



2014 CCE Summer Internships

CATEGORY ARCHIVES: [WRITING ABOUT LIFE CHANGES](#)

The Final Week

Posted on **August 8, 2014** by **kcm65**

The last week at camp was a blur. It's so hard to believe this experience is over, it feels like it just started yesterday! It has been such a great summer, full of new experiences and inspiring people. Although Alexandra and I came to Bristol Hills for research, our time at camp was about so much more than that. So to piggyback onto my partner's blog, I would like to share my top moments from camp.

1. Watching the staff wrangle two sheep back into their pen!

This was one of the most memorable parts of my summer. When the two camp sheep (Coffee and Gertrude) escaped from their pen, two staff members burst into action. They tackled the sheep down before the fluffy duo could get very far. Although sheep wrangling wasn't covered during staff week, they handled the emergency like well-trained pros (while ignoring the uncontrollable laughter of amazed onlookers).

2. The week four debrief

At the end of week four Alexandra and I did the usual debrief for the girls. When we asked the girls what they thought of writing exercise now that it was over one told us that she loved it, because she was able to write about things that she wanted to get out of her system. Another girl told us that doing the expressive writing project helped her realize that she wasn't the only one going through changes with peers and family. This was incredibly rewarding to hear, and reinforced the purpose of the project.

3. Night Ziplining

During the CIT's last night the camp staff set up ziplining for them at night. Alexandra and I tagged along and had an amazing time. It was kind of frightening zooming through the dark woods, but so much fun.

4. Answering to Squint

To be honest, I wasn't too sure about my camp name during the first week. But I came to love hearing my name yelled across campus. Even better was having campers try and guess my real name (Sara? Abigail? Penelope?).

5. Typing up participant responses

Kind of a weird one, but it was eye opening to see what the girls wrote. They were so insightful and funny, and their responses showed such a range in experience, emotion, and perceptions of universal events. I think that reading these responses helped me better understand adolescent issues and how they can vary person to person, adding to what I've learned so far as a Human Development major.



Also did some friendship bracelet making!

This summer has been a great learning experience, and a great introduction into research. I feel so lucky to have worked with such an amazing group of people, who have made the Expressive Writing project so successful and enjoyable. My summer and CCE internship went above and beyond my expectations. Thank you, Cornell!

Posted in **Uncategorized**, **Writing about Life Changes**

Final Week

Posted on **August 6, 2014** by **ach233@cornell.edu**



— Squint and I with the lollipop tree



— Squint, Medulla (another CCE intern), and I, in front of our cabin, Big Dipper

So far, Squint and I have had a wonderful last week of camp. We are lucky to have 16 girls after the third day who have been doing a great job with their writing. I think Squint and I will both be a little bit sad on Friday. We have had such a good experience here this summer, between working with the girls and just enjoying camp life.

For example, last night, I observed with the campers as the counselors played a game called “Pokemon” for evening program. Campers from each cabin dress one of their counselor’s up in a fun and crazy outfit, name their Pokemon,

and give them a superpower. Then the Pokemons battle 1 on 1 in a ring, until the top pokemon is crowned. The battle is composed of throwing balls at the other pokemon and trying to hit them, and pokemons are only allowed to step on certain spaces in the “arena” where there are hula hoops or other markers. The campers have a blast with this game, cheering for their cabin and watching their counselors look a little bit ridiculous. Being a part of things like this has made the experience really unique and special. Since this is the final week of camp, I thought I would go through a few more of the top things I’m going to miss about being here at 4-H Camp Bristol Hills.

1. Working with campers and the girls in our study- it has been great getting to know some really amazing kids
2. The directors and staff at camp- the camp is extremely well-run, and I have made some great friends
3. Calling people by their camp names makes everything more fun (I might accidentally call Kate “Squint” around Cornell this fall)
4. The Camp Store (you can’t beat the “lollipop tree” and the slushies)
5. Having my place of work being called “Big Chief”- I don’t know if I will have the chance to work in a cabin again

I am so grateful to have had this internship experience. I hope to have the opportunity to do more things like this in the future, where I have the chance to apply what I have learned in my classes to a real-life setting.

Posted in [Writing about Life Changes](#)

The Unbelievable Occurrence

Posted on [August 5, 2014](#) by [Patricia Damaris Gonzalez](#)

Week 6 at Hidden Valley: Week 5 of Data Collection

Last week may have been the best group of girls Taylor and I have had/will have this summer. Not only were they very understanding of the camp store running out of ice cream, but they were very respectful. Although the control week’s writing topic is not that exciting, they took their writing seriously.

Days 1,2, and 3 went by without anything really worth mentioning. Day 4, on the other hand, was a very surprising day. The girls had been writing for 5 minutes when we suddenly heard a high-pitched screech. I paused for a moment but paid no attention to it. Then I saw a girl raise her hand.

“Patty?”

“Yes, ___?”

“There’s a bat.” She said, calmly pointing up towards the ceiling.

A moment of silence.

“Everybody stop what you are doing and get out!”

While Taylor relocated the girls to the dining hall, I went to search for Chris, Hidden Valley’s program director and unofficial bat catcher. When I returned to the Arts & Crafts building with Chris, we discovered that instead of one bat... there were 3 bats! Of everything that has happened over these past few weeks, Taylor and I never would have guessed that bats would also pose as an obstacle to our study. Seeing the bat flying around made us flustered and slightly panicked (we have never seen them so up close and personal before), but now it is a source of jokes between the camp staff and us.



— A captured bat lies within this coffee container

I have a feeling that whenever I reflect on this study and my experiences here at Hidden Valley, I will immediately flash back to this day.

“BATS!”

Posted in [Writing about Life Changes](#) | Tagged [bats](#), [data collection](#), [Hidden valley](#), [puberty](#)

Riddles and Rain

Posted on **July 31, 2014** by ach233@cornell.edu

I want to start off this post by answering the riddles from Kate's last post! The coolest letter in the alphabet is B, because it is between A and C. And a candle is tall when it's young, and short when it's old. Throughout this week, we have continued to come up with new riddles to tell the girls, and it has worked out well. Today was "When I eat, I live, and when I drink, I die...what am I?". The answer is..."fire!" One of our participants guessed the right answer today, and we gave her a friendship bracelet for a prize, which she was very happy about!

Week 4 has been very successful so far. We were able to get 5 girls who participated in the study last year to complete a follow-up survey, which was a great surprise. We started the week with 18 girls participating in the study, and had 14 girls complete all 4 days, which we are very happy about.

Outside of the study, this week has been a chilly and rainy one at camp. Monday there was a flood watch, and counselors and campers huddled in the lodge, draping their wet clothes over the fireplace to dry. Although this wasn't ideal summer camp weather, it was cozy and there were still plenty of fun things to do. Tuesday and Wednesday continued to be rainy, and I helped lead a Zumba class in one of the cabins. As we were jumping around, the floor was creaking, and it sounded like it was going to break. Anyway, we kept going, the cabin held up for us, and it was a fun workout! As I'm writing this blog post, the weather has brightened, and Kate is teaching a very successful creative writing class.

We can't believe that next week is our last week here. We hope it will be our best yet!

Posted in [Writing about Life Changes](#)

Fishing for Participants

Posted on **July 29, 2014** by [Patricia Damaris Gonzalez](#)

[Week 4 at Hidden Valley: Week 3 of Data Collection](#)

Last week went by pretty smoothly. We were able to recruit participants, but a few dropped out on the first day. Girls did not want to miss out on rest hour after their busy morning activities and others discovered that they felt uncomfortable answering questions and writing about the topic of puberty.

Also, we did struggle to keep the girls happy for three of the four days because the camp store ran out of ice cream.

They made sure to constantly inform us of how disappointed and impatient they were to not receive their daily reward. We ended up having to give them Cheetos for a day and tell them that we would pass out ice cream on Friday. Other than these few setbacks, nothing significant occurred in regards to the study.



— Where we have the girls write in their diaries



— Surprised Taylor while she was setting up

An exciting activity that I participated in last week was canoeing. I learned how to fish and was able to catch one on my first day! (Sadly, I was not able to take a picture of the little guy) Canoe Lake is such a beautiful and relaxing place. If you are quiet and wait long enough, you are able to catch a glimpse of frogs, beavers, and turtles. Funny enough, it is also the place with the best phone service. Even though it is a 15 minute walk from camp!



— Morning at Canoe Lake



Overall, a very easy-going week.

Posted in [Writing about Life Changes](#) | Tagged [canoeing](#), [fishing](#), [Hidden valley](#), [puberty](#), [summer internship](#)

Week Three!

Posted on **July 29, 2014** by **kcm65**

Our third week at camp was a busy one, but very fun and successful. We recruited sixteen girls, and were able to keep fourteen of them for the entire week. Our focus last week was to keep as many girls writing as possible, and minimizing dropouts. We think it helped that each day we told them a riddle and only gave the answer to the riddle when they came back to write the next day. Some of the more popular riddles were: "What is the coolest letter in

the alphabet?” and “When I’m young, I’m tall. When I’m old, I’m short. What am I?” Stay tuned for the answers in Alexandra’s post!

It is really cool to see the girls grow more comfortable with both the project and camp as the week progresses. Every week so far we have seen the same pattern. The girls come in quiet, unsure and not very responsive on Monday. By Friday they can’t stop talking, and enthusiastically hop on over to Big Chief to come see us for the debriefing session.

Our camp experience outside of the study was also a ton of fun. Alexandra taught some yoga basics to a small but eager group, and I led a creative writing activity one day and created an obstacle course for an energetic group of campers the next.

I think the highlight of my week was teaching the campers how to play Big Mouth- a game where you run while yelling, stopping only when you run out of breath. The person who gets the farthest is the winner. The campers and staff loved watching and playing it. I think it might also be a great idea for a stress reliever back in Ithaca!

Hopefully this coming week will be as successful and enjoyable as the last. With such a great camp environment, I’m guessing it will be!

Posted in [Writing about Life Changes](#)

Week 3: Drop-Outs, Missing Ice-Cream & Cliques

Posted on **July 24, 2014** by [Taylor Cheyenne McGuire](#)

Week 3 of data collection has been more gratifying, besides our lowest number of girls since we’ve started. They are so adorable and better-behaved than our previous week’s participants. Recruitment went fairly well, but we had a couple of drop-outs because of a group of a girl’s friends being in the experiment and a girl feeling uncomfortable about the writing material (which was understandable.)

Throughout the week, we had a stable, quiet area for the girls to complete their surveys and write in their “journals.” The one minuscule thing that the girls had issue with was that the camp store ran out of ice cream. I know two girls in particular would personally make it their duty to inform me each time they saw me that we owed them 3 ice-creams all at once (it was always so hilarious to me.) I think the camp got a shipment of ice-cream late yesterday so we can reward them!

A disturbing issue is that there is an entire cabin with girls that fit our age group, but we are never able to get in contact with all of their parents. We even sit with them at all meals and go to flagpole with them. Also, once girls sign up and make friends who aren’t in the experiment, they decide to drop-out. I don’t think this issue will be

resolved, but it would be great if there was something we could do to get entire groups of girls to participate all at once.

Posted in [Uncategorized](#), [Writing about Life Changes](#) | Tagged [Dear Diary](#), [expressive writing](#), [Hidden valley](#), [summer camp](#)

Week 2: Disruption

Posted on **July 24, 2014** by [Taylor Cheyenne McGuire](#)

Week Two of data collection was ... interesting. For starters, we were able to recruit more girls than our first week, even with fewer campers present. I was a bit sad because it would have been great if we had gotten this many during our experimental week, but I'm still happy we recruited more than our quota. Normally our "Dear Diary" table is overlooked, but with help from Patty and the program director, Chris, we were able to get girls directly from the "Sign-In" table. Another difference was that we had even more incentive than just a claim for free ice cream for the week; we had Birthday Cake Oreos. I convinced one reluctant girl to try them and after she tried it I heard "Dad, can we get these at home? They're amazing!"

We had a couple of participants who were disruptive and complained during the experiment, so that was the major difficulty for this week. However, after the follow-up session that I gave, they understood what it was that they were contributing to and vehemently contested against the hypothesis. Additionally, throughout the week, we tested a few more areas due to the spontaneous environment at camp. I believe we have finally settled on the Arts and Crafts room, depending on if it's available or not.

On a side note: I really enjoy the activities and things that we are able to partake in here. I have tried canoeing, went on a wet hike to see a waterfall, made food with the Camp Cook, Lisa, and tried archery for the first time!

Posted in [Writing about Life Changes](#) | Tagged [Dear Diary](#), [Hidden valley](#), [internship](#), [summer camp](#)

Bumps along the way

Posted on **July 21, 2014** by [Patricia Damaris Gonzalez](#)

[Week 3 at Hidden Valley: Week 2 of Data Collection](#)

Week 2 of data collection has finished and we are now starting our 3rd week. As we had thought, the second week did go smoother! Although it was a low-camper week, Taylor and I were able to recruit more campers than when the

camp had over 100 campers. We believe that this may have been due to how frantic preoccupied parents were in getting their children situated. Because of the slight frenzy, people tended to disregard our little “Dear Diary” booth. Week 2 recruitment was better due to the more laid-back atmosphere, as well as the small plate of birthday cake Oreos on our table.

Another difficulty we faced was dealing with the hustle and bustle of camp life. It was very difficult to find a permanent and quiet place for the girls to write in. We constantly moved from place to place during the first place (from the program director’s office to the dining hall to just sitting outside with a clipboard). The second week was much better because we were able to use the arts & crafts cabin as our permanent place.



— Scenic view from the bridge right next to the arts & crafts cabin



- Raspberry bush growing right next to the bridge (Counselors usually pick and eat them when campers are out of sight)

Other difficulties we faced, and are still facing, are keeping girls for the entire 4 days of writing. Girls have dropped out or gone home sick and girls have also had to be rescheduled to write during bunk activity because they were away horse-back riding for most of the day. (They were never happy to be missing out on bunk activity)

Sorry girls.

(But be excited for the free ice cream!)

Posted in [Writing about Life Changes](#) | Tagged [difficulties](#), [Hidden valley](#), [research internship](#), [summer camp](#)

Dear Diary: Week 1

Posted on **July 15, 2014** by [Taylor Cheyenne McGuire](#)

Our first week of the experiment went well. Recruitment was a bit stressful given that there were approximately 130 campers and parents who were frantic. We only recruited 8 girls. The two goals that we had were to gather the girls for the survey once during the beginning of the week (which took approximately 40 minutes) and then have the girls complete the expressive writing for 20 minutes for 4 days straight. We did have a couple of conflicts. For example,

we dealt with participants who decided not to participate, those who went horseback riding or canoeing and weren't available during the specified camper "rest hour", participants who left camp and went home, and we also fluctuated between different locations because we had no specified quiet room for the girls to write in.



— One of the many different locations we tried!

Even with those difficulties, Patty and I were still able to get through the week successfully and the girls were happy in the end (although I feel like I owe most of that to the ice cream/Popsicles they were given each day). Altogether, I believe that it went the best that it could, given that it was our first week and also the first time working at Hidden Valley. For the second week of the experiment, we have a bunch of ways to resolve the differences and attempt to gather more girls during recruitment on Sunday!

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2014 CCE Summer Internships

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Ready 2 Go (Week 2)

Posted on **July 15, 2014** by ach233@cornell.edu

On Sunday of this week, Squint and I (Yogi) arrived feeling ready to recruit girls to participate with our newfound knowledge from last week. Last week, we got a good system down of taking girls to the camp store right after lunch to get their free slushies, and then bringing them right into Big Chief to do their writing. We take girls to Big Chief in a couple of groups, so that those who are done with the camp store don't lose focus and can start writing as soon as possible.



In the past week, we also had the experience of dealing with some unplanned occurrences, such as having girls

telling us that they no longer wanted to participate. We also witnessed some more unusual camp happenings, like the camp sheep escaping from their pen, when we had the chance to witness counselors and directors as they wrangled the sheep (thankfully they got them to go back into their pen, but it wasn't easy!!)

This Sunday was a little bit rainy, so we stood in the lodge (instead of outside) waiting for this week's group of campers and parents to arrive. Being there when everyone comes into camp definitely has its perks. We got to babysit a puppy, watch a camper use her mother's back as a clipboard, and had a parent say that they might pay us if we could get their daughter to sit down and write for 20 minutes. We recruited 18 girls, and our goal is to keep as many as we can for the entire week. We found last week that a big challenge wasn't so much getting girls to participate, but having them complete the entire 4 days of the study. We have a slightly older group of girls this week, and are optimistic that more of them will complete the week. Yesterday (Monday), they did very well with their writing, and are hoping for the next three days to continue in the same way.

Posted in [Writing about Life Changes](#)

“Dear Diary”: An Introduction

Posted on **July 13, 2014** by **Patricia Damaris Gonzalez**

Week 2 at Hidden Valley Camp: Week 1 of Data Collection

Week 1 of Data collection has ended!

I last wrote that I would talk about the study and the recruitment process in this post. The study is called “Dear Diary” and it consists of girls going through expressive writing exercises. Expressive writing requires the girls to write about a specific topic for 20 minutes over a period of four days. These writing exercises have been used in several other experiments and have been shown to provide benefits to participants (for example: students visiting the health center less). In our study, participants will either be answering questions pertaining to puberty or activities at the summer camp. Since the age group we are recruiting consists of girls who are entering adolescence, we hope the expressive writing exercises will help them more easily transition into adolescence.

Recruitment day (Sundays) is when the campers arrive at Hidden Valley. We created a poster board to attract the girls and stationed ourselves across from the registration table. Staff members were kind enough to tell girls to come to our table, but we were to fend for ourselves, for the most part.



— Our artsy poster board for the “Dear Diary” study

There were so many campers (over a hundred were registered for that week) that parents were in a frenzy to get everything and everywhere. Because of this, we had a little trouble attracting their attention, as well as convincing the girls to spend time writing in a journal during their rest period. In the end, Taylor and I made it through the first week of data collection. We had a few bumps along the way, but we were able to successfully recruit participants and have them participate in our study. I will write a little bit about the difficulties we faced in my next post. This coming week should definitely go smoother!

Posted in **Uncategorized, Writing about Life Changes** | Tagged **poster board, recruitment, summer camp**

Hello My Name is...

Posted on **July 10, 2014** by **kcm65**

Last week Alexandra and I received camp names for the summer! Alexandra was named Yogi (because she is a yoga guru), and my name is Squint (I squint when I smile and I smile a lot). At first it was really hard to call everyone by their camp name, it just seemed wrong, but now I'm used to hearing “Hey Squint!” yelled across campus. The names also make us feel like we're all on the same team, and the counselors attitudes toward us have reinforced that feeling.

Sunday was our first chance to introduce ourselves under our new titles, as we recruited girls to join our study. It went very well, with twelve girls signing up to participate. We had them take the survey on Sunday night, just after dinner, in Big Chief. Although the girls were not enthused with the length of the survey, Alexandra and I kept them happy with lollypops and candy. After the girls left we began inputting data, a time consuming process that we willed ourselves through with music and caffeine.

On Monday we had the first day of writing. We brought the girls back to Big Chief after taking them to the store, then sat them down to write. It went pretty well, though the girls were restless towards the end of their time in the cabin. The bleating sheep and yelling boys outside didn't really help them focus, but overall it was a positive experience.

Tuesday was both a fun and frustrating day. Fun, because Alexandra taught a yoga class and I helped out with Nature class. Frustrating because three girls dropped out of the study. Two girls could not attend during rest time because of a scheduling conflict and one decided that she just did not want to journal anymore. I think it just emphasizes the importance of recruiting as many girls as possible on the first day to ensure more girls get through the entire study. Alexandra and I reminded each other that this is understandable, as the last thing many girls want to do in the summer is something they perceive to be school-like.

Today was day three of writing and I think it went very well. After lunch the girls knew the drill and came right out of the Lodge to meet with me. We went to the store, where the girls got their slushies, and then they went right to writing. One girl asked if we were journaling on Friday, and was disappointed to discover that we only had one more day. I was happy to hear that she looked forward to writing and that the sentiment was shared by some of the other girls.

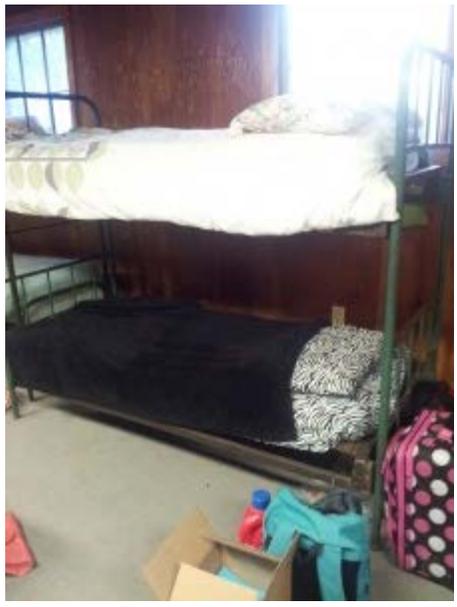
So far this week has been very enjoyable and educational, as we have tried to figure out the best way to get our research done while creating a minimally invasive journaling time for the girls. The counselors and staff at camp have been incredibly helpful, volunteering their time to supervise the girls in Big Chief and including us so we can be a part of camp. Alexandra and I are grateful that they have been so welcoming and warm, making our time here about more than just the research.

Posted in [Writing about Life Changes](#)

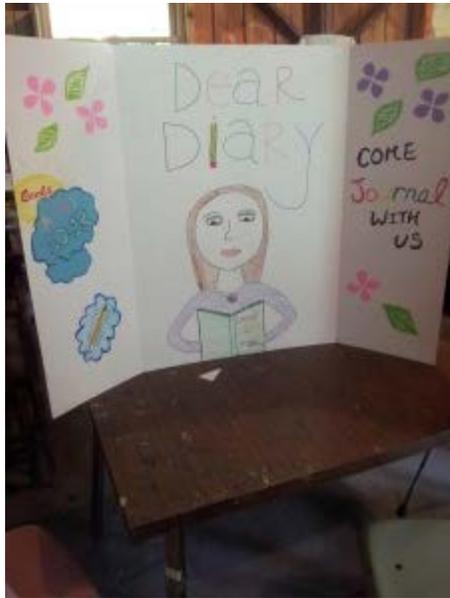
ASIDE

This summer I am going to be involved in an expressive writing experiment within the Adolescent Transitions lab led by Dr. Jane Mendle. The project takes place at Hidden Valley, a camp located in Watkins Glen. As a research assistant/camp staff member, I will be on camp grounds from 6/29 until 8/8 with the other RA Patty. The focus of the project is to investigate whether expressive writing is beneficial for girls ages 10-13 entering adolescence.

During the first week, which was only staff training, I quickly started a mission on recalling all 40-so counselor members' names. Our days have been very long. We learned about dealing with troubling campers during meals, rules for counselors, opening camp fire, various counselor games, we toured the drama area, arts and crafts room, lab, archery area, and pool. We also went on a hike yesterday.



In regards to our requirements, we have just gone to every event for staff training, except for today because we began working on our recruitment poster for a couple of hours. I find it creepy because I did a bunch of eyelashes with dark marker and it looks a bit *not* child friendly. Other than that, it's nice.



— The eyelashes are a bit scary!

Sunday was the day of our first recruitment and our goal was to recruit at least 10 girls. It was a bit difficult, but we almost made the quota! Hopefully we will have more girls next time.

Posted on **July 8, 2014** by **Taylor Cheyenne McGuire**

“WELCOME TO CAMP!”

Posted on **July 8, 2014** by **Patricia Damaris Gonzalez**

Week 1 of the CCE Summer Research Internship:

This summer I will be conducting research under Professor Jane Mendle. We plan on recruiting and collecting data from 10 – 13 year old girls at Hidden Valley 4-H Camp. Hidden Valley is a sleep away summer camp located in Watkins Glen (about 25-35 minutes away from Cornell) and is a part of the Cornell Cooperative Extension. We will be at the camp for 6 weeks and collecting data for five of these weeks.



— Our humble abode for the next few weeks: “Beech”

Our first week at Hidden Valley consisted of participating in the staff training. Although we are not counselors, it was important to take part in the training activities in order to get to know the camp counselors and directors.



— We also got to know “Guppy”, the program director’s pet cat, who lived with us during training week.

My research partner, Taylor, and I learned a lot of useful tips for dealing with campers, as well as the responsibilities of being a counselor. We also were able to participate in some fun activities, such as singing at camp fires, hiking, and canoeing at a lake.



— Our “opening campfire”

Taylor and I have been sitting with a cabin of girls during meals and have found ourselves utilizing a few of the skills learned throughout training (such as how to deal with a distressed/crying camper). The cabin we sit with is filled with girls of the age we are recruiting for our study so it has been interesting to first-handedly observe this age group, since our study revolves around girls and puberty.

The study began on Sunday, so I will write a little more about the purpose of the study and the recruitment process in my next blog post.

Posted in **Writing about Life Changes** | Tagged **Hidden valley, research internship, summer camp, week 1**

Getting Started

Posted on **June 30, 2014** by **ach233@cornell.edu**

Hi, we are the 4-H Camp Bristol Hills team of research assistants, Kate McCormick and Alexandra Holmes, working and blogging jointly on our expressive writing project for CCE and the Adolescent Transitions Lab. Today was our second day of staff training. Although we are not counselors, 4-H Camp Bristol Hills has encouraged us to participate in all of the same training and pre-season festivities with the other staff. This included activities such as zumba and ravine hiking, as well as learning basic camp procedure. The environment of the camp is very inclusive,

enthusiastic, and team-oriented, and we already know that the counselors will be very accommodating which will enable us to have a really positive experience doing our research.

While staff worked on their individual programming, we were able to set up the cabin, "Big Chief", where the girls will be journaling. We got an excellent workout moving tables and chairs in the sauna-like room. We want to make sure it is cool, comfortable, and ready by the time the girls arrive. Although we are enjoying the process of getting to know the staff and camp, we can not wait for the campers to arrive!



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