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## Development and Application of a Camper Growth Index (CGI-C)

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## DEVELOPMENT AND APPLICATION OF A CAMPR GROWTH INDEX (CGI – C)

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Many people know about the value of organized camp experiences for youth, but few instruments measure camp experiences relative to positive youth development. Over the past century, most studies have found positive outcomes on a variety of dimensions, but these studies have used mainly convenience nonrandomized samples, different criteria, and a variety of instruments in their assessments. The purpose of this paper is to present evidence about the psychometric properties of a scale specifically designed to measure youth development outcomes through camp experiences.

A conceptualization of positive youth development provided a theoretical framework for examining the potential for human growth within organized camp experiences. The first stage of the research directed by the American Camp Association (ACA) was to develop instruments that were reliable, valid, and usable in measuring youth development outcomes in camp settings.

The steps involved in developing the instrument to measure camper growth, the Camper Growth Index-Child (CGI-C), included instrument construction, pilot testing, field testing, sample selection, and additional validation. An initial questionnaire draft was developed by examining existing instruments in the field of youth development. Based on this information, four major domains were ascertained that represented the outcomes found in the literature as well as the articulated goals that most camp programs sought to achieve for young people.

The camper questionnaire was pilot tested, field tested, and reduced to a 52 item instrument that used a 4-point Likert scale with 4=strongly agree to 1=strongly disagree. The final questionnaire consisted of ten outcome constructs that represented the four major domains of interest to camp professionals. The reliabilities of the domains (in bold) and constructs (italicized) included: **Positive Identity:** *positive identity* (.75), *independence* (.63); **Social Skills:** *leadership* (.76), *making friends* (.69), *social comfort* (.66), *peer relationships* (.71); **Positive Values and Spiritual Growth:** *positive values* (.76), *spirituality* (.81); and **Thinking and Physical Skills:** *adventure exploration* (.66), and *environmental awareness* (.76).

In the summers of 2002 and 2003, a multistage random sampling strategy was used to identify camps for study participation. Camps were selected to represent characteristics such as day or resident camp status, camp sponsorship categories (i.e., agency, religious, independent nonprofit, and independent for-profit), regions of the country, and gender served (i.e., boys, girls, and coed). Over the two summers, 92 camps participated with a sample of over 5000 campers. The sample was representative of the population of ACA accredited camps, and the results indicated that positive changes were found from pre to post test on 6 of the 10 constructs:

adventure/exploration skills, making friends, positive identity, independence, leadership, and spirituality.

The development of the CGI-C makes a contribution toward collecting further empirical information about assessing youth development outcomes. Strengths of the instrument are that it is camp specific and designed to intentionally measure youth development outcomes in camps. The instrument also helps to reaffirm the contribution that camp experiences can make to positive youth development.

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