CAMP PARTICIPATION AND LIFE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF 4-H AND NON-4-H YOUTH PUEBLO COUNTY, COLORADO

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Project Introduction

The Pueblo County 4-H Program facilitated two summer camps with the common goal of helping 4-H and non-4-H youth develop life skills.

The first camp, Adventure Day Camp (ADC), targeted outreach efforts towards non-4-H youth in lower-income areas and families. This camp hosted 13 campers aged 8-10 and two days of events. Day one consisted of hands-on, educational workshops and group games, while day two consisted of an educational trip to the Pueblo Zoo.

The second camp, 4-H Camp, was open to 4-H youth members. Camp included a three-day, two-night trip the Pueblo Mountain Park in. This camp hosted 48 campers aged 8-13 and all days consisted of a variation of educational life skills activities. Including large and small group games, and competitive team-building exercises.

The main research goal of this internship was to evaluate the differences in life skill development between 4-H and non-4-H youth after attending a youth development camp.

Internship Goals

Community Outreach: (Fig. 1) Engage community in underserved areas with business-to-business canvassing, social media, and flyers.
Survey Design: Define life skills for comparison and create a survey using the targeting life skills model for our desired age group and data.
Hands-on Learning: Provide youth with educational games and activities that help build on foundational skills by encouraging socialization, deeper thinking, communication, and problem resolution.

My Impact

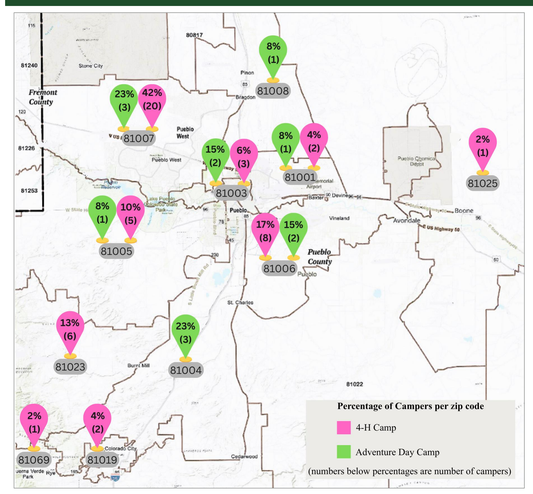
First Steps: Research & Settling In

- *Survey Design:* Defined life skills for comparison using simple Likert scales and retrospective post-tests. Evaluated life skills were independence, social skills, leadership, and self-esteem.
- *Outreach:* Engaged with community members and organizations (libraries, recreation centers, etc.) for parent and youth involvement.
- *Preparation:* Organized storage center. Packed and set up supplies and materials for both camps, including workshop materials.

Secondary Steps: Camps and Youth Education

- Engaged kids one-on-one and in group settings, encouraged use of deeper thinking (ask/answer questions, explore, participate, etc.).
- *Adventure Day Camp (ADC)*
  - Workshops: Campers participated in multiple learning stations. Campers learned about native plants, various bugs and pollinators, plant growth cycles, and made solar oven s'mores to learn about solar energy.
  - Other Activities: Team-building group games.
- *4-H Camp*
  - Workshops: Main workshops included a compass orientation scavenger hunt, archery, public speaking skits, and teambuilding dances. Campers showed increased participation during and after events, as well as anticipation for future events after workshops.
  - Other Activities: An optional hike, camp wide games, and competitive group games to win team ribbons.

Figure 1. Campers' Zip-Code Demographics. Figure 2. ADC Solar Oven & Smores Figure 3. 4-H Camp Flags. Figure 4. 4-H Camp Trashion Show!









What We Learned

Survey results:

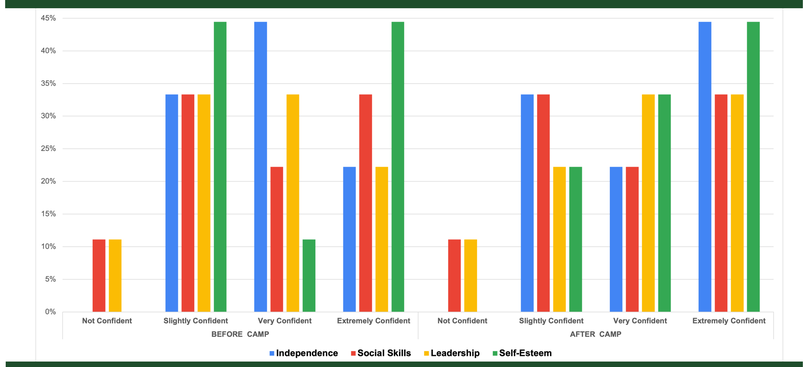
- Retrospective post-tests showed a positive shift in youth's life skill confidence following camp attendance. ADC youth demonstrated a substantial increase, notably moving from "slightly" or "very confident" to "extremely confident" across most skills. In contrast, 4-H Camp youth showed a similar, but less obvious shift, with minimal change observed in social and leadership skills.
- Higher "before camp" rating of life skills from 4-H Camp youth likely reflects long-term development of life skills from community engagement through 4-H, when compared to the lower "before camp" rating of life skills from ADC youth.
- *Response Rates:* ADC: ~31%, 4-H Camp: ~19%

(Low 4-H Camp response rate may reflect emergency circumstances produced by the Aspen Acres Fire, which affected many in the Pueblo 4-H community).

Figure 5. ADC Retrospective Post-Test Results



Figure 6. 4-H Camp Retrospective Post-Test Results



Next Steps and Recommendations

- Define and locate specific areas for community engagement.
- Expand outreach towards schools and local businesses, while starting outreach efforts earlier too help improve participant rates.
- Look forward to next years awesome activities and camps!

I would like to extend a special thanks to everyone at the Pueblo County Extension office for their mentorship and kindness! We are also grateful to Generation Wild, the Pueblo Zoo, the Colorado State Fairgrounds, and the Pueblo Mountain Park Staff for providing such great hospitality and making our camps successful.

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