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Prosocial Behaviours in a Creative Arts Day Camp for Children With and Without Special Needs: A Mixed-Methods Study

Comportements prosociaux dans un camp de jour en arts créatifs ouvert aux enfants ayant ou non des besoins particuliers : une étude à méthodes mixtes

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ABSTRACT
There is a lack of research on the social benefits of creative arts therapies in summer day camp settings that are focused on children with special needs. Researchers in this study sought to address this gap by using a mixed-methods, concurrent embedded design that explored the prosocial potentials of using art therapy and music therapy to support school-aged children with and without special needs in a 2-week summer camp. A unique team approach—consisting of faculty, clinical supervisors, and art and music therapists in training—was used to collect, analyze, and interpret data. The aims of the camp and the research project focused on social interaction, engagement in activities, and emotional expression. Pretest and post-test evaluations revealed significant findings within the areas of task orientation ($p < .001$), assertiveness ($p < .001$), and peer social skills ($p < .001$). Qualitative data were collected in the form of camper statements, parent/caregiver statements, and student journals. Results indicated the effectiveness of a combined creative arts therapy model in helping children with special needs develop their prosocial skills.

RÉSUMÉ
On remarque une pénurie de recherches sur les retombées sociales positives des thérapies de créativité dans des contextes de camp de jour d'été qui se spécialisent auprès des enfants ayant des besoins particuliers. Les chercheurs ayant mené cette étude ont voulu réagir à cette pénurie en utilisant une approche à méthodes mixtes, à conception intégrée concomitante permettant d'explorer les potentiels prosociaux du recours à l'art-thérapie et à la musicothérapie en appui aux enfants d'âge scolaire ayant ou non des besoins particuliers dans le cadre d'un camp estival d'une durée de 2 semaines. Pour recueillir, analyser et interpréter les données, on a eu recours à une

approche par équipe unique, soit des enseignants, des superviseurs cliniciens et des musicothérapeutes et art-thérapeutes en formation. Le camp et le projet de recherche étaient axés sur l'interaction sociale, l'engagement dans les activités et l'expression émotionnelle. Les évaluations prétest et post-test ont révélé des résultats significatifs au chapitre de l'orientation des tâches ($p < .001$), de l'affirmation de soi ($p < .001$) et des compétences sociales auprès des pairs ($p < .001$). Les données qualitatives furent recueillies sous la forme d'énoncés par les participants au camp, d'énoncés des parents et des aidants et des journaux étudiants. Les résultats ont révélé l'efficacité d'un modèle fondé sur la combinaison d'arts créatifs pour aider les enfants ayant des besoins particuliers à développer leurs aptitudes prosociales.

All of us are unique
Necessary in our own way
Each of us can be awesome
Diverse yet equal
—Song included as part of the opening circle at Creative Arts Day Camp

The Creative Arts Day Camp (CADC) was created at a small Pacific Northwest university for children with and without special needs and had been a vital part of the education of music therapy students for two consecutive years. Before the third year of camp, a new art therapy director took over and was eager to have the modality included in the planning process. With this expansion of offerings in creative arts therapies, faculty members at the university decided to search for ways to assess the effectiveness of the camp in terms of social interaction and self-expression. We conducted a literature review and discovered a lack of research on the social benefits of creative arts therapies in a summer day camp setting for children with special needs. In tandem with planning the camp's next iteration, a team of students, faculty members, and supervisors created a mixed-methods research project to study whether creative arts therapies (specifically art therapy and music therapy) had any measurable effects on prosocial behaviours. The study was designed to explore the social benefits of using art therapy and music therapy to help children with and without special needs in a two-week summer camp setting.

The terms *art therapy*, *music therapy*, and *special needs* are defined to frame an understanding of how we implemented the work in our study.

Art therapy, as facilitated by a professional art therapist, supports personal and relational treatment goals effectively as well as community concerns. It is used to improve cognitive and sensory-motor functions, foster self-esteem and self-awareness, cultivate emotional resilience, promote insight, enhance social skills, reduce and resolve conflicts and distress, and advance societal and ecological change (American Art Therapy Association, 2017).

Music therapy is "the clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship by a credentialed professional who has completed an approved music therapy program" (American Music Therapy Association, n.d.).

In the context of the children who attended the camp, the term *special needs* encompasses the following diagnoses: autism spectrum disorder (ASD), Down's syndrome, cerebral palsy, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified, sensory processing disorder, auditory processing disorder, apraxia, Lennox-Gastaut syndrome, brain injury (both acquired and traumatic), limited intellectual functioning, learning needs, spina bifida, and chromosomal and genetic disorders.

Literature Review

There is a scarcity of literature focused on creative arts camps with children who have special needs and the potential prosocial benefits of the experience of such camps. Previous studies focused on camps for children with autism and targeted social skill development (Hantson et al., 2012; Henley, 1999), but none of these incorporated creative arts therapies. Conversely, most studies that indicated the efficacy of creative arts therapies with special needs populations did not include a summer day camp setting (De Vries et al., 2015; Epp, 2008; Kearns, 2004; Wigram & Gold, 2006). Only one study (Buskirk-Cohen, 2015) was identified that combined the day camp format with creative arts modalities, yet this one had typically developing children as its participants and lacked clarity on the use of creative arts interventions. To gain a more comprehensive view of how the pieces we address in this study fit together, we looked at literature related to children with special needs, social interactions, and the role emotional expression takes in this work.

Working With Children Who Have Varying Levels of Needs

Treatment approaches and opinions varied regarding which issues to focus on when working with children with special needs. Ackerman (2006) emphasized the importance of building skills toward self-determination. Other authors discussed the importance of building social as well as emotional awareness (Elias, 2004; Griswold & Townsend, 2012; Henley, 1999). Another team of authors suggested that when children participated actively in meaningful activities, they acquired the physical and social competencies needed to develop and to flourish in multiple contexts (Reynolds et al., 2011). Focusing on social and emotional goals was a common theme across readings, yet how and where this was done had a wide range of possibility. Settings of these studies included after-school programs, classrooms, specific camps for children with special needs, and other formats that varied in frequency and duration of treatment offerings.

Social Interaction

A characteristic feature of children with special needs is their difficulty navigating social relationships (Elias, 2004). This is not specific to any diagnosis or condition, though these challenges are seen often in children with learning issues, language impairments, anxiety disorders, and ASD (Griswold & Townsend, 2012). Observing a child's natural work, play, or leisure activities enabled the observer in one study to "identify specific behaviors in social interaction that may lead to competence" (Griswold & Townsend, 2012, p. 710).

Emotional Expression

In the realm of socialization, emotions play a crucial role (Doble & Magill-Evans, 1992). Social-emotional skills include recognizing emotions in self and others, regulating and managing strong emotions (positive and negative), recognizing strengths and areas of need, listening and communicating accurately and clearly, sensing the emotions of others, appreciating differences, setting positive and realistic goals, problem-solving, decision-making, and planning.

Children with emotional issues often have trouble developing social skills (Elias, 2004). To develop strong social-emotional skills, one must be able to recognize emotions in self and others, regulate and manage strong emotions (positive and negative), listen and communicate accurately and clearly, and recognize areas of strength and areas of need. These realms intersect in many ways and both are required for a child to develop.

Engagement in Skill Building

Creating opportunities for children to develop skills that cross over from setting to setting helps them grow (Reynolds et al., 2011). Also important is offering a variety of therapeutic activities that requires different levels of response and engagement. Children with ASD enact cyclical patterns in which social, motor, and sensory deficits limit participation, which in turn exacerbates underlying ASD symptomatology. To break that cycle, a child's daily participation in a variety of experiences could improve their social, motor, and sensory deficits (Reynolds et al., 2011). Reynolds et al. found that "children who seek out sensation may engage in activities more frequently or for a longer duration. By engaging, they may naturally get practice in the performance of social, motor and sensory skills leading to increased competence over time" (p. 1504). Challenges in sensory responsiveness should be addressed as part of an overall program designed to increase participation for children with ASD.

Gaps in Research

Specific to children with social-emotional issues and summer camps, Clark and Nwokah (2010) searched academic journals and found 122 articles on both topics. The authors summarized and compared the types of camps, distinguishing

between camps focused on recreational activities, camps focused on non-competitive sports, and camps focused on pedagogically recreational activities. All camps were designed to help children develop social and emotional skills through a variety of activities and games. In each of the articles surveyed, there was no mention of creative arts therapies as part of the camp schedules or treatment protocols, and none of the camps addressed the unique needs of children who have more involved learning, emotional, physical, and/or behavioural issues that could preclude them from full engagement in a typical camp experience.

Several studies outlined treatment camps for children with autism that targeted social skill development (Hantson et al., 2012; Henley, 1999), but again few of them incorporated creative arts therapies. Researchers in one recent study utilized the Direct Teach method (Maich et al., 2015), while another relied on sensory-motor and language-based play (Walker et al., 2010). An exploratory study published by Brown et al. (2018) concentrated on the effects of speech-language and music therapies in a summer camp setting involving children with ASD, but it was focused more on the benefits and possibilities of such interprofessional collaborations.

There was accessible research that pertained to the social benefits of music therapy and art therapy with special needs populations (De Vries et al., 2015; Epp, 2008; Kearns, 2004; Wigram & Gold, 2006), yet again the literature was lacking a focus on the application of creative arts therapies in a summer day camp setting. Clark and Nwokah (2010) analyzed outcomes related to tracking the social and therapeutic impact of summer camps and advocated for more research examining play in summer camps for children with a variety of issues.

Buskirk-Cohen (2015) created a pilot study to evaluate whether a creative arts therapy program, delivered through a 2-week summer day camp, improved young children's social behaviours and relationships. This study was geared to typically developing children and had a lens of social competence, which refers to the ability to demonstrate appropriate social skills relative to various settings. Buskirk-Cohen (2015) explained how a child's ability to build and maintain positive relationships with peers and family members was crucial to their lifelong development of social competence and interpersonal sensitivity.

The study's findings supported the role of creative arts therapies (such as art, music, writing, and movement) in helping children gain personal insight and express themselves through alternative means; the study described the unique benefits of summer camps in fostering social development from a young age. The author adopted a creative arts focus in a summer camp but did not define which creative arts were used and how. Due to the strength of the study's methodology and promising findings, we decided to base our study on the salient design of the Buskirk-Cohen (2015) project and adapt it for our population.

Table 1
Camp Schedule

Intervention	Description
All campers	Opening circle
Small groups	First rotation of music therapy, art therapy, or recreation
Small groups	Hydration break
Small groups	Second rotation of music therapy, art therapy, or recreation
All campers	Snack
Small groups	Third rotation of music therapy, art therapy, or recreation
All campers	Closing circle

Camp Setting and Format

The Creative Arts Day Camp (CADC) was held on the campus of a private, non-profit university. The camp had been held the 2 previous years at this location, and in this time a keen community awareness of and support for the camp had developed. The campus setting provided full use of two buildings and an outside recreation area dedicated to the camp, offering space, parking, and accessibility.

The overall design was such that there were two separate 4-day camps, held Monday through Thursday over two consecutive weeks. The mission of the camp was twofold: (1) to offer a non-judgmental environment for campers to grow, explore, be with other children, and be creative and (2) to offer university students an intensive educational experience. The camp schedule, consistent with previous years, was constructed carefully to give the campers a sense of structure and safety (see Table 1). Children with more severe needs were assigned a dedicated volunteer to help them navigate the activities and accompanying transitions. The hub of the camp consisted of two large adjacent rooms. One was used for opening and closing activities and the other was a gathering space with couches, a tent with weighted toys and blankets, a fabric chair suspended on a swing set frame, and other sensory-friendly items. Any time a child felt overwhelmed, felt unable to participate in group activities, or became volatile, they could come to this space to decompress. Other breakout rooms were dedicated to art therapy and music therapy and an outside area was available for recreation time.

The schedule was organized to serve children in both large and small group environments. Before campers arrived, they were purposefully assigned to small groups to ensure a balance of needs and strengths in each group. This also afforded greater opportunities for the campers to bond with each other within their group.

Drawing on literature from other camps (Henley, 1999), therapeutic benefit was injected into every aspect of camp. Camp counsellors (who were music

Table 2
Examples of Music Therapy Interventions

Intervention	Description
Opening/greeting song	Geared to all ages and to all specific needs of the campers, typically involved singing and taking turns saying hello. Used for developing group cohesion, creating a structured environment, and socialization.
Instrument play	Group music making, possibly with a student therapist leading the group by playing a familiar song or an improvisation based upon a theme.
Group movement	Movements paired with music may be specific or freely improvised. Scarves were often used as props, which added an additional element of sensory stimulation and opportunities for play..
Songwriting	Fill-in-the-blank songwriting templates based on familiar songs provided opportunities for campers to express themselves.
Group drumming	Focus on developing flexibility of dynamics and use of call/response; for self-expression, impulse control, and self-regulation.
Song choice	Campers chose a song for the group to sing or play from a list provided by student therapists; for self-expression and cognitive development.
Closing/goodbye song or group play	For self-regulation, socialization, and communication.

therapy and art therapy students) considered how to incorporate therapeutic interventions throughout the day. For example, prosocial behaviours were supported and encouraged during snack time: campers and staff members came together in the common room to relax, to eat, and to share what had happened during the day. From the opening circle to water breaks to therapeutic sessions, children were encouraged to interact with each other and with staff and to engage to the best of their ability. The breakout sessions of art and music therapy were also planned carefully in order to bring a variety of therapeutic experiences to each child. Examples of art therapy, music therapy, and recreational activities can be found in Tables 2–4.

Methodology

A mixed-methods approach was used to combine the benefits of statistical analysis of the observation instruments with emerging qualitative data in the form of parent comments and student journals. The quantitative research

Table 3
Examples of Art Therapy Interventions

Intervention	Description
"I am unique because …"	Used collage materials to express individuality and personal strengths/interests.
Mandala	Each camper worked on a section/pie slice before all campers put the sections together to form a mandala.
Painting without paint brushes	Used a box lid and objects like balls, cars, and natural objects; campers worked in pairs to tilt the box lid and to move the objects to create patterns with the paint.
Glue, salt, and liquid watercolours	Campers made designs using glue and salt, then used liquid watercolour paint and droppers to drip colour onto the salt patterns.

Table 4
Examples of Recreation Activities

Intervention	Description
Chalk drawing	Free drawing on sidewalks.
Instrument play	Group music making, possibly with a student therapist leading the group by playing a familiar song or an improvisation based upon a theme.
Giant bowling pins	Teams were not formed for this activity.
Bubbles	Blowing bubbles with a variety of mechanisms used.
Group drumming	Focus on developing flexibility of dynamics and use of call/response; for self-expression, impulse control, and self-regulation.
Circle games	Singing, physical movements, passing games.

question was: "Does participation in a creative arts summer day camp have an effect on the social interactions and behaviours of children with and without special needs?" The qualitative research question was: "What meaning or value did the camp hold for parents/caregivers and students?" The specific design was a mixed-methods, concurrent embedded design (Creswell & Clark, 2017), chosen to evaluate comprehensively the effects of this summer creative arts day camp on children's prosocial behaviours.

Participants

Campers were between the ages of 5 and 23. Participants were recruited through postcards, advertisements in parent magazines, flyers, and social media. Advertisements stated that the camp was for children with and without special needs ranging in age from 5 to 18. The camp's primary focus was on children with varying disabilities but was open to all children. Several typically developing siblings also attended the camp. Camp activities were designed to reinforce the ideal of achieving one's maximum potential in a friendly and adaptive environment that fostered success through music, art, and movement.

The host institution obtained IRB approval, and the parents or legal representatives of participating children signed informed consent forms. Letters detailing the study were sent to parents and guardians two weeks before the camp opened. The risks of participating in the study were minimal for participants as the camp was run in the same fashion as in preceding years, with no modifications made to accommodate the research study. The only foreseeable risk was that campers/participants might become self-conscious if they noticed someone writing on a clipboard. This was a minor concern as children were acclimated to being evaluated in their school settings. The benefits of participating in the study were also no different from what campers typically experienced in CADC.

The parents or legal representative of all but two campers permitted their child to be part of the study, and all campers received the same camp experience. Participants attended one of the two 4-day camps, with three participants attending both weeks. The present study collected data from 17 participants during the 1st week of camp and 12 participants during the 2nd week of camp for a total sample of 29 participants over the 2 weeks. Data were examined from both weeks separately and comparatively.

Researchers chose not to obtain assent from the children participating in the study, not to alter their view of the camp experience, and not to make them feel pressured to perform in any way. Informed consent from legal representatives was required for participation in the study, yet not for inclusion in any camp activities.

Research Team

The research team consisted of four board-certified music therapy educators and supervisors, two board-certified art therapy educators and supervisors, and four graduate and undergraduate students in both fields. Two music therapy students collected quantitative data (the Teacher-Child Rating Scale).

All university students were engaged in some form of camp management: they rotated between serving as support staff and serving as primary treatment providers for their modality. Camp leadership included two directors for overall operations: one who was responsible for the development of the research design and for monitoring all data decisions made prior to collection, data collection methods, and analysis of results and one who had the role of ensuring that the

Table 5
Items on Data Tracking Sheet for CADC Objectives

1.	Each camper will engage with at least one other camper as evidenced by touch, eye contact, sharing of materials, verbal interaction, etc., each session (1=yes/0=no).
2.	Campers will remain in the session area for the duration of that session time (Y=yes/N=no).
3.	Campers will express enjoyment of activities as evidenced by smiling, laughing, verbal expression, indication of "yes" when asked, etc., at least once per session (Y=yes/N=no).
4.	When given the opportunity, campers will indicate their choice of presented options at least five times per day (Y=yes/N=no).
5.	Campers will engage in every offered activity in music therapy, art therapy, and recreation (Y=yes/N=no).

format of the camp (and therefore the study) was followed in a manner consistent with the aims of the project.

Quantitative Data Methods

The primary form of quantitative data collection was the Teacher-Child Rating Scale (T-CRS 2.1; Hightower & Perkins, 2010), completed by the two student raters for every participant on the 1st day and the last day of camp. Each parent completed the scale independently. This form of collection was a daily objectives form, designed by camp staff to track each camper's level of engagement (see Table 5).

The T-CRS 2.1 (Hightower & Perkins, 2010) instrument was designed originally for students with behaviour management issues in a typical classroom (Cowen et al., 1996), though the children at camp had a greater range of ages, abilities, and disabilities. Researchers for this project adapted the T-CRS 2.1 instrument, taking into account the demographics of the children who had attended our camp previously. We intended to implement the study in a way that expanded the original instrument's intended setting, allowing for a wider age range of campers, and introduced new interventions (Kapitan, 2010). We did not exactly replicate Buskirk-Cohen's (2015) study, not only because of the mismatch between participant demographics and sites of data collection but also because we recognized the potential pitfalls of trying to duplicate how the other study was operationalized (Morling, 2018). In essence, we wanted to inject a clinical focus into the study (McKinney, 2016). Unlike in a classroom setting, we employed creative arts therapies, had a greater number of participants, and focused specifically on prosocial behaviours (Morling, 2018). Ultimately, we decided to use the Buskirk-Cohen (2015) study as a foundation and a guide in setting up the study protocols and in analyzing results, yet we allowed ourselves

some freedom in knowing we had a very different type of participant pool and intervention tool.

The present study also aimed to include a larger sample size than the Buskirk-Cohen (2015) pilot study for greater generalizability of results. The pilot study had a sample of 11 participants, while the present study had a sample of 17 participants the 1st week of camp and 12 participants the 2nd week of camp, for a total sample of 29 participants over the 2 weeks.

Interrater Reliability Using the T-CRS 2.1

Before the beginning of camp, staff members and volunteers were trained on how to use the T-CRS 2.1. Before camp began, we held a series of training sessions; in two of the sessions, all staff members went through the rating scale item by item, discussed what each measure was and how it could be interpreted, and came to a consensus for each one. From there, the two students designated to take these data viewed three videos of children who have special needs interacting with other people, completed the scale independently of each other, and compared results. They discussed each question, the ways they interpreted the questions, and variations in how they observed and interpreted a child's behaviour. The third round of creating interrater reliability was through review and evaluation by one of the camp directors, who discussed any differences in ratings with the two students. Though not assessed statistically, this three-step training process seemed to increase the interrater reliability, so there was a higher degree of confidence that the rating scales would be applied similarly by each student.

The degree of interrater reliability was also not analyzed formally, yet the research team believed having two perspectives and two separate ratings, analyzed using a t-test, indicated strength and congruence. Data from the T-CRS 2.1 were analyzed using Microsoft Excel's data tools. Specifically, the T-CRS 2.1 was analyzed using the t-test function to compare the pretest and post-test average scores for each camper.

Daily Objectives Tracking Sheets Data Collection

The objectives data tracking sheet was completed daily by camp staff members to determine if participants were meeting the camp's objectives and goals. This form was a comprehensive, detailed overview of each child's engagement. Because its daily objectives had been designed by creative arts therapists to help track social behaviours, this form served as a continuous assessment of progress throughout the camp to support the pretest and post-test measures, which are more generalizable. The goals and objectives of camp were provided to parents prior to the beginning of camp. This form of data collection was informal, not based upon previously validated tools, yet rooted in the knowledge of campers' observed responses and behaviours from the two previous years of camp. For this reason, the daily objectives data were not considered strong sources of

generalizable information, but results provided more in-depth insight into the effects of the camp nonetheless. It was included in the analysis below to enhance the reader's understanding of the data collection methods; it might also prove useful for future studies.

Qualitative Data Methods

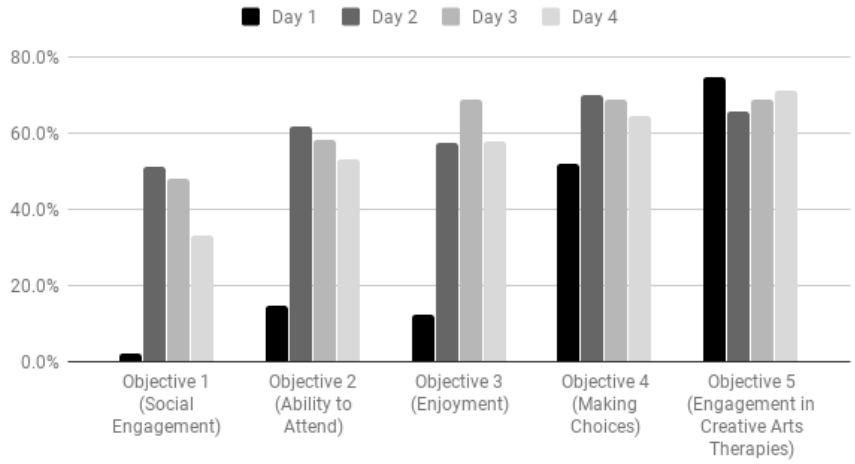
Embedded qualitative data were collected through three data collection methods: in-person comments from parents/caregivers during the camp, a post-camp survey sent out to parents/caregivers in which comments were sought, and journal responses by university students. A link to complete a post-camp survey (created through Google Forms) was emailed to parents/caregivers of the children who attended camp 30 days after the last day of the 2nd week of camp. Parents/caregivers were asked to reflect on the benefits of camp for their child(ren) and themselves and to offer suggestions or recommendations for camp in the years to come. Only the replies about the camp's benefits for the children and parents/caregivers were included in the qualitative data analysis of this study. For the journals, university students who helped facilitate the camp were asked to reflect on their experience through daily journal entries. The journals of eight music therapy students and two art therapy students were anonymized and analyzed for themes. Thematic analysis was employed, so emerging themes across datasets could be captured (Braun et al., 2019). A process of analysis was established to ensure multiple perspectives were considered (Sechelski & Onwuegbuzie, 2019): A minimum of three research team members reviewed the data and considered possible themes. All of the data were reviewed in detail by the camp director, who then passed the data, as well as their determination of themes, on to one of the primary researchers. This person then reviewed all data, created a list of recurring themes, and identified salient quotations. This list of themes and quotations was compared and contrasted to that of the camp director, and two other primary researchers conducted a similar review. This resulted in a final identification of themes and quotations that merged the three perspectives in a naturalistic and congruent manner.

Results

Quantitative Data from the T-CRS 2.1

The T-CRS 2.1 (Hightower & Perkins, 2010) was designed with data analysis tools built into the instrument. Significance was found within the areas of task orientation ($p = 0.0010$), assertiveness ($p = 0.0000$), and peer social skills ($p = 0.0001$) for both weeks combined. For each of these areas, significance was found within the individual weeks as well. In the 1st week, task orientation ($p = 0.0022$), assertiveness ($p = 0.0005$), and peer social skills ($p = 0.001$) showed a statistically significant improvement. In the 2nd week, task orientation ($p = 0.0263$),

Figure 1
Percentage of Campers Meeting CADC Objectives: Weeks 1 and 2



assertiveness ($p = 0.0020$), and peer social skills ($p = 0.0336$) also showed improvement. Significance was not found in the area of behaviour control ($p = 0.5390$).

Quantitative Data From the Daily Objectives Tracking Sheets

Data compiled from the data objectives tracking sheets were taken by the students leading the groups of campers that day. These data reflected both weeks of camp, showing overall trends of the camp (see Figure 1). After the camp concluded, these data were compiled and analyzed to show the number of campers meeting each objective. For Objectives 1 (social engagement), 2 (ability to attend), 3 (enjoyment), and 4 (making choices), the percentage of campers meeting the objective were lowest on day 1 but increased between days 1 and 2. Objective 5 (engagement in creative arts therapies) had an opposite trend, with the highest percentage of campers meeting the objective on the 1st day of camp, dropping to the lowest point on day 2, and improving slightly on days 3 and 4. Objectives 1, 2, and 4 showed a slight percentage decline from day 2 to day 4. Objective 3 revealed an increase in percentage from day 1 to day 3, with the highest percentage of campers meeting the objective on day 3, but had a slight drop again by day 4. The trends reflected in Figure 1 show a pattern of campers meeting objectives that was not readily apparent using the other information collected in this study. Further investigation of the factors influencing the observed improvement by day 2 can provide opportunities to enhance the overall camp experience. Additionally, the opposite trend seen in Objective 5 can provide an opportunity for

future camps to investigate what might be influencing the temporary decrease in campers' engagement in creative arts activities after the first day of camp.

Qualitative Data From Parents/Caregivers

Parents/caregivers and students engaged in the gathering of qualitative data for this project. We wanted to capture their experiences, particularly those of the parents, and their observations of shifts or changes in their child's engagement. Parent/caregiver comments and student journals were primary sources of data. After completing the aforementioned three-stage review process, saturation was deemed to have been met (Sechelski & Onwuegbuzie, 2019). Two sets of themes emerged: one related to camper experiences (inclusive of parent/caregiver comments) and one related to student experiences. Two themes emerged from data related to camper experiences (i.e., parent/caregiver survey responses and verbalized comments to staff): social interaction and acceptance.

Social Interaction

Making friends can be difficult for children with special needs, as they may have trouble identifying boundaries and typical protocols of participation. Parents/caregivers noted that the children who attended camp engaged in social interactions with greater ease and intention after attending the camp than they had seen previously. One parent commented, "I loved seeing [my son] involved with other kids and smile in a way I don't see every day." A mother who attended camp with her son said, "He loved coming to camp. I think he felt very comfortable and it was a great way to practise social skills." Similarly, another parent stated,

> This was an awesome opportunity for my daughter to get out of her comfort zones and learn from others who offer her different learning techniques. She also was able to make new friends and learn new things from her peers.

Camp allowed children to interact with each other in ways that did not rely solely on words but allowed for meaningful collaborations via musical, artistic, recreation, and movement interventions. Parents and caregivers valued the inclusion of art and music highly. The parent of a child with a more severe form of autism had this to say: "[She] really enjoyed the camp. Music is her passion and I think she was happy finding people who share her passion." Another parent said, "Thank you for all your hard work to give my daughter the opportunity to explore art and learn social skills while having lots of fun!"

Acceptance

The satisfaction parents derived from seeing their child accepted by others was also evident in another comment: "[My son] is included, empowered and successful at [camp]. The high spot of our summer!" One mother described it this way:

> This camp is the only place that I know of where my son's unique needs are met and he is accepted fully—by peers as well as adults. No one judged him negatively because he is a 14-year old with a binky, drools, uses a wheelchair and doesn't talk much. Rather, he was accepted and included!!! … He had opportunities for social interaction, creativity, and, most importantly, fun.

Qualitative Data From Students

In reviewing the journals written by eight music therapy students and two art therapy students, themes emerged that reflected the students' journeys of self-discovery and change. Journal entries evidenced a fear of novel situations, recurring patterns of negative self-talk and self-doubt, and a growing sense of confidence and connection to others. Overarching themes that were found in all student journals included the benefits of shared facilitation, increased confidence, accelerated experiential learning, observed change in the campers' behaviour, personal and professional development, and inspiration. In addition, two recurring and consistent themes emerged from the student journals data: trust and awareness of qualities the students would like to develop.

Trust

The sense of trust generated in students was a powerful theme that was multifaceted: trust in themselves, trust in the creative process of art and music, and trust in the team. One student stated, "I learned to relax a bit more and to trust my instincts." Developing self-trust is a critical component of becoming a creative arts therapist, for therapists must rely on their skills and knowledge base to create therapeutic environments for their clients. Sometimes this starts with taking simple steps: "I figured out a way to be engaging and engaged without letting my self-doubt get in the way." Pride of accomplishment built with each step:

> I felt proud of my ability to just be present and responsive to whatever the moment called for and to adjust plans continuously. I now feel ready to work with this population again with greater awareness of and confidence in my ability to meet their needs and help them succeed.

One student phrased it succinctly this way: "I learned to always have interventions ready to go at a moment's notice and to trust my instincts and go with my gut."

Awareness of Qualities to Develop

The students expressed consistently their increased awareness of what they needed and wanted to work on in order to become more effective therapists. The intensive nature of the camp—in that they were observing, leading, and co-leading each day—gave them ample opportunities to see what others did that

they wanted to emulate and to identify the internal struggles that blocked their growth. One student stated,

> Today was the first time since beginning my music therapy journey that I said to myself, "I can do this. I can be a music therapist." What an empowering thing to say to myself. I love this population, I love music therapy, and finally beginning to combine those two together has made me happier than I ever thought possible.

Another student remarked on their realization that being serious and rigid in adhering to the session plan was holding them back: "I think being more silly with the campers and taking something they are interested in and turning it into a game or conversation topic really helped increase the socialization in my group."

Developing as a leader was another sub-theme that became evident. Students learned from each other: as one student said, "I really learned a lot working with someone with such an opposite leadership style than myself and plan to integrate their style more into my personal work." Several students also seemed surprised that they could lead effectively as evident in these statements: "I learned that I am a natural leader and enjoy taking charge of situations" and "I feel much more confident now."

Discussion

> And out of joy came more confidence to just be who they are.
>
> —Parent comment

The themes that evolved for campers as well as for students demonstrated the experiential power of this intensive and focused camp experience for all involved. The significant improvement in social skills illustrated by the quantitative data was reflected in the parent/caregiver comments. The growing trust that students experienced in themselves was reflected in parents' trust in the camp and in comments related to seeing their children grow in their abilities.

The difficulty children with special needs have in negotiating social interactions was mirrored in graduate students' struggles to manage the intensity of having to be a leader, manage campers' needs and behaviours, and trust themselves. Both campers and students grew in their self-awareness and their ability to work with others.

In reviewing the results of the T-CRS 2.1 (Hightower & Perkins, 2010), it was evident that the individual campers improved in the areas of task orientation, assertiveness, and peer social skills whether they attended the first week, the second week, or both weeks. While there was some variation between the degree of change between pretest and post-test of the two weeks in the T-CRS

2.1, the consistency of significance speaks to the functionality and consistency of the design of the creative arts day camp.

The measured improvement in the area of task orientation could be explained by the increased level of engagement and empowerment through creative outlets and experiences. As the camp progressed, the campers may have become better acquainted with the expectations and projects that occurred within the camp. The campers may also have developed an understanding that camp was a non-judgmental, safe place to be creative, to have fun, and to be themselves. The measured improvement in the area of peer social skills could be explained by an increase in opportunities for the campers to interact positively with their peers. It could also be due to the camp's emphasis on the importance of equity and acceptance. The measured improvement in the area of assertiveness could be due to positive reinforcement. Campers were rewarded intrinsically in creative experiences they were sharing with peers. Similarly, the staff members encouraged campers to be true to their needs and desires, which reinforced the benefits of self-expression.

There was no significant change or improvement in the area of behaviour control. The items within this area, such as "tolerates frustration" and "accepts imposed limits," were not addressed explicitly through the camp structure. The camp was designed with few imposed limits other than the structure of the schedule. The camp was designed intentionally to minimize frustration through freely chosen creative self-expression activities.

When the quantitative data and the qualitative data were synthesized, a trend of meaningful change in campers' social interactions became clear: a therapeutic creative arts approach in an intensive camp setting can make a difference in how children with special needs can express themselves to others. It also makes a difference in their ability to learn to work with others, to celebrate the accomplishments of others, and to regulate their own behaviours. Much of what the students reflected in their journals paralleled what the campers experienced: an increase in self-awareness and the ability to work with others (prosocial behaviours).

The embedded qualitative data supported the statistical significance of prosocial behaviours and created a picture of the camp as having the potential to create meaningful change, not only in camper behaviours but also in parent and caregiver perceptions. Student journals indicated that the camp was a powerful learning experience for them. The post-camp survey indicated that parents/caregivers observed meaningful changes in their child's presence and ability to interact with others. Parents/caregivers are the people most familiar with their child's needs, quirks, and abilities. For parents/caregivers to see and to remark upon a change in their child's demeanour, speech, and/or social relatedness could reflect an increased awareness of their child's needs and abilities and an appreciation for the value of the camp. The statistical significance indicated positive changes in social awareness but, when paired with potent and emotional statements that defined the change, there was potential for continued growth. A fuller, richer picture of

each child who participated in the study emerged and was an important piece of the data presented to parents/caregivers and administrators at the university where the camp was held.

Any mixed-methods design holds potential for several potential outcomes: (1) neither the quantitative data nor the qualitative data will show significance or impact, (2) one part of the design may yield more information than the other, or (3) the two might dovetail, creating an integration of data that suggests the study yielded rich and transformative experiences. This study resulted in the third possibility: significance in several prosocial areas was achieved and an analysis of the parent/caregiver comments and the student journals gave insight into the transformations the children underwent.

Limitations

The T-CRS 2.1 (Hightower & Perkins, 2010) is a scale that was designed originally for teachers who have ongoing contact with the children they rate. The developers of the study recommended a minimum of four weeks of experience with children before completing the T-CRS 2.1. As the camp lasted only four days and the current study was designed in a way to limit inconvenience to the campers or their family members, assessing an accurate baseline for each child was not possible. Therefore, scorers used a "snapshot" method and included information they observed from that day only. This meant that scorers might not have observed behaviours that correlated to all items on the scale. Researchers also acknowledge that some of what was observed may have been an inaccurate representation of each child's standard levels of functioning. To this point, it may also be noted that the CADC was not within the scope of their standard lives and that the behaviours that occurred within this space likely are different from how they portray themselves in other facets of their lives.

Furthermore, it should be anticipated that any child who is put in an unfamiliar situation may initially present themselves as less assertive, less social, and perhaps less task-oriented. Over the week, there is an anticipated level of change as the campers become more familiar with the camp and its structure. However, it is of note that for many of these children, adaptation to new schedules, plans, environment, and people can require formal training and preparation. With this in mind, four days of camp was a short amount of time to observe significant changes.

Finally, the use of the daily objectives data was, while informative, not a validated tool. It should be considered supplementary data for this study, though it could be a source of data for future study.

Future Research

The sample size of the present study—a total of 29 campers in both weeks—was relatively small. It was, however, larger than most studies identified in the

literature review. Future research designs could increase the sample size in order to produce more generalizable results. The present study compared the campers' levels of participation from the start of the camp to the end of the camp. Future researchers might benefit from gathering more details about a child's baseline level of behaviours and social interactions by adding items to the camper intake form such as information about the quantity and quality of friendships a child has or about verbal and non-verbal interaction preferences. Knowing more about how each camper functions at their baseline would help inform the overall impact of camp on each camper. This would require another level of interrater reliability as well as some form of validation for the added items, yet it could yield valuable information.

The creative arts day camp was run primarily by music therapy and art therapy students and supervisors. We suggest adding play therapy students and supervisors who could transform the recreation portion of camp into a segment with enhanced therapeutic benefits. This would increase the strength of the creative arts foundation for the camp and create a greater level of consistency in interactions between campers and staff members. By integrating the expertise of music therapy, art therapy, and play therapy into the camp format, the camp would offer campers a fuller creative arts experience with even more opportunities for growth and change. A final consideration that might strengthen future research designs would be to conduct a follow-up survey with parents 2 months after the camp to assess lasting changes.

Conclusion

Results of this study imply that participation in a creative arts day camp has social benefits for children with and without special needs. The camp was geared to children with disabilities, and these children were indeed the majority of campers; that the camp had a statistically significant, positive effect on their lives was a bonus to all who helped organize and run the camp. Students in training experienced accelerated learning and realized some of the benefits in cross-disciplinary collaboration. We all witnessed first-hand the friendships formed, moments of one camper helping another camper out, the campers' appreciation for the artwork others created, and joy in mutual music making. Having designed and implemented this study carefully, we were gratified to realize the data supported our previous years of experiences of success and connection: results indicated the effectiveness of using a multi-modal creative arts therapy model in treating children who could benefit from developing their prosocial skills.

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