

UNDERSTANDING THE INFLUENCE OF THE GEORGIA 4-H ENVIRONMENTAL
EDUCATION EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE ON WORKFORCE TRAJECTORY

by

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(Under the Direction of Nicholas Fuhrman)

ABSTRACT

Environmental Education is a niche of education that to date has facets that have been understudied. This study examined the impact of working as an environmental educator for the Georgia 4-H program on workforce-related skill acquirement and workforce trajectory-post program. Qualitative data results suggested that no matter the reason for initially working in environmental education, working in this field has a significant influence on a young person's pursuit of work and their skill-set throughout the duration of their career.

INDEX WORDS: Career Typology, Environmental Education, Non-formal Education, Residential EE Program, Sense of Place, Significant Life Experience, Social Cognitive Career Theory, Soft Skills, Workforce Skills, Workforce Trajectory

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all the past, present, and future lovers and teachers of nature; to all who seek to engage with youth about the wonders of the world around us; to my loving family and friends. Do it with gusto!

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A wise person once told me, “Life is hard, that’s why people do it together”. This simple, sweet quote could not describe my life more perfectly. I would not be the person I am today if not for all the people who have come into and out of my life.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Each year, 4-H provides programming to nearly six million young people, nationally.

“4-H’s reach and depth are unmatched, reaching kids in every corner of America – from urban neighborhoods to suburban schoolyards to rural farming communities” (What is 4-H, ¶ 3). This program is not merely a “sit and get” style of curriculum, but experiential-based learning that gets youth up, out and working to better understand their community, country and world. In Georgia 4-H, one aspect of the program that is extremely hands-on is the environmental education (EE) program. In a time known as the “era of environmental literacy” spanning from 1972-1979, Georgia 4-H proposed the addition of the Georgia 4-H EE Program (Hopkins, 2016, p. 470). EE is defined by the North American Association for Environmental Education as, “a process that helps individuals, communities, and organizations learn more about the environment, and develop skills and understanding about how to address global challenges” (“About EE and Why It Matters,” 2017, ¶ 1). Just before the commencement of Georgia 4-H’s new program, the Tbilisi Declaration was adopted in 1977 by many international delegates. “The declaration noted the unanimous accord in the important role of EE in the preservation and improvement of the world's environment, as well as in the sound and balanced development of the world's communities” (Tbilisi Declaration, 1977, ¶ 3). The Georgia 4-H EE program’s founder and original curator, Diane Davies, established the following objectives in 1979.

- Comply with, and complement, the Georgia Department of Education's standards, guidelines and requirements for quality-based education, building credibility within the academic community.
- Establish as its initial audience third through eighth grade students in Georgia schools and perimeter states, bringing a new audience to Rock Eagle 4-H Center during the school year.
- Utilize the out-of-doors as a dynamic, living laboratory for academic study.
- Enhance studies in the major academic subjects of science, math, language arts, social studies, history and physical education.
- Encourage residential participation for greater understanding and appreciation of the curriculum...thereby using the cabins with three-to-five-day stays. (Hopkins, 2016, p. 471)

In Georgia 4-H, there are currently 169,998 enrolled 4-H members (Georgia 4-H Membership). A portion of these enrolled members participate in the residential EE program, but approximately 37,000 school students, both members of 4-H and not, travel from across the state to learn more about a myriad of environmental topics each school year (More about Environmental, 2018). To the students, their teachers and the environmental educators, the importance and potential impact of this position is easily explainable, but to those who are not familiar with the EE programming, it is not.

Problem Statement

Research regarding EE is differentiated. Research exists studying camp settings examining both the counselor and camper. Research also exists surrounding specific

learning outcomes following EE-based experiences, but most data currently known is in regard to the learner/student, not the educator facilitating such learning. Currently, no known research exists concerning EE's impression on workforce or workforce skill acquirement. The need to answer this question is ever-present as the Georgia 4-H program strives to hire quality educators for these centers. It has been discussed for decades all the benefits the program offers but only in casual settings. This data will be the first of its kind for Georgia 4-H and will allow some insight on how serving in this role impacts an emerging adult's career choice(s) and skillset post-program.

Purpose of the Study

This study set out to fill the chasm in research regarding environmental educators and the outcomes that facilitating EE has on the future career endeavors of EE staff. This was done by focusing on if participating in EE as an instructor had an influence on workforce trajectory and whether any workforce related skills were attained while working in EE. By working with the well-established Georgia 4-H EE program, the researcher completed a retrospective qualitative study with past EE staff members who were five or more years removed from the program. Potential outcomes of the study were:

- Identification of better marketing tactics and targets to attract prospective employees to the Georgia 4-H environmental education program.
- Procurement of data that can be used to market the Georgia 4-H EE program to future donors and funders.
- Exemplify and describe the value of working in EE to future employers, both within and outside of the natural/life science disciplines.

- Identification of what, if any, transferable work skills can be obtained through serving as an environmental educator in the Georgia 4-H EE program.

The overarching research question and sub questions were as follows:

Research Question:

How does working as an environmental educator influence the future workforce trajectory of past educators?

Sub Questions:

1. What transferable skills are obtained through employment in the Georgia 4-H EE program?
2. What type of experiences during the Georgia 4-H EE tenure helped educators develop the transferable skills?
3. Where do former GA 4-H EE staff enter into the workforce after their tenure with the EE centers?
4. What position are prior educators holding now?
5. In what capacity do former GA 4-H environmental educators apply the transferable skills acquired?

Assumptions

The following assumptions helped inform this study:

1. Environmental educators involved in the study will be honest about their experience teaching EE at a Georgia 4-H center.
2. Environmental educators will be able to accurately recall elements of their experience teaching EE which have contributed to their current-day employment.

Delimitations

The study was delimited to past Georgia 4-H EE program participants who were at least five years removed from the program at the time of the study. This requirement was established in order to have subjects who had been removed from the program long enough to have attained other employment endeavors. This proved to be an appropriate amount of time removed from the program in order to gain data on their academic/career path. The educators could have taught at one or more of any of Georgia 4-H's five centers.

Limitations

Certain limitations were applied to this study; therefore, this study does not represent all EE programs or all educators. The specific criteria constructed for the research study was an impactful limitation. Although not generalizable, results of this study will be transferable to other EE settings and will be useful to individuals providing professional development training to EE teaching staff.

Definitions of Key Terms

- Career Typology- individuals choose career environments that best fit their personality and interest (Holland, 1966)
- Environmental Education- Environmental education (EE) is a process that helps individuals, communities, and organizations learn more about the environment, and develop skills and understanding about how to address global challenges. It has the power to transform lives and society. It informs and inspires. It influences attitudes. It motivates action. EE is a key tool in expanding the constituency for the

environmental movement and creating healthier and more civically-engaged communities (NAAEE, 2017, ¶ 1)

- Non-formal Education- Any organized educational activity outside of the established formal system, typically set in areas not familiar to the learner (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974).
- Residential EE Program- experiences characterized by their immersive, field-based qualities, including at least one night spent on site (Ardoin, DiGiano, O'Connor, & Holthuis, 2016, ¶ 4).
- Sense of Place- sense of place can be conceived as a multidimensional construct representing beliefs, emotions and behavioral commitments concerning a particular geographic setting (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2006, p. 316)
- Significant Life Experience- the formative influences recalled by people whose lives demonstrate environmental concern (Tanner, 1980)
- Social Cognitive Career Theory- theory on career perspective that discusses the way(s) people understand their career interests, set their goals, and persist in the working environment (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994)
- Soft Skills- Soft skills are those non-technical competencies connected to one's personality, attitude, ability, and motivation to interact effectively with others (Stewart et al., 2016, p. 277). These can include skills such as communication (written and oral), problem-solving, teamwork, and critical thinking.
- Workforce Skills- When employers speak of skills, they sometimes mean the ability to perform a particular task or job: using of-the-shelf or customized software for recordkeeping; selling enough ads to keep a struggling newspaper afloat; working as

a nurse in an operating room. At least as often, employers and their HR (human resources) staff mean something quite different: social and interpersonal skills, and not just the obvious sort, the ability to get along with coworkers and deal with customers (Alic, 2018, p. 30)

- Workforce Trajectory- the path your job(s) take as you move forward, backward or stay on an even keel during your working years

Summary

Throughout this study, data providing details on the impact of employment with the Georgia 4-H EE program will unfold. The researcher set out to explain phenomena surrounding the EE program and fill voids in the literature. Chapter one provided an introduction to the research problem, purpose of the study, assumptions, delimitations, limitations, and terms used throughout this thesis. The following chapter will discuss the conceptual framework components used to guide this study and identify trends and gaps in the literature related to outcomes of EE-related experiences for learners and facilitators.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following review of literature examines previous studies related to EE and the role of camp counselors in moving learners along the path from environmental awareness to pro-environmental action. With a lack of literature in this area, a conceptual framework was used to explain the phenomenon found in this study. This study was curated to fill a void in research that is present within Georgia 4-H and all across the EE community. In an effort to attract prospective employees to the Georgia 4-H EE program and to exemplify the value of working for the program to future employers, this study took a longitudinal, in-depth look at the transferable work skills that can be obtained through the program.

The study was guided by the following three objectives:

Objective 1. To determine the workforce trajectory of past Georgia 4-H environmental educators.

Objective 2. To describe the motivating factors of workforce trajectory.

Objective 3. To detect if working with the Georgia 4-H EE program has developmental impacts on adults' transferable work skills.

The guiding research question was: How does working as an environmental educator influence the future workforce trajectory of past educators? In order to answer this question and fulfill the objectives, three theoretical foundations were used to guide this study: Sense of Place, Significant Life Experience and Career Typology/Social Cognitive Career Theory (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2006, p. 316; Chawla, 1998; Holland, 1966; Lent,

Brown, & Hackett, 1994). The following conceptual framework guided the researcher on the creation and implementation of the study.

Georgia 4-H, EE, and Camping Program

Throughout the course of Georgia 4-H's long, abounding history there have been countless programs offered to both youth and adults of all ages. Perhaps one of the most recognizable programs is the Georgia 4-H EE Program. EE is defined by the North American Association for EE (NAAEE) (2017) as, "a process that helps individuals, communities, and organizations learn more about the environment, and develop skills and understanding about how to address global challenges" (§ 1). Originating in 1979, the EE (EE) programs began at Rock Eagle 4-H Center, but over time extended to all the 4-H centers across the state (Walton et al., 2008). Incorporating research-based curriculum in conjunction with experiential learning to meet the Georgia Standards of Excellence, the program is recognized as "one of the nation's largest providers of residential EE", but also provides day experiences as well ("Georgia 4-H: More about," 2016, § 1). The Georgia 4-H EE program has served over 1,112,000 participants since its inception.

In Georgia 4-H, EE is tied directly into the camping program that spans all five centers. In addition to residential EE programs, the curriculum is also used to educate thousands of summer camp attendees annually. Summer camp participants attend EE curriculum-based classes. The Georgia 4-H EE program is composed of former Georgia 4-Hers that are now employees as well as seasonal EE workers that come from other outlets and from across the nation. Despite the plentiful research that has been completed about summer camp attendees and counselors and the extensive research on youth who have attended residential EE experiences, there is a gap in the research for EE employees

themselves. For the purpose of this study, previous data pertaining to camp counselors and camping programs were utilized due to camp experiences being often synonymous with EE in many states.

Sense of Place Theory

Jorgensen and Stedman (2006, p. 316) stated that, “sense of place can be conceived as a multidimensional construct representing beliefs, emotions and behavioral commitments concerning a particular geographic setting.” Their work regarding sense of place offers promise in understanding the past environmental educators’ time at their previous place of employment in the Georgia 4-H program. They examined Sense of Place as place identity, place attachment, and place dependence. Place Identity involves “those dimensions of self that define the individual’s personal identity in relation to the physical environment by means of a complex pattern of conscious and unconscious ideas, beliefs, preferences, feelings, values, goals and behavioral tendencies and skills relevant to this environment” (Proshansky, 1978, p. 155, as cited in Jorgensen and Stedman, 2006, p.234). Place attachment is a positive bond felt by individuals or groups and their environment. Lastly, the third dimension, place dependence, can be described as either a positive or negative. It is described as the perceived strength of association between an individual and place(s). In their study, findings showed that the residents felt a strong sense of place across the three dimensions because of the lake and natural flora. However, Sense of Place is not merely one’s attitude towards a location, but “also a social phenomenon; ‘in essence, people confer meaning on the environment in ways that reflect their social and cultural experiences’” (Eisenhauer et al., 2000, as cited in Shamai & Ilatov, 2005, p. 468). As stated by Barker (1979), “Obviously, sense of place is one of

the most abstract and illusive concepts . . . understanding what creates a true sense of place . . . is a complex task” (p. 164). While the lake and flora were indicative to the participants in Jorgensen and Stedman’s work, it is subjective to the individual what constitutes Sense of Place. Therefore, Sense of Place can be difficult to measure from one research study to the next because many researchers measure it differently (Anton & Lawrence, 2014). In the study looking at place attachment for residents of Western Australia’s bushfire area, they found that there was greater place attachment for the residents in rural areas than urban areas. These findings also correspond to findings by Lewicka (2005), which indicated that community size has a negative effect on place attachment. This study did not specifically examine the past educators’ Sense of Place regarding the program and/or the center(s) worked at, but the theory will potentially help give some rationale as to why the subjects were impacted as far as workforce trajectory and skills go. If Sense of Place does play a role in the impact of these young workforce entrants, the study participants’ responses might be better understood. Applying Sense of Place to the current study, participants potentially will have been impacted in a greater, more long-lasting way by feeling a sense of place amongst their small community of fellow staff members and/or the natural environment at a Georgia 4-H Center.

Chawla’s Significant Life Experience Theoretical Framework

Another potential impact felt by the environmental educators could be better understood by considering Significant Life Experiences as a theoretical framework. This concept acts on one’s affective domain and takes on a more emotional tone. Louise Chawla began studying Significant Life Experiences in Environmental Educators in the 1990’s. While this study is not focused on others’ environmental interest, concern and

action like Chawla's, Significant Life Experience may very well have made an impression on the past environmental educators and led them to their next employment endeavor(s) and their workforce skill development. In Chawla's (1998) research, she found that "in all of the preceding research, when people explained the sources of their environmental career choice, activism, or environmental concern or interest, similar answers recurred: positive experiences in natural areas, adult role models, environmental organizations, education, negative experiences of environmental degradation, books and other media, and on-the-job experience" (p. 369).

The Career Typology and Social Cognitive Career Theory

With each passing generation, a new group of individuals enter the workforce. Many influences may take a toll on the decision of the individual on which portion of the workforce they should enter. In a study by Tang, Pan, and Newmeyer (2008), results showed that female high school students were more interested in working with social or artistic-type occupations while male students were more interested in "data and things". Apart from the high school adolescent age, there is an age termed "emerging adulthood" that can be defined as neither adolescence nor adulthood and is used to brand 18-24-year-olds. Those emerging adulthood individuals may choose their area of workforce for many reasons. Humayon, Raza, Khan, and Ansari (2018, p. 133) state the following:

According to Holland's theory of "Career Typology," individuals choose career environments that best fit their personality and interest (Holland, 1966). Personal interests are learned from parents, in school, from friends, and from your life-long experiences. Interest plays very important role in motivating people to do the right

things that they like. A very strong and motivating interest in anything will boost to do it whole heartedly.

Based on these findings, participating in the Georgia 4-H EE program might have a strong enough impact to boost the individual to choose a similar career or a connected career to EE as their own. A theory posed by Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994), Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), is an extension of Bandura's social cognitive theory (1986). SCCT is a leading theory on career perspective that discusses the way(s) people understand their career interests, set their goals, and persist in the working environment. "The SCCT points out that individuals tend to select their career pathway based on cultural, social, and economic factors" (Dos Santos, 2018, p. 150). Therefore, this theory provided the possibility that participating in EE as an emerging adult might have such an impact on an individual that they glean an entire career path from their participation. Although we know their participation might have an impact on their career choices, we do not know if it actually does or if their workforce skills are attributed back to this influential time in their lives. Based on the theories set forth by both Holland and Lent, Brown, and Hackett, the researcher hypothesizes that the social factors such as living and working together on center that EE staffers experience will heavily affect most of the participants to pursue a similar or identical career choice as EE.

Longitudinal Studies About Environmental Educators in Camp Settings

When it comes to skills obtained by teacher versus skills obtained by the learner, in EE there are far more studies that have been conducted to discuss the impact on the learner. Garst and Johnson (2005) explored adolescent leadership skill development while participating in residential 4-H camp and examined how camp impacts a person in

the middle such as a teen leader who is not the teacher per say, but also not the primary learner in a camp setting. The qualitative study had two primary motivations leading towards the fruition of the study. A.) to examine how residential camp participation impacts the development of leadership and other life skills in teen leaders. B.) to examine how camp teen counselors affect campers they were in charge of and interacted with. In order to obtain the data, researchers evaluated teen leaders working at six 4-H camping facilities in Virginia. The study took place during the summer of 2002 and lasted 10-12 weeks. Teen leaders ranged in age from 14-18. The data was collected through focus groups made up of 4-8 people at each of the facilities. The 68 teen participants' responses led researchers to recognize four themes:

1. Internal motives and external factors that impacted teen camp counselor participation
2. Increased understanding of children
3. Increased understanding of self
4. Development of mentoring relationships with children

The study revealed that many of the teen's peers outside of camp did not recognize the value of the experience. They viewed camp as "nerdy" or "uncool." Despite what their peers thought of camp, the teen counselors felt camp had many benefits. The study pointed out the following as positive outcomes from teen counselors participating in camp: teens recognized the developmental differences between youth, how to respect younger youth as individuals, how diverse youth are and the strategies that work on them, appropriate communication skills in regards to kids, an ability to be patient increased, raised responsibility for themselves and youth under their supervision, an ability to

overcome shyness, increased communication skills when working with any age level, and improved problem solving skills. “The results of the study suggest that 4-H camp participation positively affected teen counselors by helping them to develop leadership-related knowledge, skills, and behaviors” (Garst & Johnson, 2005, ¶ 19).

Some longitudinal studies have been done which were used to guide the development of this study. One study examining the long-term impacts of working at an organized camp for seasonal staff was done by DeGraaf and Glover (2003). Their work was conducted to understand how camp impacts counselors five years or more after their experience. The researcher also set out to explore whether gender made a difference on the counselors’ outlooks on camp years later. Number of years since working at camp and counselors’ gender were the two variables being examined. Five groups were comprised of 305 past counselors. The groups were divided up by number of years past since working at camp with even numbers of males and females in each group.

1. Staff who worked in camp 5 to 10 years ago
2. Staff who worked in camp 11 to 15 years ago
3. Staff who worked in camp 16 to 25 years ago
4. Staff who worked in camp 26 to 40 years ago
5. Staff who worked in camp 41 or more years ago

Personal impacts of the camp experience such as self-confidence, responsibility, spiritual growth, environmental awareness, role models, and relationships were identified.

Professional impacts of the camp experience such as the development of specific work-related skills appeared in responses. Reflections on camp revealed what the former staff took away as being pivotal experiences. Some of the memories and beneficial

involvements mentioned were community building, benefits of organized camp for campers and staff, diversity, and camp traditions (DeGraaf and Glover, 2003).

Counselors who had served 25 years or more ago mentioned working with youth as a motivator for being a counselor more often. This age group also mentioned camp counselor as being able to connect staff to future employment. Findings showed that males and females both felt camp had positive influences on them. There were very small differences between the two genders' answers (DeGraaf and Glover, 2003). This particular study was used as a useful guide during the planning stages of the current study.

In terms of other longitudinal studies, the following work by Brandt and Arnold (2006) observed the long-term impact of being a 4-H camp counselor on life skills as well as working effectively with children and groups. This work took place throughout the summer of 2004 in Oregon. Brandt and Arnold (2006) directed this study to assess how counselor alumni felt about their time in their camping program as they entered the workforce and adulthood. The participant pool was made up of 205 4-H camp counselor alumni from all across Oregon. This quantitative study used a survey as the instrument for data collection. This survey focused on three areas of impact:

- 1) Personal experience as a camp counselor
- 2) The development of skills for working effectively with children and groups
- 3) The development of selected life skills

Using a five-point scale, participants were asked to rank nine items associated with their development of skills for working with children, 15 life skill items and five items about their personal experience. The alumni felt their experience helped them develop self-

confidence and gain transferable skills (Brandt and Arnold, 2006). In order to see the long-term impacts, the participant pool was divided into two groups. Group one had 18-23-year-olds and group two had 24-year-olds and older. The results showed a high rating in the Target Life Skills of leadership, responsible citizenship, contribution, and teamwork (Brandt and Arnold, 2006).

Camping Program Outcomes

There have been numerous studies showing the positive benefits of camping employment on individuals. For a long time, camp has been known to have an impact of positive youth development. Garst, Franz, Baughman, Smith, and Peters (2009) have proposed that this positive youth development is also applicable to the staff members helping run these camps as these individuals transition into adulthood. This study found that longitudinal camp experiences can be a change agent. Findings showed that “young adult staff gain an enhanced sense of self, confidence, and a drive for success that may not have been present prior to their involvement in camp” (Garst et al., 2009, p. 11).

A research study by Duerden et al. (2014) found that through camp employment individuals obtained interpersonal, communication, problem solving, and leadership skills. Relationships with other staff and campers, appreciation of diversity, interpersonal skills, group cohesion, leadership and responsibilities, role modeling/mentoring, technical skill development, personal growth, administrative skills, and teamwork were all seen as positive developmental outcomes of the camp experience in a study by Bialeschki, Henderson, and Dahowski (1998). Other profound outcomes have been uncovered by prior research. DeGraaf, Glover, Frauman, and Shaffer (2015) found that in many cases

these young adults participating in seasonal EE positions have a great connectedness to nature. This also has the potential to impact their later workforce choices.

In Garst's co-authored work, *The Role of Camp in Shaping College Readiness and Building a Pathway to the Future for Camp Alumni*, he retrospectively surveyed camp attendees to determine if camp had any impact on their college-readiness skills. Interestingly, these responses suggest that about 51% of participants felt their camp experience had an influence on their educational choice. More specifically, 35% of the 420 participants claimed that camp shaped their academic interests in some manner. This study was set-up to examine females and males independently of each other. Participants could remark that camp either had "to a great extent", "to some extent", "not much extent", or "no extent" on various skillsets. Both females and males had significant college readiness skills gains that they attribute to their time at camp. Females' had the highest gains in independence/self-reliance (86% reported to a great extent), teamwork (79% reported to a great extent), self-efficacy (76% reported to a great extent), and confidence (75% reported to a great extent), among others. Males listed teamwork (80% reported to a great extent), independence/self-reliance (76% reported to a great extent), self-efficacy (71% reported to a great extent), and confidence (71% reported to a great extent) as their highest skills gained (Whittington & Garst, 2018).

While prior studies have examined the long-term outcomes of environmental educator/camp counselor experiences, this study was the first of its kind for Georgia 4-H and provided insight on how serving in this role impacts an emerging adult's career choice(s) and skillset for jobs once post-program. By interviewing previous environmental educators from GA 4-H, the researcher's goal was to collect definitive

data to show what skills the program provides and where former educators go when they exit the program.

Studies similar in regard to studying Georgia 4-H environmental educators such as the one proposed have been conducted, but none that fill the specific gap that currently exists. For example, a study done by Goldsmith (2017) reviewing how environmental educators' personal traits relate to their teaching style, teaching methods used, and perception of "effective" instruction showed the most effective environmental educators promoted novelty, connections, personalization of the curriculum based on educator characteristics, management of the learning environment, extra resources, and engagement and inclusion. Another study done by Fincher (2018), studied why people choose to pursue EE. Both of these studies delved into EE with the Georgia 4-H EE program as the specific program under investigation, but neither identified the skills of a previous GA 4-H EE member that they attribute back to their time in the program. Although there is more known now than ever before about this specific program (GA 4-H), it is still unknown how the educators' future career endeavors are shaped by their EE experience.

Workforce Skills Developed through EE in Camp Settings

Based on a study by Casner-Lotto et al. (2006), "over 400 employers identified four critical skills that individuals should possess as they enter the 21st-century workforce: professionalism/work ethic, oral and written communications, teamwork/collaboration, and critical thinking/ problem solving" (p. 9). Many studies having been conducted on EE, but not necessarily looking at the longitudinal impacts of EE or more specifically the workforce trajectory. The lack of workforce related research

in EE paired with a lack of soft skills amongst the workforce posed a lot of questions for the researcher. Is it possible that these prior EE staffers are gaining invaluable skills to help close these voids in various aspects of the workforce? Research by Duerden et al. (2014) intended to see if working as a camp staff member had an impact on workforce readiness in young adults. Researchers were interested to see if the camp experience would increase, decrease or leave unchanged workforce- related skills in camp staff. The study found that communication skills, interpersonal skills, problem-solving, leadership and identity development were all positive outcomes of camp employment. The elements of camp that facilitated these skills were intrinsic motivations (e.g., working with kids and making a difference). Also, being forced out of their comfort zone, the camp community, and receiving positive feedback for their work. Based on the findings of this study, the workforce gap can be made smaller when young adults are exposed to a camp staff/counselor setting. While the study found many positives, it also found hinderances that could and has negatively impacted camp staff such as losing focus and poor camp management. These pieces are important to avoid in order to ensure camp staff feel a sense of place and have a significant life experience. Even though it does not exactly evaluate EE staff, the findings are extremely beneficial and offer an explanation as to why some EE staffers may have a positive or negative work experience and how that will impact their skill development

In another study conducted by Johnson, Goldman, Garey, Britner, and Weaver (2011), they seek to explore impacts camp has on identity development in emerging adults. Camp can allow for young adults to express themselves and be child-like while still being a role model and adult authority figure for their adolescent campers. The age of

many camp counselors gives them a valuable position of not being adult yet, but not being youth anymore either. They are thought to be able to express more and explore their identity. During this qualitative study, several participants spoke about camp being a separated place and referred to it as a “camp bubble.” The researchers were able to identify five differing themes that make up the bubble, including:

- (1) the physical and psychological separation of camp
- (2) its organizational structure
- (3) camp traditions
- (4) camp activities
- (5) the establishment of a camp culture built around acceptance (Johnson et al., 2011).

Upon questioning, many counselors felt they were able to serve in many varying roles while at camp. This, paired with the ability to be childlike while also serving in a childcare role, can explain how emerging adults are able to have identity development during camp. Thanks to the “camp bubble,” these emerging adults were able to experience a unique variety of roles and situations (Johnson et al., 2011). This article did not follow the participants as they entered the workforce, but it did offer some reasons why camp and EE settings offer identity development before heading into the workforce.

Cooley (2015) set out to study how Outdoor Adventure Education (OAE) courses developed transferable group work skills in higher level education students. The students were taken out of traditional classroom settings and put into the outdoors where they had to overcome more challenging obstacles. Groupwork skills are extremely attractive to employers; therefore, the skills obtained during OAE have the potential to help students excel in career opportunities. During this study, 95 participants who had all attended an

OAE course had data collected from them. The first group consisted of students who took at least one OAE course that lasted from half a day to 6 days. The second group consisted of alumni who had taken an OAE course between 2 and 20 years before this study occurred (Cooley, 2015). The alumni participants are now managers, engineers, consultants, or event organizers. Third, a group of academic staff were evaluated. Lastly, instructors' perspectives were also collected. The study found that transferable groupwork skills were obtained and/or facilitated during OAE courses. The work also found that teambuilding occurred in these OAE courses. The students also had a more positive outlook on groupwork after the course(s). Participants also felt more included and supported during the course(s) (Cooley, 2015). The idea of outdoor education fostering and developing groupwork skills is important. These are skills people need in the workforce. These are skills that make employees more attractive and better co-workers. This study incites curiosity about whether teaching EE through the GA 4-H program might alter groupwork skills and cooperation.

A qualitative study done by Bialeschki, Henderson, and Dahowski (1998) specifically looked at the positive and negative outcomes of camp on staff members. Data was collected through ten focus groups made up of 50 participants who had worked as a summer camp staff member for at least one season. Through the focus groups, researchers were able to point out some definite areas camp had impacted each staff member. Relationships with other staff and campers, appreciation of diversity, interpersonal skills, group cohesion, leadership and responsibilities, role modeling/mentoring, technical skill development, personal growth, administrative skills, and teamwork were all seen as positive developmental outcomes of the camp experience

(Bialeschki et al, 1998). The study was also able to pick-out key negatives about the camping program as well. These included dealing with diversity, low wages, lack of time for self, negative perceptions of influential others, frustration with campers, cliques, and lack of director support. The findings can correlate with EE staff as well. Many EE staff members could possibly share in these feelings and have those feelings shape their future career choices and worth ethic.

A research study looking specifically at the correlation between positive youth development (PYD) and serving as a camp counselor was done by Ferrari and McNeely (2007). Specifically, a survey was created in order to measure personal, interpersonal, and negative experiences. Across Ohio, a total of 779 counselors participated in detecting how being a camp counselor impacts PYD. The subjects of the study ranked themselves high in teamwork and social skills, initiative, identity, and interpersonal relationships. They also felt they had developed basic skills and adult networks (Ferrari and McNeely, 2007). The negative experiences were not ranked very high, but the most common negative items were controlling adults, stress, unfair workload, interference with family activities, and presence of cliques. The study was also able to show a positive correlation between the number of years worked and leadership and responsibility (Ferrari and McNeely, 2007).

Summary

Chapter 2 established the foundational theories and concepts that guided this study. Three theoretical foundations were used to inform data collection and analysis, including: Sense of Place, Significant Life Experience, and Career Typology Social Cognitive Career Theory. Sense of Place was used to understand if past EE staff confer

any special meaning onto their site(s) during their time in the program. In terms of Significant Life Experience, Chawla's findings could transfer themselves onto this study by the participants having been so positively and/or profoundly impacted during the program that the experience influenced their career choice. Despite all the current research regarding camp or EE-centered learners and educators, the specific impact of workforce skills gained and workforce trajectory from the Georgia 4-H EE program remains unknown. This study was designed to explain the phenomenon and help camp and EE program practitioners, stakeholders, potential EE staff members, and graduate and professional program coordinators to better understand the impact of serving as an environmental educator on one's career trajectory. Chapter 3 will discuss the structure for the research study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

This study used a qualitative research design in order to gather data about Georgia 4-H environmental educators' career trajectories following their tenure in the program and to evaluate what, if any, transferable skills they obtained while in the program. In order to evaluate the group of participants, a qualitative research data collection method consisting of a hybrid study made up of a semi-structured focus group (Appendix B and F) and individual, follow-up telephone interviews occurred (Appendix C and G).

“Combining methodological approaches dates back to the early 1900s in anthropological and sociological studies” (Robinson and Mendelson, 2012). Data analysis consisted of implementing content analysis procedures to identify reoccurring themes in the raw data. This chapter describes the design of the research project, the background and biases of the researcher, the data collection techniques, and the data analysis procedures used.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to assess the value of working for the Georgia 4-H EE program and better understand how the skills gained while environmental educators could be transferred to present day careers. This study had a three-part objective: (a) To determine the workforce trajectory of past Georgia 4-H environmental educators, (b) To describe the motivating factors of workforce trajectory, and (c) To detect if working with the Georgia 4-H EE program has developmental impacts on adults' transferable work skills.

More specifically, this study took an in-depth look at what, if any, transferable work skills past environmental educators attributed back to their time in the program. This data was the first of its kind for Georgia 4-H (GA 4-H) and allowed some insight of how serving in this role impacts an emerging adult's career choice(s) and skillset for jobs once they are post-program. By interviewing previous environmental educators from GA 4-H, the researcher's goal was to collect definitive data to show what skills the program provides and where former educators go when they exit the program. The study can also benefit the GA 4-H EE coordinator with promotional data that could be used when recruiting future environmental educators.

The overarching research question and sub questions were as follows: How does working as an environmental educator influence the future workforce trajectory of past educators?

Sub Questions:

1. What transferable skills are obtained through employment in the Georgia 4-H EE program?
2. What type of experiences during the Georgia 4-H EE tenure helped educators develop the transferable skills?
3. Where do former GA 4-H EE staff enter into the workforce after their tenure with the EE centers?
4. What position are prior educators holding now?
5. In what capacity do former GA 4-H environmental educators apply the transferable skills acquired?

Rationale for the Research Design

According to Patton (2002), “Qualitative research produces a wealth of detailed information about a much smaller group of people and cases” (p. 14). The need for a qualitative approach to this study was apparent due to the nature of the study and the rich data that was expected to be gleaned from the participants. By using a qualitative method, the researcher was able to generate stories and context as to how the environmental educators gained specific skills, they have transferred with them to other areas of employment. The set-up of the hybrid study was determined by the researcher and research committee. The focus group was the initial part of the study and the individual phone interview took place approximately two weeks following the focus group meeting. The follow-up individualized phone interview was suggested by the research committee in order to hopefully gain richer data. The set of semi-structured questions for the phone interviews were almost identical to the focus group for the researcher to glean more comprehensive content from the participants following the focus group and to verify responses from the researchers’ original interaction with each participant. This was to allow participants to experience a reflective period of time following the focus group to collect more information about their time during their EE experience and throughout their professional career(s) since. By asking the participants these same questions outside of a group setting, it provided an atmosphere where participants were able to discuss anything with sensitive content and avoid group think. A semi-structured script was created to help guide the conversation in a flexible manner. “Approaching field work without being constrained by predetermined categories of analysis contributes to the depth, openness, and detail of qualitative inquiry” (Patton, 2002, p. 14). In order to encourage even more

openness, the researcher asked the participants to provide some visual data in the form of artifacts from their time in EE. The term artifact is not referring to ancient relic found in a museum or within the soil from many moons ago (Saldana, J., & Omasta, M., 2017). Rather, these artifacts are tangible item that have endured time and been kept and cared for by the individual. These are items that hold value, often emotional, for the individual. The participants were asked to explain what their artifacts were and their importance to them. This added to another layer of rigor to the study in hopes of gathering richer data.

Trustworthiness and Rigor in the Research Design

In order for a qualitative study to hold merit it must have proven trustworthiness and rigor present. Noteworthy qualitative research was once thought to need reliability and validity. Past studies (Altheide & Johnson, 1998; Leininger, 1994) stated that, “some researchers have suggested that reliability and validity are not terms to be used to explain the usefulness of qualitative research. They believe that those terms are to be used to validate quantitative research” (as cited in Amankwaa, 2016, p.121). Lincoln and Guba (1985) constructed evaluative criteria made up of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Lincoln and Guba thought these criteria to be parallel to validity and reliability (Morrow, 2005). “Thus, credibility in qualitative research is said to correspond to internal validity in quantitative approaches, transferability to external validity or generalizability, dependability to reliability, and confirmability to objectivity” (Morrow, 2005, p. 252). For this study that would be described by Morrow and Smith as “idiographic and emic (focusing on one or a very few individuals, finding categories of meaning from the individuals studied),” the researcher followed these

parallel criteria to ensure trustworthiness and rigor (as cited in Morrow 2005, p. 252).

The following key terms guided data collection and analysis in this study:

- Credibility - confidence in the 'truth' of the findings
- Transferability - showing that the findings have applicability in other contexts
- Dependability - showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated
- Confirmability - a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)

Credibility is thought to be established through prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis referential adequacy, and member-checking. Transferability can be identified using thick description of the phenomenon (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability relies on having audits conducted by an external source not involved in the study. Lastly, confirmability uses confirmability audit, audit trail, triangulation, and reflexivity to demonstrate the objectivity of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

For this qualitative study, trustworthiness and rigor were addressed by concentrating on multiple areas of criteria. Credibility was gained by adding the components of triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checking. Due to this being a hybrid research study consisting of a focus group component and follow-up individual phone interviews, triangulation was present to provide richer, more validated data. “This [triangulation] provides a check on selective perception and illuminate blind spots in an interpretive analysis. The goal is to understand multiple ways of seeing the data” (Amankwaa, 2016, p. 122). Results from the focus groups were compared to the

responses given by the individuals during their phone interview to check for consistencies in both sets of responses. Data was analyzed to help the researcher glean any new information and insight provided during the phone interview. Member checking was met by having multiple observers and analysts checking the work of the researcher as well as the researcher's thesis committee. Notes taken during the focus group and phone interviews were recapped to the participants to ensure all data collected was correct. An uninvolved colleague of the researcher also looked over the methodology of the study and transcripts to add peer debriefing to the credibility of the study. Transferability was met through thick description from the focus group and individual follow-up phone interviews to collect data in concert with the researchers' detailed notes and findings from the literature review. Dependability was secured with the help of a peer review process. Confirmability was met by using triangulation.

Research Context

Site Selection

Throughout the course of Georgia 4-H's long, abounding history, there have been countless programs offered to both youth and adults of all ages. Perhaps one of the most recognizable programs is the Georgia 4-H EE Program. Originating in 1979, the EE programs began at Rock Eagle 4-H Center, but over time extended to all the 4-H centers across the state (Walton et al., 2008). As of June 2016, the Georgia 4-H EE program has served over 1,112,000 participants since its inception (Georgia 4-H Environmental Education, 2016). Due to Rock Eagle being the birthplace of GA 4-H EE, the center was selected to host the participants for the first (in-person) focus group portion of the research study. The Rock Eagle 4-H Center is located in Eatonton, Georgia and is the

largest and most centrally located of all the centers. Because of its size and location, Rock Eagle is a host to many EE groups during training of the EE teaching staff. Therefore, the researcher and committee felt this location would be a great source of comfort and nostalgia for the participants.

Participant Selection

The targeted sample population for this research study was past GA4-H EE staff members who were five or more years removed from the program. This was done to ensure the researcher would get a good idea of each participant's workforce path post-program. Perspective participants and their personal contact information were gained through a key informant, Melanie Biersmith. At the time of this study, Melanie Biersmith served as the Associate State 4-H Leader: Facilities and Residential Programs. The researcher worked closely with Melanie to keep her informed about the study and gain her input on each aspect of it. Snowball sampling was used gain a pool of potential participants by reaching out to the center directors, then their contacts, then more contacts, and so on. Then initial contact with qualifying past environmental educators to inquire about their interest in participating in the study. The criterion for former GA 4-H environmental educators participating in this study was they had to have worked for the Georgia 4-H EE program five or more years ago. It was also highly encouraged that each of the five 4-H centers (Rock Eagle, Jekyll Island, Wahsega, Burton, and Fortson) were represented by at least one participant. Once any of the center coordinators or the state coordinator had viable volunteers, they provided the contact information (name and email address) to the researcher. Once perspective participants were identified and personal information was granted to the researcher, the sample was contacted via email (Appendix

D) with information and a request for participation in the research study. This took place after the study was granted approval from the University of Georgia Institutional Review Board (IRB ID: STUDY00005603) (Appendix A). No incentives were involved with the participation of this study.

Duration of Participation and Study Timeline

The first step for the focus group was to choose a date that best fit the schedules of all participants who agreed to be involved. A poll was constructed by the researcher and sent out via email. From this, the researcher selected a date that best fit the majority. The research study lasted approximately two hours for each participant. One hour was spent during the focus group session and the second hour made up the individual phone interview. The focus group was the initial part of the study and the individual phone interview took place approximately two weeks to one month following the focus group meeting. It was the researcher's initial goal to host one in-person focus group and follow that up with an individual phone interview two weeks after the focus group to gain more data. However, due to low attendance (two participants) during the first focus group, a second phone-facilitated focus group was planned in order to gain more participants and ensure data saturation. The researcher emailed all the original list given by the key informant, Melanie Biersmith, minus the two participants from the first focus group. Much like the first focus group, another poll was constructed and sent out to be able to identify which date and time worked best for a majority of the prospective participants. This was offered at-a-distance for this second group. In this focus group there was much better participation with seven in attendance. During each focus group, the moderator would ask a question and the group would take turns answering as they were comfortable

sharing. Some would answer off other's responses and elaborate more, some would state new content, and some would agree with others but add nothing new with their response. At the end of each focus group, the researcher would schedule the follow-up phone interview with each participant. During the phone interviews, the researcher posed the same questions as previously asked in the focus group with the exception of one pertaining to an artifact they were asked to share during the focus group session. Posing similar questions in the phone interviews as the original focus groups was recommended by the research committee. The rationale for this was to achieve greater, richer responses after a period of reflection post-focus group. Most of the previous environmental educators either answered that their original answers remained the same or would reiterate something similar to their previous answer.

Research Procedures

Instrument and Materials

All documents, including the consent form, initial and follow up contacts, focus group and phone interview guides (Appendix F and G) were considered and approved by the University of Georgia Institutional Review Board. IRB ID: STUDY00005603, *Understanding the Influence of the Georgia 4-H Environmental Education Employee Experience on Workforce Trajectory* was led by the original principal investigator (PI), Dr. Milton G. Newberry III, and co-principal investigator, Katlyn E. LaVelle (See Appendix A).

A guide for the focus group was originally developed based on the research question and sub questions. The focus group guide was used to create the guide for the phone interview. Only slight modifications were made to the focus group guide from the

phone interview guide in order to keep the questions the same but allow for a reflection period. These modifications included taking out the question about the participants' artifact they brought to the focus group as well as some changes to the language of the guide to be geared toward an over-the-phone interview rather than an in-person focus group. After speaking to the research committee as well as Melanie Biersmith and Diane Davies (Appendix E), some questions were modified to encourage the participants to provide as rich, in-depth responses as possible. Questions were strategically created in order to incite these rich responses. One question focused on having the participant talk about an artifact that each participant was asked to bring to the focus group. This artifact was something from the participants' past from their time with GA 4-H EE. This facet was thought of by the researcher's committee as a way to elicit stories and memories to add context to the study. Artifacts have the ability to evoke a story of its history within the viewer. This is all part of a bigger picture of the person's local world (Saldan & Omasta, 2017, p. 63).

Data Collection

Each participant eligible for the study was sent an initial email invitation recruiting participation into the study. Melanie Biersmith served as the key informant for this study. She was able to look through her annals to identify past environmental educators who were five or more years removed. She also contacted center directors at all five 4-H centers to ask that they reach out to past educators to enhance social exchange and encourage follow-through. Interested participants (25) agreed to have their contact information shared with the researcher for the study. From this, a list was generated and passed on to the researcher for use. After the initial invitation, those who agreed to

participate were placed onto a list of participants and removed from the list of potential participants for recruitment. Those who did not respond to the initial email received subsequently two more email invitations asking them to participate in the research. The fourth and final email consisted of information about the focus group (i.e., date, time, location, etc.) for those who had consented and agreed to participate. This procedure is an adaptation of Dillman's Tailored Design Method (TDM) for questionnaire invitations (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014).

The two-part hybrid research study took place at Rock Eagle 4-H Center and over the phone. Two focus groups were held due to lack of participation in the first; one in-person (two participants) and one at-a-distance (seven participants). At the commencement of the focus group a consent form was given to all participants. At the end of both focus groups, the researcher invited the focus group subjects to participate in a further individual telephone interview (eight of the nine participated). This was done to give the participants time to think of and add any information they felt they may have previously left out.

The focus group was recorded both in an audio and visual format. The follow-up telephone interview was solely recorded in an audio format. Once the focus group and interviews were completed, the researchers analyzed the data using content analysis from each interaction with the participants. The captured content in audio and visual format assisted the researcher in accurately analyzing the data.

Data Analysis

As suggested by Agar (1980), “it is important to read and reread the transcriptions in order to be immersed in the responses and details of the study” (p. 103). This was the

first step to analyze the data collected during both focus groups and the individual phone interviews. The data analysis plan for this qualitative study consisted of using data analysis methods as described by Creswell (2007). After the initial phase of reading and noting important information and quotes, the next steps were to describe, classify, and interpret the data. A process called coding “involves aggregating the text or visual data into small categories of information” (p. 184). This enabled the researcher to identify common themes among the subjects’ responses using a color-coding system. These themes were analyzed to see if any would fit into for larger categories. This process occurred for both focus groups and the phone interview. A special note was made by any new information provided from the phone interview that was not initially mentioned.

Researcher Subjectivity

Qualitative research is not supported by empirical data; therefore, whenever collecting and analyzing qualitative data it is essential to maintain checks and balances to ensure researcher subjectivity is as close to nonexistent as possible. Each researcher has their own biases and prior knowledge they are bringing to their research. I am no different. At a young age I gained my love for the outdoors by gardening with my grandfather. Those precious memories and lessons I gained from growing tomatoes, watermelons, squash, and so much more on hot, summer days made me into the individual I am today. My enjoyment for the outdoors only flourished when a 4-H agent visited my fifth-grade class.

Having grown up as a member of Georgia 4-H, I have had a lot of exposure to the program. I quickly learned through this youth development organization that I had an undeniable love for agriculture, youth and the outdoors. The summer following my senior

year of high school I served as a summer camp counselor through the Georgia 4-H program at the Rock Eagle 4-H Center. This position allowed me to learn from current Georgia 4-H environmental educators in order to deliver programming to fifth and sixth grade youth throughout the duration of the summer. I returned for several summers teaching curriculum regarding lake ecology, wildlife, and more. In 2014, following my summers spent at Rock Eagle 4-H Center, I served as an AmeriCorps Vista on Jekyll Island on behalf of Georgia 4-H delivering marine and coastal EE programming.

I chose to study EE because of the gap in research around this field. It is my hope to help educate others on how beneficial environment education is on the participants as well as the practitioners.

Effective instruction is a catalyst for learning, and I believe EE is an ideal median for effective instruction because of the abounding opportunity for experiential learning. Because of my long connection with EE and Georgia 4-H, certain measures were taken to maintain the integrity of the participants' responses as discussed in the Trustworthiness and Rigor section of this chapter.

Summary

This chapter presented the purpose and research questions, rationale for the research design, trustworthiness and rigor in the research design, research context, research procedures, and researcher subjectivity. Two focus groups (two people for the first and seven for the second) along with eight individual phone interviews made up this study. These participants were previous environmental educators who had served at least at one of the five 4-H centers in their E.E. careers. There was personal bias associated with the researcher as shared in the subjectivity statement, but research-recommended

protocol was followed to maintain the trustworthiness and rigor of the study. The following chapter will share the findings of this study.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This study set out to assess the value of working for the Georgia 4-H EE program from those who previously worked as environmental educators in Georgia. A hybrid research study was conducted where two semi-structured focus groups were used prior to individual follow-up phone interviews with former EE staff members. There were nine participants in total during the focus groups and eight for the phone interviews. All nine subjects were white; eight being female and one being male. The lack of diversity is due to a limited number of willing participants. One of the focus group participants was not able to join for a phone interview due to scheduling conflicts. These educators met the criterion set forth by the research committee that they must have served in the Georgia 4-H EE program five or more years ago. These participants had worked at four of the five 4-H centers across the state with the exception of Burton 4-H Center.

The objectives of this study were (1) to determine the workforce trajectory of past Georgia 4-H environmental educators, (2) to describe the motivating factors of workforce trajectory, and (3) to detect if working with the Georgia 4-H EE program has developmental impacts on adults' transferable work skills. These objectives helped to guide the study and were instrumental during the creation of the questions posed to the subjects. Results are presented under each of the respective research objectives. After the responses to each of the focus group and interview guide questions were transcribed and analyzed, themes were identified based on patterns in responses. Patterns were easily

identifiable by color coding the raw data. Discernible themes emerged recurrently under each research objective and are presented below. Pseudonyms are used to protect the identities of the research participants.

Research Objective 1: To determine the workforce trajectory of past Georgia 4-H environmental educators because of the positive experience with the Georgia 4-H

EE program

Table 1

Georgia 4-H EE Program Participants' Post-Program Career Endeavors: Past, Present, and Future

Participant:	Centers and Year(s) with GA 4-H EE:	Positions following working with the GA 4-H EE program:	Current Position:	Dream job or future career aspirations:
Eleanor	Jekyll, 2007-2008	grad school, PhD, postdoc positions, current position	Benedictine University assistant professor of Biology working with ectothermic vertebrates	Current position is dream job
Cora Lee	Wahsega, 2009	grad school, current position	physician's assistant	Hopes to go back to environmental education or at least volunteer
Kate	Rock Eagle, 2006 and Fortson, 2008-2011	grad school, taught high school, current position	director of education for a nature park in Greenville, South Carolina	Current position is dream job
Leo	Wahsega, Jekyll, Rock Eagle, 1998-2011	worked on railroad, construction, youth ministry, current position	camp manager at Pine Creek Camp (336-acre Methodist church camp) in Indiana	Current position is dream job

Katie Beth	Rock Eagle, 2005-2006	grad school, AmeriCorps member working in EE, current position	naturalist at Lee and Rose Warner Nature Center in St Croix, Minnesota	Current position is dream job
Hazel	Rock Eagle, 2007-2010	grad school, EE position, EE at Foss Valley YMCA, current position	weekend family and group coordinator for Foss Valley YMCA in New York	Current position is dream job
Lenore	Rock Eagle, 2009-2011	4-H agent, current position	City of Ocala in Ocala, Florida working with wastewater facilities and education	Unsure, but is thankful to be working in environmental education of some sort
Edna	Jekyll, 2004-2005, Rock Eagle, 2005-2007	4-H agent, grad school, teaching position, current position	High school teacher in Newnan, Georgia	Hopes to go back to environmental education upon retirement
Ella	Jekyll, 2006-2008	law school, current position	maritime lawyer in New York City	Run ships for someone

Table 1 above depicts the research subjects' 4-H centers during their employment and years of employment. It also describes their career path following their time with the Georgia 4-H EE program up to where they are currently and where they hope to be.

Theme 1 for Objective 1: Professional or Academic Work Following the Georgia 4-H EE Program

Each research participant had his or her own unique career path, but there were patterns that emerged amongst the data that led to some interesting findings. Two patterns emerged pertaining to their immediate position following the participants' time in the program.

Pattern 1. Georgia 4-H EE program to graduate/professional school-The researcher found that following their stint in the program, six of the nine participants went on to continue their education in either a graduate or professional (law school) program.

Pattern 2. Georgia 4-H EE program to employment related to education-Out of the remaining three, two worked with education in the capacity as an environmental educator at another facility or as a 4-H Agent.

The one outlier participant who did not go on to continue their education or go into education of some sort was Leo. His reasoning is given below:

I went from working at Rock Eagle to operating giant machinery for the railroad 12 hours away...When I left Rock Eagle my mother had been diagnosed with cancer, and at the time we didn't know if we were gonna have her much longer, and so that was the railroad thing. Fortunately, Mom is still with us, still kicking... and so since then I worked for the railroad for six months... I was a small business owner. I was a construction contractor kind of, and then I got into ministry and did youth ministry for three and a half years and worked with young people and that led me to this job. Somebody at my church said, "Hey! I know a campy kind of guy."

However, manual labor in the outdoors and working on large projects was something Leo was used to thanks to his time with Georgia 4-H EE.

Research Objective 2: to describe the motivating factors of workforce trajectory

The majority of the research participants are still affiliated with education in some way at the time of this study. Based on the finding of this study, it can be inferred that many of the motivating factors for continuing in an education-related field stemmed from their early involvement in EE through Georgia 4-H. This could be seen in a few patterns throughout their responses. In order to get a holistic understanding of their workforce paths, the researcher first looked at what led them to the Georgia 4-H EE program initially the what elements of the EE employment experience influenced their time.

Theme 1 for Objective 2: introduction to the Georgia 4-H EE program

When asked what factors influenced them to work for the program initially, some of the participants communicated that they had begun working for the program because of a suggestion from a friend or mentor, because of the location of the centers, and others were simply seeking new employment.

Suggestion of a Friend/Mentor

Kate: I got into it from my friend, Connor, that was working at Rock Eagle. I was doing seasonal wildlife biology work and I didn't have a job and she was like "Ah, it's fun. Come on." And I was like "Oh. Teaching. Okay." But obviously it worked out very well for me.

Katie Beth: I went to the University of Georgia and I had a double major in English and Ecology and my senior year my English mentor said to me "Katie Beth, don't go to do more school. I really think that you should do something different. Just go do something

different." And my entire career at Georgia, every professor, every one of my peers said with my majors they were like "Are you going to teach?" And I thought "No. Why would I do that?" And so I ended up at Rock Eagle teaching EE and I've been in the field now for thirteen years so it's pretty crazy. And my something different just kept being something different every day that I go to work. And I still haven't gone back to school So, thanks English mentor, I guess.

Simply Seeking New Employment

Hazel: Yeah, I was teaching environmental ed before Rock Eagle in California and we had to teach, we had to work 22 and a half hours a day. We had an hour and a half off a day. We lived in a cabin with kids. We talked with them, we ate meals with them, and we were looking to, my husband and I at the time, we were dating at the time, we were looking for a new place to go and when we interviewed for Rock Eagle, Donna Stewart just sold us. She really sold us on the place and we loved the idea of being on a big lake and we didn't really know much else except it was across the country and that she'd take both of us and she pretended to know that we weren't a couple even though we were a couple. So, it kind of worked out. It was no secret. We were engaged within the first year we were at Rock Eagle, but it was kind of cool that she let us

live together, and really, she was incredibly sweet. She was the best interview that I think we had, and we were sold.

Lenore: Mine's kind of lame. Rock Eagle's the only place that hired me after I graduated from college...Hey, I did work EE after college in like the summer months before, at Hackensack, Minnesota ...

Edna: I don't remember. It was a long time ago. I had finished with my master's up in New York in Environmental Education and then I decided to go live in Scotland for six months after that and then I guess I was looking for job, what I was going to do when I got back from Scotland. I don't remember. I remember having to find a friend with a phone that dial long distance across ... 30 minutes away, a 30-minute walk from my flat in Edinburgh and talking to Melanie Biersmith and she hired me for Jekyll.

Location of the Center(s)

Ella: I was looking for a break between law school and I had some ... I used to go to Jekyll every summer growing so I wanted to live there, and I found the posting online and called Richard and interviewed with Richard the next day and had the job, so it was awesome.

Leo: I just wanted to get out of the flat area of Indiana so when I saw a job available in the mountains of Georgia, little did I know the ride I was taking.

Theme 2 for Objective 2: Sense of community within the centers

A unique quality about Georgia 4-H EE is that most educators live on center and share housing during their season of work. This was mentioned by seven of the nine subjects. All looked fondly at their time living and working at whichever center with which they were employed. Despite the hard work and strenuous tasks, the educators spoke very fondly of their experience and discussed that living near or together was beneficial. Eleanor mentioned:

The incredible and lifelong bonds I have with all those people even though I don't see them regularly, was so unique, and you don't get that in a lot of other jobs. Living 24/7 with these folks and figuring out how to teach in a creative way, you have to take into consideration the environmental changes or if there's a huge storm coming, we're obviously not gonna do beach class, and so you're kind of faced with all these challenges that you have to come up with and a lot of the time it's the group work to figure out some kind of creative solutions to that.

The staff members' proximity to one another and collaborative experiences provided a common positive impact that bonded the educators closer together. Cora Lee expressed,

"the staff being kind of your family and the bonds with your coworkers." She also stated, "because you're in a cabin... there was not really a lot of alone time, which I think is great, but it's so different than any other career or job I think most of us had ever had." Another example was given by Lenore, "I think the level community in Rock Eagle was phenomenal like and just like house hopping, like "Who's making food tonight?"

The location of the centers themselves play a big role in the impact of the experience on the educators with not just their co-workers, but the environment combined with their co-workers. Eleanor recounted:

At Jekyll, I know that it's improved a whole lot since I've been there, and it was one of those little bit kind of bare bones, and run down and all those things were these unique challenges that we had to face as instructors. And so the incredible and lifelong bonds I have with all those people even though I don't see them regularly, was so unique, and you don't get that in a lot of other jobs. Living 24/7 with these folks and figuring out how to teach in a creative way, you have to take into consideration the environmental changes or if there's a huge storm coming, we're obviously not gonna do beach class, and so you're kind of faced with all these challenges that you have to come up with and a lot of the time it's the group work to figure out some kind of creative solutions to that. And the resources that we had or didn't have there were bonding experiences, I think. And then the staff were all like family and so that was another aspect of it. So not just the other teachers but the director and the assistant directors, the cooks, everyone there was, kind of see them as all family.

Some of the participants initially were interested in the job purely due to the location of the center. Cora Lee felt this way, saying, "I just came across the 4-H programs in Georgia and I loved the wilderness of Wahsega, I loved all the hiking and the outdoors like just being in the mountains." Another example of this place attachment was stated by Ella, "I was looking for a break between law school and I had some ... I used to go to

Jekyll every summer growing up, so I wanted to live there, and I found the posting online.”

Theme 3 for Objective 2: Excitement for teaching youth after taking the position

Georgia 4-H environmental educators have the ability to work with youth k-12 and from primarily all over Georgia. Therefore, they get the chance to make a significant impact through hands-on learning in ecologically unique, nontraditional settings. For many, this is their first exposure to teaching and EE and not either are a deciding factor when applying for the position. In fact, only one participant stated they were influenced to work for the program because of wanting to work with youth or gain experience in teaching. However, once they began the program a response pattern about working with diverse youth of all ages and stages and teaching was seen repeatedly on numerous questions in regard to parts they enjoyed about their time in the program. Ella, a maritime lawyer, told the researcher, “I really loved teaching kids.” She later went on to reflect on a meaningful time with her students:

I loved, loved, loved the fact that I would teach, and the kids would just be so, I mean not always obviously, but so interested and like I remember vividly like taking kids from like inner city Atlanta on to the beach ecology class and they had never seen the ocean before. And there's nothing better than that.

Eleanor, the assistant professor, spoke about working with diverse youth when asked about acquired skills:

Learning how to interact with a lot of different age students from a lot of different places was I think a really important skill that I, you know I'm teaching at a school now that is very diverse, and where I went to undergrad I would say not as

diverse, so it did kind of expose me to a lot of students from different backgrounds and I think it set me up well for doing that in the future.

Because of the nature of the job, the EE staff members are different from a “typical” formal educator who the students are used to. Environmental educators teach the students about the environment around them. Classes are taught in interactive labs and outdoor settings. The educators interviewed in this study also gained many skills on how to be more engaging and efficient teachers. Kate, an education director for a nature park, claimed, “throwing out some silly game or something to get the kids... But to get the kid's attention and to kind of bring them back in and settle them down all at the same time and did a lot of that.” This experience made a difference in how the individuals work with youth. Edna, a high school teacher, explained:

I think I get to know my students more than other teachers. I think I have a closer relationship with my students, I think that's something that I gained from a time where you're walking through the woods with them, just chatting with the kids, and I have a lot of kids every day that just come up and hug me that I don't even teach. I think it has to do with the fact that I learned how to get to know them on a personal level from spending that time with kids at the 4-H program.

These early educational experiences provided study participants with a passion for working with youth, specifically in EE. Eleanor, an assistant professor of biology, exclaimed, “I think one of the reasons that I chose this path was because of how I was opened up to teaching essentially with the 4-H center.” As stated, of the nine individuals, seven are still working within education of youth in some capacity with only two working outside of education. Eight of these individuals stated that they are either in their dream

job within EE or their dream job/future career aspirations are in EE. The sole outlier was the maritime lawyer.

Theme 4 for Objective 2: Training and ownership over the curriculum being taught

Another common theme related to the intense training received by the educators and their ability to partake in the instructional design of the program to better meet the needs of their students and utilize their resources/environments. Katie Beth shared:

I'm so grateful for that really great training that I got. I think back all the time on things that I did during that one year at Rock Eagle and how much I was able to grow in just my short time there.

As Leo expressed, "I barely passed English and I wrote entire curriculums, I learned to type. I think about the curriculum stuff a lot." Hazel shared a similar sentiment as Leo about instructional design stating:

The curriculum. I mean, you think to yourself, you teach you know herpetology three times in one week, you might get better at it, and you do get better at it, but you know, it doesn't become repetitive because you just keep adding more information in there. You just keep making it better and better every single time. You know, I could do this job for three years and I never got sick of it because it just "Oh, what can I do to make it better?"

Theme 5 for Objective 2: Passion and Profound Appreciation

Initially, only one of the research participants was specifically seeking EE work, Hazel. However, it was found that no matter how they were introduced to the Georgia 4-H EE program most found a passion and profound appreciation through their experience that impacted their career paths greatly. Objective 2 set out to find what these motivating

factors were. When asked questions such as What was unique about working at with Georgia 4-H EE compared to other jobs you've had? or If you were in a job interview and you had to explain your time as a Georgia 4-H environmental educator, what would you say? the themes that were present in their responses were the community within the centers, the experience of working with diverse youth of all ages and stages, and the training and curriculum. Seven of the nine participants were still working in traditional and nontraditional educational settings such as a school, nature center, camp, nature park, and county water office. Eleanor, an assistant professor of biology said, "I would say I have no idea what I'd be doing if I didn't do 4-H [EE program], maybe I'd still be doing the same thing or maybe I would've gone more of the path of the career biologist." Of the six subjects still involved in EE, they all stated that they are in their dream job. When asked, "Where do you hope your career will lead?" The science teacher, Edna, stated, "Ideally, get to go back to EE. It might not be until retirement, though." Additionally, Cora Lee, a physician's assistant, also stated, "I would actually, you know, welcome the opportunity to get back into maybe some more outdoor activities or ...kind of some more maybe volunteer stuff that directly relates to EE." This only left one subject that did not mention EE in their current or future plans.

Research Objective 3: to detect if working with the Georgia 4-H EE program has developmental impacts on adults' transferable work skills

In order to discuss the impact of this study we must first discuss what skills the participants utilize in the positions they obtained following their experience as a 4-H environmental educator in Georgia. Questions such as: If you were in a job interview and you had to explain your time as a Georgia 4-H environmental educator, what would you

say? Close your eyes and think back to the time when you spent your workdays outdoors with youth as an environmental educator. What skills or tools, if any, do you attribute back to the time you were employed in the Georgia 4-H EE program? And, in your current position, what do you believe your supervisor sees in you that ties back to the EE program? Participants shared the following thoughts in response to these kinds of questions:

Theme 1 for Objective 3: Balancing roles efficiently

When asked about what was unique about working with the Georgia 4-H EE program, Katie Beth answered, “now I realize that is the life of an environmental educator, of being flexible and expecting the unexpected.”

Additionally, Lenore stated, “I think working at Rock Eagle taught me to wear many hats and be efficient at each of them as I'm wearing them.”

Edna also said that a valuable skill she obtained during here time with the program was:

Being able to change on the spot, so being really flexible and adaptable. That is a definite skill I learned that the thing you have planned so carefully on, it's not working, being able to come up with something else on the fly.

Theme 2 for Objective 3: accumulation of teaching skills and experience

A common theme that emerged was that participants gained invaluable teaching skills through EE. Some of these skills included experiential learning methods, differentiated teaching methods, understanding of student behavior, classroom management practices, and utilizing atypical classroom settings. Edna stated:

I would mention that it was hands on, hands on teaching and learning environment, and I would also point out how one thing that sets me apart from

other teachers is because of my time in environmental education is that I understand that learning can get very active and very loud, and that for me, it's this really exciting time. And it looks different than other teacher's classes because their classes tend to be more orderly, I guess, and quiet, and my classes tend to be more rambunctious and excited. That to me is what learning looks like, because of my time in environmental education.

Cora Lee:

Kind of working through the other social things that come out, teaching students during overnight trips versus just a day trip or just to a museum or things like that, if they're out of their cabin in the middle of the night, or if they get homesick or things like that. You're not exposed to that in normal classroom settings so just how to do that classroom management outside of the normal basic classroom management.

Lenore:

I think that that covers a lot as well. I'm sure we were taught how to teach and how to use the outside environment as your classroom, a lot of those skills came as you were doing it. I actually would sit in on EE and a lot of other classes that the other staff taught for that reason, to learn from them as well.

Theme 3 for Objective 3: Public Speaking/Communication Skills

A side effect of teaching EE is practicing public speaking. Being able to get a lesson across in such unique settings with students of various ages and backgrounds can be challenging, but the following statement given by Cora Lee and Ella speak to how their communication skills were honed through Georgia 4-H EE.

Cora Lee:

So definitely problem solving I think was a major one, and kind of developing social skills with a wide age range because you're in close communication with the parents that come and the educators, and I think at first for me it was a little intimidating because I didn't have a teaching background, so it was a lot of studying up front.

Ella:

When I was interviewing for jobs, I was interviewing with lawyers and most of them are super lame and didn't even ask about my environmental ed experience, all they wanted to see was my grades. But the ones that did, usually they would ask what did you learn that would be valuable on the job here and I definitely think that learning how to speak in front of large groups of people, even if they're kids, we had chaperones too.

Cora Lee:

Let's see, I did want to add probably public speaking or speaking in front of like different age groups has definitely strengthened from then. But I do think that a lot of ... my ability to have conversations and patient education aspect now, I can definitely attribute that back. So just being comfortable speaking in front of both like one on one with students and kind of larger audiences. Then probably just my background in environmental science in general. So like tree ecology, animal care, geology. Pretty much all of the courses that we taught, definitely a lot more hands on information or how to relate book information to the students.

Ella:

But like having to do sea turtle class three times a week, and having the lecture hall filled with like 80 kids, and kinda making a fool of yourself to get the kids interested really, really, helps be able to talk to a room of 20 old people who don't really care what you're saying, you don't even have to get their attention cause they're used to boring information, but this really helps with public speaking skills, and making anything interesting. Because everybody likes to be taught at a kid level. People don't wanna have to think hard when you're presenting new information...

Theme 4 for Objective 3: Working with others/teamwork

In the Georgia 4-H EE program, educators work and live on the centers' grounds at all five centers. During this study, this has emerged as a vital aspect of the success of the program. Teamwork and overall cooperation skills were obtained by the past educators because of not only teamwork courses taught by these staffers to the visiting students, but also because of this distinctive community setting within each center's EE staff and the Georgia 4-H EE program as a whole.

Lenore:

So, I mean in terms of what I gained from it, I think learning how to troubleshoot and to work with people with different opinions in really close quarters and solve a lot of the issues that come up in 4-H centers... We always had to work through those because you know you would see those people essentially 24/7, right? And we only had 11 teachers, and I think I learned the most in that position. It's taken

me really far in where I am now because I'm, again, working close with faculty, I'm actually in my office right now. And we all have our offices really close, we're all really uniquely bonded here as well at my university, and I think I search for a position like that because of the connections I founded at the Jekyll 4-H so I knew how important relationships with staff are, so that was my number one thing I looked for looking at jobs to move forward.

Hazel:

I would say sequencing a class is huge and you learn so well how to do by teaching those same classes over and over again. You get really, really, good at knowing what to go next and how to make that lesson go even better the next time and team building is huge. My team building skills went through the roof because of all my time teaching team building a knowing the course and how initiatives work, I use those skills to this day, and those are the skills I teach my staff is how to run a good team building class.

Theme 5 for Objective 3: Problem solving skills

EE staff are often called to be adaptive and efficient. Being able to problem-solve is a skill that can be transferable to many career endeavors outside of EE and camp settings.

Lenore and Cora Lee recall how they gained this skillset during their time in EE.

Lenore:

So, I mean in terms of what I gained from it, I think learning how to troubleshoot and to work with people with different opinions in really close quarters and solve a lot of the issues that come up in 4-H centers. So, it could be disciplinary issues,

it could be weather related issues, it could be equipment related issues, or personality issues.

Cora Lee:

Let's see, same answer because I think we were talking about the cohesiveness of our cohort and how well we got together, got along as employees and how kind of a tight knit community the 4-H center was, which is very different than previous jobs or any actually future jobs after that. I would also add to that probably the onsite training. We had a lot of very in-depth onsite training. So, for some of the things that we were teaching, like I don't know, we had a big section on pioneer life, astronomy where I would say none of our cohort really knew too much about in detail. It was nice to have that intensive, I want to say it was like a three or four-day training session just on the things we were educating our students on. Which I thought was really nice.

Theme 6 for Objective 3: Miscellaneous-community outreach

Each center in Georgia 4-H has its own set of resource within the center itself, the community the center it part of, and the environmental ecosystem(s) that surround the center. Leo speaks below to how his community outreach skills were gained while working in EE.

Leo:

We had pieces of equipment at Rock Eagle that were worth, in their current condition, more than my entire yearly budget. So, I went from having what I thought was the best of the best, even though Rock Eagle was absolutely not, now that I've been out into the world. But to nothing and it was really my time at

Wahsega and my time at Jekyll that we made it work no matter what we had. And I made the joke about the turtle shells earlier, but on Jekyll especially, we made friends with shrimpers, we got bycatch, we let them see our aquariums so that we would have cool fish, we really tried to tap into the community, and that ... I couldn't exist here without that. I'm fifteen minutes from where I grew up, and I am constantly developing relationships. In fact, we started this meeting, there was a guy on a full-size road grater, doing our lane. And I won't even tell you how long I've been working on him. And I won't even tell you how much trouble he can get into, but we have a smooth driveway now. And so, just learning how to get something done with nothing, that was something that ... Donna and I would joke about this, but she used to call me the project manager because I would get overwhelmed with whatever it was I was supposed to be doing, and I would come into her desk with the 30,000 ideas she had given me these last two weeks, and I'd say, "Okay, pick ten that I'm supposed to focus on." And she would pick ten, and we would work on those for a while. And so that was a big thing, is learning just resources and how to play around with them. 'Cause in ministry, we don't do money.

Artifacts

Each participant was asked to bring an artifact to the focus group meeting to share with the group. This component of the study was recommended to the researcher by the research committee during the initial research proposal meeting and was added in following the suggestion and further research of visual data. Surprisingly, some participants chose to share multiple artifacts. This visual data fragment of the research

study was designed and added to the overall study in hopes of obtaining more detailed, richer data than gained solely from the questions asked during the focus groups and individual interviews. Using Saldana and Omasta's information on latent and manifest content, the researcher was able to identify two themes emerged during the sharing of the artifacts (2017).

Theme 1 for Artifacts: Artifact(s) that held value pertaining to teaching EE and students

Leo: I was up in the area four team building course that we have not put completely together yet, and we were talking about putting ... I think at the time, it was gonna be a maze or something, and we were talking about having to put staples in trees and were kinda laying it out, and I can't even tell you, honestly, who I else was there but there was a pine tree that had fallen over, and as I was walking I kinda kicked it and it was rotten, and of course I reached down and this staple was in that pine tree. So clearly, there had been something in that spot long enough ago to rot this tree and here I was, in that spot, looking to put a staple in another tree to do something else.

I've kept that around and I actually use this as my totem during summer, so during meals, the kids get to pick a totem and they put up the chair and you sit by the kids that pick you. And whenever they ask me about, I tell them because you never know where you're gonna be and who's there before you, and one thing I'm big

on out here is, I try to do my job for the person who comes after me. Whether that be that be one of my fellow staff members, or so on and so forth. I try to do it such that it's easier on you, and you, and you, and you, and so on and so forth. And I always think of this person, like I have no idea who that was. It could have been Rick, we don't even know, you know? But whoever it was, I appreciate them, and I appreciate the fact that they were there, and I'll take it from here and do what we gotta do.



Figure 1. Tree staple that serves as Leo's artifact.

Hazel: I couldn't decide what to bring. I had a few things. So, I couldn't find it, I was trying to find ... I actually stole something. I put

together like Rock Eagle packet these things my last year. I spent all year doing this project. So, when I was like told to leave, I took a packet with me. I kinda stole it. But I can't find it. I literally tore my house apart. I swore I had it...

Lenore: I have milky quartz covered in clay. I have a whole bag of milky quartz covered in clay. Why? Because you never know when you wanna show some tribal luminescence, you know? You never know.

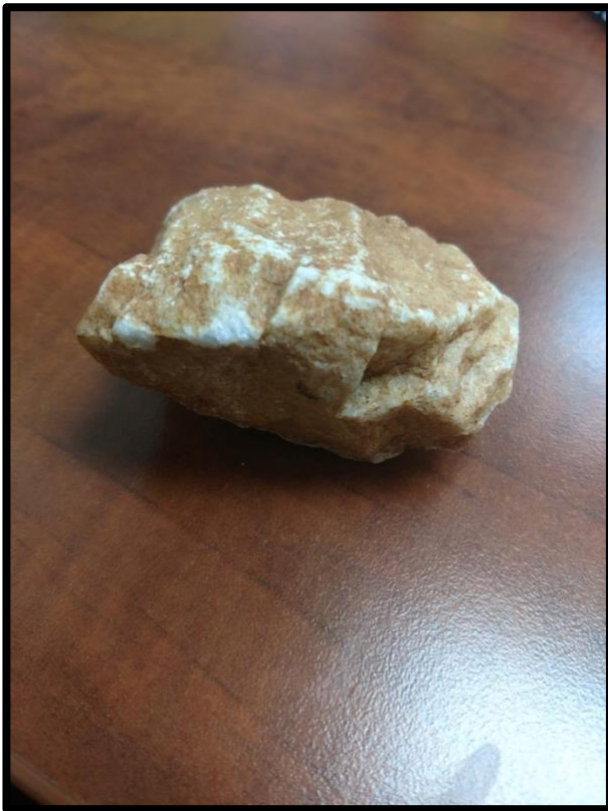


Figure 2. Milky quartz used as Lenore's artifact.

Ella: Okay, so mine are when I first started learning the curriculum at Jekyll, I made these little one-page sheets with all the information because I was so scared, I was gonna forget stuff. And I kept them

because I'm a real big dork, and I like to refer back to them because I'm always afraid I'm gonna lose everything that I learned at Jekyll. And then when my baby is old enough to go to the beach and not remember all this stuff, so I have my beach ecology sheet...And I made these. This is forest ecology...And then I have the marsh class. And I have north end with the tree. My worst class. And I have a night walk, which was stupid because like you could see this at nighttime. And I vividly remember making them. I would go to the north end where there was this little ... if you remember there was like a bike path that went through the marsh and there was a little bridge, and we needed crabs to go to touch tank. So, I would go crabbing, this was before the kids came. I would go crabbing from there after work at like 5 pm. And I would draw those and make those while I was trying to get crabs for the touch tank. And it was just fun. I loved that time and it was awesome.

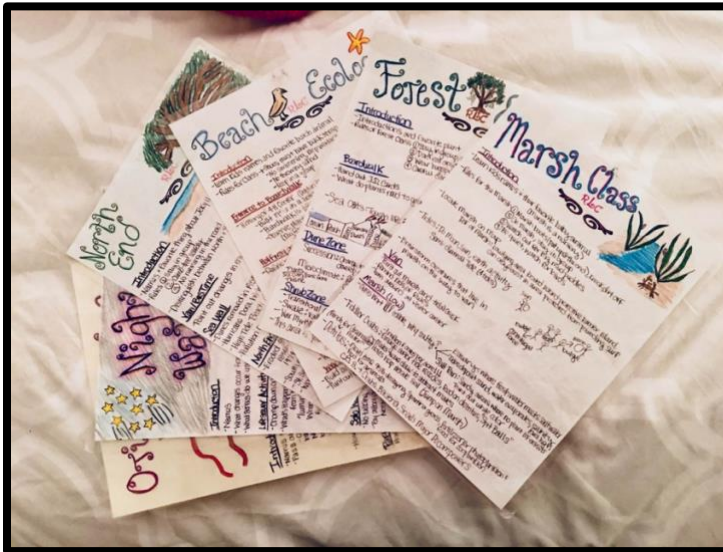


Figure 3. Information sheets used as Ella's artifacts.

Theme 2 for Artifacts: Artifact(s) that held value pertaining to the EE community

Eleanor: So, I don't know if... Biersmith, she was the director at Jekyll but she, I think after went maybe to Wahsega, I mean she's just been in the 4-H Jekyll Island program for a while. I didn't keep too many mementos other than shells and stuff, but I have a lot of pictures, but this was one thing that I think kinda sums up the bond that we had not only with the staff but also with the directors, we all made T-shirts and puffy painted them for Melanie's [Biersmith] birthday and then just all wore them to work in the morning for her birthday, and... It was one of those, like I couldn't throw away that T-shirt. Obviously, I don't wear it normally in regular, every day events, but it's one of those things that I'll keep forever for that reason because it just shows how close we were, and she loved it, we got a picture with her and it also does highlight our extreme

fascination with puffy paint. We decorated a lot of stuff with puffy paints. So, this is my artifact that kind of sums up the time with and the unique connection that I had with faculty and staff.

Cora Lee: So, I thought that I had saved my car keys. But my car keys I think actually count as my artifact, because of how many places I think of where my coworkers traveled during that time we were at Wahsega. I thought the great benefit of being an employee there was you could stay at each of the other 4-H centers for the weekends, so we visited Rock Eagle, we visited Jekyll, and because most of us weren't from Georgia so we did all of the Athens and Atlanta and all that stuff, so I actually still have them somewhere, my Ford Explorer keys that are no longer. I just couldn't get rid of them because of so many memories. We probably squeezed more people than should have been into the car, but when you have to take up the rocky roads from Wahsega, or then it's raining and then it turns into a mudslide, I just couldn't throw them away. Because even just going to Wal-Mart or going to get a beer after work or something like that, every time I think of that I think of all our awesome times together that we squeezed six people in a four-person SUV.

Kate: So, this was spring of 2006 and it was epic and euphoric. I don't think anybody ever got mad at anybody. I'm really not sure why it was so magical. But Teddy made a song called "Welcome to the

Palace." He was our resident advisor ... I don't know how do you describe that? ... Yes. Yeah so, the palace, it had its special room with a tent and everything and we would go and sit in it and ... There were a lot of drinks had in the palace... Yeah. Kool-Aid only. Ever. And so, Donna being the awesome person that she is picked up on our theme and made us a special shirt for that season and this is that special shirt. And I was probably in the best shape I've been in, in a long time when I was at Rock Eagle and then at Fortson too. But I put on a little bit of weight, so I couldn't wear it anymore. And then when I was at Fortson-We did tie-dying for summer camp, and I was like I'm just gonna mix this shirt up a little bit and see how it goes, and so I tie-dyed it. So that's now why it's tie-dyed. So, there's a little bit of both of my places in the one story here. And I'm going to be really cheesy and say that Edna is my other artifact, because she's still my friend after all of these years. We still do camping trips and see each other, and I kept her around because I love her, and I wish I could see more of her. But she was part of the palace as well.



Figure 4. T-shirt that serves as Kate's artifact.

Hazel: I couldn't decide what to bring. I had a few things... So, this hangs on my wall all the time. It's a picture of a few Rock Eagle things. Halle put it together, I won it in one of my white elephant parties. I love it. It has the effigy, it has Casper, and Digger, and one of the owls, I'm sorry, I don't know which one. So, it still hangs in my house, I love it. I also have my favorite snake, Pinky, painted this. It is really special cause Pinky was my favorite. Alex has one that Winston made. I didn't bring that, but he has one too... Yeah, he has Winston, I have Pinky. They hang on the wall... Yeah, this stuff hangs in my house... I have a shirt too ... a Donna Stewart shirt. Things I learned at the rock. It's pretty fantastic... But the final thing that's also in my house is really important. When we left Rock Eagle, it was really hard for us. We were there for three years. It was really hard to leave. We didn't wanna leave. But we had to go. And 2201 gifted us these that he made himself. A spoon

and a knife that he made himself. And they're really, really, special to me. And so, these also are in my house on display all the time. And they mean a lot to us. So, I really appreciate that.



Figure 5. Spoon and knife made by Leo used as one of Hazel's artifacts.

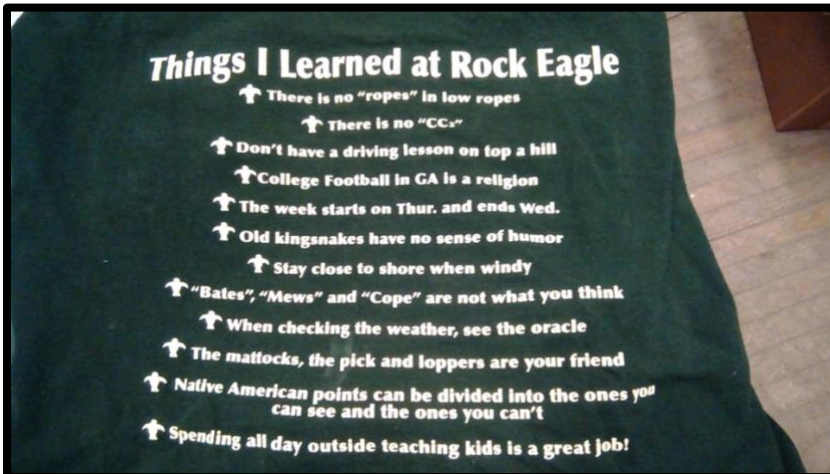


Figure 6. T-shirt used as one of Hazel's artifacts.



Figure 7. Frame used as one of Hazel's artifacts.



Figure 8. Frame used as one of Hazel's artifacts.

Katie Beth: I think I still have a lot of things from Rock Eagle around my house, but when I saw this question from you, I immediately went to one of my many still left-over shirts. I think I have about four left and I still wear these shirts. Part of my job now, are cleaning these big, huge, fish tanks, something I did not do at Rock Eagle, so every two weeks, whichever one is clean at work, I put on. I change my outfit at work, I put on my Rock Eagle t-shirt, I go

downstairs and get really smelly and wet. I bring them home and I wash them, they have holes in the arm pits, they're stained. Gross, but I still have them, and I have all kinds of other pictures and wonderful things that are still with me. But this is with me still in my job.

And since Kate put a person as an artifact, I'm gonna claim..., who I was lucky enough that when I moved to Minnesota in 2006, he moved back to Wisconsin to Bayfield, and her journey took her to different places, but I was so lucky. She was here in St. Paul with me for, I don't know how many years. And she moved to Iceland last summer for two years to go to grad school, and I cried, and Olsen said "Katie Beth, get out of here. I have no time for you", cause you know. And I really miss her, but definitely holding on to those people as artifacts. And people that we still get to have close relationships with even though we're not still in Georgia too, so.

Lenore: I have the little frame and drawings that Leo's daughters made for me when I left, which is really sweet. I have those, and I have one of the bookmarks we made from the snake paintings. One of the more arrogant things that I have is I photocopied all of the good evals that I got from Rock Eagle. And I keep them in a folder, and I read them sometimes. Makes you feel better about yourself.

Edna: Oh, me! Sorry. I have many, many, many seashells from Jekyll all over the house, but you're never gonna believe this, but here's one

of my artifacts. Still have them. And here's another one. I can't wear these anymore, they don't fit, but I'll never throw them away cause they're ... well, for one, they have our names on them. And it was just a great thing that Donna would do for us. And I really appreciate that she would just memorial, that word, she would do this-have this little memory for us at the end of every season. It was really special.



Figure 9. T-shirts used as Edna's artifacts.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion

The impact of EE is often measured in terms of the learner/student and less on the educator themselves. In an effort to better understand the influence of working in an EE setting, this research study was created. The purpose of the study was to assess the value of working for the Georgia 4-H EE program in terms of career outcomes later in life. The two-fold objective of the study was to determine the workforce trajectory of past Georgia 4-H environmental educators and to detect if working with the Georgia 4-H EE program has developmental impacts on adults' transferable work skills. During an interview with Melanie Biersmith stated, "Anecdotally we have been able to attribute quite a bit of success back to people's time in the program, but we don't have any formal way to document that" (M. Biersmith, personal communication, November 28, 2017). With the assistance of the Georgia 4-H EE program, a research study and findings were able to be achieved as laid out in the previous chapters. The overarching research question and sub questions were as follows: How does working as an environmental educator influence the future workforce trajectory of past educators?

Sub Questions:

1. What transferable skills are obtained through employment in the Georgia 4-H EE program?

2. What type of experiences during the Georgia 4-H EE tenure helped educators develop the transferable skills?
3. Where do former GA 4-H EE staff enter into the workforce after their tenure with the EE centers?
4. What position are prior educators holding now?
5. In what capacity do former GA 4-H environmental educators apply the transferable skills acquired?

Chapter 5 will summarize the key findings of this study and their implications, as well as propose recommendations for future studies and practice.

Objective 1. To determine the workforce trajectory of past Georgia 4-H environmental educators

The researcher set out to better understand if working for the Georgia 4-H EE program had any influence on the participants' career choices and workforce-related skills. In order to answer this question. The first objective in this study was to determine what the workforce trajectory of the participants has been since exiting the program all the way to present date. Table 2 below shows the past and current workplace experiences of study participants.

Table 2

Georgia 4-H EE Program Participants' Post-Program Career Endeavors: Immediately Following the Program and Current Position

Participant:	Positions following working with the GA 4-H EE program:	Current Position:
Eleanor	grad school, PhD, postdoc positions, current position	Benedictine University assistant professor of Biology working with ectothermic vertebrates
Cora Lee	grad school, current position	physician's assistant

Kate	grad school, taught high school, current position	director of education for a nature park in Greenville, South Carolina
Leo	worked on railroad, construction, youth ministry, current position	camp manager at Pine Creek Camp (336-acre Methodist church camp) in Indiana
Katie Beth	grad school, AmeriCorps member working in EE, current position	naturalist at Lee and Rose Warner Nature Center in St Croix, Minnesota
Hazel	grad school, EE position, EE at Foss Valley YMCA, current position	weekend family and group coordinator for Foss Valley YMCA in New York
Lenore	4-H agent, current position	City of Ocala in Ocala, Florida working with wastewater facilities and education
Edna	4-H agent, grad school, teaching position, current position	High school teacher in Newnan, Georgia
Ella	law school, current position	maritime lawyer in New York City

Objective 2. To describe the motivating factors of workforce trajectory.

In order to better understand this objective, research regarding two possible theories were studied and explored; Sense of Place and Significant Life Experience. As stated in chapter 2, “Sense of place can be conceived as a multidimensional construct Representing beliefs, emotions, and behavioral commitments concerning a particular geographic setting” (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2006). This theory was applicable to the study because the researcher felt this theory might impact the participants in such a way that they might continue to chase the sense of place they felt at their respected work

site(s) while in the program. Sense of Place Theory was used to study how even a short time spent in the EE program could affect the outcome of their future career choices and their workforce-related skills.

Katie Beth shared:

I'm so grateful for that really great training that I got. I think back all the time on things that I did during that one year at Rock Eagle and how much I was able to grow in just my short time there.

Most of the participants only spent 2 or 3 years in the program except Leo who spent 13 years and served in leadership roles at various centers. Nearly 88% of the participants have continued to work in similar areas of the workforce as EE. One of the most prominent themes that emerged during the focus group and individual phone interview was the sense of community within the center that was felt among the group. From teaching together to cooking dinners together, the educators spent a great deal of time with their peers. This was seen as an enjoyable characteristic of the program by the participants. Multiple participants also mentioned the location of the centers themselves as having a significant impact.

Eleanor recounted:

At Jekyll, I know that it's improved a whole lot since I've been there, and it was one of those little bit kind of bare bones, and run down and all those things were these unique challenges that we had to face as instructors. And so, the incredible and lifelong bonds I have with all those people even though I don't see them regularly, was so unique, and you don't get that in a lot of other jobs. Living 24/7 with these folks and figuring out how to teach in a creative way, you have to take

into consideration the environmental changes or if there's a huge storm coming, we're obviously not gonna do beach class, and so you're kind of faced with all these challenges that you have to come up with and a lot of the time it's the group work to figure out some kind of creative solutions to that. And the resources that we had or didn't have there were bonding experiences, I think. And then the staff were all like family and so that was another aspect of it. So not just the other teachers but the director and the assistant directors, the cooks, everyone there was, kind of see them as all family.

Some of the participants initially were interested in the job purely due to the location of the center. Cora Lee felt this way, saying, "I just came across the 4-H programs in Georgia and I loved the wilderness of Wahsega, I loved all the hiking and the outdoors like just being in the mountains." Another example of this place attachment was stated by Ella, "I was looking for a break between law school and I had some ... I used to go to Jekyll every summer growing up, so I wanted to live there, and I found the posting online." For these educators, some fundamental piece of these centers impacted them greatly. Further research should be conducted to determine all the primary causes for this sense of place. From the researcher's finding in this study, the reason for such a strong sense of place was due to the unique community Georgia 4-H builds for EE staffers.

Looking back at Chawla's Significant Life Experience research, she found that recurring answers as to why people chose environmental-related career paths were positive experiences in natural areas, adult role models, environmental organizations, education, negative experiences of environmental degradation, books and other media, and on-the-job experience" (1998, p. 369). This could absolutely explain what has

happened to the participants of this study and why their post-GA 4-H EE program career choices have been so similar. Generally, these participants had a very positive experience in the program that has helped perpetuate the significance of the life experience. Themes such as the sense of community, teaching diverse youth, and the fantastic training and curriculum provided to the educators can all weigh into their time in the program being such a significant life experience. More research should be conducted to determine if the participants have any other significant life experiences that led them to work in the Georgia 4-H EE program or if they can describe any particular significant experiences that may have occurred while in the program. Thus far, the researcher was able to determine that for many of the participants their time in the program did significantly impact them and kept some in the same workforce niche.

Objective 3. To detect if working with the Georgia 4-H EE program has developmental impacts on adults' transferable work skills.

In order to collect data regarding this objective, three very significant questions posed to the groups/individuals were: 1. If you were in a job interview and you had to explain your time as a GA 4-H environmental educator, what would you say? 2. What skills or tools, if any do you attribute back to the time you were employed in the Georgia 4-H EE program? 3. In your current position, what do you believe your supervisor sees in you that ties back to the EE program? As stated in chapter 4, the following themes emerged:

- Balancing roles-being able to be flexible while being efficient
- Teaching skills and experience- gained a variety of skills that have made them better teachers though EE. In the following quotes from the focus groups and

phone interviews many specialties emerge within these professionals' teaching styles and experience.

- Public Speaking/Communication Skills
- Working with others/teamwork
- Problem solving skills
- Miscellaneous-community outreach

Of those results, the following directly correlate with research found in the literature review, and here is how. Balancing roles-being able to be flexible while being efficient: This is in-line with the findings of Duerden et al. (2014). They found that being forced out of their comfort zone in a camp element led to workforce development in the areas of interpersonal, communication, problem solving, and leadership skills. When asked about what was unique about working with the Georgia 4-H EE program three of the participants in this study mentioned the importance of being flexible and able to adapt.

Three of the participants also mentioned that teaching skills and experience were enhanced through their time as environmental educators and that this benefited their current career path. Specifically, they gained a variety of skills that made them better teachers through EE. Eleanor, the assistant professor, spoke about working with diverse youth when asked about acquired skills:

Learning how to interact with a lot of different age students from a lot of different places was I think a really important skill that I, you know I'm teaching at a school now that is very diverse, and where I went to undergrad I would say not as diverse, so it did kind of expose me to a lot of students from different backgrounds and I think it set me up well for doing that in the future.

Research by Duerden et al. (2014), supports this claim with their research as well. In their study, they found that a skill gained at camp was responsibility which is tied to teaching. Their work also found that a camp element that facilitated workforce development was intrinsic motivations such as working with kids which is in line with the findings of this study.

A profound quote was made by Edna stating:

I would mention that it was hands on, hands on teaching and learning environment, and I would also point out how one thing that sets me apart from other teachers is because of my time in EE is that I understand that learning can get very active and very loud, and that for me, it's this really exciting time.

These early educational experiences provided study participants with a passion for working with youth, specifically in EE. Eleanor was so impacted by her time with the GA 4-H EE program that she stated, “I think one of the reasons that I chose this path was because of how I was opened up to teaching essentially with the 4-H center.”

Public Speaking/Communication Skills: Public speaking and communication skills were listed many times throughout the literature review. For example, Garst and Johnson (2005) found that teen leaders serving at camp gained communication skills when working with youth. Hendricks (1996) found that 4-H camp counselors gained communication skills as well in his study. Whittington and Garst (2018) also found that a college readiness skill reported to have been obtained by camp alumni was communication. Lastly, Duerden et al. (2014) found that communication skills (listening, sharing personal thoughts/feelings, and public speaking) were gained by those working in a camp setting. Out of the nine research participants in this study, four mentioned

communications skills and public speaking as a skill they attribute back to the EE program. Cora Lee said, “let's see, I did want to add probably public speaking or speaking in front of like different age groups has definitely strengthened from then.”

While this study found that an important outcome of serving as an environmental educator was working with others/teamwork, Brandt and Arnold (2006) also reported similar outcome. Specifically, one area they found as a prominent area of impact was the development of skills for working effectively with children and groups. Hendricks (1996) also found that group contribution and teamwork were direct results of participation as a 4-H camp counselor. Teamwork is another college readiness skill identified by teen leaders serving at camp (Garst & Johnson, 2005). Another study performed by Bialeschki, Henderson, and Dahowski (1998) looked at the outcomes of camp on staff. They too found that teamwork was seen as a positive development amongst the participants. Hazel stated that, “I use those [teambuilding] skills to this day, and those are the skills I teach my staff is how to run a good team building class.”

Problem solving skills were identified as another key outcome of serving as an environmental educator which helped participants in this study later in their careers.: The study completed by Duerden et al. (2014) supports this claim. Hendricks (1996) also found that problem solving was a life skill stated to have been acquired by camp counselor participants. Finally, Whittington and Garst (2018) found problem solving to have been a college readiness skill gained “to a great extent” by 54% of the male participants and 53% of the female participants who served as environmental educators. It is clear that working as an environmental educator produces important skills needed in the workforce—regardless of position acquired.

Conclusions

As mentioned in Chapter 2, in a study done by Casner-Lotto et al. (2006), “over 400 employers identified four critical skills that individuals should possess as they enter the 21st-century workforce: professionalism/work ethic, oral and written communications, teamwork/collaboration, and critical thinking/ problem solving” (p. 9). The type of skills aforementioned are often referred to as soft skills. “Soft skills are those non-technical competencies connected to one's personality, attitude, ability, and motivation to interact effectively with others” (Stewart et al., 2016, p. 277). Results of this study show that critical “soft skills” were gained by participants which positively influenced their career readiness later in life.

Interestingly, most of the participants in this study went on to graduate or professional school immediately after their time as an environmental educator. All but two have remained educators to some extent. One of the nine took some time away from EE due to circumstances but is now managing a camp. Based on the data collected, Georgia 4-H EE has had a positive and profound impact on its participants. So much so that those participants seem to have had a significant life experience by finding a sense of place among their fellow EE community members. The subjects’ recurring work skills they attribute to their time in the program included:

- Balancing roles-being able to be flexible while being efficient
- Teaching skills and experience- gained a variety of skills that have made them better teachers though EE. In the following quotes from the focus groups and phone interviews many specialties emerge within these professionals’ teaching styles and experience.

- Public Speaking/Communication Skills
- Working with others/teamwork
- Problem solving skills
- Miscellaneous-community outreach

These transferable skills were obtained through experiences such as teaching classes on the spot, working around inclement weather, working with a variety of ages and backgrounds, serving in multiple roles on their centers, living and working on center with the same group of educators, at times making the most out of limited resources and so on. Flexibility and adaptability seemed to be key workforce readiness skills that were gained while an environmental educator and that continued to positively influence study participants well after serving Georgia 4-H.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Further Research

1. If this study were to be replicated, additions should be made to the follow-up or part 2 interview. Questions such as:
 - Did EE have an impact on their next career/academic choice immediately following the program? If so, how?
 - What workforce skills would they identify as being obtained during their time in EE?
2. Camp directors/coordinators should gather a group of collegiate or newly post-collegiate students who are participating in the EE program but who are not majoring in the traditionally EE-related majors (life sciences, forestry, wildlife

sciences, EE, etc.) in order to better understand their motivations for pursuing EE. Possibly use an instrument such as the Volunteer Functions Inventory.

3. Using the themes identified in this study, a quantitative instrument could be created to collect information from a broader sample of environmental educators nationally.
4. In terms of a long-term research study, it would be interesting to have a pre-post component for the participants to partake in before and after their time with the GA 4-H EE program. This would involve capturing their workforce skills, reasons for joining the program, and future career goals and aspirations. Participant demographics could also be used to better understand the “types” of individuals pursuing EE.
5. A study to identify what about being an environmental educator inspires EE staffers to want to pursue graduate/professional school. Look at what field/subject they choose to pursue, specifically.

Recommendations for Practice

1. When recruiting new environmental educators, camp practitioners should not just focus on collegiate majors from the natural resources or life sciences or education departments but should also consider marketing to a broader variety of student majors, including the fine arts and law. This recommendation is made based on how the subjects for this research study began working for the Georgia 4-H EE program.
2. Promotion of the diverse centers and the diverse curriculum should take place in order to advertise the program.

3. Camp directors should continue to emphasize the intimate community living and positive team environment on site. This created a special sense of place that the participants of this study spoke fondly of. The benefits of living and working with people of a similar age and interest creates something like a brother and sisterhood of environmental educators. This aspect should be talked about, promoted and celebrated.
4. The creation of an EE alumni group or hosting an annual reunion has been brought up and requested by the participants of this study. This will help them feel that sense of place and community they felt during their days as an environmental educator.

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APPENDIX A

University of Georgia Institutional Review Board Approval



UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA

Tucker Hall, Room 212
310 E. Campus Rd.
Athens, Georgia 30602
TEL 706-542-3199 | FAX 706-542-5638
IRB@uga.edu
<http://research.uga.edu/hso/irb/>

Office of Research
Institutional Review Board

EXEMPT DETERMINATION

January 3, 2018

Dear [Milton Newberry](#):

On 1/3/2018, the IRB reviewed the following submission:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title of Study:	An Exploration into the Effect of the Georgia 4-H Environmental Education Employee Experience on Workforce Trajectory
Investigator:	Milton Newberry
IRB ID:	STUDY00005603
Funding:	None
Review Category:	Exempt 2

The IRB approved the protocol from 1/3/2018 to 1/2/2023.

Please close this study when it is complete.

In conducting this study, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

Kate Pavich, IRB Analyst
Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia

APPENDIX B
Consent Form-Focus Group
Consent Letter
University of Georgia

March 25, 2018

Dear Research Participant:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Dr. Milton Newberry III in the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication at The University of Georgia. I invite you to participate in a research study entitled “An Exploration into the Effect of the Georgia 4-H Environmental Education Employee Experience on Workforce Trajectory”. The purpose of this study is to determine the impact of working as a Georgia 4-H environmental educator on career outcomes.

You were selected to participate in this study because of your past experience with the GA 4-H EE program that took place five or more years ago.

Your participation will involve answering questions about your time while working for the Georgia 4-H environmental education program and your career since. This will take place in a focus group and a phone interview setting and should only take about two hours of your time in total. Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

All information that I receive from you during the focus group and phone interview, including your name and any other information that can possibly identify you, will be strictly confidential and will be kept under lock and key and in a password protected computer. The results of the research study may be published, but your name or any identifying information will not be used.

The findings from this project may provide information on the benefits of working for the Georgia 4-H environmental education program and also the benefits of hiring someone who has previously worked with the environmental education program. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call me at 678-438-6045 or send an e-mail to KatlynL@uga.edu. Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant should be directed to The Chairperson, University of Georgia Institutional Review Board, 609 Boyd GSRC, Athens, Georgia 30602; telephone (706) 542-3199; email address irb@uga.edu.

Research Subject’s Consent to Participate in Research:

To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. Your

signature below indicates that you have read or had read to you this entire consent form and have had all of your questions answered.

Name of Researcher

Name of Participant

Signature & Date

Signature & Date

APPENDIX C
University of Georgia
Consent Form-Phone Interview

March 25, 2018

Dear Research Participant:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Dr. Milton Newberry III in the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication at The University of Georgia. I invite you to participate in a research study entitled “An Exploration into the Effect of the Georgia 4-H Environmental Education Employee Experience on Workforce Trajectory”. The purpose of this study is to determine the impact of working as a Georgia 4-H environmental educator on career outcomes. You were selected to participate in this study because of your past experience with the GA4-H EE program that took place five or more years ago.

Your participation will involve answering questions about your time while working for the Georgia 4-H environmental education program and your career since. This will take place in a focus group and a phone interview setting and should only take about two hours of your time in total. Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

All information that I receive from you during the focus group and phone interview, including your name and any other information that can possibly identify you, will be strictly confidential and will be kept under lock and key and in a password protected computer. The results of the research study may be published, but your name or any identifying information will not be used.

The findings from this project may provide information on the benefits of working for the Georgia 4-H environmental education program and also the benefits of hiring someone who has previously worked with the environmental education program. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call me at 678-438-6045 or send an e-mail to KatlynL@uga.edu. Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant should be directed to The Chairperson, University of Georgia Institutional Review Board, 609 Boyd GSRC, Athens, Georgia 30602; telephone (706) 542-3199; email address irb@uga.edu.

Research Subject’s Consent to Participate in Research:

To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. Your

signature below indicates that you have read or had read to you this entire consent form and have had all of your questions answered.

Name of Researcher

Name of Participant

Signature & Date

Signature & Date

APPENDIX D

Email Invitations

Initial Invitation: Good morning/afternoon/evening, thank you for agreeing to speak to me about your experience with the Georgia 4-H environmental education program.

Hello, my name is Katlyn LaVelle and I am a graduate student at UGA studying agricultural and environmental education. In order to complete my thesis, I am conducting a research study about the effect of working as a Georgia 4-H environmental educator on work trajectory. One of the main goals of this study is to determine the impact of working as a Georgia 4-H environmental educator on career outcomes. You were selected to participate in this study because of your past experience with the GA4-H EE program.

This research study will consist of two parts; an in-person focus group and an over-the-phone interview. The focus group will take place on an agreed upon date and time that works best for the most people at UGA's Four Towers Building. The study will last about an hour and there will be light refreshments. A few weeks following the focus group you will receive a phone call to ask you some questions like what will be asked during the focus group session. The follow-up phone interview will also take about an hour of your time.

All information that I receive from you during the focus group and phone interview, including your name and any other information that can possibly identify you, will be strictly confidential and will be kept under lock and key/in a password protected computer. Remember, your participation is voluntary; you can refuse to answer any questions or stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

If you would like to participate, please complete the doodle poll below by *insert date here* to select which dates and times would be best for you to meet for a focus group discussion.

include computer generated link here

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call me at 678-438-6045 or send an e-mail to KatlynL@uga.edu. Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant should be directed to The Chairperson, University of Georgia Institutional Review Board, 609 Boyd GSRC, Athens, Georgia 30602; telephone (706) 542-3199; email address irb@uga.edu.

First Follow up Invitation (send one week after initial email to any prospective participants who have not responded to prior email):

Good morning/afternoon/evening, thank you to everyone who has responded to the online poll thus far. If you would like to participate in the Georgia 4-H environment education study, there is still time. Please complete the doodle poll below by *insert date here* to select which dates and times would be best for you to meet for a focus group discussion.

include computer generated link here

Second Follow Up (send one week after first follow up email to any prospective participants who have responded to prior email):

Good morning/afternoon/evening, Thank you for your participation in the online poll. The most agreed upon date and time was *date at time p.m.*

We will meet at UGA's Four Towers Building located at *(insert address here)*. There will be light refreshments prior to our study.

If you have any questions regarding the study, please contact me at 678-438-6045 or KatlynL@uga.edu.

Reminder Email (send one week prior to the focus group meeting to all consenting participants.

Good morning/afternoon/evening, this is a reminder that we will be meeting at UGA's Four Towers Building located at *(insert address here) on date at time p.m.* There will be light refreshments prior to our study. I look forward to meeting you all then and hearing your perspectives about the GA 4-H EE program. Please bring with you one artifact from your time as a GA 4-H environmental educator. It can be any trinket you hold dear and associate with your time in the program.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 678-438-6045 or KatlynL@uga.edu.

APPENDIX E
Diane Davies and Melanie Biersmith Interview Guide

1. What is your relation to/ history with the Georgia 4-H EE program?
2. How did you get involved with the EE program?
3. Do you think the program has changed since its commencement? If so, how?
4. Do you have any suggestion(s) on questions to ask the research participants in order to gain knowledge of how the program has impacted career outcomes and skill attributes?
5. Are there any questions you would like to see answered about the EE program?
6. Do you have any suggestions on people to interview? (criteria: one person from each center, 5+ years removed, 5-8 people)

APPENDIX F

Research Participant Interview Guide: Part 1

Part One: Focus Group Interview Guide

Good morning/afternoon/evening. Thank you for agreeing to speak to me about your experience with the Georgia 4-H environmental education program.

Hello, my name is Katlyn LaVelle and I am a graduate student at UGA studying agricultural and environmental education. In order to complete my thesis, I am conducting a research study about the effect of working as a Georgia 4-H environmental educator on work trajectory. The results will be recorded and used to determine the impact of working as a Georgia 4-H environmental educator on career outcomes.

You were selected to participate in this study because of your past experience with the GA 4-H EE program. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to:

- Share your thoughts and opinions.
- This study will take about an hour to complete.
- Your responses will be audio recorded and kept confidential.

During the course of this focus group please remember there are no right or wrong answers. Each viewpoint is helpful and will be respected. Please feel free to share your point of view even if it differs from what others have said.

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose to discontinue participating in the study at any point without fear of penalty.

With your consent, the focus group will be audibly and visually recorded for transcription later. The focus group audio/visual and transcribed files will be kept confidential. All identifying information will be removed from the transcription of the recordings. Only the researcher will have access to the audio and visual recordings, and will be secured on a university computer, with a password only known by the researchers. While the researchers will discourage anyone from sharing this information outside the group, they cannot guarantee that confidentiality will be maintained by other group members. We will be using your first name tonight, but we won't use your name in our reports. You may be assured of complete confidentiality.

1. *Tell us your name, when (years) and where you worked with the GA 4-H EE program.*
2. *What do you do now, professionally or academically?*
3. *What factors influenced your decision to work as a Georgia 4-H environmental educator?*
4. *What was unique about working at with GA 4-H EE compared to other jobs you've had?*
5. *Will you please describe the artifact you brought from your time as part of the GA 4-H EE program?*



6. *If you were in a job interview and you had to explain your time as a GA 4-H environmental educator, what would you say?*
7. *Close your eyes and think back to the the time when you spent your workdays outdoors with youth as an environmental educator. What skills or tools, if any do you attribute back to the time you were employed in the Georgia 4-H EE program?*
8. *Can you recall any teachable moments you were able to capitalize on? Please explain.*
9. *What was your position immediately following working for the GA 4-H EE program?*
10. *What has been your career path since then?*
11. *In your current position, what do you believe your supervisor sees in you that ties back to the EE program?*
12. *Where do you hope your career will lead??*
13. *Have we missed anything/ Would you like to add any last comments?*

Thank you for your participation in part-one of this research study. If you have questions, you may direct them to Katlyn LaVelle at KatlynL@uga.edu or by phone at 678-438-6045. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706.542.3199 or irb@uga.edu.



APPENDIX G

Research Participant Phone Interview Guide: Part 2

Hello, this is Katlyn LaVelle. It is nice to speak with you again. Thank you for agreeing to take part in the second part and final portion of this research study.

I have some brief interview questions that would take about 60 minutes of your time to answer. Your participation is entirely voluntary; you may skip any questions that you do not want to answer. You can also choose to stop the interview at any time. With your consent, I will be recording the audio from this conversation for transcription later. These audio and transcribed files will be kept confidential. All identifying information will be removed from the transcription of the recordings. Only the researcher will have access to the audio recordings, and will be secured on a university computer, with a password only known by the researcher. The transcription will be kept indefinitely for future research.

Do you have any questions about the research study? Do I have your permission to ask you these questions and for the study to begin?

Good morning/afternoon/evening. Thank you for agreeing to speak to me about your experience with the Georgia 4-H environmental education program.

1. *What do you do now, professionally or academically?*
2. *What factors influenced your decision to work as a Georgia 4-H environmental educator?*
3. *What was unique about working with GA 4-H EE program compared to other jobs you've had?*
4. *If you were in a job interview and you had to explain your time as a GA 4-H environmental educator to a potential employer, what would you say?*
5. *Close your eyes and think back to the time when you spent your workdays outdoors with youth as an environmental educator. What skills or tools, if any, do you attribute back to the time you were employed in the Georgia 4-H EE program?*
6. *Can you recall any teachable moments you were able to capitalize on? Please explain.*
7. *What was your position immediately following working for the GA 4-H EE program?*
8. *What has been your career path since then?*
9. *In your current position, what, if anything, do you believe your supervisor sees in you that ties back to the EE program?*
10. *Where do you hope your career will lead?*
11. *Have we missed anything? Would you like to add any last comments?*

Thank you for your participation in part-two of this research study. If you have questions, you may direct them to Katlyn LaVelle at KatlynL@uga.edu or by phone at 678-438-6045. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706.542.3199 or irb@uga.edu.