



2013 CCE Summer Internships

CATEGORY ARCHIVES: TRANSFORMING TEENS: BRIEF INTERVENTIONS IN A CAMP SETTING

The True Challenges of Our Job

Posted on **August 13, 2013** by **Natasha**

Opening/closing windows

The hardest job, no doubt about it. It entails injuries such as rope burn, aching head, ripped out earrings. However, on those hot camp days the breeze is the most rewarding.



Skyping with the graduate student (overseeing the project)

Internet connection at camp isn't our best friend. But, when you've got a graduate student waiting to get in contact with you to see how the study is going, you just try and try again.



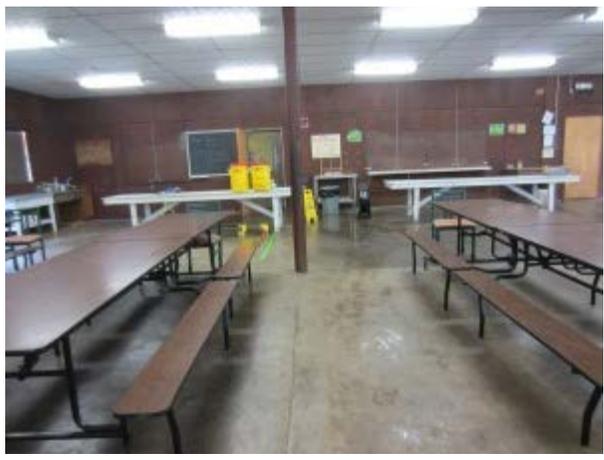
Paper clipping

Fitting a paper clip on a thick stack of paper. The key is organization. After the first three weeks or so we realized paper clips just weren't going to cut it, and we invested in a file folder box.



Hunting for Counselors

As inspired by a popular game known as counselor hunt, where teams (separated by cabins) look for counselors around the camp. Burrow and I played one time. Burrow hid under a cabin and I hid in a tree. But it's as though we played counselor hunt all summer long as we tried to find counselors for various reasons. Sometimes we needed to find a counselor to bring the campers or the CITs over for the studies. We also needed to find counselors to sit in during the writing sessions because campers could not be alone. Or we would have to find counselors who could help us get supplies. Whatever the reason, we spent many times hunting for counselors.



High Ropes Course

Very scary.



Cleaning the Garbage

To keep away the kitties (code word for raccoons). Okay so we could handle this one.



Posted in **Transforming Teens: Brief Interventions in a Camp Setting**

Recruiting Participants and Other Fun Stuff

Posted on **July 24, 2013** by **Natasha**

We are now in our second to last week of camp. It's hard to believe that the internship is coming to an end.

We have been running the social exclusion study every other week with the CITs (counselors in training). The CITs attend camp for two weeks. The first set of CITs came directly after staff week, to attend week 1 and week 2 of camp. Though the CITs come for two weeks, we only need about 4-5 days to run the study, depending on if you add the presentation and debrief to the 4th day of study. Since the professor and graduate student leading the study were making modifications based on the reactions of staff during staff week, we decided to run the study during the CITs second week of training. The study went a lot more smoothly as a result of these modifications. For example, one day we changed a series of 5 mood measures to 3 mood measures, and also spaced them so that they were at least 2 ½ hours apart. This prevented the CITs from becoming frustrated for returning to do so many mood measures in the day. In addition, camp directors were provided with a list of questions, so that they could have a discussion with CITs after each part of the study. These questions would not be a full debrief which could implicate the study, but they provided CITs a chance to process some of their feelings. These two modifications appeared to be very helpful, because when we ran the study with the CITs we had little problems. With the second set of CITs, who came during week 3 and week 4 of camp, we ran the study with them during the second week as well. This was to provide consistency, and because it fit in better with the schedule of the camp.

In addition, each week we have been running the expressive writing study with girls age 10-13. Unfortunately, sitting down and writing for 20 minutes seems a little too much like school to many campers. While with the CITs and staffs the social exclusion study was incorporated into their training with time was set aside for them to participate, for the expressive writing we needed to find a way to get interest in participation. We were luckily able to work with a group of known as the teen adventure program for week 1 and week 2 of camp. But, in addition to these groups,

we only had 1 outside participant each week.

We've been working to creatively attract campers the last few weeks. We started with our poster board. We thought it was cute and might attract girls that age to participate in the project.



— Poster Board

During week 2 of camp, while we still had some girls from the teen adventure program, we tried to offer the study as a class period for regular campers. We showed up for camp registration on Sunday, in an effort to promote the study to girls who might be interested. We thought that by marketing the class with other activities, such as decorating journals, that we might be able to get more participants. However, week 2 was one of the weeks we only had a single participant outside of the teen adventure program. We canceled the class and offered that project to the camper during her break time instead. We did not want her to miss out on participating in a class with other campers.

In speaking with the executive director and the professor working on the project, we came to the decision to offer free camp slushies (typically costing \$1.50) to a camper each day that she participated in the project. We also decided that offering the writing as a class was not a good option because campers would prefer to do more interactive activities, such as critter care, archery, etc. during a class time. Instead, we decided to offer the expressive writing right after lunch. We thought that after lunch time would be an appealing time to have a slushie. Though some campers might not want to miss 20 minutes of break, it seemed like our best option, because campers would not be missing out on other fun activities. We first offered the slushies during week 3 of camp, and we were able to get 5 participants who stuck with the project throughout the week. Now, during week 4 we have been able to get 15 participants who will hopefully continue throughout the week.



— Some of the 15 Participants Writing

We're not sure why we had such a jump in participants from week 3 to week 4. I wouldn't say the weather, because week 3 was uncomfortably hot and I'm sure people could have eaten slushies all day long, while this week is so chilly many of us are wearing sweatshirts. Perhaps it is because we were more enthusiastic and confident in promoting the class on Sunday this week. We also placed an emphasis on the project being for girls this week, so maybe it seemed more exclusive and girls were interested in participating in a study made just for them.

Maybe we were just lucky. This week as compared to last, we saw a lot more girls excited about the ideas of participating. Moms were telling us that their daughters loved to write. I'd like to say I learned how to be successful at encouraging participation, but I'll be honest that I don't really know why we had so many more participants. Perhaps, we got lucky with a group that was more willing to participate. Nevertheless, I did learn to be persistent. Each week holds its own group. Next week if we get 15 participants, or more, or just 1, I will have that same smile on my face and show each participant the same courteousness that I did for all the previous participants. I will do this because if the other research assistants and I had given up, who knows if we would have these 15 girls this week. Whatever the reason we did well this week, hopefully we have another group of girls interested next week.

Posted in [Transforming Teens: Brief Interventions in a Camp Setting](#)

The Secret Life of the....American Day Camper

Posted on **July 8, 2013** by **Natasha**

Guest Blog Appearance by Dylan Tucker, our fourth Research Assistant

As you might have guessed, the life of an RA at 4-H Camp Bristol Hills is filled with glamour and often blinding from the intense spotlight of the paparazzi and countless fans...but the story that is often untold and forgotten is the story behind the life of a "Day Camper" RA.

All jokes aside, my life here at camp is quite different from my fellow coworkers, or teammates, if you will. For one thing, the nicknames that my counterparts received are quite lovely, however I regretfully have to admit that I have not received one yet. This is almost certainly due to the fact that I am rarely here during any “social times,” and when I am around, I am usually copying data or doing something related to my job. I thought about nicknaming myself as “the flash,” because from the prospective of the camp counselors, it seems I am here one minute and gone the next...clever? I thought so.

As portrayed in the example above, one might imagine that I am not as close with the counselors as my teammates are...That assessment would be accurate. Not that I do not talk to counselors or am some sort of shut-in, but the simple fact that I do not sleep here, and go home after work is completed, is a hindrance to any relationship I could potentially build. Could I potentially change this? Possibly, but that requires staying extra hours, and when you are dependent on other people for rides, one is fortunate enough to even be able to work; I’m lucky in that regard.

Besides the few negative aspects of only working during the day, there are some pretty great benefits. For example, I get to go to work, do my work, and then go home to my family, friends, and air-conditioning. This benefit is NOT underappreciated. However, I do try to offer to pick up coffee on my way to work for my teammates on occasion to try to utilize my situation to be somewhat of a benefit to them as well.

Whelp, there ya have it, the life of a Day Camper is no longer so secret. It changes the dynamics from a camp experience to more of a “regular job,” which, as aforementioned, has both its positives and negatives. My fellow RAs are great and the camp staff here is wonderful as well...No complaints on this end! I’m excited to move forward with the research and hopefully conclude the summer with successfully finishing our objectives and learning some new things!

Posted in **Transforming Teens: Brief Interventions in a Camp Setting**

“Fall is a season; We say slip” and AHH is that a snake?!

Posted on **July 8, 2013** by **mpm272@cornell.edu**

After a super relaxing, and super short weekend at home, I trekked back out to camp early Sunday morning to meet with the other research assistants to prepare for our upcoming week. First thing first was recruitment—we were responsible for answering any questions parents had about our expressive writing project, and making sure that any camper that wished to participate had both a Youth Assent form and a Parental Consent form signed.

Being the first one to arrive, my individual responsibility was to stand in Cayuga cabin, where the Young Women’s Adventure Camp (YWAC) girls would be staying for the upcoming week. I introduced myself and told them I was there to answer any questions that parents or campers might have. The ladies working the registration table did a remarkable job explaining the project, or the parents were just not very curious, as I was only asked one question

over the span of an hour. One parent mentioned to me a possible challenge in working with her daughter, and it is something to think about regarding any research study. This challenge is dyslexia, as it makes reading any survey or question difficult. *How will this effect research results in general? Does providing the child with the necessary accommodations, such as a reader, skew the results of the study in any way?* Not only is this a challenge issue to address, but there is also the challenge of dysgraphia, which makes writing difficult as well. This is a particular issue for the expressive writing project—*if a scribe is provided for the child, will they still reap the benefits of expressive writing? Not only that, how do you go about making the child feel comfortable enough to delve into her deepest thoughts and emotions regarding puberty and other prompts provided if that said child is required to share those thoughts out loud with another person?* While I'm sure the answer to some of these questions are known, as a Research Assistant, when a parent asks if we will be able to provide a scribe and a reader for her daughter, you are expected to answer with your best judgment. My best judgment in that situation was to assure the parent that accommodations could be made, and to make note of what was being done.

And so with our work from Sunday done, we decided to participate in some camp activities, like their first night campfire!



Campfire included funny skits (one even involved a counselor putting vanilla pudding in his hair, armpits and ear!), traditional camp songs, and spontaneous nature checks!

Nature Check:



Minus the large amount of mosquitos, and the loud mouthed frogs found by the campfire circle, it was a good time! Campfire starts at 8:05pm, and around 8:40, all of the songs become quiet, whispered songs, and campers are asked to snap instead of clap. Why, you might ask? Well, it's a very subtle and very tactful way of calming campers down before their bed time of 9pm. As campfire ends, campers are asked to remain quiet and whisper, in order to prevent the kids from becoming "riled up."

Monday started our work week, as it was Day 1 of expressive writing. With 11 YWAC girls participating, we were above maximum capacity, as we only planned for 6 girls in a group! Luckily the camp was able to provide us with extra computers, and we started the girls on their initial surveys. Not so luckily, we're at camp. Cell service is spotty, and so is the Wi-Fi. The Wi-Fi does the trick for a couple of computers, but when it rains, or there are too many computers on the system, it needs to be reset rather often. Unfortunately, Monday was a rainy, stormy day. And we had way too many computers up and running at once. This led to the router needing to be reset every 2 minutes, which was frustrating as the girls could not proceed with their surveys until the Wi-Fi was up and running. Eventually, we had to ask half the girls to stop their work and go with their counselor to do something else. The remaining half was able to finish their surveys, but there was not enough time to start the writing as planned. After the first group of girls finished, we brought in new girls to finish their surveys. This plan seemed to be working well, until the fire alarm went off that is. And after the fire alarm, it was lunch time. And after lunch time, we brought back the rest of the girls to finish their surveys. However, not all of them wanted to continue, seemingly due to frustration. In the end, our numbers were brought down from 11 to 5.

For the rest of the week we ran our 5 YWAC girls, and one resident camper who had signed up previously, and things went very smoothly! Since we had a lot of down time, as we had few participants, and no data to enter, we got to try lots of different camp activities. One of the mornings, the other research assistants and I got to try archery! This was one of the camp activities I was most looking forward to. I learned how to stand, knock the arrow, and shoot at a target. The counselor teaching the archery class was very helpful, yet he couldn't help but laugh at us as we struggled to hold the bow and pull the string back as far as possible. It's harder than it looks!



After archery I also got to check out their critter care class, which involved holding baby chickens, petting a chinchilla, petting a snake, watching a turtle race across the floor, and petting a gecko. There were so many cool animals, and it was fun to see how excited the campers were at learning about these different animals!



During the week I also sat in on woodworking, where campers were making napkin holders and foldable chairs, both of which seemed like pretty cool projects with some challenging elements. Campers got to drill the holes and sand and saw the wood themselves. It was a very hands-on class, which I enjoyed seeing!



Natasha and I also got to hang out at the pool, go swimming, and observe an intense game of water polo between campers.



Finally, I got to observe the high ropes course, as campers went across two different high elements. Both required campers to climb up a ladder, and then continue climbing a tree using large stables embedded in the trunk. Once they reached the wires, the climbing differed. One had a wire for your feet, and a higher wire on either side of the wire, acting as hand holds. The other one had a sole wire for one's feet, and then long white ropes at set intervals for campers to hold onto. Campers had to reach out and grab the white rope, begin walking, and streeetch to

reach the next white rope. That is probably not the one to start on if you're scared of heights, but it looked like a lot of fun regardless. Campers were secured in harnesses, so even if they did slip, they were not going to fall to the ground. The counselor in charge of belaying campers kept saying, "Fall is a season; we say slip," as a way to remind the campers that if they fell off the wire, they would not be going anywhere.



While we did have expressive writing to worry about, this week had more down time, and was a really great week to experience camp life. Expressive writing, minus the first day, was virtually problem free, and the girls were a pleasure to work with. During the debriefing session, they did not have many questions, and they mentioned that they did enjoy the writing project, which is good to hear! I look forward to running the expressive writing project with YWAC in the coming week, as we have made the surveys and writing available on paper and pencil, so that way Wi-Fi will no longer be an issue.

Camp has made us an expert at problem solving, and each week we are learning a lot. For this week in particular though, we got to immerse ourselves in camp culture, and enjoy spending time with each other, counselors, and campers! It also allowed us time to adjust to our new nicknames as well (I still don't always turn around when I hear someone calling for Burrow)!

Posted in **Transforming Teens: Brief Interventions in a Camp Setting**

My camp name is Punch Line, but my real name is Natasha

Posted on **July 8, 2013** by **Natasha**

With fewer participants the second week, we had time to get involved in some camp activities. We also had a chance to become accustomed to our camp names. What are camp names? How do they work? Well, every counselor gets a camp name. The counselors only use their camp names throughout the week, and it is a mystery to the campers what the counselors' real names are. The campers might guess a counselor's real name, or figure out the name if a counselor mistakenly calls another counselor by their real name. But, typically the campers do not get to find out the counselors' real names until the final day. Though we are not counselors, the counselors decided

to give us camp names anyway.

My camp name is Punch Line. Am I really funny? I wish. What really happened is that a counselor was telling a story, which I had just heard. I was sitting next to him as he told the story again. He was taking a little too long to get to the point of the story...so I beat him to the punch.

Meredith's camp name is Burrow. Something unique about camp names is that you get to choose the spelling. Meredith was named after one of the five boroughs of New York City. In reality, Meredith lives in Long Island, but the counselors thought it was close enough. So Meredith's name became Borough, or as she spells it, Burrow.

Leticia's camp name is Sephora. She chose this name because she loves the makeup store Sephora. Originally, her name was going to be RA, because she kept referring to the group of us as the RA's (research assistants). However, when Leticia found out that other counselors had names such as Tresemmé and Godiva, she decided that she would like to have the name of one of her favorite stores instead.

There are about 50 counselors at this camp. There are a lot of names, and stories behind each one. Some are simple stories, some are silly, and some are extremely interesting. At the camp, no one can ever have the same camp name. So when someone leaves, their camp name serves as a reminder of them being there.

Posted in **Transforming Teens: Brief Interventions in a Camp Setting**

A list of things to pack for camp:

Posted on **July 1, 2013** by mpm272@cornell.edu



- 1. Reusable water bottle

For the many thirsty hours spent working, walking, and playing. You'll never drink more water than you do at camp.



— 2. Flashlight

To prevent yourself from running into invisible clotheslines on your midnight walk to the bathroom, and to stop yourself from falling down the stairs on that same trip. Camp is dangerous in the dark.



— 3. Snacks

For those late night (by late night I mean 9pm) cravings. Meals are available at 8am, 12:30pm, and 6pm, and once 8pm hits, you'll be STARVING!



— 4. Hazmat suit

Used to protect yourself from any bugs, creepy flying creatures, and bats that may be found around the camp or in your cabin.



— 5. Bug spray

Used either to protect yourself from being bitten by mosquitos, or to kill large flying objects found around your cabin. Self-defense at its finest.



— 6. Rain boots

These bad boys are not only for the rain, but they protect you mud, and any other unidentifiable squishy liquids.



— 7. Ear plugs

Essential for ignoring those loud 7am wake up calls!



- 8. Your own Personal Library

Something to keep you occupied after 9:30pm lights out, and during the unanticipated downtime in between running experiments.



- 9. Swimming Gear

Because what's summer camp without some pool time fun?



- 10. A positive attitude

Because camp forces you out of your comfort zone— into singing silly songs, performing cheesy skits, and just being

all out goofy. If you let yourself relax, you'll be surprised how much fun you can actually have!

Posted in **Transforming Teens: Brief Interventions in a Camp Setting**

Week 1

Posted on **June 30, 2013** by **Natasha**

This summer I am interning for Cornell Cooperative Extension through Human Ecology at Cornell University. I am working as a research assistant on a project titled, Transformative Teens: Brief Interventions in a Camp Setting.

The internship is at Bristol Hills 4-H Camp, in Canandaigua, New York. I am 20 years old, a rising junior, and a Human Development major. As a rising junior, this summer it is helpful to start exploring career interests, but it doesn't feel quite as permanent as an internship before senior year. It is interesting that I will be in a setting reminding me of when I was a kid, at the same point in my life where I am starting an internship and have begun to really feel like an adult.

I am interning with three other research assistants for the project. We are running two studies, a Social Exclusion study and Expressive Writing study. Last week was our first week, which was during the training week for counselors before the camp actually started. Thus, we only ran the social exclusion study with the counselors, counselors in training, and a few other staff members from the camp.

We arrived at the camp on Sunday afternoon, and moved into our cabin, Pueblo Hut. After moving into our cabin, we set up in Big Chief, which will be our work space for the next six weeks.



— Pueblo Hut

The day after we arrived was the first day of the study. We gave out a pretest to participants. The pretest was right after lunch. Though I had not been that nervous about leading the sessions prior to coming to camp, I was

surprised by how nervous I was feeling during lunch. I read the instructions for the pretest, and once we started handing out pretests I felt much more comfortable and confident. We did have one incident, with a participant who was feeling upset over the test because of some questions that brought up some heavier topics for that participant. Another research assistant and I spoke with the participant and a camp director to make sure the person was okay and to reassure the person that they could drop out from the study now or at any point during the week if they wished to do so.



— Pretest

Throughout the week we met with the Cornell liaison, a counselor at the camp, who will be communicating with us during the six weeks to help us with our programs, scheduling, and to help acquaint us with the camp. We have also remained in constant touch with the camp directors.

On Tuesday and Thursday, we had participants participate in a computer game online as part of the study. They came in to Big Chief in groups of 6 throughout the day. The other interns and I were responsible for welcoming them into the room, reading them directions, answering questions, and resetting the computers in between sessions. We also were responsible for taking notes on a tracking sheet to keep record of any incidents that may have happened. For example, on several occasions, we lost internet access, and had to reset a computer during the session. It was important to note this so that it will be clear when looking at the data, what had caused a discrepancy in the participant's answers.



— Participants in Big Chief, Research Assistants in Middle

Finally, on Thursday, we had a final game and presentation to serve as a debriefing session for participants. The other interns and I will be alternating throughout the six weeks who will be presenting. For the first week, it was my turn to present to participants. It was important that I had a good understanding of the material which I was presenting. I had multiple sessions on google chat with the professor and graduate student leading the project. They gave me feedback on my presentation, and I was also able to ask questions about any information I found confusing myself.



— Presentation



— Me Presenting

Preparing for the presentation did have challenges. I have learned that many things change and come up during the week which you actually begin a research project. The slides were continuously changing throughout the week, as they needed to be adapted to meet the needs of the participants. Many participants were conflicted with the idea that we were holding a study on social exclusion, in the context of a camp setting, where social exclusion is the opposite of camp values. The other interns and I were responsible for relaying the needs of this community, while also being respectful of the needs of the professor and the graduate student. It was important that we did not provide too much information to the counselors and staff, which could have infringed upon the results of the study. Nevertheless, it was still important that we took into consideration the personal responses of the counselors and staff. As a result, the presentation, which was originally scheduled for Friday, was moved to Thursday afternoon. It became apparent that a sooner debriefing session would be more beneficial for all participants and best serve the needs of the camp. In addition, participants were provided the opportunity to give anonymous written feedback. The interns and I were able to type this information up so that it could be available for the professor and the graduate student working on the study, so that they could make modifications as necessary.

Overall, it was a hectic week, but with some success as well. At the same time we were just becoming accustomed to the camp setting, we had what will probably be our largest week of participants. For a few days the other interns and I were very busy, working from morning to bedtime. However, it was useful to have the group of us working together as a team. We were lucky that the staff members were very friendly and accommodating and that we had a Cornell liaison who we could specifically speak with about how everything was going. It was also helpful that we were in constant communication through e-mails, skype sessions, and g-chat with the graduate student working on the study.

This has been my first time working as a research assistant, but I feel that I have already learned so much in the past week. While I have read about many studies in my classes, it is interesting to have an experience where I

have the opportunity to see some of the work that goes on behind the scenes. I look forward to seeing what this upcoming week will bring.

Posted in **Transforming Teens: Brief Interventions in a Camp Setting, _Uncategorized**