationship between intentionality and outcomes. Although higher rates of staff retention are often associated with positive program outcomes (Hartje & Evans, 2006), some research does not entirely support this assumption for camps (Bialeschki et al., 2008). Further study of the role of staff retention will help us better understand if a high percentage of returning staff is a necessary component to provide programs with a high degree of intentionality.

Camp budget was not evaluated as a variable in this study. The camps represented in this study were, by all indications, well resourced, and youth served by these camps were from middle-to-upper income families. This study should be replicated with directors representing programs with fewer resources or with camps serving less-resourced children. Camp directors with fewer resources may express intention to outcomes in different ways. Additionally, access to resources may be a stronger predictor of youth outcomes than intentionality toward outcomes. Moreover, with an improvement in director sample size (this study involved 13 directors) it would be prudent to see if there is a mediational effect of director characteristics (e.g., experience level, training, education, gender, camp style) on levels of intention and outcome growth.

A unique contribution of this study was the use of structural equation modeling to identify causal relationships between director practices and developmental outcomes with data collected from one of the largest samples of parents to date. This study furthers our understanding of program intentionality in camps and may offer insights to inform practices across youth development settings.

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