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**RETROSPECTIVE PERCEPTIONS OF COUNSELOR WORK AT AN
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CAMP:
EXPERIENCES AND OUTCOMES**

A Thesis in

Recreation, Park, and Tourism Management

by

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Abstract

Environmental education camps serve as a space to integrate the pro-environmental messages typical of an environmental education setting with the social and emotional growth of the general camp setting. There exists initial evidence from the general camp environment that counselors are developing alongside campers through their work in these programs, especially as counselors generally exist in the period of identity exploration known as emerging adulthood. To explore this further, a quota sampling process was used to recruit and conduct interviews of 26 former counselors from Shaver's Creek Environmental Center's Outdoor School (SCEC ODS), informants being both within emerging adulthood and past emerging adulthood. Interviews focused on impactful elements of the counselor experience, the meaning the experience holds in the current lives of informants, and how the associated meanings differ between individuals' developmental states. Past counselors communicated strong eudaimonic and hedonic feelings stemming from four primary components of the SCEC ODS experience: leadership and education, community, outdoor elements, and cultural traditions. The complimentary nature of these feelings promoted post-program identity development within counselors, with individuals identifying strongly with the environmental and social skills developed through the experience. Finally, emerging adults identified a level of compartmentalization of these identities, seeing them as only part of their fragmented self-perception. In contrast, those removed from emerging adulthood utilized a sense of identity flexibility to incorporate their SCEC ODS-related identities into a more cohesive sense of self. This suggests identity development within counselors at an environmental education camp may be an effective way to promote long-term pro-environmental and social-emotional outcomes within emerging adults. Implications for future research and environmental education camps are discussed from these findings.

Table of Contents

List of Tables	vi
List of Figures	vii
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Chapter Two: Literature Review	4
Environmental Education within Social-Ecological Systems	4
Environmental Education Camps: An Interplay Between the General Camp Setting and Environmental Education	5
The Camp Counselor Experience	9
Emerging Adulthood as a Developmental Concept	12
Promoting Pro-Environmental Behavior	14
Integrating Environmental Education with Social-Emotional Learning	16
The Current Study	17
Chapter Three: Methods	19
Study Setting and Population	19
Data Collection	20
Analytical Framework	22
Developing Intimacy with Data and Analysis	23
Chapter Four: Results	27
Informant Information	27
Results Overview	28
Research Questions #1: How do counselor alumni remember and interpret their time working at an environmental education camp?	31
Leadership and Educational Elements	32
Community Elements	39
Outdoor Elements	46
Cultural Elements	49
RQ2: What meaning do counselor alumni associate with their experience at a residential environmental education camp?	53
Prominence of a Cultural World	55
Identification with a Cultural World	59
Development of Knowledge	69
RQ3: How does the meaning associated with the counselor experience change at different points of retrospection as counselor alumni navigate the developmental period of emerging adulthood?	71

Chapter Five: Discussion, Limitations, and Conclusion.....	80
Discussion	80
Limitations	88
Conclusion.....	90
References.....	93
Appendix: Semi-Structured Interview Guide	104

List of Tables

Table 1.) Basic demographic information of informants.....	28
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List of Figures

Figure 1.) Overview of SCEC ODS experience and retrospectively cited outcomes.....31

Chapter One: Introduction

Human behavior exists in an unsustainable and imbalanced relationship with the natural world (Catton, 1980; de Sherbinin, Carr, Cassels, and Jiang, 2007; Gould, Pellow, & Schnaiberg, 2004; Murphy, 1994). As this imbalance leads to greater and greater environmental degradation, human behavior within broader environmental systems is presented with diverging paths: one allows for humans to shift this dynamic towards greater balance, with the other leading towards even greater imbalance (Collins et al., 2011). By acting in a pro-environmental manner, humans can realign their behavior to fall within the limits of natural systems while also advocating for broader systemic changes towards sustainability. But in order for this to happen, humans must begin to develop a holistic pro-environmental worldview, combining environmental knowledge with pro-environmental identities, values, attitudes, and beliefs (Heberlein, 2012).

Environmental education presents the opportunity to foster this pro-environmental ethic and identity within the greater public (Volk & Hungerford, 1990), with these pro-environmental psychosocial constructs increasing the likelihood that individuals will also engage in pro-environmental behaviors (Heberlein, 2012; Stern, 2000). Furthermore, environmental education in a residential camp setting presents the opportunity to align environmental education outcomes with the social and emotional outcomes which have been consistently linked to the general camp experience (Bialeschki, Henderson, and James, 2007). This produces citizens with environmental knowledge who also have the ability to act on this knowledge, a necessary combination of skills if individuals are to shift their behaviors after educational experiences (Chawla & Cushing, 2007).

Thus far, environmental education and camp research has largely focused on the perspectives of students and campers, examining what participants are gaining from these

various experiences. Alternatively, a small but growing body of research has demonstrated that campers are not the only ones growing from the camp experience, with camp counselors also gaining a wide-array of developmental outcomes (DeGraaf & Glover, 2003; Digby & Ferrari, 2007; Duerden et al., 2014; Jacobs & McAvoy, 2005; Johnson, Goldman, Garey, Britner, & Weaver, 2011). This is especially important given that counselors are generally characterized as emerging adults, a period defined by individuals exploring what type of person they would like to be as they transition into more permanent adult roles (Arnett, 2007; Schwartz et al., 2013). If program managers are to effectively foster pro-environmental outcomes through environmental education camp experiences, counselors must also be considered when planning the learning and development process. By educating individuals socially, emotionally, and pro-environmentally during the emerging adulthood developmental period, environmental education experiences have the opportunity to develop individuals who embody pro-environmental sentiments paired with the social-emotional skills to act on these sentiments. Furthermore, social identification as a pro-environmental person can promote pro-environmental values, attitudes, and behaviors (Fritsche, Barth, Jugert, Masson, & Reese, 2017).

With this in mind, no current empirical research examines the counselor experience or the associated outcomes in an environmental education camp setting. If we are to help foster broader pro-environmental behaviors within the general public, counselors, as emerging adults in their own unique developmental period, must not be ignored. The interplay between general camp outcomes and environmental education outcomes for counselors must be explored and used to develop better educational and training programs for these individuals.

Given the lack of understanding on how work in an environmental education setting specifically impacts individuals within the developmental period of emerging adulthood, this

thesis will address the following items: A literature review will be conducted that covers the current state of empirical and theoretical understanding of: a.) environmental education within social-ecological systems, b.) outcomes of environmental education and camp settings, c.) outcomes of the camp counselor experience, d.) emerging adulthood as a developmental stage, e.) environmental values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, f.) the integration of social-emotional learning with environmental knowledge in environmental education settings. A novel study is then proposed at the end of the literature review to explore the outcomes associated with emerging adults working in an environmental education setting. The methodology for data collection and analysis will then be presented. Results of this exploratory study will be presented, connecting relevant findings to existing theory in order to orient this work within the broader field of research on related topics. Lastly, results will be discussed, specifically focusing on directions for future research and implications for practice relevant to those working in an environmental education and camp setting.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Environmental Education within Social-Ecological Systems

There is strong evidence that anthropogenic systems exist out of balance with natural systems (Catton, 1980; de Sherbinin et al., 2007; Gould et al., 2004; Murphy, 1994). In order to restore this balance, shifts must be made with how humans view and interact with the natural environment. Heberlein (2012) asserts that sustainable alternatives may be provided on a systemic level, technological level, or an educational level. But whichever path is taken, a public that views nature as valuable must exist to support these fixes. This exemplifies the necessity of fostering a broader pro-environmental ethic and identity amongst the general public. Individuals must go beyond understanding natural systems and begin to value them in a way that pushes them to act in support of environmental sustainability. Educating individuals about how the natural world functions is not enough to foster this worldview. A more complex connection with nature, pulling upon values, attitudes, and beliefs, must be fostered within educational systems to build a view of the natural world that values a sustainable relationship within human-environment systems (Pooley & O'Connor, 2000; Volk & Hungerford, 1990).

By educating individuals on the natural environment in experiential ways that expand beyond simply sharing knowledge, environmental education centers and camps aims to shift ethics and identities of participants in this holistic manner necessary in shifting behavior. Wals, Brody, Dillon, and Stevenson (2014) discuss how environmental education arose from the widespread awareness of environmental degradation that came about in the 1960's. They operationalized environmental education as a response to these environmental crises by attempting to develop "the ecological and environmental literacy required to understand the sociopolitical, value-laden, place-based, and emotional contexts in which environmental issues

arise and need to be resolved” (Wals et al., 2014; pp. 583). This broad approach to education makes individuals more likely to embody this environmental ethic in their sense of self, increasing the likelihood that they will act in a more pro-environmental manner after these educational experiences (Heberlein, 2012; Stern, 2000). This falls in line with Volk and Hungerford (1990), who posit that the ultimate aim of environmental education is to promote behavioral change. Ultimately, this pro-environmental behavioral change feeds back into social-ecological systems, influencing how anthropogenic systems interact with the natural environment (Collins et al., 2011). If we are to realign social-ecological systems towards a sustainable balance between humans and nature, environmental education occupies an important place within this process.

Environmental Education Camps: An Interplay Between the General Camp Setting and Environmental Education

Environmental education camps incorporate pro-environmental messages into the developmental experiences of the general camp setting. This provides an educational setting that is intensive and multi-faceted, touching on constructs beyond knowledge of educational content, expanding learning into the social and emotional realms as well (Williams & Chawla, 2016). By examining what is currently known on outcomes of the general camp experience and then incorporating these findings with the current state of research on environmental education, a better understanding of what is known and unknown about the environmental education camp setting can be developed. A need for this broader education is especially imperative in light of some evidence that attachment to nature may be declining amongst younger generations due to factors like interest in technology and an over-obsession with safety (Liu, Vedlitz, & Shi, 2014; Louv, 2006).

The general camp setting provides an opportunity to foster an intensive developmental setting for all of those involved. Bialeschki, Henderson, and James (2007) define the camp setting as offering “sustained experiences, usually in natural settings, that promote a ‘sense of community’ or ‘family.’ Children are with camp staff for extended lengths of time (ie. usually 1–8 weeks) and in the case of ‘resident’ or ‘sleep-away camps’ are under the continuous care of the camp staff” (pp. 770).

Learning in the general camp setting has frequently been found to exist within the social and emotional realm. Bialeschki et al. (2007) broke these broad outcomes of camp down into four areas for campers: self-constructs, social relationships, skill building, and spirituality. These social and emotional outcomes manifest themselves in the camp setting in a variety of ways: decreased anxiety amongst campers whose siblings were undergoing cancer treatment (Sidhu, Passmore, & Baker, 2006), increased self-esteem within campers from economically disadvantaged communities (Readdick & Schaller, 2005), increased perceived autonomy for campers managing Type 1 diabetes (Hill & Sibthorp, 2006), and increased communication and cooperative skills (Bialeschki et al., 2007) to provide a brief overview of outcomes in some settings. Consistent evidence from a variety of camps strongly suggests campers are leaving the experience with more advanced social and emotional skills.

Furthermore, when examining these primary outcomes of the camp experience, increased spirituality stands out in broadly linking itself to constructs operationalized as values, beliefs, attitudes, and affect in the pro-environmental behavior literature (Heberlein, 2012; Pooley & O’Connor, 2000; Stern, 2000). Henderson & Bialeschki (2008) claim spiritual growth is supported in the general camp setting by rituals and traditions, time spent outdoors, and communal living. This fits within recommendations that an appeal to attitudes, emotions, and

beliefs is necessary in addition to environmental knowledge for educators hoping to influence environmental worldviews (Pooley & O'Connor, 2000; Volk & Hungerford, 1990). This link provides a unique opportunity for environmental education camps to promote learning outcomes that could ultimately manifest themselves in behavioral change amongst campers, teaching campers more than just content knowledge on environmental systems.

When examining programmatic components of the general camp settings that contribute to these positive outcomes, supportive relationships between campers and staff were identified as being the most impactful element of campers' experiences (Garst, Browne, & Bialeschki, 2011; Henderson et al., 2007). Other parts of the camp experience that were also found to be impactful were the presence of a program mission, the presence of structured activities, and having trained and accountable staff members (Garst et al., 2011; Henderson et al., 2007). This integrates well into literature on residential environmental education camp settings that states that mentors play a significant role in promoting both positive youth development outcomes and environmental education outcomes (Stern, Frensely, Powell, & Ardoin, 2018).

Further contextualizing these camp-related outcomes within environmentally-oriented outcomes, the significant life experience (SLE) research provides an opportunity to understand how general camp outcomes integrate with environmental education outcomes regarding environmental sensitivity, which Hungerford and Volk (1990) argues is a needed entry point towards pro-environmental behavior. Environmental sensitivity is operationalized as a general sense of care, empathy, and concern for the natural environment, and has been found to be a strong antecedent of pro-environmental behavior in prior studies (Volk & Hungerford, 1990). Within the SLE research, individuals who identify as having a pro-environmental identity as adults are purposively sampled and asked to identify influential life experiences earlier in life

that helped shape this environmental awareness (Chawla, 1998; Corcoran, 1999; Palmer et al., 1998). When sampling cross-culturally, several prominent factors are most frequently identified in supporting pro-environmental behavior later in life: direct experiences in nature were cited as the most influential factor with connections to other people outdoors, education, and witnessing environmental destruction all being somewhat equal in being the second-most influential (Palmer et al., 1998). Specifically within the United States, the prominence of direct experiences in nature and mentorship (both formally in an educational setting and informally via friendships and family) arise as key antecedents of environmental sensitivity later in life (Chawla, 1998; Corcoran, 1999). More recent research further confirms that time spent in nature early in life predicts environmental awareness later in life (Bögeholz, 2006; Wells & Lekies, 2006).

These themes within the SLE literature have links to findings within the general camp literature, with both stating that some of the most influential elements of formative camp experiences are the social relationships formed between individuals and time spent in nature (Garst et al., 2011; Henderson & Bialeschki, 2008; Henderson et al., 2007). With social connections within the camp setting being identified as one of the most important aspects of the experience, the question arises, what is the influence of the camp experience on the other end of this dialectic relationship between campers and camp staff? Some prior research has examined this question, but findings focused specifically on the camper side of this relationship (Roark, Ellis, Wells, & Gillard, 2010). There is a clear imbalance in the literature. The counselor side of this relationship has a small but growing body of research examining specifically what counselors are getting out of the camp experience.

The Camp Counselor Experience

The importance of camp staff as mentors in helping to form impactful experiences for campers has been shown both in the general camp literature (Garst et al., 2011; Henderson & Bialeschki, 2008) and within the environmental education literature (Chawla, 1998; Corcoran, 1999; Stern et al, 2018). While most camp and environmental education research focuses on camper outcomes, initial studies provide evidence that camp counselors are also learning and developing from their camp experiences. While generally characterized as a job, there seems to be wide-ranging educational and developmental outcomes associated with work as a camp counselor. If counselors are also developing from their time working at camp, it may help to understand how counselors are growing in order to fully maximize the benefits they are gaining from the experience.

In parallel to camper-focused research, a sense of community has been found to be one of the primary outcomes of the general camp experience for counselors as well (McCole, Jacobs, Lindley, & McAvoy, 2012; Lyons, 2003; Lyons, Young, & Wang, 2016). Lyons et al. (2016) found camps used various rituals, traditions, and symbolism to develop episodic and inclusion boundaries to define the camp community. These boundaries intentionally emphasized cohesion amongst camp staff while differentiating the community formed within the camp setting from those formed outside it (Lyons et al., 2016). This parallels outcomes found in camper-focused research, supporting evidence that social relationships represent a primary outcome of the camp experience, both for counselors and campers. Furthermore, McCole et al. (2012) surveyed former camp counselors and tested how their perceived sense of community predicted their willingness to return as a counselor for the following season. Those who felt a strong sense of community were significantly more likely to return to the same camp next season, implying that social

connections developed have a strong influence on how counselors perceive their camp experience as well (McCole et al, 2012).

With previous literature showing that campers gain social and emotional growth from the general camp environment, similar findings are also found for the counselor experience. The counselor experience was found to contribute to leadership development (Kenedellen, Camire, Bean, & Forneris, 2016), identity exploration (Johnson et al., 2011), and increased emotional intelligence (Jacobs & McAvoy, 2005). Kenedellen et al. (2016) found that three primary aspects of the counselor experience helped facilitate leadership development: the need for good communication skills, developing confidence in their role as a counselor at camp, and the opportunity to shadow more experienced counselors. In compliment to this leadership development, Johnson et al. (2011) found that the camp environment provided a safe place for identity exploration for counselors. When working with campers, they had the opportunity to experiment with a wide range of roles spanning from role model to entertainer. This identity exploration was supported by the unique sense of separation counselors felt from the outside world when in the camp environment (Johnson et al., 2011). Furthermore, Jacobs and McAvoy (2005) found that emotional intelligence levels, the ability to monitor one's own emotions and those of others, significantly increased after a season of working as a camp counselor. These findings on social and emotional development provide further evidence that the general camp setting is a unique environment of growth for campers as well as counselors, providing all involved a strong sense of community and growth both intra- and interpersonally.

In contrast to these previous studies, others have primarily set out to examine growth resulting from the camp counselor experience regarding workforce skills and preparedness (Digby & Ferrari, 2007; Duerden et al., 2014). Some findings on workforce development

paralleled other studies that sought to examine social and emotional development from the camp counselor experience. Growth in areas of leadership, communication skills, and identity development were all found to be workforce skills developed via the camp counselor experience (Digby & Ferrari, 2007; Duerden et al., 2014). In addition to these findings, other workforce skills that were developed as a camp counselor were organization, responsibility, patience, and intrinsic motivation (Digby & Ferrari, 2007; Duerden et al., 2014).

Despite these wide-ranging developmental outcomes associated with the general camp counselor experience, there are currently no studies examining counselors specifically in an environmental education setting. The current base of knowledge on camp counselor outcomes is derived from camp research in a general sense, with environmentally themed camps being unstudied within the counselor literature. This is in clear contrast to other portions of the environmental education literature, which has no shortage of studies examining campers within an environmental education camp context (Browne, Garst, & Bialeschki, 2011; Mittelstaedt, Sanker, & VanderVeer, 1999; Mullenbach, Andrejewski, & Mowen, 2018). Understanding the interplay between general camp outcomes and environmental education outcomes helps practitioners design more effective programming for campers. The same is needed for counselors, especially in light of research showing that the camp experience is an educational experience for counselors as well as campers. In a broad overview of the camp counselor experience, Garst et al. (2011) state that, “research on camp staff outcomes suggests that camp experiences may contribute toward young adults’ becoming fully functioning adults, characterized by the ability to find employment, form a lasting and gratifying partnership, and become a community contributor” (pp. 81). If these are the primary outcomes of the camp experience for counselors, how do they integrate with pro-environmental themes woven into the

experience at environmental education camps? These developmental outcomes are a necessary component in developing environmentally active citizens (Chawla & Cushing, 2007), but how these outcomes integrate with environmental themes is not well understood for camp counselors.

Emerging Adulthood as a Developmental Concept

Understanding how environmental education camps act as an educational setting for counselors as well as campers is vital given that counselors are frequently classified as emerging adults. This period of growth, which is considered unique to industrialized nations, is characterized by identity exploration, increased responsibility, and increased independence (Arnett, 2007; Schwartz et al., 2013). This is the time emerging adults explore who they would like to become once they settle into more permanent adult roles. As Arnett (2000) states, “Because marriage and parenthood are delayed until the mid-twenties or late twenties for most people, it is no longer normative for the late teens and early twenties to be a time of entering and settling into long-term adult roles. On the contrary, these years are more typically a period of frequent change and exploration” (pp. 469).

Identity exploration within emerging adulthood takes place in three primary areas: work, love, and worldviews (Arnett, 2000). Regarding exploration in the realm of work, emerging adults see employment at this time as preparing them for jobs they will hold throughout the period of adulthood (Arnett, 2000). This integrates well into research that has already been done on the camp counselor experience, with the opportunity to try out different roles in the camp setting being shown to help counselors understand what type of setting they would like to work in the future (Digby & Ferrari, 2007). Furthermore, this view on work held by emerging adults adds support for examining the camp counselor experience as an educational process.

In regards to worldview development, this is seen as an integral part of the cognitive development in emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000). Schwartz et al. (2013) connect this process within emerging adulthood to Erikson's (1950) life span psychosocial theory. Through this process of identity development, emerging adults experience an interplay between "identity synthesis" and "identity confusion." In "identity synthesis," emerging adults begin to develop a coherent sense of self, with different areas of their lives converging around a cohesive central identity. In "identity confusion," emerging adults feel a sense of fragmentation, with different life areas lacking a consistent direction (Erikson, 1950; Schwartz et al., 2013). The sense of community and separateness from the outside world in the general camp setting has consistently been found to support this identity exploration process (Digby & Ferrari, 2007; Garst et al., 2009; Johnson et al., 2011). Counselors report that a feeling of acceptance and isolation from the outside world allowed them to be authentically themselves at camp, while also providing them the opportunity to explore different roles within the camp community (Digby & Ferrari, 2007; Garst et al., 2009; Johnson et al., 2011). As counselors explore who they would like to be in adulthood, the camp experience provides a "bubble" for emerging adults to navigate this tension between "identity synthesis" and "identity confusion" in a safe and supported environment (Johnson et al., 2011).

With camp counselors largely falling into the period of emerging adulthood, this adds a greater need to understand how camp counselors in an environmental education setting are being impacted by their work. If we are to develop an environmentally aware society, this is a developmental period that has been relatively under-studied in the environmental education literature. Identity exploration has been identified as an outcome for emerging adults working in camp settings (Johnson et al., 2011), but how broader environmental themes fit into this

development are not well understood. Given that this period is characterized by emerging adults exploring what kind of person they would like to be in adulthood, it is important to understand the interplay between environmental themes and this broader development. Targeting environmental education experiences towards individuals within this developmental stage provides the opportunity to potentially develop a stable pro-environmental identity for emerging adults later in life.

Promoting Pro-Environmental Behavior

Previous work within environmental attitudes, values, and beliefs can add depth to the current state of knowledge on the camp counselor experience and how such outcomes may link to broader outcomes for counselors coming out of environmental education settings. Volk and Hungerford (1990), in their writing on environmental education methods, discuss how the traditional line of thinking within environmental education has posited that teaching individuals about the environment will make them more aware of environmental issues and therefore more willing to act on them. This linear model of environmental education affecting pro-environmental behavior is not supported by the literature (Volk & Hungerford, 1990). Research on pro-environmental behavior indicates that factors like attitudes, values, and beliefs all also influence pro-environmental behavior in conjunction with knowledge and awareness (Heberlein, 2012; Steg & Vlek, 2009; Stern, 2000; Volk & Hungerford, 1990). By aligning pro-environmental themes with the diverse outcomes of the camp counselor experience, individuals may be more likely to integrate this knowledge into their sense of self and ultimately translate it into pro-environmental behavior. This falls in line with researcher recommendations to appeal to attitudes, emotions, and beliefs in order to make environmental education content more impactful (Pooley & O'Connor, 2000).

Heberlein (2012) states aligning messages with previously well-developed value systems of the population increases the likelihood that it will be adopted and valued. Aligning pro-environmental themes with camp-related outcomes like a sense of community (McCole, Jacobs, Lindley, & McAvoy, 2012; Lyons, 2003; Lyons et al., 2016) and increased spirituality (Henderson & Bialeschki, 2008) strongly suggests counselors are prone to embody these themes and live them out in their behaviors, especially during the developmental period of emerging adulthood. This goes beyond the simple educational fix that researchers have argued is ineffective (Heberlein, 2012; Volk & Hungerford, 2012). Heberlein (2012) claims that knowledge must be paired with other processes preceding pro-environmental behavior, like affect and social norms, in order to increase the likelihood that people will act in a pro-environmental manner. The need to target a broader base of social and cognitive factors supporting pro-environmental behavior is supported within the social psychology literature (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002) as well as the environmental education literature (Pooley & O'Connor, 2000; Volk & Hungerford, 1990).

Stern's (2000) value-belief-norm theory provides an alternative conception of the factors preceding pro-environmental behavior. Via this theory, pro-environmental behavior flows outward from an individual's universal values; to their beliefs, which are influenced by a combination of worldview, awareness of environmental issues, and ability to take action on known environmental issues; to norms promoting or inhibiting a sense of obligation to take the desired action; and finally to actually acting on the desired action (Stern, 2000). While values are generally formed early in life and are fairly static (Heberlein, 2012), the environmental education camp setting has the opportunity to influence both beliefs, by communicating pro-environmental messages in an effective way (Pooley & O'Connor, 2000), and norms, by providing them with a

strong sense of community centered around a common purpose (McCole, Jacobs, Lindley, & McAvoy, 2012; Lyons, 2003; Lyons et al., 2016).

Ultimately, by understanding how environmental education effects the psychological constructs preceding pro-environmental behavior, one can begin to better understand how counselors may be integrating pro-environmental themes with the broader camp-related outcomes in residential environmental education settings.

Integrating Environmental Education with Social-Emotional Learning

Given the positive developmental outcomes associated with the camp counselor experience, environmental education outcomes do not exist in isolation, but rather are integrated seamlessly with the other outcomes associated with the experience. The literature on environmental values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors has shown that pro-environmental behavior is affected by complex, interacting constructs (Heberlein, 2012; Stern, 2000). While the interplay between these constructs have not been explicitly examined within a camp counselor context, researchers have begun to examine social and emotional outcomes in conjunction with environmental education outcomes in other settings (D'Amato & Krasny, 2011; Chawla & Cushing, 2007; Krasny, Kalbacker, Stedman, & Russ, 2015; Liddicoat & Krasny, 2014; Williams & Chawla, 2016). In these studies, environmental education outcomes are not examined in isolation, rather they are folded into the broader outcomes of the experiences examined in this research.

Williams & Chawla (2016) conducted retrospective interviews of camper alumni from residential environmental education camps in Colorado, examining the influence the experience had on their life trajectory. Outcomes were found to fit well into the framework of social practice theory, with individuals developing both an “ecological identity” and a “social environmental

identity” from their time at camp. Through the development of these identities, individuals came to incorporate environmental knowledge and awareness into their sense of self (Williams & Chawla, 2016). In an alternative setting, D’Amato & Krasny (2014) found that the lens of transformative learning theory conceptualized the experiences of young adults returning from outdoor adventure expeditions well. Through their trips, participants identified both instrumental outcomes, like a commitment to environmental stewardship, and personal growth outcomes, like emotional growth and management (D’Amato & Krasny, 2014). In each of these settings, outcomes of pro-environmental feelings and behaviors were not identified in isolation, rather they were inextricably tied to other outcomes of the experience. Furthermore, Krasny et al. (2015) demonstrate that the natural world can also act as a vehicle to facilitate social and emotional growth, as they discuss how environmental education can act as means to develop social capital within communities.

For each of these settings, growth in an environmental sense is supported and complemented by growth in a social and emotional sense. With the social and emotional outcomes of the camp counselor experience discussed in previous studies, understanding how these outcomes integrate with environmentally themed outcomes in an environmental education settings provides a fruitful direction for future research, especially as a seamless integration of outcomes has already been demonstrated in other settings.

The Current Study

The current state of research provides promising opportunities for examining camp counselors in a residential environmental education setting. As has been previously outlined, in comparison to research on campers, research on counselor learning has been lacking. While this may not be surprising given the primary objectives of environmental education and camp

settings, research suggests that counselors are also gaining a great deal from their time at camp (Digby & Ferrari, 2007; Duerden et al., 2014; Jacobs & McAvoy, 2005; Johnson et al., 2011; Kenedellen et al., 2016). This research suggests that many camper and counselor outcomes parallel each other, with both communities gaining social and emotional outcomes from their experience. This provides support for researching counselors in an environmental education camp setting as well, given campers are likely not the only ones gaining from this experience. Furthermore, as counselors continue to develop within the phase of emerging adulthood, it is important to understand how they uniquely interact with the various educational components within an environmental education camp setting. Given this, the following research questions are proposed to guide the current study:

RQ1: How do counselor alumni remember and interpret their time working at an environmental education camp?

RQ2: What meaning do counselor alumni associate with their experience at a residential environmental education camp?

RQ3: How does the meaning associated with the counselor experience change at different points of retrospection as counselor alumni navigate the developmental period of emerging adulthood?

Chapter Three: Methods

Study Setting and Population

Shaver's Creek Environmental Center's Outdoor School (SCEC ODS) is a four-day, three-night residential environmental education camp serving fifth-graders in the central Pennsylvania region. Campers attend SCEC ODS through their public or private schools during either the spring or fall semester. While at SCEC ODS, campers learn experientially, attending lessons on various aspects of the natural world while being outside and fully immersing themselves in the lesson content. All lessons are designed to fulfill the Pennsylvania state education standards for Environment and Ecology. Other aspects of camp programming include living in communal cabin environments, shared meals, nightly campfires, and unstructured outdoor recreation time. These elements all work to fulfill the purpose of SCEC ODS, striving to "guide children toward healthy and harmonious relationships with other people and the earth" (Shaver's Creek Environmental Center, 2019).

Counselors at SCEC ODS are Pennsylvania State University undergraduate students receiving class credit for their work at SCEC ODS. They receive two, three-hour trainings prior to their week at SCEC ODS. They then live at SCEC ODS for one full camp session, becoming an integral part of program functioning. They act as the primary caregivers to campers throughout the week: sleeping in cabins with the campers overnight, helping campers prepare for the day's activities, teaching lessons, eating communal meals with the campers, and fulfilling any other necessary roles throughout the week.

Given counselors are receiving class credit for their time at SCEC ODS, learning and development are integral parts of the counselor experience. Concepts emphasized in trainings are pedagogical skills, knowledge of basic environmental science, caregiving skills, group

management skills, and the intersectionality of these concepts. Counselors are required to write a reflection paper at the end of their experience, pushing them to look back on their week at SCEC ODS and derive meaning from the experience. SCEC ODS has been functioning for over 50 years and therefore has a large community of counselor alumni.

Data Collection

SCEC ODS provided rosters of all counselors who worked at SCEC ODS from Fall 2004 to Spring 2019. Using these lists of participants, the Penn State Alumni Association provided the most current email addresses on record for the listed individuals. With approval from the Penn State Alumni Association, an email and survey were sent out to all counselor alumni via the Qualtrics Survey Platform. This email provided some basic background on the research project, how data would be utilized, and directed individuals to fill out the accompanied survey if they were willing to participate in a 60 to 90-minute semi-structured interview. The following information was aggregated for informants via the Qualtrics Survey Platform: name, email address, current age, season(s) serving as a counselor at SCEC ODS, season(s) serving as a Learning Group Leader (a higher counselor position reserved for returning individuals) at SCEC ODS, and convenient dates and times for semi-structured interviews. The solicitation email was sent out only once as there was an adequate number of responses after the first email.

Ultimately, 26 semi-structured interviews were conducted: 8 were scheduled via chain referral from key informants within the SCEC ODS community and 18 were scheduled via the email solicitation. The chain referral interviews were conducted to ensure adequate study sample size while the Penn State Alumni Association worked to aggregate the email addresses for the individuals on the provided rosters. Upon receiving email lists for all individuals serving as

counselors from the Fall of 2004 to the Spring of 2019, that served as the only source of recruiting informants for interviews.

A quota sampling technique (Bernard, 2011) was used to segment the counselor alumni population into three main groups when scheduling the interviews. Each targeted sub-population was theoretically informed by emerging adulthood theory. This study defines emerging adults along the lines of Côté's (2014) conceptualization and critique of the term, acknowledging that it is a useful term to describe a prolonged transition into adulthood without classifying it as a universal developmental stage in the United States. Given preliminary evidence that the perception on the camp counselor experience changes over time (DeGraaf & Glover, 2003; Digby & Ferrari, 2007) and that emerging adulthood plays a key role in the perception of the camp counselor experience (Johnson et al., 2011), this method purposively sampled informants who were reflecting on the SCEC ODS experience along a spectrum of both time and developmental stages. The following sub-populations were utilized to develop the quota sampling categories: within emerging adulthood (25 years old or younger) and still pursuing an undergraduate degree or having graduated within the past three months; within emerging adulthood and out of their undergraduate education for three months or more; and out of emerging adulthood (over 25 years old) and out of their undergraduate education. Given emerging adults are exploring life areas such as work and worldview (Arnett, 2000), sampling participants before and after their undergraduate education and within and removed from emerging adulthood can help provide unique insight into lasting outcome from the experience. Six interviews or more were the minimum conducted for each sub-population, as Bernard (2011) states this can be adequate to reach saturation in phenomenological interviews. Ultimately,

interviews within each sub-population were conducted until saturation was reached (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

The semi-structured interview guide was designed to ask general questions allowing informants to speak freely on their SCEC ODS experience and the meaning they derive from it in their current lives. Broadly, there were three primary sections to the semi structured interview: pre-SCEC ODS, the SCEC ODS experience, and moving forward in life post-SCEC ODS. The pre-SCEC ODS section covered relevant previous life experiences, how individuals learned about SCEC ODS, and motivations for signing up to be a counselor. The SCEC ODS experience section discussed anecdotal memories, impactful programmatic elements, and the subjective feelings associated with different programmatic elements. Finally, the post-SCEC ODS section addressed adjustment back into everyday life, knowledge and skills gained from the experience, and the perceived meaning associated with the experience in current lives of informants. The semi-structured interview guide can be found in the Appendix of this thesis.

Analytical Framework

This research project took an inductive approach to answering the previously described guiding research questions. As Babbie (2013) states, an inductive approach starts by “observing aspects of social life and then seeking to discover patterns that may point to relatively universal principles” (pp. 80). Throughout the research process, while allowing themes to emerge naturally, an effort was made to capture the emic perspective of counselor alumni (Creswell, 2007). That is, themes were tied to the unique worldview of counselor alumni, attempting to capture the essence of their lived experience and understand how they derive meaning from it.

After allowing for emic themes to emerge inductively, they were integrated into other theories that best accounted for observed phenomena (Bernard, Wutich, & Ryan, 2016). Given

the current state of literature on camps, environmental education, and pro-environmental behavior, this approach presents an opportunity to fill a gap in understanding while explicitly orienting findings to areas that have already been established. This approach helps to investigate where work in an environmental education camp setting as an emerging adult intersects with other fields of research and where it is a unique and novel process. This inductive research process provides the opportunity to bolster theory and form the basis for future deductive research to further triangulate findings associated with this research project.

Developing Intimacy with Data and Analysis

In order to best capture the emic perspective (Creswell, 2007) of SCEC ODS counselor alumni, the six stages of thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) were utilized. These six steps were: becoming familiar with data, developing a system of initial codes, searching for themes amongst initial codes, reviewing and refining initial themes, operationalizing themes, and developing a final report of findings.

Interviews were all conducted by the primary researcher during the summer of 2019. Informants were either interviewed in-person at a mutually agreeable third party location or via the phone if a mutual location and time could not be established (e.g. scheduling conflicts, distance between informant and interviewer). Interviews were recorded on a handheld audio recording device and uploaded to a computer system for later transcription. With the primary researcher acting as the sole interviewer, this helped to attain Braun and Clarke's (2006) first goal of qualitative research in which familiarity with data is developed. Furthermore, the primary researcher developed an intimate knowledge of the program while working as a teaching assistant for program trainings. This allowed for informants to speak at ease about the program

as the interviewer had a general knowledge on programming function and traditions. Informants knew of the primary researcher's connection to SCEC ODS

Audio recorded interviews were then subsequently transcribed using Rev Transcription Services (Rev, 2019). Transcriptions were read while simultaneously listening to the interview audio file at least once through to ensure accuracy and gain familiarity with the data. All transcripts were edited for errors during this process. This helped to both make interview transcripts more accurate while also further working toward Braun and Clarke's (2006) first goal of gaining an intimate understanding of the collected data.

Semi-structured interviews were analyzed through a combination of first- and second-cycle coding techniques. First cycle coding methods included descriptive and process coding (Saldaña, 2009). This combination of coding techniques allowed for themes to emerge inductively. Process coding helped to understand how different elements of the SCEC ODS experience interact with each other to create a unique learning environment for counselors. Descriptive coding helped to develop an understanding of common topics discussed by informants. Second cycle coding methods, including axial, focused, and pattern coding (Saldaña, 2009) then aggregated initial codes into general, broader themes across informants.

The aforementioned process was undertaken by three members of the research team independently. In addition to the primary researcher of this study, two research assistants were recruited to aid with coding. Both research assistants were debriefed on study goals and relevant background information. The first research assistant held a bachelor's degree in recreation, park, and tourism management and previously spent several years working as a technician on various social science research projects related to outdoor recreation and visitor use monitoring. This individual helped to transcribe six of the 26 interviews before beginning coding, helping to

develop familiarity with the data. The second research assistant was an undergraduate student studying recreation, park, and tourism management and had assisted previously on other research projects related to outdoor recreation. To help develop her familiarity with the data, representative transcripts were reviewed together, and initial emergent themes were discussed. Basic coding procedures were reviewed with each research assistant prior to beginning the coding process. The inductive nature of this process was emphasized to both research assistants, highlighting that their analysis should aim to capture the emic perspective of the informants being interviewed.

Coding processes were conducted in NVivo 12 qualitative analysis software. Codes were compared between researchers, and discrepancies in codes were discussed between researchers to develop a mutual understanding of the data. Revisions were made to codes to represent this mutual understanding. This collaborative coding process was utilized to develop intercoder reliability within the thematic coding process (Saldaña, 2009). The utilization of multiple coders during the data analysis process was taken in conjunction with several other steps, prolonged engagement with the data, acknowledgement of bias, and detailed description of processes, that Morse (2015) recommends in ensuring reliability and validity during qualitative data analysis. Establishing reliability and validity during the data analysis process was important in developing a strong link between the emic perspective of informants and established theory during the final coding processes.

Lastly, once codes were refined and operationalized, themes were tied back into the existing theory that best accounts for the emic perspective of the informants (Bernard, Wutich, & Ryan, 2016). This linked results to relevant theories, bridging the gap in understanding between the retrospective meaning associated with work at SCEC ODS and other realms of research that

are more well-established. Given the clear gap in understanding regarding emerging adults working in an environmental education camp setting, it is necessary to explicitly orient findings amongst existing fields of study, providing useful direction for future research and understanding what novel processes exist within this study system.

Chapter Four: Results

Informant Information

26 informants were ultimately interviewed on their SCEC ODS experience and the corresponding meaning it holds in their current lives. Interview lengths ranged from 50 minutes to 120 minutes in length. A wide range of time involved with SCEC ODS was reported. Six informants worked for only one week as a counselor at SCEC ODS. In contrast, one informant worked for 10 weeks as a counselor at SCEC ODS and one informant could not name an exact number of weeks he was involved in the program as he returned as a full time program manager for multiple seasons. Within the sub-categories informed by emerging adulthood theory, seven were within emerging adulthood (25 years old or younger) and still pursuing an undergraduate degree or having graduated in the past three months. Eight informants were within emerging adulthood and had been removed from their undergraduate education for more than three months. Lastly, 11 informants were removed from the emerging adulthood category (over 25 years old) and removed from their undergraduate education. Informants ranged from 20 to 34 years old. Ultimately, the purposive sampling framework outlined was satisfied as at least six informants were interviewed within each sub-population determined by emerging adulthood theory. Basic demographic information for the 26 informants and assigned identification numbers are outlined in **Table 1**.

Informant ID #	Sampling Category	Age	Gender	Number of Weeks Worked at SCEC ODS
1	B	23	Female	8
2	A	22	Male	1
3	C	29	Male	10
4	C	26	Male	5
5	C	33	Male	6
6	C	31	Female	9
7	C	29	Male	6
8	C	34	Male	Numerous (worked as counselor, also previously worked for SCEC ODS in year-round administrative role)
9	C	33	Male	1
10	B	24	Male	1
11	B	22	Female	1
12	A	22	Female	4
13	A	20	Female	3
14	C	28	Male	4
15	B	24	Female	3
16	A	20	Male	2
17	C	26	Female	2
18	B	24	Female	3
19	B	24	Female	4
20	B	23	Female	2
21	A	23	Female	5
22	C	26	Female	1
23	A	22	Male	4
24	C	30	Male	6
25	B	24	Female	1
26	A	21	Female	2

Table 1.) Basic demographic information of informants; sampling category informed by emerging adulthood theory (A: emerging adulthood (25 years old or younger) and still pursuing an undergraduate degree or having graduated within the past three months; B: within emerging adulthood and out of their undergraduate education for three months or more; C: out of emerging adulthood (over 25 years old) and out of their undergraduate education)

Results Overview

Interviews were analyzed to capture informants' emic perspectives on the three outlined research questions. Responses were inductively tied into theory to help explain the unique perspectives communicated by informants. In examining informants' responses to determine

which elements of the SCEC ODS counselor experience were retrospectively cited as most impactful, four primary elements of the experience were identified: leadership and educational elements, community elements, outdoor elements, and cultural elements. The descriptions of experiences linked to these programmatic factors aligned with Ryff (1989) and Waterman's (2011) conceptualization of eudaimonic and hedonic cognitive-affective experiences. These two terms stem from positive psychology, defining well-being in two different ways. The former generally refers to a sense of purpose and self-actualization. The latter generally refers to positive affect and enjoyment (Huta & Waterman, 2014). By understanding programmatic elements through this lens, their impacts on informants can be better understood and tied more effectively into resulting impacts.

Furthermore, in examining outcomes from these eudaimonic and hedonic experiences, a wide range of meanings were cited by informants. These resulting outcomes connect well with and expand upon Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain's (1998) social practice theory through which individuals begin to identify with a relevant cultural world and begin to act in accordance with its norms. One identity-related outcome of this process, the development of a "social environmental identity," has been previously explored within literature on environmental movements (Kempton & Holland, 2003; Kitchell, Kempton, Holland, & Tesch, 2000) and outcomes for youth taking part in environmental education programs (Williams & Chawla, 2016). In exploring the emic perspective of informants, there exists clear limitations in conceptualizing SCEC ODS outcomes solely via a social environmental identity. The interpersonal, leadership, and educational skills gained by informants also support individuals in developing a "social actor identity," a term developed to describe how individuals gain skills to effectively navigate and influence various social realms. While informants often cited an

interplay between these two identities, informants often treated them as distinct concepts when discussing outcomes from SCEC ODS, with individuals often identifying more strongly with one identity or the other post-SCEC ODS.

Lastly, in comparing the meaning informants associate with the experience between the three purposively sampled sub-populations, individuals within emerging adulthood identify strongly with their social environmental and social actor identities yet balance them with competing identity constructs in their lives after SCEC ODS. No major differences were found in perceptions of the experience between emerging adults still pursuing an undergraduate degree and those removed from it. Individuals over 25 years old and past emerging adulthood integrated their social environmental and social actor identities with other competing identity constructs as they moved further away in time from their SCEC ODS experience. Through this process, individuals compromised certain aspects of their SCEC ODS-related identities while maintaining and balancing other aspects of them with other life areas. This process is characteristic of the transition between emerging adulthood and adulthood (Schwartz, Côté, & Arnett, 2005). While documented in previous literature, understanding how individuals employed in a residential environmental education setting derive meaning from their experiences as they move into adulthood provides unique insight into the long-term outcomes associated with this work. This “identity flexibility” (Waterman, 2017) provides an effective lens to examine how informants incorporate outcomes from their work at SCEC ODS into their lives as they move further away from the experience in time. As informants form a long-term sense of self in their adult years, they must re-interpret their experiences at SCEC ODS to fit into this stable sense of self.

Results across all three research questions are summarized in **Figure 1**. In the following sections, prominent themes, relevant theories, and connections between the two will be discussed for each research question.

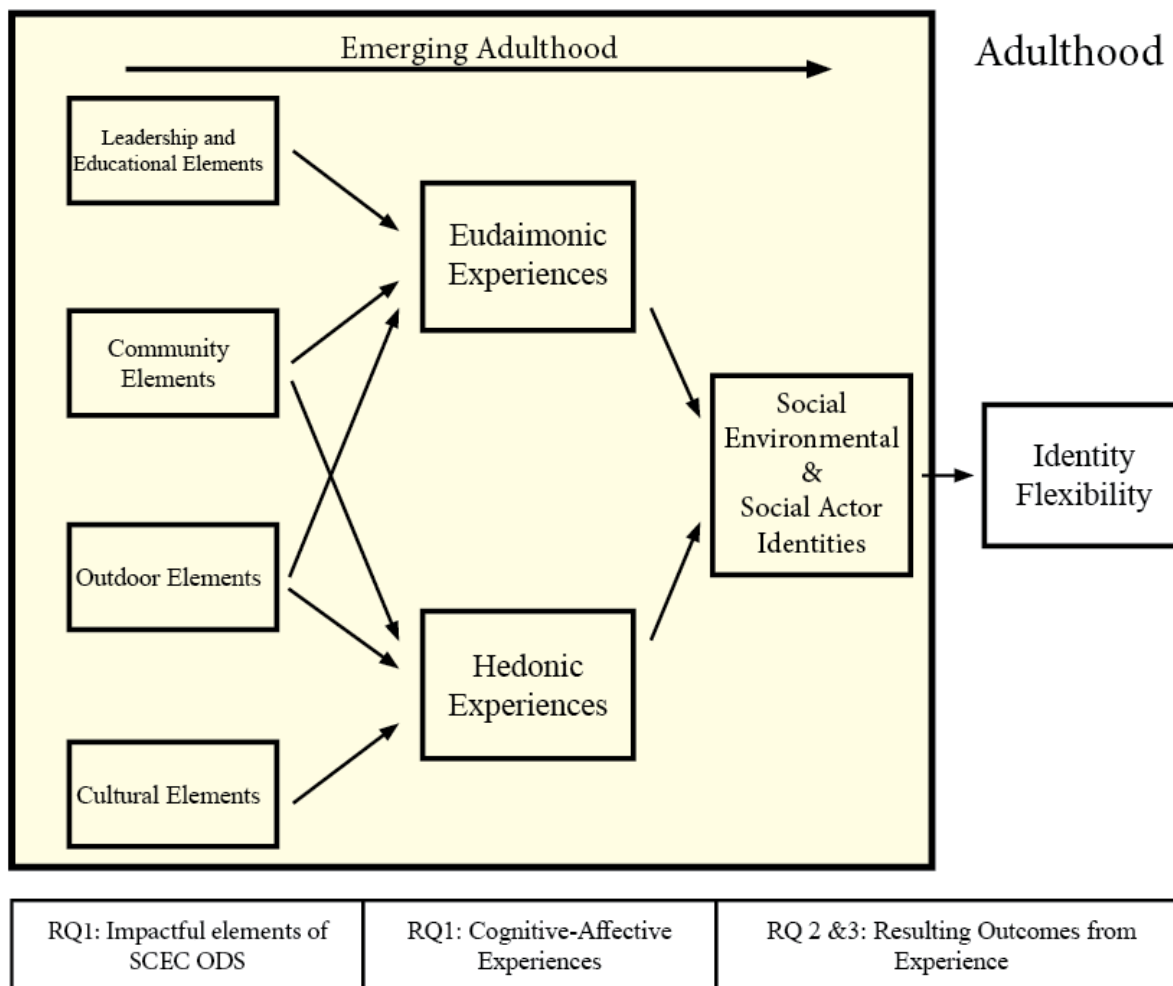


Figure 1.) Overview of SCEC ODS experience and retrospectively cited outcomes

Research Questions #1: How do counselor alumni remember and interpret their time working at an environmental education camp?

Informants cited four primary elements of the SCEC ODS experience as being impactful to them in their current lives: leadership and educational elements, community elements, outdoor elements, and cultural elements. Each of these four elements were mentioned by all informants

interviewed. There was considerable interplay and overlap between these four components, with each contributing uniquely to the participants' perceptions of the experience. While each of these elements are presented successively in the following sections, the order of presentation does not represent differences in significance between parts of the SCEC ODS experience. The meaning each of these four components of the SCEC ODS is interpreted through the emic perspective of informants without ascribing a relative weight or importance to them. These four components were described as inspiring eudaimonic and hedonic cognitive-affective feelings in informants, contributing to the identity-forming aspects of the experience discussed later in the results section. While the meaning of both eudaimonic and hedonic experiences have been subject to a wide variety of philosophical debates, psychologists have operationalized these terms in order to study them in a systematic manner. This study examines eudaimonic and hedonic experiences by integrating Ryff (1989) and Waterman's (2011) influential perspectives as summarized in Huta and Waterman's (2014) review:

Hedonia: The presence of positive affect, enjoyment, and satisfaction with life; subjective feelings of well-being

Eudaimonia: The process of self-realization as a central process, including peripheral experiences of self-expressiveness and development of a sense of purpose (Waterman, 2011); the presence of six primary components of eudaimonia: self-acceptance, positive relationships, sense of purpose, personal growth, environmental mastery, and autonomy (Ryff, 1989)

Leadership and Educational Elements

Leadership and educational elements of informants' SCEC ODS experience were cited as being extremely impactful in retrospect, contributing largely to the eudaimonic feelings associated with the experience. The strong sense of responsibility informants felt towards

providing care and educational experiences for their assigned campers pushed them to grow in ways they did not initially expect. This manifested itself in both caring for campers during time outside of lessons and teaching them relevant content during formal lesson periods. Informant #1 reflected on this process and what it meant to act as a caring and nurturing figure while at SCEC ODS:

“Like showing that there are adults who care and they care about your wellbeing. They'll make sure you're warm. They're gonna make sure you're fed. They're gonna make sure you shower. And they want you to learn. And they want you to be happy. And they want you to have friends. So showing that adults can care and if ‘low key, small text’ yours aren't caring, here are some who will. And you can find someone who will. And that makes a difference.”-**Informant #1 (Sampling Category B)**

As emphasized by the respondent above, leadership and education during both lessons and out-of-lesson time acted as important moments for counselors to aid in campers' growth. Counselors felt out-of-lesson time allowed them to help guide campers towards becoming more resilient and emotionally mature. This manifested itself in many ways. Examples of counselor mentorship during these periods included teaching campers how to get ready for the day in a more independent manner, teaching them the value of time management, or helping them work through the anxiety of being away from home for an extended period of time. The powerful nature of helping a camper work through these difficult elements and succeed is exemplified in the following quotation:

“Outdoor School isn't necessarily about teaching that information. Yeah. That's an important step that it follows state standards and all of that, but it's watching a child make their way through some sort of personal turmoil and succeed. That was sort of a powerful

point for me. You know, watching them be away from home for the first time or you know, someone that maybe is kind of shy and timid, doesn't want to dance at a hoedown and suddenly they're out moving and grooving.”-**Informant #8 (Sampling Category C)**

A sense of eudaimonia emerges from Informant #8’s narration as he talks about seeing campers grow from these difficult moments. This aligns with the sense of purpose Waterman (2011) argues is a core part of eudaimonic feelings. The benefits of this mentor-mentee relationship do not solely exist through the growth inspired within the campers; it also exists within the strong sense of meaning counselors derive from facilitating these growing opportunities. This sense of purpose is something counselors hold close to themselves even as they move away from the SCEC ODS experience through time. A similar sentiment is expressed when an informant talks about taking care of campers in the cabin environment, the communal living area at SCEC ODS where two counselors take care of approximately 7-10 campers at a time.

“At first, you're just a person, but very quickly they just start to trust you, and the two counselors just become the most trusted person. In our cabin, sometimes people were angry, or frustrated, or whatever, but there was a lot of just respect in a way that's a healthy form of like, ‘Yeah, these two people are here to take care of us,’ and that felt really good”-**Informant #10 (Sampling Category B)**

This sense of fulfillment that arose from taking care of campers was a distinct trend amongst informants, despite the process also being cited as a source of difficulty throughout the week. At times, caring for campers was seen to be frustrating, tiring, and overwhelming. Informants frequently discussed how hard it was to maintain energy levels while acting as the primary caregiver for a group of campers continuously. The tension between trying to provide a

positive week for the campers and maintaining one's energy levels is demonstrated in the following quotation:

“It was hard for me, because I wanted to be that energetic person for them, and it's challenging sometimes. Sometimes, you just can't. That was always hard for me, because I wanted to be that. I would beat myself up because I'm like, ‘You're not being that person,’ but it's like you can't be that person, because they need to get ready. Those were definitely challenging parts.”-**Informant #12 (Sampling Category A)**

Acting as a leader and educational figure for campers did not always inspire positive emotions. That sentiment is further reinforced by Informant #23:

“It was being the parent of the camper part, that hat that you have to put on, was probably my least favorite just because it's the most stressful. It's the time where you are under the closest microscope, I think, at least in your own mind.”-**Informant #23 (Sampling Category A)**

Throughout the caregiving process, it is not necessarily the absence of negative affect that inspires positive associations with the experience for counselors, but the strong sense of fulfillment they associate with the experience. This is in line with the distinction between eudaimonia and hedonia discussed previously by researchers (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Huta & Waterman, 2014). The concept of self-actualization and purpose resulting from an experience is the heart of eudaimonic feelings, while hedonia exists largely in the presence of satisfaction, happiness, and other positive emotions. The eudaimonic nature of education and leadership during the SCEC ODS experience, an experience that does not necessarily always inspire surface-level positive affect, is represented in the following statement:

“Even when the kids were difficult, like at times like I didn't hate, I didn't have negative feelings about that, if that makes sense. Like I enjoyed that. Because you found ways to connect and you found ways to make a difference or you hope you made a difference at least. Yeah. It was fulfilling. It was a rewarding experience.”-**Informant #5 (Sampling Category C)**

The previous quotation goes beyond surface-level positive affect and grounds itself in a sense of meaningfulness that is characteristic of eudaimonia. These eudaimonic feelings were also associated with the leadership and educational moments associated with teaching lessons while at SCEC ODS. Taking place two or three times a day, formal lessons teaching basic environmental science at SCEC ODS helped further the sense of fulfillment counselors felt in mentoring campers throughout the week. This growth was often associated with the independence counselors felt in planning and implementing their own lessons, the unique educational style encouraged at SCEC ODS, and the growth inherent in rising to the challenge of teaching. The interplay between these various aspects well-articulated by Informant #15:

“I just think like being given responsibility and having the freedom to craft, in the case of Outdoor School, your own lessons and kind of like your own plan for the week, within like a larger like set itinerary, was very empowering and having the support of like a really strong community behind you. And knowing that even if you mess up a little bit, like it's still not a big deal.”-**Informant #15 (Sampling Category B)**

The sense of fulfillment counselor gained from teaching lessons is also further exemplified by the following informant:

“I really enjoyed when I got to take the lead and be the person guiding the instruction. So the time that I led an activity in a learning group time, or when our campers were just asking things, and we would just go explore and try to find answers, that was one of my favorite parts was the education in such an organic way.”-**Informant #10 (Sampling Category B)**

From this perspective, counselors see their work in developing and teaching lessons not only as a means of sharing environmental knowledge with their campers, but also as a developmental experience for themselves. To experience this challenge with the strong support of the SCEC ODS community further supports eudaimonic feelings, as Ryff (1989) discusses the importance of strong social relations in conjunction with these elements of self-actualization as an important element of eudaimonic experiences. This concept of challenge resulting in growth within a supportive community helps to further the self-actualization informants felt during their time at SCEC ODS. This interplay is on display with counselors feeling a sense of responsibility to teach their campers as effectively as possible as is discussed in the following quotation:

“Probably the main thing is you're there to teach the kids. you can't just sit there and be monotoned, or just be shy, or just sit in the background. You have to contribute and help them learn, because they're the ones that are... It's ultimately for them, to get them to have a field trip, and get them to learn stuff. I think just knowing that, if anything, you got to give these kids a good experience, that forces you to branch out a little more.”-**Informant #7 (Sampling Category C)**

This sense of challenge resulting in growth was not isolated to the formal teaching moments while at SCEC ODS but also extended to the general caregiving elements necessary in being a responsible counselor figure. The role pushed counselors to take on responsibility they

may not have felt in life previously. Counselors often communicated the magnitude of accountability they felt in caring for campers' wellbeing over the course of the week:

“I felt like it was the first time in my life where an adult was like, ‘Okay, you are responsible for these kids' lives.’ They were going to be alive, right? They were going to eat and drink and have shelter, but it was like a moment of opportunity, ‘Here you go. Show up. Do it.’”-**Informant #6 (Sampling Category C)**

Informants often felt a strong sense of responsibility related to the leadership and educational aspects of the SCEC ODS experience. There were elements of frustration and exhaustion associated with these parts of SCEC ODS as well, but informants maintained a positive association with leadership and educational experiences due to the feeling of purpose they gained from carrying out these roles. The sense of fulfillment informants felt from this work, the support they felt from the community when playing this role, and the self-realization that resulted from the experiences all contributed to eudaimonic perceptions of these experiences. The following quotation exemplifies this feeling of satisfaction:

“I think even though I knew I liked working with kids and that sort of stuff, I was surprised how satisfying it was to teach and watch kids learn. That was a big surprise is how much I really, really liked that.”-**Informant #9 (Sampling Category C)**

This strong sense of purpose and self-actualization resulting from education and leadership in both lesson and out-of-lesson time is further supported by Informant #8's statement:

“Those ‘aha’ moments both in teaching a lesson or just, you know, in overcoming some sort of struggle. You know, having them have these awesome experiences and building

friendships around and being someone that has fostered that and, you know, helped to shape that in some capacity. Yeah, it's super powerful.”-**Informant #8 (Sampling Category C)**

Eudaimonic perceptions of the teaching and leadership moments for counselors at SCEC ODS represents an impactful element of the experience that was largely associated with a sense of purpose, self-realization of one’s potential impact, all while being part of a supportive community that encourages growth and learning for the counselors as well as the campers. This element of the SCEC ODS experience interacted with the other three primary components of the experience, community elements, outdoor elements, and cultural elements, as informants recalled their time as SCEC ODS counselors, with all four coming together to support impactful eudaimonic and hedonic feelings.

Community Elements

Community elements were found to be another impactful element of the SCEC ODS experience. The perception of a welcoming and inclusive community that valued social connections played a major role in how counselors perceived their SCEC ODS experience when they reflected on it. Multiple components were found to contribute to this perception. A welcoming tone set by the directorial staff, connections with the campers, connections with fellow counselors, and a general culture of acceptance and care all contributed to hedonic and eudaimonic experiences felt by counselors at SCEC ODS. Each of these elements contributed to informants leaving SCEC ODS feeling a sense of community from the experience, a key element that contributed to long-term outcomes.

From the beginning of their SCEC ODS experience, informants cited a culture and tone established by the directors to be a major part of the community they felt while working as a

counselor. Given the high turnover rate of new counselors working each week at SCEC ODS, it was the responsibility of the directors to establish a strong sense of community quickly and effectively amongst each week's staff. This was accomplished by directors acting as role models for how counselors should act within the SCEC ODS community. The directorial staff set a precedent for others by acting this out in their own personalities, as displayed by Informant #24's anecdote:

“The three of them sort of got up in front of our group, sort of explained the idea, and their personalities were just so friendly and attractive that you wanted to be around them. I mean, they had a draw. I don't know how to say it other than that.”-**Informant #24**
(Sampling Category C)

This embodiment of a welcoming and inclusive tone acted as an important example for other counselors to aspire to. This expectation that counselors would also embody this tone was further emphasized by Informant #18's memories:

“And they all have their own mark that they put on things. But the way that they approach everything is with the same like, ‘We're going to have a great time,’ mentality, and I think that they set the precedent for everyone else to follow.”-**Informant #18**
(Sampling Category B)

By embodying this positivity and friendliness that the directors set a precedent for, counselors recalled entering the week prepared to play their part in building this positive community. This was accomplished by recognizing the interrelationships between all valued elements of SCEC ODS and how they themselves fit into this broader picture. This includes connections with other counselors, the campers, and grounding these relationships in an

appreciation for the natural world. The broader community elements of the SCEC ODS community were articulated effectively by Informant #21:

“I think it's a very unique community and it's something that we talk about a lot, at least going into it, and how you're supposed to create this welcoming community for the kids. Including the environment and everything within the community, not just the people. But I don't think you realize how much it will affect you. Like you will try to create this for the kids, but it'll just kind of happen to you naturally, that you'll become a part of it.”-

Informant #21 (Sampling Category A)

This representation of the SCEC ODS community shows the value placed on developing a welcoming community that extends beyond human connection and includes the natural environment as well. This concept of connections, including human to human and human to nature relationships, finds itself woven throughout the SCEC ODS experience. Counselor to camper relationships were referenced as a highly impactful element of working at SCEC ODS, and informants frequently described these social connections to be steeped in an appreciation for nature. For example, Informant #1 discussed the tradition of using “worry stones” to help build community within her group:

“It's really just that you have special stones and you give them to people and you say something like, ‘When you're happy, squeeze all your happy thoughts and energy into this rock. And if you're ever feeling sad or lonely throughout the week you would hold the rock and know that all your happy thoughts are in there and it can make you feel better.’ You can also say that you can pass energy through rocks. So, when a kid's feeling sad I can tap my rock to theirs and I'll send them my good energy and my happy thoughts. And I've even had homesick kids holding my rock for the day because I'm like,

‘Mine has so much joy and happiness in it for Outdoor School that you can do anything.’”-**Informant #1 (Sampling Category B)**

Through this tradition, Informant #1 works to establish sincere and meaningful connections with her campers via a metaphor utilizing the natural environment. This account begins to connect with Ryff’s (1989) conceptualization of positive social relationships that are “warm, satisfying, trusting” (pp. 1072) that support eudaimonic sentiments. Ryff (1989) also discusses how individuals experiencing eudaimonic states are also concerned about the welfare of others. While inherently linked to the leadership and educational elements of the experience, counselors utilized their leadership roles to build a close-knit community for all individuals involved. Informant #22 discusses this:

“I think it all just came down to the relationships that we built with the children. That first conversation that we had of like, what do we want this community to feel like? What are the rules we need to set up here? So if there ever was a time when we had trouble with one of them or we were struggling in our role, we were put back on that conversation that we had before of, okay, how did we expect this to go? What were, what did we talk about before?”-**Informant #22 (Sampling Category C)**

This community development role allowed counselors to explore these meaningful relationships with their campers, with informants associating eudaimonic sentiments with these relationships. In compliment to these eudaimonic relationships, interactions with campers that simply inspired positive affect and enjoyment were also frequently described by counselors. These interactions were not deeply ingrained in any feelings of purpose or self-realization, but simply represented levels of hedonic enjoyment in interacting with campers. Informant #22

contrasts her eudaimonic memories with one that is hedonic in nature with the following anecdote:

“I didn't realize that there could be so much more like whimsical part of the camp experience than just this teaching side of it, the education side of it. And when I was a child and I did Girl Scout camps and whatnot, I thought about being a counselor in training, but I never pursued it. So I had never gotten to feel what it was to take care of other children and be like their guardian for a week or to just be goofy with them and free and not have to worry about all these other things going on”-**Informant #22 (Sampling Category C)**

These lighthearted relationships represent the multi-layered interactions counselors and campers had in the SCEC ODS environment, inspiring both eudaimonic and hedonic sentiments. Similar feelings were also expressed when counselors reflected on their relationships with other counselors. Informants expressed joy and happiness when talking about relationships between counselors. These moments were facilitated by experiencing SCEC ODS together, a sense of mutual reliance in accomplishing tasks, and a shared sense of purpose counselors had through their work with campers. A moment of hedonic feelings facilitated by these bonding factors was described by Informant #18:

“I remember being slap happy because we were so tired because some kids wet their beds, and it was like everybody was awake and sleepy and we were trying to figure out a dance. And I remember everybody laughing and I could have, this is cheesy maybe, but I looked around the room and everyone there was so different and I just remember feeling like that was the coolest moment for me, realizing how unsuspecting these seven people would have been to be so close and such good friends so quickly that we're all just

laughing and falling in each other's laps and braiding each other's hair and singing songs, being silly.”-**Informant #18 (Sampling Category B)**

In contrast to this lighthearted fun, counselors working together to care for campers and bonding over this mutual sense of purpose begins to connect with eudaimonic feelings as described by Ryff (1989) and Waterman (2011). Counselors helping each other to navigate the process of caring for children also begins to build positive relationships between the counselors. The small moments where counselors debrief stressful experiences is an example of how counselors embody these eudaimonic sentiments. Informant #21 describes a representative moment of this in the following quotation:

“I think there's a lot of politics that happen on a college campus that you don't get as much there. So people who might be completely interested in different things or have different hobbies in their free time and probably wouldn't necessarily hang out together now have this bond. It might even just be you both have to take a kid to the bathroom at the same time and you can debrief about the stressful moment you had in the cabin or something.”-**Informant #21 (Sampling Category A)**

The mutual reliance counselors had on each other and the integration of eudaimonic and hedonic moments regarding their sense of community was occasionally strained when counselors were forced to navigate conflicts. This frequently manifested itself in differences of commitment when it came the working in the counselor role. Counselors who committed to the vision of the SCEC ODS culture would often become frustrated or discouraged with other counselors who did not match their level of enthusiasm. This sentiment is exemplified by Informant #13:

“I think because my first week and after that I loved Outdoor School so much and I didn't want to be on my phone or didn't wear makeup and all of that stuff. When I would see other people having makeup on or having their phone or their Apple Watch, it would discourage me and I would get frustrated, but I didn't feel like it was my place to say something.”-**Informant #13 (Sampling Category A)**

Despite these occasionally strained relationships, the positive sense of community present at SCEC ODS was often reported to outweigh these difficult elements. While differences in cultural buy-in were often a point of tension, the general community sentiments at SCEC ODS was often described to be accepting and positive. This general sense of community facilitated both eudaimonic and hedonic sentiments amongst participants, acting as a highly impactful element of the experience. From the tone set by the SCEC ODS directors, counselor to camper relationships, and counselor to counselor relationships, complimentary eudaimonic and hedonic experiences came together to make the community an impactful element of the SCEC ODS experience for the informants. Informant #8 summarizes this general sense of community and the integration of these multiple elements well through his reflections:

“It's the ability to be together in a similar environment, similar setting that may be unfamiliar to everyone. You know, sharing in the same experience but yet still having your own personal experience within that. And that is done through community. You know, everyone has their own personal experiences, but having an experience that you're sharing with everyone else at the same time is what builds that community. And it's trust and respect for each other.”-**Informant #8 (Sampling Category C)**

Outdoor Elements

Outdoor elements were frequently cited as impactful parts of the experience when informants reflected on SCEC ODS. Given the focus on teaching environmental science topics to the campers attending the program, outdoor elements pervaded all aspects of the experience, especially the leadership and educational elements, but also occupied a unique niche in the perspective of many previous counselors. When discussing the impacts of outdoor elements at SCEC ODS, three primary sub-themes emerged: the sense of escape related to spending time in an outdoor environment, gaining environmental knowledge and awareness alongside campers, and the sharing environmental messages with young people. As a whole, outdoor elements inspired both eudaimonic and hedonic perceptions within counselors making it a meaningful element of the SCEC ODS experience.

Counselors frequently talked about SCEC ODS as an environment separate from their day-to-day lives in college. This resulted in them associating a sense of escape with SCEC ODS, a sentiment that was closely linked with the outdoor elements of the experience. Given the contrast in environments, informants believed it was easier to take a step away from certain routines and obligations and start anew at SCEC ODS. This sense of escape often resulted in SCEC ODS being referred to as a bubble and separate from the rest of one's lives. Informant #9 (Sampling Category C) reflected on how "it's a cool way of removing you from all the distractions and influences of this campus and college." Counselors frequently talked about how this sense of escape made it easier for them to fully invest themselves in other aspects of the SCEC ODS experience, such as teaching or building community. Informant #7 summarizes this sentiment effectively:

“Like I said, you have the grind of the school and the homework and stuff, you know, in the back of your head, when I come back, it's still going to be there. I mean, it wasn't like a vacation because you're still working, but at the same time, it is like a vacation in a sense. You're getting out and having fun.”-**Informant #7 (Sampling Category C)**

This sense of escape was discussed with a general sense of enjoyment by informants, specifically being specifically referred to as a “vacation” by Informant #7. This aligns with a hedonic conceptualization of the experience, with informants feeling a general sense of positive affect in relation to their reprieve from their daily lives. While this element of SCEC ODS was generally perceived as hedonic in nature, it also allowed informants to fully invest themselves in other aspects of the experience, some of which were cited to inspire more eudaimonic feelings within counselors.

In teaching lessons, counselors described feeling a strong sense of purpose when they shared environmental knowledge and positive outdoor experiences with their campers. Facilitating these experiences for young people was often described by informants as having moral weight to it, that sharing pro-environmental knowledge and attitudes was a meaningful pursuit. Informant #24 captures the urgency that counselors associate with their work at SCEC ODS:

“Your entire goal for these kids is to keep magic alive, to not break that engine. I realize that now. I think that that's very important because building that sort of mystique around the natural world I think is important in helping kids recognize that there is something unspoken and beautiful about the environment. That it's our responsibility to keep it pure.”-**Informant #24 (Sampling Category C)**

In reflecting on these experiences, informants also felt they were highly impacted by these moments. Counselors expressed a sense of purpose in developing environmental knowledge and ethics with their campers at SCEC ODS. This fulfillment is expressed by Informant #22 as she reflects on her experiences:

“They had become these new environmental stewards through the programming. It had meant that much to them that they now care so much for people and for the environment. And it just changed everything for them and for me.”-**Informant #22 (Sampling Category C)**

Informants associate eudaimonic feelings (Ryff, 1989; Waterman, 2011) with facilitating these positive outdoor experiences for young people. By recalling a sense of purpose through this work, a sentiment exemplified in both Informant #24's and Informant #22's narratives, informants are growing towards Waterman (2011) and Ryff's (1989) conceptualizations of eudaimonia. Counselors often saw this work to be central to the mission of SCEC ODS. In seeing their efforts as part of a larger whole, counselors often described how they felt that they were contributing to a cause that was larger than themselves. Informant #25 describes this in her reflections on SCEC ODS:

“I really just enjoy being a part of a world like Outdoor School. I just love being, I really believe in the mission of Outdoor School and of Shaver's Creek. And so just to get to be a part of that is like every piece of it is really enjoyable to me. To know that you're a part of helping kids discover this love for the natural world is awesome. To know that you're a part of a group of college kids who like to take time out of their schedule to do this is awesome, like to know that you're a part of a history and a tradition is really cool too. That exists at Outdoor School.”-**Informant #25 (Sampling Category B)**

In addition to sharing outdoor experiences with young people, informants also discussed the process of learning about the outdoors alongside the campers as well. Counselors reflected on how they gained environmental knowledge and awareness by partaking in lessons with campers partially as a learner and partially as a facilitator. This was often referenced as something that surprised informants about their time at SCEC ODS. Informant #21 recalls going through this learning process:

“I think the first time I did Outdoor School, I think what made it so special, now that I'm remembering, is all of these activities were so new to me. I learned so much about nature. So all of the little activities that we do are things that the counselors are learning too. So I think it gives you a more well-rounded perspective of how the world works, like the natural environment. Which just kind of makes me feel more at peace, safer.”-**Informant #21 (Sampling Category A)**

This growing awareness about the natural world helps foster a sense of personal progress within informants, aligning with Ryff's (1989) concept of individual growth further contributing to eudaimonic feeling associated with SCEC ODS. When examined as a whole, both eudaimonic and hedonic feelings are inspired by the outdoor elements at SCEC ODS. These sentiments are supported by a sense of escape into a natural environment, sharing environmental knowledge and experiences with young people, and learning alongside the campers about the natural world. In conjunction, these feelings contribute to the influential characteristics of SCEC ODS as retrospectively described by informants.

Cultural Elements

Cultural elements represent the final aspect of the SCEC ODS experience retrospectively cited to be impactful by former counselors. These aspects of the SCEC ODS experience largely

consists of various traditions and rituals built into the week to support up the “magic” of the experience frequently discussed by informants. These communal traditions were described as bonding activities for the community through joy, laughter, song, and other feelings of communal enjoyment. Traditions frequently cited include the use of “nature names” while at SCEC ODS, eating meals together, and campfires incorporating songs and humorous skits. In taking part in these activities, informants frequently reported feeling a strong sense of hedonic joy that they still associated with memories of the experience.

Informants frequently reflected on the use of “nature names” when describing their time at SCEC ODS. These names were derived from natural objects or living things that held personal meaning to an individual. Once chosen, these were used as the person’s name during their week of SCEC ODS. These names, in conjunction with the elements of escape associated with the outdoor nature of SCEC ODS, helped further the perception that individuals were separated from their past selves while working as a counselor. This feeling was described by Informant #9:

“And the fact that you're all assigned a nature name, it gives you an opportunity to be that person, even if it's like, it sounds stupid, but like an alter ego, like I am Fungus. We're not using our first names anymore.”-**Informant #9 (Sampling Category C)**

Furthermore, nature names not only acted as an element of escape for counselors, but it also acted as a way for counselors to ground themselves in SCEC ODS as an experience and place. The meaning nature names comes to hold within the culture of SCEC ODS is discussed by Informant #13:

“So when someone was explaining their nature name, they were talking about like their family came from a different country and all this stuff. And so it holds value for them.

And then like I thought of one that held value to me. And then like it seems like a silly little thing, but then it's like you carry it with you and you realize like how important that one like tiny aspect of something was.”-**Informant #13 (Sampling Category A)**

Other cultural aspects build from informants feeling grounded in the SCEC ODS experience. By being present in the space, eating communal meals were described as a memorable aspect of the experience for counselors. These times were described as inspiring feelings of laughter, goofiness, joy, and connection. This time to be present, eat family style, and have conversation was described as a welcome contrast to the rest of the responsibilities that counselors had while at SCEC ODS. Informant #12 discusses her perspective on these shared moments:

“When I was a counselor, I definitely felt that there were sometimes I couldn't be my most bubbly self, because I was like, ‘Where are your things?’ It was much more like, ‘We need to get to this place in five minutes, and you don't have your shoes on, let's go.’ Whereas meals was that time, they were there. I had them, and just having those fun conversations.”-**Informant #12 (Sampling Category A)**

Meals were recalled as inspiring general hedonic feelings amongst informants. Moments of positive affect and enjoyment were frequently recounted as counselors reflected on their times eating meals with campers. Informants attributed this largely to the lack of distractions during these moments and everyone being present with each around the table, a dynamic that was frequently described as family-like. Informant #22 describes these shared meals through her perspective:

“I remember dinner time. I remember that the conversations never stopped, that the children were just always so happy and so excited. And there was never a question of like, if someone's not going to eat anything for dinner, it was just a family time.”-

Informant #22 (Sampling Category C)

These moments of positive affect and hedonic feelings were not limited to mealtimes. Other cultural aspects of the experience were also interspersed within the experience to inspire similar feelings. A set of tradition that were specifically discussed frequently by participants were the nightly campfires and the songs and skits that accompanied them. When recalling these moments, counselors often described very similar emotions to how they felt during mealtimes. These were moments of positive affect and “being in the moment” without other external distractions or responsibilities. A moment representing these feelings of joy and excitement at a campfire was described by Informant #15:

“And then also at the campfire on the last night. Well I like, actually a couple of the campfires were very memorable things, but like one of them was, a good friend of mine and I were in charge of doing one of the songs and it was an outdoor campfire. And it was like still really light out cause it was I guess getting pretty late in the spring when we did it. And we were like, we were so hype, like so excited to lead this song. It was the like ‘Peel the Banana’ song. And we just, we got too excited that we messed up the lyrics and we were like dancing and screaming and like running around this campfire.”-

Informant #15 (Sampling Category B)

The counselors’ presence in the moment and excitement clearly shows through her memories associated with the campfires and songs. In remembering the skits at the campfire, another counselor recalls:

“I just remember laughing so hard at some of the other counselors. You take a group of people who, they don't always know each other that well, but they have fantastic ideas. And you're watching basically a live Saturday Night Live skit or something.”-**Informant #24 (Sampling Category C)**

These memories exemplify counselors experiencing moments of positive affect, but these feelings are not described as being tied to any deeper sense of purpose in contrast to other elements of the SCEC ODS experience. These general feelings of enjoyment and satisfaction align with a hedonic conceptualization of well-being. Informants took cultural aspects as a time away from many of the self-reflective and work-intensive aspects of the SCEC ODS program. Informants often described being in the present moment during these memories and immersing themselves in the collective emotions of the group.

As a whole, these elements of the SCEC ODS experience were recognized as being impactful across all sampled categories in relation to emerging adulthood. The complimentary nature of the hedonic and eudaimonic feelings inspired by these elements of SCEC ODS and the associated meanings in counselors' lives is discussed in the following category.

RQ2: What meaning do counselor alumni associate with their experience at a residential environmental education camp?

Four primary components of the SCEC ODS experience, leadership and education elements, community elements, outdoor elements, and cultural elements, were described as collectively inspiring eudaimonic and hedonic emotions within informants. With these cognitive-affective emotions being supported by the experience, this study also aimed to explore how these feelings impacted informants. In exploring what meaning informants associate with SCEC ODS

retrospectively, informants described elements of identity development that took place at SCEC ODS.

Counselors describe their experience at SCEC ODS as contributing to the development of two distinct aspects of their identity, a social environmental identity and a social actor identity. This concept of identity formation originates from Holland et al.'s (1998) social practice theory, through which an individual begins to identify with a specific cultural world and integrates aspects of this reference group into their sense of self. This is described as happening in three steps:

1. Prominence of a cultural world: A specific realm of action and issues begins to grow in salience for the individual, an individual “wakes up” to an opportunity
2. Identification with a cultural world: Individual begins to identify and act in accordance with the reference group, holding themselves accountable to the group and its values
3. Development of knowledge: Individual begins to develop and further their knowledge by acting within the cultural world they identify with

Specifically, for a social environmental identity, it “locate[s] a person as an environmentalist, or a particular type of environmentalist, in a context of persons, groups, and struggles” (Kempton & Holland, 2003; pp. 318). In other words, individuals begin to embody the pro-environmental actions of the group they associate with. In this case, counselors began to identify and carry out the pro-environmental actions that were supported by SCEC ODS. The term “social actor identity” was developed to describe the process through which informants began to identify with the interpersonal skills and norms of the SCEC ODS community. These social tools of leadership, education skills, and resilience were seen as distinct identity-based outcomes for participants. There was often interplay between these two identities within

informants, but both were described as unique constructs by informants. As these identities developed and formed, beliefs, attitudes, and values were described as moving in a lock-step manner with these changes, a concept further supported by social practice theory (Kempton & Holland, 2003).

These identities, originating from the eudaimonic and hedonic experiences at SCEC ODS, were described as two distinct outcomes for informants upon completing their work as a counselor. These identities were developed while at SCEC ODS, with informants fully embodying these roles in that space. The following section discusses the formation and development of these identities as outcomes of the experience. Because individuals' social environmental and social actor identities were described as independent but also interactive, they will be discussed together across the three steps of identity formation associated with social practice theory.

Prominence of a Cultural World

In examining identity formation outcomes as a result of the SCEC ODS experience, it is necessary to examine informants' life positions prior to SCEC ODS. Individuals frequently identified with either the social actor (e.g. having previous leadership or educational experiences) or social environmental (e.g. having previous pro-environmental attitudes, participating in outdoor recreation) realms prior to SCEC ODS. Informants generally identified these interests as a "point of entry" into SCEC ODS. Knowledge and interest on these topics were frequently described as being more general and diffuse in nature but were activated by an initial spark that drew individuals into the experience. This initial presence of a cultural world is a necessary first step in identity formation via social practice theory (Holland et al., 1998), with these initial constructs undergoing "reformulations" as individuals further identify with a specific cultural

world (Kempton & Holland, 2003). Individuals were ultimately drawn to SCEC ODS by a general interest in one of its main topics that was “sparked” by gaining awareness of the program. Learning of SCEC ODS through social connections or being recruited in a class or club often acted as the moment that activated these diffuse life interests into a specific intention to work as a counselor.

Individuals entering SCEC ODS because of the outdoor aspect of the experience often described spending frequent time outside as they grew up or having a family that enjoyed being outside. For example, Informant #10, who studied engineering, discusses an interest in the outdoors he balanced with his primary academic pursuits:

“One way was I ended up taking an ornithology class that was totally outside the realm of my engineering degree, but it was just a way to continue learning about nature, and it's one of those things where as soon as you start learning it, then you get so excited, and it opens your eyes to new things, and all of a sudden you're looking around like a child again, like, ‘Oh my, God, what is that?’, asking questions and being curious.”-**Informant #10 (Sampling Category B)**

For Informant #10 and many other informants, individuals had a predisposed interest with the natural world prior to SCEC ODS. The cultural world of nature and environmentalism already existed to some extent within these individuals prior to working as a counselor. While for some this existed as a personal interest, for many others it was also encouraged by their family from a young age, as was shared by Informant #4:

“Yeah so my, you know family vacations were outside. You know, we're going to national parks, we're going to the Caribbean, we were going to out west and hiking and

camping. My dad is just an avid outdoors-person, swimming and hiking and kayaking and biking, all the stuff that my brother and I love. He definitely, you know, put that into our brains at an early age.”-**Informant #4 (Sampling Category C)**

Be it a family-directed or personally-directed interest, the environmental world existed as a “point of entry” for many individuals into the SCEC ODS experience. Alternatively, others did not have a prominent interest in the outdoors prior to SCEC ODS but had previous educational and leadership experiences that drew them into working as a counselor. This existed in informants’ lives in two primary ways: a desire to go into education as a profession or previous experience in the camp environment either as a camper or counselor. A prior interest in education was articulated by Informant #26:

“The idea of being an educator in that kind of setting is something that really appeals to me just because I like education. I consider myself kind of non-traditional, like pretty experienced-driven and that kind of stuff. So I was like, well that seems like kind of my thing.”-**Informant #26 (Sampling Category A)**

For some, like Informant #26, an interest in teaching existed as the primary “point of entry” into the SCEC ODS cultural world. While some identified with this aspect of being a social actor, others hoped to specifically facilitate and lead camp-related activities at SCEC ODS. This desire stemmed from previous experiences as a camper or counselor. Informant #12 exemplifies this with her reflections:

“I was a camp counselor, starting when I was 13. I'd do a day camp every year, and throughout my high school years, turned into me being much more of a mentoring role,

working with younger scouts, and really fell in love with that role. Camp really became part of me.”-**Informant #12 (Sampling Category A)**

Through her words, Informant #12 talked about how camp became “part” of her, the salience of the cultural world of camp emerging from that statement. For those interested in facilitating these camp-type experiences or those with a general interest in education, there was a broad interest in leadership, group management, facilitating social growth, and teaching others. In other words, all wished to be “social actors” in some way. This existed as the other salient cultural world that acted as a “point of entry” in the SCEC ODS program.

For individuals with interest in each of the two described cultural worlds, environmentalism or social action, interpersonal connections were often cited as one of the bridges or “sparks” that brought individuals into the SCEC ODS cultural world. The encouragement provided by others acted as a means of solidifying one’s perceptions of the qualities of SCEC ODS program, verifying that it was a positive experience aligning with informants’ values. Informant #15 describes this process prior to signing up for SCEC ODS:

“I think I also just had friends that, at that point I met people that had done Outdoor School and that loved it so much, like they identified with their nature name. They, you know, would like wear the wood cookies around, all that stuff. So I think like after just kind of familiarizing myself with the community around it, it became kind of a no brainer.”-**Informant #15 (Sampling Category B)**

In addition to learning of SCEC ODS through friends, many informants described learning of the program through a class or club. During these times, an advocate for SCEC ODS, either a program director or a designated student, would advertise the opportunity in relevant

classes. These moments also served as a way for many individuals to transition their general interests in education, leadership, and the environment into the specific outlet of SCEC ODS.

Informant #6 recalls this process of being recruited during a class:

“Then the camp director came into my sociology class, as I told you, and kind of planted a seed. He brought some energy that made me feel like the program was important and that the work at Outdoor School was important.”-**Informant #6 (Sampling Category C)**

By being recruited during class, individuals developed this “awareness” that Kempton and Holland (2003) argue is the necessary first step in identity formation via social practice theory (Holland et al., 1998). This initial “spark” or “point of entry” allowed informants to take their generalized interests in one or several aspects of the SCEC ODS experience and funnel them into the specific opportunity provided. In becoming more associated with this cultural world, these general interests begin to go through “reformulations” as described Kempton and Holland (2003), leading to the development of social environmental and social actor identities within informants.

Identification with a Cultural World

As outlined earlier, informants described experiencing strong hedonic and eudaimonic feelings while working as counselors at SCEC ODS. Informants cited these feelings and experiences as causing identity reformulations throughout their time working as counselors. Individuals often described arriving at SCEC ODS with few expectations or ideas on how their week would unfold. Yet upon leaving, they often described having a new sense of themselves, identifying strongly with the experiences they had while working at SCEC ODS. This is representative of the process described by Holland et al. (1998) in discussing identity development. They assert individuals objectify themselves in relation to various behavioral and

social positions, and individuals leaving SCEC ODS strongly identified as alumni of the program. Furthermore, Holland et al. (1998) write that “such objectifications, especially those to which one is strongly emotionally attached, become core of one’s proactive identities” (pp. 4). The eudaimonic and hedonic experiences outlined previously helped to develop this emotional attachment to identity. In associating themselves with the cultural world of SCEC ODS, individuals developed two distinct yet interactive identities: a social environmental identity and a social actor identity.

Informants retrospectively cited a sense of change in self-perceptions, both during the SCEC ODS program and when discussing how they felt the program impacted them afterwards. This was often spoken about generally, with counselors frequently talking about how they became better versions of themselves while at SCEC ODS. Informant #25 discusses this general sense of change in her reflections:

“And seeing counselors and seeing yourself leave a different version of yourself I think is always a good reminder that, you know, four days is not a long time like, but it's enough to really change someone's life.”-**Informant #25 (Sampling Category B)**

This sentiment is further expressed by Informant #13:

“So for me, I think going to Outdoor School, I became a ‘me’ that I wanted to be the whole time but never could because I felt forced into a societal thing. So like going Outdoor School and like keeping the Outdoor School magic is like, you have like a smile on your face constantly.”-**Informant #13 (Sampling Category A)**

These quotes reflect that both in and out of the SCEC ODS environment, individuals begin to perceive themselves differently. They begin to shift their sense of self into something

new. Paired with this change in one's sense of self, individuals cited a strong sense of community between counselors leaving the program together. This was frequently discussed as a major component of how individuals identified with the SCEC ODS cultural world upon completing their involvement with the program. Informant #12 shares a memory of this community upon leaving SCEC ODS:

“When we got back from Outdoor School, that Friday, we all hung out and just got to put our walls down, and just be like let me tell you about what happened this week. Let me tell you about my campers, let me tell you about my learning group, let me tell you about this amazing thing that happened. That's one of my favorite memories of college as a whole.”-**Informant #12 (Sampling Category A)**

Informant #19 further confirms and expands upon this anecdote:

“I definitely do think about it a lot. It's just like I said, been a really big part of my life and my college career. I think mostly when I reflect on it, it's when I'm thinking about the connections that I've made and the friendships that I've made through Outdoor School.”-

Informant #19 (Sampling Category B)

The social world counselors identify with upon completing their work as a counselor clearly stands out as one of the primary outcomes. In compliment to these anecdotes, informants frequently discussed how participating in SCEC ODS created a social bond between people even if they did not work as counselors during the same week together. This clearly emphasizes the cultural identification individuals hold towards the experience. This is exemplified by Informant #7's thoughts:

“If I met someone and they're like, ‘Oh, I did Outdoor School,’ then you immediately have a bond. Even if you didn't do a week together, it's like then you have hours worth of topics to talk about. Then there's mutual friends that you have and everything, that was always cool to see.”-**Informant #7 (Sampling Category C)**

These social manifestations provide clear evidence that informants hold strong connections to the SCEC ODS cultural world. In examining the nuances of this shift in identity and cultural association, the development of a social environmental identity is a primary outcome associated with the experience. In line with social practice theory, individuals who cite having a connection with environmentalism and the outdoors begin to shift their actions to align with those of the SCEC ODS cultural world. Through this change, informants' values and attitudes towards the natural world also begin shift in a lock-step manner with informants' identities. Throughout this change though, identity and association with SCEC ODS is specifically described as the primary driver by informants, with values and attitudes following behind this identity formation. Within the social environmental identity supported by SCEC ODS, the most prevalent outcomes included a desire to share the outdoors with others and shifts in sustainable behavior by recognizing humans' interrelationships with the natural world.

Informants frequently discussed a desire to share positive outdoor experiences with others upon leaving SCEC ODS. By developing an appreciation for the power of education and bringing others into outdoor spaces, informants began to reformulate their concepts of environmentalism to fit within SCEC ODS cultural world. Informant #3 discusses this reformulation process in his reflections:

“I was already an environmentalist when I entered the program, but I changed. Outdoor School added an educational component to it, an understanding that an education is so

vital, so vital for environmentalism long-term. Because believe it or not, a lot of the people who are so entrenched in our political system and in our seats of power otherwise are very uneducated when it comes to environmental science. Or if they do they just don't care enough about it to pay it heed. But education has the ability to create concerned and well-informed citizens, which is hopefully what will change the world.”-**Informant #3 (Sampling Category C)**

From his perspective, Informant #3 described a shift in how he viewed environmentalism. The act of educating others on the outdoors was shared with him via SCEC ODS. By identifying with this cultural world, he reformulated his view of environmental work to match the conceptualization presented by SCEC ODS. Other informants discussed that SCEC ODS made them realize how privileged they were to grow up spending time in the outdoors and that others do not always have the same opportunities. Through this, a similar reformulation process took place, with informants realizing the need to provide others with the same outdoor opportunities that they had while growing up. Informant #14 relays a story similar to this:

“I think just in doing the program, it helps me to be aware of the differing experiences that people had. You know, I think I said before that I feel pretty privileged to have had like a really good experience learning about the outdoors when I was a kid. But realizing that not everyone has that. And you know, and like with all things, learning about it as a kid is way more impactful and, you know, will lifelong matter a lot more than learning about a lot of those subjects as an adult. And I think just now seeing that firsthand and then also seeing that there aren't a whole lot of programs like Outdoor School really makes me feel like it's super valuable and it's something that I would definitely advocate for, something that I'm passionate about.”-**Informant #14 (Sampling Category C)**

While informants frequently talked about their desire to share outdoor experiences with others following their work as a counselor, informants also discussed a shift in their own personal views and behaviors regarding the environment as well. These shifts were primarily driven by a reevaluation of the relationship between humans and the natural world, a key educational component of SCEC ODS. This reformulation was largely driven by lesson content taught at SCEC ODS and traditions built around certain pro-environmental behaviors like striving to have no food waste at meals. Informant #10 talks about how the culture of SCEC ODS primarily drove the reformulation of his pro-environmental behaviors:

“So that in particular was something that I really took away, and they were part of a more broad and abstract feeling that we all developed together at Outdoor School of caring for the environment, and being stewards, which I definitely felt some before Outdoor School as well, but I think there were a couple of specific things like that sentiment that were more cultured. It's really great to be around a group of people where everyone wants to be a part of that, and you really feel empowered to care about nature, and to be respectful of nature, and it's so much easier to do that when you're surrounded by a lot of people who also feel like that.”-**Informant #10 (Sampling Category B)**

Informant #15 expands upon the general socialization process outlined by Informant #10, specifically discussing the zero food waste tradition that became the norm at meals:

“I think it really cemented kind of a lot of the environmental ethics that I had before doing Outdoor School, and I think Outdoor School does a really good job of giving you like small ways to live out those values. For example, like zero waste. It's something I think about all the time and am very conscious of now, like, and have been since college. That's like one very specific thing.”-**Informant #15 (Sampling Category B)**

Lastly, Informant #21 discusses the need to buy into the culture of SCEC ODS if one is to teach lessons effectively, emphasizing that one must be a good role model for the campers they are teaching:

“I think I try to be much more mindful of my impact on the planet. Definitely try to consume less. I think you also, if you're going to do Outdoor School and if you're going to do it more than once, you want to be a good role model and a good leader. So maybe you think about that in your day-to-day life. If I'm teaching these kids to do this, then I should be doing this kind of thing too, like trying to bike more rather than use a car. That kind of thing.”-**Informant #21 (Sampling Category A)**

By reworking their environmental attitudes to match those reinforced by the cultural world of SCEC ODS, informants develop a social environmental identity as a primary outcome of their work as a counselor. Throughout the provided quotes, informants discuss how their identification as a member of the SCEC ODS community pushed them to shift their environmental values, attitudes, and behaviors accordingly. This identification as a member of the SCEC ODS community was supported by both the eudaimonic and hedonic experiences invoked while working as a SCEC ODS counselor. This is in line with the second step of identity formation outlined by social practice theory (Holland et al., 1998), the stage at which individuals' identification with a cultural world begins to shift their self-concepts and behaviors.

In tandem with the development of a social environmental identity, informants also described the development of a social actor identity as well. This identity formation was described as a parallel process to that described in the development of a social environmental identity. In identifying with the SCEC ODS cultural world, individuals begin to reformulate their thoughts as a social actor to meet those that exist as the norm for counselors. Informants

frequently entered SCEC ODS counselor position with some interest in leadership and education as methods of social action. Upon working at SCEC ODS, individuals described a reformulation of their views on education and leadership to be more experiential and more inquiry driven. Furthermore, individuals described a level of interpersonal growth as well, specifically social confidence and valuing human connection, from their time as counselors. These changes are in line with both the educational style and the general social atmosphere that is encouraged at SCEC ODS.

Learning that is outdoors and experientially driven is the cultural norm at SCEC ODS. By being in a community that values education in this manner, counselors describe being pushed to reevaluate their educational style to match this expectation. Informant #4 reflects on this reformulation process during his time teaching:

“I was thinking a lot of like about my education style and developing my style and being an effective educator and like communicating, That's really what I was focused on at that point was like what methods I could learn and use and how I can be a serious modern educator.”-**Informant #4 (Sampling Category C)**

The focus on becoming an engaging, hands-on educator is further reinforced by Informant #18:

“And I also just from time to time, when I'm thinking about my students' engagement and like are they being passively taught? Are they just going to stand there and listening to me because that's not going to help out anybody. And I feel that the root of my belief of that and my understanding is not really a belief. It's just true. I feel that really came from Outdoor School. So when the kids are engaged and they're hands-on and they are

doing something with their bodies or doing something with their hands, that is when the most learning happens.”-**Informant #18 (Sampling Category B)**

Informants begin to identify with the unique educational style of SCEC ODS and embody it in their thinking moving forward. Informant #26 expands upon this idea of hands-on learning to also include the value of inquiry-based education:

“I think it's also made me focus a lot more on inquiry-based and experiential education. Cause I feel like I've seen it work so much. You know, like if you can tell a kid about that, that's fine, but like they're not going to remember that truly and honestly. Like kids remember like how you make them feel, and kids remember if you gave them power.”-

Informant #26 (Sampling Category A)

In the previous anecdotes, informants describe how these educational norms at SCEC ODS pushed them to reevaluate how they acted as a leader and educator. While this is a major portion of the social actor identity informants developed through their work as a counselor, interpersonal outcomes were also described by informants. The two primary outcomes identified were social confidence and valuing human connection, two elements strongly linked to the eudaimonic and hedonic elements of the camp experience described previously. Informant #16 discusses this as he talks about how he believes elements from SCEC ODS can help individuals connect more effectively:

“It's crazy because if we put ourselves in nature, we can, I think, and putting yourselves away from the phone and stuff and just walking in nature with people, we can just really bond on another level, which is why I'm going on much more hikes. But also going on hikes with people that I'm close with so we can, really just bond and be away from

everything and just relax and be together and stuff. It's really fun.”-**Informant #16 (Sampling Category A)**

In expanding upon Informant #16's belief that being in the moment can help individuals connect more effectively, Informant #18 expands upon this by sharing what she feels the accepting community at SCEC ODS has taught her:

“There is something that connects you to everyone and it's up to you whether or not you want to find it. And I think that's something really awesome Outdoor School has taught me, that all of these people that I would have never guessed would have been friends with me, we were all friends.”-**Informant #18 (Sampling Category B)**

Lastly, the SCEC ODS community's accepting nature impacted how informants approach future social relations is described by Informant #23:

“Learning to be more open about myself to allow people to be comfortable when they first meet me. Like being able to make friends a lot easier. Once you're used to everyone being your friend already you sort of become that anyway, which is a little awkward at times when people are not ready for that kind of energy. But there are so many different things that just make you a better person and a better employee of really anywhere that you want to go that you get during Outdoor School.”-**Informant #23 (Sampling Category A)**

Ultimately, the development of a social actor identity through the cultural world of SCEC ODS merged effective leadership and educational techniques with improved interpersonal skills, specifically openness to human connection and social confidence. As individuals began to identify with the educational style and social community present at SCEC ODS, they described

reformulating their previous conceptions of leadership, education, and social skills to fit with this identity.

The adoption of a social environmental and social actor identities was dependent on informants identifying with the cultural world of SCEC ODS. By developing this emotional connection with the experience, largely driven by eudaimonic and hedonic feelings, informants began to identify with these elements of the SCEC ODS experience. In turn, they shifted their values, attitudes, and behaviors to align with this identity development. This process builds upon the first step of social practice theory (Holland et al., 1998) by further developing this spark of awareness into identity reformulation.

Development of Knowledge

The final step of identity development within social practice theory (Holland et al., 1998) outlines that individuals gain practical skills and knowledge by navigating within the cultural world they identify with. Individuals frequently discussed an expansion of their social environmental and social actor roles while existing within the cultural world of SCEC ODS. Individuals often returned to serve as a counselor multiple times and identified strongly with the associated social world in between these weeks. Throughout this time, individuals described growing into their roles as counselors, gaining skills and knowledge on how to exist and work within the SCEC ODS community. This process further solidified the previously outlined outcomes in developing a social environmental identity and social actor identity. Informant #12 discusses this growing identification with SCEC ODS upon returning for multiple weeks in the following anecdote:

“It's become something that it went from something that I did once a year, and I did once, and just didn't really think about, but the second time I did it, being like, ‘Okay, now I

have some more friends in here,' to the third time being like, all right, Outdoor School is my thing. I do this.”-**Informant #12 (Sampling Category A)**

This process of further solidifying one’s identity through continued involvement in SCEC ODS is exemplified by Informant #12, with similar reflections being provided by other informants as well. Specifically, this concept of continued involvement with SCEC ODS reinforcing an individual’s social environmental identity is further outlined by Informant #23:

“The more time I've spent in the natural world and the more time that I've heard from people who are really experienced and really care about it, the more important it is to me that more people know about it. I think especially now that the carbon footprint of humanity has become so big and so threatening to the way we live, planting that seed of loving nature that most kids get at a place like Outdoor School, is so important.”-

Informant #23 (Sampling Category A)

Informant #23 talks about how his social connections and spending time with people who are knowledgeable about the outdoors has further shifted his perspective on how to act regarding the environment. He specifically mentions the importance of sharing the outdoors with others growing in significance to him. This specifically reinforces a cultural aspect of the social environmental identity that individuals identify with after SCEC ODS. A similar phenomenon was also described as individuals reflected on the development of their social actor identities. Development in leadership and educational skills were frequently described by informants. This is exemplified by Informant #20 discussing her growth as a counselor:

“And then also, just the growth and the change in responsibilities where I got to do some additional activities with the group that I was with. And how I had more little ideas in my

pocket for when people weren't listening to whoever they were supposed to be listening to or when they needed to settle down and go to sleep. Just having even one additional trick up your sleeve can be a nice thing of like, 'Well, I still have this to fall back on if this other thing doesn't work.'”-**Informant #20 (Sampling Category B)**

By returning as a counselor multiple times, she gained more practical skills as a leader within the unique educational style of SCEC ODS. For both social environmental and social actor identities, informants described further growth into the cultural world of SCEC ODS over time, solidifying these outcomes within informants. The cultural world of SCEC ODS and the associated hedonic and eudaimonic experiences were attributed to the reinforcement of these identities and their associated traits. This is the final stage of identity development within social practice theory (Holland et al., 1998), with counselors fully embodying this new sense of self inspired by SCEC ODS. The final section of the results will discuss how these identities were perceived differently across respondents at different points within emerging adulthood, a key lens through which this identify formation process must be examined.

RQ3: How does the meaning associated with the counselor experience change at different points of retrospection as counselor alumni navigate the developmental period of emerging adulthood?

The final section of results reports how informants attach different meanings to the SCEC ODS experience between the three purposively sampled categories: within emerging adulthood (25 years old or younger) and still pursuing an undergraduate degree or having graduated within the past three months; within emerging adulthood and out of their undergraduate education for three months or more; and out of emerging adulthood (over 25 years old) and out of their undergraduate education. Individuals within the two categories of emerging adulthood (both in and out of their undergraduate education), related strongly with their identities associated with

SCEC ODS. In conjunction with this identification though, informants described feelings of “identity confusion” (Erikson, 1950; Schwartz et al., 2013) as well, reporting separateness between their identities developed at SCEC ODS and their broader sense of selves outside of this cultural world. In examining reflections from individuals removed from emerging adulthood, informants reported using “identity flexibility” (Sinnott, 2017; Waterman, 2017) to incorporate their social environmental and social actor identities into a stable sense of self necessary for the transition into adulthood (Schwartz et al., 2005). These differing meanings associated with the SCEC ODS experience are explored sequentially in the following section.

Informants described feeling a sense of fragmentation between their different senses of self (Erikson, 1950; Schwartz et al., 2013) during emerging adulthood, with unique identities existing separately within an individual rather than as a cohesive whole. A similar process was described by individuals upon leaving SCEC ODS, with informants navigating how to incorporate their social environmental and social actor identities into their broader lives. The unique and removed nature of the SCEC ODS in the lives of informants was exemplified by their accounts of returning home after the experience. This stark difference was described by

Informant #16:

“It's funny because there is a culture shock coming here from the Middle Eastern States. There's a sort of culture shock. But there was a different kind of culture shock from Outdoor School back to Penn State.”-**Informant #16 (Sampling Category A)**

This “culture shock” referenced by Informant #16 is further expanded upon by Informant #21, discussing the difference in cultural values between SCEC ODS and the rest of the world:

“It's like the rules feel different, does that make sense? You spent this entire week in this very special community where people were looking out for each other, and things didn't revolve around your phone, and things like that. Then coming back to reality it's like all of these little things that maybe you forgot about or didn't really matter when you were away, it's like they matter again.”-**Informant #21 (Sampling Category A)**

Each of these anecdotes exemplifies the separateness that exists while one is enveloped in the cultural world of SCEC ODS, with the program often being referred to as a “bubble” by informants. In deriving meaning from their social environmental and social actor identities developed through the experience, those still within emerging adulthood remained at a point of questioning with how to proceed with the knowledge and identity they had formed. This period of confusion between one’s SCEC ODS-related identities and their other identities is exemplified by Informant #12’s (Sampling Category A) reflections upon leaving SCEC ODS. She said, “We joked when I left camp, how am I going to find ways to still be my counselor self when I'm in the real world?” As Arnett (2000) discusses, emerging adults generally find themselves exploring work, love, and worldviews in their lives. Given this period of flux, informants described two related yet slightly different areas in which they were navigating their identities developed from SCEC ODS: how do these identities impact their career trajectory and how do they exist in their lives socially?

In reflecting on their time at SCEC ODS, informants often associated strongly with their identities developed through the program. This frequently led them to question how they could incorporate these important aspects of themselves into their careers moving forward in life. Informant #21 reflects on this process and her desire to try and work in the outdoors upon graduating from college:

“Being able to work outside, which is not something I would have thought that I wanted to do. But I really like that potential. I think my mom thinks I'm a little crazy for wanting to do this, but she's my mom so it makes sense. I think I just really liked the feeling that I got when I was doing it. Everybody seemed really happy and you don't do this if you don't love it, so you don't see anybody who's sad or hates their job, just kind of punching the numbers.”-**Informant #21 (Sampling Category A)**

Through this reflection, Informant #21 discusses how she is intrigued with the potential of a career in outdoor education, yet she feels pressure from her mother otherwise. Informant #10, who had just completed a degree studying engineering, reflects on balancing the prospect of pursuing a career in line with his education or living out the identities he developed at SCEC ODS:

“Afterwards I did take some time to reflect and be like, ‘Yeah, that's definitely something that I can see myself doing.’ I think this week was a really good indicator that I could spend maybe a semester or a year at an Outdoor School with kids, or some science school or science center, both working with kids and working a lot in the outdoors, and learning more about that alternative style of education.”-**Informant #10 (Sampling Category B)**

In his reflections, Informant #10 sees himself presented with a diverging path, pursue outdoor education or pursue a career in engineering. These cultural worlds are seen a separate and mutually exclusive. This separateness between these worlds extended to how emerging adults perceived their social relationships stemming from SCEC ODS as well. Informants often talked about how they acted like their “camp self” around their SCEC ODS friends, actively perceiving themselves differently in these social situations. Informant #12 discusses this separateness:

“I think that as I've done it more, and I've made more friends, and I've developed more relationships with people who have done it, I'm that person way more, where I'm just silly a lot of the time. It's really cool having people who I'm so close to be part of that. When you're close to a person, you become the person that you are when you met them.”-

Informant #12 (Sampling Category A)

Coupled with this separateness of their social identities, informants also described frustration or disappointment with how those who had not done SCEC ODS could not relate to their experiences or stories. Informant #20 discusses this in her reflections:

“I feel like a lot of times even the exact same story would most of the time elicit laughs from someone who had been in ODS before, whereas someone who, like one of my roommates who's never gone camping before, it's like ‘Wow, I can't believe that. I'm so sorry that you had to go so many days showering in communal type showers.’ It's like, ‘No, that was the funny part.’”-**Informant #20 (Sampling Category B)**

This separateness of identity, both in the realms of social relations and career exploration, suggests emerging adults perceive their social environmental and social actor identities as standalone facets of their self. These separate identities are brought to the forefront as informants discuss the stark differences between their SCEC ODS-related identities and those that they built elsewhere during the undergraduate education. Perceptions of SCEC ODS in this manner align with concepts of identity exploration within emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000; Schwartz et al., 2013). While social practice theory outlines the development of these self-constructs, emerging adult informants describe these SCEC ODS-related identities as compartmentalized and distinct cultural worlds in their lives.

In examining the meaning adult informants associate with the experience, the concept of “identity flexibility” (Sinnott, 2017; Waterman, 2017) describes how those who have made the transition to a stable adult identity (Schwartz et al., 2005) utilize a fluid sense of self to incorporate their SCEC ODS identities into a cohesive self-perception. The idea of identity flexibility can be traced to Erikson (1956) when he writes, “the end of adolescence thus is the stage of an overt identity crisis, identity formation neither begins nor ends with adolescence: it is a lifelong development largely unconscious to the individual and to his society” (pp. 69). Identity flexibility is seen to be the ongoing maintenance of a singular concept of “I” despite the ever-changing nature of identity (Sinnott, 2017). Within social practice theory, Kitchell et al. (2000) refer to these obstacles to live out one’s identity as “barriers.” This term focuses on the cultural and societal obstacles presented to individuals without including the psychological and developmental processes. Given this, the term “identity flexibility” was acted as a more accurate representation of informants’ perspectives.

Informants removed from emerging adulthood described this process in incorporating and maintaining their identities developed at SCEC ODS into their adult years. This process saw informants compromising on some values and identity aspects they gained during the SCEC ODS experience in light of competing identity constructs. Alternatively, other aspects were prioritized and maintained considering this changing sense of self. Informant #15, who was 24 years-old, described how she had become flexible with the interpersonal aspect of her social actor identity to incorporate it into her solidifying adult self:

“I mean, the world is a tough place, so I can't say that I am always the best version of myself in the same way that I was pretty constantly at Outdoor School. But I do think I talked about, I think a big part of that like the magic and the best self part of Outdoor

School is just being willing to take risks and develop close relationships with people and be vulnerable in a way that allows you to get to those close relationships. I think like that is something that I have made a point to bring forward with me.”-**Informant #15**

(Sampling Category B)

In this process of forming a stable adult identity, Informant #15 recognized that she cannot be as open emotionally as she was throughout her time working at SCEC ODS. In order to maintain this piece of her social actor identity, she must ease it to align with broader societal pressures. Regarding career aspirations for one’s social actor identity, Informant #6 talks about how she had to be flexible with her career goals to have a teaching-related career long-term:

“I was sort of romantic about it at first, like, ‘I want to be a camp counselor forever. When I graduate from college, I want to go found my own camp.’ You know? That didn’t happen and my dreams changed but there was definitely this romantic sense about it like, ‘Oh, I could do this forever’ and then as I moved forward, I could see, you know, the camp life is tricky.”-**Informant #6 (Sampling Category C)**

Informant #6 was currently working as a public school elementary teacher when interviewed. She described her profession choice as a way for her to continue to live out her love for education in a more stable way, incorporating experiential and environmental themes into her teaching. This process allowed Informant #6 to continue to embody her love for education while compromising on how it was lived out.

A similar process was recounted for individuals’ social environmental identities.

Informants often described internalizing an appreciation for the natural world in their post-SCEC

ODS identities, a facet that Informant #17 had to become flexible with as her career pushed her to live and work in an urban environment:

“I don't work right now specifically with the environment at all but having these experiences at Outdoor School and everything has allowed me to, like I said, stay in touch even when maybe the space I'm in doesn't specifically facilitate that. Yeah, mainly the interconnectedness between people and the environment is probably what I've taken with me in all aspects personally, professionally.”-**Informant #17 (Sampling Category C)**

Informant #17's desire to maintain a connection with the natural world became something new as she re-worked it to fit into her new living scenario. In compliment to this anecdote, Informant #22 recounted several career and job changes within the realm of education prior to returning to work in environmental education. She discussed her love for teaching and the natural world that originated in her SCEC ODS experience. In attempting to find ways to live out these identity-based values, she originally went to work in a public school. She felt unfulfilled in this job, so she returned to work in environmental education, a field she was still working in at the time of her interview. She shared this reflection:

“So a lot of people when they ask me why I got involved in education or why I'm still pursuing environmental education, I go back to those very foundational moments at Outdoor School around the campfire, watching those children change how much they cared about the natural world.”-**Informant #22 (Sampling Category C)**

Informant #22 had to be flexible to find ways to live out her social environmental identity after SCEC ODS given broader life pressures like the necessity to find stable employment.

Throughout this period of exploration, she had to rework how this identity fit into her sense of self. While she ultimately returned to a job that was broadly similar to that done at SCEC ODS, she had to be flexible with how she embodied her social environmental identity in order to ultimately find this stability.

Ultimately, this cross-sectional sample suggests that identity outcomes from SCEC ODS are generally perceived to be part of a fragmented sense of self (Erikson, 1950; Schwartz et al., 2013) for emerging adults. These individuals described their social environmental and social actor identities as separate constructs without incorporating them into their broader conceptualization of who they are. Upon transitioning into adulthood, identity flexibility (Sinnott, 2017; Waterman, 2017) allowed individuals to incorporate these SCEC ODS-related identities into a cohesive self-perception. To do this, adult informants describe a process of compromise and prioritization in various aspects of their identity, a necessary process if individuals were going to continue to live out these valued constructs.

Chapter Five: Discussion, Limitations, and Conclusion

Discussion

In reflecting on their SCEC ODS experience, informants cited four impactful elements of their work as a counselor: leadership and educational elements, community elements, outdoor elements, and cultural elements. These four elements were described as inspiring eudaimonic and hedonic emotions in participants, resulting in the formation of two distinct identities in informants: a social environmental identity and a social actor identity. These identities were described as existing within a fragmented sense of self for emerging adults, with informants reflecting on their SCEC ODS experiences as a separate cultural world in their lives. When transitioning into a more stable adult identity, informants described the process of becoming flexible with their SCEC ODS-related identities, finding ways to incorporate them into their current lives through a process of compromise and prioritization.

In examining the implications for future research and environmental education practice stemming from these findings, reflections provided by informants offer several potential directions forward in each of these areas. Firstly, the impactful elements of the SCEC ODS experience parallel previous research on the elements of the camp experience that individuals cite as meaningful to them. The importance of leadership and education (Kenedellen et al., 2016), community (McCole et al., 2012), culture (Lyons et al., 2016), and outdoor experiences (Garst et al., 2011) have all been previously documented in the general camp literature when examining the counselor experience. The current study further confirms that these four components are all necessary in developing impactful camp experiences for counselors.

While the elements of the SCEC ODS experience that informants cited as being impactful are not especially new, the hedonic and eudaimonic emotions that camp counselors

associate with these elements outlines a novel conceptualization as to *why* these elements of the camp counselor experience are impactful. Previous research on camp counselors has shown that identity development is a key part of the camp counselor experience (Johnson et al., 2011). The link between eudaimonic experiences and identity-forming experiences has also been documented (Waterman, 2017). It is the connection between these causal links that informants emphasized during their reflections for this study and presents itself as a new way to think about the impacts of the camp counselor experience in an environmental education setting.

Related literature has documented feeling of eudaimonia in post-trip perceptions of ecotourism experiences (Hunt & Harbor, 2019), in teachers' perceptions of their work (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2009), and retrospective life narratives (Bauer, McAdams, & Pals, 2008). The nature of the eudaimonic feelings recounted by past counselors from SCEC ODS is peripherally related to each of these previous research projects to some degree, but the present study provides the first suggestion that eudaimonia can play a role in outcomes for camp counselors and work in an environmental education setting as well. These feelings of eudaimonia can act synergistically with hedonic feelings to form impactful experiences for counselors, contributing to post-program identity development. Furthermore, intentionally developing eudaimonic and hedonic experiences for counselors in an environmental education setting could enhance post-course identity-related outcomes.

In extending these findings towards implications for practice in an environmental education setting, the impacts of eudaimonia on past SCEC ODS counselors may provide direction as to how camp counselor and environmental education work should be framed in trainings, employee recruiting, and when employers are discussing transference of work skills with their counselors. While exhaustion and over-working are pitfalls that employers must

attempt to prevent amongst their employees, previous counselors at SCEC ODS did not necessarily state it was the absence of negative affect that made the experience impactful to them. There were times personal relationships were strained or they felt exhausted and overwhelmed, but it was the sense of purpose, self-actualization, personal growth, and relatedness to a strong community that made the experience important. Environmental education and camp employers should effectively communicate a communal sense of purpose amongst staff in order to foster these outcomes. In addition, employers may communicate that camp counselor work may become somewhat difficult when working to accomplish goals such as fostering positive outdoor experiences or emotional growth amongst campers. This could be a proactive step in fostering senses of eudaimonia amongst counselors. Recognizing this appropriate level of difficulty and differentiating it from burnout and exhaustion may help individuals balance the many aspects of the camp counselor experience in a healthy way while also maximizing outcomes for participants. Furthermore, explicitly connecting counselor work to environmental education camp mission and Recognizing these challenges of being a camp counselor and pairing it with a sense of purpose could maximize employee learning outcomes, especially as previous literature has suggested that eudaimonic experiences can influence identity development processes (Waterman, 2017).

Furthermore, the identity-based outcomes participants associated with the SCEC ODS experience helped to extend outcomes previously documented in a general camp environment (Johnson et al., 2011) specifically to counselors working at an environmental education camp. Given counselors generally fall into the period of emerging adulthood, connecting identity-related outcomes to the environmental education experience provides an extension of this concept to a related yet unique setting. As counselors at SCEC ODS were generally experiencing

high levels of identity exploration as emerging adults (Arnett, 2000), overlaying the pro-environmental outcomes of residential environmental education camps suggests there could be unique outcomes for individuals working in these settings.

By incorporating the pro-environmental themes into the identity-forming elements of the general camp counselor experience, informants frequently reported the development of two interrelated identities: a social environmental identity and a social actor identity. These findings suggest that social practice theory (Holland et al., 1998) conceptualizes this identity-forming process effectively in the camp setting. Previous research has already suggested that this is an effective way to explore the long-term outcomes for campers in a residential environmental education setting (Williams & Chawla, 2016). The present study expands upon this, suggesting that this also may be an effective way in conceptualizing the camp counselor experience in an environmental education setting as well. Encouraging these identity development processes is especially important given the developmental context of emerging adulthood that counselors fall into. Understanding the identity-based elements that draw counselors to working at an environmental education and facilitating experiences that reformulate these factors, such as the four primary elements of the SCEC ODS experience outlined by informants, can help to maximize developmental outcomes for participants.

By developing a social environmental identity and a social actor identity through work at SCEC ODS, individuals discussed how they began to associate with the collective values and attitudes associated with the program. The meaning associated with the cultural world of SCEC ODS links eudaimonic and hedonic experiences with these identity-forming aspects of the experience. This process in which informants begin to associate themselves with the cultural

world of SCEC ODS suggests that counselor work in an environmental education camp setting holds unique educational and developmental value for emerging adults.

Specifically regarding the development of a social environmental identity, this presents a promising direction in providing environmental education experiences beyond simply providing information on environmental issues, an approach that has been found to be ineffective in promoting behavioral change (Heberlein, 2012; Volk & Hungerford, 1990). By associating one's identity with a specific cultural world, social practice theory asserts that one begins to embody behaviors that are representative of their associated cultural world (Kempton & Holland, 2003; Kitchell et al., 2000). This process is important as group identification can be a powerful driver of collective action (Simon et al., 1998) and general pro-environmental behaviors (Fritsche et al., 2017). Furthermore, learning to take environmental actions within a supportive community is important as collective efficacy can develop personal efficacy (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2004).

By seeing work as a camp counselor in an environmental education setting as a developmental experience for counselors as well as campers, these outcomes can be more effectively facilitated by program providers. This is especially important given emerging adults frequently see current work opportunities as educational opportunities preparing them for more permanent careers in the future (Arnett, 2000). In addition, identity development provides a way to influence environmental values, attitudes, and beliefs, which have been found to be especially important in influencing pro-environmental behaviors via educational experiences (Heberlein, 2012). In connecting identity to values and attitudes, Waterman (2017) writes, "Identity refers to a person's self-definition, in terms of goals, values, and beliefs, whether developed through a process of conscious choice, identification with significant others, or ascription, that provide direction, purpose, and meaning in life" (pp. 314). With this connection between identity and

other psychological constructs, developing emerging adult's identification with the pro-environmental community of SCEC ODS increases the likelihood of acting in a pro-environmental manner moving forward in life.

By developing a social actor identity in conjunction with this social environmental identity, SCEC ODS bridges pro-environmental outcomes with social-emotional outcomes, the latter of which has been well-documented in previous research in the general camp setting (Jacobs & McAvoy, 2005; Johnson et al., 2011; Kenedellen et al., 2016). While the combination of these two factors has been cited as important in developing active environmental stewards (Chawla & Cushing, 2007), informants often spoke about these two identities separately. People often saw themselves as a leader, educator, and socially confident person after their SCEC ODS experience, living out these qualities in their professional and personal lives in a variety of ways, often unrelated in pro-environmental actions. A limiting factor many emerging adults associated with this process was the compartmentalization of this identity into a facet of themselves not linked to their broader sense of self. Camp and environmental education practitioners may be able to enhance outcomes of the camp experience by training individuals in how to transfer this social actor identity to other aspects of their lives. For example, explicitly discussing how to transfer environmental education skills like public speaking and outdoor leadership into other contexts can increase the likelihood that counselors utilize these skills after their time working as a counselor has concluded.

Lastly, in examining the meaning the SCEC ODS experience holds for individuals across the three purposively sampled categories of emerging adulthood, individuals specifically characterized as emerging adults described their social environmental and social actor identities as being part of a fragmented sense of self. For these individuals, outcomes gained at camp were

frequently seen as unique identities lacking a broader integration into their more general self-perception. This is typical of the identity exploration process that has been described in emerging adulthood (Schwartz et al., 2013) as well as in the more foundational identity development literature (Erikson, 1950, 1956). This isolation of individuals' SCEC ODS-related identities was frequently described as a product of identity exploration as well as the sense of isolation, both physically and socially, from informants' daily lives. This aligns with previous research on emerging adults from the general camp setting (Johnson et al., 2011), while also extending this developmental process past the camp experience and back into life outside of SCEC ODS. This existence of identity fragmentation may have been exacerbated when talking to informants from SCEC ODS compared to other camp settings given the unique structure of the counselor experience. Individuals returned to the same physical place and attended the same undergraduate university as other counselors they worked with throughout their week. Comparatively, counselors from other camps likely come from various places to work at a camp, returning to different locations and social communities upon the conclusion of their time as a counselor. Given the proximity of the SCEC ODS cultural world to other aspects of their lives, the contrast between the two was often stark from the perspective of the informants.

In specifically examining the adults interviewed within this cross-sectional sample, they described a process of compromise through which they integrated their SCEC ODS-related identities into a stable sense of self. This was done through a process of giving up some elements of their social environmental and social actor identities in light of competing identity constructs. Other aspects of these identities were prioritized and maintained. This process is effectively conceptualized by the concept of "identity flexibility" (Sinnott, 2017; Waterman, 2017). By utilizing this cross-sectional approach and specifically comparing adults to emerging adults,

long-term outcomes of the SCEC ODS counselor experience can be more effectively explored. This approach to examine long-term outcomes from the camp counselor experience in a manner theoretically informed by emerging adulthood, an approach that was lacking from previous studies taking a similar approach (DeGraaf & Glover, 2003; Digby & Ferrari, 2007). By comparing the adult perspective of the SCEC ODS experience to the emerging adult perspective, a better understanding of the long-term outcomes from camp counselor work is developed.

In order to maximize long-term pro-environmental and social-emotional outcomes for counselors, this perspective must be developed on the identity development and learning processes taking place both in an environmental education setting and a general camp setting. Environmental education and camp managers explicitly incorporating discussions on transference to one's life outside of working as a counselor could be an important step in helping counselors grow from their work. Furthermore, discussing counselors' long-term goals and incorporating those goals into individualized training and mentorship could help counselors better develop identity flexibility skills. Through this, individuals may be better at incorporating their counselor-related identities into their adult identities as they progress in life. This can help counselors maintain pro-environmental behaviors and social-emotional skills in light of evolving life pressures.

By building from other studies examining impactful elements of counselor work, this study ultimately provides new perspectives on the outcomes related to working as a counselor at an environmental education camp. In understanding both impactful elements during the SCEC ODS experience as well as how these experiences hold meaning later in life, more effective training and education programs can be provided in these settings.

Limitations

Limitations regarding theoretical foundations, methodology, and generalizability should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings from this study. Firstly, regarding theoretical foundations, the critiques associated with emerging adulthood as a theory and developmental period should be acknowledged. Côté (2014) presents a critique of this conceptualization and its implications, outlining the care that must be taken when using the term. He argues that many structural barriers (e.g. economic, social) prevent many young adults from entering the period characterized as emerging adulthood. Rather, individuals such as those that enter the labor force directly out of secondary school are excluded from this theory. Hendry and Kloep (2010) support this critique empirically, finding a purposive sample of Welsh 17-20 year-olds who did not pursue higher education only had one sub-group within their study support the developmental processes asserted in emerging adulthood theory. While these critiques hold valid, the process of prolonged adulthood asserted by emerging adulthood theory is generally supported by individuals pursuing higher education (Arnett, 2000). Given the population of SCEC ODS counselors only consists of individuals enrolled in a higher education program, this theory was viewed as an appropriate component of this study. It is possible that emerging adulthood and the identity development processes associated with it may not hold true for the broader life positions of all individuals interviewed.

Furthermore, this study examines a single environmental education camp following a unique curriculum and procedures. This divergence from other environmental education camps is especially apparent in the structure of the counselor experience. At SCEC ODS, counselors are receiving college credit for their work as counselors, a major difference when compared to most environmental education camps who hire counselors as seasonal paid employees. Counselors at

SCEC ODS only attend camp for a week at a time. While they often return for multiple semesters, there is a significant period of time between these weeks. This is in contrast to most environmental education camps where counselors generally work a full season, consisting of several months of work. Given this difference from the general environmental education experience, some aspects of the camp experience like burnout from working multiple weeks in a row or developing a community consistently separated from the outside world are not aspects of SCEC ODS. While this study aimed to capture the emic perspective of counselors within this unique environmental education camp setting, these unique programmatic aspects should be acknowledged when this work is considered within the broader context of camp and environmental education research.

Lastly, several limitations must be recognized regarding the methodology of this study. A single method was used to collect data, a process which lacked triangulation of results (Bernard, 2011). By lacking other data sources to confirm findings from these interviews, future research is needed to further establish validity of the salient themes identified. Utilizing surveys, participant observations, or documents analysis all present possible future directions for further triangulation. In doing this, findings can be more responsibly extended to effective educational and training practices. Secondly, in attempting to generalize these findings to the broader population of SCEC ODS counselors, this study presents the possibility of a self-selection bias amongst participants (Costigan & Cox, 2001). Given interviews generally lasted 60 to 90 minutes, individuals with polarized opinions on their experience may have been more likely to volunteer for an interview. While informants were screened prior to scheduling interviews on what category of emerging adulthood they fell into, other perspectives and information on informants were not collected. There is a possibility that individuals who volunteered to

participate in interviews were not representative of the more general SCEC ODS counselor population and therefore care must be taken when drawing implications from this study. While this study works towards filling a gap within the current academic literature, care must be taken when extending these findings to inform future research as well as practical outcomes in environmental education and camp settings

Conclusion

Humans have the ability and opportunity to shift their behavior to act in a more environmentally friendly manner, a necessary step towards living in a sustainable future. Environmental education camps provide a unique opportunity towards shifting these behaviors as they represent an intersection between social-emotional learning and environmental learning. While research around these educational programs is often geared towards campers and students, counselors also represent an element of these programs where learning is potentially taking place. By better understanding these learning processes, programs and trainings can be designed more intentionally to enhance learning outcomes for counselors, both maximizing performance while working as well as enhancing post-program learning outcomes. This is especially important as counselors generally fall into the period of development frequently defined as emerging adulthood, characterized partially by high levels of identity exploration.

Using an inductive approach, semi-structured interviews were utilized to understand the impacts of an environmental education camp on past counselors existing both within emerging adulthood and past emerging adulthood. These interviews were aimed at capturing the emic perspective past counselors had on their experiences. Data were then examined to understand impactful elements of their camp experience, how the experience holds meaning in the current

lives of past counselors, and how that meaning differs between different individuals and different points within emerging adulthood.

Ultimately, four camp elements were found to be highly impactful in retrospect: leadership and education elements, community elements, outdoor elements, and cultural elements. These four parts of the camp experience inspire eudaimonic and hedonic emotions within participants, influencing individuals' post-program identities. Conceptualized by social practice theory, these counselors shared how their pre-program identities were reformulated through their association with this cultural world, developing a social environmental identity and a social actor identity. Informants discussed an interplay between these identities upon leaving the environmental education camp environment, while also living them out separately in their lives as well. Emerging adults often spoke of both of these identities as separate from other facets of their life in their lives after working as a camp counselor. When examining the perspectives shared by adult informants though, individuals became flexible with their identities they developed through their work. By compromising and prioritizing various elements of their counselor-related identities, informants spoke on how they were able to integrate it into a stable sense of self.

As we work towards a more sustainable future, further developed research and practice on counselor growth in an environmental education camp setting exists as a promising direction to encourage environmental stewardship amongst emerging adults. Given the nature of this developmental period, this presents an optimal time for educational and developmental programming to impacts individuals' pro-environmental identities as well as provide them the social-emotional skills to act on these beliefs. Integrating these values and worldviews into one's identity provides an opportunity for environmental education camps to foster long-term social-

emotional and pro-environmental outcomes within counselors. In doing this, environmental education camps have the opportunity to expand their impacts, extending their educational outcomes beyond campers to counselors as well.

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Appendix: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Interview Protocol: Perceived Impacts of the Camp Experience on Counselor Alumni of a Residential Environmental Education Camp

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

(Briefly describe the project)

Background:

Please describe your general lifestyle/life position prior to being an Outdoor School counselor.

- What factors influenced this lifestyle?

Please describe any previous camp experience you had prior to being an Outdoor School counselor.

What types of leadership experiences did you have prior to Outdoor School?

How would you characterize your experience working with children prior to Outdoor School?

How would you characterize your attitudes towards the natural world prior to Outdoor School?

Pre-ODS

How did you learn about Outdoor School?

What factors influenced your decision to be an Outdoor School counselor?

What were your expectations for the experience prior to being an Outdoor School counselor?

The ODS Experience

Please walk me through your week as an Outdoor School counselor, or the typical week if you served as a counselor more than once. (grand tour question)

What parts of your week(s) were especially memorable?

Please describe the community that developed during your week of Outdoor School.

What parts of being a counselor did you enjoy?

- Why? (probe)

What parts of being a counselor challenged you?

- Why? (probe)
- Please talk about any times being a counselor pushed you out of your comfort zone.

What surprised you about your time as an Outdoor School counselor?

- Why? (probe)

Post-ODS

Please describe your transition back into everyday life after your time(s) as an Outdoor School counselor.

What did you tell others about your experience at Outdoor School?

- How did they react?

Please share any times you have found yourself reflecting on your time at Outdoor School.

- What triggered these moments of reflection?

Do you feel your time as an Outdoor School counselor changed you?

In what ways do you feel Outdoor School has influenced you today?

- What parts of the counselor experience do you feel impacted you the most?

Please list the knowledge and skills you feel you gained from your Outdoor School counselor experience.

- In what way have you utilized these skills and knowledge?

Please describe how you feel Outdoor School has influenced your environmental attitudes

- What aspects of the Outdoor School experience contributed to this?

Is there anything else you would like to share about your Outdoor School experience, how it affected you then or now, or what the experience has meant to you?

Demographics

Age:

Gender:

Number of Weeks Worked at ODS (as a counselor or Learning Group Leader):

Graduation Year (if applicable):

Time Since Last Outdoor School Experience:

Current Profession (if applicable):

Number of Weeks of Camp Experience (camper or counselor) Outside of Outdoor School: