Recr 4400

Assignment #5 – Major Paper

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Executive summary

This paper aims to address a gap in the literature regarding long-term youth involvement and the camper life cycle at residential summer camps in British Columbia, Canada. It proposes the question(s) What are the current factors within BC residential summer camps that affect youth volunteers aged 14 to 19 from continuing long-term (1-5 years) participation? What steps can Camp Latona take to mitigate these factors and promote long-term participation within their residential summer camps?

This study explores the typical progression of individuals from campers to volunteers, then staff members (Kendellen et al., 2016). Factors such as job impact, camp embeddedness, and mentorship are found to be crucial for sustained involvement (Richmond et al., 2020).

It also identifies three types of barriers to long-term participation: systemic, industry-specific, and regulatory barriers within BC. Regulatory barriers like cabin counsellors are required to be over the age of 17 to work (BC Camping Association 2023) organizational barriers such as negative role models (Kendellen et al., 2016), and systemic barriers linked to the residential school system (Parish, 2024).

The research, conducted in British Columbia, Canada, between January 25 and March 6 2024, used three primary methods: interviews, content analysis, and specialized perspective observations. It identified three additional barriers: misaligned role identity, the significance of quality non-guardian adults, and the importance of training soft skills.

The paper concludes with suggestions for Camp Latona to tackle these issues. These include refining job identities, enhancing soft skills training, creating more mentorship opportunities with non-guardian adults, and an industry-wide recommendation to address previous connections to the residential school system

Introduction

Movies like Meatballs (1997), The Parent Trap (1961, 1998), or even Friday the 13th (1980) has created mysticism around the idea of what it means to volunteer or work at a residential summer camp. Often portrayed as an easy summer job where all you do is watch over children and goof off with other staff members. This cultural phenomenon has caused a rise in, and now booming, industry of recreational residential summer camps (Malinowski, 2021).

Residential summer camps refer to places where a variety of activities such as recreation, sleeping overnight, and eating take place. These camps are typically occupied temporarily, specifically during the summer months (Ontario, 2023). Residential summer camps are one of the largest childcare providers for summer break in Canada, with over 600,000 children and youth attending every year, representing a 1-billion-dollar industry (Canadian Summer Camp Association, 2016). Research suggests residential summer camps are vital for youth development in social, intellectual, and physical areas (National Academies of Sciences et al., 2019).

The thesis of this paper is to answer the question(s), "What are the current factors within BC residential summer camps that affect youth volunteers aged 14 to 19 from continuing long-term (1-5 years) participation? What steps can Camp Latona take to mitigate these factors and promote long-term participation within their residential summer camps?" Volunteering is defined as "Any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group, or organization" (Adams & Boscarino, 2015). In recent years, there have been major challenges in finding both volunteers and paid staff to support these programs. News outlets across North America have reported on this issue, such as one camp director in Alberta, Canada seeing only 25% of pre-COVID-19 applicant numbers for both volunteer and paid positions (Green 2022).

This paper aims to fill the existing gap in understanding the camper progression cycle within Canada and specifically British Columbia. The primary research focuses on three research methods to better understand the factors of how people participate long-term in summer camps. Utilizing one-on-one semi-formal interviews with volunteers and staff members of residential summer camps, program observations to better understand the relation between non-guardian adults and youth participation, and lastly, a content analysis of documents meant to orient young workers to gain skills for future long-term employment.

Background and context

Within British Columbia, Canada, there are currently 57 residential summer camps, including those managed by families, organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club or the YMCA, or operated by churches. Currently, most of them are church or religious-affiliated (BC Camping Association, 2024). Camp Latona is a non-religious, family-owned, and operated children's residential summer camp and outdoor retreat. It has operated for over 60 years in British Columbia. It's mission is to provide opportunities for children and youth to grow through wilderness, community, and creative experiences (Camp Latona 2022). Jill Lawlor is the agency advisor for this project. As the executive director, she has owned and operated Camp Latona for over 15 years. Bringing a wealth of experience and mentorship to this project.

Kendellen et al. (2016) suggest there are three primary progression steps in residential summer camp organizational participation. The first level is leaders in training, who are defined as campers who are not yet staff members but participate in volunteer leadership mentoring programs. The second level consists of counsellors, who are typically paid positions required to directly supervise campers 24 hours a day. Senior staff, the third level, are like staff in directly supervising campers but tend to have more years of experience and are expected to mentor junior counsellors and leaders in training.

Volunteer leaders in training and camp counsellors play a vital role in facilitating the camp experience for over 600,000 campers every summer. In Ontario alone, over 120,000 people each year are employed by residential summer camps and outdoor education centers (Ontario Camping Association, 2024). According to the American Camping Association, some people start working as early as 13-17; however, most of the camp staff population is believed to be emerging adults aged 18 to 25 (American Camping Association, 2010; Arnett, 2007). In Canada, youth aged 15 to 30 collectively contribute to 23% of all volunteer hours nationwide. Generation Z (people born between the years 1996 and 2012) has been more engaged than any other generation at 43% (United for Literacy, 2023)

Literature Review

Emerging adults

Individuals between the ages of 13 and 25 are transitioning from adolescence into early adulthood. "emerging adults" is a term used to help bridge the differences between those in adolescence and those in early adulthood. Certain indicators, such as a decrease in depressive symptoms with age and an increase in self-esteem, contribute to this definition. These changes result from factors such as navigating through puberty and acquiring autonomy as individuals age. An emerging adult is meant to describe someone who is no longer fully a child but does not yet have the education and autonomy of an adult. Although there is no exact age, the classification relies on developmental milestones encompassing cognitive and physical development, as well as family relationships (Arnett 2007, Thompson 2000)."

Arnett's process of how people move from adolescence to young adulthood is mirrored in the traditional residential summer camp program. Progression starts with individuals as campers, transitioning to leaders and training, then staff, and eventually senior staff. Each of these levels serves a different purpose within the camp ecosystem while also creating a program loop. Eventually, those campers who age into staff will then ideally inspire future campers to do the same. (Kendellen et al., 2016; Ferrari & McNeely, 2007)

Step 0 - Campers

Campers are youths, and sometimes adults, who participate in residential summer camp programs. In British Columbia, this can start as young as 6 years old for residential summer camps (Government of BC, 2016, Pg. 1). The upper age range depends on the type of camp programming, being upwards of 18+ for summer camps centered around those with developmental disabilities (Dawson et al., 2022, pg. 78). For the traditional summer camp experience within Canada, the typical range is 6 to 15 years old (Grace, 2024).

Campers' motivations for attending summer camp come from two avenues: one through intrinsic motivation, the other through parental decision-making. Campers are often motivated by factors such as gaining new friendships, learning new skills, building self-esteem, and connecting with nature (YMCA, 2019). Long-term (multi-year) motivating factors include leisure skills, willingness to try new things, independence, and affinity for nature (Richmond et al., 2019). However, when it comes to physical competencies, campers reported lower levels of self-perceived athletic competence and eagerness to try new activities at the end of their week at camp compared to the start of the week (Agans et al., 2022).

Parents are also a large contributing factor in determining when campers start attending camp, which camps they go to, and what parents see as perceived benefits of sending their child to camp. It is suggested that often parents see fewer perceived benefits before sending their kid to camp compared to 6 months after their child's program concluded. However, in that 6-month follow-up, parents overwhelmingly agreed that their children had been positively changed from the beginning to the end of camp (Schwartz, 2008).

Step 1 – Leaders in Training

"Leaders in Training" is a term that refers to campers, usually between the ages of 14 and 16, who act as senior campers and volunteers, assisting with various camp duties (Kendellen et al., 2016, p.40). This role is typically a progressive step for campers who are too young to work but too old for the traditional camp program, sometimes referred to as a "Camper in Transition" (Thompson, 2000). Key characteristics of Leaders in Training include not being staff members, participating in leadership mentorship programs focusing on different leadership responsibilities, and receiving no financial compensation beyond room and board for their work (Kendellen et al., 2016, p.39).

The literature suggests that structured leadership education programs provide an opportunity for emerging adults to become leaders, even if they haven't perceived themselves as such before. This is especially important for minority groups, such as low-income individuals (Martinek et al., 2006). This type of training better prepares individuals for future camp employment and general employment, particularly through the development of soft skills such as cognitive empathy, listening, and emotional intelligence (Hastings et al., 2020).

Step 2 & 3 – Staff/Senior staff

The final transition stage is from volunteer to staff member. Staff and senior staff are considered paid positions within residential summer camps. They are responsible for the direct supervision of campers on a 24/7 basis. They may have other administrative duties outside of cabins. However, they still live on site and are on call. Senior counsellors distinguish themselves from normal or junior counsellors by having 3+ years of work experience and the expectation of providing high-quality mentorship for younger junior counsellors and leaders in training (Kendellen et al., 2016, p.39). Like volunteers, there are a variety of benefits and motivators that lead people to seek out work opportunities in residential summer camp environments. Such as leadership development, confidence, managing stressful situations, and innovative decision-making skills (Brandt & Arnold, 2006; Duda, 2009; Garst & Johnson, 2005).

Short and long-term volunteering

Short-term volunteering can be defined as one- or two-week time period's working on a specific project, such as revitalizing a shoreline or a small renovation project. Long-term volunteering can range anywhere from 4 months to a year or longer. Typically, long-term positions involve a higher skill ceiling, longer durations, and more responsibility (Hannah, 2022). Within the context of residential summer camps, long-term can refer to someone who has volunteered or worked within the camp environment for at least 3+ years or summer seasons following similar distinctions (Degraaf and Glover, 2003).

Factors facilitating long-term participation.

The research suggests that several subthemes that facilitating factors to long-term participation for both volunteers and staff members. Job impact is often cited as a primary motivation for retention. Many volunteers and staff members who return to camp year after year mention that they are driven by the desire to make a difference in the lives of campers, to give other youth the same positive experiences they had as campers and witness the growth of individuals from session to session and year to year (Richmond et al., 2020, p. 191; DeGraaf & Glover, 2003).

Another common theme is camp embeddedness, defined as the friendships and relationships formed with both the camp environment and its people. Volunteers and staff members often refer to camp as their "second home." Some of the themes related to camp embeddedness include interpersonal relationships with campers, staff, and leaders in training. The camp environment fosters these relationships, participating year after year make camp an escape from the real world through these connections (Richmond et al., 2020, pp. 192-193; DeGraaf & Glover, 2003).

It is also believed that there is a significant gap in workforce readiness among emerging adults. A residential summer camp job provides a variety of interpersonal, communication, problem-solving, and leadership skills (Duerden et al., 2014). However, some research suggests that working in a residential summer camp environment has minimal influence on career orientation, which refers to the understanding of what to do for a career or in college (Richmond et al., 2019).

Factors hindering long-term participation

There are a variety of factors that can prevent emerging adults from starting or continuing participation within residential summer camps. These largely fall into three categories: industry-specific (poor leadership, lack of feedback, negative role models), regulatory (such as needing to be over a certain age to hold certain roles), and systemic (racism, income inequality, etc.) (Kendellen et al., 2016; Richmond et al., 2019; Parish 2024).

Organizational (individual camps) and industry barriers exist. Research suggests that on an individual camp basis, internal conflicts, lack of feedback and support, and negative role models all create barriers to long-term participation (Kendellen et al., pg. 44-45). For industry-wide barriers, a primary reason staff and volunteers leave is due to voluntary turnover (Hom et al., 2017). This typically comes from three categories: compensation, life scripts/other opportunities, and poor job fit. For some people, residential summer camps don't pay enough for college or car payments. They may need to intern in places better related to their college major or find that the environment is high energy and doesn't work for them (Richmond et al., 2020).

There are a variety of regulatory bodies that represent summer camps across North America. Specifically, in British Columbia, there exists the BC Camping Association, which acts as a governing body that facilitates and promotes the accreditation processes, informs, and educates camping professionals, and advocates for the benefits of camp (BC Camping Association, 2024). One barrier that exists within their regulations is to become accredited, all overnight counseling staff must be at least 17 years old or older, and ideally 18+ (BCCA, 2023).

Gaps in the Literature

The existing literature on camper progression and long-term participation is limited. Foundational research on this topic has been conducted by authors such as Richmond and Kendellen. However, their research primarily focuses on the camp industry in the United States or Ontario. As of 2024, there is no research on the camper progression cycle or factors affecting long-term participation within British Columbia. This could indicate a scarcity of institutions offering outdoor recreation programs. Currently, only two bachelor's degrees in outdoor recreation and tourism management are offered within BC. Limiting the amount of research done within the topic area. (University of Northern British Columbia, 2024; Capilano University, 2024).

Areas of controversy

Residential summer camps in name share a deep history with Canada's residential school system. Residential schools refer to an extensive schooling system that the Canadian government created and administered through the church for indigenous youth. This system was extremely damaging to indigenous culture, assimilating indigenous youth into a Euro-Canadian and Christian way of living. (Hanson et.al 2020) Summer camps across North America have often culturally appropriated indigenous symbols and traditions, even going so far as "Playing Indian". (Parish 2024) This is cited as one of the ways The Government of Canada continues to erase and commodify indigenous culture. While in residential schools, students were punished for partaking in such traditions, residential summer camps stole this culture and called it their own. (Parish 2024)

Discourse has started around this topic in recent years because of the residential school findings in Kamloops, British Columbia. Three common themes have emerged within the discourse of Christian summer camps running programs for indigenous youth. The first is that many of these camps struggle to find indigenous staff members. The second is that there's a great disconnect between the culture of Bible Camp and indigenous cultures, leading to ostracization and internal conflict for indigenous participants. The third discourse within Christian residential summer camps is surrounding the residential school system. Historian Sean Carleton (2021) argued that residential school denialism "is not the outright denial of the system's existence, but rather the rejection or misrepresentation of basic facts about residential schooling to undermine truth and reconciliation efforts in Canada." This was reflected in a Christian residential summer camp through bringing in indigenous students of the residential school system to discuss how it was a positive life-changing experience for them. (Rumford-Roger & Giles 2022)

This reflects a systemic barrier and area of controversy in the literature. Within BC, most summer camps were previously or currently Christian or church affiliated. (BC Camping Association 2024) To accurately answer the thesis question, it is vital to acknowledge all contributing factors that both facilitate and hinder long-term participation, including what we are participating in. The connection to residential schools is just one example of how cultural assimilation, colonialism, and systemic racism affect outdoor recreation and residential summer camps within British Columbia, and Canada. There is substantially more to unpack within this topic, however, within the scope of the paper, this was the most important factor to mention.

Methodology

Three primary research methods were applied to answer the question, "What are the current factors within BC residential summer camps that affect youth volunteers aged 14 to 19 from continuing long-term (1-5 years) participation? What steps can Camp Latona take to mitigate these factors and promote long-term participation within their residential summer camps?" These research methods include seven one-on-one interviews with current volunteers and staff of residential summer camps about their transitions from camper to volunteer, to staff member. To better understand what factors, promote and hinder long-term participation. The second is special status observations, looking towards community recreation to better understand the role that non-guardian adults play in affecting how youth participate in recreation programs. Finally, content analysis was utilized to see how Camp Latona's documents support the idea of residential summer camp jobs being used as a stepping stone for future employment. The goal of this primary research is both to connect and validify the existing body of knowledge within the literature on this topic. Secondly, to grow the limited body of research within British Columbia Canada on the progression cycle of campers. Lastly to explore new themes and findings within the topic.

Research Method 1 – Interviews

Six interviews involved Camp Latona volunteers and staff members, and one executive director from Sasamat Outdoor Center. They fall into six categories: camper, leader in training, staff member, senior staff member, leadership director (those who run leader in training programs), and executive director. It should be noted that interviewees can fall into more than one category; in many cases, people started off as campers, then did a leader in training program, and then became staff members. As such, their interview questions would be tailored to the identities and roles they've held. They were asked to describe their experiences within each of the stages of the identities they hold. The interview structure adheres to Rubin and Rubin's (2012) guide for qualitative semi-formal interviews, employing a three-part formula.

First, introduce the project and research question, alongside collecting demographic information such as name, gender identity, age, and titles held. Second, a series of main questions were asked to prompt discussion, then follow-up questions were asked to garner more detailed information on different themes and concepts related to the primary question. These key concepts are inspired by Kendellen's et.al (2016) Leadership Ladder, looking at both facilitators (positives) and barriers (negatives) in each step within the camper life cycle. Lastly, after all the formal questions had been asked, an opportunity was provided for the participant to share any additional information or thoughts not covered in the first two parts. Due to the scope of the project,

participants were also asked at the beginning and end of each interview whether they wished for their answers to remain anonymous pertaining to the final paper. Interviews were conducted over a period of 3 weeks from the January 25 to February 9, 2024 via phone call, online video teleconference, and in person.

The purpose of this primary research method is to better understand how the factor of role identity plays in long-term participation. Role identity can be defined as a set of attributes, common values, beliefs, and behavioral norms that exist when fulfilling a role (Mausz et al., 2022). A misaligned role identity can be described as a conflict between how a role is perceived by an individual versus how it is acted out. Intentional design is cited as one of the best practices when creating and administering leadership programs, defined as the consideration and intentional design of each experience and how it lays the foundation for the following step (Department of Youth and Community Development, N.D). Thus, implying that it's important to understand how and why people progress through each step. Such as defining the scope of their identity, what skills and abilities they learned in said step, and what they chose to take forward with them in the following step or what prevented them from continuing past the current step.

Table 1 - Interview list

Interviewee	Roll identities	Dates Interview	Years at camp	Interview Medium
Hannah Burnette (She/Her)	Camper, CIT, Staff, Senior staff, Leadership director	Jan 25, 2024	9	Video teleconference (via Facebook messenger)
Tegan Gammel (She/Her)	Camper, CIT, Staff, Senior staff, Leadership director	Jan 26, 2024	9	Phone call
Leah Puitz-Haywood (She/Her)	Camper, CIT, Staff, Senior staff,	Jan 28, 2024	10	Video teleconference (via zoom)
Amanda Anzulovich (She/Her)	Staff, Senior staff	Jan 30, 2024	4	Phone call
Anonymous	Camper, CIT	Feb 2, 2024	5	Phone call
Michael Gares (He/Him)	Camper, CIT, Staff, Senior staff, Leadership director	Feb 6, 2024	11	Phone call
Ben Quinn (He/Him)	Camper, CIT, Staff, Senior staff, Leadership director, Executive director	Feb 9, 2024	23	Video teleconference (via zoom)

Table 2: Interview question guide broken down by identity.

Stage 0 - Camper	
What was one of your fondest memories as a camper?	Facilitator/Barrier
Can you tell me about your experience as a camper?	Facilitator/Barrier
Stage 1 - Leader in Training	
Can you talk about the training you did as a volunteer?	Facilitator
Did you think your CIT Training Prepared you to be a Staff Member?	Facilitator
What challenges have you faced when it comes to volunteering at camp?	Barrier
What did you learn about yourself as a leader at Camp?	Facilitator
In your experience, what role does mentorship play in fostering long-term participation in leadership programs?	Facilitator/Barrier
How supportive were your parents of you coming to camp?	Barrier
Stage 2 - Staff	
What was your experience like as a counsellors?	Facilitator/Barrier
What did you learn about yourself as a leader at Camp?	Facilitator
Have you ever been in a situation where you wanted to volunteer /work at camp, but you couldn't? What was the reason?	Barrier
What motivated you to continue working at summer camps several seasons?	Facilitator
Stage 3 - Senior Staff	
How do you show the value of volunteering to youth in the settings?	Facilitator
How do you address any potential burnout or fatigue among youth volunteers, and promote their well-being in the long term?	Barrier
Leadership Director	
Have you noticed any specific factors that contribute to youth volunteers transitioning from volunteering to eventually being hired by organizations?	Facilitator
What is your leadership program like?	Facilitator/Barrier
Have you noticed any trends over the last few years of your work in relation to youth volunteering?	Barrier
Executive Director	
Can you share any best practices or lessons learned from your experience in coordinating youth volunteers?	Facilitator/Barrier
Can you share any success stories of youth volunteers who have participated in your leadership program and continued their involvement in the camp?	Facilitator/Barrier
What are your partnerships with community recreation like?	Facilitator

Research Method 2 – Observation

Three observations were taken from a specialized perspective, assessing three different programs within the City of Delta in British Columbia, each with varying degrees of guardian and non-guardian adult participation. Roaming Rascals was observed on March 6th, 2024 from 9:15am-11:45am. This program, designed for youth aged one to five, is described as a fun morning of play with toys, gymnastics, and sports equipment, requiring mandatory adult participation. (City of Delta 2024) The second program is ice skating lessons, observed on February 29th, 2024 3:45pm-7:00pm. This program, starting as young as three and extending to adulthood, requires parental participation at drop-off and pick-up, such as getting their kids dressed for the program, and then handed over to adult instructors for the duration of the 40-minute program. Lastly, a baking and cooking club was observed on March 4th, 2024 from 3:30 pm-7:15pm. For ages 6 through 12, this program had no parental participation.

The observation criteria were as follows, focusing on two themes within guardian and non-guardian adult interactions with youth. The themes being positive (facilitator) interactions, and negative (barrier) interactions. The checklist used was based on early childhood technical assistance center (ECTA) early childhood adult to child Interaction Checklist. Positive interactions on the checklist include parent participation in activities and social play, engagement with the child's interests, accurately interpreting child's behaviors and communications, and encouraging the child to try new things or new ways of doing things (ECTA, 2015). Adapting the ECTA checklist, negative interactions would be the lack of, or absence of things identified as positive interactions. For example, a lack of adult participation in play, limited understanding of a child's behaviors and communication, or not encouraging the child to try new things. *See Appendix A for full checklist.*

Parents and guardians are pivotal decision-makers in determining what recreational activities their children attend. Within the residential summer camp industry, parents determine if their kids get sent to camp, how much money they'll spend on it, and what benefits they perceive towards certain recreational activities. (Schwartz, 2008) There is currently limited research on how parental involvement impacts long-term participation in residential summer camps. With other recreational opportunities, such as sports, it's suggested that parental praise is important in developing positive behaviors in their child, especially when developing skills at younger ages. However, excessive parental involvement can have a negative impact on children who would prefer participation without parents present. (Bonavolontà et.al, 2021) Due to the nature of residential summer camps being almost exclusively parent-free, leaders in training and staff members fulfill this role as a temporary guardian.

Table 3 – Observation checklist (ECTA, 2015)

Positive interaction	Guardian examples	Non-Guardian Examples
• Observe the child's participation in everyday activities and social play. • Identify the focus of the child's attention or engagement in the activities (e.g., child interests) • Follow the child's lead and interests or preferences. • Interpret the child's behavior and responses as an intent to interact or communicate with you. • Respond promptly and positively (contingently) to the child's behavior in a way that maintains a child's interactions. • Enter into the child's play or interactions to encourage your-turn-my-turn play and interactions. • Encourage the child to try new things (behavior elaborations) through modeling, expansions, or other types of guided supports	• Watching a child will they play • Noticing a child fascination with a particular toy • Playing with their child in desired area of interest • Showing the child how to build a tower with blocks, then encouraging them to try	• A teacher observing a child during playtime in school. • At babysitter noticing a child's interest in a specific book • A babysitter than reading a child's favorite book because they showed interest in it. • A coach giving positive feedback When a child follows instructions • A coach demonstrating a new skill and encouraging the child to try
Negative interaction	**Guardian examples**	**Non-Guardian Examples**
Adapted from (ECTA 2015) Checklist • Ignore the child's participation in everyday activities and social play. • Overlook the focus of the child's attention or engagement in the activities (e.g., child interests). • Disregard the child's lead and interests or preferences. • Misinterpret the child's behavior and responses, not seeing them as an intent to interact or communicate with you. • Respond slowly or negatively to the child's behaviour in a way that disrupts a child's interactions. • Doesn't enter the child's play or interactions, discouraging your-turn-my-turn play and joint attention interactions. • Discourage the child from trying new things through lack of modeling, expansions, or other types of guided supports.	• No acknowledgment when a child shows a drawing they made • Not noticing a child special interest at home • Forcing a child to play in a specific way, such as through sports or with different toys when they do not wish to • Scolding the child for spilling water during play • Dismissing a child's interests and wanting to learn a new skill	• A teacher not acknowledging a child's effort in a group activity. • A babysitter not noticing the child's interest in a specific book. • A nanny forcing the child to read a different book when they want to read their favorite book. • A teacher scolding a child for making a mistake during a class activity

Research Method 3 – Content Analysis

Four of Camp Latona's documents were analyzed through a content analysis. The documents analyzed include Camp Latona's staff training schedule, staff training checklist, and staff manual. As well as volunteer leader in training participant numbers. The focus was on documents meant to orient young workers to gain skills for future long-term employment. Camp Latona's staff manual is an 80-page booklet shared with all staff members. It covers a variety of topics including Camp Latona's mission and objectives, staff policies, camp counsellor duties, and program-specific areas such as arts and crafts, waterfront, and out tripping (Camp Latona 2022). The staff training checklist was a series of competencies staff acquire through staff training, broken up into six categories including camp facilities, policies and procedures, program organization, health and safety, counseling and leadership, waterfront, and camping (Camp Latona 2008). The staff training schedule is a 5-day schedule that details when certain topics will be held throughout the duration of summer staff training. (Camp Latona 2023) Lastly, the volunteer leader in training registration numbers from 2019 to 2024.

These documents were analyzed using Work BC employment services center's personal skill inventory. This inventory is a set of transferable skills in seven categories, including key skills, creative, leadership, hands-on, communication, people, and information. The key areas that were assessed in this content analysis were leadership, communication, and people skills. Leadership includes skills such as making decisions, directing the work of others, helping the team set goals, motivating people, solving problems, and taking risks when necessary. Communication includes talking easily with others, being inventive, speaking in public, working well with others, and clearly expressing yourself. People skills include managing conflict, being tactful, being kind and understanding, being a good listener, and being patient. (Work BC, 2015) *See Appendix B for full checklist*

The literature strongly suggests a correlation between the skills and abilities acquired through volunteer work at camp and work readiness (Duerden et al., 2014). Looking at the natural progression of a camper's life cycle, these skills and abilities gained as a volunteer should ideally transition into a qualified staff member. As such, the content analysis assessed documents pertaining to these transitions. The literature suggests that Leaders in Training programs are effective at preparing individuals for future camp employment and employment in general, especially in soft skills such as cognitive empathy, emotional intelligence, and listening (Hastings et al., 2020). It has also been suggested that the predominant reason people continue long-term participation is due to job impact, defined as the desire to make a difference in campers' lives and

give others the same experiences they had when they were campers (Richmond et al., 2020, p. 191; DeGraaf & Glover, 2003).

Table 4 – Work BC personal skills inventory (Work BC, 2015)

Leadership Skills	Verbal Communication Skills	People Skills
• arrange meetings or social functions	• clearly express myself	• help and care for others
• be competitive when necessary	• talk easily with others	• manage conflicts, resolve issues
• make decisions	• create and talk about new ideas	• counsel people
• direct the work of others	• design presentations	• be tactful and diplomatic
• help set goals for my team	• be inventive	• interview people
• explain things to others	• conduct research in a library or on the Internet	• be kind and understanding
• solve problems	• set up my own network of experts or helpers	• be a good listener
• motivate people	• be logical	• negotiate
• settle disagreements	• speak in public	• be outgoing
• plan activities and put them into action	• write clear and concise reports	• show patience
• take risks when necessary	• work well with others	• be pleasant and sociable
		• supervise, teach
		• be tough when necessary
		• trust people
		• trust my instincts

Successes and challenges in conducting primary research

Within the primary research, specifically the semi-formal one-on-one interviews, success was found with willing participants from the residential summer camp industry. When reaching out to current industry professionals about the project, all interviewees contacted were enthusiastic about being interviewed on their experiences. It should be noted that interviews were only scheduled for 20-to-30-minute time slots based on the allotment of planned questions to participant identity. However, almost every interview went over that time limit during the third portion of open dialogue, with multiple interviews going for an hour or longer. This led to deep, authentic conversations that helped fill in the gaps missed in the literature review and interview questions. Some key findings from this success were the roles that parents play in influencing the camper identity and their participation. Another conversation that came up was the complex history of the residential school system and Christianity in relation to residential summer camps.

Two major challenges presented themselves: one through finding adequate observations, and the other through acquiring Camp Latona documents to conduct the content analysis. Due to the timeline of the project taking place between January and March, there were limited opportunities for observing residential summer camps or progressive leadership programs. As such, digging into the literature was utilized as an opportunity to answer the research question. Due to the importance that guardians play in the camper stage of the progression cycle, community recreation programs were observed, looking at varying degrees of guardian and non-guardian participation.

The second challenge was acquiring documents for the content analysis. Many of the documents Camp Latona uses do not have digital copies and remain in binders within the office on site, such as program guides, director manuals, and program-specific activity books. Due to the remote nature of the camp, it proved difficult to acquire these documents within the timeline of the project. Ultimately, documents chosen for the content analysis pertained to recently updated digital copies of specific documents, including the staff manual, staff training schedule, and registration numbers. The theme utilized with the available documents was assessing transferable skills for future camp and other employment.

Research findings and analysis

The following section is broken up into two categories with multiple sub-themes of research findings. Category 1 is primary research findings that are congruent with the literature. This means findings within the primary research that are in line or agree with those found within the literature review. Category 2 is new and/or contrary findings found through the primary research. This refers to new information that was not existent, or limited within the literature, or findings that contrast what is found in the literature.

Category 1 – Primary research congruent with secondary research

Camper progression cycle

The literature suggests that campers progress through a natural life cycle. Kendellen et al. (2016) propose a leadership ladder that outlines three primary stages of a camper's life cycle: Volunteer in Training, Staff Member, and Senior Staff Member. This progression was confirmed through the primary research methods. In the interviews conducted, the average number of identities held by the interviewees was four, with the mean number of years spent at camp being 10.1. The identities of Camper, Leader in Training, Staff, and Senior Staff were common among almost all participants. This suggests that long-term participation (1-5 years) involves multiple role identities rather than a singular one.

This was also reaffirmed through Camp Latona's leadership program participant registration numbers. Despite limited registration numbers post-2020 due to the pandemic, there has been a consistent number of participants progressing through each stage within the Leader in Training step of the camper life cycle. For example, in the Future Leaders in Training program, the first level of Camp Latona's leadership program in 2021, 11 participants completed the first stage, another 11 completed the second stage, and 10 completed the third stage. Similar trends were observed among those who started Future Leaders in Training in 2022 and finished their third stage in 2024.

Table 5: Participant registration numbers for Progressive leadership programs

Program/Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Counsellor in training	N/A	3	5	9	10	24
Leader in training	N/A	4	3	11	22	11
Future leader in training	2	6	11	19	22	19
Outdoor Leadership	7	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Job impact and camp embeddedness are key facilitator.

Richmond et.al (2020) suggested that job impact is one of the major reasons people continue to participate in camp long-term as volunteers and staff. Camp embeddedness was also cited as another major reason people continue to participate in residential summer camps. Through the interview process in the primary research, findings from Richmond are congruent with those within residential summer camp professionals in British Columbia.

When prompted by the question "What motivated you to continue working for several seasons?" every interviewee mentioned themes of job impact and/or camp embeddedness, such as becoming friends with the people they work with, seeing breakthroughs with youth, making an impact on those they work with, and being in a different environment from regular everyday life.

Complex dynamic between Christianity, residential summer camps, and inclusion

Camp Latona has operated for over 60 years and, until 2008, functioned as a Christian summer camp (Lawlor 2024). It currently operates as a non-church affiliated camp, open to all faiths. One challenge Camp Latona faced in its new era was an allegation in 2021 dating back to 1978. One man sued a previous Archbishop of Camp Latona, alleging sexual exploitation. He claims to have dealt with numerous mental health issues, sexual dysfunction, and mistrust of authority figures, especially men (Hainsworth 2021).

The organization also has some outdated sections of documents that don't necessarily align with the current mission and vision of the organization. For example, a 2018 staff manual mentions: "Arts and crafts is enjoying the world of nature. God's creation is alive at CAMP LATONA. Man-made things seem to dominate in city life. Here at Camp, God-made things surround us in a treasure as simple as a shell or a piece of driftwood." And "AIMS AND OBJECTIVES: Camp Latona is an extension of home, church, and school." (Camp Latona 2018)

When discussing factors that affect long-term participation, understanding the complicated histories upon which recreational activities are based is vital. The literature showcases the longstanding connection between Christianity, residential schools, and residential summer camps. Some of these influences still affect summer camps today, even after becoming non-church affiliated. Lived experiences and history can manifest themselves even if the current organization or industry isn't practicing said history. This can create a systemic influential factor in determining whether people initially begin to participate, are deterred due to generational trauma, or have preconceived biases about certain minorities (Indigenous, LGBTQ+, etc.) interacting with other affiliated groups like the church.

Category 2 - Novel and/or Contrary findings

Misaligned role identity

A key factor throughout the interviews that created barriers to participation was role identity. For example, some people cited that during their leader-in-training years, they were unsure of their responsibilities and/or felt that those responsibilities were more aligned with a staff or senior staff role. One staff member mentioned, "Not having the fun of a camper, but not getting the respect of staff" (Burnett, 2024). Another staff member mentioned that in 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Camp Latona had volunteers operating in a staff-like capacity, such as running activities by themselves and managing groups of campers, however without the pay associated with a higher role (Gammel, 2024). It's been previously suggested in the literature that there's role conflict between identities held outside of camp (such as being a student) and inside of camp (such as being a staff member). However, there's a limited body of understanding about what a misaligned role identity looks like within the traditional camper life cycle as suggested by Kendellen.

Importance of having high quality a non guardian adults supporting youth

The three programs form the City of Delta had guardian involvement to varying degrees, such as 100% mandatory, only during transition periods, and not at all. A common theme within the observations is that high-quality non-parental adult support is a crucial factor in creating long-term participation. For example, during the cooking and baking club, there were two staff members alongside an adult volunteer supporting the program of 5 youth. Three youths were quite rambunctious and required the two staff members to support them. These three mentioned that their parents signed them up because they thought it might be good for them. This allowed the adult volunteer to support the other two who were internally motivated to be there. Near the end

of the program, all the youth noted that they enjoyed the week and were sad that the next class would be their last.

Limited time training soft skills for staff and senior staff

Camp Latona dedicates significant training, resources, and time to hard skills among both staff and volunteers. This includes activity skills such as leading archery, high ropes activities, waterfront, boating activities, etc., as well as emergency procedures, policies, and facility maintenance. In the 2023 staff training schedule, only half a day out of 5 days were dedicated to soft skills (Camp Latona 2023). This is mirrored in a staff training checklist, where only 11 out of the 73 items pertain to communication, people skills, leadership, or other soft skills (Camp Latona 2008). This is important because job impact and the ability to connect with campers to form long-lasting relationships are cited as one of the major factors in promoting long-term participation for both volunteers and staff members (Richmond 2020). This is important because this could imply that volunteers and staff members are not getting the adequate skills required to promote their own retention. However, it should be noted that the staff training manual goes into much greater depth in what it means to be a camp counsellor, what a leader is and how to build cabin culture. Dedicating around 20 pages or roughly a quarter of the manual to this topic. (Camp Latona 2022)

Summary of Key Findings

Much of what was uncovered through the primary research aligned with the existing body of research on this topic. Three congruent themes were found between the three primary research methods. Kendellen's Leadership Ladder was found to be an effective categorization method in showcasing the transitions from camper to volunteer to staff member. However, camper as a stage was added to round out the cycle. Among interviewees, it was determined they held an average of four role identities over a median of 10 years. This was also found within Camp Latona's progressive leadership volunteer program, with consistent registration numbers over the course of multiple 3-year cohorts. Camp embeddedness and job impact were also found to be key facilitators for long-term participation. All seven interviewees mentioned connection with others and making a difference in children's lives as key reasons for continuing for multiple seasons. Lastly, there's still a long and complicated history in relation to Christianity, residential summer camps, and residential schools. In Camp Latona's 60+ year history, only a fraction of that time has been non-church affiliated. As such, they deal with a complicated history of alleged child abuse and some misaligned document sections because of its history.

Three new barriers were observed through the primary research methods. Through qualitative interviews using Reubin and Reubin's guide, it is suggested that there's a current issue with misaligned role identity at Camp Latona. The literature suggests that having clear and defined roles is important in progressing long-term from camper to senior staff member (Kendellen et al., 2016). However, many staff members mentioned that at one point throughout their participation, they operated at a higher level or outside of their job scope leading to a disconnect between what they were doing, and the compensation associated with said role.

Through observations within community recreation, it was found that there's a vital importance of having non-guardian adults supporting youth. This factor can both promote and create barriers to long-term participation. The observation from a specialized perspective suggested it can promote participation through one-on-one support and creating deeper interpersonal connections (Job impact). Some of the literature suggests that having negative role models within residential summer camps can be a barrier to participation (Kendellen et al., 2016).

Lastly, through content analysis, it was determined that Camp Latona spends a limited amount of time training volunteers, staff, and senior staff on soft skills. The literature suggests job impact is a primary motivator for retention, cited as the desire to make a difference in people's lives, and give the same positive experience they had as campers (Richmond et al., 2020, p. 191; DeGraaf & Glover, 2003).

Further research could be conducted utilizing the special status observation method, specifically focusing on interactions between non-guardian volunteers, staff members, and participant relations. Although the community recreation observation highlighted the significance of this dynamic in a single-day setting, additional research is needed to comprehend its implications in an overnight residential setting. Also given the scope of this project, further research can be done on specific categories of barrier factors including systemic, organizational, and regulatory.

Recommendations

Refinement of Job Identity

To address the identified issue of misaligned job identity at Camp Latona, they should consider refining their staff and volunteer job descriptions. As identified in the literature review, there are clear and defined steps that campers traditionally progressed through. This was mirrored and even found successful within Camp Latona programs through their progressive leadership volunteer program. However, some volunteers and staff stated there were points throughout their journey where they were confused about their role identity or operating at a higher level with less reward. By redefining each of these identities, it will allow people to better understand where they currently are, what their responsibilities are, and what they're looking forward to in the future.

Three ways Camp Latona can refine job identity is through a comprehensive review of current staff and volunteer job descriptions, redefining these job descriptions, and better documentation of each role. As new facilitators and barriers continue to present themselves over time, traditional job identities may become outdated and not match current societal expectations. Through analysis of current job descriptions, Camp Latona can identify where responsibilities may be out of line with how the role is currently perceived in action. By redefining job descriptions, it can help people better understand their job identity and for it to be more aligned with their internal motivations. Documenting these changes will help legitimize said changes and bring everything full circle into reality rather than just through conversation.

Increase time on soft skills training

The literature on this topic strongly suggests that job impact and camp embeddedness are two of the most important factors promoting long-term participation. (Richmond et.al, 2020) A content analysis of Camp Latona's training documents showcased a limited amount of time spent training soft skills such as communication, leadership, and empathy. It is recommended that Camp Latona increases its emphasis on soft skills when training in hard skill areas (such as group management when teaching archery) and includes more time in general towards training of soft skills.

Some ways this could be done include incorporating more soft skill training modules into the existing staff and volunteer training program. Such topics could include effective communication, how to build a cabin culture, and conflict resolution. It's also important for Camp Latona to evaluate the effectiveness of the soft skill training, given the importance of these skills for long-term volunteer participation and for making further improvements.

Create more opportunities for non guardian adult mentorship.

The primary research highlighted the importance of non-guardian mentorship in fostering a sense of community, particularly in small group settings. According to Kendellen's definitions of Leaders in Training and Senior Staff, Leaders in Training are expected to receive leadership mentor training, while Senior Staff are traditionally meant to provide that training. It is recommended that Camp Latona incorporate more opportunities for Senior Staff to mentor Leaders in Training and Junior Counsellors to foster connections and gain skills for future camp employment.

This can be achieved in three ways: by developing a structured mentorship program, promoting the benefits, and highlighting opportunities to learn from experienced peers, and providing training resources for mentors to support their role effectively. By creating an intentional program, you can foster opportunities for senior staff members to pass down their knowledge and experience to younger staff and volunteers. By promoting the benefits, you can showcase to newer staff the advantages of the program and encourage the participation of senior staff to mentor. By providing training resources to senior staff, you can effectively equip them to better execute their roles, leading to improved outcomes.

Addressing historical systemic issues

There's a complex history found through both the primary and secondary research relating to Christianity, residential schools, and summer camps. It is recommended that Camp Latona and the BC summer camp industry as a whole take steps towards addressing this systemic barrier. Ways this can be achieved is by being transparent about the broader historical context of residential summer camps, incorporating inclusivity and cultural sensitivity training for staff and volunteers, and utilizing YouthREX's checklist for inclusive youth leadership programs.

The BC residential summer camp industry can be transparent about this history through industry websites like the BC Camping Association, individual camp websites, communications with campers and families, and through staff training materials. It can look at industry best practices for cultural sensitivity and inclusivity training towards reconciliation and incorporate those teachings into volunteer and staff training. Lastly, different residential summer camps can audit their own youth leadership programs using YouthREX's checklist for auditing youth leadership programs accessibility towards marginalized youth. (Houwer 2016) *See Appendix C for full checklist.*

Conclusion

Residential summer camps within British Columbia, Canada, are not immune to similar barriers observed within other parts of Canada and North America. Long-term volunteering within the context of residential summer camps traditionally starts when people are campers, and they eventually age out into a volunteer leader-in-training role as emerging adults, then potentially transition to staff members (Kendellen et al., 2016). There are a variety of factors that both support and hinder the participation of people at each of these levels, with facilitating factors such as job impact, camp embeddedness, and mentorship (Richmond et al., 2019).

Systemic, industry-specific, and regulatory barriers hinder long-term participation. This includes industry-specific barriers such as voluntary turnover, organizational barriers such as negative role models, and systemic barriers such as the connection to the residential school system (Richmond et al., 2019; Kendellen et al., 2016; Parish, 2024). Most of the literature on this topic is centered around American or Ontario-run camps, leading to a large gap in the literature pertaining specifically to British Columbia on this topic.

Three primary research methods were utilized within British Columbia, Canada: interviews, content analysis, and observations from a specialized perspective. Through the primary research, three new barriers were identified, including misaligned role identity, the importance of quality non-guardian adults, and the need for training of soft skills. Further research can be done to look at the factor of non-guardian adult participation within a residential summer camp setting. Successes were found through the willingness of residential summer camp professionals to share their experiences during interviews. Challenges were found given the scope of the project taking place between the months of January and March, specifically in the observation category due to the limited number of summer camp and youth leadership programs running.

A common theme throughout all primary research methods indicates that factors that inhibit participation for volunteers and staff pertain to soft skills and the inability to connect with others. Recommendations specific to Camp Latona include redefining different job identities, increasing time training staff on soft skills, and creating more opportunities for non-guardian adult mentorship. With an industry-specific recommendation of acknowledging historical pasts with residential schools, summer camps, and Christianity.

Ultimately, this research showcases that it's substantially harder to overcome barrier factors than it is to promote facilitator factors. It's hard for just one camp to change regulatory factors such as age requirements for certain roles, or systemic issues that affect the industry. But what they can do is look at why people stay and give them the training and resources they need to promote their own participation. If that is done successfully, the camper life cycle could continue indefinitely.

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Appendix A: Work BC Employment service center, Know yourself personal skills inventory (Work BC, 2019)

WorkBC Employment Services Centre

Vancouver Northeast Employment Services Centre

Know Yourself • Personal Skills Inventory

Step 1: Find your Transferable Skills (continued)

Verbal Communication Skills
→ clearly express myself ☐
→ talk easily with others ☐
→ create and talk about new ideas ☐
→ design presentations ☐
→ be inventive ☐
→ conduct research in a library or on the Internet ☐
→ set up my own network of experts or helpers ☐
→ be logical ☐
→ speak in public ☐
→ write clear and concise reports ☐
→ work well with others ☐

Data/Information Skills
→ make a budget, manage money ☐
→ record facts, classify information by date ☐
→ analyze data, audit and maintain records ☐
→ check information for accuracy ☐
→ pay attention to details ☐
→ investigate and clarify results ☐
→ locate answers, gather information ☐
→ calculate or compute ☐
→ evaluate ☐
→ take inventory ☐
→ keep financial records ☐
→ research and write reports ☐

People Skills
→ help and care for others ☐
→ manage conflicts, resolve issues ☐
→ counsel people ☐
→ be tactful and diplomatic ☐
→ interview people ☐
→ be kind and understanding ☐
→ be a good listener ☐
→ negotiate ☐
→ be outgoing ☐
→ show patience ☐
→ be pleasant and sociable ☐
→ supervise, teach ☐
→ be tough when necessary ☐
→ trust people ☐
→ trust my instincts ☐

Job Skills · Hidden Skills · Transferable Skills

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WorkBC Employment Services Centre

Vancouver Northeast Employment Services Centre

Know Yourself • Personal Skills Inventory

Step 2: Find your Hidden Skills

You may have some valuable skills that you haven't thought about including on your résumé. Follow these six steps to identify your hidden skills:

1. **List all your previous and current experiences, at work and in other contexts.**
   When you think about your skills, don't just consider paid work. You can also draw from extracurricular activities at school, time spent volunteering, and even hobbies.

2. **Describe the tasks you completed using action words for each experience.**
   For example, suppose you worked in a coffee shop. You might describe the tasks you completed like this:
   - I followed recipes, mixed ingredients, set temperatures, baked muffins, and mixed a variety of hot and cold coffee and tea drinks.
   - I worked with complex equipment.
   - I operated a cash register, made change, and balanced the day's receipts.
   - I worked with others under sometimes busy or stressful situations.

3. **Identify the skill(s) required to complete those tasks.**
   Your list of skills might look something like this:
   - manual skills
   - computer skills
   - financial and number skills
   - teamwork and patience skills

4. **List other things you learned to do in that job.**
   Other things you learned working in the coffee shop include how to:
   - manage your time responsibly and organize your work
   - serve customers in a professional and friendly way
   - display products so people will buy them

5. **Identify the skills you gained from the other things you learned.**
   Your list of skills might look something like this:
   - time management skills
   - customer service and communication skills
   - marketing and promotional skills

6. **Build strong sentences by combining the skills you developed with the tasks you completed.**
   - I developed marketing and creative skills while designing window displays to attract customers.
   - I developed communication skills while serving customers and working with my co-workers.
   - I developed promotional skills while helping customers decide what to order.
   - I developed financial skills while making change, ordering inventory, and balancing the day's receipts.

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WorkBC Employment Services Centre

Vancouver Northeast Employment Services Centre

Know Yourself • Personal Skills Inventory

Step 3: Find your Job-Related Skills

Job-related skills are those that you need for a particular job. An office worker needs computer and keyboarding skills, a mechanic has to understand repairs and how to use tools, and a cashier must be able to make change and use a cash register.

When you're about to apply for a specific job, review your lists of skills and highlight the ones that are most relevant to the job you're applying for. Once you have these elements, put them together into a résumé that will work for you.

Essential Skills Profiles

Essential Skills Profiles describe how workers in various occupations use each of the key essential skills. They include:
- a brief description of the occupation;
- examples of tasks that illustrate how each essential skill is applied; and,
- complexity ratings that indicate the level of difficulty of the example tasks.

To access the profiles and explore careers by skills and knowledge visit: www.jobbank.gc.ca/es_all-eng.do

Source:
Government of Canada-Services for Youth www.youth.gc.ca/eng/media/skills_inventory.shtml
Government of Canada-Job Bank www.jobbank.gc.ca/es_all-eng.do

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Appendix B: ECTA Adult-Child Interaction checklist (ECTA 2015)

INTERACTION Checklist 1 of 4

ecta Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center

Adult-Child Interaction Checklist

This checklist includes practices that can be used to engage a child in adult-child interactive episodes to promote and support child competence. The main focus of the practice is responding promptly and positively (contingently) to a child's behavior to elicit or maintain child interactions with an adult during everyday activities and play. Adult contingent responsiveness is characterized by sensitive, prompt, positive, and an appropriate amount of adult responses to maintain and not interrupt child interactions.

The checklist indicators can be used by a practitioner to develop a plan to use the practices with a child or to promote a parent's or other family members' use of the practices. The checklist rating scale can be used to do a self-evaluation to determine if the different practice characteristics were used by a practitioner with a child or as part of promoting a parent's use of the practices.

Practitioner: _____ Child: _____ Date: _____

Please indicate which practice characteristics you were able to use as part of interactions with a child:	Seldom or never (0 - 25%)	Some of the time (25 - 50%)	As often as I can (50 - 75%)	Most of the time (75 - 100%)	Notes
1. Observe the child's participation in everyday activities and social play	☐	☐	☐	☐	
2. Identify the focus of the child's attention or engagement in the activities (e.g., child interests)	☐	☐	☐	☐	
3. Follow the child's lead and interests or preferences	☐	☐	☐	☐	
4. Interpret the child's behavior and responses as an intent to interact or communicate with you	☐	☐	☐	☐	
5. Respond promptly and positively (contingently) to the child's behavior in a way that maintains a child's interactions	☐	☐	☐	☐	
6. Enter into the child's play or interactions to encourage your-turn-my-turn play and joint-attention interactions	☐	☐	☐	☐	
7. Encourage the child to try new things (behavior elaborations) through modeling, expansions, or other types of guided supports	☐	☐	☐	☐	

This checklist is based upon the following *DEC Recommended Practices*: Interaction 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
The DEC Recommended Practices are available at http://dec-sped.org/recommendedpractices

Access this checklist and other products at http://ectacenter.org/decrp
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Appendix C: YouthRex Checklist (Houwer 2016)

FACTSHEET

Youth Leadership Development Program Checklist

Content developed from information in the report *Changing Leaders, Leading Change: A leadership development model for marginalized youth in urban communities* by Rebecca Houwer, YouthREX Knowledge Exchange Manager. Visit exchange.youthrex.com for the full report.

Consider the following questions when developing your youth leadership development program.

These will help you think through how you define and describe your program, as well as how you design the content in your program!

1. Are the activities in your program specifically geared towards developing youth leadership or are they general youth development activities?

2. Does your program provide opportunities to build relationships with peer and/or adult mentors who focus specifically on supporting their leadership development?

3. Does your program support young people to develop a leadership identity that draws on their personal and cultural strengths and assets? Does the program consider the individual, cultural, political, and gendered experiences of its youth participants?

4. Does your program offer opportunities for individual and group-level leadership skill-building alongside opportunities to put these into practice?

5. Does your program support young people apply their individual level leadership strengths to real world challenges and to participate in meaningful and consequential social change at the community level and beyond? Does your program focus on addressing issues relevant to lived experience and take context into account?

6. What does leadership look and feel like in your program? Leadership ideas and practices change over time and are different based on historical, social, and cultural contexts. In order to support youth leadership development to its fullest potential, avoid reproducing adult-centric, hierarchical and masculine versions of leadership.

7. Does your program work to address the barriers that marginalized youth face when accessing or participating in youth leadership development opportunities? These barriers may include (but are not limited to):

- Experiences of racism
- Poverty (need for employment or need to take care of siblings)
- Lack of identification with dominant conceptual frame of "leadership"

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