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MUSIC THERAPY FOR YOUNG CHILDREN WHO HAVE SPECIAL NEEDS:
THE MUSIC THERAPY EXPERIENCE FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF
CARERS AND PROFESSIONALS

Thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

Master of Music Therapy

At The New Zealand School of Music, Wellington

New Zealand

Jenny Yu Kuan Chiang

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ABSTRACT

This project aims to investigate how carers and other professionals perceive the music therapy process over time. Music therapy has been used to address a wide range of diagnoses and developmental issues of young children. The research was conducted during my clinical placement working with young children who have been referred to a child development team. The participants in this project were carers with children with special needs. The children were diagnosed with various disabilities and required different support and developmental goals. Each child attended individual music therapy sessions once a week over a period of three to nine months. It was speculated that many other changes or developmental progress could occur along with the goals and objectives set by me in the music therapy process. To understand fully what other changes or progress the children have made with the input of music therapy, the research was designed using open-ended interviews to find out what the carers and a professional witnessed during and in between the sessions. Three carers were involved in a one-on-one in-depth interview in which they were encouraged to talk about their observation and perception of music therapy. A speech-language therapist was also invited to participate in an in-depth interview. Data derived from the interviews was analysed using a thematic analysis approach. The findings compare themes generated from the clinical notes and interview data. The results showed some shared experiences amongst the participants as well as exceptions influenced by parental differences and the children's conditions. Examination of the similarities and differences between the clinical notes and the interview data helped me validate the outcome of music therapy intervention and gain more insights into effective practice.

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This research received ethical approval from the Central Regional Ethics Committee
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>ABSTRACT</u>	<u>I</u>
<u>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</u>	<u>II</u>
<u>LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES</u>	<u>VI</u>
<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	<u>1</u>
A. THE CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH	
A.1 MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM	2
A.2 HOME-BASED VISITS	2
B. THE PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH	
B.1 EMPOWER CARERS AND OTHER PROFESSIONALS	3
B.2 INSIGHT INTO THE RESEARCHER’S CLINICAL PRACTICE	3
<u>LITERATURE REVIEW</u>	<u>5</u>
A. YOUNG CHILDREN WITH SEPCIAL NEEDS	5
B. FAMILY WITH A CHILD WHO HAS SPECIAL NEEDS	5
C. MUSIC THERAPY FOR YOUNG CHILDREN WITH SPEICIAL NEEDS	6
C.1 MUSIC THERAPY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES	7
C.2 MUSIC THERAPY APPROACHES	11
D. MUSIC THERAPY IN A MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM	12
E. MUSIC THERAPY THROUGH THE EYES OF CARERS AND PROFESSIONALS	13
<u>METHOD</u>	<u>15</u>
A. PARTICIPANTS	15
B. PROCEDURE AND DATA COLLECTION	16
	III

C. ETHICAL ISSUES	17
D. MUSIC THERAPY SESSIONS	17
E. PROCEDURES FOR DATA ANALYSIS	18
FINDINGS	20
<hr/>	
A. CASE 1	
A.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION	20
A.2 OBSERVATION FROM CLINICAL NOTES	21
A.3 FINDINGS FROM THE INTERVIEW	23
A.4 COMPARING FINDINGS FROM THE CLINICAL NOTES AND THE INTERVIEW	28
B. CASE 2	
B.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION	30
B.2 OBSERVATION FROM CLINICAL NOTES	30
B.3 FINDINGS FROM THE INTERVIEW	33
B.4 COMPARING FINDINGS FROM THE CLINICAL NOTES AND THE INTERVIEW	36
C. CASE 3	
C.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION	39
C.2 OBSERVATION FROM CLINICAL NOTES	40
C.3 FINDINGS FROM THE INTERVIEW	41
C.4 COMPARING FINDINGS FROM THE CLINICAL NOTES AND THE INTERVIEW	44
D. PROFESSIONAL INTERVIEW	
D.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION	46
D.2 FINDINGS FROM THE INTERVIEW	46
E. RESULTS	50

<u>DISCUSSION</u>	<u>53</u>
A. CARERS' PERSPECTIVE OF MUSIC THERAPY	53
A.1 "MUSIC THERAPY IS FUN AND ENJOYABLE"	53
A.2 EFFECTS OF MUSIC THERAPY ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF LANGUAGE SKILLS	55
A.3 TREATMENT AS PROCESS	56
A.4 ONE-ON-ONE MUSIC THERAPY PREPARES CHILDREN FOR GROUP PARTICIPATION	57
A.5 LONG-TERM MUSIC THERAPY	57
A.6 HOME-BASED MUSIC THERAPY AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT	58
B. PROFESSIONALS' PERSPECTIVE OF MUSIC THERAPY	58
B.1 HOLISTIC APPROACH AND SPECIFIC AIMS IN MUSIC THERAPY	58
B.2 MEETING EACH CHILD'S DIFFERENT NEEDS	59
B.3 MUSIC THERAPY IN A MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM	59
C. MUSIC THERAPY FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF CARERS/PROFESSIONALS AND THE MUSIC THERAPY STUDENT – DIFFERENCE AND SIMILIARITIES	60
D. LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH PROCEDURES	61
E. IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESERACH	62
<u>CONCLUSION</u>	<u>64</u>
<u>REFERENCES</u>	<u>65</u>
<u>APPENDIX 1 INFORMATION SHEET FOR CARERS</u>	<u>70</u>
<u>APPENDIX 2 INFORMATION SHEET FOR PROFESSIONALS</u>	<u>72</u>
<u>APPENDIX 3 CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN MUSIC THERAPY RESEARCH PROJECT (CARERS)</u>	<u>74</u>

<u>APPENDIX 4</u>	<u>CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN MUSIC THERAPY RESEARCH PROJECT (PROFESSIONALS)</u>	<u>76</u>
<u>APPENDIX 5</u>	<u>INTERVIEW GUIDELINES FOR CARER PARTICIPANTS</u>	<u>78</u>
<u>APPENDIX 6</u>	<u>INTERVIEW GUIDELINES FOR PROFESSIONAL PARTICIPANT</u>	<u>79</u>
<u>APPENDIX 7</u>	<u>AN EXAMPLE OF CLINICAL NOTES FOR CASE 1</u>	<u>80</u>
<u>APPENDIX 8</u>	<u>AN EXAMPLE OF CLINICAL NOTES FOR CASE 2</u>	<u>82</u>
<u>APPENDIX 9</u>	<u>AN EXAMPLE OF CLINICAL NOTES FOR CASE 3</u>	<u>84</u>
<u>APPENDIX 10</u>	<u>CASE 1 INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT</u>	<u>86</u>
<u>APPENDIX 11</u>	<u>CASE 2 INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT</u>	<u>97</u>
<u>APPENDIX 12</u>	<u>CASE 3 INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT</u>	<u>107</u>
<u>APPENDIX 13</u>	<u>PROFESSIONAL INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT</u>	<u>117</u>

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

TABLE 1	CARERS AND THE PROFESSIONAL'S VIEWS ON MUSIC THERAPY - COMMON AND EXCEPTIONAL THEMES	50
TABLE 2	COMMON THEMES DERIVED FROM THE INTERVIEWS AND THE CLINICAL NOTES	51
FIGURE 1	THEMES DERIVED FROM THE CLINICAL NOTES AND THE INTERVIEW DATA (CASE 1).....	29
FIGURE 2	THEMES DERIVED FROM THE CLINICAL NOTES AND THE INTERVIEW DATA (CASE 2).....	37
FIGURE 3	THEMES DERIVED FROM THE CLINICAL NOTES AND THE INTERVIEW DATA (CASE 3)	45
FIGURE 4	OUTCOME OF THE MUSIC THERPAY SESSIONS - LOOKING FROM A HUMANISTIC VIEW ON THE CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT.....	52