ABSTRACT

ADAMS-ROBERTS, MADISON LEE. Examining the Professional Development Growth of North Carolina State University Livestock Science Camp Counselors. (Under the direction of Dr. Carrie Pickworth and Dr. Joy Morgan Fleming).

The purpose of this research study was to determine if serving as a camp counselor positively impacts professional development skills through student leadership competencies for NC State Livestock Science Camp Counselors. This quantitative research targets communication, personal behavior, and interpersonal interaction competencies, which allow for the growth and development of camp counselors. The relationship between counselors and campers plays a vital role in positive youth development (self-constructs, social relationships, and physical and cognitive skills) and a quality camp experience. This research study is rooted in Astin's (1984) student involvement theory to design more effective learning environments for students as it pertains to their future careers. The research design of this quantitative study uses a validated pre- and post-survey created by Dr. Corey Seemiller and Dr. Dave Rosch (2018), Likert scale data, survey data, and field note observations to understand the increase in professional development skills in the Livestock Science Camp counselors. The results were quantified and analyzed to determine if the professional development skills and leadership competencies have increased, stayed the same, or decreased. While the results from the pre and post-survey data did not show any increase in the professional development of the camp counselor, there was a positive correlation between camp counselors' feelings towards a better understanding of professional development and belief that these skills would be of assistance in their career. It is encouraged that camp leaders continue to seek out professional development training for their counselors in order to provide the best experience for all.

Examining the Professional Development Growth of North Carolina State University Livestock Science Camp Counselors

by

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late friend Keiley A. Banfield. Thank you for being a driving factor in my growing passion for the cattle industry, along with other junior members throughout the country. The push that you always gave me to try new things and words of encouragement when I needed them the most are things I live by now. I miss you today and everyday, but I miss your contagious laugh the most.

BIOGRAPHY

Madison Lee Adams-Roberts grew up in the small town of Eastwood, North Carolina. After graduating Pinecrest High School in 2017, she attended Sandhills Community College in Southern Pines, North Carolina where she earned an Associate of Science. Madison then transferred to North Carolina State University in Raleigh, North Carolina where she graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Science with a minor in Agricultural Business Management. During her time at North Carolina State University, Madison was an active member of North Carolina Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers Chapter at North Carolina State University, Collegiate Cattlemen's Association at NC State where she sat on the officer team for multiple terms, and Sigma Alpha Professional Agricultural Sorority. After graduating with her bachelor's, Madison returned to North Carolina State University to pursue her Master of Science in Agriculture and Extension Education. During this time, Madison served as the assistant director to the North Carolina State's Livestock Science Camp. Upon graduating, Madison plans to enter the agriculture sector pursuing a career in the field of education, extension or industry.

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I want to thank the participants of this study who dedicated themselves to the process and faithfully completed each step in this research study. I also want to thank all Livestock Science Camp counselors for their dedication and hard work to an amazing 2022 camp experience.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Camp is an out-of-school educational experience where participants gain life skills while creating nurturing relationships with the individuals responsible for their safety and care as camp counselors (Owens & Browne, 2021). There is extensive research focused on the learning and development of camp participants, but there is a lack of research on the camp counselors and their personal growth and development. Camp counselors wear many different hats as most feel they are in-between, described as in between getting to be 'child-like' with the campers and having to be a 'caretaker' (Johnson, 2011). Camp experiences benefit both the camper and the counselor; many counselors report increasing their professional and social development within the organization along with their responsibilities serving in a counselor position (Johnson, 2011). The relationship between counselors and campers plays a vital role in positive youth development (self-constructs, social relationships, and physical and cognitive skills) and a quality camp experience (Garst et al., 2011; Schelbe et al., 2018).

Camps across the United States employed over 1.2 million counselors and served over 26 million youth campers in 2020 (American Camp Association, 2021). Different types of camps include academic or technology camps, travel or expedition camos, arts and performance camos, sports camps, religious camps, and specialty camps for children with learning disabilities or serious illnesses. The Gunnery Camp was the first summer camp in the United States, targeting boys in Connecticut who took a two-week trip and set up camp to complete activities such as boating, fishing, and trapping (American Camp Association, 2010). In addition, Camp Arey in New York was the first camp in the United Stated to accept girls and a few years later moved to

exclusively serve as an only girls camp (American Camp Association, 2010). Today, there are many organizations that host camps with some of the well-known being YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, 4-H, and FFA. The relationship between counselors and campers plays a vital role in positive youth development (self-constructs, social relationships, and physical and cognitive skills) and a quality camp experience (Garst et al., 2011; Schelbe et al., 2018).

Specifically, North Carolina State University offers many summer camps targeting a variety of interests; however, this research specifically focuses on an animal science-related camp within the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Animal Science Department, specifically the Livestock Science Camp. This week-long, residential Livestock Science Camp targets high school-aged students interested in the agriculture industry to educate them on the large variety of career options available and engage in hands-on curricula. Livestock Science Camp has been hosted at North Carolina State University for going on seven years. Each year the camp grows in counselor's and participants, and more significantly with interest with applications. Participants apply to participate in camp because they have a passion for the livestock industry or have a career aspiration to work in the livestock field one day. The camp program accepts campers who have a range in experience working with livestock, or who have no experience. This is because of the hands-on beginner experience that the camp provides. Throughout the week of camp, campers travel to the North Carolina State University teaching animal units to participate in lab experiences. Examples of these experiences include testing milk collected that day at the dairy unit, weighing piglets at the swine unit, sorting and moving cattle at the beef unit, drawing blood samples on the sheep at the small ruminant unit, and learning how to use a weight tape at the equine unit.

When campers are not at the teaching units then they are participating in field trips to feed mills, production farms, and necropsy labs. In addition to the teaching units and field trips, they are either in a participants engage in classroom learning such as creating feed rations, dissecting fetal pigs, pulling calves through a birthing simulation, egg candling, or learning about different cuts of meat. Even though the camps activities can differ from year to year, there are a few things that stay the same to ensure that campers are getting a North Carolina State University student experience. All campers participate in activities throughout the week such as campus scavenger hunts, a tour at the bell tower, career and major discussions with faculty members, and teamwork activities to help build relationships and friendships with other campers that could last a lifetime.

To provide the appropriate ratio of camper to counselor ratio, approximately eight counselors are selected each year. The counselors who are employed by the camp are predominantly Animal Science majors who are also interested in careers in the agriculture industry after graduation. Any student within the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and the Agriculture institute (2-year associates program) has the opportunity to apply to be a camp counselor. Counselors are required to have recommendations from advisors, faculty members or mentors, write essays as to why they want to serve as a camp counselor and what their career aspirations look like, and agree to follow minor regulations. The camp director interviews students who have applied and then makes the final decision of the counselor team. Counselors are then responsible for obtaining certifications in minor regulation and animal care and use. Counselors are able to submit their certifications, and access additional reading resources that are relevant to their required trainings but most importantly engagement techniques, ice breaking activities, and leadership material through a password protected project space for Livestock

Science Counselors. While this research will target the growth of professional development skills of these camp counselors, it will also discuss the overall knowledge gained in the agriculture industry as a counselor because this is also a goal of the camp experience for camp counselors.

Problem Statement

We understand the importance of camp counselors and their importance to the camper and youth experience; however, the research on the professional development of camp counselors is limited (Garst et al., 2011; Schelbe et al., 2018). Counselor development should be as much of a priority within a camp planning phase as much as camper development (Epley et al., 2014). While these results are specific to the counselors serving in this position, they can serve as a base for professional development research among university camping programs that utilize college students as camp counselors. By determining growth in the professional development of the Livestock Science Camp counselors, future camps can utilize this base information to consider their counselors and implement additional training programs that can foster professional development.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study was to determine if the role of serving as a camp counselor positively impacts professional development skills through student leadership competencies for NC State Livestock Science Camp Counselors. This quantitative research targets communication, personal behavior, and interpersonal interaction competencies, which allow for the growth and development of camp counselors.

Research Questions:

- How does professional development increase in the NC State Livestock camp counselor as the semester and camp progresses compared to before the start?
- What impact does professional development and engagement as a camp counselor have on Student Leadership Competency development?
- To what extent has the camp counseling experience impacted their existing knowledge of animal science?

Implications

Research supports that camp programs impact campers and camp counselors (Digby & Ferrari, 2007; Epley et al., 2017; Gershon, 2016; Johnson et al., 2011; Rice et al., 2017; Smith, 2006, Thurber et al., 2007). The level at which camp counselors are impacted by serving in a faculty position is not as researched when compared to the level at which participating in camp as a camper has an on the learning experience. This research study is meant to bridge the gap between camp counselors and how camp impacts their growth and development.

The data from this research study focused on understanding how professional development skills and student leadership competence impact undergraduate students serving as camp counselors. Other camp programs can use the overall theme from this research to create an understanding of the importance that time spent on growing and developing camp counselor skills is just as important as creating and facilitating programs for campers.

The findings from this study also support the use of training programs that fit their counselor's needs and camp goals. The data participants share can also be used for other undergraduate students interested in increasing their student leadership competencies and professional development skills as they soon enter the workforce. From an external perspective,

this data can assist employers who look at experiences and see camp counselors. Not only have the camp counselors gained important work experience, but they have also had the opportunity to learn and implement their professional development skills during camp and after, along with gaining knowledge from the camp program that is beneficial to their potential careers.

Limitations and Assumptions

Limitations

1. This study is limited to the 2022 Livestock Science Camp Counselors and findings may not be generalized to other groups.
2. Results are limited to student's time and energy invested in engaging in professional development tools.
3. Counselors have different previous experiences with student leadership competencies or professional development tools to utilize during the professional development tool.
4. Counselors may have different opportunities to display student leadership competencies during the week of camp.

Assumptions

1. The participants will answer the questions to the best of their ability and with integrity.
2. Camp counselors have similar responsibilities and opportunities for professional development throughout camp.
3. Each participant will complete the professional development tools and serve as a camp counselor to the best of their ability.

Definition of Terms

Professional development: has a willingness to be coached and challenged; accepts feedback and guidance from adults and peers seeks opportunism to continually improve knowledge, skills, and capabilities, and develops job-seeking skills (Epley et al., 2017, p. 62).

Student Leadership Competencies: Knowledge, values, abilities and behaviors that help an induvial contribute to or successfully engage in a role or task (Seemiller, 2013)

The following definitions are from *The Student Leadership Competencies Guidebook* by Corey Seemiller (2013):

Confidence: Appearing certain of one's beliefs, knowledge, convictions, and/or capabilities (Seemiler, 2013).

Ethics: Upholding standards of conduct based on socially accepted values (Seemiler, 2013).

Facilitation: Effectively managing the group process during a meeting, presentation, or gathering without inputting one's opinion by directing the flow of discussion, asking prompt questions, and keeping the group on track (Seemiler, 2013).

Listening: engage in strategies that assist in accurately receiving a message that someone conveys through verbal communication (Seemiler, 2013).

Mentoring: Using one's expertise and experience to teach, coach, share resources, and challenge individuals with less experience and/or knowledge so that they can reach their potential (Seemiller, 2013).

Nonverbal Communication: using body language, gestures, facial expressions, and/or contact with and proximity to others to either complement verbal communication or serve as communication in and of itself (Seemiler, 2013).

Positive Attitude: Exhibiting an optimistic outlook by identifying the positive aspects of a situation and displaying a "can do" attitude (Seemiler, 2013).

Productive Relationships: Cultivating connections or associations with others that contribute positively to the well-being of those involved (Seemiller, 2013).

Responsibility for Personal Behavior: Taking responsibility for one's own behavior by admitting mistakes, apologizing, rectifying the situation, and accepting the consequences of one's actions (Seemiler, 2013).

Verbal Communication: effectively communicating verbally with others one on one, in groups, and/or in front of a large audience (Seemiller, 2013).

Chapter Summary

Camp counselors serve in vital roles that impact the camp experience for campers; this can include positive youth development and quality camp experiences. The research is abundant on how camp experiences affect campers and youth; however, the research lags behind how serving in a counselor role affects counselor growth and development. The purpose of this research study was to determine if the role of serving as a camp counselor positively impacts professional development skills through student leadership competencies for NC State Livestock Science Camp Counselors.

CHAPTER II

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

The purpose of this research study was to determine if the role of serving as a camp counselor positively impacts professional development skills through student leadership competencies for NC State Livestock Science Camp Counselors. For the purpose of this study, the Student Involvement Theory created by Austin (1984) will serve as the theoretical framework. The literature review is divided into the following categories:

- Development and Impact of Camps (History)
- Impacts and Roles of Camp Counselors on Campers
- Impact of Professional Development Skills among College Students
- College Student Motivation and Engagement

Theoretical Framework: Student Involvement Theory, 1984

The student involvement theory was created in 1984 by Alexander W. Astin, a distinguished professor at the University of Los Angeles. Astin (1984) believed that this theory serves as a good framework for research and directing the administration to design more effective learning environments for students.. Students who actively participate in extra-circular programs have increased ambitions, self-confidence, interpersonal skills, communication, teamwork, and overall leadership skills (Rubin et al. 2002). Further, Hunt (2003) utilizes the Student Involvement Theory to create a deeper learning process for students through communication programs.

To further explain involvement in this aspect, it is the physical and psychological effort into the academic experiences, including spending time within campus organizations, studying, and peer and faculty interactions (Astin, 1984). Student involvement is measured with an understanding that different students can dedicate more involvement to particular objects than other students and that the dedication could vary depending on the time in place (Astin, 1984). Additionally, involvement can be described as the energy invested physically and psychologically into the academic experience (Astin, 1984).

Astin (1984) theorized five basic principles for involvement:

1. Involvement requires an investment of psychosocial and physical energy.
2. Involvement is continuous, and the amount of energy invested varies from student to student.
3. Involvement is qualitative and quantitative.
4. What a student gains from being involved is proportional to how much or how little they were involved.
5. Involvement is connected to students' academic performance (Astin, 1984).

When educators create programs or lessons, the thought process is focused on 'what' they are creating for their students or learners; however, the student involvement theory encourages the educator to consider the 'how' of creating programs or lessons considering the student's involvement. Astin (1984) describes this as "how motivated the student is and how much time and energy the student devotes to the learning process" (pg.522). Effective student leadership development programs are proven to create positive changes locally, nationally, and within

international contexts, along with increased student retention (Ingleton, 2013; McElveen & Ibele, 2019).

The principal advantage of the Student Involvement Theory focuses on shifting away from resources and subject matter to the student's behavior and motivating the student (Astin, 1984). A study in 2012 placed Astin's Theory of Student Involvement to the test by looking at the amount of time students spent on social media versus their GPAs. Findings suggested that the students that spent less time on social media had higher GPAs. The more time the students spent on social media, the lower their GPAs were (Ahsan, & Chand, 2012). Student behavior and motivation can vary from student to student; however, Astin (1984) concludes that while this theory is simple but comprehensive, it suggests that the more student involvement in the academic setting and experience, the more personal growth the student will gain. The psychological energy and motivation a student puts into or has for their professional development skills learning process is measured between the pre- and post-surveys and implementation in regard to this study.

Development and Impact of Camps (History)

Organized camp experiences have been a part of American culture for over 150 years and continue to increase in size and variety each year. The lasting and positive effects of summer camp on youth development have been documented: social, emotional, and fine- and gross motor development (Rice et al., 2017). The Gunnery Camp was the first summer camp in the United States, targeting boys in Connecticut who took a two-week trip and set up camp to complete activities such as boating, fishing, and trapping (American Camp Association, 2010). This camp expanded from one camp in 1861 to currently employing more than 1.5 million paid camp staff and more than 14 million campers yearly (American Camp Association, 2016). The

development of summer camps increased significantly over the past 18 years since the early 1900s, so much so that psychologist, G. Stanley Hall, deemed summer camps as the intellectual development of children (Gershon, 2016). Camps are a way for children to escape an overwhelming society and the reality of the world events that are taking place (Gershon, 2016; Smith, 2006).

American Camp Association (2023) defines camp as 'A sustained camp experience that provides creative, recreational, and educational opportunities in groups living outdoors. It utilizes trained leadership and the resources of natural surroundings to contribute to each camper's mental, physical, social, and spiritual growth.' Day camps can range from 5 days to weeks in length with an emphasis on campers going home with their parents or guardians each day compared to a residential camp where campers stay overnight, and the camp staff is responsible for all campers for 24 hours of the day. Further, residential camps can also range from five days to weeks at a time. It is important for organizers to clarify the difference between day camps and residential camps, as they require different qualifications and responsibilities.

American Camp Association found that campers who participate in an overnight camp are more likely to gain the highest levels of positive youth development and mobilization when compared to campers participating in day camps (Owens & Browne, 2021; Thurber et al., 2007). Gambone (2002) describes the key factors for youth development mobilization as people, opportunities, and places. Wilson and Sibthorp (2019) reported that the prolonged experiences at an overnight camp help to facilitate the opportunity for campers to explore their self-identity and witnessing counselors who have positive characteristics also helps youth learn more about themselves.

Different types of camps (girls or boys camps, faith-based camps, medical specialty camps, or camps serving youth from low-income backgrounds) can tailor their programs to their audience to create a higher learning experience (Warner et al., 2021). Meltzer and Rourke (2005) found that camps help to provide a similar population of peers creating a positive self-evaluation that includes social acceptance, physical appearance, self-worth, and loneliness. This is especially true regarding specialized camps targeting different youth populations. Camps targeting different populations can create a sense of belonging through social comparison with campers (Roberson, 2010).

Thurber et al. (2007) credited Dimock and Hendry's *Camping and Character* (1929) as the first statistical research study based on the outcomes of camp programs. *Camping and Character* (1929) observed a 7-week 216 boys camp in Canada looking at behavioral changes with the assistance of camp staff, parents, the boys, and experts in behavioral analysis. At the end of the research, there was an overall positive behavioral change among the participants, and parents later reported similar positive changes post-camp at home. Some of the boys decreased in behavioral aspects such as manners and sportsmanship, which can be linked to peer pressure, type of program, quality of leadership, and overall attitudes of participants. Dimock and Hendry (2007) determined six different conclusions that can still hold true in today's camp experiences (Thurber et al., 2007).

1. Camp had a net positive effect on their behavior.
2. Change probably depended on the type of program, peer pressure, quality of leadership, and overall attitudes.
3. Younger boys benefited more than the older boys.
4. Amount of change was unrelated to whether the boys stayed one or two months.

5. Parents' rating were more favorable than camp staff.
6. Positive behaviors persisted at home in the weeks after camp (Thurber et al., 2007, pg. 242.)

Camps are immersive experiences for campers and counselors that can foster positive behaviors and positive youth experiences (Thurber et al., 2007).

Impacts and Roles of Camp Counselors on Campers

Camp counselors are the foundation of a successful camp; not only are they responsible for the campers 24 hours a day during a residential camp, but they also hold more responsibility for an impactful camp experience with campers. A camp counselor's role is multifaceted in that counselors often see themselves as caregivers, disciplinarians, entertainers, and facilitators; from counselor to counselor, they are seen as team members or friends, and from campers to counselors, they are often seen as role models and mentors (Epley et al., 2017; Johnson et al., 2011). Digby and Ferrari (2007) reported that some counselors even describe their roles as similar to being surrogate parents to campers during a residential camp. While taking on these roles and responsibilities of camp counselors, they also must regulate and manage their own development, whether social, emotional, physical, or mental.

Epley, Ferrari, and Cochran (2017) developed a roles and responsibilities chart describing the multifaceted roles that 4-H camp counselors face on a day-to-day basis. Roles and responsibilities can be unique depending on the type of camp program; however, these general roles and responsibilities can be broken down into three categories; caregiving, programming, and teaching.

Camp Counselor Roles and Responsibilities

Type of Responsibility	Description
Caregiving	Assure for safety of campers at all times including in cabins, sessions, and large group activities.
	Be aware of child protection regulations and report any child abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect in accordance with university policy.
	Identify and respond to camper behavior issues.
	Ensure campers' health and hygiene, e.g., brushing teeth, eating meals, taking medication, etc.
Programming	Attend required trainings prior to camp.
	Market and promote camp.
	Follow and enforce camp rules.
	Serve on committees or other groups to plan programs at camp.
	Assist staff and other counselors with camp activities; work as a team to implement the activities.
	Know and understand all safety guidelines, including emergency procedures, associated with the camp and program areas.
Teaching	Conduct self in an appropriate manner before, during, and after camp while serving as a role model to campers and peers.
	Promote camper participation during camp.
	Teach and lead campers at workshops or during other components at camp (table setting, song leading, etc.).
	Lead and supervise campers in activities at camp including but not limited to songs, teambuilding challenges, group activities, challenges, etc.
	Mentor and give guidance to campers to encourage positive youth development and enhancement of life skills.
	Serve in a leadership and teaching role to other counselors.

Figure 1. Camp Counselor Roles and Responsibilities (Epley et al., 2017)

The roles of camp counselors can create life-enhancing experiences and growth of compassion; however, when camp counselors are taking care of campers, who is taking care of them? In a ten-week study, Stanfield (2019) looked at camp counselors who observed counselors

in two, three, and four-week increments to determine the level and severity of burnout counselors face from stressors. Burnout is when someone begins to feel hopeless, inadequate, and unable to help others because of these feelings; it affects the well-being and has the potential to lower the satisfaction of clients or, in this case, the camper's overall camp experience and satisfaction (Smart et al., 2014). It is recommended that camps implement compassion satisfaction prior to camp programs for staff and counselors to help identify potential stressors and stress thresholds to ensure that burnout does not occur, keeping counselors at the forefront of the camp experience (Stanfield, 2019).

In 2020 the American Camp Association developed "The Camp Program Quality Assessment" to help camp staff ensure that programs meet the quality programming checkoff list for positive youth development experiences. The checklist itself is extensively focusing on the following practices:

1. Staff friendliness and Circulation: warm tone, respectful language, eye contact, friendly gestures, responsive, circulating, interacting one-on-one, and actively involved.
2. Emotional Safety: demonstrating respect, addressing incidents, initiative, and responding with respect.
3. Support for Belonging: facilitating youth activities to create a sense of belonging
4. High expectations and Good challenge: encourage, provide opportunities, challenge campers, ensure appropriate activities, time management, and ask challenging questions.
5. Active and Cooperative Learning: create opportunities for campers to use or develop cognitive skills and facilitate group activities and experiences.

6. Camper Voice: ensure campers have a say in their time spent, open-ended activities, creativity, and share control of activities.
7. Planning and Reflection: campers create activities, timekeeping, reflection, engagement with the intent to reflect, and time for debriefing questions.
8. Nature (Optional): explore outdoors, utilize nature, familiarize, and explore different nature topics (American Camp Association, 2020).

A goal of camping programs for campers is the development of social-emotional skills (SEL). However, Johnson (2011) has found that counselors also gain SEL while facilitating their roles and responsibilities. “Social-emotional learning (SEL) is a skill set that develops over time and through engagement with an array of individuals and opportunities that support social and emotional health across the lifespan” (Owens & Brown, 2021, pg. 8). Camp counselors' most common self-development increases of self-confidence, self-esteem, understanding of oneself, appreciation of nature, and a sense of responsible following (Johnson et al., 2011). Placing college students in the role of camp counselors for high school-aged campers has proven to be effective in developing future leaders, professional attributes, and emerging adulthood skills, such as social-emotional that are sought out by potential employers (Ford et al., 2020; Martin & Strom, 2017; Owens & Browne, 2021). Campers find that counselors who are similar in age are easier to connect and relate to, so they feel as though they are likely to learn more about “relationship skills, identity, confidence, sport and leisure skills, independence, living in the moment, leadership, emotion regulation, and willingness to try new things” (Wilson et al., 2019, pg. 273). Further, counselors who participate in camps related to their potential careers have the chance to gain experience in the field that they would otherwise not have the opportunity to see or participate in shaping their professional identity (Ford et al., 2020).

Impact of Professional Development Skills among College Students

In the 1990s, colleges shifted their career development practices from job placement to career development and planning services (Rayman, 1993). This change created career development centers at universities that would begin to focus on professional development skills such as self-presentation, networking, teamwork, leadership, and more to gain competitive skills sought after to enter the workforce (Blau & Snell, 2013). However, the number of undergraduate students who take advantage of the professional and career development activities that the career centers offer does accurately represent the undergraduate population (Lipka, 2008). Since the early 2000s, there has been a steady decrease in the percentage of students who find a job within 12 months of graduating college, and research shows that extended periods of time in which a student cannot find a job, then it negatively impacts their mental health (Blustein et al., 2012; Stone et al., 2012). Blau & Snell (2013) pose that an increase in professional development engagement of undergraduate students can enhance the likelihood of having a job upon graduation.

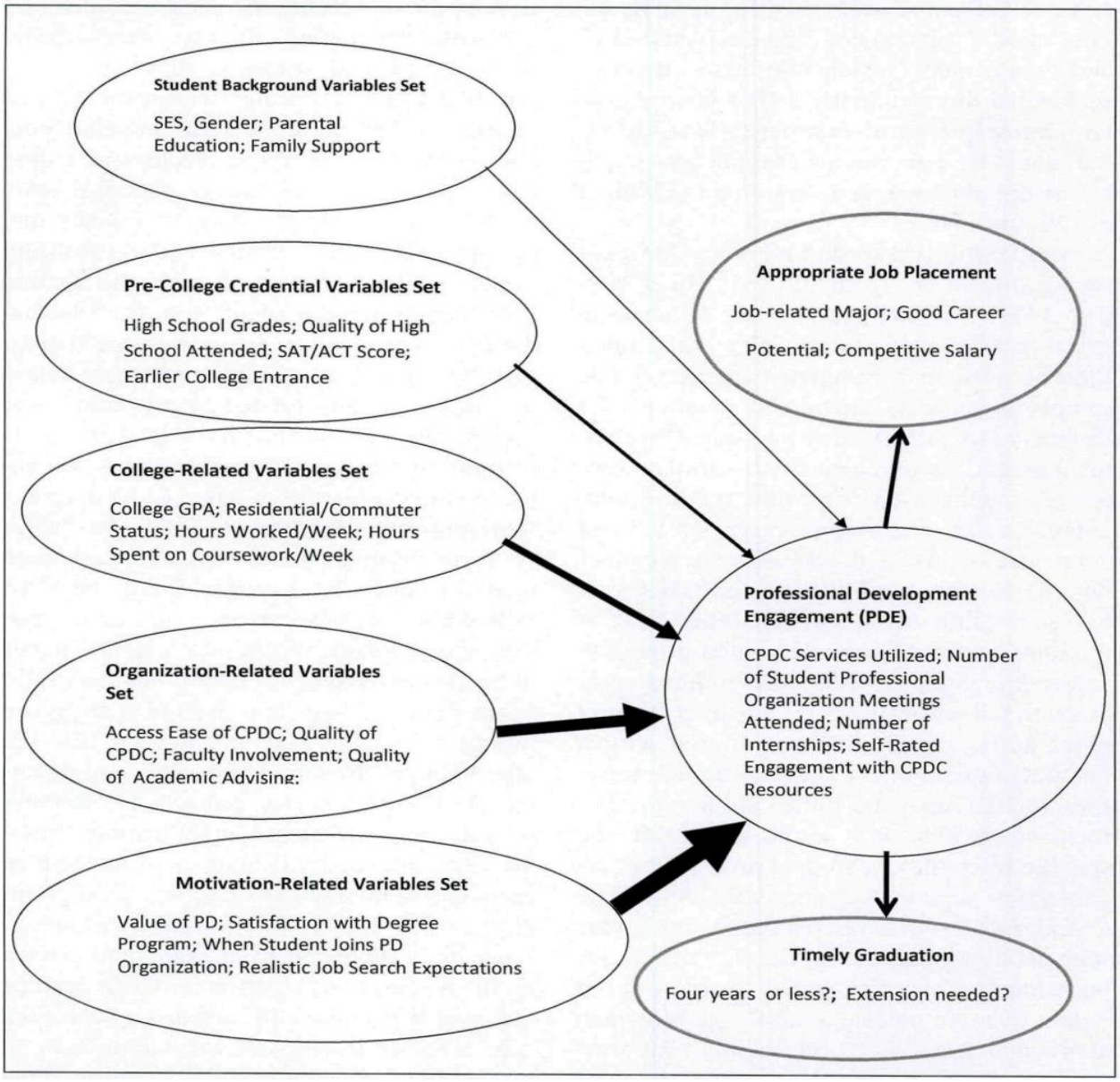

Figure 2. A conceptual model for Understanding Professional Development Engagement and its Impact (Blau & Snell, 2013)

Professional development skills have been shown to increase success in the classroom, academically, and the ability to graduate on time (Appleby, 2017; Blau & Snall, 2013). Activities and courses that facilitate professional development skill advancement are often field experiences or practical training scenarios (Su & Chung, 2015); examples of this include mock interviews, networking events, public speaking or listening to speakers, job shadowing,

internships or workshops (Blau & Snell, 2013). Students learn these skills through active participation, interactions with peers, professionals, instructors, the environment, and cultural experiences (Knight, 2002).

While career centers focus on the future of undergraduate students' career development, other skill sets, such as professional development, also help prepare students for leadership roles within on-campus organizations (Arnold, 2018). Student leaders are more effective when provided with the appropriate training and development opportunities (Gentul, 1998). Students who participate in leadership roles within organizations and take the time to self-reflect on their position and experience are more likely to increase their willingness to further advance their professional development skills (Su & Chung, 2015). The professional development needs of college students vary depending on the activities, involvement, type of organization, leadership roles, and time (Hoover, 2004). Students involved in organizations on campus rate professional development as a top reason for participating and being an active member, along with the chance of scholarship opportunities (Powell & Agnew, 2007).

College Student Motivation & Engagement

There are two main types of motivation, intrinsic and extrinsic; intrinsic is defined as internal fulfillment, while extrinsic can be defined as external fulfillment (Clark et al., 2010). An example of extrinsic can be praise from a parent or professor, and an example of intrinsic motivation would be self-joy. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for college students correlate with their academic motivation to learn and be engaged (Clark & Schroth, 2020). Student engagement can hold many different definitions depending on who defines it: a student, a university faculty member, or a researcher. However, one common theme that most agree on is that student engagement inside and outside campus is a highly desirable trait among students in

academics (Garrett, 2011). The more the student is involved in the classroom or lecture-type structure, the more the student is likely to become invested in studying and learning (Horstmanshof & Zimitat, 2007). Student engagement is an essential factor driving graduation success among undergraduate students within four-five years (Blau & Snell, 2013).

A factor in students feeling motivated to join campus activities and organizations is a sense of belonging and a sense of being valued; this is often seen as emotional, psychological, and behavioral engagement (Gunuc & Kuzu, 2015). Students who participate in extra-circular activities, such as campus organizations or volunteer activities, are less likely to drop out of school (Mahoney & Cairns, 1997). Southern New Hampshire University recommends five tips for staying motivated in college: pursuing passions; setting and organizing goals; developing and leaning on a support system; celebrating all wins, big or small; and embracing the college journey (Maddocks, 2018). When students feel that they 'love' whatever they are doing, either participating in an organization or the classroom, they are more likely to feel motivated to be engaged, and the more they engage academically (Zhang et al., 2018).

Chapter Summary

The theory of student involvement guided this research study in creating an effective learning environment for students to develop and grow within their professional development skills. The five principles that this theory is grounded in are that involvement requires an investment, involvement is continuous and can vary from student to student, it is both qualitative and quantitative, and what is gained from the learning experience depends on how much the student was involved, and involvement is connected to academic performance (Astin, 1984).

The review of this literature dove deep into the impacts and roles that camps have on campers, the impacts that are working at camps have on camp counselors, the impact of

professional development skills on college students, and the motivation of college students to learn and engage outside of the classroom. Camp programs have significantly changed over the last 18 years; they offer escapes and learning opportunities for campers away from home (Gershon, 2016; Smith, 2006). While campers have positive youth development experiences while participating in the camp, camp counselors are the ones who facilitate those learning experiences. Camp counselors gain social-emotional and professional development skills while implementing camp programs and activities and from interacting with campers and other staff members (Owens & Brown, 2021). These skills will ultimately be used in the career force and are sought after by potential employers (Blau & Snell, 2013). Not only do camp counselors have the ability to learn more skills that could be beneficial, but they also have the chance to implement the skills throughout the week of camp. For this study, camp counselors are undergraduate students, which is even more important in gaining professional development skills as they will soon enter the workforce. College students are often motivated to learn and participate by feeling they belong, are valued, and love what they do (Gunuc & Kuzu, 2015; Zhang et al., 2018).

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The purpose of this research study was to determine if the role of serving as a camp counselor positively impacts professional development skills through student leadership competencies for NC State Livestock Science Camp Counselors. This quantitative research targets communication, personal behavior, and interpersonal interaction competencies, allowing camp counselors to grow and develop.

Research Questions

- How does professional development increase in the NC State Livestock Camp counselor as the semester and camp progresses compared to before the start?
- What impact does professional development and engagement as a camp counselor have on Student Leadership Competency development?
- To what extent has the camp counseling experience impacted their existing knowledge of animal science?

Research Design

The research design of this quantitative study uses pre- and post-surveys, Likert scale data, and field note observations to understand the increase in professional development skills in the Livestock Science Camp counselors. The longitudinal survey design allows the researcher to observe the participants over time to allow for growth (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The use of pre-post surveys helps to determine an intervention's impact; in this research study, the

intervention was a professional development tool between the pre- and post-survey (Nimon, 2011).

The professional development tool included four steps; the first was to read definition or ability created by Dr. Corey Seemiller (2013), the second was to watch either a professional TedTalk or Linkedin Learning video, the third was to read a prompt that enticed reflections or critical thinking skills, and lastly to implement that specific professional development skill in writing. An example of this is shared below and can also be found in Appendix B.

Listening- (Appendix B)

> Ability: Being able to engage in strategies that assist in accurately receiving a message that someone conveys through verbal communication (Seemiller, 2013).

1. Watch:
    a) Listen with the Intent to Understand - LinkedIn Learning (2:59)
    b) 5 Ways to Listen Better- Ted Talk (7:34)
2. Things to think about:
    a) Think about a time when you really felt like someone was actively listening to you and think about how that made you feel.
3. Show me: (1 paragraph)
    a) Share a time when you were not actively listening. What was the situation? What would you do differently?

The consent forms were electronically delivered and signed through Qualtrics, a secure software program for NC State University faculty and staff members. The data from the online survey process and observations were stored in a secure excel file. The online survey, *The Student Leadership Competencies: 360 Self-Evaluation*, used for the research was a validated survey created by an expert and award-winning author, professor, researcher, and speaker in the

field of leadership competencies, Dr. Corey Seemiller. The results were quantified and analyzed to determine if the professional development skills and leadership competencies have increased, stayed the same, or decreased. If the skills have shown improvement in the post-survey and have been appropriately implemented, then the counselors have shown growth and development in their professional development skills. If the data shows that the participants stayed the same or decreased in the post-survey results compared to the pre-survey results, then it could mean they have increased their own awareness of what they thought they knew about that professional development skill. This study was conducted with approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at NC State to conduct research on human subjects and was assigned an exempt status (IRB Protocol 24769) on February 24th, 2022.

Study Population

This was a population study; therefore, all 2022 Livestock Science Camp counselors were made aware of the research being conducted and were prompted with the option of participating. Six out of eight counselors agreed to participate in this study. Once the counselors consented to the research, their university email was obtained; however, each participant was assigned a de-identified number to protect their anonymity. Participants were not compensated for their participation in this research; however, they were compensated for their involvement as a Livestock Science Camp Counselor. It is important to note that their participation in this research was not shared with the camp director, who also serves as a professor and a member of the researcher's committee; therefore, it would not affect their employment, grades, or class standing.

Data Collection

Quantitative methods were used to collect survey data. Once the camp director had selected counselors, a meeting was held to read the recruitment script approved by the NC State Institutional Review Board. A Qualtrics link was sent to all Livestock Science Camp Counselors, where they had the opportunity to review the consent form once again and determine their participation. If they agreed, they were given a link to the pre-survey created by Dr. Corey Seemiller on self-prediction of behavior for specific leadership competencies, *The Student Leadership Competencies: 360 Self-Evaluation* (Rosch & Seemiller, 2011; Seemiller, 2013). Participants' results were submitted to the researcher for review; the researcher then analyzed the results deciphering which of the ten pre-determined student leadership competencies the participants had the most room for improvement. This was determined on if the participant scored a four (about equivalent) or lowered on the pre-survey. The researcher met with the participants to assign them professional development tools; this included four steps, definitions, watching education and learning videos, critical thinking, and then display of knowledge. (Appendix B) Participants were given restricted access to the professional development tools they were assigned for up to four weeks before the start of Livestock Science Camp. During the week of the residential camp, the researcher observed the participants using an observational chart (Appendix A) with field notes. After the camp concluded, the participants took the same validated survey they took as a pre-survey as their post-survey, *The Student Leadership Competencies: 360 Self-Evaluation*. The residential camp started on June 12th, 2022 and ended on June 17th, 2022. Throughout the week of camp, the researcher used the observational chart twice a day at random times throughout the week and tallied the number of times the camp counselor was displaying that student leadership competency effectively. Camp counselors had

two weeks post-camp to complete the follow-up assessments. While 60 different leadership competencies were evaluated, this research study only focused on the following ten: productive relationships, mentoring, nonverbal communication, verbal communication, listening, facilitation, responsibility, ethics, positive attitude, and confidence. The researcher then analyzed the pre-and post- evaluations in relation to the observations to determine/uncover a change in the professional development skills of the camp counselors.

The participants were assigned a de-identified number that they would be referred to until the end of the research study. Six individuals agree to participate in the survey out of eight counselors, resulting in a 75% response. All participant information remained confidential throughout the study; all data and information were stored on password-protected computers and approved software through NC State.

Instrumentation

The development of this research began with a recent quantitative study determining the top-rated competencies of past 4-H camp counselors by 4-H camp counselors (Sutphin, 2021). Using the Delphi Technique, past 4-H counselors rated teamwork, work ethics, initiative & independence, communication, relationship building, compassion, problem-solving, and creativity as their topmost important competencies of being a camp counselor (Sutphin, 2021). Using a Likert scale, responsibility and engaged camper-centered were rated as the top competencies for counselors (Sutphin, 2021). Due to these top-rated competencies being proved critical for camp counselors and their success, these competencies served as a good base for this research.

The top-rated competencies were then compared to a sub-scale of the 60 student leadership competencies inventory created by Dr. Corey Seemiller and Dr. David Rosch (2018).

Ten competencies were collected from the student leadership competencies that matched definitions using the top nine Delphi Technique and Likert Scale competencies. It was important that these competencies could also be observed for field notes. A comparison to the similar definitions that are both deemed critical for camp counselor success and included and measured by student leadership competencies is communication. Seemiller (2013) separates communication into several different categories such as verbal, non-verbal, and listening. Sutphin (2021) defines communication as the ability to communicate effectively with peers, adults and youth…ability to communicate across different modes. For this reason utilized all breakdowns of Seemillers communication student leadership competencies. For example Seemiller (2013) defines nonverbal communication as effectively communicating verbally with others one on one, in groups, and/or in front of a large audience.

With the permission and direction of Dr. Corey Seemiller, the instrument used was the *Student Leadership Competencies: 360 Self-Evaluation*. *The Student Leadership Competencies: 360 Self-Evaluation* measures the self-perception of practiced behaviors of the students related to those 60 student leadership competencies (Rosch & Seemiller, 2018). This survey was used as the pre-and post-survey, measuring on a seven-point scale (*1=exceptionally higher, 2=considerably higher, 3=somewhat higher, 4= about equivalent, 5=somewhat lower, 6= considerably lower, 7=exceptionally lower*) (Rosch & Seemiller, 2018). Even though the survey measures over 60 student leadership competencies, only ten student leadership competencies were focused on in the results.

Statistical Analysis

After the first participant submitted results to the research, data organization began by using an excel spreadsheet for both pre-and post-survey data. All identifying data was removed and each participant was assigned a de-identified number ranging from one to six to ensure that their identity was protected from start to finish. This helps to ensure that there is no reasonable basis to believe that any information provided in the data set could be used after publication to identify an individual who was a participant in the data (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Due to the small number of participants, the descriptive statistic of means and percentages were used to describe the changes in the data sets.

Methodology Summary

This study focuses on Livestock Science Camp counselors and measures their professional development skills gained from participating in this camp program. A pre- and post-survey design involving 6 participants out of 8 counselors resulted in a 75% response rate. The instrument used was *The Student Leadership Competencies: 360 Self-Evaluation*, created by Dr. Corey Seemiller and Dr. David Rosch (2018). The competencies evaluated in this research study were comparable to the top ten competencies most important to 4-H camp counselors in a Delphi study (Sutphin, 2021). Productive relationships, mentoring, nonverbal communication, verbal communication, listening, facilitation, responsibility, ethics, positive attitude, and confidence were the competencies that served as the basis for the professional development tools that participants completed and then implemented during the week of camp. Descriptive statistics of mean and percentages were used due to the small sample size.

CHAPTER IV

Findings

This chapter is organized into the following sections: (a) purpose of the study, (b) research question one results, (c) research question two results, and (d) research question three results.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study was to determine if the role of serving as a camp counselor positively impacts professional development skills through student leadership competencies for NC State Livestock Science Camp Counselors. This quantitative research targets communication, personal behavior, and interpersonal interaction competencies, which allow for the growth and development of camp counselors.

Research Questions:

- How does professional development increase in the NC State Livestock camp counselor as the semester and camp progress compared to before the start?
- What impact does professional development and engagement as a camp counselor have on Student Leadership Competency development?
- To what extent has the camp counseling experience impacted their existing knowledge of animal science?

Research Question 1: How does professional development increase in the NC State Livestock camp counselor as the semester and camp progress compared to before the start?

Research question one aims to determine if participants grew between the time of the pre-survey, the implementation of the professional development tools, the implement the professional development competency at Livestock Science Camp, and the post-survey. A 7-point Likert Scale was used in the pre-and post-survey from exceptionally lower to exceptionally higher. Table 1 shows the results of the pre-and post-surveys based on the number of participants who rated productive relationships, mentoring, communication: nonverbal, communication: verbal, communication: listening, communication: facilitation, personal, behavior: responsibility, personal behavior: ethics, personal behavior: positive attitude, personal behavior, and confidence on the 7-points Likert Scale. Table 2 displays how each individual participant increased, decreased or stayed the same within the different competencies.

The most significant change in this data set from the pre-survey to the post-survey is non-verbal communication and listening. In the pre-survey for both nonverbal communication and listening of the ten other student leadership competencies only one participant rated themselves somewhat higher when compared the post-survey data where four participants rated themselves as somewhat higher on the seven-point Likert scale (Table 1). This could mean one of two things, participants increased from lower on the Likert scale such as rating nonverbal communication as somewhat lower or about equivalent and then increased in the post-survey data or participants could've rated themselves as considerably higher and then decreased on the Likert score in the post-survey bringing it down to somewhat higher.

Nonverbal communication productive relationships, and facilitation are the only student leadership competencies that saw an overall increase across the data (Table 2). All other student leadership competencies, mentoring, verbal communication, listening, responsibility, ethics, positive attitude, and confidence did see a decrease within participants. This does not mean that participants did not increase on the Likert scale. For example, participant three increased one Likert scale point for listening even though the average was an overall decrease. Vice versa to this point, productive relationships had an overall increase however participant four decrease by one Likert scale point.

Observation data was collected two times a day during the duration of camp. This meant that camp counselors had the opportunity to display their assigned professional development skill and student leadership competency throughout multiple times of the day. Times of observations throughout the day were not known to the counselors. Observations were broken down into three categories, always, sometimes and never. For example, if when the researcher was observing the participant was not displaying one of the key competencies then they received a never. The observational data set consistently displayed that participants came into this study with previous knowledge of their assigned professional development tools and leadership skills.

Table 1.

Student Leadership Competencies – 360 Evaluation ($n^{pretest}=6$, $n^{posttest}=6$)

	Exceptionally Lower		Considerably Lower		Somewhat Lower		About Equivalent		Somewhat Higher		Considerably Higher		Exceptionally Higher	
	Pre-	*Post-*	*Pre-*	*Post-*	*Pre-*	*Post-*	*Pre-*	*Post-*	*Pre-*	*Post-*	*Pre-*	*Post-*	*Pre-*	*Post-*
Productive Relationships	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	4	3	1	2	-	-
Mentoring	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	4	2	1	1	1	1
Communication: Nonverbal	-	-	-	-	1	1	2	-	1	4	2	1	-	-
Communication: Verbal	-	-	-	-	1	1	2	4	2	1	1	-	-	-
Communication: Listening	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	2	1	4	2	-	-	-
Communication: Facilitation	-	-	-	-	2	1	1	2	3	2	-	1	-	-
Personal Behavior: Responsibility	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	3	2	1	2	1	-
Personal Behavior: Ethics	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4	3	2	2	-	-
Personal Behavior: Positive Attitude	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	3	4	1	-
Personal Behavior: Confidence	-	-	-	-	1	-	3	3	1	3	1	-	-	-

Note. Likert Scale: 1= Exceptionally Lower, 2= Considerably Lower, 3= Somewhat Lower, 4= About Equivalent, 5= Somewhat Higher, 6= Considerably Higher, 7= Exceptionally Higher

Table 2.

Student Leadership Competencies Averages Change Pre and Post – 360 Evaluation ($n^{pretest}=6$, $n^{posttest}=6$)

	Productive Relation-ships	**Mentoring**	**Commun-ication: Nonverbal**	**Commun-ication: Verbal**	**Commun-ication: Listening**	**Commun ication: Facilitation**	**Personal Behavior: Respons-ibility**	**Personal Behavior: Ethics**	**Personal Behavior: Positive Attitude**	**Personal Behavior: Confidence**
Participant 1	0	0	-1	-1	-2	0	0	0	-1	+1
Participant 2	0	-1	+1	0	0	1	0	0	-1	0
Participant 3	0	0	0	0	+1	2	0	0	0	+1
Participant 4	-1	-1	0	-2	0	-1	-2	-2	0	-1
Participant 5	2	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
Participant 6	0	-1	1	0	-1	-1	-1	0	0	-1
Average:	+0.16	-0.33	+0.16	-0.5	-0.16	+0.3	-0.3	-0.16	-0.16	-0.11

Research Question 2: What impact does professional development and engagement as a camp counselor have on Student Leadership Competency development?

Research question two aimed to determine the effectiveness of participants' learning process of the leadership competencies within the professional development tools to potentially serve as career skills. Participants had the opportunity to implement the skills learned during Livestock Science Camp. During the second survey, participants rated their knowledge of the professional development skills they worked on between the pre- and post-survey. Another part of this survey included rating their belief in the importance of these professional development skills in the long-term, such as in their career, and if they had received a promotion after Livestock Science camp, such as in their job or within an organization on campus and if so, do they feel that their professional development work helped them in that process. Table 3 shows that participants (n=5) used a 7-point Likert scale, that ranged from strongly disagree, to strongly agree. *One participant did not respond to the second survey.*

60% of participants strongly agreed that the student leadership competencies will support them in their professional careers, and 40% agreed. 40% of participants strongly agreed that the professional development tools created on the bases of student leadership competencies were helpful during their learning process. One question included in this survey was to understand if the skills learned had been helpful in receiving a promotion in a job outside of school or within an extracurricular activity such as a school organization. One participant had received a promotion and did feel that the professional development tools played a role in receiving that promotion.

Table 3.

Follow-up Survey Responses- Likert Scale (n=5)

	I better understand the professional development skills that I worked on prior to and during camp.	**I found the Professional Development Tools on Moodle that I was assigned helpful and beneficial.**	**These skills will provide long-term support in your professional career.**	**Have you received a promotion since participating in this research opportunity?**	**If so, do you believe that professional development skills played a role?**
1	6	6	6	Yes	Yes
2	6	7	7	No	-
3	7	7	7	No	-
4	6	6	6	No	-
5	7	7	7	No	-
Average:	6.4	6.6	6.6	+0.16	+0.16

Note. Scale: 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Somewhat Disagree, 4= Neutral, 5= Somewhat Agree, 6= Agree, 7= Strongly Agree

Research Question 3: To what extent has the camp counseling experience impacted their existing knowledge of animal science?

Livestock Science Camp counselors are students in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at NC State University, normally with a passion for livestock knowledge so they can contribute to the planning and execution of camp activities. While the goal of the Livestock Science camp is to serve youth who are interested in the livestock industry, the camp strives to create positive learning experiences for counselors as well. During the follow-up survey, participants (n=5) were asked to rate their knowledge of the livestock industry pre-camp and post-camp in the form of a 7-point Likert scale. 100% of participants felt that livestock science camp overall impacted their existing knowledge of animal science. Out of the 7-point Likert scale, the average for knowledge prior to camp was 4.2, which is between about equivalent and somewhat higher. Post livestock science camp participants rated their knowledge an average of 5.2 to be between somewhat higher and considerably higher. *One participant did not respond to the second survey.*

Table 4.

Animal Science Knowledge Survey Results (n= 5)

	How would you rate your livestock Science knowledge PRE Livestock Science Camp?	***How would you rate your livestock Science knowledge POST Livestock Science Camp?***	***Do you feel that Livestock Science Camp impacted your existing knowledge of animal science?***
1	4	6	Yes
2	4	6	Yes
3	4	5	Yes
4	4	5	Yes
5	5	5	Yes
Average:	4.2	5.4	100%

Note. Likert Scale: 1= Exceptionally Lower, 2= Considerably Lower, 3= Somewhat Lower, 4= About Equivalent, 5= Somewhat Higher, 6= Considerably Higher, 7= Exceptionally Higher

Summary of Key Findings

The following is a summary of the key findings of this study, organized by research questions.

Research Question 1: How does professional development increase in the NC State Livestock camp counselor as the semester and camp progress compared to before the start?

The results of research question one target the pre- and post-survey data. Table 1 shows how many participants scored specific competencies on the Likert scale, and the Table 2 shows how each individual participant increased, decreased, or stayed the same within the different competencies. Productive relationships, nonverbal communications, and facilitation of communication saw an overall increase in pre- and post-survey data. However, mentoring, verbal communication, listening, responsibility, ethics, positive attitude, and confidence resulted in an overall decrease across the data set.

Research Question 2: What impact does professional development and engagement as a camp counselor have on Student Leadership Competencies development?

A post-camp survey was delivered three months after participants had the opportunity to implement their knowledge and professional development skills during camp. 60% of participants agreed and 40% strongly agreed that they agree that they had a better understanding of professional development skills prior to the camp experiences. 60% of participants strongly agreed that the student leadership competencies will support them in their professional careers, and 40% agreed. 40% of participants strongly agreed that the professional development tools created on the bases of student leadership competencies were helpful during their learning process.

Research Question 3: To what extent has the camp counseling experience impacted their existing knowledge of animal science?

During the post-camp survey, livestock knowledge impact was also surveyed to determine if participating as a camp counselor for a livestock camp also served as a learning opportunity for the counselors. 100% of participants felt that livestock science camp overall impacted their existing knowledge of animal science. Out of the 7-point Likert scale, the average for knowledge prior to camp was 4.2, which is between about equivalent and somewhat higher. Post livestock science camp participants rated their knowledge an average of 5.2 to be between somewhat higher and considerably higher.

CHAPTER V

Summary of Study

Livestock Science Camp is a week-long program hosted through NC State University targeting youth across the east coast to help bring awareness to the millions of jobs the agriculture industry offers. Throughout the week, undergraduate students within the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences participate as camp counselors. The purpose of this research study was to determine if the role of serving as a camp counselor positively impacts professional development skills through student leadership competencies for NC State Livestock Science Camp Counselors.

This study utilized a pre- and post-survey design targeting the Livestock Science Camp counselors. Counselors participated in a self-assessment created by Dr. Corey Seemiller and Dr. David Rosch (2018), The Student Leadership Competencies: 360 Self-Evaluation; this served as the pre- and post-surveys. After camp, participants completed a post-camp survey to understand their overall knowledge of student leadership competencies, professional development skills, and the impact of animal science knowledge on counselors from Livestock Science Camp.

A total of six camp counselors participated in this research out of eight camp counselors. All six participants completed the pre-survey, professional development tools, and the post-survey. However, only seven participants responded to the post-camp survey. Due to the small sample size, descriptive statistics of means and percentages were used to describe the changes in the data sets.

Conclusion

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study was to determine if the role of serving as a camp counselor positively impacts professional development skills through student leadership competencies for NC State Livestock Science Camp Counselors. This quantitative research targets communication, personal behavior, and interpersonal interaction competencies, which allow for the growth and development of camp counselors.

Research Question 1: How does professional development increase in the NC State Livestock camp counselor as the semester and camp progress compared to before the start?

Participants used the *Student Leadership Competencies: 360 Self-Evaluation* designed to measure self-perception for practiced behaviors in their pre-and post-survey (Rosch & Seemiller, 2018). Between the pre- and post-survey, participants completed professional development tools (Appendix B) to help them understand those competencies where improvement was needed, reflect on their newfound learning, and then had the opportunity to implement their new skills two different times, one in the professional development activity, and the other throughout the week of camp.

Due to the small number of participants, the descriptive statistic of means and percentages were used to describe the changes in the data sets. Productive relationships, nonverbal communication, and facilitation were the competencies that had the greatest overall increase from the pre-and post-survey. As a camp counselor, productive relationships can be described as the "ability to quickly establish rapport with youth and peers… and the ability to

create a welcoming environment" (Sutphin, 2021, pg. 50). Being able to build productive relationships is a critical competency in serving as a camp counselor. Variations of productive relationships can be found in counselor competency models used to facilitate successful camp programs for counselors (American Camp Association, 2020; Epley et al., 2014; Peace Core, 2013). Seemiller (2013) describes facilitation as "effectively managing the group process during a meeting, pre-sensation, or gathering without inputting one's opinion by directing the flow of discussion, asking prompt questions, and keeping the group on track" (pg. 96). This is comparable to the definition of Epley's et al. (2014) counselor competency model that describes facilitation as the ability to lead, interact, engage, and motivate campers along with leading hands-on or experiential learning processes of campers. Seemiller (2013) breaks down communication between verbal, non-verbal, and facilitation. The majority of camp counselor models group communication together and include in the definition that various methods of communication are essential. Starr et al. (2009) include communication as a vital component in creating a safe and equitable environment for campers through counselor awareness of their communication skills and willingness to learn new communication skills. Non-verbal communication entails the ability to actively listen (Seemiller, 2013) to campers; effective communication skills include being able to use cues such as eye contact, facial expressions such as smiling or having tight lips, utilizing hand movements, and posture such as the directions someone's feet are pointing (Kent, 2021).

Some participants had an increase in individual competencies. However, there was an overall decrease in professional development skills between the pre- and post-survey. Mentoring, verbal communication, listening, personal behavior, ethics, responsibility, and confidence are the competencies that overall decreased among participants. We can assume that this is due to

overconfidence in the pre-self-assessments. Participants potentially rated themselves higher in the pre-survey due to their overconfidence in performing or understanding their knowledge of student leadership competencies. Overconfidence can interfere with the learning process after the pre-survey as participants had the opportunity to learn more about the student leadership competencies they needed to improve (Ehrlinger et al., 2016). However, all participants showed at least some level of knowledge of student leadership competencies with their presurvey results therefore, they are more likely to gain more from the learning process of the professional development tools and participation in camp as a camp counselor (Krajc & Ortmann, 2008).

When examining the data from the observations, it was evident that counselor teams are made up of individuals with different strengths and that is why teams are more powerful than individuals. Each counselor excelled in specific leadership competencies and when combined with the others, every leadership competency was covered. When putting together counselor teams, camp coordinators should seek out counselors who each bring forth their own unique set of contributions and skills.

Research Question 2: What impact does professional development and engagement as a camp counselor have on Student Leadership Competencies development?

One of the goals of this study was to provide the skills needed to potentially enter the workforce and provide participants with the chance to implement the skills learned from the professional development tools and student leadership competencies. Implementation is the process of identifying and putting into practice the skills learned. Connecting and implementing student leadership competencies for camp counselors provides the skills needed to enter the workforce after graduation. Additional experiences and opportunities outside the classroom are needed to help youth develop the much-needed sought-after skills to enter the workforce

(Casner-Lotto et al., 2006). 60% of participants strongly agreed, and the other 40% agreed that the skills learned while participating in the camp would be able to support them long-term in their professional careers. 21st-century skills employers seek are comparable to the student leadership competencies that participants implemented during the week of camp. These skills include communication, teamwork/collaboration, interpersonal skills, decision-making skills, and confidence, all of which were included in this study as student leadership competencies and professional development tools (Duerden et al., 2014). 60% of participants agreed that they better understand the student leadership competencies they had the opportunity to work on before camp and then implement during the week of camp. Quality and quantity of support, services, and opportunities are directly related to college students' progress toward their transition to the workforce (Witt & Caldwell, 2005). This connects to Astin's (1984) theory of student involvement in that the involvement requires both psychological and physical energy to be implemented for students to gain any knowledge in return. That level of knowledge is ultimately determined by the level of involvement that a student implements into their learning experience (Astin, 1984).

A total of 57% of camp counselors and staff members return to work as camp counselors or volunteer in the same camp for multiple summers in a row (American Camp Association, 2008). Camp counselors can utilize the skills they have learned for multiple summers in an outside-of-the-classroom setting. Work experiences on potential employees' applications or cover letters can be seen by employers as opportunity costs in that sacrifices had to potentially be made in choosing certain work experiences over others (Richmond et al., 2021). One participant said they had since received a promotion from participating in camp within an organization through school or at a job outside of school. They believed that professional development tools

ultimately played a role in receiving a promotion. Academic success can be related to professional success in that student involvement is connected to academic performance, similar to professional involvement is directly related to professional performance (Astin, 1984). These experiences, such as serving as a camp counselor on resumes and cover letters, show that the applicant has acquired outside knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Research Question 3: To what extent has the camp counseling experience impacted their existing knowledge of animal science?

All study participants are students within the animal science department on many different paths, such as pre-vet or industry concentrations. The study participants have a different levels of background knowledge related to animal science. More students are entering the animal science department without any prior animal science experience, which ultimately puts pressure on the department to provide the disciplinary knowledge needed to graduate and enter the workforce related to animal science (Early, 2018). To be a successful student in animal science disciplines, knowledge gained in lower-level courses must be utilized and implemented in higher-level courses to master basic skills that can be applied in real-world settings (White, 2016). Livestock science camp provides hands-on learning experiences to campers and camp counselors. However, camp counselors take on responsibilities, including communicating with the animal science department faculty members to set up hands-on learning experiences for campers. 100% of participants agreed that the livestock science camp impacted their knowledge of animal science. All participants were involved in both a teaching and learning process to increase their animal science knowledge and campers. What the participants gained from participating as livestock science camp counselors is proportional to how much they were

involved in animal science knowledge's learning and teaching process (Astin, 1984). One participant stated the following about their experience as a counselor:

> "As a high school student, I would have loved to attend a camp like this one! Each of the stations we went through at the units provided me with information that I hadn't learned yet in my classes. One of the best experiences I had during camp was at the SREU (Small Ruminant Education Unit). The campers and counselors got the opportunity to take blood from sheep, which is something that I had never done before. I really love that the counselors get an opportunity to learn new information too!"

Participants rated their pre-camp animal science knowledge with a mean of 4.2 on a 7-point Likert scale; this means that most participants thought they had equivalent knowledge in the animal science field. Two participants felt that their knowledge increased by two scale points after participating in the camp experience bringing their knowledge up to considerably higher levels. The mean for post-camp knowledge was 5.4, putting most participants' knowledge at a somewhat higher rate.

Implications

Research supports that camp programs impact campers and camp counselors (Digby & Ferrari, 2007; Epley et al., 2017; Gershon, 2016; Johnson et al., 2011; Rice et al., 2017; Smith, 2006, Thurber et al., 2007). The level at which camp counselors are impacted by serving in a faculty position is not as researched when compared to the level at which participating in camp as a camper has an on the learning experience. This research study is meant to bridge the gap between camp counselors and how camp impacts their growth and development.

The data from this research study focused on understanding how professional development skills and student leadership competence impact undergraduate students serving as camp counselors. Other camp programs can use the overall theme from this research to create an

understanding of the importance that time spent on growing and developing camp counselor skills is just as important as creating and facilitating programs for campers.

The findings from this study also support the use of training programs that fit their counselor's needs and camp goals. The data participants share can also be used for other undergraduate students interested in increasing their student leadership competencies and professional development skills as they soon enter the workforce. From an external perspective, this data can assist employers who look at experiences and see camp counselors. Not only have the camp counselors gained important work experience, but they have also had the opportunity to learn and implement their professional development skills during camp and after, along with gaining knowledge from the camp program that is beneficial to their potential careers.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. Due to the small sample size, this research should be repeated to create a better understanding of how professional development skills and student leadership competencies impact camp counselors. This study was limited to the number of hired Livestock Science Camp counselors and then decided to participate in the research study.
2. It is recommended for future research to include qualitative research methods to ensure that lived experiences and emotions of learning professional development skills are taken into consideration. Both qualitative and quantitative methods follow one of the five basic principles of Astin's Theory of Student Involvement (1984).
3. Further research on how professional development skills have been used since Livestock Science Camp is recommended. This could help understand the long-term impact of professional development impacts for camp counselors. It could benefit future camp

counselors and their willingness to learn and engage in their own growth and development throughout their time serving as camp counselors.

4. Additional research into camp counselor development with camper observations would allow for a different perspective. Creating observation protocol for campers to observe the potential growth of camp counselors and the effectiveness of student leadership competencies and professional development tools could further validate this research study.
5. It is recommended that the professional development tools created for the purpose of this research are utilized towards research studies for teen 4-H camp counselors. It would allow teen 4-H camp counselors to implement their skills multiple times before entering the work force or continuing their education in a college setting depending on their career path.
6. Additional research utilizing qualitative methods to understand participants' feelings and emotions during their learning and implementation process. These interviews may help researchers to better understand what the undergraduate students' learning process looks like and then how they use the skills soon after. This could help create better program planning opportunities to deliver skill development to undergraduate students.
7. It is recommended that future research utilizes undergraduate students who do not have the opportunity to implement professional development skills. This could serve as a comparison to learn the importance of implementation after a learning experience.
8. Additional research following camp counselors' first year of their professional career could help gain insight into the impact that student leadership competencies had on undergraduate students. This could benefit future camp counselors to understand the

work put into student leadership competencies during camp could benefit significantly in the future.

Recommendations for Practice

1. To strengthen counselor development across all camp programs, the implementation of student leadership competencies should be utilized. This gives camps the opportunity to provide practical leadership skills to camp counselors and gives them a chance to implement their new skills during the week or weeks of camp. For camp programs that last more than one week, counselors would have to opportunity to implement their skills multiple times.
2. To ensure that all camps are providing camp counselors with the same opportunity and preparation for their future, camps should mandate that all camp counselors take part in the Student Leadership Competencies and professional development tools. The professional development tools allow for counselors to utilize their own experiences to learn from therefore they are able to be utilized by anyone.
3. Camp programs that are hosted through colleges and universities often utilize the pool of students who attend those universities to serve as camp counselors. The overarching goal of colleges and universities is to provide students with skills and knowledge that would benefit them in their future careers. As college and university camp programs develop camp counselors' training, both a focus on future career development and leadership skill development should be incorporated.
4. Part of this research utilized a neutral platform for camp counselors to gain access to all training materials, along with outlets to submit training certificates that are required for working with minors and livestock. This platform or similar should be utilized

throughout all university camp programs for camp counselors. This platform can be customized to match different camp programs and their needs.

5. When possible, it is recommended previous camp counselors be used for the next camp program in the following year. Returning camp counselors can serve in mentorship positions for new camp counselors. This also gives the previous camp counselors an opportunity to further implement their skills learned in the previous year in hopes of creating stronger leaders.
6. To strengthen the understanding that camp program positions, such as counselor positions, can serve as opportunities with the same level of professional development learning and skill building similar to that of internships, it is recommended that camp programs improve their recruitment strategies. The skills gained from participating as a camp counselor have the potential to increase desirability for future employers.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A- Observation Chart

BEHAVIOR	Rating			Comments
	Sometimes	Always	Never	
a. 43				
a. Confidence				
b. 23				
a. Non-verbal				
b. Facilitation				
c. Confidence				
c. 10				
a. Non-verbal				
b. Verbal				
c. Listening				
d. Facilitation				
e. Responsibility				
f. Confidence				
d. 31				

a. Listening	
b. Positive attitude	
e. 9	
a. Productive relationships	
b. Verbal	
c. Listening	
d. Confidence	
f. 15	
a. Non-verbal	
b. Verbal	
c. Facilitation	

Behavior:

1. **Productive Relationships:** Cultivating connections or associations with others that contribute positively to the well-being of those involved.
2. **Mentoring:** Using one's expertise and experience to teach, coach, share resources, and challenge individuals with less experience and/or knowledge so that they can reach their potential.
3. **Verbal Communication**: effectively communicating verbally with others one on one, in groups, and/or in front of a large audience.
4. **Nonverbal Communication**: using body language, gestures, facial expressions, and/or contact with and proximity to others to either complement verbal communication or serve as communication in and of itself.
5. **Listening:** engage in strategies that assist in accurately receiving a message that someone conveys through verbal communication.
6. **Facilitation:** Effectively managing the group process during a meeting, pre-sensation, or gathering without inputting one's opinion by directing the flow of discussion, asking prompt questions, and keeping the group on track.

7. **Responsibility for Personal Behavior**: Taking responsibility for one's own behavior by admitting mistakes, apologizing, rectifying the situation, and accepting the consequences of one's actions.
8. **Ethics**: Upholding standards of conduct based on socially accepted values
9. **Positive Attitude**: Exhibiting an optimistic outlook by identifying the positive aspects of a situation and displaying a "can do" attitude.
10. **Confidence:** Appearing certain of one's beliefs, knowledge, convictions, and/or capabilities.

Appendix B - Professional Development Tools

Productive Relationships-

Ability: Being able to cultivate connections or associations with others that contribute positively to the well-being of those involved (Seemiller, 2013).

1. Watch:

a) The Power Of Relationships - TedTalk (15:56)

b) Building Productive Relationships - LinkedIn Learning (2:52)

2. Things to think about:

a) Reflect on a relationship you would consider productive and identify those attributes that make it productive. Reflect on a relationship that you would consider non-productive and identify those attributes. Then compare the two attributes to see the differences.

b) Brainstorm a productive relationship in your life that has a positive force in your life, consider why this relationship is valuable to you.

3. Show me: (1 paragraph or max of 10 bulleted steps)

a) Think of a relationship that you would like to cultivate and outline the steps you would take to develop this relationship into a productive one.

Mentoring-

Ability: Being able to use one's expertise and experience to teach, coach, share resources, and challenge individuals with less experience or knowledge to reach their potential (Seemiller, 2013).

1. Watch:

a) Mentoring Others- LinkedIn learning (2:18)

b) How to be a Great Mentor -TedTalk (14:34)

2. Thinks to think about:

a) Reflect on your mentos and what you have gained from that relationship.

b) Brainstorm some benefits of mentoring in general and within youth development.

a) Show me: (1 paragraph)

Think about an area in your life in which you have experience and/or expertise about anything. What information should be the most important you would share with a mentee who is less experienced, and the best way to go about sharing that information to be successful.

Verbal Communication

Ability: being able to effectively communicate verbally with others one on one, in groups, and/or in front of a large audience (Seemiller, 2013).

o Professional Development Tool:

1. Watch:

a) Improve your Verbal Communication - LinkedIn Learning (2:50)

b) The Art of Effective Communication -TedTalk (12:08)

2. Things to think about:

a) Why do leaders need to be able to communicate verbally effectively?

b) Think about a time a friend or colleague effectively communicated something to you; maybe you were inspired or influenced by how they were speaking to you. Think about the impact that might have had on you.

3. Show me: (1 paragraph)

a) Tell me about a time when you did not use effective communication (examples could be in your relationship, during a one-on-one conversation, class presentation, running a meeting, etc.). Tell me how you would have handled it differently.

Non-verbal Communication

Ability: Being able to effectively convey meaning without the use of words; this may be done by body language, gestures, facial expressions, and/or contact with and proximity to others to either complement verbal communication or serve as communication in and of itself (Seemiller, 2013).

1. Watch:

a) Nonverbal Communication - LinkedIn Learning (3:34)

b) The Power of Non-verbal Communication- TedTalk (12:55)

2. Things to think about:

a) Think about the use of nonverbal communication in leadership situations.

b) Think about a time when someone used nonverbal communication with you. Was it effective?

3. Show me: (1 paragraph)

a. Note the nonverbal actions that you used today. What did you do a lot? Was the non-verbal communication effective? Was it interpreted correctly?

Listening-

Ability: Being able to engage in strategies that assist in accurately receiving a message that someone conveys through verbal communication (Seemiller, 2013).

1. Watch:

a) Listen with the Intent to Understand - LinkedIn Learning (2:59)

b) 5 Ways to Listen Better- Ted Talk (7:34)

2. Things to think about:

a) Think about a time when you really felt like someone was actively listening to you and think about how that made you feel.

3. Show me: (1 paragraph)

a) Share a time when you were not actively listening. What was the situation? What would you do differently?

Facilitation-

Being able to effectively manage the group process during a meeting, pre-sensation, or gathering without inputting one's opinion by directing the flow of discussion, asking prompt questions, and keeping the group on track (Seemiller, 2013).

1. Watch:

a) Different types of Facilitation - LinkedIn learning (4:50)

b) Art of Facilitation - TedTalk (18:06)

2. Things to think about:

a) Think about a time when you experienced ineffective facilitation. How did the rest of the meeting or the situation turn out?

3. Show me: (1 paragraph, or max ten bulleted points)

a) What are some straights and weaknesses in facilitators?

Responsibility for Personal Behavior

Ability: Being motivated to take responsibility for one's own behavior by admitting mistakes, apologizing, rectifying the situation, and accepting the consequences of one's actions (Seemiller, 2013).

1. Watch:

a) Responsibility vs. Accountability - LinkedIn Learning (1:39)

b) Taking Responsibility - TedTalk (12:17)

2. Things to think about:

a) Think about a time when someone did not take responsibility for their behavior. What was that experience like, and how did it affect other things or other people?

b) Think about the most important reason it's vital to take responsibility for your own actions or behaviors.

3. Show me: (1 paragraph)

a) What is an action that you have engaged in intentionally or unintentionally that had negative consequences? How did you handle the aftermath and what could you have done differently?

Ethics-

Ability: Being motivated to uphold standards of conduct based on socially accepted values (Seemiller, 2013).

1. Watch:

a) Ethics - LinkedIn Learning (3:00)

b) Ethics: Yes, Even When Nobody is Watching - TedTalk (16:00)

2. Things to think about:

a) What is considered unethical behavior?

b) Why are ethics important in leadership? Reflect on a time that you acted unethically.

3. Show me: (1 paragraph)

a) Think about what makes you or others do unethical things. Give an example and a strategy that could change the likelihood of you or someone else doing something unethical.

Positive Attitude-

Ability: Being motivated to exhibit an optimistic outlook by identifying the positive aspects of a situation and displaying a "can do" attitude (Seemiller, 2013).

1. Watch:

a) How to Create and Keep a Positive Attitude - LinkedIn Learning (2:19)

b) The Power of Positive Attitude - Ted Talk (17:55)

2. Things to think about:

a) Think about how a positive attitude can affect others. Also, think about how negative attitudes affect others.

b) Why do we think it's important for leaders to exhibit positive attitudes?

c) Think about how someone's negative attitude affected your attitude. How did that make you feel? Was it easy to then change your attitude?

3. Show me: (1 paragraph)

a) Share with me what motivates you to demonstrate a positive attitude. Share what strategies you use to fight off negativity.

OR

b. Think about a negative situation in your life right now. It could be a small scale like a difficult group assignment or a big one like a relationship but write down the positive aspects of that situation. This will not be easy, but it is doable.

Confidence-

Ability: Being able to appear certain of one's beliefs, knowledge, convictions, and/or capabilities (Seemiller, 2013).

1. Watch:

a) Strengthen your Confidence Muscle - LinkedIn Learning (3:46)

b) Your body language may shape who you are - Ted Talk (20:46)

2. Things to think about:

a) Think about why confidence is so important. How does a leader with confidence affect followers?

b) Reflect on different communication skills that could demonstrate confidence.

3. Show me: (1 paragraph)

a) Identify a situation where you may not feel as confident in a professional environment. Tell me about the situation and what are strategies you could use to feel confident.