

# The role of a summer camp for trans- children in middle childhood and their families

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September 28, 2018

# Overview

- Research focus
- Key Terms
- Background
- Method
- Findings
- Recommendations

# Research Focus

- How can the Developmental Assets Framework for middle childhood (Search Institute, 2006) inform the evaluation of Camp Born This Way (CBTW)?
- How can Camp Born This Way, as a social institution, benefit *trans*-children and their families by introducing coping mechanisms?

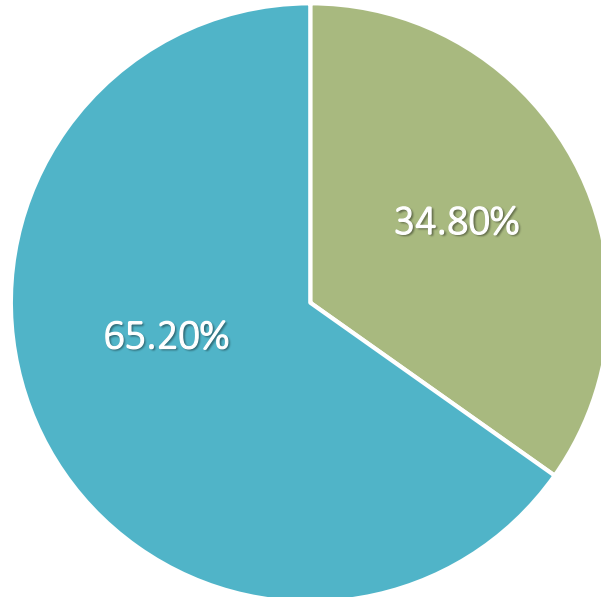
# What is Camp Born This Way?

- Camp Born This Way (CBTW) is...
  - 4 day 3 night volunteer led, family based summer camp in Arizona
  - Provides a safe space by supporting and affirming *trans*- identity
  - Social institution
    - Cultivates advocates for *trans*- population and their allies
  - The majority of the *trans*- children campers has CBTW experience from previous years (returners)

# What is Camp Born This Way?

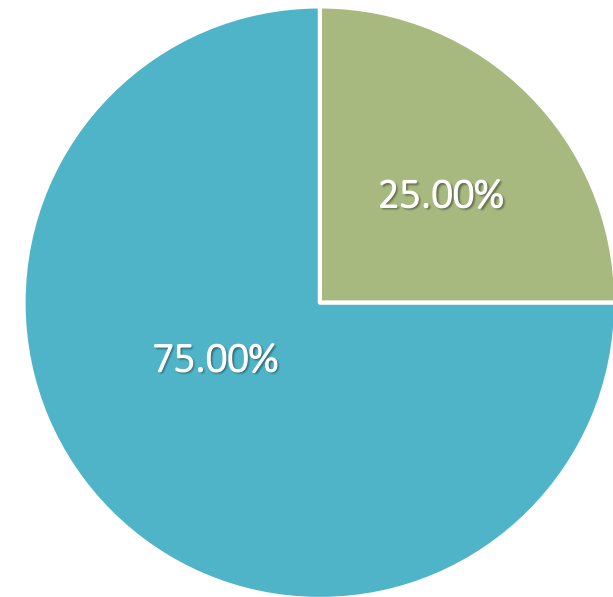
- Camp Born This Way (CBTW) had...

- 65.2% ( $n = 14$ ) returning *trans*- children campers in 2016 ( $N = 23$ )



■ Newcomer ■ Returner

- 75% ( $n = 16$ ) returning *trans*- children campers in 2017 ( $N = 21$ )



■ Newcomer ■ Returner

# Key Terms

- **Trans-**
  - A “blanket” term used to refer individuals whose gender and sex differ (Dunham & Olson, 2016; Stryker, Currah, & Moore, 2008)
- **Middle childhood - age 8 to 12**
  - Attachment figures expand to peers and non-parental adults
  - Bodily changes may occur as they reach puberty

# Background

- ***Trans-* population**
  - 150,000 thousand *trans-* youth and 1.4 million adults in the U.S. (Herman, Flores, Brown, Wilson, & Conron, 2017)
  - 60% of *trans-* adults reported that they had started feeling the difference between their gender and sex at by the age of 10 (James, Herman, Rankin, Keisling, Mottet, & Anafi, 2016)
  - Prepubescence is not included
  - Suggests that there are more than 150,000 *trans-* youth

# Background

- **Minority stress model** (Kelleher, 2009)
  - Minority stress is felt when the identification with or belongingness in a group make individuals feel as if they have less power and influence in society
    - External stressors (e.g., stigma)
    - Outcome (e.g., depressive symptoms, suicide ideations)
  - Family support can ameliorate external stressors, thus, reduce negative outcomes



# Method: Participants

- Samples
  - 19 *trans*- children in middle childhood (Range = 8-12)
    - Returner ( $n = 6$ )
    - Newcomer ( $n = 13$ )
  - 31 parents of *trans*- children in middle childhood
    - Returner ( $n = 19$ )
    - Newcomer ( $n = 12$ )

# Method: Instruments

- **Secondary data:** collected by the Community Research, Evaluation & Development (CRED) team in School of Family and Consumer Sciences at the University of Arizona
  - Pre- , post-, and returner surveys from 2016 and 2017 CBTW
    - Close-ended questions with categorical and 5-point Likert scaled responses
    - Open-ended questions for detailed responses
    - Separate sets of surveys for *trans*- youth and parents

# Procedure

- Descriptive design
  - Quantitative
    - IBM SPSS (v 24)
      - Independent samples t-tests
      - Bivariate correlations
  - Qualitative
    - Template analysis approach
    - The Developmental Assets Framework (Search Institute, 2006)
    - Deductive parallel coding

# Method: Conceptual framework

- **Developmental Assets<sup>®</sup> Framework** (Search Institute, 2006)  
(For complete list: <http://sde.ok.gov/sde/sites/ok.gov.sde/files/Prev-40AssetsMC.pdf>)
- Utilized 11/20 external assets
  - *Support*
    - Family support
    - Positive family communicate
    - Other adult relationships
    - Caring neighborhood
  - *Empowerment*
    - Community values youth
    - Service to others
    - Safety
  - *Boundaries and expectations*
    - Family boundaries
    - Neighborhood boundaries
    - Adult role models
    - Positive peer influence

# Method: Conceptual framework

- **Developmental Assets<sup>®</sup> Framework** (Search Institute, 2006)

(For complete list: <http://sde.ok.gov/sde/sites/ok.gov.sde/files/Prev-40AssetsMC.pdf>)

- 12/20 internal assets

- *Commitment to learning*

- Learning engagement

- *Positive values*

- Caring
    - Equality and social justice
    - Integrity
    - Honesty
    - Responsibility

- *Social competencies*

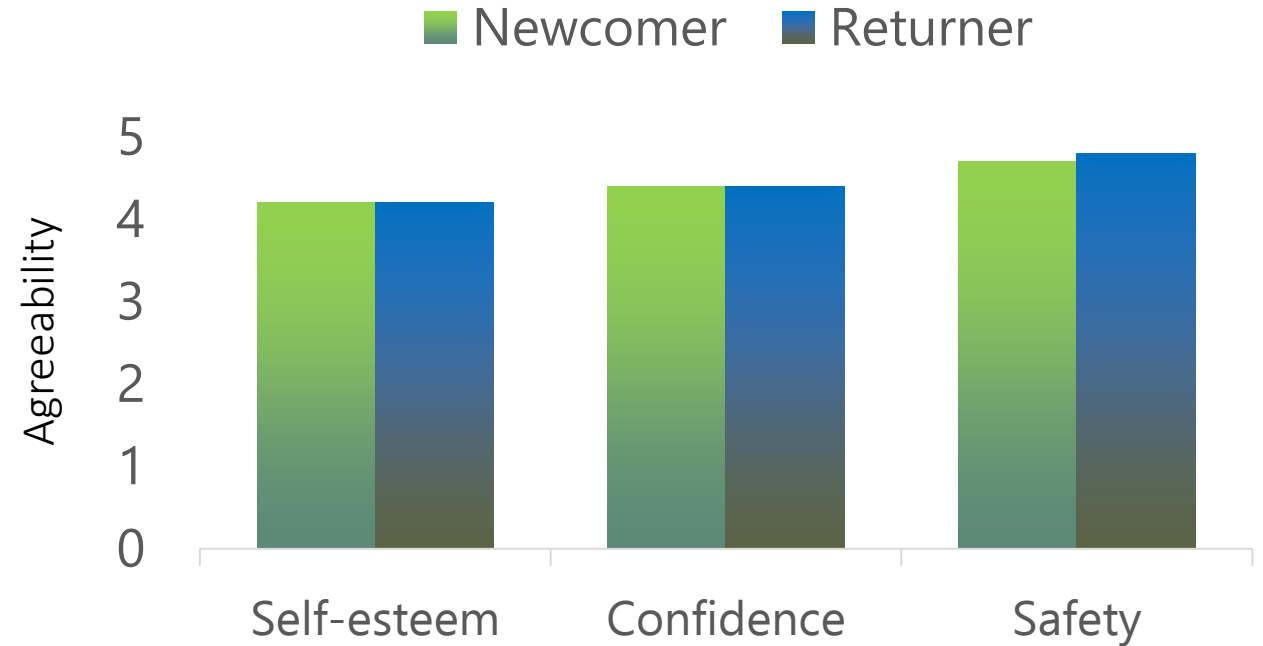
- Planning and decision making
    - Interpersonal competence
    - cultural competence

- *Identity*

- Personal power
    - Self-esteem
    - Positive view of personal future

# Findings: Safe environment & self-esteem

- High levels of:
  - Self-esteem
  - Confidence
  - Safety



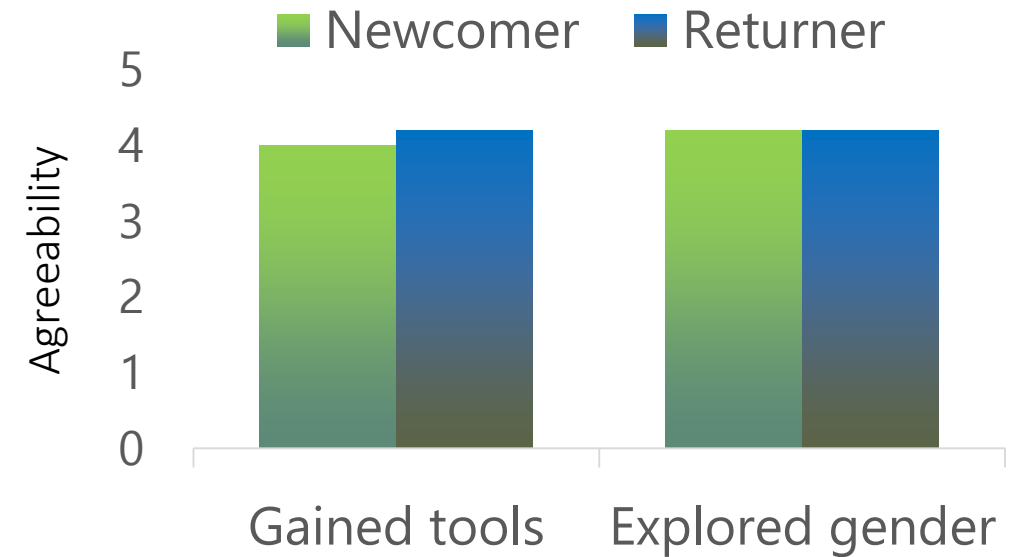
*Trans- children say...*

*“I feel so much more [valued] at camp!” (self-esteem)*

*“I didn’t need my mom or dad.” (personal power)*

# Findings: Understanding of gender

- CBTW is an invitation to:
  - *Trans-* children and their family members
  - Engage in conversations on *trans-* identity
  - Enhance their understanding of gender

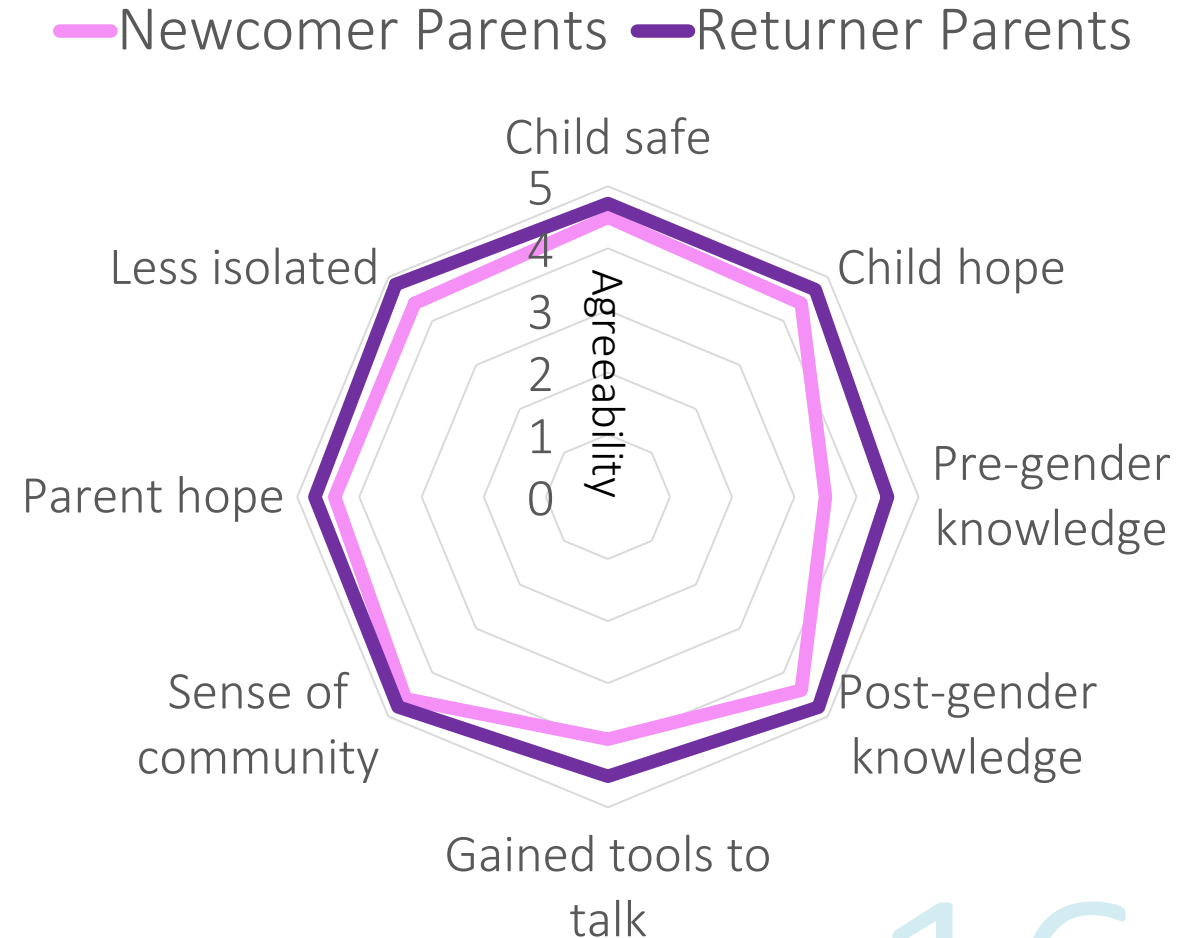


## *Parent A says...*

“[I have] a much better understanding on how to communicate and explore gender with my child and family.” (understanding of gender)

# Findings: Connectedness

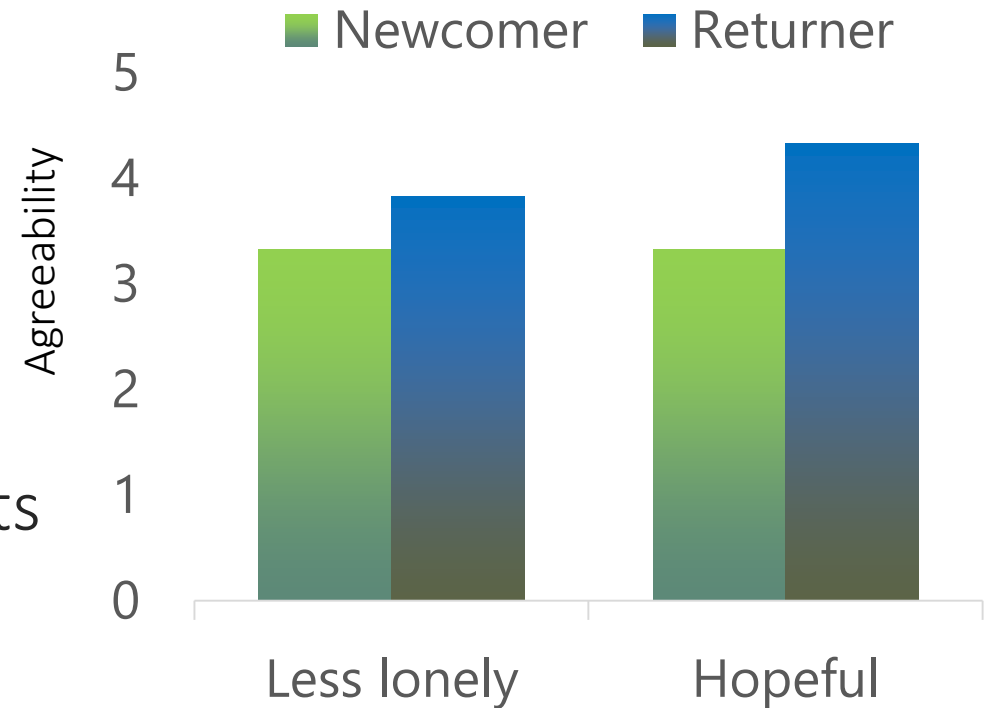
- **Safe environment at CBTW:**
  - Provided its campers the ability to freely explore gender
  - Connected its campers to each other over shared experiences (e.g., *trans-* identity)





# Findings: Advocacy

- Connectedness contributes to:
  - Self-advocacy for *trans*- children
  - *Trans*- community advocacy for parents



## *Parent B says CBTW helped...*

“normalizing the trans experience knowing there are other trans families” after CBTW.

# Findings: Building a family

## *Safe environment & Self-esteem*

Increased learning engagement, self-esteem, and interpersonal skills in *trans-* children suggest that CBTW aided in positive youth development.

## *Understanding of gender*

CBTW invited *trans-* children and their family members to engage in conversations to enhance their understanding of gender.

### Building a Family

The connectedness built among the campers within CBTW grew into community advocacy for parents and individual advocacy for *trans-* children.

## *Advocacy*

The safe environment at CBTW potentially provided campers with the ability to freely explore gender and connect over shared experiences.

## *Connectedness*

# Recommendations

- With a larger participant group, dividing the group into newcomers and returner groups may allow future evaluators to observe the possible long-term effects of CBTW.
- Including the CBTW online communities in future evaluations may provide insights to how the internet can aid in shaping the post-CBTW *trans*-experience of youth and their families.
- Including questions on the relationships with volunteers in surveys will help measure the “adult role model” external asset in the Developmental Assets Framework.

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# Acknowledgements

Michele Walsh, Ph.D.

Andrew Carnie, Ph.D.

Donna Treloar, M.A.

Andrew Huerta, Ph.D.

Violeta Dominguez, M.A.

Ruben Zecena, Ph.D. Student

Aly Higgins, Ph.D. Student

Community Research, Evaluation & Development (CRED) team

UROC peers

Carol Oliver, Ph.D.

Christina Chisholm, Ph.D.



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# Questions

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