

**CENTER OF APPLIED RESEARCH
FOR NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS**

The Impact of *Royal Family KIDS Camp* on Foster
Children Who Have Experienced Abuse and Neglect.

**Royal Family KIDS
Technical Report**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to present the evaluation results of the impact of Royal Family Kids Camp on children's hope.

368 Campers (52.2% Female) responded to a pre-camp and post-camp Hope Index. Reliability estimates for the Children's Hope Scale were good and the Satisfaction with Camp scale was acceptable.

Camp counselors completed 365 pre-camp and post-camp assessments of their observation of each child's hope as well as the character strengths of Zest, Grit, Optimism, Self-Control, Gratitude, Curiosity, and Social Intelligence.

Camper Self-Assessment:

HOPE: Results of the pre-test post-test assessment showed significance increases in the child's self-report of hope suggesting an improved future goal orientation among RFKC campers.

Camp Counselor Observation:

One goal of youth programs like Royal Family Kids Camp is the improvement of character development. Counselor assessments of each child's character strengths saw significant improvements in the following areas:

- **HOPE:** Ability to create pathways and dedicate energy toward goals.
- **ZEST:** Excitement and energy toward goals.
- **GRIT:** Perseverance for goals.
- **SELF-CONTROL:** Capacity to control thoughts, feelings, and behaviors when in conflict.
- **GRATITUDE:** Appreciation for the kindness received by others.
- **CURIOSITY:** Desire to learn and seek out new information.
- **SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE:** Awareness of the feelings and motivations of others.

Additional analysis found that increases in a child's self-reported hope was associated with positive behaviors associated with counselor observations of character.

The results of this evaluation support a compelling argument for the power of Royal Family KIDS Camp to improve the lives of and long-term outcomes for children in the foster care system.

INTRODUCTION

Child Exposure to Abuse

In September of 2014, there were approximately 415,129 children within the foster care system; the highest number in recent years (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2015). Children who have been placed in foster care are a higher risk for poor social, psychological, and physical outcomes in adulthood. Studies have found adults who were in foster care as children have lower educational attainment, lower income, and poorer marital relationships (Buehler, Orme, Post, & Patterson, 2000). Higher incarceration rates, homelessness or unstable housing, and poor mental health are associated with adults who were once in foster care (Barth, 1990). These potential negative consequences are especially pronounced for foster children who were abused (Currie & Widom, 2010; Ferguson, 2009). The higher the exposure to childhood trauma, the higher the rates of illness, disease, and criminality in adults (Felitti & Anda, 1998; Reavis, Looman, Franco, & Rojas, 2013).

Royal Family KIDS Camp

Royal Family KIDS (RFK) seeks to create life-changing moments for children, ages 6-12, who have experienced abuse through mobilizing the faith community to confront child abuse. We keep moving forward by making moments matter and treating people royally (royalfamilykids.org, 2014). Royal Family KIDS has made an attempt to decrease negative outcomes associated with foster care by providing a safe place for foster care youth to build healthy relationships with supportive counselors, adults, and other foster care children. At RFK camp, children have the opportunity to “be kids again.” In 2015, Royal Family KIDS served 7,748 children in 209 camps with the help of 11,728 adult volunteers and 1,032 teen volunteers (royalfamilykids.org, 2015).

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to present findings from a quantitative outcome assessment of Royal Family Kids Camp conducted by the University of Oklahoma’s Center of Applied Research for Non-Profit Organizations. The primary outcome of focus is the impact on children’s hope along with a sense of belonging and satisfaction with camp. This evaluation is based upon a longitudinal design in which the children provide self-report on their hope. Additionally, Camp counselors provided a pre-camp and post-camp assessment on their observation of the camper’s character strengths (e.g., Zest, Grit, Self-Control, Optimism, Gratitude, Social Intelligence, and Curiosity).

HOPE THEORY

Hope is a cognitive-based motivational theory in which children learn to create strategies as a means to attain their goals. Snyder's (2002) Hope Theory has two fundamental cognitive processes termed "pathways" and "agency". Pathway thought processes are the mental strategies or road maps toward goal attainment. Higher hope children can identify and articulate strategies to manage potential barriers. Agency refers to the mental energy or willpower capacity the child can direct and sustain toward goal pursuits. Higher hope children can self-regulate their energy toward the pathways even in the presence of barriers. Alternatively, children who have experienced repeated failed attempts at goal pursuits often recognize their deficits in both pathways and agency thoughts. These low hope children will face future goals with negativity and a focus on failure.

The role of hope in a child's capacity to flourish is well-established. Hopeful thinking among children is positively associated with perceived competence and self-worth (Kwon, 2000) as well as lower depression and anxiety (Ong, Edwards, & Bergeman, 2006). Higher hope children are more optimistic about the future, have stronger problem solving skills, and develop more life goals. Hopeful children are less likely to have behavior problems or experience psychological distress. These children also report better interpersonal relationships and higher school achievement success in the areas of attendance, grades, graduation rates, and college going rates (Pedrotti, Edwards, & Lopez, 2008). Moreover, hope has been shown to serve as a buffering resilience factor when facing stressful life events among children (cf. Valle, Huebner, & Suldo, 2006). Finally, hope is positively associated with emotional well-being in a six-year study contributing to positive youth development (Ciarrochi, Parker, Kashdan, Heaven & Barkus, 2015).

METHOD

Assessment Procedure

Three hundred and seventy surveys were administered to the youth participants of RFKC. A pre-camp/post-camp design was utilized. Pre-test surveys were distributed to campers before the camp activities began and post-test surveys were given to the campers before they left on the final day of camp. A systematic training program was developed for ethical data collection procedures for the research center's staff as well as the hope liaison. Each camp site identified a hope liaison who was responsible for the data collection as well as matching the pre-test surveys and post-test surveys to ensure the OU research team received matched, de-identified surveys.

Sample Demographics

Pre-camp surveys were completed by 361 children while 368 post camp survey were completed. Ultimately, 343 completed pre and post surveys were matched, resulting in a 93.2% match rate. Specific demographic characteristics of the children were limited in the survey. However, the average age of the respondent was 9.04 years (SD = 1.68). Three hundred and sixty-five reported their gender with 46.5% males and 52.2% females.

No demographic information was obtained on the Camp Counselor Assessment. However, these counselors completed 365 pre assessments that were matched to the camper self-assessment.

Measurement: Child Hope Index:

Children's Hope:

Hope was assessed using the Children's Hope Scale (Snyder, Hoza, Pelham, Rapoff, Ware, Danovsky, et al. 1997) which examines the extent to which children can believe they can establish pathways to their goals as well as develop and maintain the will power to follow these pathways. Both pathways and willpower are required to establish hope. This measure is comprised of six self-report items with a six-point Likert-Type response format (1 = none of the time; 6 = all of the time). Scores can range from a low of six to a high of 36. Thus, higher scores reflect higher hope. The Children's Hope Scale is a widely used measure with over 200 published scholarly studies. Validity estimates have been established both psychometrically and substantively. Internal consistency reliability analysis indicated a Pre-Hope $\alpha = .77$; Post-Hope $\alpha = .81$; F/U-Hope $\alpha = .89$.

Measurement: Counselor Observations:

Hope Index.

Counselors were asked to complete the Children's Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1997) for each camper in their respective group. Items were re-worded to reflect this approach. For example, the item "I think I am doing pretty well" was reworded to "I think the camper is doing pretty well." The questionnaires included the same six-item children's Hope Scale reworded to fit the observation intent. Internal consistency reliability was adequate for the sample of counselor's (pretest $\alpha = .92$; posttest $\alpha = .91$).

Child Character Strength.

Following the positive psychology foundation that character leads to the capacity to live a fulfilling and meaningful life, we included a 20-item assessment of character strengths. Following the Character Counts model, we assessed the child in the area of Zest, Grit, Optimism, Self-Control, Gratitude, Social Intelligence, and Curiosity. Counselors rated each camper in their group at the beginning of camp and the final morning of camp. Table 2 below provides the character strength observed and its definition.

Table 1

Character Strengths Assessed at Royal Family Kids Camp

Character Strength:	Definition:
Zest	An approach to life filled with anticipation, excitement, and energy.
Grit	Perseverance and passion for long-term goals.
Optimism:	The expectation that the future holds positive possibilities and likelihood.
Self-Control:	Capacity to regulate thoughts, feelings, and behaviors when they conflict with interpersonal goals.
Gratitude:	Appreciation for the benefits received from others and a desire to reciprocate with positive actions.
Curiosity:	Search for information for its own sake. Exploring a wide range of information when solving problems.
Social Intelligence	Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people.

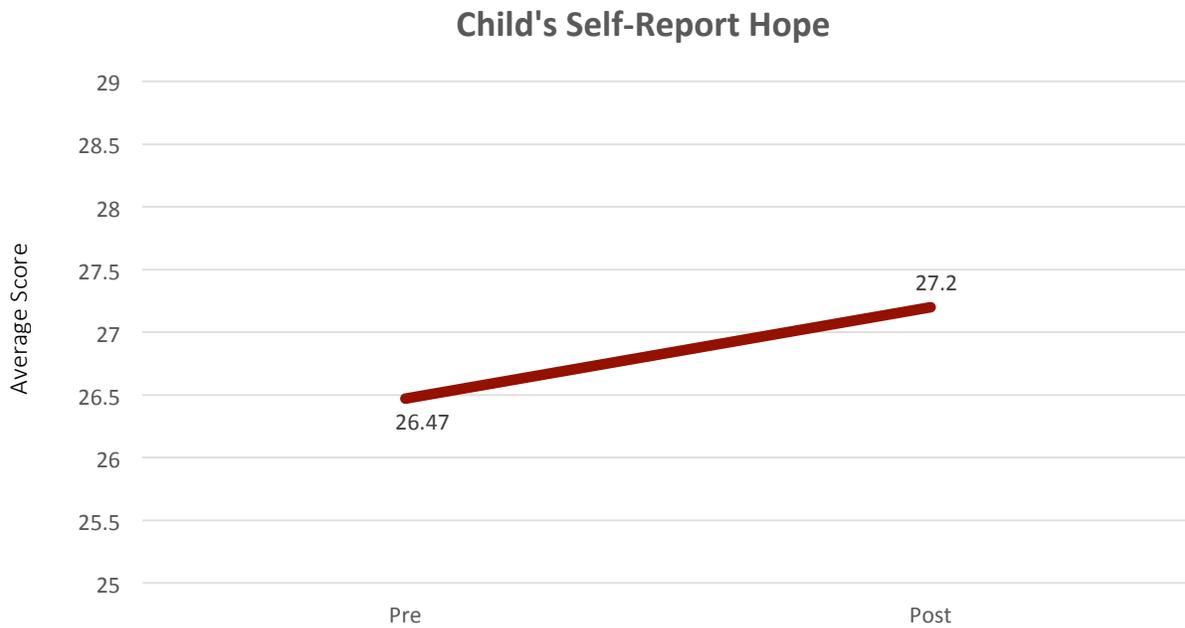
Positive Youth Development:

In recent years, positive psychology has emerged as the scientific study of the emotions, traits, and relationship that promote the capacity to flourish and serve to buffer the negative effects of difficulties often experienced in life (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Furthermore, this work has identified 24 strengths of character that help young people thrive and are associated with socially desired outcomes such as academic achievement, attendance, athletic achievement, goal attainment, leadership, tolerance, kindness and pro-social behaviors to name a few (Park & Peterson, 2009). These 24 strengths have now been studied in over 190 countries with 2.6 million participants (www.viacharacter.org).

Interventions that target positive character development in youth now has a validated measurement application that can be used to promote well-being especially among those who have experienced stress associated with trauma. The character strengths targeted for this assessment have been consistently shown to serve as a buffer to stress and serve as an important indicator of personal well-being (Park & Peterson, 2009).

RESULTS: CHILD SELF-REPORT

Graph 1: Children's Hope Index

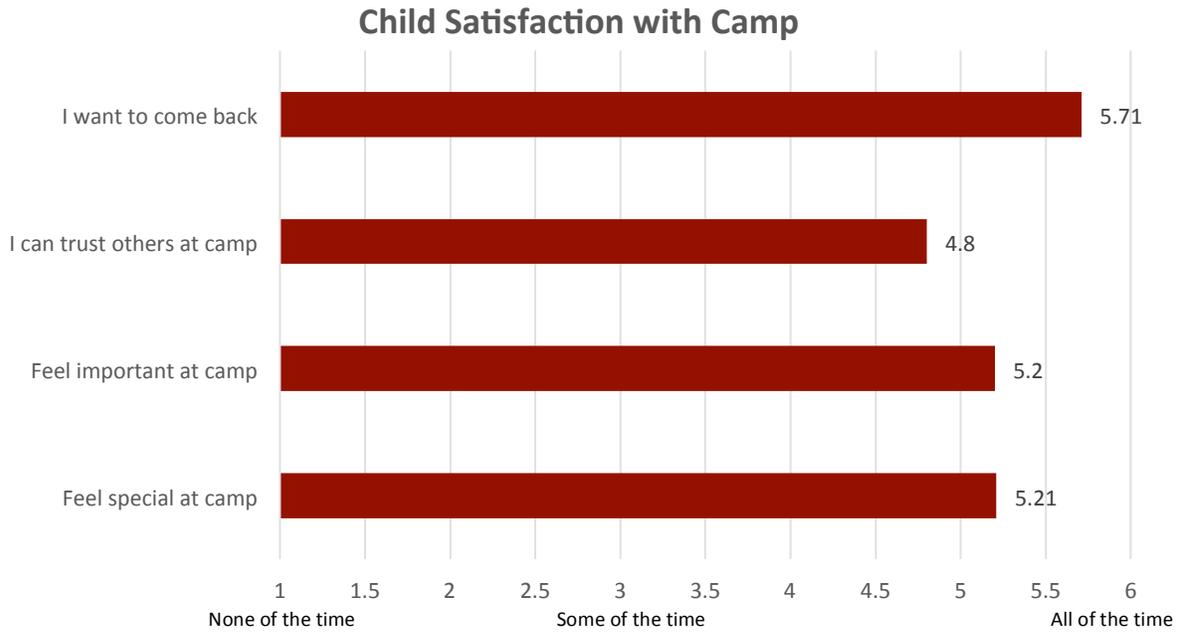


Hope reflects the individual's capacity to develop pathways and dedicate agency toward desirable goals.

Graph 1 presents the total mean scale scores for the Children's Hope scale. As seen in the graph, hope scores increased from pretest to posttest. A paired samples t-test showed that this increase in hope was statistically significant [$t(342) = -2.58; p < .05$]

NOTES:

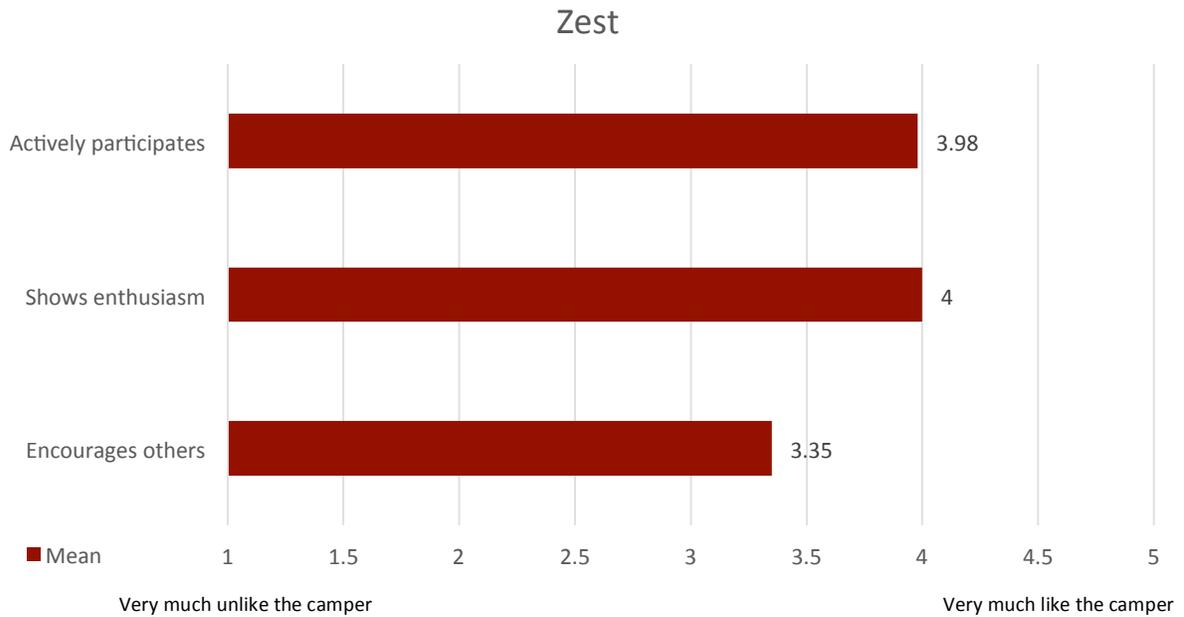
Graph 2: Child Satisfaction with Camp



The above graph demonstrates the average scores for children’s satisfaction with camp based on four items. Overall, the children appear to enjoy camp as shown by the average score for “I want to come back to camp next year.” The high scores for “I feel important at camp” and “I feel special at camp” also show the children’s satisfaction.

NOTES:

Graph 2: Observed Zest

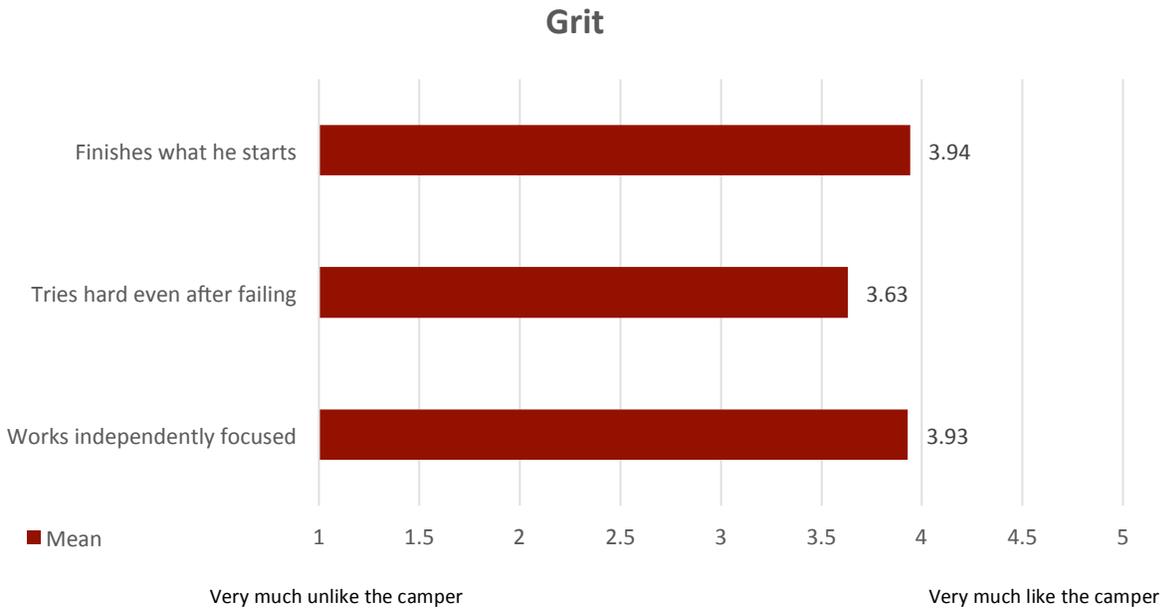


Zest is an approach to life filled with anticipation, excitement, and energy.

Graph 2 presents the average scores for the three items related to Zest as observed by the camp counselor. The average score was 4 (“like the camper”) for two of the items. The third item, “Encourages others,” was slightly lower.

NOTES:

Graph 3: Observed Grit

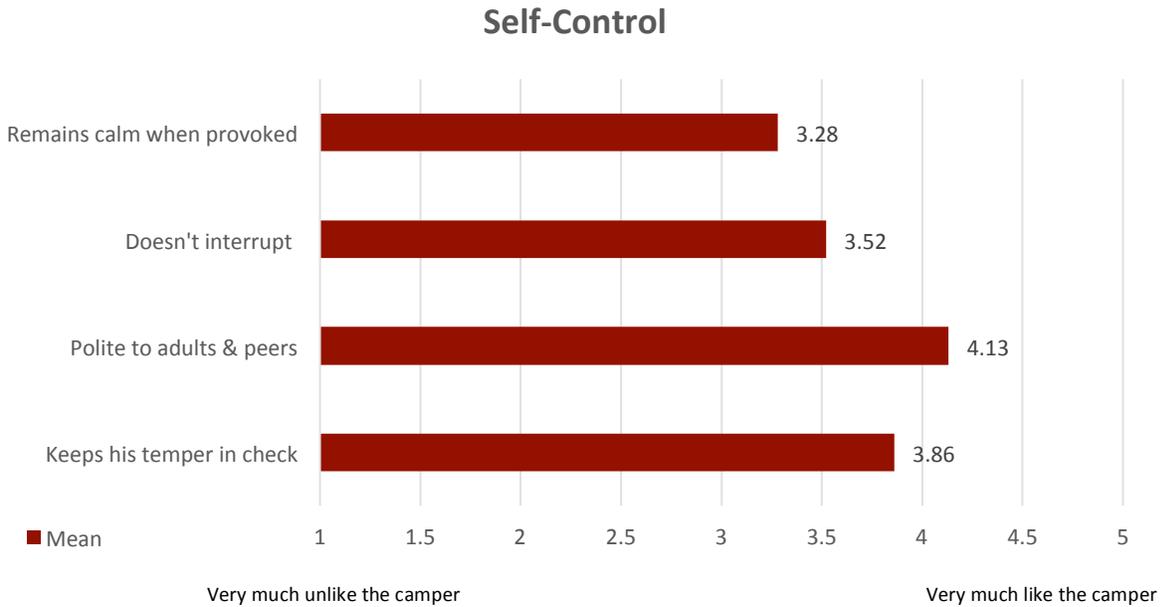


Grit is perseverance and passion for long-term goals.

Graph 3 demonstrates the average scores for the three items related to Grit as observed by the camp counselor. The average score was close to 4 (“like the camper”) for two of the items. The third item, “Tries very hard even after experiencing failure,” was slightly lower.

NOTES:

Graph 4: Observed Self-Control

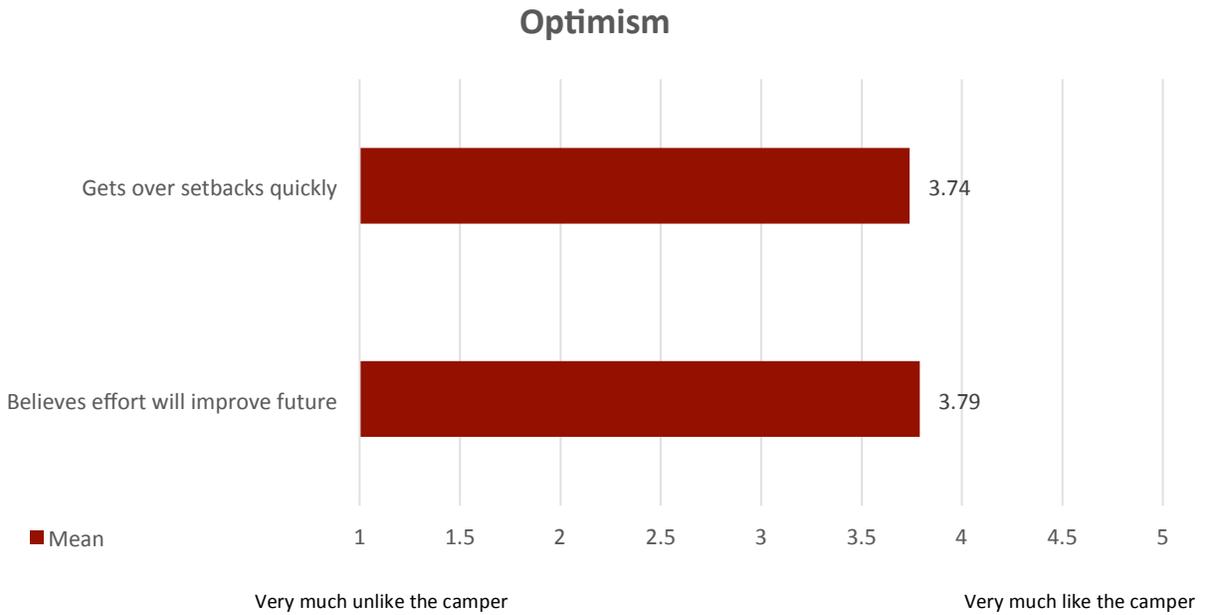


Self-control is the capacity to regulate thoughts, feelings, and behaviors when they conflict with interpersonal goals.

Graph 4 presents the average scores for the four items related to Self-Control as observed by the camp counselor. The four items ranged from 3 (“Somewhat like the camper”) to 4 (“Like the camper”). The lowest score was for “Doesn’t interrupt.” The highest score was for “Polite to adults and peers.”

NOTES:

Graph 5: Observed Optimism

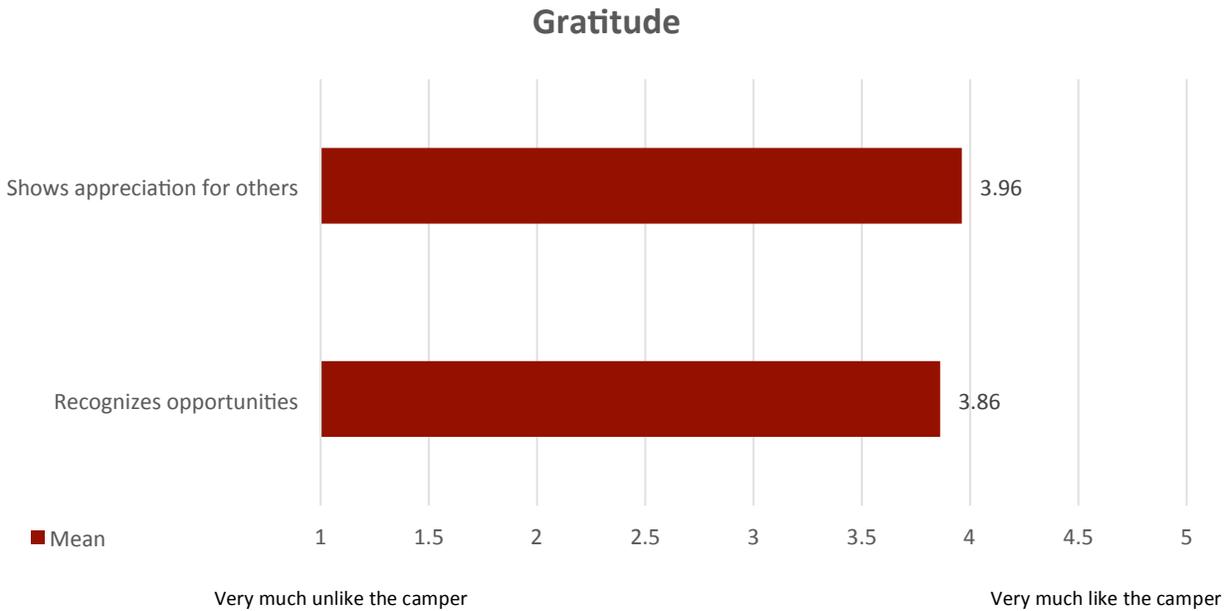


Optimism is the expectation that the future holds positive possibilities and likelihood.

Graph 5 demonstrates the average scores for the two items related to Optimism as observed by the camp counselor. The average score was close to 4 (“like the camper”) for both behaviors observed.

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Graph 6: Observed Gratitude

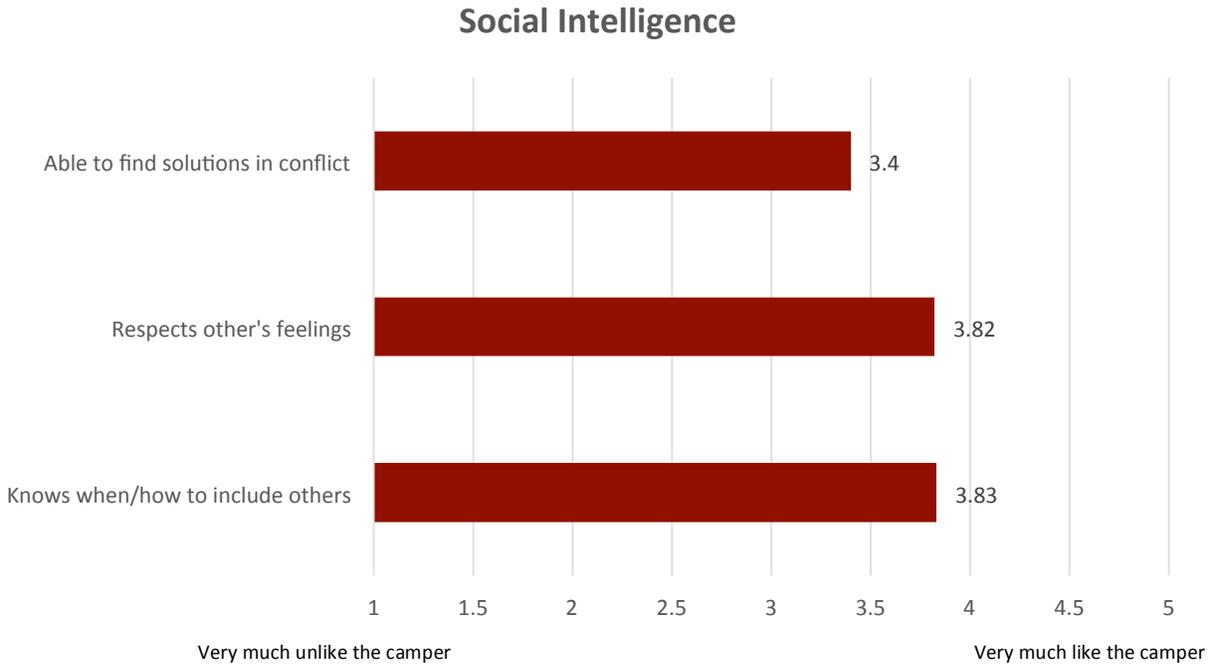


Gratitude is an appreciation for the benefits received from others and a desire to reciprocate with positive actions.

Graph 6 demonstrates the average scores for the two items related to Gratitude as observed by the camp counselor. The average score was close to 4 (“like the camper”) for both behaviors observed.

NOTES:

Graph 7: Observed Social Intelligence

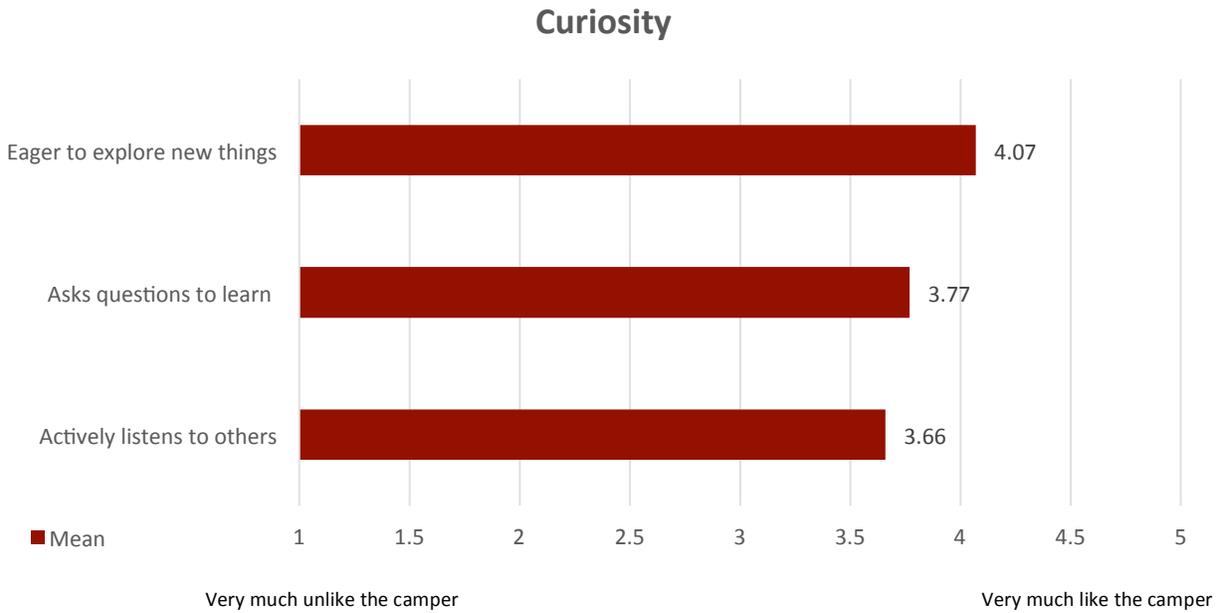


Social intelligence is being aware of the motives and feelings of other people.

Graph 7 demonstrates the average scores for the three items related to Social Intelligence as observed by the camp counselor. The average score was close to 4 (“like the camper”) for two of the items. The third item, “Able to find solutions during conflict,” was slightly lower.

NOTES:

Graph 8: Observed Curiosity



Curiosity is searching for information for its own sake and exploring a wide range of information when solving problems.

Graph 8 presents the average scores for the three items related to Curiosity as observed by the camp counselor. The average score was between 3 (“Somewhat like the camper”) and 4 (“like the camper”). The highest score was for “Eager to explore new things.” The lowest score was for “Actively listens to others.”

NOTES:

Table 2: Correlations of Children’s Hope with Counselor Observed Character Strengths

<i>Item:</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
<i>Child Scores</i>									
1. <i>Hope</i>	--								
<i>Counselor Observations</i>									
2. <i>Hope</i>	.28*	--							
3. <i>Zest</i>	.13*	.58*	--						
4. <i>Grit</i>	.12*	.65*	.48*	--					
5. <i>Self-Control</i>	.11*	.56*	.37*	.61*	--				
6. <i>Optimism</i>	.18*	.64*	.45*	.57*	.64*	--			
7. <i>Gratitude</i>	.20*	.61*	.58*	.55*	.63*	.54*	--		
8. <i>Social Intelligence</i>	.12*	.48*	.47*	.41*	.58*	.47*	.56*	--	
9. <i>Curiosity</i>	.13*	.62*	.57*	.57*	.54*	.50*	.59*	.52*	--

Note: All Scores obtained at post-test. N = 336-363. * $p < .05$

Relationships among the Measures

The table provides the correlation matrix for all the scales described above. A correlation represents the level of relationship between two variables. The interpretation is based upon the strength of the relationship as well as the direction. Strength of a correlation is based upon Cohen’s (1990) effect size heuristic. More specifically, a correlation (+ or -) of .10 or higher is considered small; a correlation (+ or -) of .30 is considered moderate, and a correlation (+ or -) of .50 is considered strong. With regards to direction, a positive correlation indicates that higher scores on one variable are associated with higher scores on the other variable. A negative correlation indicates that higher scores on one variable are associated with lower scores on the other variable. Identifying a specific correlation is based upon matching a row to a particular column. On the left side of the table the column marked “Variable” identifies the order of the correlations and corresponds to each column. For example, variable “6” represents optimism and the row of correlations with other variables 1-5. Additionally, column 6 represents optimism and the corresponding correlations with variables 7 – 9.

Examples from Table 1.0:

The first variable “Child Hope” is also the next column. The first correlation ($r = .28; p < .05$) under Counselor Observed Hope (2) column represents the relationship between Child Hope and Counselor Observed Hope. We interpret this correlation as follows: “Participating clients who reported higher levels hope were also observed by their counselor to have high hope, reflecting a small positive correlation.”

Results from this study show a significant increase in hope as reported by the children. Thus, hopeful children will have an elevated sense of mental energy and goal attainment strategies and generally approach life with positive emotions and a belief in their ability to achieve goals. Conversely, lower hope children likely recognize their deficits in pathways and agency thinking. These lower hope children will approach life with negativity, ambivalence and a focus on failure.

Furthermore, based upon the correlations in Table 2, hopeful children have an increased level of excitement and energy (zest), are more likely to persevere in goal attainment behaviors (Grit), have a higher level of positive outlook toward the future (optimism). Hopeful children are more likely to have the capacity to regulate their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (self-control), show appreciation toward others (gratitude), explore options for problems solving, and recognize the motives and emotions of others (social intelligence). In short, hopeful children have an increase capacity for well-being.

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The mission of the University of Oklahoma is to provide the best possible educational experience for students through excellence in teaching, research, creative activity and service to the state and society. The Center of Applied Research for Nonprofit Organizations focus this mission by collaborating with nonprofit agencies to improve program services using sound scientific practice while simultaneously training students in the application of research methodologies.

The Center of Applied Research for Nonprofit Organizations is an interdisciplinary social science unit in the College of Arts & Sciences for the University of Oklahoma. Collaborating with nonprofit organizations, faculty and graduate students lead research projects with a particular focus on sustainable well-being among vulnerable and otherwise at-risk individuals and communities.

Guided by the principles of Positive Psychology, and the right of all members in the community to flourish; we use hope as the theory of change to assess the impact of nonprofit organizations.

Faculty members who work in the center provide a full range of applied research activities including program evaluation and outcome assessment in support of nonprofit program service delivery. Participating faculty members are nationally recognized for their area of research and are expert methodologist with the capacity to match research protocols to the needs of the nonprofit community.

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