

Emerging Trends and Issues in American Camps



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Purpose of the Study



This exploratory study was designed to determine the emerging trends and issues in American camps and to determine if significant differences exist based on independent variables.

This study was designed to benchmark camp professionals' perceptions of the most important issues in camps today.

Research Question #1 and Analyses



- What are the major emerging trends and issues in the administration of day and resident camps in the United States?
 - Descriptive statistics
 - Correlations using Kendal's Tau-b (due to ordinal nature of the data)
 - Qualitative data sorted into thematic categories using constant comparison (i.e., open coding) within the framework of grounded theory (Henderson, 1991)

Research Question #2 and Analysis



- Do significant differences in emerging trends and issues exist based on geographic location of camp; program type; type of camp; number of campers served per year; or respondents' years of experience, camp affiliation, sex, age, or ethnicity?
 - Ordered logistic regression (using dummy variables)

Review of Literature



- 1861: First organized camp – Gunnery Camp (Ball & Ball, 2000)
- 1882: First camp for girls – Camp Arey (Ball & Ball, 2000)
- 1910: With increased attendance and programming, staff training and certification became an issue (Eells, 1986)
- 1950: The post-WWII baby boom increased the number of camps rapidly (Ball & Ball, 2000)
- 1960: Day camps outnumbered residential programs (Van slyck, 2006)
- 2005: “Nature-Deficit Disorder” gains international attention (Louv, 2005)

Methods: Data Collection



- Data were collected in Nov/Dec 2007 via online survey using Survey Monkey
- Survey was developed by ACA Committee for the Advancement of Research and Evaluation
- Sample consisted of ACA members designated as camp liaisons
 - N=2,353
 - All camp liaisons were invited to complete the survey
 - 365 out of 2,353 camp liaisons completed the survey, yielding a 16% response rate

Limitations



- Instrument was developed and used for the first time
- Low response rate
- Missing data
- No statement of confidentiality

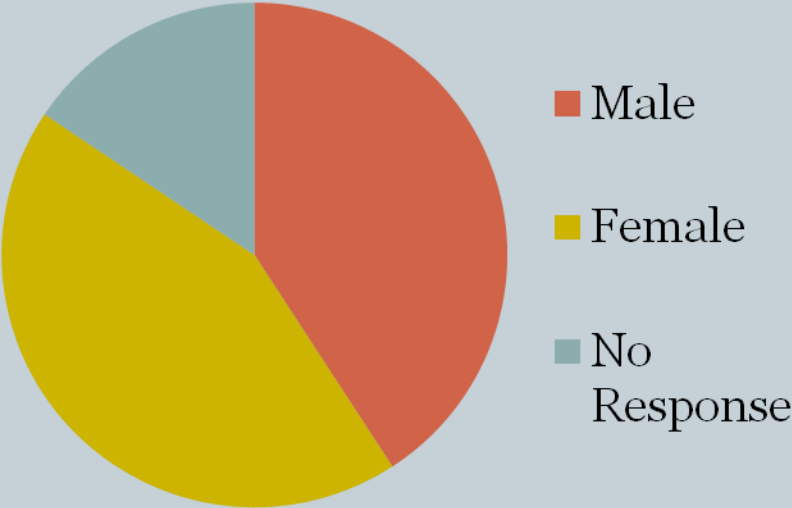
Sample: Respondent Characteristics



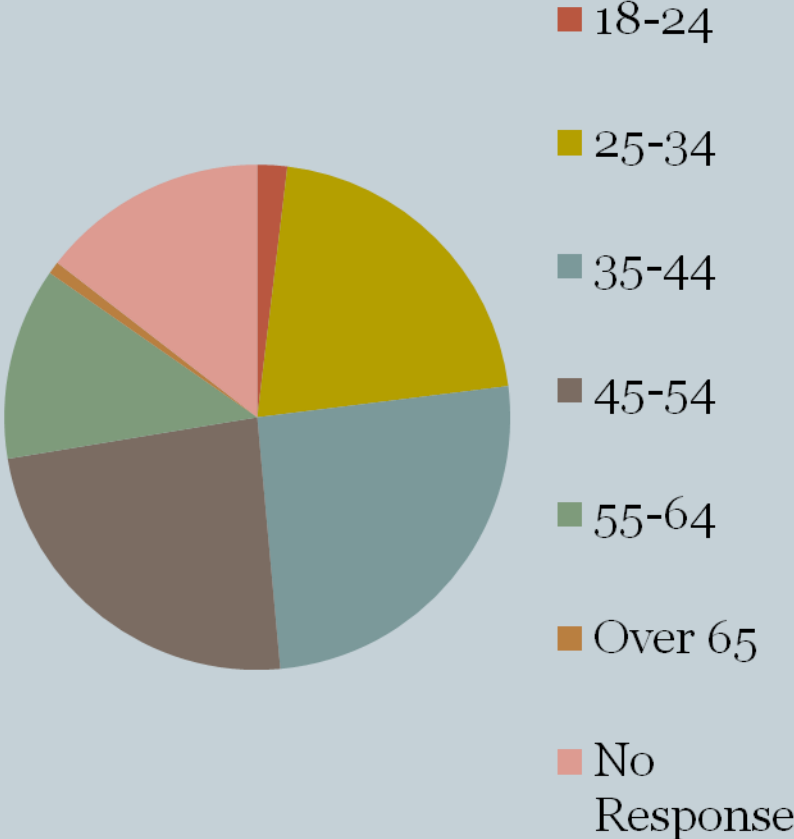
- 365 survey respondents (camp liaisons)
- Median age = 25-34 years (SD = 1.09)
- 41% male; 44% female
- 82% Caucasian
- Camp position of respondents
 - 56% camp directors
 - 11% owners/operators
 - 11% agency/denominational executives
- 32% have 10+ years in their current position
- Respondents were moderately proportional across ACA sections (13% were from New England Section)

Descriptives

Sex

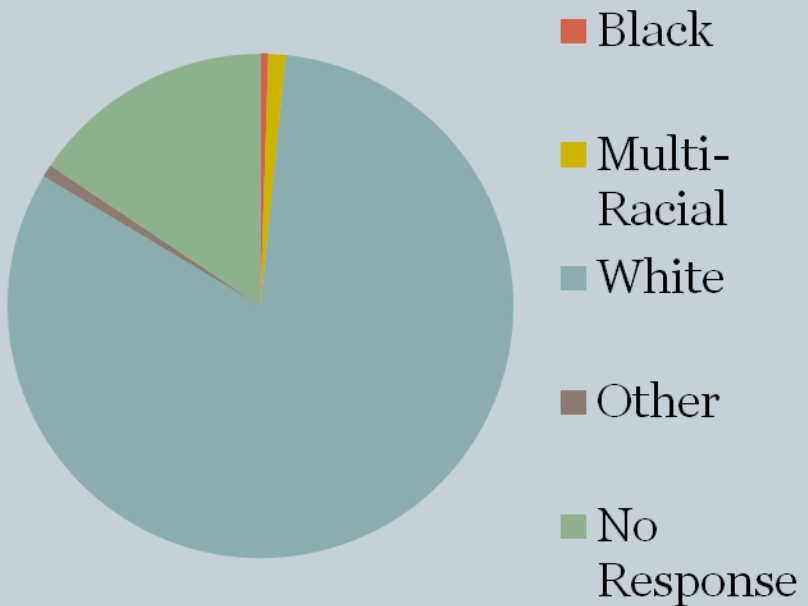


Age

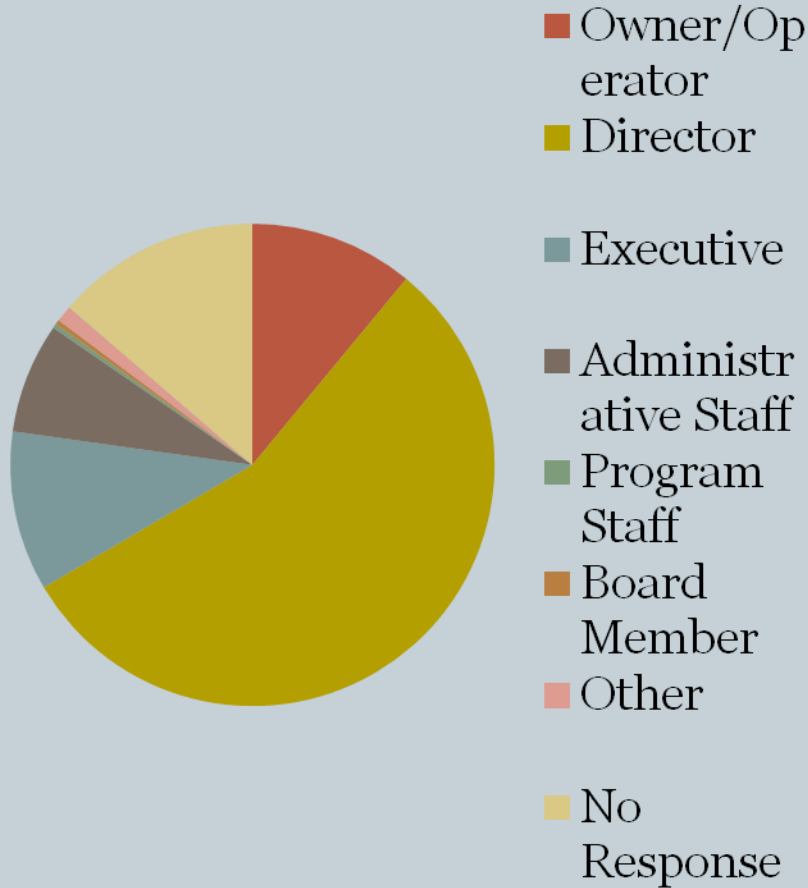


Descriptives

Ethnicity



Current Camp Position



Respondents by ACA Section



ACA Section	n	%	ACA Section	n	%
Chesapeake	6	1.6	Northland	13	3.6
Evergreen	9	2.5	Ohio	13	3.6
Great Rivers	17	4.7	Oregon Trail	5	1.4
Heart of the South	12	3.3	Rocky Mountain	5	1.4
Illinois	8	2.2	Southeastern	31	8.5
Indiana	6	1.6	Southern California/Hawaii	9	2.5
Keystone Regional	12	3.3	Southwest	3	0.8
Michigan	10	2.7	St. Louis	6	1.6
New England	47	12.9	Texoma	9	2.5
New Jersey	14	3.8	Upstate New York	7	1.9
New York	31	8.5	Virginias	9	2.5
Northern California	10	2.7	Wisconsin	17	4.7

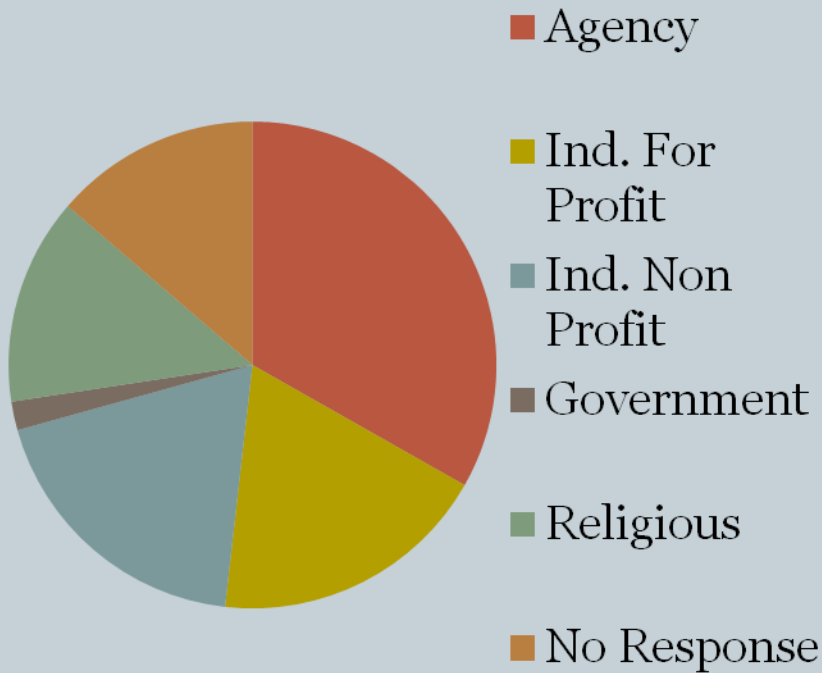
Sample: Respondents' Camps' Characteristics



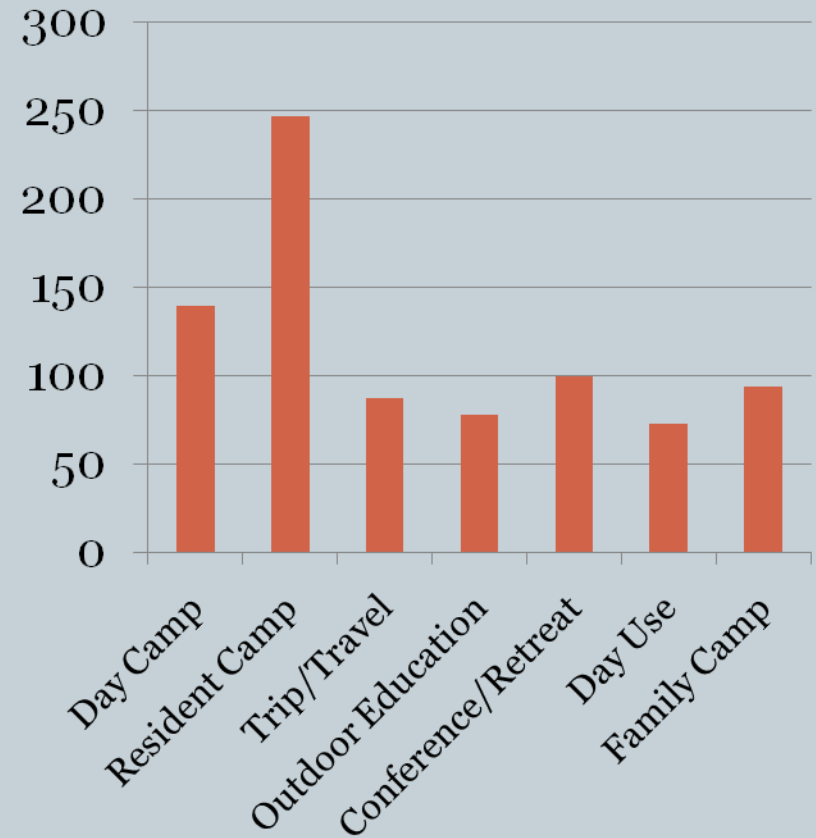
- 33% of respondents worked at an agency camp
- 19% of respondents worked at independent for profit camps
- 19% of respondents worked at independent not for profit camps
- 14% of respondents worked at religiously affiliated camps
- 68% offer resident camp experiences
- 38% offer day camp experiences
- Median number of campers served per summer is 400 campers

Camp Characteristics

Type of Camp



Programs Operated

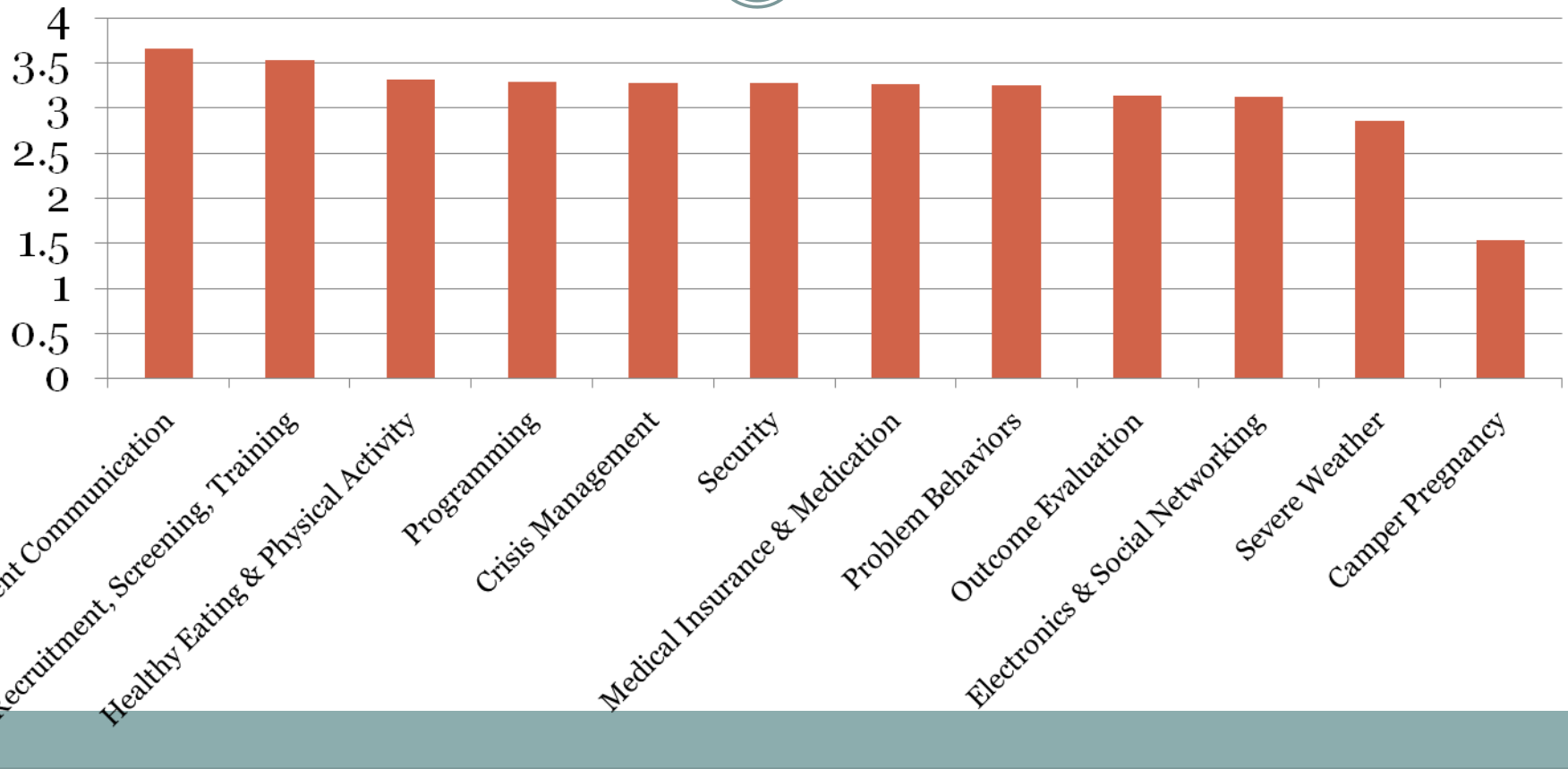


Instrumentation



- A 12-item 4-point Likert-type scale from “very unimportant” to “very important.” The twelve items were pre-determined camp issues.
- Open-ended question regarding the identification of emerging trends and issues in American camps

Findings to Research Question #1: What are the major emerging trends and issues in the administration of day and resident camps in the United States?



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Correlation Matrix

Item	Security	Parent Communication	Medical Insurance and Medication	Healthy Eating and Physical Activity of Children	Electronics and Social Networks	Severe Weather	Programming	Problem Behaviors	Staff Recruitment, Screening, Training	Crisis Management	Outcome Evaluation	Camper Pregnancies
Security	1.00	.21**	.21**	.10*	0.05	.19**	.18**	.10*	.11*	.20**	.16**	0.08
Parent Communication	.21**	1.00	.17**	0.07	0.04	0.09	.24**	0.03	.17**	.12*	0.08	-0.01
Medical Insurance and Medication	.21**	1.7**	1.00	.23**	-0.02	.25**	.21**	.11*	.18**	.22**	.09*	.09*
Healthy Eating and Physical Activity of Children	.10*	0.07	.23**	1.00	0.06	.09*	.11*	.16**	0.08	.19**	.26**	0.07
Electronics and Social Networks	0.05	0.04	-0.02	0.06	1.00	0.07	-0.03	0.07	0.03	0.05	.12**	0.07
Severe Weather	.19**	0.09	.25**	.09*	0.07	1.00	.23**	0.22	.12*	.30**	.11*	0.04
Programming	.18**	.24**	.21**	.11*	-0.03	.23**	1.00	0.23	.29**	.24**	.15**	0.04
Problem Behaviors	.10*	0.03	.11*	.16*	0.07	.24**	.23**	1.00	.25**	.32**	.15**	.12**
Staff Recruitment, Screening, Training	.11*	.17**	.18**	0.08	0.03	.12*	.29**	.25**	1.00	.24**	.19**	-0.01
Crisis Management	.20**	.12*	.22**	.19**	0.05	.30**	.24**	.32**	.24**	1.00	.34**	.16**
Outcome Evaluation	.16**	0.08	.09*	.26**	0.12**	.11*	.15**	.15**	.19**	.34**	1.00	-0.14
Camper Pregnancies	0.08	-0.01	.09*	0.07	0.07	.04*	0.04	.12**	-0.01	.16**	.14**	1.00

n = 365

* = p < .05, ** = p < .01

Findings to Research Question #1: What are the major emerging trends and issues in the administration of day and resident camps in the United States?



Emerging Themes from Qualitative Data

- Technology
- Helicopter parents
- Human resources
- Camper behaviors
- Camper outcomes
- Camper recruitment

Findings to Research Question #2:

Do significant differences in emerging trends and issues exist based on geographic location of camp; program type; type of camp; number of campers served per year; or respondents' years of experience, camp affiliation, sex, age, or ethnicity?



- Ordered logistic regression was utilized (using dummy variables)
- Independent variables
 - Number of campers
 - Service learning/community service
 - Recruitment of college staff
 - Program type
 - Type of camp
 - Respondent's position at camp
 - Respondent's years of experience in current position
 - Sex
 - Age
 - Ethnicity
- Findings indicate that it is hard to predict what will cause a respondent to have particular issues in camps.
- See Tables 1A, 1B, and 1C in the Abstract (tables were too large to be presented in Power Point slides)

Findings to Research Question #2:

Do significant differences in emerging trends and issues exist based on geographic location of camp; program type; type of camp; number of campers served per year; or respondents' years of experience, camp affiliation, sex, age, or ethnicity?



• Security Concerns

- Overall, the model does a poor job of explaining security concerns, with the model as a whole failing to achieve statistical significance in a chi-square test, and the pseudo R-Square only achieving .11.
- Agency and government camps reported more security concerns than independent for profit camps ($p < .05$).
- Independent not for profit camps also reported fewer security concerns than government camps ($p < .10$).
- Outdoor education centers were less likely to report concerns with security ($p < .10$).
- Male respondents were also less likely to report concerns with security ($p < .10$).

Findings to Research Question #2:

Do significant differences in emerging trends and issues exist based on geographic location of camp; program type; type of camp; number of campers served per year; or respondents' years of experience, camp affiliation, sex, age, or ethnicity?



•Parent Communication

- Travel camp organizations reported having more concerns with communicating with parents than those that do not have this service component.
- Day camps also reported more concerns with parental communication ($p < .10$).

•Medical Issues

- The overall model does a better job at explaining the sources of medical concerns, as the model as a whole attains statistical significance ($p < .05$) and has a larger Psuedo R-Square than the two first models (.14).
- Resident camps report more concerns with medical issues ($p < .05$)
- Camps with day use programs also apparently have fewer concerns with medical issues ($p < .05$).
- Camp staff were more likely to be concerned with medical issues ($p < .10$).
- Respondents with more experience at camps had less concern about medical issues in comparison to respondents with less than two years experience ($p < .10$).

Findings to Research Question #2:

Do significant differences in emerging trends and issues exist based on geographic location of camp; program type; type of camp; number of campers served per year; or respondents' years of experience, camp affiliation, sex, age, or ethnicity?

•Healthy Eating/Physical Activity

- Camps that recruit college staff were more likely to report health concerns ($p < .05$).
- Respondents from faith based camps were less concerned about food and activity issues than respondents from independent for profit camps ($p < .05$)
- Male respondents were less likely to be concerned about healthy eating and physical activity than female respondents

•Electronics/Social Networks

- The model attains statistical significance ($p < .05$), although its Psuedo R-Square is again fairly low (.12).
- Camps with a travel component are more likely to report concerns with electronics/social networks ($p < .05$).
- Agency executives were also more likely to report concerns with technology in comparison to camp directors ($p < .05$), while camp staff were also more likely to express concerns about this than directors ($p < .10$).

Findings to Research Question #2:

Do significant differences in emerging trends and issues exist based on geographic location of camp; program type; type of camp; number of campers served per year; or respondents' years of experience, camp affiliation, sex, age, or ethnicity?

•Severe Weather

- Camp administrative staff were more concerned about severe weather than camp directors ($p < .05$), and more concerned than camp owners or operators ($p < .05$), as well as in comparison to agency executives ($p < .10$).
- Older respondents were more concerned about severe weather ($p < .10$).

•Programming

- Respondents from day camps expressed more concern about programming than those from camps that did not have a day camp component ($p < .05$).
- Respondents from resident camps also expressed more concern ($p < .10$).
- Agency camps ($p < .05$), independent not for profit camps ($p < .10$), and faith-based camps ($p < .05$) saw more concern with programming than independent for profit camps.
- Agency executives were less concerned with programming issues than camp directors ($p < .10$).

Findings to Research Question #2:

Do significant differences in emerging trends and issues exist based on geographic location of camp; program type; type of camp; number of campers served per year; or respondents' years of experience, camp affiliation, sex, age, or ethnicity?



•Problem Behaviors

- Resident camps see many more problem behaviors than camps that do not have a residential component ($p < .05$). Surprisingly, camps with a retreat center component also have more concerns for problem behavior ($p < .10$).
- Family camps have less problem behavior than other camps.
- Camp owners or operators see less concern with problem behaviors in comparison to camp administrative staff ($p < .05$)

•Staff Recruitment and Training

- The number of campers increases concerns about staff recruitment and training ($p < .05$).
- Camps that hire college staff report being more concerned about recruitment and training ($p < .05$).
- Day camps express more concerns about recruitment and training ($p < .10$), as do resident camps and camps with retreat centers (both $p < .05$).
- Family camps see less of a problem with recruitment and training ($p < .05$).

Findings to Research Question #2:

Do significant differences in emerging trends and issues exist based on geographic location of camp; program type; type of camp; number of campers served per year; or respondents' years of experience, camp affiliation, sex, age, or ethnicity?



•Crisis Management

- Resident camps see more concerns regarding crisis management ($p < .05$).
- There was a tendency for camp owners or operators to be less concerned with crisis management than camp administrative staff ($p < .05$), or agency executives ($p < .10$).
- Respondents with six to ten years of experience were more concerned about crisis management than those with two or fewer years of experience ($p < .10$).

•Outcome Evaluation

- Camp owners or operators were less concerned about outcome evaluation in comparison to camp directors ($p < .05$).
- Male respondents were less concerned ($p < .05$), as were non-white respondents ($p < .05$).

•Camper Pregnancies

- Camps that report a service learning or community service component see more concern about camper pregnancies ($p < .05$).

Conclusions



- Camp professional should consider better educating parents through web videos about the negative effects of campers possessing cell phones on the overall camp experience and the ability of camps to achieve outcomes, such as independent decision-making.
- Instead of fighting technological intrusion, camp directors may consider embracing technology and better integrating it into traditional camp programs.
- Staff recruitment and training continues to be a critical issue, which is consistent with Schaumleffel & Backlund's (in press) study on program leader training.
 - Data revealed the family camp model reduces staff recruitment and behavior management issues

Conclusions



- Technology in camp seems to be enhancing and/or enabling the helicopter parent phenomena.
- Camps need to give more attention to healthy meal planning and portion control by getting campers involved in the planning process.
- The ACA needs to provide training in regard to camp security, particularly for female camp professionals.
- ACA needs to work with independent for profit camps/camp owners and operators to better understand how programming and outcome evaluation may enhance marketing and profitability.

Conclusions



- Data demonstrate that the top 12 emerging trends and issues are nearly all equally rated as critical, which means camp professionals will have to simultaneously address several issues without the luxury of prioritization and problem solving.

Recommendations for Future Research



- Further analysis of the data set used for this study
- Regular longitudinal data collection of similar data
- Data set indicates respondent fatigue, which means ACA and other researchers should consider a series of several mini trend and issues surveys given to multiple random samples as opposed to one large survey that is administered to one sample

Questions?



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