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Measuring Perceptions in Quality of Life After Camp

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Measuring perceptions in quality of life after camp

An Honors Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors in the

School of Human Ecology

By

Madison Monk

Under the mentorship of *Dr. Brent Wolfe*

ABSTRACT

As children with intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD) begin to age out of the school system, they begin losing opportunities for socialization and recreation participation. Losing these opportunities greatly affects these individuals' quality of life. Limitations to socialization and recreation participation are problematic and research shows it would be beneficial to provide such opportunities. This study explores how a camp environment can increase adults' with I/DD perceptions of quality of life through providing opportunities to participate in recreation activities and socialize with other campers. Through the use of a Qualtrics survey, researchers contacted campers who attended Camp Sunlight, a camp for adults with I/DD disabilities. Researchers asked campers about their perceptions of camp and found recurring themes. After analyzing the data collected, researchers compared the themes found through the study with themes found in the literature. Study findings suggest that the camp experience does positively impact adults with I/DD perceptions of quality of life.

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Introduction

In today's society, it is quite common to group individuals who look alike and act alike into one category. This phenomenon is known as stereotyping, or creating a societal lens through which one should view others. While the term "developmental disability" [DD] does group individuals, it also has the potential to be perceived through several different lenses. The term developmental disability goes hand-in-hand with the term intellectual disability and can be defined as:

a disability that is manifested before the person reaches twenty-two (22) years of age, which constitutes a substantial disability to the affected individual, and is attributable to mental retardation or related conditions which include cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism or other neurological conditions when such conditions result in impairment of general intellectual functioning or adaptive behavior similar to that of a person with mental retardation (Developmental Disability Resource Center, para. 1).

Although all individuals should be treated with equality, this typically is not the case for individuals with any disability, including developmental disabilities. These individuals become classified by the context of their disability and the characteristics they display. Children and adults with developmental disabilities should be provided the same opportunities as any other individual in order to stay active, healthy, and apart of the community.

Literature Review

As children with I/DD enter into adulthood, they begin to lose opportunities for socialization and recreation participation, and they face greater difficulties in maintaining a healthy lifestyle (Van Naarden, Yeargin-Allsopp, & Lollar, 2006). Limited access to socialization and recreation opportunities directly affects these individuals' perception of quality of life. According to the World Health Organization (1997), quality of life (QOL) can be defined as:

individuals' perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns. It is a broad ranging concept affected in a complex way by the person's physical health, psychological state, level of independence, social relationships, personal beliefs and their relationship to salient feature of their environment (p. 1).

Since researchers have found that limited access to socialization and recreation opportunities is problematic, it is, and will continue to be very beneficial to provide opportunities for physical activity, socialization and recreation participation in order to increase perceptions of QOL (Orsmond, Krauss, & Seltzer, 2004).

Having a disability does not mean that an individual is not healthy nor does it mean that an individual cannot be healthy; however, it is important for individuals with DD to be aware of the tools and information available that can assist them in improving their health and increasing their overall QOL. Research has found that young adults with developmental disabilities have a difficult transition from adolescence to adulthood due to limited opportunities for social interaction, as well as the inability to obtain an adult social role. Van Naarden, Yeargin-Allsopp, and Lollar (2006) discussed that in the United States, being employed, continuing education past high school, and being a caregiver are three normative social roles that begin in young adulthood; however, individuals with DD have a hard time with the transition into adulthood because they don't receive many opportunities for the aforementioned experiences. Therefore, providing opportunities for social interaction would potentially ease the transition into adulthood. There are several different ways to provide opportunities for socialization and community involvement, particularly teaching individuals with DD how to live independently, attain employment and engage in community activities. Stumbo et al. (2015) discussed using a community-based adaptive sports program to provide

opportunities for social interaction and found that this program provided “a strong sense of CI [community integration] that was positively correlated to increased quality of life” (p. 42), which shows that providing opportunities for community socialization may directly benefit individuals with DD as they transition into adulthood.

Furthermore, due to limited opportunities for socialization, adults with developmental disabilities have a more difficult time developing typical friendships. According to Orsmond, Krauss, and Seltzer (2004), even individuals who do have the ability to develop friendships find it difficult to define what friendship is and report high rates of loneliness. Individuals with autism, a type of developmental disability, have a more difficult time with communication and social participation due to their disability. This study found that friendships and social engagement are directly affected by the severity of the disability (Orsmond et al., 2004). Specifically, results showed that 46.4% of “these individuals had no same aged friends with whom they had a reciprocal relationship either within or outside of prearranged settings” (Orsmond et al., 2004, p. 250). In other words, almost half of those who participated in the study had no definitive friendships with individuals of the same age. If individuals with DD were provided more opportunities for social interaction, they would potentially be more likely to develop friendships. In fact, Stumbo et al. (2015) argued that, “increasing access to meaningful inclusion and engagement in the community for persons with I/DD is critical” (p. 42).

Folk, Yamamoto, and Stodden (2012) did a study that implemented the Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID) program for young adults with I/DD who were working to transition from high school to some form of secondary education. They found that the students for whom this program was

provided, greatly appreciated the opportunity to participate in secondary education and “were motivated by the opportunity to learn, meet new people, and contribute to their families” (Folk et al., 2012, p. 257). Folk et al. also promoted the “Front Door First approach” to inclusion, which worked to promote and provide full access to community resources, activities and employment to individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities (2012). Overall this study showed that providing opportunities for inclusion stimulates intrinsic motivation for individuals with IDD to become more active members of their community and heightens their perceived QOL.

Individuals with developmental disabilities are at a higher risk of reduced or limited participation in leisure activities, and providing these opportunities is an extremely important aspect of enhancing their quality of life. In a study done by Heller and Sorensen (2013), it was found that providing individuals with I/DD active recreation activities resulted in better fitness, health, and improved overall quality of life. Furthermore, Zakrajsek, Hammel, and Scazzero (2014) stated that in order for individuals with I/DD to experience valuable leisure participation, “they must have the control in their lives, choices in how they participate, and support in their self-determination to define community participation activities and pursuits that are meaningful for them” (p. 154). In order to explore this concept, these researchers conducted a staff pilot study in which staff members and administrators from community agencies worked alongside individuals with IDD to empower them in becoming more active in recreation activities in the community. The study found that participants felt they had more independence and felt more comfortable participating in community- based recreation activities (Zakrajsek, et al., 2014). Furthermore, Badia, Orgaz, Verdugo, Ullan, and Martinez (2012) explored

how participating in various leisure activities can benefit individuals with DD. The authors randomly selected 125 individuals with DD and had them complete a leisure assessment inventory to measure their current leisure participation as well as leisure preferences, interests and constraints; results showed that individuals who participated in various leisure activities “were more satisfied with life, had high self-concept, showed less stress levels, enjoyed good health and felt physically fit” (Badia et al., 2012, p. 540).

Another study conducted by Badia, Orgaz, Verdugo, and Ullan (2013) found that most individuals with DD participate in very passive recreation activities, such as watching television, listening to music or reading a book because they feel they have limited opportunities for recreation. Participation in passive recreation activities does not provide the physical or social benefits that active leisure participation would provide. Orsmond et al. (2004) found that adults with autism reported higher levels of life satisfaction due to participating in social and recreational activities. These researchers also found that *adolescents* with autism were far more social and participated in more recreation activities than *adults* with autism (Orsmond et al., 2004), which goes to show why it is so important to provide more opportunities for adults to participate in leisure activities. It was also found that recreation participation is impacted by environmental factors and that “rates of participation in social and recreational activities were a function of not only the individual’s social impairments, but also the extent to which their mothers participated in similar activities” (Orsmond et al., 2004, p. 253), which highlights the idea that because these individuals are more dependent on caregivers, their ability to participate in recreation opportunities is impacted by the degree to which their caregiver participates. Salkever (2000) explored how activity status among individuals with

developmental disabilities impacts their perceived life satisfaction and found that individuals who were idle and only participated in passive activities reported far lower life satisfaction rates than individuals who engaged in active recreation opportunities, such as volunteering in the community.

Overall, a meaningful leisure lifestyle is need and a right of all individuals. Although individuals with intellectual/ developmental disabilities may face greater barriers than an individual without a disability, they still desire the equal opportunity to engage in meaningful recreation activities (Stumbo & Peterson, 1998). Research supports the importance of providing individuals with I/DD the chance to participate in active recreation opportunities in order to improve their QOL. Having opportunities for social inclusion and active recreation participation allows for these individuals to feel more involved in their community, which, in turn, can increase their life satisfaction and overall quality of life.

Research Questions/Hypotheses

As noted in the literature review, there have been few studies exploring how providing opportunities for socialization and recreation participation will benefit adults with developmental disabilities; moreover, there have been fewer studies in which individuals with DD are given a voice to express their opinions and experiences. The proposed research explored a weeklong camp designed for adults with I/DD, assessed the different perceptions that adults with I/DD had on their camp experience, and explored how opportunities for socialization and recreation participation impacted their quality of life.

Methods

Sample and Participant Selection

Camp Sunlight, where the research occurred, serves a variety of adults with multiple different intellectual/developmental disabilities, including: Down's Syndrome, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Williams Syndrome, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), Cerebral Palsy (CP), Muscular Dystrophy (MD), etc. Some typical challenges campers may face include: communication and social deficits; the tendency to be overly dependent on others; problems with memory, confusion, and change; and difficulty with coordination and movement (Colavita, Luthra, & Perry, 2014).

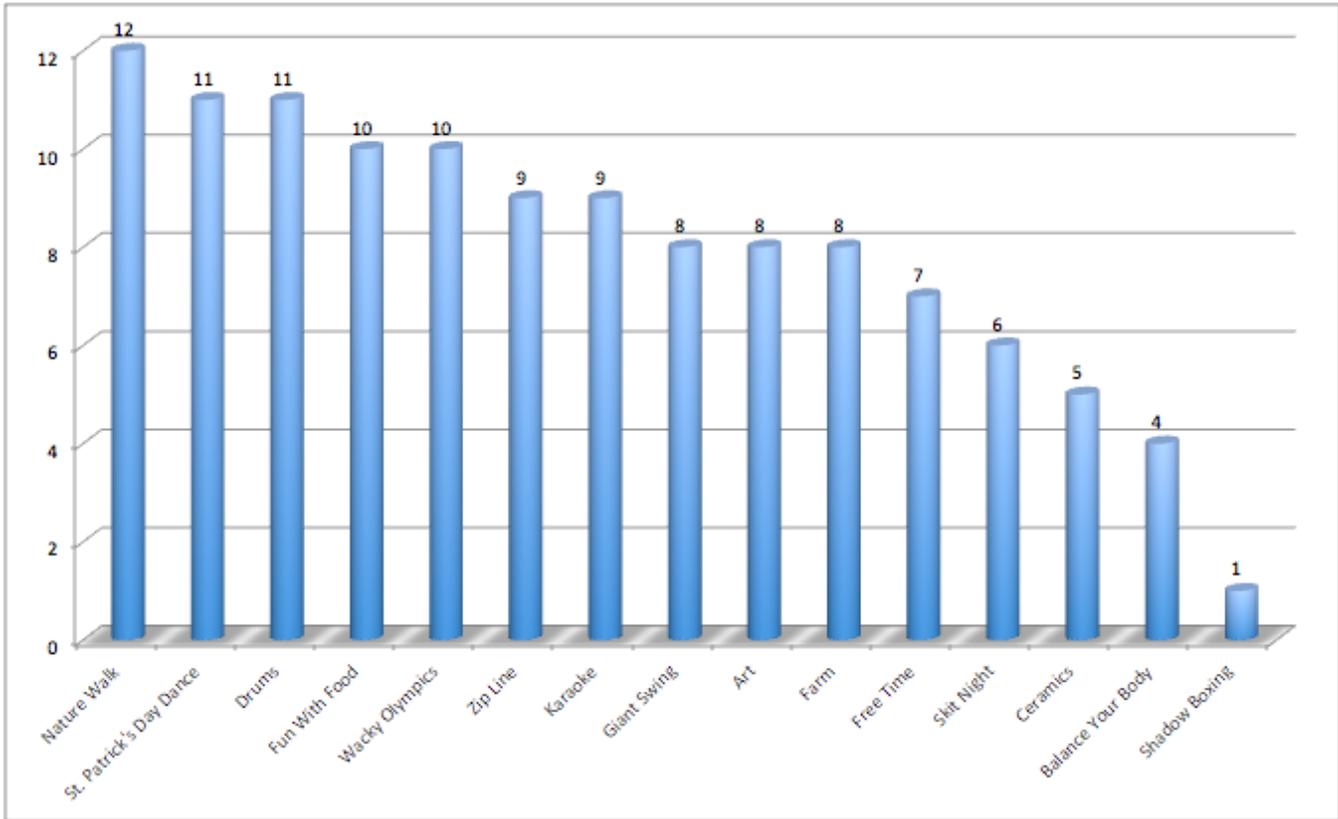
Camp Sunlight is a weeklong camp that serves adults, ages 21 and up, who have been diagnosed with an intellectual/ developmental disability. This camp takes place in three different locations: two in the Southeast and one in the Midwest. A typical day of camp provides opportunities for campers to acquire new life skills, socialize with others, and participate in numerous different recreation activities (see Table 1 for information about activities offered). At Camp Sunlight, men and women are separated into multiple groups of approximately 5-8 for sleeping arrangements; however, co-ed activity groups consisting of one female cabin paired with one male cabin (approximately 10-15 campers) are utilized to encourage normalized social interaction during camp activities. These activities groups work closely together throughout camp and participate in camp activities as a unit. A standard day of camp includes breakfast, two morning activities, lunch, two afternoon activities, dinner, one evening event, and cabin time/ lights out. Typical camp activities include: nature walk, dance, drumming, zip lining, karaoke, giant

swing, arts and crafts, ceramics, farm activities, skits, and low impact physical fitness activities. See Table 1 for specific activities and participants level of enjoyment.

This research was only conducted at the two Southeast locations. All research participants have participated in a Camp Sunlight session at either of the Southeast locations during the 2015 calendar year. The survey was sent out to approximately 105 individuals; however, researchers only received feedback from 20 individuals. This gave researchers a 19% response rate. The ages of those who provided feedback ranged from ages 22 to 70 (see Figure 1). Furthermore, an equal amount of males and females chose to participate in the online survey (see Figure 2). It was found that 25% of individuals attended Camp Sunlight in Georgia, while 45% attended Camp Sunlight at the North Carolina location. Furthermore, 30% of participants attended Camp Sunlight in both locations (see Figure 3).

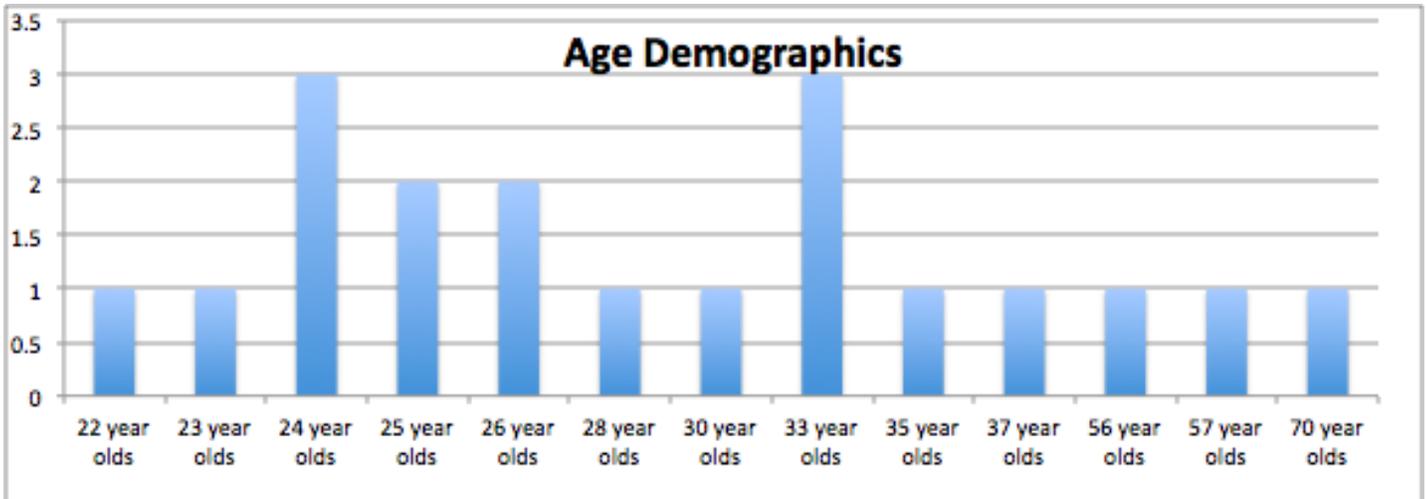
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Table 1



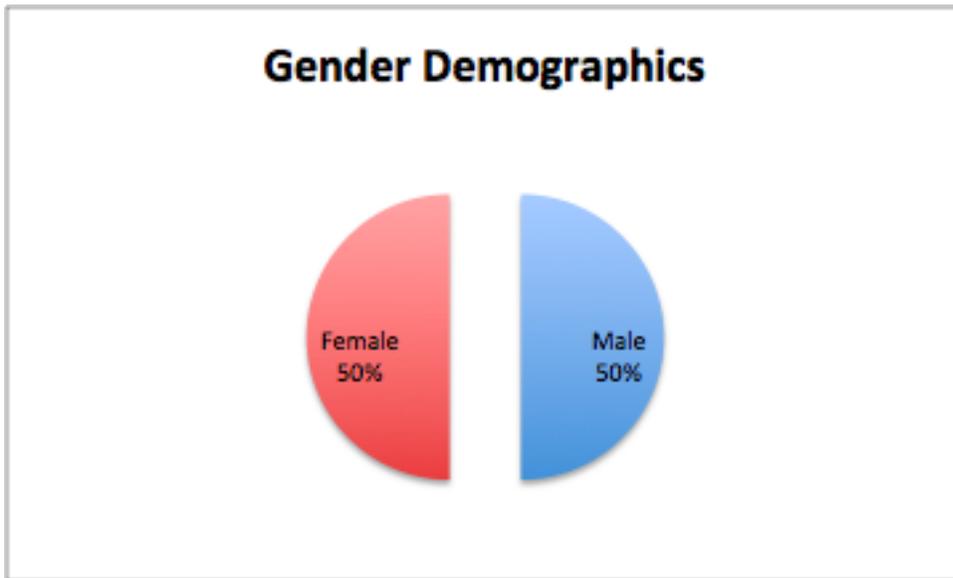
This table represents the different activities offered at Camp Sunlight. The numbers represent those participants who stated that they enjoyed the activity.

Figure 1



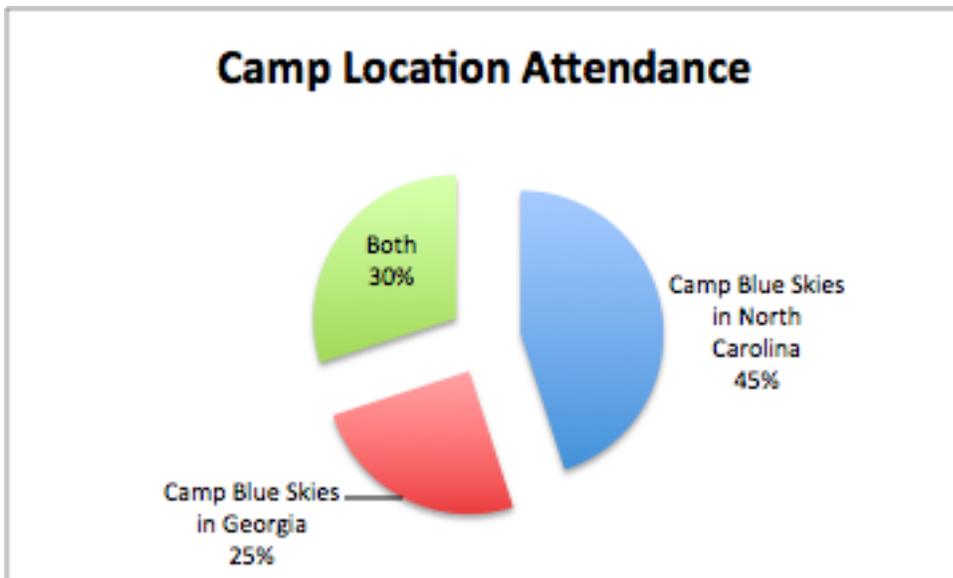
This figure represents the age demographics of those who chose to participant in the study. The ages range from 22 to 70 years old.

Figure 2



This figure represents the gender demographics that chose to participate in the study.

Figure 3



This figure represents the camp sessions our participants attended.

Assessments and Measures

Researchers created an electronic survey instrument, through the Qualtrics system, that consisted of 14 questions. Three out of the 14 questions addressed

demographic information; the remaining 11 open-ended questions were designed to explore how campers' experiences affected the way they evaluate their perceived quality of life. Researchers constructed most of the questions to explore concepts such as communication, leadership, independence, and socialization. As discussed in the review of the literature, many of these concepts are potential indicators of quality of life. See Appendix for information regarding the survey questions.

Procedure

The survey was sent out through e-mail from Camp Sunlight founder, Bob Smith. The email included a direct link to the survey as well as information regarding informed consent and informed assent. The survey was sent through Mr. Smith rather than the researchers in order to protect the confidentiality of those who chose to participate; additionally, the survey did not collect any personal or identifying data. In mid-December, the survey link was sent to the 105 campers that represented both of the Southeast camp locations. By mid-January, a follow-up email was sent to campers to encourage participation in completing the survey if they had not already done so. Researchers closed the survey at the end of the first week of February and began data analysis.

Through the use of the electronic survey instrument in which all questions are structured to be open-ended, researchers participated in a qualitative study. Different from a quantitative study that tends to focus on numbers and statistics, a qualitative study seeks to understand other peoples' perspectives, beliefs, and emotions. According to Silverman, "the distinctive contribution qualitative research can make is by utilizing its theoretical resources in the deep analysis of small bodies of publicly shareable data" (2000, p. 143). However, Silverman also discussed the idea that it is not uncommon for

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researchers to criticize the effectiveness, reliability and validity of qualitative research due to built in bias that could result (2000). For this reason, careful analysis of findings is necessary to provide reliability and validity of the study. The grounded theory involves three stages that are important in the process of breaking down and understanding the data found in the study:

1. Initial attempt to develop categories which illuminate the data
2. an attempt to 'saturate' these categories with many appropriate cases in order to demonstrate their relevance
3. developing said categories into more general analytic frameworks with relevance outside the setting (Silverman, 2000, p. 144)

In simpler terms, grounded theory consists of developing a theory based off of found data as opposed to gathering data after forming a theory; instead of beginning the study with a theoretical perspective in mind, researchers let the data speak for itself. Researchers created a separate document for each open-ended question with the answers that the participants provided. Researchers then performed line by line coding, where they reviewed every line of data and looked for recurring themes that suggested a common perspective recognized among all campers. After identifying common themes, researchers reviewed the collected data based on which camp participants attended. This process allowed researchers to look for similarities and differences among survey responses based on which camp the camper had attended. Researchers then conducted a second round of line-by-line coding to identify common themes. After this process, researchers concluded that there were no noticeable differences among the data sets that were separated by camp location; therefore, researchers utilized the overall data set for data analysis.

After reviewing the data and finding recurring themes amongst the surveys, researchers completed member checks. Member checks were designed to build

trustworthiness in the data. Guba (1981) discussed that the “concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are constructs for developing trustworthiness within qualitative research.” (as cited in the Journal of Experiential Education, 2011, p. 24). The concepts of credibility and trustworthiness were the highest goals researchers attempted to achieve within the data. The researchers conducting this study enhanced credibility due to three factors: the fact that established research methods were utilized in the study, the fact that the researchers were participant observers at Camp Sunlight, and the fact that researchers conducted member checks (Wolfe & Kay, 2011). To conduct member checks, researchers sent the aggregate themes they found back to survey participants and participants had the opportunity to either confirm or deny that the themes found represent their perceptions of their camp experience. Researchers created a visual word cloud in order for the participants to better understand the themes. After receiving feedback from the member checks, researchers compared the confirmed themes to themes found in literature.

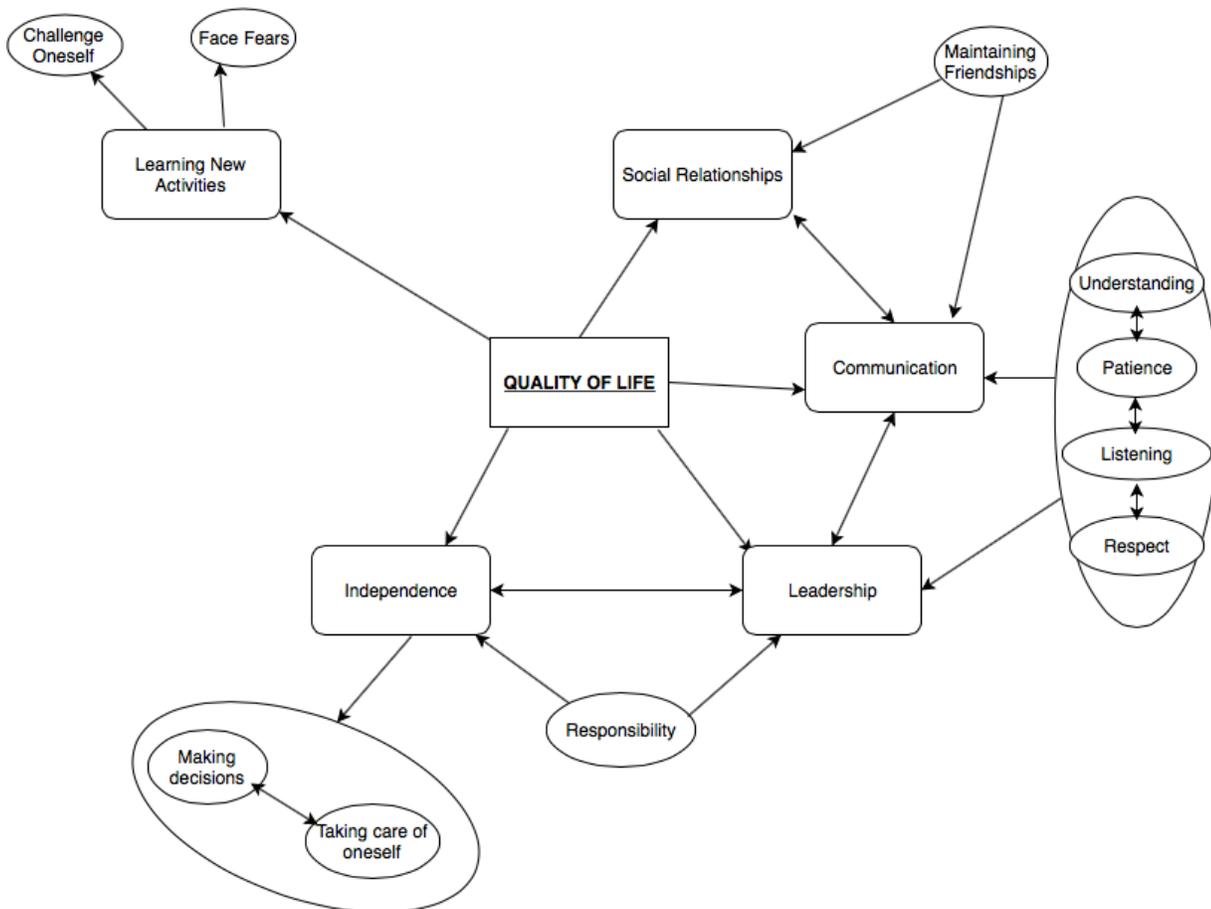
Results

Throughout this study, the researcher’s main focus was on exploring how the camp environment and experience affected campers’ perceived quality of life. Quality of life [QOL] includes a broad range of concepts, such as physical health, emotional health, independence, and social relationships, that influences how an individual may perceive his/her overall health (World Health Organization, 1997). In regards to QOL in this study, researchers found that the common themes participants conveyed included the importance of social relationships, learning new activities, independence, leadership, and communication. During data analysis, researchers found that the previously mentioned

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themes were indicators of quality of life. For this reason, Figure 4 was designed to show the relationship among the themes and their connection to QOL; however, it was also created to show that communication made unequivocal connections among social relationships and leadership. The data indicated that learning new activities was a freestanding indicator of quality of life, which is why it is portrayed as a more independent element of the figure. Overall, the figure demonstrates how these findings are interrelated in the understanding of how the camp environment affected campers' QOL. (see Figure 4).

Figure 4



Learning New Activities

Participants described enjoying the activities that camp provided because they were able to learn new activities while meeting new people (see Table 1 for information regarding provided camp activities). One camper stated enjoying the activities because they were “fun and you learn new things about yourself.” One individual also learned that participating in new activities is vital because “it is important to try new things and challenge things.” Furthermore, one camper realized that by participating in new activities, he/she found that “I can do more than I thought.” Lastly, a participant described that by participating in a new activity, he/she was able to “face my fear of heights.”

Overall, the participants learned the importance of trying and learning new activities through challenging themselves and facing their fears. The understanding of these concepts shows that participants gained vital knowledge in one area that is shown to impact quality of life.

Communication

As shown in Figure 4, the camp environment provides an outlet for participants to learn more about communication, and communication directly impacts quality of life. Those who participated in this study suggested that communication is directly related to their ability to make friends and be a leader. Furthermore, individuals who chose to participate in this study learned that in order to effectively communicate and be a good leader, one must be understanding, be patient, listen, and show respect. Through their survey responses, campers often noted the centrality of these concepts in relation to communication and leadership. One individual directly stated that through

communication, he/she learned to “respect others” while at camp. Learning to respect others through positive communication positively impacted social relationships. For example, when asked about what camp taught the participants about friendship, one camper stated that to make friends you must be able to talk to others and be understanding. This connection shows that communication is directly linked to other QOL indicators, such as the importance of social relationships..

Additionally, one camper used communication as a tool to “let the counselor know what I need;” this realization shows an understanding of taking initiative to take care of oneself, which is a sub-component of independence found during the study. This connection shows that participants realize the significance of using communication while considering their potential to be independent. This specific respondent understood how communicating with the counselor directly correlates with taking care of him/herself. Being independent is vital to individuals; therefore these factors intertwine, contributing to gaining a sense of how to improve their quality of life.

Social Relationships

During camp, participants were provided the opportunity to learn about friendship. Campers came to the conclusion that friends are very important to have, and in order to make friends, you must be understanding of others. This realization is an indicator of QOL: the importance of social relationships. One participant directly stated, “I learned to make friends.” Not only does this directly relate to the importance of friendships, it also conveys the gained knowledge of the importance of using communication to create friendships. One individual discussed wanting to “hang out with new friends after camp.” This realization was directly related to the importance of

maintaining friendships, which is a sub-component of the importance of social relationships. In contrast, one camper learned that it is okay not to get along with everyone at all times; this same camper learned that communication is being able to “tell my friend when to stop when I need to.” This connection is important because it shows that this individual camper was able to use communication as a tool for addressing conflict with other campers.

Leadership

Camp activities were designed to help participants learn about and experience leadership. Most participants learned that leadership is difficult, but important; furthermore, study participants learned that listening is an important aspect of leadership. Multiple campers discussed that listening is important to leadership because one must “listen to the leaders” and “listen to what the rules are.” This shows an understanding of the importance of being a good listener. Since listening is a sub-component of communication, these campers were able to make connections between the themes of leadership and communication. One camper learned that leadership was being “responsible for yourself.” Furthermore, another individual indicated an understanding that being leader means being responsible for others. Responsibility appears to connect both leadership and independence and camper comments demonstrate the inter-relatedness between the themes of leadership and independence.

Independence

The camp environment provides opportunity for the growth and development of camper independence. Since independence is an important factor of QOL, researchers explored what campers learned about independence during their camp experience. Most

participants described independence as something that is both difficult and important. One individual described independence as taking care of him/herself, or in other words, being responsible for oneself. Furthermore, one camper viewed independence as being able to make his/her own decisions. This shows the connectedness between independence and responsibility. On the other hand, when asked about independence, one individual learned that “we all need other people.” This shows an understanding that although independence is important, it is okay to ask for help when necessary. To ask for help, one must communicate effectively, which shows an underlying connection between independence and communication. Within the survey, campers were asked to reflect on what they learned about themselves; one camper stated, “I can do things for myself,” while another camper said, “I can stay away from home.” These self-reflections allowed for the realization that study participants can be independent. Furthermore, this awareness shows the vital role that responsibility plays in the development and understanding of independence.

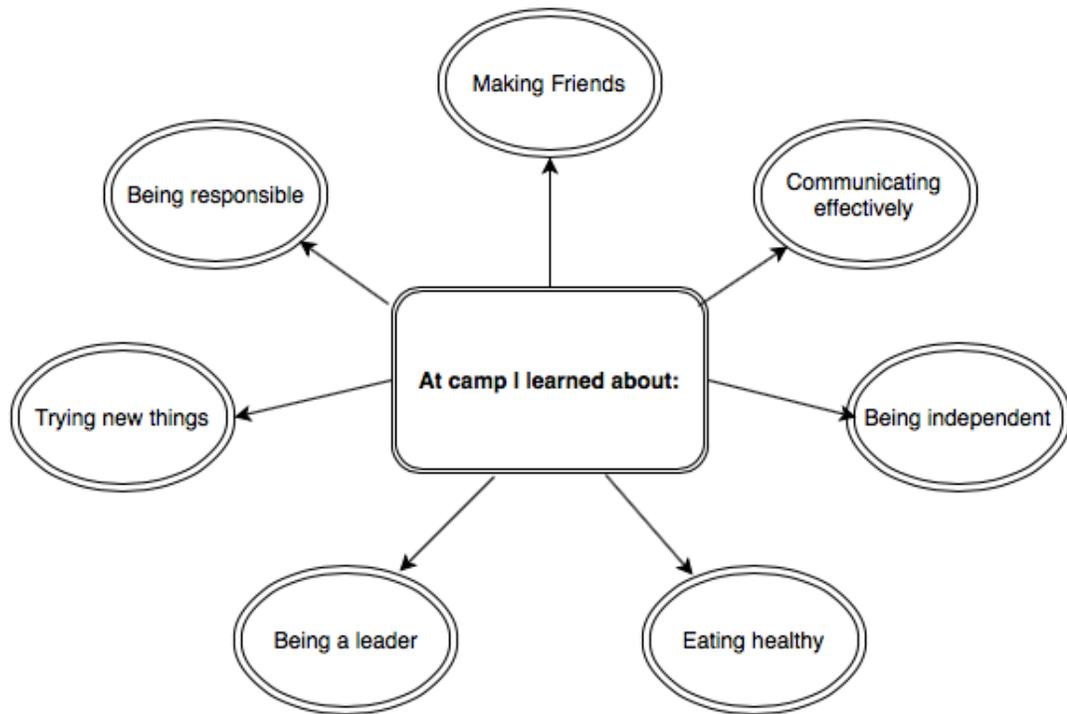
Member Checks

Researchers conducted a member check in order to substantiate the original themes found during data analysis. Researchers created an image of the themes found and sent that image out via Qualtrics survey (see Figure 5). The survey link was sent out to the same 105 participants and researchers received feedback from 10 individuals. Participants were asked if the image was an accurate representation of their camp experience. Nine out of the 10 respondents reported that the image was accurate in describing their perceptions of camp. However, one individual disagreed with the representation and stated that there were “not enough normal adult activities” provided at

camp. This deviant case is useful in understanding how the camp experience differs among participants. However, when asked why participants felt the image was appropriate for describing their experience, the majority of respondents stated that the image was a true representation of their experience at camp. The member check also asked for any additional thoughts about camp. Most individuals stated that they were looking forward to going back so they can see old friends and make new friends. This information ties directly back to the importance of social relationships and how campers perceive that concept.

Overall, through data analysis, researchers found that the camp environment provided campers with a better understanding of the importance of: learning new activities, social relationships, communication, leadership, independence, and responsibility. Because these concepts are all direct indicators of QOL, researchers suggest that the camp environment has the potential to enhance perceptions of QOL of campers.

Figure 5



Above is the member checks image that was sent to participants in order to verify and further explore research findings.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore and understand how a camp environment can impact participants' perceived quality of life. Existing literature limits the inclusion of the perspectives of adults with developmental disabilities. Therefore, researchers conducted the study in a way in which adults with developmental disabilities were able to voice their own perceptions, which enabled researchers to gain more knowledge about the population and their perceptions of QOL. The study found that by providing opportunities for socialization and recreation participation, individuals with

developmental disabilities gained a better understanding of the importance of friendships, being independent, communicating, and participating in new activities.

As previously discussed in the literature review, studies have shown that because individuals with DD typically face limitations in opportunities for socialization, it can be more difficult for them to develop friendships (Orsmond et al., 2004). The results of this study corroborated the work of Folk et al. (2012), in which individuals with DD were “motivated by the opportunity to learn” as well as “meet new people” because they were provided with something meaningful to participate in (p. 257). The results of the current study revealed that when participating in camp activities, participants found them beneficial because they were able to learn new things while meeting new people and enjoying time with friends. This shows direct connection to how providing opportunities for socialization can lead to individuals creating new friendships. Furthermore, individuals with I/DD may sometimes have a more difficult time communicating with others due limited acquisition of socialization skills. However, because the camp environment allows for constant socialization among other campers, participants reported learning that communication is important because it is not only how you create friendships, but how you maintain friendships. This realization ties back to previous literature findings that show how opportunities to create social relationships can improve overall QOL (Orsmond et al., 2004). Furthermore, Stumbo et al. (2015) mentioned that providing “access to meaningful inclusion” is crucial for individuals with I/DD. Participants at camp reported enjoying camp activities because they were able to challenge themselves, face their fears, and remain active throughout the day; researchers can conclude that camp activities may be considered “meaningful” due to these findings.

A study done by Zakrajsek et al. (2014) found that individuals who experienced valuable leisure participation felt more independent and comfortable participating in recreation activities. According to the World Health Organization (1997), independence is a direct indicator of quality of life; participants of this study discussed that through camp experiences, they were able to learn that although being independent can be difficult, it is important. Participants also learned that being independent involves making decisions and taking care of oneself. Studies done by Badia et al. (2013) and Orsmond et al. (2014) found that recreation participation improved overall life satisfaction. Similarly, participants in this study reported feeling “happy at camp” because they were able to enjoy new activities.

The aim of this study was to better understand how a camp environment can impact the overall perceptions of quality of life of adults with DD. Based on overall findings, it appears that the camp environment allowed for increased opportunities for socialization and recreation participation. These opportunities led to participants having a better understanding of the importance of creating and maintaining friendships, learning to communicate with others, being a leader, being independent, being responsible, and participating in new activities. These concepts are general indicators of quality of life, which shows that a camp environment can enhance individuals’ perceptions of QOL.

Limitations and Future Directions

While study participants appeared to experience enhanced QOL, there were some limitations within the current work. Although a large population was invited to participate, the response rate was quite low. The survey link was sent to 105 individuals; however, only 20 individuals provided feedback. The minimal amount of survey responses limited the amount of data researchers were able to analyze, and participants

may not be representative of the population. Another limitation would be that the study only explored *campers'* perceptions of how their quality of life was impacted. The study did not include the perceptions of staff, volunteers, friends and/or family members who interacted with the participants during and after the camp session. It would be beneficial for future studies to explore the perceptions of more than just the camp participants. Moreover, the timeliness of the study may have impacted the findings. Campers were asked for their perceptions anywhere from 4-10 months after their experience. This delay may have influenced camper perceptions of their experiences. Lastly, there does not appear to be existing literature that explores this hypothesis directly. A larger study is recommended to further explore participant perceptions related to QOL.

Further research is recommended to understand how providing opportunities for socialization and recreation participation in a camp environment can impact individuals with I/DD perceptions of QOL. It is also recommended that future research include a method to identify and measure *behaviors* related to QOL after camp has ended. In addition to the above suggestions, exploring several different camps in various locations may ensure a larger pool of data. Including more camps will directly include more survey participants, which will allow for more data to be collected, analyzed and used to explore the mentioned hypothesis. It would be beneficial to explore this concept through the multiple lenses that further research would provide. These multiple lenses could include how volunteers, counselors, friends and families feel the camp experience has impacted the participants.

Summary

Overall, this study was created to gain a better understanding of how an outdoor camp experience can affect participants' perceptions of QOL. Previous literature suggests that as individuals with I/DD age out of the school system, they begin to lose the opportunities to be involved in active recreation participation, as well as the opportunity to socialize with other individuals. The literature indicates that by losing these different opportunities, individuals with I/DD may experience decreased QOL. Furthermore, research demonstrates that providing opportunities for socialization and recreation participation may increase perceptions of quality of life. Because Camp Sunlight provides recreation and socialization opportunities, researchers explored how the camp environment impacted the QOL of adults with I/DD. The current research appeared to suggest that the camp environment provided the opportunity for growth in the following areas: learning new activities, social relationships, communication, leadership and independence. According to the World Health Organization (1997), all of the previously mentioned areas are indicators of quality of life (p.1). Therefore, researchers concluded that the camp environment positively impacted perceptions of QOL for these campers.

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Appendix

The survey participants received consisted of questions that addressed multiple indicators of quality of life. The survey consisted of three demographic questions and 11 open-ended questions. Below is a list of the survey questions.

Survey Questions:

1. How old are you?
2. Are you male or female?
3. Which Camp Blue Skies camp did you attend?
4. How did you feel before you arrived at camp?
5. What were your favorite activities at camp? (check boxes)
 - Giant Swing
 - Ceramics
 - Art
 - Nature Walk
 - Balance Your Body
 - Shadow Boxing
 - Fun with Food
 - Zip Line
 - Skit Night
 - Karaoke
 - St. Patrick's Day Dance
 - Wacky Olympics
 - Drums
 - Farm
 - Free Time
6. Why did you like these activities?
7. While at camp what did you learn about communicating with others?
8. While at camp, what did you learn about friendships?
9. While at camp, what did you learn about leadership?
10. While at camp, what did you learn about eating?
11. While at camp, what did you learn about independence?
12. While at camp, what did you learn about yourself?
13. Is there anything else that you learned while at camp?
14. How did you feel about leaving camp?