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The Perspective of Counselors on Occupational Therapy at a Residential Camp for Children with Disabilities

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The Perspective of Counselors on Occupational Therapy at a Residential Camp for Children with
Disabilities

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An Independent Study

Submitted to the Occupational Therapy Department

of the

University of North Dakota

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

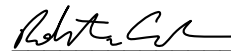
Master of Occupational Therapy

Grand Forks, North Dakota

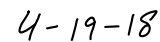
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This Independent Study Paper, submitted by Erika Moderow and Hailey Tollefson in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Master of Occupational Therapy from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisor under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.



Signature of Faculty Advisor



Date

PERMISSION

Title The Perspective of Counselors on Occupational Therapy at
Residential Camp for Children with Disabilities

Department Occupational Therapy

Degree Master of Occupational Therapy

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Erika Moderow, MOTS
April 20th, 2018



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April 20th, 2018

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: By attending summer camps, children with disabilities have the opportunity to retain skills they acquire during the school year in services including occupational therapy (Marr & Dimeo, 2006); however, the perception of occupational therapy services at these camps is limited. Not all children who receive therapy services during the school year are eligible for services in the summer, which means that occupational therapy at summer camps is an opportunity to prevent deterioration of skills in those not otherwise eligible (North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, 2016).

Methodology: A qualitative phenomenological research study was conducted to look at camp counselors' perceptions of occupational therapy services for children at a summer camp for children with disabilities. Researchers interviewed six counselors from a summer camp in the Midwest using a semi-structured interview process. Data was coded and put into categories, which were then developed into three themes. This process was guided by the Person Environment Occupation (PEO) Model.

Results: The counselors' perceptions were concerned with the camper's experience at camp and occupational therapy. Three main themes emerged that revolved around the three domains of the PEO model: the person, environment, and occupation.

Conclusion: Counselors reported that campers experienced improvements in confidence, responsibility, social skills, activities of daily living, and participation in leisure activities

and play. Occupational therapy services were perceived to be favorable by counselors in helping campers maintain skills, complete activities of daily living, and interact appropriately with peers in a camp setting.

Significance: Children and adolescents with disabilities can benefit with improved skills by attending summer camps where therapy services are provided. The profession of occupational therapy has limited presence in summer camps, however, children could benefit from increased services provided at summer camps.

Chapter I: Introduction

Since 1885, summer camps in the United States have enabled children to be introduced to the outdoors (Summer camp, 2017). Summer camps range from wilderness camps, where children stay in tents and perform the majority of occupations outdoors, to camps where children stay in heated cabins and are provided with more luxuries (Summer camp, 2017). Activities held at summer camps can vary widely, and they can include things such as art, music, sports, remedial education, horseback riding, weight loss, and therapies (Summer camp, 2017).

Several professions have worked to integrate their realm of practice into summer camps, such as social workers and pediatric nurses. Social workers have seen the benefits of working with children in a summer camp setting and have been found to build better rapport with these children by learning about them in a different setting (Michalski, Mishna, Worthington, and Cummings, 2003). Medical knowledge of pediatric nurses allowed them to refer children to summer camps that would fit their needs and to discuss this information with the children's family (McCarthy, 2015). Like these professions, occupational therapy has been involved in summer camps, but may have the opportunity to do so even further.

Occupational therapists (OTs) focus on using everyday activities therapeutically to help their clients enhance daily life (American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA], 2014). While at summer camps, children participated in their normal daily occupations in addition to trying new activities related to the camp (Summer camp,

2017). The camp environment provided a place where occupational therapists could observe children completing occupations in a novel context. There is currently limited research about occupational therapy services provided in the context of a summer camp. Increasing the amount of research and evidence regarding occupational therapists working at overnight summer camps has the potential to increase and improve the amount of occupational therapy services offered in this setting.

Statement of Problem

Children with disabilities who qualify for special education are eligible for free occupational therapy services in their school if the team feels it will enhance their education (AOTA, 2016). However, many of the children who receive school-based occupational therapy services do not receive therapy services during the summer (North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, 2016). The need for extended school year services or services in the summer is determined by several criteria including the likelihood of the child's skills regressing, category and severity of the child's disability, the parents' or guardians' ability to educate and give structure at home, and the child's learning rate (North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, 2016). Students who do not qualify under these criteria and do not receive extended school year services might have a deterioration in skills over the summer (Marr & Dimeo, 2006). For example, Marr and Dimeo (2006) found that children made significant improvements in their handwriting skills after completion of a summer handwriting course. The authors reported that occupational therapists should consider summer handwriting training for students who are expected to have deterioration of skills over the summer (Marr &

Dimeo, 2006). Occupational therapists could also have a role in limiting the deterioration of other skills during the summer through camps.

There is currently limited research about occupational therapy services at residential summer camps. To begin bridging the gap in information, this phenomenological study interviewing camp counselors was designed to gather information about occupational therapy at a camp for children and adolescents with disabilities. Camp counselors spend all day with their campers and they have the chance to see how campers are affected by different camp activities such as occupational therapy. The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of camp counselors on occupational therapy services provided at a summer camp for children and adolescents with disabilities. The summer camp in this study had a certified occupational therapy assistant who provided interventions and an occupational therapist who completed evaluations and provided off-site supervision.

Delimitations and Scope of Study

Counselors were selected as the participants for this study because they spend the most direct time with campers during their time at camp and they saw the effects of the occupational therapy services provided. Counselors could see how the OT services affected the camper's daily living skills and routines while at camp. Various other individuals qualified as potential interviewees for this study, such as campers, parents, occupational therapists, camp directors, and other camp staff. Campers would have been a difficult population to study because of their vulnerability and confidentiality issues. Campers' parents were also deemed difficult to contact due to confidentiality and a potential lack of response rates to an e-mail questionnaire. The number of occupational

therapists working in camps are limited, and they would have had a biased view of their services. There were also a limited number of camp directors and other camp staff, so camp counselors were chosen due to their accessibility, increased number of potential participants, and amount of time spent with campers.

The authors interviewed counselors who worked at the same summer camp in the Midwest within the past three years. This time frame was chosen because a recent view of the camper's experiences was necessary for accuracy. The researchers did not personally know the participants that they interviewed. These exclusion criteria were made to keep the research accurate and bias-free.

The interview questions were targeted towards the counselors' perceptions of their campers' experiences with occupational therapy services and the contexts in which they performed occupations. Questions about their experiences outside of camp were not asked as this study focuses solely on the campers' experiences during their time at the summer camp. The questions also pertained primarily to the specialty services, as other aspects were not important to the study.

Importance of Study

The importance of this study was to identify the perceptions of camp counselors on occupational therapy at residential summer camps for children with disabilities. The secondary purpose was to determine the role of occupational therapy services in camp settings. Other studies have been completed regarding summer camps for children with disabilities, but none have specifically focused on the counselors' perspectives about occupational therapy services. Provident and Colmer (2013) completed a related study regarding the experiences of completing an occupational therapy fieldwork at a camp for

children with disabilities. They found occupational therapy students were able to give counselors assistance with medical equipment, transfers, and self-cares (Provident & Colmer, 2013). This demonstrated how counselors were in the position at a residential summer camp to receive help from occupational therapists and to see the effects of OT services on campers. The focus of this study is to look at the perceptions of camp counselors on occupational therapy services at summer camps.

Theoretical Framework

The Person Environment Occupation (PEO) model was chosen to guide this study. According to Law et al. (1996) the transactive nature of the PEO model allows the therapist is to find the best “fit” between the person, environment, and occupation. All three concepts are interdependent with one another, meaning one cannot happen or change without the other (Law et al., 1996). Law et al. (1996) stated the person aspect of the model refers to the skills, attributes, and traits of a person, which are dynamic and constantly changing. The concept of environment includes the cultural, socioeconomic, institutional, physical, and social contexts surrounding a person (Law et al., 1996). Within the PEO model, the concept of occupation refers to whatever people do in their environments, which can be further broken down into activities, tasks, and occupations (Law et al., 1996). For the purpose of this study, the person is important as the counselors’ internal feelings toward the campers’ experience with occupational therapy services at a summer recreational camp are the main focus. The camp environment is different than the typical environment the campers are in, which in turn affects their participation in daily occupations and their feelings. The concept of occupation deals

with how the campers' daily occupations and occupational therapy sessions are affected by the camp environment and their own feelings.

This research paper will cover all aspects completed for this study including the literature review, methodology, data analysis, discussion, results, and conclusion of findings. A phenomenological study design was utilized to explore the experiences of camp counselors. A semi-structured interview was used to collect data, which the researchers then used to generate overall themes. This research process and the findings are discussed thoroughly throughout the rest of this paper.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used throughout the study and have been defined to help aid readers in understanding the concepts. Unless otherwise stated, the following definitions are being used for the terms or concepts listed.

Age Range for Children and Adolescents- For this study, children and adolescents refers to an age range from 8 to 18 years old since those were the ages of campers attending the camp.

Disability- "An umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions" (The World Health Organization, 2018, para. 1).

Disability Non-Specific Summer Camp- The children attending the camp have a variety of disabilities (Clark & Nwokah, 2010).

Disability Specific Summer Camp- All of the children attending the camp have the same disability (Clark & Nwokah, 2010).

Inclusive Summer Camp- A camp adapted to be accessible to people with a variety of abilities, so children with and without disabilities can attend (Melikechi, 2015).

Non-inclusive Summer Camp- A camp for only one population, meaning the camp is either for children with disabilities or children without disabilities (Clark & Nwokah, 2010).

Occupation- “Daily life activities in which people engage” (AOTA, 2014, p. S6).

Occupational Therapy- “The therapeutic use of everyday life activities (occupations) with individuals or groups for the purpose of enhancing or enabling participation in roles, habits, and routines” (AOTA, 2014, p. S1).

Summer Camps- An organized program held during the day or overnight that provides housing, food, and activities for children and adolescents (Summer camp, 2017). The following study was completed about a residential summer camp where the campers stayed overnight for a time ranging from one to three consecutive weeks.

Chapter II: Literature Review

According to a survey completed by the American Camp Association, there are over 14,000 summer camps in the United States and “each year more than 14 million children and adults attend camp” (American Camp Association [ACA], 2018). Of these 14,000 summer camps, 44% offer services for people with disabilities (American Camp Association, 2018). The majority of research regarding summer camps for children with disabilities was focused on changes children experienced at camps; however, occupational therapy and other specialty services were not often mentioned (Barry, Bader, & Walker, 2010; Dawson, Devine, & Piatt, 2015; Epstein, Stinson, & Stevens, 2005). Since limited literature was found about occupational therapy services at summer camps, this literature review was conducted to look at information regarding camps for children with disabilities, the effects of camps on occupations, the experiences of counselors at camps, and therapy services offered at camps.

Camps for Children with Disabilities

Current literature is primarily focused on non-inclusive, disability-specific camps. Examples of disability specific camps included children with visual impairments, hearing impairments, autism spectrum disorder, burns, chronic illness, and other disabilities (Goodwin, Johnston, Leo, & Lieberman, 2011; Dawson et al., 2015; Barry et al., 2010; Bay et al., 2007; Epstein et al., 2005). Limited research was found regarding summer camps accepting children with a wide variety of diagnoses. A summer camp that accepts

children with a range of different diagnoses would have to potentially adapt occupations in several ways for different campers' abilities.

Positive effects have been identified in literature for children with disabilities who attended summer camps. McCarthy (2015) found recreational camps for children with disabilities provided opportunities for campers to improve a wide variety of personal skills including confidence, development of friendships, self-esteem, and knowledge of diseases and disorders. In addition to these areas, Clark and Nwokah (2010) found camps for children with disabilities provided a chance for children to experience disability culture, which can help them learn more and feel included with peers. Summer camp also had the potential to assist children in retaining skills learned through education and therapy services during the school year (Marr & Dimeo, 2006).

Several acts of legislation allow children with disabilities to receive services during the school year. Legislation including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) allow children and adolescents with disabilities to qualify for special education and free school-based therapy services during the school year (AOTA, 2016). The IDEA guarantees school-based therapy services and free education to children with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.a). Section 504 provided legal support for students with disabilities to participate in programs and services that receive funding from the federal government (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.b). The ADA prevents discrimination against those with disabilities, especially in the areas of employment, public accommodations, transportation, communication, and access to government services and programs (United States Department of Labor, n.d.). These services provide

opportunities for children of all abilities to receive a public education, but they do not always cover services over the summer (North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, 2016).

Several studies found children and adolescents do not retain knowledge and skills learned in school throughout the summer if they do not practice their skills or have summer programming (Marr & Dimeo, 2006; Borman & Dowling, 2006). Children were found to have better retention and knowledge of skills the next school year if they attended summer school or camp (Marr & Dimeo, 2006; Borman & Dowling, 2006). According to the American Camp Association (2018), 49% of camps surveyed reported having worked directly with a school to continue academic programming throughout the summer to retain knowledge and skills. Occupational therapists could provide either direct or indirect services for children at summer camps to continue expanding upon what the child was working on through school therapy services to prevent deterioration of skills. The potential to maintain skills along with the other positive effects demonstrate the benefits children with disabilities can experience through summer camps.

Effects of Camp on Occupational Participation

While away at summer camps, children take part in many occupations. Besides completing typical daily cares, new occupations campers might experience at summer camp include swimming, tubing, making s'mores, crafting, pitching a tent, or staying in a cabin. These new occupations and the environment of a summer camp have the potential to greatly alter how children with disabilities participate in their occupations. The available literature suggested summer camps for children with disabilities had both

negative and positive side effects on the campers' occupations in relation to quality of life, social participation, and independence.

Quality of Life

The quality of life and self-esteem of children with disabilities was found to be positively affected by summer camps. Children with burn injuries who attended a summer camp reported significantly higher self-esteem upon completion of camp (Bay et al., 2007). Similarly, Dawson et al. (2015) found children with hearing impairments felt a sense of normalcy being around others similar to them in a camp setting. The authors of both studies demonstrated how the camp environment and being around peers with disabilities allowed children to become more comfortable with their injury or disability (Bay et al., 2007; Dawson et al., 2015). Zwicker et al. (2015) reported parents felt their children were more inclined to participate in new activities after attending a summer camp. This again shows how the camp environment may have increased the confidence in children with disabilities. In another study regarding children with chronic illnesses, summer camps were found to have a positive effect on health-related quality of life, which looks at several aspects of health including physical, emotional, and mental (Epstein et al., 2005). These studies demonstrate the positive effects summer camps can have on a child's overall quality of life, health, and self-esteem.

Physical and mental health has also been shown to be positively affected by summer camps. McCurdy, Winterbottom, Mehta, and Roberts (2010) discussed the effects of nature and outdoor activity in increasing the health of children. Time spent in nature was found to decrease childhood obesity and improve mental health. Researchers suggested pediatric health care professionals promote more activity in an outdoor

environment (McCurdy et al., 2010). Because many activities at recreational camps are outdoors, these same findings are applicable to how summer camp affects the occupations of children with disabilities.

Social Participation

Social participation has been a primary function of summer camps for a long time. Knapp, Devine, Dawson, and Piatt (2015) discovered that campers remembered social experiences more in-depth when compared to other aspects of camp. Positive findings based on the occupation of social participation have also been found by other researchers. Dipeolu et al. (2016) found campers were shown to have personal and social transformations through their camp experience. Through summer camp, children with chronic illness reported an increase in sense of belonging, ability to be themselves, enjoyment, positive affect, a sense of escape, and personal growth through a summer camp experience (Gillard & Allsop, 2016).

Studies conducted in non-inclusive summer camps also found the camps having positive impacts on the campers' social skills. Goodwin, Johnston, Leo, & Lieberman (2011) found campers with visual impairments felt an increase in connectedness with others along with decreased isolation and alienation while at camp. Bader et al. (2010) found parents of children with autism spectrum disorder perceived improvements in social interaction, verbal communication, attention to task, and transitions. The authors of these studies demonstrated how populations of children with different disabilities have been positively affected in the area of social skills through participation in a summer camp.

Independence

While at summer camps, children experienced a chance to be self-reliant away from their caregivers (Goodwin & Staples, 2005). Goodwin and Staples (2005) identified that campers felt like they were able to take care of themselves better and they were able to do more tasks around the house after returning from camp. Campers experienced positive peer pressure which encouraged them to be independent and try new things (Goodwin & Staples, 2005). In another study, parents stated their kids were more responsible and cooperative after returning home, but these changes only lasted a short period of time following camp (Michalski et al., 2003). Previous research demonstrated how summer camps allowed opportunities for children with disabilities to become more independent in their daily lives.

Negative Outcomes

Although summer camps have been linked with several positive outcomes, negative outcomes have been identified as well. Michalski et al. (2003) found children with disabilities felt isolated the following school year because their friends from camp were not with them. Another downfall to camps for children and adolescents with disabilities was limited carryover of skills and relationships learned at camp into the next school year (Michalski et al., 2003). Current research was not found to address any other negative outcomes that occurred when children with disabilities attended summer camps.

Counselors at Summer Camps for Children with Disabilities

Many roles have to be filled at a summer camp, such as craft teachers, recreation staff, or specialty service providers; however, counselors commonly have the most interaction with campers. They spend days and nights with the campers while residing in

the same cabin as the children or adolescents. Counselors are either paid staff or volunteers at a summer camp with a variety of responsibilities which can include: keeping the campers on schedule, helping the campers get ready in the morning and at night, and being a resource for campers should they need any assistance. Counselors at camps for children with disabilities often undergo extensive training to learn how to specifically counsel campers with disabilities (Blas, 2007). The training depends upon the camp, but specific training for counselors at camps for children with disabilities could include in-services from healthcare professionals, file reviews, and extra safety training (Blas, 2007).

Counselors' experiences at camps for children with disabilities have been identified in multiple studies. Alden, Hunter, Rabbitts, and Yurt (2006) found volunteer counselors who worked at a burn survivor camp for children had positive outcomes in both their personal and professional lives from volunteering at the camp. Outcomes included bonding with the campers, learning skills that could be used at work, and encouraging exploration of their own personal beliefs more thoroughly (Alden et al., 2006). This demonstrated how working as a camp counselor can cause the development of new professional and interpersonal skills.

In contrast, Lawrence, Glidden, and Jobe (2006) found several negative outcomes from working as a camp counselor. Counselors working at a camp for children with disabilities did not return to their jobs the following year because of stress, bad pay, and issues with their employer or other staff members (Lawrence, Glidden, & Jobe, 2006). A limitation of this study was the authors did not identify whether the negative experiences of the counselors were related to the fact it was a camp for children with disabilities or

whether the negative attitudes would have happened regardless of the type of camp (Lawrence et al., 2006).

Gillard and Allsop (2016) found information about how the campers themselves viewed their camp counselors. The authors looked at the campers' perspectives of the staff and the staff's impact on the campers' experiences (Gillard & Allsop, 2016). Campers reported a sense of compassion and love toward staff because they felt staff wanted to make them feel important and have a good experience at camp (Gillard & Allsop, 2016). Limited research focused on the perspective of camp counselors at camps for children with disabilities and on the perspective of camp counselors on occupational therapy services at these camps.

Summer Camps with Occupational Therapy Services

Existing literature focused on occupational therapy services provided during summer camps is limited. Provident and Colmer (2013) described occupational therapy fieldworks completed at a camp for children with disabilities. Occupational therapists' roles in this study consisted of helping counselors and campers with wheelchairs, medical equipment, transfers, feeding adaptations, and following precautions during self-care activities (Provident & Colmer, 2013). Occupational therapists have also been identified as a resource to help staff adjust activities at camp for children with different abilities (Provident & Colmer, 2013). Through this case study, the authors demonstrated the role occupational therapists could potentially have at summer camps. Goodwin and Staples (2005) found camps could be a therapeutic and restorative place for children with disabilities. Although occupational therapy is not directly addressed in the study,

occupational therapists could have a role in developing camp programs to be comfortable, restorative, and therapeutic for children and adolescents with disabilities.

Remaining research focused on health professionals outside of occupational therapy, such as nurses and social workers. Nurses and social workers were able to help find the camp that best fit a certain child, and they were able to use the information gathered at camp to connect better with the child later on (McCarthy, 2015; Michalski et al., 2003). Occupational therapists also have the skills necessary to evaluate a camp to find the best fit for a child. In addition, information gained at camps could in turn be useful to occupational therapists to better connect with their clients and to see how they react to unfamiliar environments. The lack of research specifically addressing occupational therapists working at summer camps demonstrates a need for further research to explore the role of occupational therapy at camp.

Person Environment Occupation Model

The Person Environment Occupation (PEO) Model guided this study due to the emphasis on the transactions between aspects of the person, environment, and occupations (Law et al., 1996). This model allowed researchers to look at the effects each aspect had on the others since all three concepts were interdependent (Law et al., 1996). The environment had an effect on the person and occupation because of the change in contexts while attending camp. Looking at the person was valuable because of the PEO model's view of the person as dynamic and changing, which is what the campers were when they attended camp and had OT services (Law et al., 1996). In addition to the main concepts of person, environment, and occupation, this model also focused on the concept of occupational performance. Occupational performance happens when there is a good fit

between the person, the environment, and the occupations that allows the person to perform meaningful occupations (Law et al., 1996). The level of occupational performance children with disabilities experience while at summer camp was looked at throughout this study to see how it was affected by the perceived presence of occupational therapy at that camp.

The PEO model was demonstrated in a study about camps for children with disabilities. Goodwin and Staples (2005) discussed how they used a therapeutic landscape as their conceptual model for a study on children with disabilities at a camp. They stated the importance of the interaction of the environment, the individual, and the social context to provide a meaningful experience at summer camps (Goodwin & Staples, 2005). The authors of this study demonstrated how the PEO model can be a useful way to look at the summer camp environment, the campers, and how their occupations are affected by the camp, occupational therapy, and other services offered. The PEO model guided the methodology for this study on occupational therapy in summer camps, which is described in the next chapter.

Chapter III: Research Methodology

Design

The researchers utilized a phenomenological qualitative research design for this study. Qualitative research was used in order to generate perceptions of occupational therapy services at summer camps. The experiences researchers wanted to explore would have been difficult to quantify as quantitative questions would have had a lack of depth due to the limited research available to base them off. Phenomenological research involves looking at how people experience a phenomenon or certain part of their lives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Due to limited existing research, a phenomenological design was chosen to learn about the perceptions of camp counselors on occupational therapists at summer camps for children with disabilities. By choosing a phenomenological design, the goal was to generate themes and ideas based off participants' perceptions that could later be expanded into further research.

Researchers used a semi-structured interview to collect data from participants. The interview questions were developed around the main concepts of the PEO model, which is the guiding model throughout this research study. The main concepts of the PEO model focus on how the person, the environment, and the occupation are interdependent of one another (Law et al., 1996). The interactions between those three concepts are called transactions (Law et al., 1996). For the semi-structured interview, questions were designed to focus on aspects specific to the person, the environment, and the occupation. The remaining questions were designed to gather information about the transactions

between the person, the occupation, and the environment. All three aspects and the transactions between these were addressed in the semi-structured interview. The questions utilized during the interview are shown in the table below:

Concept Targeted	Interview Questions
Demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We know that you were a camp counselor this past summer, what are you doing now? • How many years have you worked at camp? • Have you worked at any other summer camps before this?
Person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about your experience working at camp • Tell me about your experiences working with people with disabilities previous to being a camp counselor at camp.
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about a typical day at camp. • What do you know of the different therapy and specialty services being offered at camp? Tell me about your experiences with them. • How did you see these services impact the campers? • How would you define occupational therapy after seeing it at camp? • In your opinion, how do the campers feel about their disabilities? • Were there any changes to this because of camp?
Occupations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In your opinion, what were some of the activities in camp overall that had the most impact on campers? • Tell me about how the campers interacted with one another. • Tell us about some of the activities you saw the occupational therapist organize that made a difference for the campers? • Tell me about skills you saw campers learn from camp relating to daily tasks. • Did you notice any negative impacts for the campers? Tell me about them. How do you think this would be different than any other summer camp?
Transactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about how your experiences with therapy services as a camp counselor. • Tell me about ways you saw the campers being impacted by the therapy services at camp. • Tell me about how you saw the camp environment affect your campers.

Table 1: Semi-structured interview questions used in study

The interview questions were written based off the differing aspects of the person, environment, and occupation concepts. The affective part of the person concept was developed into a questions because researchers wanted to learn more about how the counselors felt about working in a camp setting and perceived the role of occupational therapy in this setting impacting the three concepts (Law et al., 1996). For the concept of environment, the institutional and cultural environments were developed into questions to learn more about the camp as an institution and about the culture of disability at the camp. Questions for the concept of occupation were developed around the ideas of leisure, productivity, and self-care. Every part of each concept was not covered because researchers focused on areas that were relevant to the study. Questions were then developed that focused on the transactions between each of the areas. Since these three concepts are interdependent within the PEO model, there was further overlap in the questions and further transactions that developed naturally (Law et al., 1996).

Participants

Upon the approval from the University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board, researchers utilized convenience sampling to obtain participants. A camp director of a camp for children with disabilities was contacted to obtain the contact information of camp counselors for the 2015-2017 summers. An email requesting participation in the research study was sent out to seventeen potential participants. The goal was to have six to eight participants to reach a point of saturation with information gathered (Creswell & Poth, 2018). One email did not go through as it stated the email address was not valid. Out of the sixteen remaining participants, seven responded to the email stating they

would participate in the study. These participants were contacted via a phone call or text message to further discuss the study and to set up a time for the interview to be completed. Six of these participants were interviewed and one did not respond to the researchers after the initial contact.

Participants interviewed had worked at a summer camp for children and adults with disabilities in the Midwest. Three of the participants were male and the other three were female. The inclusion criteria included having worked as a camp counselor at this specific camp for any of the summers from 2015-2017, worked at the two and three week camp sessions, and English speaking. Exclusion criteria included not working as a counselor at the camp in question for the selected time period, non-English speaking, and being an occupational therapist or in an occupational therapy program. This exclusion criterion was set so research would not be tainted with biases from the researchers personally knowing the participants. Since some counselors only work during certain camp sessions, it was required that all counselors worked at the two and three week sessions so they would have had similar experiences.

Demographic information from each participant was collected and analyzed prior to coding the rest of the information. Similarities and differences were noted about prior experience and career paths. None of the participants had prior experience working as a camp counselor. All but one of the participants had little to no experience working professionally with people with disabilities prior to working at the camp. None of the participants had worked there more than one summer; however, several reported they desired to return for another summer. Four of the six participants were college students and the other two were working. Their fields of work or study include human

development science, speech language pathology, physical therapy, athletic training, and occupational therapy. The sixth participant did not state where he is currently working.

Data Collection

The six interviews were completed through BlackBoard Connect, which is a classroom platform that allows secure video recording. These interviews were conducted over a 60 day period. An email with a copy of the informed consent was sent to each participant. At the start of each interview, participants verbally consented after reviewing the consent form. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researchers.

The data was analyzed using phenomenological methods (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Both researchers read through all six interviews as a whole before beginning coding. Researchers then completed coding of each of the transcriptions separately. Each researcher identified a category for each piece of collected information. The researchers then collaborated to group the information into agreed upon categories. From these categories, researchers developed themes based off the most prevalent information and an overall assertion was then developed based off the themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The codes developed from the transcriptions were sent to all six participants for member checking to ensure that the main ideas were gathered from the interview data.

Data Security

Recordings were kept on a password-protected laptop and were deleted after research was completed. Video interviews were conducted over BlackBoard Connect with a secured link that could only be accessed when it was sent to the participant via email. The names of people and places were changed to keep anonymity and protect

participants' identities throughout the research paper. Other identifying information was also removed so that data could not be traced back to participants. The name of the camp was not mentioned throughout the paper and will not be mentioned in future presentations.

Credibility

To maintain credibility of the research study, several steps were taken. Each researcher kept a separate journal throughout the research process to check biases since both researchers had worked at the summer camp that information was gathered about. Six participants were interviewed separately to obtain a wide variety of information. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim to improve reliability. Codes developed out of transcriptions were sent to all participants to ensure the information gathered was accurate. Researchers completed coding separately then compared codes to prevent biases emerging in data analysis.

Approval/Credentials

Prior to contacting or beginning interviews with the camp director or any participants, this study was approved by the University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board (IRB). In addition to this, both researchers completed online IRB training, and both had been taught how to conduct qualitative research through a university course. The advising professor for the research study had also completed IRB training and qualitative research courses and was able to guide researchers through the research study.

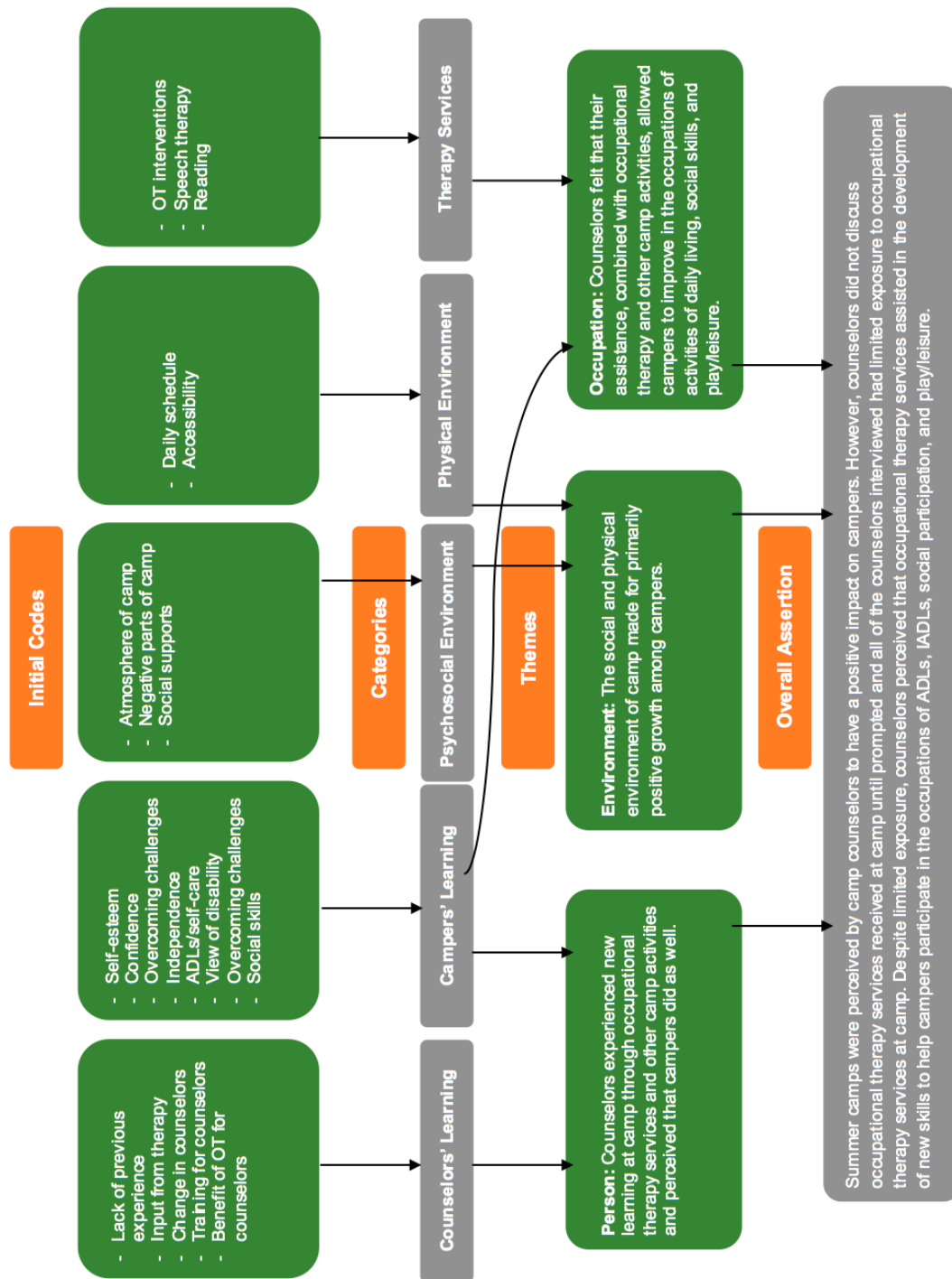


Table 2: Analysis of data, including codes, categories, themes, and overall assertion

Chapter IV: Presentation, Analysis, and Interpretation of Data

The purpose of this study was to look at perceptions of camp counselors on occupational therapy services at a residential summer camp. Utilizing the PEO model enabled examination of the person, environment, and occupations along with transactions between these concepts. The three domains of person, environment, and occupation were used to organize codes, categories, and themes from the data collected. This process is shown above in Figure 1 with the flow of how the initial codes, categories, themes, and final assertion were developed. According to the PEO model, concepts are interdependent and cannot be completely separated (Law et al., 1996). Although three themes were developed looking at the concepts of person, environment, and occupation separately, there is still overlap due to the transactions and interdependence of the concepts (Law et al., 1996). The participants did not mention or expand upon their perceptions of occupational therapy services until directly asked about them. Information gathered about the occupational therapy services is presented below, but is limited in several areas.

Person

Counselors experienced new learning at camp through occupational therapy services and other camp activities and perceived that campers did as well.

The person domain of the PEO model is the focus of this theme. A person is seen as someone who takes on roles and engages in occupations (Law et al., 1996). The five components of the person in this model include physical, cognitive, sensory, affective, and spiritual aspects (Law et al., 1996). Counselors provided information about

themselves and the campers that focused specifically on the cognitive, affective, and physical components.

Campers' Learning

Counselors perceived that campers experienced new cognitive learning. This new learning included improvements in behaviors, an increase in confidence, and taking more responsibility for actions. Improvement in behaviors included following rules and societal expectations campers had not previously recognized. Dustin discussed how one camper learned to wait in line appropriately due to his occupational therapy sessions:

He would always jump in line, he would always cut people off. With occupational therapy, we were able to see a change in where he would notice that other people were standing still.

Matt reported the occupational therapy assistant stated several of the campers made progress in their behaviors over the years they had been attending camp. This demonstrated how the campers were able to work on generalizing and maintaining skills from home and school to camp. Several counselors reported they saw campers have an increase in confidence over the span of their time at camp. Matt stated new activities such as a talent show and dances helped campers to become more comfortable with themselves. Roger discussed how campers became aware and more comfortable with their abilities while at camp:

I mean definitely by the end they would get more confident with themselves. I mean just because they are so used to being around other kids and they're helping, through therapies and stuff, to understand their limitations and what to work on. And I think they definitely feel better coming out of camp.

This new understanding of abilities and the therapy services offered at camp helped campers understand what skills to work on at camp and at home. This increase in knowledge and confidence was perceived to help campers take more responsibility for themselves and their actions. An increase in responsibility included campers taking care of their morning and night routines with encouragement from counselors and other staff. Rachel reported she saw her campers become more independent and able to make their own decisions:

That was really cool to see them take their own responsibility. You know like you don't get your token if you don't make your bed in the morning. I'm not going to argue about it. So you know it was kind of, they saw I was not really giving it, so just to be able to make the decision themselves 'oh when I wake up, I'm going to make my bed right away because it's easier and I'm going to get a reward.' So I think the independence part was huge because they are able to kind of make their own decisions.

The improvement in behaviors, increase in confidence, and taking more responsibility for their actions were all changes counselors reported related to the campers' cognitive abilities. Counselors also reported campers appeared to feel differently about their abilities. Some campers accepted their disabilities while others did not. According to Sarah, all campers had a different way of looking at themselves:

I think everyone had different feelings. I had campers during 2 week that were very aware of their disabilities and they felt; I don't how to put this, but they felt that they were different than other kids. And then I had some kids that embraced it

and didn't care. Everyone had their own little quirk to it, their own thought process.

The campers varied in the way they thought about their disabilities. Several counselors reported the camp environment was a place where campers learned to feel good about themselves and their abilities. Dustin stated camp was a place where campers worked on changing their attitudes about abilities:

There were some who just knew about their disabilities and felt like they can't do anything about their disability but we were kind of just able to crush that idea and help them understand to work with what you have and live with what you have and you are an individual who is very apt to do what you want to do. Your disability shouldn't hold you back from what you want to do.

Rachel remarked upon the inclusive nature of camp and how campers were able to see they were on the same level as their peers:

You know you are put in an environment with your peers that are all on the same level as you, so you're with others who are on the same intellectual level as you or whatever the case may be here. You're around people who are like, you know it's so inclusive there.

Campers came into camp with varying attitudes and feelings about their own disabilities. However, camp was reported to be an accepting environment where campers were able to interact with peers who had similar abilities. It was also described as a place where counselors and staff encouraged campers to do things despite their disabilities. The role of occupational therapy in campers' affective learning or how they felt about their abilities was not addressed by any of the counselors.

In addition to cognitive and affective learning, counselors reported seeing improvements in campers' physical abilities as well. Although this is closely related to campers completing occupations, this section is focusing on what counselors said about motor planning and preparatory interventions related to balance and gross motor skills. Counselors reported the campers participated in several physical activities during occupational therapy sessions including: crab walks, jumping on a trampoline, shooting basketball hoops, using a parachute, and playing twister. Matt stated several occupational therapy interventions he recalled seeing related to physical skills:

One thing that I found interesting that I guess was helpful was like some of the motor planning, like having them get down and do a crab walk or jump on the trampoline or even like shoot hoops, she had a little basketball hoop in the room. And I think that puzzles go a long way with that too because that's both motor planning and cognitive control, putting that together.

Counselors perceived that these physical-focused occupational therapy sessions along with the affective and cognitive learning experienced by campers allowed for a wide variety of learning.

Counselors' Learning

Counselors reported learning how to work with people with a variety of abilities and commented on the orientation given to the camp counselors. All participants discussed their learning in relation to occupational therapy and its meaning. Only one counselor had previous experience working with people with disabilities, while other counselors stated they learned about different diagnoses as time went on. Rachel discussed her experiences of working with children with various disabilities:

I think going into it you know children have autism or you know they have some sort of intellectual disability or cerebral palsy or whatever, but you don't realize the range of someone that is severely disabled versus someone that is, maybe has minimal effects being on the spectrum or whatever.

Working with children with disabilities gave counselors a better understanding of how disabilities affect people differently. Counselors also discussed the orientation given to them before camp began. Although orientation was only two to three days, counselors reported they felt as prepared as possible. Several counselors stated they learned the most once the campers arrived and they were able to work with them. Joni discussed her experience with orientation:

I felt it was good. I guess, [the camp director] tried to do as much training and give as much knowledge as he could before, but it's kind of hard to have a lot of training without just jumping into it and getting the experience and figuring it out along the way.

The only change participants mentioned in orientation was having more structure of how to explain the rules of camp to the campers on the first night of a session. Learning how to work with children with disabilities was a new cognitive learning experience for counselors as all but one counselor had little to no prior experience. Although some learning took place during orientation, counselors reported most of their cognitive learning took place as they were working with campers.

The counselors also gained knowledge of different therapy services over the summer and discussed their view of occupational therapy. No participant mentioned occupational therapy, outside of the dialy schedule, until directly asked. Because the

camp offered occupational therapy services, counselors were asked to define occupational therapy according to their experiences. The majority of participants reported a general understanding of occupational therapy. The following are examples of how participants explained occupational therapy:

Rachel stated, “It gives you life skills. Day-to-day living skills to be able to function more appropriately or better or more comfortably in your regular environment.”

Roger discussed, “Mostly it was a lot of the fine motor skills or balance. I noticed a lot of the games kinda focused on that. Like a definition would be like a therapy used for like, um, to do like simple tasks easier. Or like some of my campers had troubles zipping up their jacket or something so like right away we helped them, and then they did stuff in OT with it, and at the end we made them do it themselves. Like just doing simple activities that make every day a little easier.”

Sarah discussed activities of daily living, “It’s like a therapy for daily living activities, holding like a fork the correct way or how do you use a knife. I think they did some with some campers for like gripping things.”

Joni also had an understanding of this, stating, “I’d have to say it’s more with functional things, like fine motor skills, gross motor skills, and like doing things in everyday life.”

These definitions showed that counselors had an understanding of the primary focus of occupational therapy in the pediatric camp setting. Because the camps only lasted two to three weeks, counselors only saw limited occupational therapy services.

Most of the tasks counselors discussed were ones counselors did with campers, which showed that counselors also worked with the campers outside of therapy.

Counselors reported how they felt in the beginning of camp, as well as at the end. In the beginning, counselors reported they were nervous and there were difficulties.

Roger remarked:

It was really nerve-wracking...having all these kids to be responsible for with disabilities, I really didn't know what to expect. But within the first few days you just got like really used to it.

All six participants reported overall positive feelings about their experiences at camp. They felt after meeting the campers, being a counselor became easier, and they enjoyed it. Matt reports about his experience:

It was probably one of my best jobs I've ever had. Going into it, I was pretty skeptical because I had never worked with that population before, especially kids. But as the summer went on and you know, as you bond with those kids, it turns into a really wholesome experience. It makes you want to go back.

Despite initial challenges, counselors reported having an overall positive experience at camp. They reported feeling like they made an impact on campers, and this made them feel like their role was of importance. Multiple participants reported wanting to return to the camp for another summer due to the experience they had as a counselor. Counselors also had an overall positive perception of camp services offered including occupational therapy.

Environment

The physical and social environments of camp made for primarily positive growth among campers.

The environment is the second domain of the PEO model. The components of this domain include physical, social, cultural, institutional, and virtual (Law et al., 1996). Counselors mostly reported information about the physical and social components of the environment. Counselors did not heavily discuss how the environment influenced occupational therapy directly; however, they did talk about the impact of the environment on campers' occupations.

Physical Environment

The physical environment was discussed as an overall positive aspect of camp. The physical layout of the summer camp was said to be important and accessible to campers. In turn, this allowed campers with varying abilities participate in various occupations. Matt felt camp was both of these aspects:

The physical environment itself of camp—it's got pretty good facilities for how long it's been around and how often it needs to be updated. There's plenty of adaptive equipment around and just places for activities. So the physical environment is pretty good for children with disabilities. And adults. Whether it be like the bathrooms be like handicap accessible or having other adaptive equipment that the camp has purchased over the years.

Roger talked about how the counselors made efforts to make the physical environment more welcoming:

The counselors decorate all the cabins because it might be kind of weird like going into the cabins, might be kind of scary.

Overall, the counselors gave positive remarks about the physical environment of the camp; however, the environment for occupational therapy services was not discussed by counselors. They did feel the environment overall was inclusive and welcoming for campers, which was important since campers had varying disabilities. Because this camp is inclusive to individuals with a variety of disabilities, the environment needed to facilitate performance in occupation for all children who attended the camp.

Social Environment

The social environment of the camp pertained to how the campers interacted with their peers and staff. All of the participants had positive perceptions of the social environment of camp and felt it was a place where campers were supported by their peers and staff. This positive social environment started with the camp director creating a safe place for the campers to be themselves. Rachel discussed how involved the camp director was with the social environment of camp:

He makes sure this is their vacation and their time away from all the bullies or whatever they might deal with at home. Just makes sure they're having a good time. And the atmosphere is really welcoming throughout like all of camp, each session. I just think that [he] really gets it across to all the counselors and makes them want to treat the campers well.

Other participants also stated camp was a vacation experience for campers and a place where they could relax while still learning. In addition to the positive environment created by staff, counselors reported campers were supportive of each other. There were

times when campers did not get along, but participants stated it was an overall positive experience. Rachel reported:

Of course, sometimes there were times with a dominant personality. But for the most part, it was really like good. I felt like it was such a non-judgement zone I guess. Whether they were playing a game or lost a game or whatever, it was just sweet to see that they do care for each other and that they were really supportive.

Several participants stated similar perceptions of campers being supportive of one another. Matt discussed how campers became close with one another:

As for the social environment, I would say it's a real positive impact because they're surrounded by like-minded people and people that are like them. And you know, I've heard a bunch of campers say this is where they make the best friends ever.

This demonstrated how the social environment was perceived as positive and allowed campers to make friends who were struggling with similar issues. Overall, counselors reported both the physical and social environments made camp a positive place for campers to come and be themselves. The camp director, positive staff attitudes, and physical camp set-up all contributed to making camp an inclusive setting where campers of all abilities could participate and meet friends. The counselors did not discuss their perceptions of occupational therapy services in relation to the environment.

Occupation

Counselors felt their assistance, combined with occupational therapy and other camp activities, allowed campers to improve in the occupations of activities of daily

living (ADLs), instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs), social skills, and play/leisure.

This theme was developed from the third domain of the PEO model: occupation. Counselors were asked questions addressing the campers' occupations while at camp, as well as their perception of how occupational therapy influenced these occupations.

Activities of Daily Living

Activities of daily living were discussed by all six interview participants, and all reported improvements in areas of self-care for the campers. Most of these improvements were seen during their morning or nightly routines and included showering, deodorant application, brushing their teeth, making their beds, and toileting hygiene. Roger discussed how he had to give less cues at the end of camp for campers to complete ADLs:

So they always had to shower like at night usually. They'd argue with us but they always had to make their beds before they could leave....Then at the end we didn't have to tell them or reinforce it a lot, we didn't have to tell them.

Counselors worked on activities of daily living with campers because they were the staff who helped campers get ready in the morning and at night. In addition, the occupational therapist included ADLs into interventions with campers, such as buttoning shirts, willingness to take a shower, and following a daily routine. Several participants reported having both the occupational therapist and speech therapist was helpful because the therapists were able to interact individually with campers and determine why campers were not completing ADLs. Rachel stated how the speech therapist helped her find out why a camper was not showering:

So we were like how can we get him to do something? But it was like, so he would go and talk with speech. They were like, ‘Oh, you know he is just scared of the bugs in the bathroom.’ So I was like, oh, that’s why you won’t shower? We were getting on him because he would not shower.

The participant discussed how she was able to use the information gathered in therapy to help the camper shower and complete the rest of his ADLs. This demonstrated how both direct and indirect therapy services positively affected the campers and counselors at camp in relation to activities of daily living.

Instrumental Activities of Daily Living

When counselors talked about the transition camp for adolescents, instrumental activities of daily living were mentioned, such as laundry, grocery shopping, cooking, finding jobs, and money management. Matt discussed an outing they took to go grocery shopping and then make a meal. He felt these were useful skills for the campers:

I think that was just a really good thing to know how to do if you’re going to be independent or semi-independent, just how to cook meals and budget and stuff like that.

These activities were not stated as occupational therapy services by the campers, one participant discussed how he was unclear whether these services were therapy services. He reported:

I know they did like how to do laundry properly and a lot of cooking stuff too. I know those really helped out a lot. Mainly we had a few more down syndrome kids and stuff. I mean you can argue those are types of therapies. I mean I think those are really helpful.

Though the occupational therapist was not the only one facilitating these activities, counselors reported they were important occupations for the campers to explore and practice. These activities prepared them for transitioning to new living situations.

Social Skills

Participants remarked that social skills were important for use at camp, and many campers' social skills improved while at camp. Being around other children, especially those with disabilities, gave campers the opportunity to engage in social interactions.

Rachel saw one of her campers open up to others:

One new camper...he was just shy. I think he just learned how to open up overall, because he was like he did not want to talk and by the end, he was horsing around with his buddy.

Sarah reported similar findings during her time at camp. She felt this trend was present in the children who were attending summer camp for the first time:

With the kids that were new, seeing them from like the first week until the last day; first week they were kind of shy. They didn't really want to interact with people for fear of being rejected, none of that. Then being able to like open up and be themselves...it was fun to watch.

Table manners were another part of the campers' social skills that multiple counselors identified as impacted during summer camp. Because staff and campers sat together as a cabin for three meals a day, counselors were encouraged to enforce table manners. Speech therapy interventions helped campers to work on social skills as well.

Rachel discussed how the speech therapist involved the whole cabin to work on social skills:

It was really fun we saw a game in speech...the whole cabin got to come play this game. The kids were really engaged in that and they really enjoyed it. You could see, to me it helped them to open up, especially the ones who were shy. It gave them an opportunity to talk and express things.

Therapy sessions, eating meals together, and other camp activities gave campers a wide variety of settings to develop and practice social skills. Though counselors did not mention occupational therapy in relation to social skills, several participants stated they saw campers improve in their social skills from the beginning to the end of camp sessions.

Play/Leisure

Play and leisure were two occupations emphasized throughout the camp's schedule. Counselors reported that children regularly participated in swimming, playing on the playground, recreation, social time, reading, and other activities planned throughout the camp sessions. These activities allowed for children to have time to participate in activities they may enjoy or try new leisure and play activities. Rachel discussed the activity of swimming during the interview:

Swimming was really cool because you could see like people at the beginning would be pretty fearful of the water, or maybe not fearful but less confident; and by the end, you know they go everyday, so they had learned how to swim or were more comfortable. That was cool to see, it's just so, just to be able to have fun in the water and just to be able to go in.

Counselors also saw play addressed in occupational therapy sessions. Some of the interventions used included playing twister, doing puzzles, brain breaks, throwing a ball, and playing basketball. Campers were able to participate in these play activities while still working on motor and cognitive skills. Therapy sessions combined with the camp schedule allowed campers to participate in both new and familiar play and leisure activities.

Temporal Aspect

The temporal aspect is included in the occupation domain of the PEO model and included the timing and routines of the camp (Law et al., 1996). The structure and schedule of the camp was another aspect of the environment counselors discussed during interviews. All six participants were asked about a typical day at camp, and they gave their perspective on the schedule. A typical day at the camp allowed for both structured and unstructured time. Structured time included therapy, recreation, arts and crafts, and meal times. Unstructured time included rest time and time on the playground. The counselors interviewed were also asked about activities and services they felt campers could benefit from if they were included in the schedule. Rachel felt a service similar to a psychologist would be beneficial:

I feel like maybe people could have benefited maybe just somebody to go and talk to by themselves. Just like I'm really stressed out. Someone who was just more trained in understanding the kids and what they go through...at night some of the kids would come and talk to us as camp counselors, so is it necessary to bring somebody in?

Overall, counselors felt campers made improvements throughout their time at the camp. Joni summed up the changes made at camp through occupational therapy:

Although they might not have made a lot of progress during the summer because it's at camp...I think it was good for them to continue doing things throughout the summer so they could keep up with things and not forget over the summer.

Overall Assertion

Summer camps were perceived by camp counselors to have a positive impact on campers. However, counselors did not discuss occupational therapy services received at camp until prompted and all of the counselors interviewed reported little exposure to occupational therapy services at camp. Despite limited exposure, counselors perceived that occupational therapy services assisted in the development of new skills to help campers participate in the occupations of ADLs, IADLs, social participation, and play/leisure. The profession of occupational therapy has limited presence in summer camps, however, children could benefit from increased services provided at summer camp.

Chapter V: Summary, Conclusions, & Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative study was to determine camp counselors' perceptions of occupational therapy services at summer camps for children and adolescents with disabilities. A phenomenological method was utilized to look at the phenomena of the camp counselors' experiences. Researchers used a semi-structured interview to gather data from six participants who had worked at a summer camp for children with disabilities in the Midwest. Data was separated into the themes of person, environment, and occupation and described using concepts from the PEO model. While data collected related to some of the current literature, there were also new findings in relation to occupational therapy services at summer camps. Because literature was limited, this research study was designed to fill in the gap of information about how occupational therapy services were perceived at summer camps for children with disabilities and the contribution of these services to the development of campers. The participants had limited exposure to occupational therapy services at camp and did not give much information about these services until they were directly asked about them. Due to this limited insight, a majority of information gathered pertained to the camp environment and perception of campers' experiences rather than campers' OT services. The following summary focuses on connecting the data collected to current literature.

Summary

Theme One

Both counselors and campers experienced new physical, cognitive, and affective learning at camp through occupational therapy services and other camp activities.

The first theme generated focused on the person domain of the PEO model. Data found about the person domain dealt with the cognitive, affective, and physical aspects of counselors and campers. Cognition includes a person's thoughts, memory, reasoning, and judgement and the affective component of the person includes moods and emotions (Law et al., 1996). Counselors perceived that campers had positive cognitive and affective learning at camp with improvements in behaviors, confidence, responsibility, and how they viewed their abilities. Literature found camps for children with disabilities helped to improve confidence, self-esteem, responsibility, and maintaining a positive affect (Bay et al., 2007; McCarthy, 2015; Michalski et al., 2003; Gillard & Allsop, 2016). In addition, campers also improved in their physical abilities, which includes movement, range of motion, strength, and muscle tone (Law et al., 1996). Occupational therapists worked on physical skills with campers including balance, gross and fine motor skills, and motor planning; however, current literature found did not discuss specific physical skills campers worked on at summer camps.

The overlap of the literature and this independent study demonstrated how summer camps for children with disabilities can be a place where campers make improvements in cognitive, affective, and physical skills. Occupational therapists are able to help facilitate this learning by planning interventions sessions at camps that address cognitive, affective, and physical skills with activities a camper might not typically

participate in. Participants stated the occupational therapist used the following activities for interventions at camp: basketball, brain breaks, puzzles, games, parachute, and meal preparation. These interventions helped campers to learn a variety of cognitive, affective, and physical skills. Participating in occupational therapy sessions at camps can be a way for children to retain abilities they have previously learned (Marr & Dimeo, 2006). It was stated that the occupational therapist felt campers retained skills they learned at camp until the next summer. This carryover of services from camp to home and school highlight the importance of having children with disabilities attend occupational therapy sessions while at summer camp.

Counselors discussed their own learning in addition to the campers, which consisted of cognitive and affective learning. Counselors reported they learned how to work with people with a variety of abilities and they learned about occupational therapy services. When asked about their orientation to camp, counselors stated it only lasted a few days, and they learned the most once they actually started working with campers. Blas (2007) reported training for counselors at camps for children with disabilities can include in-services from health professionals, file reviews, and safety training. Occupational therapists have the skills and knowledge necessary to give an in-service for counselors at camps for children with disabilities. Provident and Colmer (2013) found occupational therapists at a summer camp could educate counselors and other staff about wheelchairs, safety, transfer techniques, ADLs, feeding, adapting activities, medical equipment, and a variety of other skills. These are all skills and knowledge that an occupational therapist could have shared with the counselors during their orientation. Alden et al. (2006) found counselors who worked at a camp for children with disabilities

learned skills that could be utilized in both their personal and professional lives. Several participants stated that they would use what they learned at camp in their future careers. Overall, counselors stated they had positive learning and working at camp was a good experience.

Participants perceived that they themselves and the campers experienced new learning through occupational therapy services and camp activities. Current literature reviewed had similar information with both campers and counselors having positive experiences at summer camps. Current literature has limited information regarding occupational therapists at summer camps, and the participants also had limited insight into OT services at camp. However, occupational therapists have the knowledge and skills to facilitate new learning at summer camps.

Theme Two

The physical and social environments of camp made for primarily positive growth among campers.

This theme was developed from information about the physical and social environments of the camp. According to Law et al. (1996), the physical environment can consist of the natural environment, such as vegetation and climate, and the man-made environment, such as houses or parks. The social environment can include primary and secondary groups, teams, and family (Law et al., 1996). The camp environment is different from the children's home environment, but it was still a positive experience for campers. In the literature review, limited information was found about the physical environment. McCurdy, Winterbottom, Mehta, and Roberts (2010) found time spent in nature decreased obesity and improved mental health. Counselors perceived similar

improvements with campers in this study who had more positive outlooks of their disabilities and increases in self-esteem after spending time at camp. The physical environment of the camp in this study made it more accessible for campers of all abilities, which allows for better administration of occupational therapy services; however, participants did not directly state anything about the physical environment in relation to the occupational therapy services they saw at camp.

Counselors reported the social environment had a higher impact on campers than the physical environment. Participants discussed several OT group interventions at camp, such as playing basketball, preparing a meal, or playing games, but did not directly link those interventions to the social environment. Occupational therapists have the ability to work with clients on social skills, which could occur in a camp setting. Just as Clark and Nwokah (2010), Bay et al. (2007), and Dawson et al. (2015) found, the social environment allowed for campers to feel more included while being around children with disabilities. This could be because campers felt they could be themselves around other who had similar experiences. Counselors also reported campers provided social support to other children. Goodwin, Johnston, Leo, & Lieberman (2011), who found an increase in connectedness with peers and a decrease in isolation in campers with visual impairments. Social supports provided in the camp environment provides a positive environment for occupational therapy services, especially group interventions.

Theme Three

Counselors felt that their assistance, combined with occupational therapy and other camp activities, allowed campers to improve in the occupations of activities of daily

living (ADLs), instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs), social skills, and play/leisure.

This domain focuses on self-care, productivity/work, rest/sleep, and leisure (Law et al., 1996). It also includes the temporal aspect, which involves the camp schedule and routines (Law et al., 1996). Since counselors spent the most time with campers, they were able to see which of the campers' occupations were most influenced by time spent at camp, and the occupational therapist could then work on these areas with them. The occupational therapist at camp worked with campers on ADLs, IADLs, and preparatory physical and cognitive skills. Provident and Colmer (2013) found that occupational therapists at a summer camp were able to help with adapting ADLs and feeding. Campers were also found to take better care of themselves and do more chores after attending a summer camp (Goodwin and Staples, 2005). Counselors in this study had similar discussion, such as improvements in ADLs and IADLs. These improvements could have been because of the counselors, the occupational therapists, or a combination of both. In a study completed by Zwicker et al. (2015), parents felt their children were more apt to participate in new activities after attending a summer camp, which was similar to counselors' perceptions in this study. Counselors reported children became more comfortable in new activities, such as swimming and other play or leisure activities. This may have been related to positive aspects of the social environment mentioned previously. These findings about counselors' perceptions of campers' occupations are assumed to be a result of both occupational therapy and the counselors' interventions.

Conclusion

Current literature and this study had many similar findings regarding campers' and counselors' learning, the camp environment, and how camp affected campers' occupations. This study concluded with the overall assertion that summer camps were perceived by camp counselors to have a positive impact on campers. However, counselors did not discuss occupational therapy services received at camp until prompted and all of the counselors interviewed had limited exposure to occupational therapy services at camp. From what counselors experienced, they perceived that services helped in developing new skills to help campers participate in the occupations of activities of daily living, instrumental activities of daily living, social participation, and play/leisure. Occupational therapists have the knowledge and skills necessary to work with campers to provide the best fit between the camper, the camp environment, and the camper's occupations.

Limitations

This study had several limitations. The sample size was small with only six participants and not all participants observed occupational therapy sessions while at camp. All participants had worked at the same camp, so a study reflecting counselors' perspectives from multiple camps that provide occupational therapy services would be valuable. Both researchers had previously worked at the summer camp where participants had worked, so there could have been biases about the camp and the data collected. These biases were controlled for with reflective journaling, using participants the researchers did not know, recording interviews, and transcribing data verbatim.

Recommendations

The counselors discussed occupational therapy minimally during the interviews, which shows the profession's opportunity for promoting services in this area. Campers and counselors alike could benefit from increased counselor involvement in the therapeutic process. Occupational therapists at summer camps should encourage counselors and other staff to attend therapy sessions so they know what campers are working on and can implement it throughout camp. This will give counselors and other staff knowledge about occupational therapy services, and enable them to assist campers' follow-through with skills learned.

Several recommendations can be made for the profession of occupational therapy. Occupational therapists, specifically school-based therapists, can recommend camps to children with and without disabilities who might benefit from summer services. Occupational therapists could work on further implementing occupational therapy programming into summer camps, including direct group or individual services. Occupational therapists could also offer indirect services to camps, such as environmental modification or program planning. Environmental modifications include helping to make camps physically accessible for people of all abilities in both indoor and outdoor environments. Program planning could consist of structuring the camp schedule or creating specific programs that target social skills, ADLs, IADLs, education, play, or leisure. Occupational therapists could also provide staff training to educate counselors and other staff members on the purpose of therapy, safety issues, transfers, helping campers with ADLs, how to deal with behavioral issues, and a variety of other topics.

This research can be used as a starting point for camps wanting to offer occupational therapy services and for future research regarding occupational therapy at

camps. Due to the small sample size, future studies could include more participants from a multiple summer camps. Other staff in addition to counselors could be interviewed. Future research could address how occupational therapists could have a consultation role at summer camps. Funding and resources for occupational therapy services at summer camps could also be addressed.

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Appendix A
Consent Form



DIVISION OF RESEARCH & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

UND.edu

Institutional Review Board

Twamley Hall, Room 106
264 Centennial Dr Stop 7134
Grand Forks, ND 58202-7134
Phone: 701.777.4279
Fax: 701.777.6708

Email: UND.ibr@research.UND.edu

September 27, 2017

Principal Investigator:	Erika Moderow; Hailey Tollefson
Project Title:	The Perspective of Counselors on Occupational Therapy at a Residential Camp for Children with Disabilities
IRB Project Number:	IRB-201709-057
Project Review Level:	Expedited 6, 7
Date of IRB Approval:	09/26/2017
Expiration Date of This Approval:	09/25/2018

The application form and all included documentation for the above-referenced project have been reviewed and approved via the procedures of the University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board.

The waiver of written consent has been approved under 45 CFR 46.117(c)(2).

Prior to implementation, submit any changes to or departures from the protocol or consent form to the IRB for approval. No changes to approved research may take place without prior IRB approval.

You have approval for this project through the above-listed expiration date. When this research is completed, please submit a termination form to the IRB. If the research will last longer than one year, an annual review and progress report must be submitted to the IRB prior to the submission deadline to ensure adequate time for IRB review.

The forms to assist you in filing your project termination, annual review and progress report, adverse event/unanticipated problem, protocol change, etc. may be accessed on the IRB website:
<http://und.edu/research/resources/human-subjects/>

Sincerely,

Michelle L. Bowles, M.P.A., CIP
IRB Coordinator

MLB/sb

Cc: Roberta Carrison, MOT

The University of North Dakota
Consent to Participate in Research

TITLE: *The Perspective of Counselors on Occupational Therapy at a Residential Camp for Children with Disabilities*

PROJECT DIRECTOR: *Erika Moderow and Hailey Tollefson; Advisor: Professor Roberta Carrlson*

PHONE # *701-777-2897*

DEPARTMENT: *Occupational Therapy*

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH

A person who is to participate in the research must give his or her informed consent to such participation. This consent must be based on an understanding of the nature and risks of the research. This document provides information that is important for this understanding. Research projects include only subjects who choose to take part. Please take your time in making your decision as to whether to participate. If you have questions at any time, please ask.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

You are invited to be in a research study about the perspective of camp counselors on occupational therapy at a summer camp for children with disabilities because you were a camp counselor in one of the summers from 2013-2017 at Elk's Camp Grassick.

The purpose of this research study is to look at the perspective of camps counselors on the role of occupational therapy at a summer camp for children with disabilities. This knowledge is being sought to investigate the role that occupational therapy can play at a summer camp and how this can expand occupational therapy practice.

HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL PARTICIPATE?

Approximately 6 people will take part in this study.

HOW LONG WILL I BE IN THIS STUDY?

Your participation in the study will last 7 months. You will need to visit either a place of your choosing for an in person interview or have a computer with a microphone and internet available 1 time. Each visit will take about 1 hour. We may then be checking back with you to verify information, which is why your participation could last up to 7 months.

Approval Date: <u>SEP 25 2017</u>
Expiration Date: <u>SEP 25 2018</u>
University of North Dakota IRB

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THIS STUDY?

You will be asked to participate in 1 hour-long interview either in person or online via BlackBoard connect. Depending upon your location and convenience, you and the researcher will determine whether an in person or an online interview will be used. The interview will be recorded so that researchers are able to review your answers later. The interview is semi-structured. This means that there is a list of set questions that each participant will be asked and researchers may ask further questions based off answers. You can decline answering any questions that you do not want to, and you are free to leave the interview at any time.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THE STUDY?

There may be some minimal risk from being in this study. Certain questions might make you feel uncomfortable or you may not want to answer due to other reasons. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to. It will be your responsibility to find counseling or support services within your community if you feel you need to.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY?

You may not benefit personally from being in this study. However, we hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study because it will help to define the role of occupational therapy at summer camps for children with disabilities.

WILL IT COST ME ANYTHING TO BE IN THIS STUDY?

You will not have any costs for being in this research study.

WILL I BE PAID FOR PARTICIPATING?

You will not be paid for being in this research study.

WHO IS FUNDING THE STUDY?

The University of North Dakota and the research team are receiving no payments from other agencies, organizations, or companies to conduct this research study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The records of this study will be kept private to the extent permitted by law. In any report about this study that *might be published*, you will not be identified. Your study record may be reviewed by *Government agencies and the University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board*.

Any information that is obtained in this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. You should know, however, that there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For

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example the law may require us to show your information to a court or to tell authorities if we believe you have abused a child, or if you have knowledge of child abuse.

Confidentiality will be maintained by means of pseudonyms for both the names of people and places mentioned throughout the study. Audio recordings of interviews will be kept on the password locked laptops of the researchers. Only the two researchers and their advising professor will have access to the audio recordings. The research participant can ask to listen to their interview at any point in time and edit it in any way. Audio recordings will be deleted at the end of the study. All printed data will be destroyed after 3 years.

If we write a report or article about this study, we will describe the study results in a summarized manner so that you cannot be identified. A copy of the article may be given to the director of Elk's Camp Grassick.

IS THIS STUDY VOLUNTARY?

Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of North Dakota. If you decide to leave the study early, we ask that you call one of the researchers as soon as possible.

CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS?

The researchers conducting this study are Erika Moderow and Hailey Tollefson. You may ask any questions you have now. If you later have questions, concerns, or complaints about the research please contact Erika Moderow at (701) 412-8242 or Hailey Tollefson at (701) 891-8691 during the day and after hours. The advisor for the researcher study is Professor Roberta Carrlson who can be reached at 701-777-2897.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact The University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board at (701) 777-4279 or UND.irb@research.UND.edu.

- You may also call this number about any problems, complaints, or concerns you have about this research study.
- You may also call this number if you cannot reach research staff, or you wish to talk with someone who is independent of the research team.
- General information about being a research subject can be found by clicking "Information for Research Participants" on the web site: <http://und.edu/research/resources/human-subjects/research-participants.cfm>

Approval Date:	SEP 26 2017
Expiration Date:	SEP 25 2018
University of North Dakota IRB	

I give consent to be audio recorded during this study.

Please initial: ___ Yes ___ No

I give consent to be video recorded during this study.

Please initial: ___ Yes ___ No

I give consent for my quotes to be used in the research; however I will not be identified.

Please initial: ___ Yes ___ No

Your signature indicates that this research study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Subjects Name: _____

Signature of Subject

Date

I have discussed the above points with the subject or, where appropriate, with the subject's legally authorized representative.

Signature of Person Who Obtained Consent

Date

Approval Date: <u>SEP 26 2017</u>
Expiration Date: <u>SEP 25 2018</u>
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Appendix B

Interview Protocol

Hello, my name is _____. This interview is going to be asking you questions about your experience as a camp counselor at Elk's Camp Grassick. We specifically want to focus on your experience with the therapy services offered at camp. Please remember, you have the right to refuse answering any questions that you do not want to. Do you have any questions before we begin? Great, let's get started.

Demographic Info

- We know that you were a camp counselor this past summer, what are you doing now?
- How many years have you worked at Elk's Camp Grassick?
- Have you worked at any other summer camps before this?
 - If yes, how did this experience compare to that?

Person

Affective

- Tell me about your experience working at Elk's Camp Grassick.
- Tell me about your experiences working with people with disabilities previous to being a camp counselor at Camp Grassick?

Environment

Institutional

- Tell me about a typical day at Elk's Camp Grassick.
- What do you know of the different therapy and specialty services being offered at camp?

- Tell me about your experiences with them.
- How did you see these services impact the campers?
- How would you define occupational therapy after seeing it at camp?

Cultural

- In your opinion, how do the campers feel about their disabilities?
 - Were there any changes to this because of camp?

Occupation

Leisure

- In your opinion, what were some of the activities in camp overall that had the most impact on campers?
- Tell me about how the campers interacted with one another.

Productivity

- Tell us about some of the activities did you see the occupational therapist organize that made a difference for the campers?

Self-Care

- Tell me about skills you saw campers learn from camp relating to daily tasks.
- Did you notice any negative impacts for the campers? Tell me about them.
 - How do you think this would be different than any other summer camp?

Transactions

- Tell me about how your experiences with therapy services as a camp counselor.
- Tell me about ways you saw the campers being impacted by the therapy services at camp.

- Tell me about how you saw the camp environment affect your campers.

Conclusion

Thank you for participating in our research study. Do you have any questions for me? I will be e-mailing you a copy of the transcription soon to look over to see if you have any further comments or want to make any changes. I may also be contacting you in the future to double check the information we have taken from your interview to see if you think it is accurate.