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Considering the Importance of Attachment in Outcomes: The Case of Summer Camp

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Abstract

Youth programs are consistently described as settings that offer youth developmental experiences. Summer camps are one example of youth programs with empirical evidence suggesting positive outcomes of participation; however, researchers seldom address how youth's social development, such as attachment, may shape outcomes. By not accounting for differences in attachment, researchers may be missing reasons why youth programs, like summer camps, function as developmental settings that foster outcomes for some youth, but not for others. Using summer camp as an example youth program, the purpose of this paper is to consider the role of attachment in youth outcomes. This article reviews and integrates positive youth development, summer camp, and attachment literature to arrive at a conceptual argument for the importance of including attachment when studying summer camps. Suggestions for how researchers can enhance their efforts by accounting for how attachment may shape youth outcomes are also offered.

Key words: positive youth development, out-of-school-time, attachment theory, social development

Introduction

Many youth programs are described as settings that can offer youth developmental experiences. For example, practitioners and scholars have linked attending summer camp (here forth, camp) to positive youth development (PYD) and have suggested that camps can offer the over 14 million youth who attend camps each year developmentally rich experiences (e.g., Garst et al., 2016; Thurber et al., 2007; Wilson et al., 2019). A growing literature has begun to demonstrate that these outcomes may last for years after attendance (Richmond et al., 2019; Warner et al., 2021). Although some researchers have addressed individual differences (e.g., Garst et al., 2016; Walker, 2021), most literature does not address how individual differences in youth's social development prior to attending camp may interact with characteristics of camp

leading to potentially different outcomes, despite calls for the consideration of early life experiences (e.g., Nagaoka et al., 2015). By not accounting for differences in social development, researchers may be missing critical reasons why youth programming, such as camp, becomes a developmental setting and why these settings foster outcomes for some youth but not for others (Walker, 2021).

Attachment is one aspect of social development that may be related to outcomes associated with camp attendance (Walker, 2021). Attachment can be defined as the experience of felt security that results from bonds with caregivers during infancy and that is nurtured throughout development (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1982; Main, 2000). The patterns and qualities of these early life social experiences then shape future social development (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Main, 2000). Thus, there is good reason to believe that youths' attachment styles influence their experiences at camp. Although research investigating relationships between attachment and camp outcomes is scarce (e.g., Walker, 2021), many researchers have used camp as a setting to study attachment and attachment-related concepts (e.g., Kerns et al., 2008; Manly et al., 2001; Seibert & Kerns, 2009; Shulman et al., 1994; Sroufe, 2005; Sroufe et al., 2005; Weinfeld et al., 1997). Collectively, this research can be instructive for youth professionals and researchers.

At the most basic level, the literature offers two main takeaways. First, there is ample evidence suggesting the importance of early childhood attachment experiences to peer relations during childhood and adolescence, a common time when youth attend camp and other youth programs. Second, attachment behaviors are evident in the camp setting. When considered together, there is reason to believe that attachment can influence youth's experiences at camp.

Given the robust attachment literature that suggests that attachment is related to developmental processes across the life course, there is a need to understand attachment's role in the developmental opportunities present in youth programming, such as camps (Walker, 2021). Using camps as a conceptual case study of youth programming, the purpose of this paper is to consider the role of attachment in the camp experience. In doing so, I review literature related to PYD, camp, and attachment and integrate these concepts to arrive at a conceptual argument for the association between attachment and camp-related outcomes. I also offer suggestions for how camp researchers can enhance their efforts by accounting for how attachment may shape youth outcomes.

Attachment

Early life experiences, such as attachment, play a critical role in child development and beyond (Main, 2000). Beginning very early in life, infants' interactions with caregivers, and the behavioral patterns that result from these interactions, form attachment bonds (Bowlby, 1982). Differences in the quality of these attachment bonds are a function of the extent to which caregivers exercise sensitive and responsive caregiving behaviors regarding children's needs (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1982; Main, 2002).

This interactional process between infants and caregivers is the basis for the development of internal working models (IWM), which are flexible models for how a person acts in relation to others and how a person expects others to act toward them (Bowlby, 1982; Cassidy, 2016). IWMs are the filters through which children perceive and engage in future social interactions (Marvin et al., 2016; Thompson, 2016). IWMs are dynamic and iterative, adjusting for new experiences by replacing mental models that no longer fit the pattern of reality (Thompson, 2016).

The pattern and quality of attachment interactions results in attachment styles, which can be classified as secure, resistant/ambivalent, or avoidant (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Main, 2000). Infants who experience consistent, sensitive, and responsive caregiving are more likely to develop secure attachment bonds, which are characterized by children's confidence in the availability and responsiveness of their attachment figures (Main, 2000). Based on their experiences, securely attached children are more likely to form IWMs that emphasize constructive and positive understandings of others and relationships. Infants who receive inconsistent or neglectful caregiving are likely to develop resistant/ambivalent, or avoidant attachment, respectively (Main, 2000). These attachment styles are characterized by children avoiding their caregivers or being unsure of how to respond to their caregivers during times of stress.

Early life attachment experiences may carry forward throughout life (Pallini et al., 2014; Thompson, 2016). This carryover is often described as continuity; however, it is also important to recognize that such continuity is not necessarily deterministic. Rather, continuity of early life attachment means that these experiences help set a developmental trajectory that may impact future social interactions through mediating or moderating processes (Contreras & Kerns, 2000). A lack of determinacy and influence of other processes suggests the possibility that certain mechanisms might lead to a change in attachment styles (Hamilton, 2000).

The extent to which secure attachment fosters healthy exploration is another important idea to wrestle with when considering how early life attachment may shape youth's camp experiences. At a very early age, satisfying attachment needs opens up the possibility for infants and children to engage in exploration, which is a behavior that broadly supports other developmental processes (Ainsworth et al., 1978). The relationship between attachment and exploration can be thought of as separate yet symbiotic. That is, infants cannot be simultaneously engaging in attachment behaviors and exploration; rather, infants switch between attachment and exploration behaviors based on the needs that are currently or still need to be met (Main, 2000). In essence, infants use caregivers as bases from which they explore unfamiliar environments. For example, when infants' attachment needs are satisfied, they are more likely to wander from their caregivers to explore their surroundings. However, when infants sense danger or no longer feel proximal enough to their caregivers, they are likely to stop exploring and engage in attachment behaviors in an effort to satisfy their needs. While this discussion of attachment and exploration may seem developmentally inappropriate considering the age of youth attending camp, these early life experiences create pathways that influence future experiences of attachment and exploration that likely shape youth's camp experiences.

Camp as a Developmental Setting

Practitioners and researchers consistently describe camp as a developmental setting for the youth (Garst et al., 2016; Sibthorp et al., 2020; Thurber et al., 2007). Historically, camp researchers focused on a variety of outcomes, such as connection to nature, independence, and interpersonal skills, which were believed to result from attendance (Dimock & Hendry, 1929; Paris, 2008). While many of these initially researched outcomes have stayed the same, researchers have begun to frame these outcomes as social–emotional learning (e.g., Richmond et al., 2019), 21st century skills (Wilson & Sibthorp, 2018), and life skills (Garst et al., 2016).

Many of the outcomes linked to camp align with developmentally appropriate processes of camp-aged youth. For example, overnight camps offer youth opportunities to be away from home for extended periods, often for their first time (Garst et al., 2011). Subsequently, camp researchers have examined youth's development of independence (e.g., Wilson et al., 2019). Learning how to develop and maintain relationships is another common outcome associated with camp that is also a critical skill for youth as they branch out from their families and begin navigating peer social interactions on their own during late childhood and adolescence (e.g.,

Nagaoka et al., 2015; Richmond et al., 2019). Researchers have pointed to the unique physical setting and social characteristics of camp as offering ample opportunities for youth to develop these skills and have suggested that camp is well-suited to develop these outcomes when compared to other settings (Garst et al., 2011; Richmond et al., 2019; Sibthorp et al., 2020).

Camp researchers have used PYD as a guiding framework for why camp may lead to outcomes (e.g., Garst et al., 2011; Garst et al., 2016; Povilaitis & Tamminen, 2018). PYD is focused on creating supports that enable youth to use and develop their strengths instead of treating them as individuals with deficits that need to be fixed (Lerner et al., 2005). Many PYD models exist, including the Five Cs (Lerner et al., 2005), Developmental Assets Model (Benson, 2003), and Community Action Framework (Gambone et al., 2002). In general, these models focus on designing programs that foster the development of internal and external assets and leverage person-context interactions (Lerner & Overton, 2008). Scholars suggest that high quality PYD programming creates a match between youths' needs and the contexts in which they develop (Lerner et al., 2005).

Researchers have proposed several guidelines for designing PYD programming. For example, Eccles and Gootman (2002) suggested that there are eight setting features that support PYD, including: *physical and psychological safety, appropriate structure, supportive relationships, opportunities to belong, positive social norms, support for efficacy and mattering, opportunities for skill building, and the integration of family, school, and community efforts*. Scholars argue that youth who participate in programming that includes the above listed characteristics are more likely to experience positive outcomes.

Researchers have also identified characteristics of camp experiences that make the setting primed for PYD (e.g., Garst et al., 2011; Henderson et al., 2007; Povilaitis & Tamminen, 2018). These characteristics include aspects of the setting (i.e., nature and duration), structural characteristics (i.e., camp norms, group organization, social milieu, traditions), and programs and activities (i.e., structured and unstructured activities; Garst et al., 2011). Scholars have also identified the importance of supportive relationships with peers and adult staff (Garst et al., 2011; Sibthorp et al., 2020). Despite the prevalence of PYD as a guiding framework, much of the literature does not adequately account for the experiences that youth bring with them to camp. As a result, existing research potentially misses the nuanced interactions that occur between youth participants and their environments (e.g., a youth with an avoidant attachment

style who is more reluctant to join new social environments), which is a primary assumption of PYD (Larson, 2000; Lerner et al., 2005).

Given the challenges of accounting for the individual differences of youth, many camp practitioners have focused on the aspects of camp programming that can be controlled. Program quality, which is the intentional design of programming to provide the best context for growth (Akiva, 2009), is focused on the implementation of programmatic characteristics that camps *can control* (Bennet, 2018; Browne et al., 2015; Morgan et al., 2016; Sibthorp et al., 2020). With help from camp practitioners, researchers have developed program quality assessment tools that serve as resources for assessing the implementation of programming that aligns with PYD and other indicators of high-quality programming (Akiva, 2009). Program quality assessment tools include the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA; David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality, 2011; Smith, & Hohmann, 2005) and the Camp Program Quality Assessment (CPQA), which specifically focuses on the camp setting (Akiva, 2009). Program quality frameworks stress the importance of adult–youth relationships, meaningful engagement, and supportive environments, among other programmatic characteristics, which research identifies as common strengths of the camp setting (Garst et al., 2011; Sibthorp et al., 2020; Wilson et al., 2019).

Scholars have advocated for a shift away from a sole focus on outcomes and a push toward considering the impact of life experiences (Henderson, 2018; Sibthorp et al., 2020). Yet, few researchers have considered the impact of important early life experiences, such as attachment, on camp-related outcomes (e.g., Walker, 2021). In this paper, I aim to provide a jumping-off point for further exploring why and how attachment may enhance our understanding of the role of youth programming, particularly camps, in youth development.

Attachment's Impact on Youth's Camp Experiences

Henderson (2018) recently suggested that simply attending camp does not mean that youth will find the experience meaningful or that camp will be a developmental setting. This sentiment is obvious in the industry's program quality efforts, as most camp professionals recognize that high-quality programming is critical to positive camp experiences (Akiva, 2009). Although designing and delivering high-quality, evidence-informed programming can be related to youth outcomes, youths' camp experiences are also likely shaped, at least in part, by individual differences and their past experiences. Yet, this idea is often absent from camp research (Honsberger, 2014; Walker, 2021).

Attachment is an area worthy of examination when considering how differences in social development may shape youth's camp experiences. Such an exploration may highlight how camps can support youth with a diversity of attachment histories, as well as identify elements of PYD and camp characteristics that interact with attachment or facilitate attachment's effect on outcomes. By examining how differences in attachment may lead to different outcomes via different mechanisms, this research has the potential to disrupt assumptions that camp is uniformly supportive and beneficial for all youth.

Given that early life experiences can shape development later in life, a youth's attachment is likely to influence how they develop and maintain relationships with their peers throughout childhood and adolescence (Elicker et al., 1992; Groh et al., 2014; Weinfield et al., 1997). In one of the few studies relating attachment and camp outcomes, Walker (2021) found that there were differences in some outcomes based on attachment style. More research is needed to determine if these results hold across other samples.

In the following section, I present examples of how attachment styles may shape two outcomes commonly attributed to youth's attendance at summer camp: *independence* and *social skills*. To do so, I briefly define the outcomes and describe how they have been studied by camp researchers. I then link the outcomes to PYD elements and camp characteristics identified in the literature to demonstrate their potential relationship with attachment styles. I also provide examples of how attachment styles may impact how youth respond to camp characteristics, thus, potentially resulting in different outcomes.

Independence

Since the beginning of camp research, camp professionals have viewed independence as a hallmark outcome of attending summer camp (Dimock & Hendry, 1929; Paris, 2008). This claim seems logical; youth attend camp, leaving their familiar environments behind, which forces them to rely on others or themselves to solve problems in a novel setting. Indeed, camp researchers have provided evidence that substantiates this claim (e.g., Thurber et al., 2007; Wozencroft et al., 2019).

Researchers investigating independence as an outcome of camp attendance have defined and operationalized the concept differently. For example, Henderson et al. (2006) found that independence was a sub-dimension of positive identity when creating and validating the

Camper Growth Index. The commonly used American Camp Association (ACA) Camp Youth Outcomes Battery (YOB) defines independence as the ability to rely less on adults and others in everyday activities and problem-solving situations (ACA, 2013; Sibthorp et al., 2013). As another example, Richmond et al. (2019) defined independence as, "the ability to function independently without reliance on family" (p. 15).

Youth's attachment styles (i.e., secure, resistant/ambivalent, or avoidant) may be linked to independence in several ways. First, the development of independence at camp is often attributed to the separate time and space that camp creates (Wilson et al., 2019). Overnight camps that allow for this separate time and space can last several days to multiple weeks. In order for youth to be successful at overnight camps, they must adjust to the separation from their family, and in many cases, for younger campers, their primary attachment figures.

This separation from attachment figures may be less difficult for youth with secure attachments than for youth with other types of attachment styles because they are more able to engage in exploration and take advantage of all that camps have to offer. Conversely, youth with insecure/avoidant attachments likely also do not mind the separation from their attachment figures, as they are already accustomed to using exploration to cope with their inconsistently met attachment needs. Youth with an ambivalent attachment style may experience the most difficulties when adjusting to camp their first summer given inconsistencies in how their attachment behaviors result in caregiving.

Another possible explanation for the link between attachment styles and independence may be more distal and indirect by way of other life experiences (Contreras & Kerns, 2000). Both secure and insecure attachments early in life set up developmental trajectories that open youth to other experiences and opportunities to develop independence. In these cases, the variance in growth of independence may be related to previous experiences enabled by attachment styles, such that securely attached youth may report higher initial independence scores than insecurely attached youth. Given the upper limits of measurement instruments, a higher initial score may result in capturing less overall growth (even if it is there). Conversely, insecurely attached youth may report greater growth as a result of either more opportunity on the measurement tool or the supportive environment of camp; however, the exact reason is unclear.

Camps that excel at meeting program quality standards may offer a fertile setting for developing new IWMs. Recall that supportive youth–adult or peer relationships are hallmarks of

PYD and program quality. Researchers also often identify these types of relationships as strengths of camp. This supportive environment may be the necessary intervention to disrupt previous IWMs that are associated with insecure attachments. As a result, insecurely attached youth may feel supported enough to then engage in exploration. Alternatively, the supportive social environment (often attributed to camp; Sibthorp et al., 2020) may be able to account for insecure IWMs in ways that moderate their effects on the development of independence.

Social Skills

Camp has long been seen as a unique social setting that offers youth opportunities to develop social skills (Bialeschki et al., 2007; Dimock & Hendry, 1929; Garst et al., 2011; Sibthorp et al., 2020). This belief is evident in the literature, considering that most studies that investigate a broad collection of outcomes include some form of social skills (e.g., Flynn et al., 2019; Garst et al., 2016; Richmond et al., 2019; Thurber et al., 2007).

Scholars have defined and operationalized social skills in many ways. For example, during the creation of the Camper Growth Index, Henderson et al. (2006) found that the social skills outcome was a multi-dimensional construct consisting of *making friends, peer relationships,* and *trust.* Other researchers have adopted a similar approach to Henderson et al. or have considered more nuanced aspects of social skills independently. For example, the ACA YOB does not explicitly measure social skills. Rather, this suite of measurement tools examines outcomes such as *friendship skills* and *teamwork* (ACA, 2013; Sibthorp et al., 2013). Friendship skills are defined as the ability to make friends and maintain relationships. Teamwork is defined as one's ability to work with peers in a group. Other researchers, such as Richmond et al. (2019), have measured *teamwork*, *leadership*, and *relationship skills* independently and defined these constructs similarly to the ACA YOB. In addition, some camp scholars have framed their investigations using the Targeting Life Skills model (e.g., Garst & Bruce, 2003; Klem & Nicholson, 2008), which includes a social skills component.

Youth's attachment styles have been linked to social skills. Indeed, scholars have linked youth's interactions with their same-age peers during late childhood and adolescence to their early life attachment experiences (Sroufe et al., 2005). For example, Weinfeld et al. (1997) found that adolescents with secure attachment histories were more likely to be identified as socially competent. Similarly, Shulman et al. (1994) found that securely attached youth were more likely to have higher levels of peer competence than anxiously attached youth. As another example, youth with secure attachment histories were more likely to have more friends and to

be seen as more socially competent than children with other attachment histories, such as avoidant or resistant (Abraham & Kerns, 2013).

Based on the brief review of literature above, the connections between early life attachment and social skill outcomes at camp seem plausible; however, more explanation may be useful. First, attachment experiences create IWMs which are the lens through which people perceive and behave in relationships. Put within the context of camp, it is likely that IWMs resulting from secure attachments will allow youth to take advantage of the unique social milieu of camp more than their peers with insecure attachment histories. This may be advantageous for the development of outcomes that are related to or leverage social interactions, such as empathy, teamwork, and so on. Second, however in a different manner, camp professionals' intentional effort to make camp a socially safe and supportive environment, as put forth by PYD and program quality, may create opportunities for insecurely attached youth to create new IWMs that more resemble those of secure attachments (Walker, 2021). As a result, many camps' social environment may serve as a catalyst for social development growth.

In the two examples presented above (independence and social skills), I briefly described how attachment styles may influence youth outcomes associated with camp. Undoubtedly, my explanations of the relationships between attachment and these outcomes could be expanded, and other common outcomes of camp attendance could be related to attachment styles (Walker, 2021). Given the potential implications for understanding the role of camp in youth development, more theorizing and empirical work is needed to better demonstrate the value of including attachment in camp research. In an effort to jumpstart this process, in the next section I describe how including attachment might enhance future camp research efforts.

Integrating Attachment Styles Into Future Camp Research

Scholars have identified several challenges to conducting research about camp experiences (e.g., Thurber et al., 2007). For example, much of camp research is conducted with the assumption that camp will offer developmental experiences without explicitly investigating or understanding how camp develops these outcomes (e.g., Bialeschki et al., 2007; Wilson et al., 2019). Similarly, researchers do not often acknowledge the implicit assumption that all youth benefit from the programs equally. As a result, the possibility that individual differences in social development may impact the extent to which camp programming supports the development of certain outcomes is obscured. These examples highlight the limitations of past research and areas of growth for researchers to address in future studies. In the following section, I provide

a brief critique of existing assumptions guiding camp research and offer suggestions for how the inclusion of attachment measures might address gaps and limitations of current practices.

While individual social development experiences likely affect the efficacy of camp as a setting for development, it is assumed that these individual differences will wash out with large sample sizes as the larger samples sizes better capture the variability in the population (Cohen et al., 1983). This assumption may be problematic for two reasons. First, although repeated-measure designs and within-person analyses may help control for these individual differences (Cohen et al., 1983), such an approach does not always allow for more nuanced understandings of why camp is effective at producing certain outcomes for some youth, but less effective for others. Practically speaking, this lack of evidence makes it more difficult to design and structure camp experiences that meet the needs of youth with different attachment styles. Instead, this approach simply allows researchers to say that there is variance in the efficacy of camp to produce certain outcomes. In other words, camp works for some youth, but not for others. Similarly, although some research (e.g., Bean et al., 2016; Thurber et al., 2007) has found differences in outcomes based on certain individual demographic differences (e.g., race, gender, socio-economic status, etc.), these studies still do not address the underlying reasons for why these differences exist. Understanding how attachment styles may shape the development of outcomes may provide additional explanatory power that is otherwise unaccounted for through other approaches.

Another assumption that camp researchers implicitly make (and many researchers beyond camp, too) is that if variance in the outcome variable can be explained it is the result of the predictors included in the statistical model (Cohen et al., 1983). In the case of camp, a common predictor, although most often unmeasured, is camp attendance. Camp is an unmeasured predictor because the assumption is that if outcome scores change from a pretest to a posttest, it is because of camp; however, this conclusion is weakly supported given that researchers do not often use study designs that include random assignment or control groups so that a "camp effect" can be examined (e.g., Thurber et al., 2007). Using a control group may allow researchers to have more confidence in claims that camp attendance is related to outcomes above and beyond normal development attributable to maturation (Thurber et al., 2007). Nevertheless, even with a control group it is assumed that possible change (if using pre-post or longitudinal designs) is a result of camp attendance. Making this assumption leaves out spurious or confounding variables, such as attachment style, which may be important facilitators of change.

For example, youth's attachment styles likely influence their participation at camp by shaping their social interactions (an important characteristic often associated with outcomes developed through camp), and as a result, shaping the outcomes of camp attendance. Therefore, by not measuring attachment style, explained variance in outcomes may be attributed to other predictors, such as attending camp, various demographic variables, or other variables related to the camp context (i.e., experiential learning, engagement, sense of belonging, etc.), that may actually be strongly related to attachment. As a result, this relationship between the camp variables and attachment styles violates a fundamental assumption of analyses such as regression (Cohen et al., 1983). That is, the variance in the outcome and camp-related predictors are related to an unmeasured variable. In this case, researchers' omission of attachment style may result in meaningless relationships between measured predictors and outcomes.

These relationships that camp researchers often report may be a symptom of the omission of attachment styles as a predictor of outcomes (even if they report effect sizes, or obtain samples with robust sampling, use rigorous designs, or use multiple data sources, e.g., Thurber et al., 2007). By adding attachment style to models of outcome development, researchers may be able to more accurately account for associations between camp participation and outcomes, as well as better understand for which youth these effects hold. For example, attachment styles likely influence how youth interact with others at camp (i.e., peers and staff) who are often cited as critical to the development (e.g., Wilson et al., 2019), as well as the contextual variables (i.e., sense of belonging), which may subsequently influence outcomes. Based on these two examples alone, it is reasonable to suggest that the associations between attachment styles and youth outcomes are mediated or moderated by other variables (e.g., Sroufe, 2005). However, the exact manner in which attachment styles relate to youth outcomes may be dependent on a cadre of variables, suggesting the need for further theorizing and research.

Despite the need to include attachment styles as a potential predictor of outcomes, the measurement of attachment and attachment styles can be complicated and unclear, especially without access to longitudinal studies that provide attachment data from infancy or early childhood (Honsberger, 2014; Roisman et al., 2007; Walker, 2021). Nevertheless, a variety of strategies exist for measuring attachment styles at different life stages (Roisman et al., 2007). It is beyond the scope of this paper for me to provide a thorough review of the strategies for

measuring attachment styles, however, I briefly describe some example measurement approaches below (for additional information, see Roisman et al., 2007).

Use of semi-structured interviews with specific protocols can be an effective strategy among youth aged 8–12 years for examining attachment representations of attachment figures (e.g., Child Attachment Interview; Schmueli-Goetz et al., 2004). This approach relies on youth responding to questions and trained coders to analyzes youth's responses. Additionally, a number of studies that have measured attachment in its relation to camp have used indicators of attachment style, such as anxiety and avoidance constructs (Brennan et al., 1998; Honsberger, 2014; Walker, 2021) or security (Kerns et al., 2001).

In summary, a variety of strategies for measuring attachment exist and have shown utility in cross-sectional, as well as longitudinal studies. Researchers will need to invest more time in considering the most effective and accessible tool for use in camp. The effort researchers put toward this task will likely pay dividends tenfold and help advance knowledge about camp as a developmental setting.

Conclusion

Youth who participate in youth programming, such as camp, deserve the highest-quality experience possible, and while research has undoubtedly provided insight into how camp may support development, more research is needed to better understand why this setting can be developmental, for whom camp benefits most, and under what circumstances. The purpose of this paper was to provide a conceptual argument for why youth programming researchers should be studying the relationships between attachment styles and youth outcomes. Drawing from PYD, summer camp, and attachment literature, I suggested that youth's early life attachment experiences are related to their camp experiences. To illustrate this argument, I used independence and social skills as two examples of outcomes likely impacted by youth's attachment styles. Any one manuscript on this topic leaves much to be discussed; yet, all discussions must start somewhere. Youth professionals and researchers alike are in the pursuit of influencing positive change in the world through their work. Let's not forget about attachment in our pursuit.

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