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# Residential Summer Camp Counselor Retention Rates Implications and Recommendations for Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro-Denver's Gates Camp

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Residential Summer Camp Counselor Retention Rates  
Implications and Recommendations for Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro-Denver's Gates  
Camp

Molly McPhee

May 2017

A Master's Paper

Submitted to the faculty of Clark University, Worcester, Massachusetts, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the department of International Development, Community and Environment.

And accepted on the recommendation of

Laurie Ross, Chief Instructor

## **Abstract**

### **Residential Summer Camp Counselor Retention Rates Implications and Recommendations for Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro-Denver's Gates Camp**

Molly McPhee

Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Denver's Gates Camp is a residential summer camp in Ward, Colorado. There has been an observed and verified trend of a lack of returning staff, despite staff members' expressed positive experiences as a camp counselor. Returning staff improve the quality of programming for youth, by building upon their skills gained the previous summer and sharing their knowledge of the camp environment, culture and traditions with new staff. Through the use of a survey, completed by counselors who worked at Gates Camp between the summers of 2011 and 2016, trends as to why individuals choose to not return to camp emerged. Recommendations were made in accordance with such themes, and included: the addition of leadership activities for returning staff members, increasing the number of new hires in the 19 to 20 year old age bracket, and continuing to implement and expand upon staff culture building activities so as to capitalize on the positive, strong community that exists.

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**Introduction**

The purpose of this study is to better understand how influential factors in a camp setting can be manipulated to increase staff retention rates. Research focused on illuminating the factors that influence residential summer camp counselors' decision to return to camp for more than one summer of work. To accomplish this goal, this study was guided by two main research questions; what factors make counselors want to return to camp, and what factors pull counselors away from returning to camp? These questions were intended to make clear the parts of the camp experience that draw individuals to work at a summer camp, and the factors that can be modified to bolster the counselor return rate. The research questions were explored using the Metro-Denver Boys & Girls Club (BGCMD) Gates Camp as a case study.

It is important to make clear my relationship to Gates Camp, as I believe that my positionality allows for a more nuanced understanding and contextualization of recommendations. I was a counselor at Gates Camp during the summer of 2014, and then was a Head Counselor at the camp for the 2015 and 2016 summer seasons. My interest in the topic of camp counselor retention rates comes from my connection to the camp, and my deep belief in the power of camp settings as spaces for positive youth development (PYD). In my third summer working at Gates Camp, I noticed that I was one of only three other employees who had been at the camp for more than two years. I had spent two summers listening to staff proclaim that the development of the staff community was one of the most



powerful and intense social experiences they had ever been a part of, and then I watched only a few of those same counselors return the next summer. I became curious about what factors made these individuals choose to spend their summers elsewhere, particularly after such glowing reviews of their relationships with other staff. This research is meant to positively impact the Gates Camp community by providing an in-depth inquiry into experienced patterns, and offering recommendations meant to positively shift such patterns. I discussed the topic with camp administrators, and received assistance in securing programmatic documents. However, while there was support for this research from camp administration, the process was predominantly shaped by my own interests, ideas, and experiences as a staff member at Gates Camp.

The hypothesis that guides this research is that camp counselors, from Gates Camp specifically, choose to not return to camp to work for more than one season for one or more of three main reasons; the pay is too low, their time of life is not conducive to having summers available to work at camp, or they leave camp feeling burned out or unhappy with the camp experience overall. The hypothesis was derived from conversations with staff members, both those who returned for more than one season of work, and those who worked at camp for only one summer. Despite the clear hypothesis, the method through which research was conducted allowed much room for participant opinions and descriptions of lived experiences. Data obtained from previous Gates Camp counselors

informs the recommendations given to Gates Camp in regard to increasing staff retention rates.

It is fair to assume that the population of individuals that work as camp counselors are inherently transitory. There is typically a rather specific time of life during which employees choose to spend summers working at residential camps, as most camp staff members are between 18 and 25 years old (Garst, Browne, & Bialeschki, 2011, p. 81). Gates Camp, like many summer camps, is an emotionally and physically intense environment, with long hours in the out of doors, and a summer-long commitment in exchange for a small financial sum. Therefore, the goal of this research is not overly idealistic. It is understood that the recommendations will most likely only increase the number of returning counselors by a few at best. However, even a modest increase in the number of returning counselors has the potential to drastically and positively impact the camp experience for campers and counselors alike.

Returning counselors improve the quality of programming by building from their prior experiences at camp, by sharing their knowledge of the camp environment with new staff, and by participating in and carrying on positive camp culture and traditions. Additionally, returning staff have the potential for “greater intensity of on-going contact and relationship continuity” (Henderson, Bialeschiki, Scanlin, Thurber, Whitaker, & Marsh, 2007) with campers, which, if achieved appropriately, can positively impact a young person’s

development, and further the aims outlined within the positive youth development framework.

This research is meant to provide the field of youth development, and camp settings more specifically, with a framework and recommendations to support their staff retention rates in order to improve the quality of camp programming within a positive youth development framework.

### **Case Study Introduction.**

The umbrella organization, Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Denver, includes 15 clubs located in the Metro Denver area. Gates Camp operates as an entity within this broader organization, however, its structure, culture and environment sets it apart from the other clubs in BGCMD. Gates Camp shares the same mission as BGCMD, which is, “to empower every Club member, through safe and impactful experiences, to: graduate high school with a plan for college or career, contribute to their community and live a healthy life” (Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Denver, 2016). It costs only two dollars a year to become a member of BGCMD, (Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Denver, 2016), and although Gates Camp requires campers to be between eight and 13 years old, youth can become a BGCMD member as early as six years old, and may be a member until they turn 18.

Of the 15 clubs operated by BGCMD, nine locations are freestanding clubs, and six locations are based in schools. Gates Camp is the only freestanding summer camp within

BGCMD and is located in Ward, Colorado, which is about two hours outside of Denver.

The work and expertise of the clubs in urban areas vary slightly from that of Gates Camp.

Because the clubs operate as an afterschool choice for youth all year long, they offer programs geared towards academics, career development, leadership and character development as well as healthy lifestyles (Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Denver, 2016).

Gates Camp “offers Boys & Girls Club members a chance to experience new activities, learn a variety of new skills, and try new behaviors. Campers have the opportunity to make deep connections with both nature and dedicated staff” (Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Denver, 2016). Camp staff are trained in a variety of activities, including rock climbing, canoeing, archery, nature games, primitive skills and challenge course facilitation.

Additionally, counselors receive training in group and behavior management, as well as positive youth development strategies.

Youth that attend Gates Camp must be members of a Boys & Girls Club. It costs only 10 dollars for a week at Gates Camp, making BGCMD and Gates Camp accessible to youth who might not be able to pay the less than \$100 to over \$1,500 (American Camp Association, 2017) that it costs for a typical week of residential summer camp. In an effort to serve as many BGCMD members as possible, Gates Camp is organized into eight, one week sessions. Youth from each of the 15 BGCMD clubs sign up for one session of camp, where they are put into cabin groups with kids from clubs other than their own. Each session is gendered, and the sessions alternate between all boy and all girl weeks (i.e. week

one is a girls' week, week two is a boys' week, etc.). There are seven cabins that house 10 campers each, with two counselors assigned to each cabin group. Depending upon the summer, there are typically a varying number of extra counselors, sometimes in charge of teaching specific activities, and other times responsible for being a "floater" and attending to extraneous details that come up in day-to-day operations. In the kitchen, there is one head cook, an assistant cook and a dishwasher. Gates Camp has one on-site healthcare provider to take care of medical issues that arise for both staff and campers, and one nurse practitioner that spends only a day onsite to complete a health check for each camper at the beginning of every week. There is an administrative team made up of two head counselors, (one male, one female) an assistant director, and a director. An administration team in Denver, which includes the Director of Healthy Lifestyles, has the ultimate decision-making power regarding camp regulations and major decisions. The full staff typically fluctuates between 21 and 28 individuals, with an almost equal split of male and female members. Counselors typically come from all over the United States, and have varying backgrounds, experiences working with youth, and outlooks on the camp experience. There are typically one or two counselors per summer who were once BGCMD members, and only rarely are there counselors on staff that went through the Counselor in Training (CIT) program at Gates Camp.

The CIT program at Gates Camp is designed for youth leaders in BGCMD clubs to have an opportunity to practice leadership skills at camp. These youths are between 14 and 18

years old, while counselors at Gates Camp range from 19 to over 30 years old. The CIT program typically serves around six female and often fewer male youth leaders. The male CITs go to camp on boys' weeks, and the female CITs go to camp on girls' weeks, which means that each CIT spends a total of four weeks onsite per summer camp season.

Gates Camp is located on 80 acres of wilderness at the end of a mile and half dirt road. Camp is situated at an elevation of 9,450 feet. The closest town with a grocery store is 20 minutes away by car, and the next city is 45 minutes away. During the week, counselors are with youth up to 22 hours of the day. Campers arrive at camp on Monday morning from Denver, and leave camp on Friday afternoon right after lunch. After cleaning camp on Friday, counselors have the weekend off, and are expected to return to camp on Sunday afternoon. Because they come from all over the US, typically only a few counselors have cars, so there is usually much carpooling and time spent with one another on the weekends. Every Sunday a council ceremony is held, where counselors are invited to reflect and share their thoughts on a prompt. The ceremony is an opportunity for counselors to speak and listen from the heart, and in so doing, work towards creating an empathetic, supportive camp community. Because of these environmental and programmatic factors, camp is typically an intense social experience for staff members.

**Literature Review**

The literature used to support this research is of two main categories, positive youth development within summer camp settings, and organizational management and retention concepts. I contextualize the research by providing a brief outline of the positive youth development framework, and the way camp programs typically work to promote positive youth development ideals, particularly with regard to the youth-adult relationship. I then discuss organizational development concepts regarding organizational culture building and staff development.

**Positive Youth Development in Summer Camp Settings.**

The positive youth development framework was originally introduced as an alternative to an observed trend in the field of prevention science. Programs in the prevention science framework put emphasis on determining risk and protective factors in adolescent risk behavior. Such programs were criticized for focusing too much on adolescent problems, with not enough attention paid to youth strengths. Positive youth development works to emphasize positive aspects of a youth's identity as they develop, rather than focusing primarily on analyzing deficits (Shek, Sun, & Merrick, 2012). The PYD approach "begins with a vision of a fully able child eager to explore the world, gain competence, and acquire the capacity to contribute importantly to the world" (Damon, 2004, p. 15). Ultimately, PYD works to reverse the lens through which youth are typically viewed. Rather than ascribing to the dominant, observed societal narrative of children as a social burden, PYD

sees youth as assets to society, and works to understand and enhance their potential as

social individuals, (Damon, 2004, p.15). “The 5 C’s of Positive Youth Development” has

been used to succinctly convey the goals of the PYD framework. The 5 C’s are:

“competence, confidence, connection, character, caring/compassion” (Zarrett & Lerner,

2008, p. 2). One of the concepts central to the PYD framework is positive youth-adult

relationships. It has been found that “across contexts, relationships with committed, caring

adults are one of the most important assets in adolescents’ lives for promoting thriving or

high levels of PYD and low levels of risk behaviors” (Bowers, Johnson, Warren, Tirrell,

Lerner, 2015, p. 97).

Summer camp settings are typically conducive to the PYD framework and its goals.

Residential summer camps provide immersive experiences, which “allows for the

sustained resetting of negative attitudes and behaviors and the reinforcement of positive

attitudes and behaviors” (Thurber, Scanlin, Scheuler & Henderson, 2007, p. 251). Camp is

typically a setting in which youth have an opportunity to step away from their lives at

home, and into a different self, if they so choose. For many children, camp provides

opportunities to participate in activities not readily available at their homes and schools.

Camp often includes “voluntary, structured activities where intrinsic motivation is high,

and where challenging opportunities and reliable supports are plentiful” (Thurber et al.,

2007, p. 251). Additionally, the American Camp Association (ACA) conducted the

National Youth Development Outcomes study and found that “campers experienced



growth in a wide variety of areas, including self-esteem, peer relationships, independence, adventure and exploration, leadership, environmental awareness, friendship skills, values and decisions, social comfort, and spirituality” (Garst et al., 2011, p.81).

There is typically much emphasis placed on youth-adult relationships within a residential summer camp setting. A study conducted by the ACA and Youth Development Strategies, Inc. (YDSI) in 2004 asked 7,645 boys and girls between the ages of 10 and 18 who were attending one of 80, summer day, or residential camps, questions regarding supportive relationships, safety, youth involvement and skill building at their camp. The study found that 50 percent of the camps had staff to camper ratios of one-to-three, a ratio small enough to allow for “ample opportunities for positive and meaningful interactions with adults” (Garst et al., 2011, p.75). In the same study, “youth campers identified supportive relationships with camp staff as central to quality camp experiences.” (Garst et al., 2011, p. 75). The importance of camper-staff relationships is echoed by Henderson et al. (2007); “relationships, especially with staff, are central components to almost everything that happens in youth organizations” (p. 2).

Boys & Girls Clubs across the nation provide safe spaces for “ongoing, supportive relationships with caring adults and friends that foster a sense of belonging, responsibility, civility and civic engagement” (Boys & Girls Clubs of America, 2016, p. 6). The positive adult interactions available to young people who attend Gates Camp are especially

important, as “many children lack access to these types of [caring, supportive] adults because of fractured families, time constraints, and the erosion of neighborhood ties” (Garst et al., 2011, p.75). One of the populations served by Boys & Girls Clubs across America are “at-risk youth” (Boys & Girls Clubs of the CSRA, 2017), a term with several definitions.

Generally, “at-risk” youth are those living with multiple risk factors; factors that have been shown to be correlated with academic failure and poor health. Such factors include family economic hardship, residential mobility, and being born to teen mothers, among others (Robbins, Stagman & Smith, 2012). The PYD framework, as previously mentioned, is a strength-based model, which looks to increase a youth’s assets to reduce risk behaviors. One such asset is positive adult interactions; “one common protective influence that distinguishes at-risk youth who succeed in avoiding risk behaviors is their bonding to adults and to groups that facilitate successful maturation by providing opportunities for young people to gain a sense of legitimacy” (Development Services Group, Inc., 2014, p. 2).

### **Organizational Culture.**

The utilization of strategies that have been shown to positively impact organizational culture could have an impact on the rate of returning counselors. As author Edgar Shein (2010) argues, culture is simultaneously rigid and ever-changing. He writes, “culture is

constantly reenacted and created by our interactions with others and shaped by our own

behavior...At the same time, culture implies stability and rigidity in the sense that how we are supposed to perceive, feel and act...has been taught to us by our various socialization experiences” (p. 3). In this sense, camp culture typically shifts only slightly each summer. New staff bring unique perspectives, and the more rigid camp structure that exists between years means that there are certain elements of the culture that remain the same every summer. The rigid nature of specific elements of the organizational culture at summer camps offers opportunities for shifts that could improve staff retention rates.

There are a variety of elements of organizational culture have been shown to foster higher employee retention rates. However, to be able to utilize any of the strategies that have been shown as best-practices for building a culture of returning employees, the leadership of the organization must be committed to living into the values they espouse. In fact, organizational culture building is arguably part of what makes someone a leader. Schein (2010) writes, “when we are influential in shaping the behavior and values of others, we think of that as ‘leadership’ and are creating the conditions for a new culture formation” (p.3). Leadership is a key component in both maintaining and shifting organizational culture, in that “companies *can* change their cultures, provided leaders understand that change must start at the top” (Rogers, Meehan & Tanner, 2006, p.3).

Employee buy-in and commitment to the vision of an organization has been shown to be a high predictor of both high-performing organizations as well as an indicator of employee turnover intention. Perhaps the most valuable form of commitment is “*affective commitment*, which entails an acceptance and internalization of the organization’s goals and values, a willingness to exert effort on the organization’s behalf, and an emotional attachment to one’s organization” (Johnson & Chang, 2006, p. 550). Such commitment is one component of high performing organizational cultures in that, “employees think and act like owners, taking personal responsibility for overall business performance, not just their slice of it....People in winning cultures are team players who display high levels of passion and commitment, which usually includes hard work” (Rogers et al., 2006, p.2) On the flip-side of high-performance is the fact that organizational commitment has been shown to have a stronger relationship with turnover intentions than job satisfaction (Shore & Martin, 1989) in that “organizational commitment is critical because it is a proximal antecedent of turnover” (Johnson & Chang, 2006, p. 549).

There are a variety of components of an organizational culture that can impact employee commitment, including developing a strong organizational identity. Mankins (2013) writes, “every high-performing company has a unique identity....These [distinct] characteristics give employees a sense of meaning just from being part of the company” (para. 5). In creating an organizational identity, “traditions also count. Rituals, heroes and language give a company its unique feel” (Rogers et al., 2006, p. 2). Having a strong

organizational identity positively impacts the hiring process, in that “a distinct personality can help a company attract people who, in turn, embrace its culture” (Rogers et al., 2006, p. 2). This is often referred to as cultural fit, a term that refers to the idea that “employees’ beliefs and behaviors are in alignment with their employer’s core values and company culture” (Gausepohl, 2016, para. 2). The more a staff member’s values align with organizational values, the higher the likelihood that the employee will be satisfied with their job, and the longer they will likely remain with the organization (Gausepohl, 2016).

Open, honest communication, as well as employee participation in organizational management are two additional components of an organizational culture that correlate with employee buy-in and commitment. In one study, it was found that “the more an organization gives employees the opportunity to voice dissatisfaction over aspects of their work in order to change dissatisfying work situations, the greater the likelihood that its employees will remain with the organization” (Spencer, 1986, p. 498). This sort of feedback, and sharing of concerns fits with Kim’s (2002) finding that, “enhancing individuals’ perceptions of empowerment and fair treatment may intensify affective reactions toward work and, ultimately, reduce rates of turnover and absenteeism” (p. 232). Beyond reducing employee retention rate, honesty within all organizational interactions, both internal to the company, and external is one characteristic of a culture of high-performance (Mankins, 2013).

Finally, Mankins (2013) notes that one of the attributes of a strong organizational culture is collaboration; “there’s recognition that best ideas come from the exchange and sharing of ideas between individuals and teams” (para. 8). This sentiment is echoed by Rogers et al. (2006) in that, “the strongest cultures bind people together across both hierarchy and geography, guiding them to make the right decisions and advance the business without explicit direction” (p. 2). Ultimately, organizational culture can have a positive impact on staff retention rates through strong leadership, a clear organizational image, and the development of a culture of open communication and collaboration.

### **Staff Development.**

Closely tied to organizational culture building is staff development, since a culture of staff retention is only useful if the staff who return are skilled and competent individuals. High-quality training and ongoing staff development activities are crucial to successful, quality programming. Particularly at summer camps, where staff members often have varying backgrounds, ideologies, and experience working with youth, training is of utmost importance. The success of the program, particularly in terms of realizing PYD aims, often comes down to the quality of the staff training. Huebner (2003) writes that youth workers, “are the front line of the program and the front door to the agency. The task of defining the work of youth development and the processes for getting it done begins with staff” (p. 206). Indeed, “staff must understand positive youth development if they are to be

successful in helping young people. Thus, they need to go through training to learn or reinforce this knowledge about development” (Henderson et al., 2007, p.2).

Staff training programs are used to both pass on institutional knowledge to new members and prepare individuals to establish norms with campers that are in-line with institutional norms. Camp norms are established through “staff recruitment and training programs that teach staff how to model the camp’s desired norms” (Garst et al., 2011, p.77). In this sense, returning staff are valuable mentors and facilitators of the training process, in that they have experience working with the specific population of youth that arrive at camp, as well as experience with the camp culture.

One particularly useful tool that can be used during staff training is team building activities, which, if used appropriately, “maximize both individual and group productivity through the attainment of organizational goals, and also it is meant to integrate the lower level staff and top management in organizations so they can work more effectively” (Omuya, Kungu, Mulongo & Ong’anya, 2011, p 49). Additionally, team building has been shown to bring about “harmonious relations among employees [while] bringing out the creative talents of its members” (Omuya et al., 2011, p 50). These sorts of activities ultimately help build a culture of collaboration and teamwork, thus contributing to an organizational culture of success.

Employee satisfaction and commitment to an organization may also be impacted by opportunities for growth and advancement. It was found that “when it comes to ranking the top turnover triggers... Generation X and Millennial employees placed ‘lack of career progress’ first” (Schwartz, Kwan & Liakopoulos, 2011). Providing leadership positions within the organization’s structure may compel staff to improve their performance, and may bolster their overall commitment to the organization. Opportunities for feedback within a culture of open and honest communication may give staff members the tools they need to progress into those positions, and in so doing, strengthen the organization’s internal leadership.

### **Summary.**

Retaining effective camp counseling staff for more than one year of work is a critical element in the realization of PYD aims in a camp setting because of the importance of youth-adult relationships. Two main themes inform this conclusion, the first being that there is often an opportunity for returning counselors to connect and continue to positively interact with youth who return to camp. Such interactions have been shown to be the cornerstone of positive and effective PYD experiences for youth at summer camp. Secondly, returning staff help promote and teach positive camp norms and culture. There is reason to believe that increasing the number of effective returning staff will increase the knowledge and lived reality of positive camp cultural norms among staff members, and therefore, the way that such norms are role modeled to the campers.



There are a variety of factors that may impact the likelihood that a staff member will return to work the following summer, particularly in regard to organizational culture. The strongest organizational cultures are those that have a strong identity, foster a sense of collaboration among staff, value open, honest feedback and communication, and give employees opportunities to feel that they have ownership in the organizational mission and management. These characteristics often lend themselves to staff members' organizational commitment, and thus retention. Staff training and development are important components of building a strong culture of capable employees.

### **Methodology**

The case study was used to understand a specific situation, in order to draw conclusions that could positively impact camp settings similar to Gates Camp. Data were collected via a survey taken by Gates Camp counselors (Appendix A). Primary data, and my experience as a staff member, were used to contextualize the case study, and secondary literature was used to inform recommendations that could have an impact on employee retention rates.

Survey participants were former Gates Camp counselors, with target participants being summer staff who worked at Gates Camp between 2011 and 2016, as such a timeframe allowed for a large enough pool of participants. While changes in Gates Camp leadership occurred over the five summers included in this research, such shifts were not directly

accounted for within the study. There was no question on the survey regarding the year that participants worked at Gates Camp, as due to the size of the camp staff, it might have compromised the anonymity of the study. Because of this, it may be possible that participants shared the link to the survey with counselors not within this target population.

After attaining an Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, (Appendix B), surveys were sent out electronically, both via email, as well as private Facebook messages, depending upon the individual. Because of my relationship to the previous three years of staff, I hypothesized that there would be a higher survey completion rate if I sent surveys in private messages to counselors with whom I had a personal connection. I sent electronic surveys via email to those that I did not know personally. Gates Camp administrators gave me access to contact information for individuals on Gates Camp staffs from 2011 through 2014, (Appendix C) as those were staff with whom I did not have a relationship.

The survey was completely anonymous, so although many participants had a personal connection to me, there is no reason to believe that this connection affected the data that were collected. The survey link included a feature that did not allow individuals to take the survey more than once, therefore eliminating the possibility of multiple survey responses from a single individual. Additionally, the survey recruitment text, as well as the survey itself, included language intended to make clear the fact that this study was in regard to cabin counselors specifically, and was not intended to capture data from individuals serving in other camp positions. However, although as intentionally clear as possible, it is

impossible to determine whether all participants are from this target population, as sharing of the link was easy for participants, and there was no question on the survey that explicitly asked for participants to identify themselves with a camp position title.

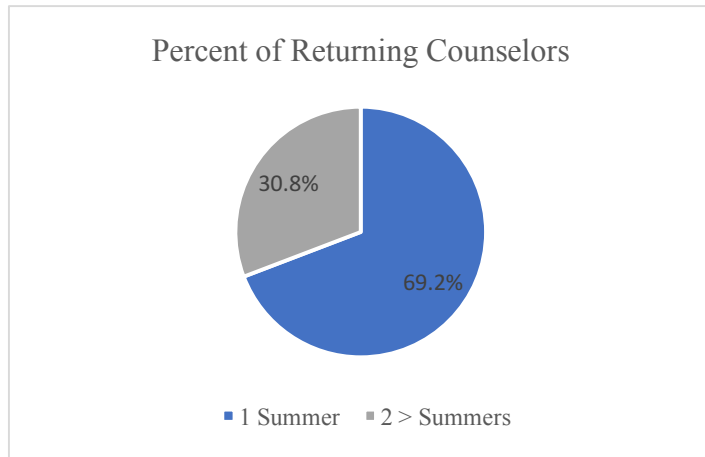
The survey was composed of 11 questions, made up of multiple choice and open-ended questions (Appendix A). It was completed by 39 individuals who previously worked as a counselor at Gates Camp. There were approximately 83 individuals on the counseling staff over the five years in question, (considering returning staff, and counting them as one staff member, rather than counting them per summer). Therefore, the 39 respondents make up approximately 47 percent of the entire counseling staff over five years. Data was analyzed through the lens of the three components of the hypothesis; pay rate, time of life, and camp experience, and open responses were primarily coded according to words that fit into these three themes.

## **Findings**

Data was analyzed through the three lens of the hypothesis, as mentioned. Trends in Gates Camp retention rates were identified in five main categories: general findings, time of life findings, camp fit findings, organizational improvements, and organizational strengths. Pay rate considerations occur throughout each section, particularly the organizational improvement section.

**General Findings.**

Of the respondents, 30.8 percent had returned to camp for more than one summer, indicating that almost 70 percent of the counselors who took the survey had been to camp



*Figure 1*

for only one summer (Fig. 1). The program documents obtained from camp administrators were used purely to gain contact information for previous counselors, rather than verify the rate at which counselors return to work for more than one summer.

This was because the system used to organize staff files, particularly those before 2015, is unrefined, so accurately assessing the percent of returning staff per summer is difficult. It is assumed that survey respondents are an accurate representation of the counseling staff as a whole. Their responses indicate a significant trend of counselors not returning for more than one summer of camp.

Counselors were asked in the survey whether they were considering returning to camp for another season of work. It is quite possible, and indeed, probable, that counselors' responses are in part a function of how long ago they worked at camp, however, because the data is not disaggregated by the year the counselor worked, (to protect anonymity) it is not possible to get a sense of the importance of time within this measure. Regardless, analyzing responses to the question of whether individuals were considering returning provided insight into patterns of retention. Of the individuals who worked at camp for only one summer, 29.6 percent

are planning on returning to camp, or are maybe planning on returning to camp. This means that of the staff who have been to camp for only one summer, 70.4 percent have

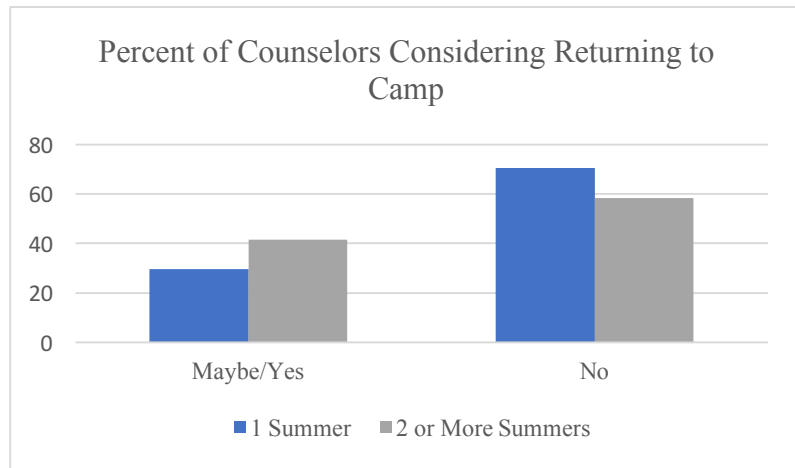


Figure 2

no intention to return as a counselor (Fig. 2). Within the category of counselors who have been to camp for two or more summers, 41.6 percent are planning, or are maybe planning on returning to Gates Camp as a counselor. This signifies that of the staff that have been at camp for two or more summers, 58.4 percent do not plan on returning as a counselor (Fig. 2). The data indicates that counselors who return to camp for two or more summers are 12

percentage points more likely to consider returning to camp for another summer than those counselors who have been to camp for only one summer.

### **Time of Life Findings.**

The age at which a staff member began working as a counselor is significant in terms of assessing their likelihood to return to camp for more than one summer. The survey asked counselors to report the age at which they were first hired in a closed question format. It has been my experience that most, if not all, of the counselors I have worked with at Gates Camp have been somehow involved in higher education at some point in their lives. Because of this observation, the age brackets were determined using the typical age at which individuals engage with a system of higher education. Counselors under 20 have typically recently graduated from high school, counselors 20-21 are often in the middle of their pursuit of an undergraduate college degree, and individuals that are 22 or older are usually either done with, or close to finishing up their undergraduate degree. Data indicated that the largest age bracket consists of counselors who started working at Gates Camp between the ages of 22 and 25. It is also the age bracket with the least number of counselors who have worked for two or more summers. Data were further disaggregated to better understand the reasons these counselors gave as to why they did not consider returning to camp. The reason given by the most counselors in this age bracket was “work conflicts” which 56 percent cited, followed closely by “pursuing other summer opportunities” and “pay rate too low” each reason cited by 44 percent of counselors in this

category. The age bracket with the second smallest percent of the total staff population, counselors who started working under the age of 20, has the largest number of individuals who have worked two or more summers (Table 1).

<b>Age Bracket</b>	<b>Percent of Total Survey Respondents</b>	<b>Percent of Age Bracket Working One Summer</b>	<b>Percent of Age Bracket Working Two or More Summers</b>
<b>Under 20</b> <i>(9 Respondents)</i>	23.1	33.3	66.7
<b>20-21</b> <i>(12 Respondents)</i>	30.8	75	25
<b>22-25</b> <i>(13 Respondents)</i>	33.3	92.3	7.7
<b>26 or Older</b> <i>(5 Respondents)</i>	12.8	60	40

*Table 1:  
Break down of tendencies to work more than one summer, by age bracket*

**Camp Fit Findings.**

Participants were asked to rank their opinions of statements on a five-point scale from “strongly disagree to “strongly agree”. The statements considered both feelings and opinions that could be measured prior to counselors’ experience at camp, as well as their feelings and opinions regarding their experiences during the camp season (Appendix A).

The “strongly agree” responses were then disaggregated by the number of summers a counselor worked at Gates Camp.

	<b>Similar Values</b>	<b>Useful in Career Goals</b>	<b>Experience Working with Youth</b>	<b>Experience with Similar Demographic</b>
<b>2 or More Summers</b>	58.3	8.3	41.6	41.6
<b>One Summer</b>	76.2	40.7	48.1	25.9

*Table 2:  
Break down of percent of counselors who “strongly agree” with statements regarding experiences prior to camp season*

In terms of questions regarding attitudes and outlooks of counselors that could be measured prior to the camp experience, (Table 2) counselors who returned for two or more summers had stronger rates of agreement than counselors who had worked at Gates Camp for one summer to only one question; having experience with a demographic of individuals like those served by Gates Camp. Counselors who returned for two or more summers had a significantly lower rate of agreement than their one summer counterparts regarding whether they believed that the camp experience would be useful in their future career goals. This finding is somewhat counterintuitive, since it indicates that counselors who spend more time at camp are less likely to think that the experience is useful in securing future employment. This finding may inadvertently highlight an important reason as to why counselors choose to return to camp; that individuals who choose to return to camp



for more than one season of work often have a passion for camp that is stronger than the usefulness of the experience in future career goals.

	<b>Supported by Staff Community</b>	<b>Supported and Valued by Supervisor</b>	<b>Autonomy in Role</b>
<b>2 or More Summers</b>	58.3	33.3	66.7
<b>One Summer</b>	70.4	74.1	63

*Table 3:  
Break down of percent of counselors who “strongly agree” with statements regarding the camp experience*

In terms of questions regarding their direct experiences working at camp (Table 3), counselors who worked for two or more summers had a higher rate of agreement than counselors who worked at camp for one summer in terms of feeling that they had autonomy in their role, but had lower rates of agreement in terms of feeling supported by their staff community and feeling supported and valued by their supervisor. The rate at which counselors who returned to work at camp for two or more summers agreed that they felt supported and valued by their supervisor was 25 percentage points lower than their agreement with being supported by staff community, and 40.8 percentage points lower than the rate at which counselors who worked for one summer agreed that they were supported and valued by their supervisor. This might indicate that feeling supported by

fellow staff members is a stronger indicator of whether an individual will want to return to camp than is a supportive relationship with a supervisor.

In terms of having autonomy in their role, it is logical that counselors who worked at camp for two or more summers felt more autonomy in their role than counselors who worked for one summer. The structure of Gates Camp is such that the more comfortable staff are in their role, the more autonomy and creativity they can leverage. Camp activities and programming is taught to new staff with the expectation that as they become more comfortable in their role they will begin to experiment and find new, creative ways of facilitating activities with youth. In this sense, the more experience a counselor has, the more flexibility and autonomy they can embrace. Additionally, as counselors become more confident and autonomous in their roles, the support of a supervisor may be less important to their experience than counselors who are new to the camp, and need more supervisor support.

**Organizational**

**Improvements.**

Through open-ended questions, counselors were asked about their reasons for considering returning, or not returning to work as a counselor.

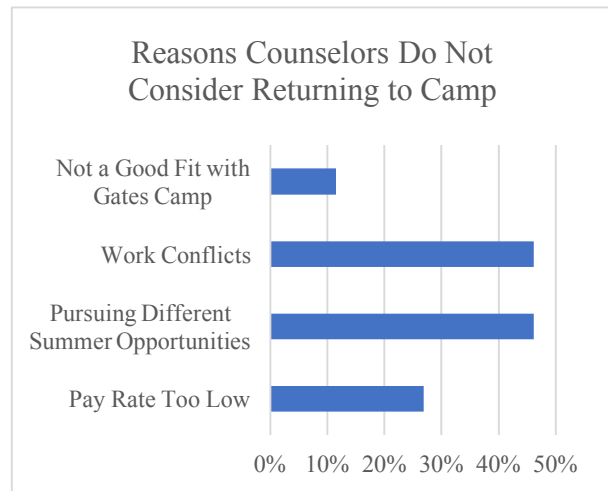


Figure 3: Reasons to not return to camp, given by counselors who do not consider returning

The 26 participants who were not considering returning gave reasons that fit within four

broad categories: pay rate is too low, pursuing different summer opportunities, work conflicts, and not a good fit at camp. Some counselors cited more than one of these categories in their response (Fig. 3). Work conflicts and pursuing different summer opportunities were cited by the most (12 survey participants) as reasons they choose to not return to camp, while not a good fit with Gates Camp was cited by the least number of

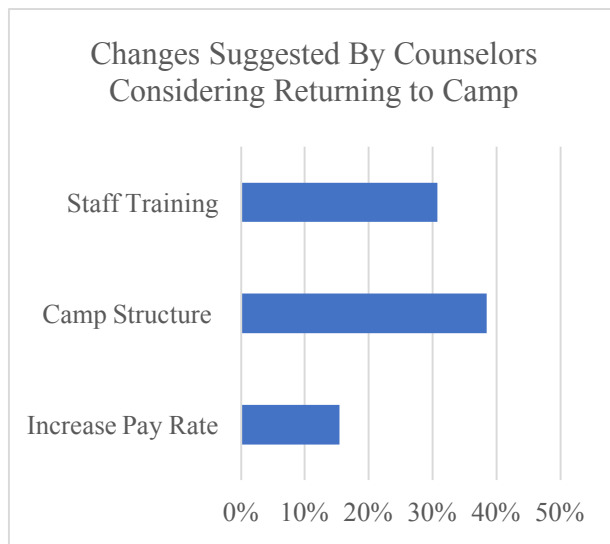


Figure 4: Suggestions for camp changes, given by counselors considering returning to camp

counselors (3 survey participants).

Through an open-ended question, the survey asked counselors to share what, if anything, they would change about their experience as a staff member (Fig. 4).

One of the reasons for the addition of this question on the survey was to investigate whether counselors who are considering returning to camp have suggestions for

improvements that mirrored reasons individuals choose to not return to camp. Of the counselors considering returning, 15.4 percent (2 survey participants) mentioned increasing pay rate as something that would improve their camp experience.

Two themes beyond the scope of this research emerged from staff who consider returning to camp. The first, cited by 38.5 percent of counselors (5 survey participants) who expressed interest in returning, was a desire for various changes within the camp structure, from increased resources to offer different programming, to a request for increased time with the same youth. The second theme that emerged from staff considering returning was a desire for different or increased staff training, expressed by 30.8 percent of these counselors (4 survey participants). This finding is noteworthy, as staff training is one of the important determinants of whether PYD aims are accomplished in camp settings (Henderson et al., 2007). Further investigation should be put into this theme as soon as possible, because the individuals who expressed such desires are those that may be interested in employment in the summer 2017 season.

**Organizational Strengths.**

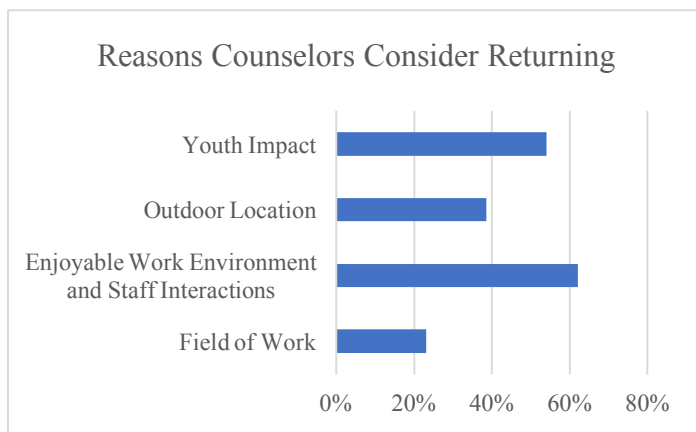


Figure 5: Reasons to return, given by counselors who are considering returning. Percentages related to number of counselors who mentioned category (some fit more than one)

While themes as to why individuals choose to not return to camp are important, it is also useful to examine the positive aspects of the camp experience for counselors. Doing so illuminates why staff consider returning, and the strengths of

the camp experience that could potentially be enhanced to increase counselor retention rates. Four main themes emerged as to why counselors consider returning: counselors enjoy feeling that they are positively impacting the lives of campers, the location or being out of doors is important to the counselor, interactions with staff and the work environment was enjoyable, and skills gained from being a counselor are useful to their field of work (Fig. 5).

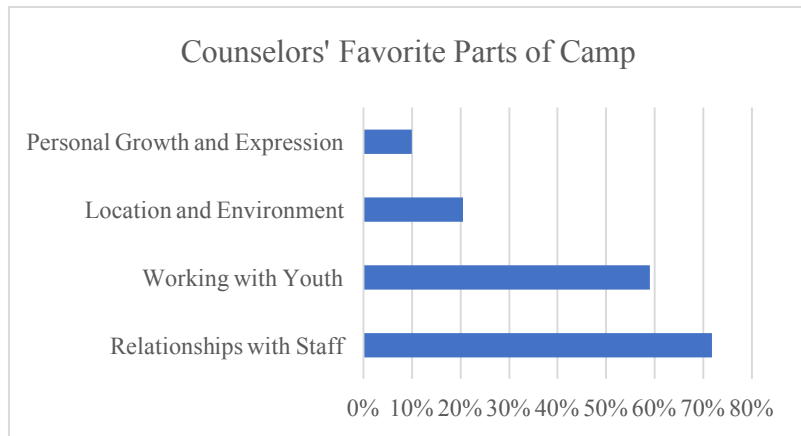


Figure 6

In terms of other strengths that came up in the survey, counselors' favorite aspects of camp were: relationships with other staff members, working with youth, the location and natural environment,

and personal growth, expression, or development (Fig. 6).

Working as a counselor at Gates Camp is a special experience for many counselors. Survey participants had many positive things to say about their experiences working on the staff, including "It is an amazing camp and I feel fortunate to have been part of it", "camp was an amazing experience that I will forever be grateful for. The memories are everlasting,"

and “[camp] broadened my horizon of what it means to work with kids and what I want for myself in the future”.

## **Discussion**

The hypothesis that informed this research was ultimately somewhat correct. Although each element of the hypothesis was mentioned at least once as a reason counselors choose to not return to camp, one was much more heavily cited than the others. Of the hypothesized reasons, (that the pay is too low, counselors’ time of life is not conducive to having summers available to work at camp, or they leave camp feeling burned out or unhappy with the camp experience overall) reasons related to time of life conflicts were cited most often (see Fig. 3). The time of life conflicts that were cited by counselors were of different natures, but were categorized as “work conflicts” and “pursuing different summer opportunities” and in total made up 70 percent of the reasons that counselors gave for not returning to camp.

Four additional major themes related to counselor retention rates clearly emerge from the data. They are:

1. Counselors who have worked at camp for two or more summers are 12 percentage points more likely to consider returning to camp than counselors who have worked at camp for one summer.
2. Counselors who started working at Gates Camp when they were between 22 and 25 years old are the largest age bracket of counselors, however, are the least likely to

have worked for more than one summer. Counselors who started working at Gates Camp when they were under 20 years old make up the second smallest age bracket of counselors, however, are the most likely to return for more than one summer of work.

3. Staff culture is extremely important to the overall Gates Camp experience for counselors. It is counselors' favorite part of camp, one of the main reasons they consider returning, and counselors who consider returning to camp felt strongly that they were supported by their Gates Camp staff community.
4. Counselors who are, or are maybe considering returning to work at camp mentioned shifts in camp structure and staff training as things they would change about the camp experience.

The first theme indicates that once counselors return for a second summer of work, they are more likely to return to camp again. It is possible that the counselors who choose to return to camp are those that fit into the camp culture, and thrive in the intense Gates Camp work environment. They gain a sense of commitment to the organizational mission, and may experience a sense of job satisfaction that makes them more likely to return to camp again. Interestingly, the counselors who worked two or more summers at Gates Camp did not strongly agree that the camp values matched their own values at a rate higher than their one summer counterparts (Table 2). They did, however, have a higher rate of agreement with the statement regarding having autonomy in their role than counselors who worked

for one summer (Table 3). This suggests that the sense of organizational commitment second summer counselors experience is more related to the sense of autonomy they have in their role than it is related to the values they share with Gates Camp.

The second theme, that of the age range in which counselors are typically hired, in comparison to the percentage at which they work more than one summer, or consider returning, has interesting implications. The reasons that counselors in the 22 to 25 year old age bracket gave as to why they were not considering returning to camp were all generally related to entering the working world, and needing to make more money than a counseling position at Gates Camp pays. This finding has strong implications for change in hiring structure and staff composition, as discussed further in the next section.

The third theme, that of the importance of staff culture to the overall camp experience for counselors, is indicative of a great organizational strength. It indicates that a culture of teamwork and collaboration has been fostered in the organization, an element associated with high-performing organizations. As mentioned in the data, counselors who had worked at Gates Camp for two or more summers strongly agreed that they were supported by their peers at a higher rate than they strongly agreed that they were supported by their supervisor. This potentially illustrates a culture of employee buy-in and participative management that helps foster organizational commitment. The team-building that takes place throughout staff training, and periodically throughout the summer may help break



down the barriers between hierarchical positions, thus contributing to an employee culture of support and collaboration. Culture-building activities that occur every weekend, such as Council, work to foster a culture of open, honest, safe communication, which additionally supports organizational commitment and employee buy-in. The intensity and closeness of employee relationships may also influence a counselor's decision to return to camp, in that if a counselor's friends on the staff choose to return to work as counselors, they may be more likely to consider returning to camp.

The fourth theme is closely related to the third theme, in that the culture of open, honest communication could be utilized to better understand, and implement counselors' recommendations for shifts in structure and staff training. Using counselors' suggestions would additionally work to increase commitment and sense of ownership of the organization, thus potentially impacting retention rates.

### **Gates Camp Recommendations**

The recommendations presented to Gates Camp address and build from the themes that emerged from the data. They are meant to be specific to Gates Camp, provide insight to existing strengths in the program, and give direction to future efforts aimed at bolstering staff retention rates.

The first theme, that counselors who return once are more likely to continue to return, may indicate that the biggest challenge is in getting counselors to return to camp for their second season of work. Therefore, the recommendation is in relation to capitalizing on opportunities to retain individuals for longer than one summer of work. As mentioned in the literature review, opportunities for growth within the camp system may make staff more inclined to return for a second season of work. Naturally there are only so many different roles that can be implemented in a camp setting to provide additional opportunities for staff career growth, however, in examining the camp structure, there may be space for the creation of more leadership opportunities for returning staff. By giving returning staff specific leadership roles, not only do returning staff have an opportunity to build their own capacities, but first year staff have individuals to look up to both in terms of teaching camp culture, and as role models for future growth within the camp system.

Additionally, the existing culture of open, honest communication lends itself to staff check-ins. While mid-season and end of season reviews have traditionally been part of the camp structure, it may be useful to increase the number of formal or informal check-ins with individual counselors throughout the summer. If leadership shows a genuine interest in, and commitment to implementing changes suggested by employees, organizational commitment could be increased. Counselors may be inclined to return for another season of work if they notice that their suggestions for improving the camp experience inform camp changes.

This recommendation further extends to the fourth theme, of counselors offering suggestions that would improve their experience on the Gates Camp staff. Reaching out to counselors who are returning this year before the season begins to ask for feedback and recommendations may bolster a sense of ownership and commitment to camp. It is important that camp leadership seriously take into consideration any suggestions that are made so as to engender a true sense of participative management and co-ownership, as well as demonstrate that administrators are committed to the camp culture they espouse.

The next recommendation in relation to the second theme is to shift hiring practices. Data shows that counselors who are first hired under the age of 20 are most likely to work more than one summer. Retention rates are likely to rise by hiring more first year counselors in the 19 to 20 year-old age bracket. There are a host of factors to take into consideration with this recommendation. Younger counselors may be less experienced working with youth than their older co-workers, and in my experience, they are generally less mature than older counselors. Therefore, shifting patterns of hiring should occur slowly and overtime. Theoretically, if a concentrated effort is made to hire three or four new counselors under the age of 20 for the next few years, and those counselors decide to stay for more than one summer, as the data suggests they will be more likely to do, then they will grow up in the organization and become mentors to the next round of new, young hires. This slow shift in hiring has the potential to create a core of experienced counselors at a variety of ages.

The CIT program could be a place from which to recruit new counselors, in that youth who go through the CIT program are assumed to have a strong sense of the camp experience, and an intrinsic desire to return as leaders. However, as it stands now, very few CITs become counselors. Therefore, before the CIT program can be used to recruit new counselors, it will be important to work to clarify the goals and purpose of the program. If the purpose of the program is to help young leaders develop the skills and interest in the camp experience that will lead them to become counselors, it is not achieving success. However, if the purpose of the program is to give young leaders an opportunity to enjoy the camp experience for a few years after they turn 13, the program may in fact be succeeding. It would be useful to spend time examining the CIT program, and creating structure that aligns with the clarified goals and purpose of the program.

I recommend that the structure and priorities of the CIT program be shifted to include opportunities for CITs to experience youth-worker skill development activities coupled with increased responsibility. Not only should CITs be viewed as capable individuals (in keeping with PYD aims), but they should also be valued as integral to the camp structure because of the knowledge of the camp experience they bring to their work. By valuing their role and giving them opportunities to develop and expand upon their skills, it may be possible to begin to shift the goal of the program towards generating capable, motivated individuals interested in joining the Gates Camp staff as a counselor.

The data verified the theme I noticed throughout the conversations I had with counselors prior to this study; being a part of the Gates Camp staff community is a powerful experience for many counselors. Working as a counselor at Gates Camp is a truly special experience for many individuals, as evidenced by survey participants' positive statements regarding their time on staff. Employee relationships tend to be extremely strong and deep, as the immersive camp setting offers opportunities for staff members to connect with one another as co-workers, roommates, and friends. These types of opportunities are often harder to find in other business-oriented work environments.

While literature offers insight into components of organizational culture that increase retention rates in business settings, less research has been done on the components of an organizational culture in seasonal work or summer camp settings that have the same effect. It can be assumed that the supportive, close-knit staff culture at Gates Camp is important because of its value in Gates Camp's organizational identity and the fact that collaboration is an integral component of a culture of high-performance, as discussed in literature related to business. However, because of the lack of research on the organizational culture of camp settings, literature offers little by way of specific recommendations or considerations for cultural shifts in a camp setting. Because of this, the recommendation offered to Gates Camp is not particularly drastic. Because of the strength of employee relationships, and the clear appreciation of the existing camp culture, the recommendation is to continue

implementing the components of staff culture building that already exist. Further informal research could be conducted and implemented throughout the summer season to expand upon the aspects of culture-building that counselors find especially impactful.

## **Conclusion**

This study is meant to inform a small camp community at Gates Camp with specific recommendations to increase camp counselor retention rates to improve program impact within a PYD context. Therefore, while recommendations may be transferrable to camps of similar ilk, it is not possible to generalize the results and recommendations to a broader, more national camp context.

The study had two main limitations. First, the research measured retention rates without consideration of the quality of staff returning. It was assumed that counselors would only be hired back if they met stringent hiring criteria. Secondly, the study only considered why counselors do or do not choose to return to Gates Camp. While suggestions were made by survey participants as to how the camp experience might be improved for staff members, this project did not offer specific recommendations that took into consideration such suggestions from staff.

The study identified three opportunities for further research. The first is to investigate counselors' skill development in order to acquire a better sense of the skills that are gained

through the camp counselor experience. This exploration could be useful to both improve Gates Camp hiring practices as well as contribute to overall camp literature. Secondly, it is suggested that the goals of the current CIT program are examined to better clarify and explicate the purpose of the program in order to align its structure with its goals. This study could take into consideration the CIT program as a leadership development program within the broader BGCMD system. Finally, informal or formal research could be conducted on the components of staff culture that positively impact the Gates Camp community, and which may be specific to camp or seasonal work environments.

Improving staff retention rates is in the best interest of the Gates Camp community, as returning staff improve the camp experience for both staff and youth alike. Experienced returning staff members improve staff training, camp culture maintenance and transmission, and make the attainment of PYD aims more realistic.

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## Appendix

### Appendix A Survey Information

#### Recruitment Text:



Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is Molly McPhee and I am a graduate student conducting a study in the Community Development and Planning Department at Clark University on camp counselor retention rate factors and implications using Gates Camp as a case study. As a researcher, I am unaffiliated with Gates Camp. My research supervisor is Laurie Ross, Associate Professor of Community Development and Planning at Clark University.

The study is looking for individuals who have worked at Gates Camp or other residential summer camps for one or more summers, and are willing to volunteer to take a survey that includes questions about their experience at camp, and reasons for returning, or not returning to work as a counselor at the same camp. The survey should take no more than twenty minutes. The survey is anonymous and responses cannot be tracked back to individual participants. Participation is voluntary. Any question may be left unanswered, and the respondent can drop out of the survey at any time.

This study could result in suggestions being made regarding strategies to increase summer camp counselor retention rates, specifically using Gates Camp as a case study. Please let me know if you have any questions about the study or your potential participation in it. Thank you for your time.

My contact information is: Molly McPhee, (603) 531-0905, [mmcphee@clarku.edu](mailto:mmcphee@clarku.edu).

My research supervisor's contact information is: Laurie Ross, Associate Professor of Community Development and Planning at Clark University, (508) 793-7642, [lross@clarku.edu](mailto:lross@clarku.edu).

Best,  
Molly McPhee

INTRO Thank you for voluntarily taking the time to complete this anonymous survey! The purpose of this survey is to gather information about factors that influence a camp counselor's decision to return or not return to work at a residential summer camp. This study could result in suggestions being made regarding strategies to increase camp counselor retention rates, specifically using Gates Camp as a case study. As a researcher, I am unaffiliated with Gates Camp. The survey should take no more than twenty minutes of your time. Any answer you provide cannot be traced back to you, and you are welcome to skip questions you would prefer to not answer. Additionally, you may terminate your participation in the survey at any time. Because this survey is anonymous, please do not include any identifying information in your answers. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me, Molly McPhee, MA Community Development and Planning Candidate at Clark University, at [mmcphee@clarku.edu](mailto:mmcphee@clarku.edu). My research supervisor is Laurie Ross, Associate Professor of Community Development and Planning at Clark University, [lross@clarku.edu](mailto:lross@clarku.edu).

Q1 What residential summer camp did you work at?

Q2 How many summers did you work as a counselor at the same residential summer camp?

- One
- Two
- Three
- Four
- Five or more

Q3 How old were you when you first started working at camp?

- 18 or younger
- 19
- 20-21
- 22-25
- 26 or older

Q4 What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Other
- Would prefer to not answer

Q5 Are you planning on returning to work at the same camp next year in the same position?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Q6 If you are not planning on returning to work as a counselor at the same residential summer camp next summer, why not?

Q7 If you are, or are maybe planning on returning to work at the same residential summer camp next summer as a counselor, why?

Q8 What was your favorite part of the camp experience as a staff member?

Q9 Is there anything you would change about the camp experience as a staff member? If so, what?

Q10 Please choose the option that most accurately describes your feelings about the following statements:

<b>The camp's values are my values</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Working at camp will help me achieve future career goals, as I plan to work in a field related to the work I did at camp</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Before working at camp, I had a lot of experience working with youth</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Before working at camp, I had a lot of experience working with youth from a similar demographic as those I worked with at camp</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>I felt supported by my community of staff</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>I felt supported and valued by my supervisor</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>I felt like I had autonomy in my role as a counselor</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q11 Is there anything else you would like to share about your camp experience, or reasons as to why you did, or did not, return to work as a counselor at the same summer camp?

Appendix B  
IRB Survey Approval

From: Human Subjects Research <humansubjects@clarku.edu>  
Subject: RE: McPhee IRB Survey Link  
Date: December 9, 2016 at 10:20:15 AM EST  
To: "McPhee, Molly" <MMcPhee@clarku.edu>

I received word from the IRB that your anonymous survey has been approved. **Research may begin.** This email serves as evidence of that approval; please retain a copy for your records, since a paper copy will not be mailed to you.

If you have questions about this decision, you may email Diane Sainsbury at [humansubjects@clarku.edu](mailto:humansubjects@clarku.edu) or phone Diane at 508.421.3880, and use the IRB protocol #2016-024A.

Regards,  
Diane

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*Diane Sainsbury  
Assistant in OSPR/IRB Coordinator  
Clark University  
950 Main Street  
Worcester, MA 01610  
(508) 421-3880  
Hours: Mon through Friday 9:00am – 1:30pm*

Appendix C  
Gates Camp Study Approval



To Whom It May Concern,

I, D.C. Larrabee, Director at Boys and Girls Clubs of Metro Denver's Gates Camp, approve of Molly McPhee conducting research regarding staff retention rates at Gates Camp. I understand that she will be conducting individual interviews with former staff members; as an organization, we are willing to grant Miss McPhee permission to access and use archived records to reference past staff's personal contact information. Molly has explained the procedures she will be using to keep data confidential, and we feel confident that her procedures are sufficient. I approve of Molly using Gates Camp as a case study, and understand that although she will reference camp in the final report, she will keep all participants' identities confidential.

If you have any questions and/or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me.

Email: [dcl@bgcmd.org](mailto:dcl@bgcmd.org)  
Office: 303-443-7394

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D.C. Larrabee", written over a horizontal line.

D.C. Larrabee – Gates Camp Director