Music Therapists' Perspectives on Working with Educational Assistants

in Manitoba School Settings

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complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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ABSTRACT

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Music therapists who work in schools often collaborate with other professionals, including educational assistants. Overall, the literature identifies that the educational assistant's role in music therapy contexts is to assist students in achieving the goals that have been established in their individualized education plans and/or in their music therapy treatment plans. However, literature and my experiences indicate that the complexities of the educational assistant's role are not well understood, and that this confusion can have an adverse effect on therapeutic outcomes. Although one study has examined educational assistants' perspectives on this topic, very little literature exists to help guide music therapists and educational assistants in their professional collaborations. The purpose of this study was to investigate music therapists' perspectives on their experiences of working with educational assistants in school settings. Three Canadian music therapists participated in individual qualitative interviews that examined their perspectives on collaborations that they had with educational assistants in school music therapy contexts. These interviews were transcribed and analyzed using a modified grounded theory approach. Results revealed information about collaborations that happened before, during and after music therapy sessions as well as information pertaining to aspects of collaboration that music therapists found helpful and aspects that they found challenging. My interpretations as well as potential implications for practice and research are discussed.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1. Introduction

Brief Overview of Music Therapy in Schools

Music therapy is an established profession in which music is used within a therapeutic relationship to address physical, emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and social needs of individuals of all ages and abilities (American Music Therapy Association, n.d. -a; Canadian Association for Music Therapy, 2012). When music therapists work in school systems (i.e., pre-school through grade 12) they often collaborate with principals and vice principals, resource teachers, classroom teachers, and/or educational assistants to meet the needs of the student(s) to whom they are assigned. These needs are often outlined in an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), which also identifies the supports that will be put in place to help each student address these needs and achieve educational goals. For example, will the student participate in a regular classroom setting or a special education classroom? Will the student require additional supports in the classroom? Will the student require intervention outside of the classroom setting (e.g., speech therapy, music therapy, and/or other therapy; Davis, Gfeller, & Thaut, 2008)?

When a student is referred to music therapy within this context, the music therapist typically conducts an assessment keeping the IEP goals in mind. The results of this assessment in conjunction with the established IEP goals are used to formulate a music therapy treatment plan that will be used to help the music therapist monitor, evaluate, and provide reports regarding the student's progress (American Music Therapy Association, n.d. -b). Music therapists in school settings use a variety of approaches, models, and interventions to help students achieve goals and/or realize their potential. These will be reviewed briefly in Chapter Two.

Interprofessional Collaboration

As noted earlier, music therapists who work in schools often work collaboratively and this may happen in a variety of ways. Music therapists may act as consultants to other professionals on how to use music in their work with students. For example, a music therapist may create a song that can be used by others to help a child transition between activities (Pellitteri, 2000). The music therapist may share observations with others that are unique to the music therapy context that may inform others' perceptions regarding students' progress and/or potential. Conversely, other professionals may share information with the music therapist about students' progress or difficulties in the classroom or other treatment contexts, or music therapists may be required to

provide assistance in these contexts where he/she is not working on music therapy goals per se (e.g., the music therapist collaborates with a speech therapist in speech therapy sessions).

School administrators sometimes mandate that music therapy programs occur in group contexts rather than in individual sessions as this is perceived as being a more cost effective service for a higher number of students in a shorter period of time. Although one could argue that this is not ideal for students with exceptional needs, this is often the current fiscal and logistical reality (Pellitteri, 2000). Therefore, music therapists must provide group intervention in school contexts and, given the size of the groups and the unique needs of the students, these groups may often require the assistance of other professionals. Based on my (the author's) personal experience as a music therapist who has worked in school settings, and what I found in the literature, it seems that music therapists often collaborate in music therapy group contexts with educational assistants (Abbott & Sanders, 2012; Abbott & Sanders, 2013; Chiang, 2010; Hall, 2012; Pellitteri, 2000).

Educational assistants are individuals with various types and levels of training (i.e., ranging from on-the-job training to university educated) who work with students in the school context to assist them with daily activities including personal care, health, and classroom tasks (The Government of Manitoba, 2009; Pellitteri, 2000). They may also be referred to as paraprofessionals, paraeducators, or teachers' aides (Abbott & Sanders, 2012; 2013). When educational assistants collaborate with music therapists in a music therapy context, their general role is to assist the students in achieving the goals that have been established in the IEP and/or in the music therapy treatment plan. However, both the literature and my own clinical experience in school settings suggest that the role of educational assistants in music therapy sessions is more complex than this and that lack of clarity around roles can lead to confusion (Abbott & Sanders, 2012; 2013). For example, I found that when I asked students to choose an instrument, the educational assistant often chose an instrument for them. This did not allow the child to determine his/her own preference, which had been my intention. I also observed that participation levels amongst educational assistants ranged from providing little to no assistance up to singing along and providing constant encouragement to students during my music therapy sessions. In my situation, I had little opportunity to plan or debrief with educational assistants outside of the music therapy sessions. During music therapy sessions, I was focused on engaging with the students and did not have the time to effectively articulate the rationale underlying

certain activities or how the educational assistant might best support the students in achieving their goals within the context of these activities. This led me to wonder whether other Canadian music therapists were having similar experiences in their work in school settings. Clarification around roles would not only help to improve the collaborative relationship between music therapists and educational assistants, but it might also better address students' needs, thus helping them to achieve their goals in music therapy contexts (Brown & Jellison, 2012).

In a systematic review of literature conducted by Brown and Jellison (2012) on music therapy in school settings, the authors found that very few studies existed on this topic. I only found two publications (based on the same study) that were directly related to collaboration amongst music therapists and educational assistants (Abbott & Sanders, 2012; 2013). In this study, the researchers interviewed 20 educational assistants who collectively identified three components that they felt were necessary for successful collaboration with music therapists. These included having a clear definition of their roles and responsibilities, learning from one another, and the need for the music therapist to respect both the educational assistants and the students. Both publications concluded with a call for music therapists to conduct more research in this area because of a lack of research in general, as well as a need to further explore the educational assistant-music therapist relationship in a variety of educational settings. In relation to the present study, it is also important to note that music therapists' perspectives on collaborations with educational assistants were not examined in Abbott & Sanders' investigation.

Purpose Statement

To summarize, very little literature exists to help guide music therapists and educational assistants in their professional collaborations, confusion around roles can have an adverse impact on therapeutic outcomes, and there is potential to learn important information from persons who have been involved in music therapist-educational assistant collaborations. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate music therapists' perspectives on their experiences of working with educational assistants in school settings.

Research Questions

The primary research question was: How do music therapists and educational assistants collaborate in music therapy sessions held in Manitoba school settings?[1] Subsidiary questions were: (a) What are music therapists' perspectives on collaborations they have had with educational assistants immediately before, during, and after music therapy sessions? (b) What aspects of working with educational assistants do music therapists find helpful in this context? (c) What aspects of working with educational assistants do music therapists find challenging in this context? (d) What other perspectives do music therapists have regarding their collaborations with educational assistants in music therapy contexts?

Key Terms

As noted earlier, *educational assistants* are individuals with varying educational backgrounds who are hired to work closely with students and provide support in many aspects of their daily school activities including personal care, health, and classroom tasks (The Government of Manitoba, 2009). A *music therapist* is "a graduate of an approved undergraduate or graduate music therapy training program. Music Therapist Accredited (MTA) is the credential granted to Canadian music therapists who have completed all of the necessary requirements for certification" (Canadian Association for Music Therapy, 2012). Finally, *collaboration* is defined as all formal and informal interactions that occur between music therapists and educational assistants that are related to planning, implementing, and evaluating music therapy sessions. These interactions may vary in length, may occur in person or in another way (e.g., through e-mail), and may occur before, during, and/or after music therapy sessions. Please see Appendix A for a more detailed definition that was provided to the research participants.

Outline of Chapters

This thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter One describes the significance and purpose of the inquiry. Research questions are presented and key terms are defined. Chapter Two reviews relevant literature in the areas of: (a) music therapy in school settings; (b) typical roles of educational assistants; and (c) collaborations between educational assistants and other

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[1] The rationale for delimiting this study to Manitoba school settings will be addressed in Chapter Three.

professionals. Chapter Three describes the philosophical underpinnings of the modified grounded theory methodology utilized in this research, the participants, as well as data collection and analysis procedures. Chapter Four contains the results that emerged from the participants' interviews. Chapter Five identifies limitations of the study and interpretations of the results. Implications for practice and research are also presented.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

As discussed in Chapter One, little literature exists to help guide music therapists and educational assistants in their professional collaborations. Music therapists' perspectives on their collaborative experiences with educational assistants may lead to enhanced understandings which could inform and/or change practice. The purpose of the present chapter is to examine and summarize relevant related literature in order to help contextualize the current topic under study. Information categories include: (a) an overview on music therapy in school settings; (b) typical roles of educational assistants; and (c) collaborations between educational assistants and other professionals.

An Overview of Music Therapy in School Settings

As noted in Chapter One, music therapists can be employed by a school or school division to work with students with special needs on goals related to their Individualized Education Plan (IEP; Ropp, Caldwell, Dixon, Angell, & Vogt, 2006). The Government of Manitoba (n.d.) identifies students with special needs as having "disabilities of an intellectual, physical, sensory, emotional, or behavioural nature, or hav[ing] a learning disability" (Student Services/Special Education section, para. 2). The amount of support received by a student is based on his or her individual needs and/or the resources available.

If a student is referred to music therapy, the music therapist will conduct an assessment that utilizes a music protocol to determine the individual's strengths and areas of need in various domains of functioning. The music therapist will also take the student's IEP goals into consideration at this point. Activities contained in the music protocol may involve use of rhythm, singing/vocalizing, movement to music, instrument playing, and listening to music (Soshensky, 2007). Based on responses to the protocol, the music therapist will formulate a treatment plan that contains goals and objectives. Progress is monitored and the school is provided with evaluations that are integrated into the student's IEP report(s) (Lathom-Radocy, 2002). Pellitteri (2000) suggested, "Unlike other supportive services (e.g., speech therapy, physical therapy) that tend to have circumscribed goal areas, music therapy crosses multiple modalities and thus can simultaneously address several needs" (p. 383).

While the music therapist's goal areas for this population may often align with those of educators (e.g., attention span, impulse control, self-esteem, creative expression, social interaction, and cognition), the ways in which progress is measured is unique (Pellitteri, 2000).

"The way the child plays, including use of instruments, dynamics, tempo, rhythm, and phrasing, gives the therapist insight into how that child experiences him or herself and the world around them" (Birnbaum, 2014, p. 30). For example, gradual changes in a child's dynamics and rhythm within the context of a music intervention may not appear to be significant to others, but a music therapist who has been targeting increased impulse control might interpret these changes as progress (Birnbaum, 2014; Pellitteri, 2000). Another example could be a student with autism who is working on passing an instrument to the student sitting next to him/her according to lyrical cues given by the therapist (e.g., "First it's your turn, then it's ____'s turn"). In this case, music can be used to reinforce turn taking or sharing concepts that are taught in the classroom. This can be expanded to having the student greet his/her peer by name when passing the instrument to further develop social skills.

As students may have a wide range of needs, music therapists who work in school settings need to incorporate a variety of approaches (McFerran, 2015). For example, a developmental approach might be suitable for children with autism because it tends to be structured, focused on achieving specific goals, and provides positive reinforcement for achievements. However, a music therapist working with teens on self-esteem issues might use a humanistic approach in which, "… the therapist adopts a position of engagement and offers acceptance of any expression of the young person's musical identity …" (McFerran, 2015, p. 330). Appropriate applications of music therapy, including providing opportunities for and analyzing each student's musical responses, offer a unique perspective of each student's abilities. Therefore, it is beneficial for all those involved in his/her special education programming, and especially those who are collaborating with the music therapist (such as educational assistants) to understand the role and relevance of music therapy intervention.

Typical Roles of Educational Assistants: A Review & Critique

As previously noted, educational assistants typically work closely with students throughout the school year and assist in many aspects of a student's daily activities including personal care, health, and classroom tasks. The Government of Manitoba (2009) describes them as important members of the educational staff who assist other professional staff such as teachers and clinicians. According to the Manitoba Teachers' Society (2013), educational assistants are expected to contribute to discussions related to assessment, programming, planning, supervision, evaluation, and reporting. They are required to complete necessary documentation, follow

classroom procedures when managing student behaviours, use similar language as the teacher to reinforce classroom concepts, and stay up-to-date on issues related to their profession. In order for educational assistants to fulfill these requirements, Manitoba teachers are expected to provide adequate assistance and training for the educational assistants who are part of their classroom(s). Furthermore, they provide an extensive list of tasks that educational assistants are not permitted to participate in, (e.g., lesson planning, teaching, evaluating the student(s), and choosing teaching resources) as well as some general tasks that are permissible (e.g., engage students in IEP-related activities, prescribed physiotherapy exercises, etc.).

Many Canadian and American school systems value inclusion and strive to provide the appropriate supports, such as educational assistants, in order to establish an inclusive environment for students who require special education. The Manitoba Government (2009) notes:

> Inclusion is a way of thinking and acting that allows every individual to feel accepted, valued, and safe. An inclusive community consciously evolves to meet the changing needs of its members. Through recognition and support, an inclusive community
>
> provides meaningful involvement and equal access to the benefits of citizenship (p. 1).

That being said, many teachers and administrative personnel recognize that placing a student with special needs in regular classrooms full time is not always best for each student. Therefore, when possible, schools attempt to provide individualized opportunities for peer interaction in ways that will focus on enhancing each student's learning which may include working with an educational assistant (Community Living-Manitoba, 2011).

French (2003) identified that inclusion in schools is often made possible because of educational assistants. Teachers generally do not have the time or means to adapt materials to suit individual needs of students who require additional support. It is not uncommon for educational assistants to spend self-directed time with the student(s) to whom they are assigned (French, 2003; Giangreco, 2003; Giangreco & Broer, 2005; Guay, 2003; Saddler, 2014) and for teachers to focus less on students with special needs if they have been assigned an educational assistant (Guay, 2003). This lack of guidance may put more pressure on the educational assistant since students with the highest needs are generally considered to be the most challenging. Depending upon their educational background and practical experience, the educational assistant may or may not have the resources needed to independently support these students (Giangreco,

2003; Giangreco, Edelman, & Broer, 2001). In the classroom, it appears that collaborative relationships between teachers and educational assistants are needed but are not happening as often as they perhaps should.

Given the amount of time spent with their students, educational assistants have the potential to enhance the ways in which they connect with others both in and outside of the classroom (McCord & Watts, 2006; Saddler, 2014). Not only do they teach and model appropriate social behaviours, they also provide the necessary supports to facilitate communication (e.g., an educational assistant can use sign language to assist his or her student with a hearing impairment with communication; Chopra, et al., 2004; McCord & Watts, 2006; Saddler, 2014). Considering the amount of time spent supporting their students, there is also potential risk for educational assistants to over-help their students (French, 2003; Giengreco, 2003). In their 2005 study, Giangreco and Broer questioned whether students' social experiences were impacted by the amount of support they received. The researchers found that educational assistants in 12 schools in Vermont spent 86% of their workday with the students they were supporting. Ultimately, the literature identifies that further training opportunities could provide educational assistants with ways to better facilitate students' independence in all areas (French, 2003; Mathews, Clair, & Kosloski, 2001; McKenzie, 2011; Patterson, 2006).

Educational assistants are generally assigned to work with one or more students with special needs (Bernstorf, 2001) but are often given additional tasks that involve student(s) to whom they are not assigned; as a result, they may end up in situations that they are not necessarily trained to manage (e.g., disruptive or dangerous behaviours; Chopra, et al., 2004; Patterson, 2006). Unfortunately, these additional tasks are also not recognized or acknowledged, and this can lead to frustration among educational assistants (Chopra, et al., 2004; French, 2003; Giangreco, Suter, Doyle, 2010).

Given the numerous possibilities for how educational assistants can be incorporated in school settings, many sources in the literature identify that the roles and responsibilities of educational assistants are unclear and require definition (Chopra, et al., 2004; French, 2003; Giangreco, Suter, & Doyle, 2010; Patterson, 2006; Saddler, 2014). In some situations, teachers may be the ones responsible for deciding how to direct educational assistants in ways that they feel is most beneficial for the student. In other circumstances, the organization may provide teachers and educational assistants with specific lists of tasks that are permissible (e.g., engaging

a student in IEP-related activities, assisting with a student's physiotherapy exercises, etc.) as well as those that are not permissible (e.g., marking a student's assignment, planning coursework, etc.). Another way that some schools address this issue is by offering training at the beginning of each school year specifically for both new and returning educational assistants (McKenzie, 2011). Overall, a more unified definition of the role and scope of practice of the educational assistant is needed given the numerous calls for further clarification in the literature. This could not only provide clarity for the educational assistants themselves, but also for the teachers and members of the administration with whom they work.

Collaborations Between Educational Assistants and Other Professionals

Community Living-Manitoba (2011) defines collaboration as "the cooperative working together of different individuals or groups of people" (p. 14). While this definition paints a positive picture, opinions on collaboration in school settings seem varied. As noted in Chapter One, some authors believe that collaboration amongst administration, teachers, and educational assistants is essential especially since it can help to clarify the expectations surrounding the roles and responsibilities of educational assistants (Abbott & Sanders, 2013; Bernstorf, 2001; Chopra et al., 2004; McCord & Watts, 2006). However, others have found that individuals who work in schools tend to be skilled at communicating with their students but lack the ability to communicate effectively with other professionals (Giangreco, Edelman, & Broer, 2001; Guay, 2003; McKenzie, 2011, Patterson, 2006). Friend (2000) purported that many individuals in the field of education inadvertently participate in collaboration in a superficial way (i.e., teachers and educational assistants may participate in collaborative meetings because of pressure from administration). She felt that the enthusiasm surrounding collaboration was causing these individuals to spend too much time, time that they did not have, in meetings. Friend insisted that the goal of collaboration should be to complete a given task in a way that gives the best outcome, meaning that in cases where an issue can be addressed independently, there is no need for collaboration.

Few sources, however, give concrete suggestions on how to improve collaboration amongst teachers and educational assistants and some identify that more research needs to be done to address this issue (Friend, 2000, Giangreco, Suter, & Doyle, 2010; Register, 2002). That being said, Bernstorf (2001) does give some suggestions on how music teachers can enhance their relationship with educational assistants. For example, the teacher should demonstrate

specifically what assistance is required from the educational assistant during class. This demonstration should be followed by a 'thank-you for your assistance' and a positive comment directed towards the educational assistant made in front of the class. Bernstorf believed that these actions would reinforce to the educational assistant how their help is of value to students. Patterson (2006) identified a need for respect from teachers and administration in collaborative settings in order to create an environment that values teamwork. These suggestions may have relevance for music therapists and for the present study.

The literature identifies additional considerations for educational assistants who work with students with special needs who are integrated into arts classrooms specifically. "Many, if not most, school districts have no set policy regarding the role of [educational assistants] in music, art or physical education classes" (French, 2003, p. 37). Furthermore, there is greater potential for educational assistants to be hesitant to assist in arts settings because they are more likely to be unsure of the material (e.g., an assistant without experience in reading music in band class; Bernstorf, 2001; Guay, 2003). Bernstorf (2001) outlined ways educational assistants could help their student(s) to achieve success in music settings. She noted that students with special needs are frequently not given enough support (from the teacher and/or educational assistant) in order to meaningfully participate in music activities. Rather than observe, students with special needs should be actively involved in the music, especially considering that the goal of most schools is to achieve inclusion for all students (Bernstorf, 2001; Darrow, 1999). Bernstorf also noted that by engaging with their students in music activities, educational assistants could further develop their relationship through positive musical interactions, which in turn could enhance the ways in which the student and educational assistant work together in other settings. It seems that these considerations would most certainly resonate with music therapists.

Music therapists who work in schools often see their students during music therapy sessions only (i.e., not in other contexts). Given the amount of time educational assistants spend with the students who participate in music therapy programming, these staff members have the potential to make valuable contributions to the music therapist's understanding of his/her clients (Chiang, 2010). Music therapists work in individual and group settings, the latter often consisting of more structure and the presence of a single or multiple educational assistants (Pellitteri, 2000). While many of these individuals offer helpful assistance during music therapy interventions, others may have difficulty contributing in a way that is valuable to his or her

student(s). For example, educational assistants may over-help their student to ensure that he/she is playing "correctly" and not give him or her the time and space to respond and be creative. This could be the result of the educational assistant's own learning experiences in music education contexts during his or her own schooling (Hall, 2012). While the goals in other music settings might be educational (e.g., to create a performance-ready piece; to learn how to read and play pre-composed music), music therapy goals tend not to focus on learning music concepts. Rather, flexible music experiences are used to work on IEP goals that are not related to music learning per se (e.g., using music to work on communication, social, and/or academic goals). In a study that examined 20 educational assistants' perspectives on collaboration in music therapy sessions, Abbott and Sanders (2013) noted that educational assistants assisted students through modeling, giving physical and verbal prompts, and by providing encouragement. The participants reported that they often extracted useful techniques from music therapy sessions and applied them when working with their students outside of sessions. Additionally, results indicated that educational assistants gained new ways of promoting positive behaviours and methods of relating to their students from the music therapists who worked with their students. The researchers suggested that collaboration with educational assistants could be improved if music therapists made music therapy goals more clearly relatable to students' learning outside of sessions (Abbott & Sanders, 2013).

Summary

Music therapy is a unique service that crosses multiple modalities and that can be used to address the IEP goals of students with special needs. Although it is important for those who collaborate with music therapists to understand the rationale underlying music therapy interventions, it appears that this is often not the case. The literature identifies some ways in which music teachers may collaborate with educational assistants, but the goals of music therapy are different from that of music education. As educational assistants are highly involved in the daily activities of students with special needs, they could serve as an excellent resource for music therapists—especially if they better understood not only why music therapy is being used but also what is needed from them in this context. Although one study examined educational assistants' perspectives on their collaborations with music therapists, music therapists' perspectives on this issue have not been explored. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to further understand how music therapists and educational assistants could best collaborate by investigating music

therapists' perspectives on their experiences of working with educational assistants in school settings.

Chapter 3. Methodology

Design

This qualitative investigation used a modified grounded theory design to create grounded descriptive statements that clarified predetermined categories (i.e., the subsidiary research questions) as well as themes and subcategories that emerged from the data. No explanatory whole or theory can be derived from this inquiry, as theoretical saturation was not achieved (Daveson, O'Callaghan, & Grocke, 2008). However, given that the data and interpretations are grounded in the real life experiences of the participants, the findings may have relevant implications for practice and future research.

Delimitations

In order to clearly situate the research and also to complete it within a Masters thesis time frame, some additional delimitations were imposed upon this study: (a) only three English speaking Canadian music therapists were interviewed; (b) the participants were interviewed on work that occurred in one particular Canadian province (Manitoba) because variance amongst provincial educational systems could have complicated the interpretation of the data; (c) perspectives of educational assistants were not included as Abbott and Sanders (2012; 2013) recently explored this issue; and (d) I did not engage participants in member checking after the interviews as this can "… dilute the true essence of the experiences, subtracting from the richness of the data" (McConnell-Henry, Chapman, & Francis, 2011, p. 31). In other words, the literature indicates that member checking can sometimes convolute rather than clarify the data. Through the informed consent form (see Appendix B), participants understood that the results of this research inquiry would be based solely upon my interpretations of their interviews.

Participants

After ethics approval was received from Concordia University's Human Research Ethics Committee (UHREC; see Appendix C), participants were recruited via e-mail through the Canadian Association for Music Therapy (CAMT; see Appendix D). This study employed purposive and convenience sampling rather than theoretical sampling. In other words, sampling did not happen in phases to further develop categories. Instead, participants were invited based on specific knowledge that they might bring to the topic under study (Wheeler and Kenny, 2005). Criteria for inclusion were: (a) MTAs (i.e., credentialed music therapist in Canada) in good

standing; (b) led group and/or individual music therapy sessions where they collaborated with at least one educational assistant; (c) led group and/or individual music therapy sessions in one or more schools in Manitoba within the last 5 years; and (d) fluent in spoken English. The first three persons who contacted the researcher and met the criteria for inclusion were included in the study. All three participants were female. No other demographic information was collected in order to maintain the anonymity of the participants who come from an area where there is a relatively low number of music therapists. They had the opportunity to withdraw their consent up to 2 weeks after the interviews. As no one withdrew their consent, all data collected was included in the final analysis.

Ethical Considerations

I am an accredited (i.e., credentialed) music therapist who at the time of this study had worked in the Manitoba school system for 3 years with an 8-month break during which time I moved to Montreal to complete the coursework required for my Masters degree. During the data collection and analysis phases of this study I bracketed my personal responses to the best of my ability by noting my reactions in a separate document which I reviewed periodically. This helped to ensure that I was being as objective as possible in my attempt to represent the participants' perspectives rather than my own. My research adviser also reviewed the process and results of the study to ensure that my interpretations and conclusions were supported by the data. Potential issues arising from belonging to a small community of music therapists (i.e., coercion to participate) were diminished through distributing the request for participants via an outside source—the CAMT sent out the request to its membership via e-mail. Informed consent was obtained from the participants prior to each individual interview (see Appendix B). These music therapists participated in this study as individual professionals and not as representatives of their workplaces. No identifying information related to participants' workplaces was included in this study. Gender was the only identifying information about the participants included in this study.

Data Collection Procedures

Data was collected using a semi-structured qualitative interview framework where a set of guiding questions was used to enable each participant and myself to engage in discussions about the topic under investigation (see Appendix A; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). One interview took place in-person in a rented private meeting room. The other two interviews were conducted via FaceTime, as this was more convenient for the participants. One participant contacted me via

email within 24 hours of completing her interview with additional information that she wished to have included in the study based upon further reflection. In order to respect her request, I included this information as part of the data.

All audio-recorded data from the interviews was transferred from a password protected computer and tablet and saved onto two USB drives that were stored in a locked filing cabinet. With the exception of the content stored on the USB drives, all audio data was immediately destroyed after the files had been transferred. Data files were password protected and labeled with pseudonyms. Only myself and my advisor had access to the raw data.

Materials

The interviews were recorded using the Notability application on my iPad, and GarageBand on my laptop. My laptop was used to transcribe the interviews, and two USB drives (kept in a locked filing cabinet) were used to store the data.

Data Analysis Procedures

I transcribed the recorded interviews, listened to the audio, and read the transcripts several times in order to become familiar with the content. I made analytic memos in order to organize my thoughts and inform my interpretations throughout the entire analysis process. During the open coding phase, the interview data from each participant was assigned a distinct colour to allow comparisons to be made throughout all phases of the analysis. I then organized the data according to the four subsidiary research questions (see research questions on p. 3). Subsidiary research question one was divided into three parts for clarity. I then used axial coding where themes that emerged from the open coding procedure were further organized into subcategories (Amir, 1992). Finally, grounded descriptive statements were constructed to clarify the themes and subcategories that emerged (Daveson, O'Callaghan, & Grocke, 2008; Magee, & Davidson, 2004; O'Callaghan, 2012). I included select quotes from participants in order to ground the emergent themes and subcategories in the data (Amir, 1992).

Chapter 4. Results

This study investigated three music therapists' perspectives on their experiences of working with educational assistants in school settings. Tables 1 through 6 display each predetermined category (i.e., the subsidiary research questions) and the related themes and subcategories that emerged from the coding processes. Each table is followed by corresponding descriptive statements, which further clarify the subcategories that were derived from the data. Participant quotes have been integrated into these descriptive statements in order to ground them in the data as well as lend credibility and confirmability to the findings.

Table 1

Category 1a with Related Themes and Subcategories

Category 1a	Themes	Subcategories
Music therapists' perspective on their collaborations with educational assistants immediately before music therapy sessions	No involvement/interaction	Interactions with educational assistants prior to sessions are limited
	Educational assistant decides own participation level	
	Informal	
	Set up	Educational assistants provide practical assistance and information
	Daily/weekly events	
	Request specific number of educational assistants to support students	Prior to each session, the music therapist must decide whether or not educational assistants' support is required.
	More educational assistants needed as student numbers increase to assist music therapist	

Descriptive Statements for Category 1a

      Music therapists' perspective on their collaborations with educational assistants immediately before music therapy sessions

      Interactions with educational assistants prior to sessions are limited. The participants indicated that collaborations before music therapy sessions were mostly informal. "Most of the time my interactions with [educational assistants] would be in the hallway before or as we are

getting set up." Another participant socialized with educational assistants if they were present while she was setting up for the session. "It really depends if they're there. If they're around, it just natually occurs … just natural conversation." Based on responses from the participants it seemed as though educational assistants generally arrived at sessions as they were about to begin, leaving little to no time available for collaboration.

   Educational assistants provide practical assistance and information. Educational assistants might assist the music therapist by setting up chairs for the students, or he/she might inform the music therapist of significant happenings related to the students that occurred since the last session. "[Educational assistants] might help me unload my car, they might tell me if there [were] any abnormalities of the day, if anybody has had a seizure, any trigger responses, any behaviours … so, on the fly information." One of the participants asked educational assistants to help her by creating a seating plan that would maximize the students' attention.

   Prior to each session, the music therapist must decide whether or not educational assistants' support is required. Participants indicated that they might have the opportunity to request a specific number of educational assistants to participate in a group. They may also decide for particular reasons that an educational assistant is not needed. For example, the music therapist might request limited or no educational assistants in individual and/or small group settings to increase independence and/or creativity amongst group members. "At any time I could have an educational assistant present with a student if I really needed them to [be there]." They might also request a specific educational assistant prior to music therapy sessions because of his/her strengths with particular students.

Table 2

Category 1b with Related Themes and Subcategories

Category 1b	Themes	Subcategories
Music therapists' perspectives on their collaborations with educational assistants during music therapy sessions	Educational assistants help with facilitation	Educational assistants can help to facilitate sessions by regulating participants' behaviours and interacting with the group as a whole
	Crowd control while music therapist interacts with group as a whole	
	Regulate behaviour while music therapist interacts with group as a whole	
	Interact with entire group not just with his/her assigned student to assist music therapist	
	Maximize students' success with or without prior communication with music therapist	Educational assistants, with and without the music therapist's direction, often strive to maximize students' success and/or level of participation during music therapy activities
	Help with communication device to enable interaction with music therapist and/or peers	
	Support student with musical participation according to music therapist's instruction	
	Music therapist may suggest dyad play between educational assistant and student until student is comfortable in the group	
	Educational assistants give the music therapist information about student(s)	Educational assistants can provide practical information and assistance throughout music therapy sessions
	Educational assistants facilitate transitions lead by music therapist	
	Music therapist may praise educational assistants who demonstrate enthusiasm	Music therapists often provide practical support and validation to encourage educational assistants' participation during music therapy sessions
	Ideas/comments from educational assistant are sometimes incorporated into music therapy activities	
	Music therapist support educational assistants by providing examples/modeling	
	Give concrete tasks to educational assistants	

Descriptive Statements for Category 1b

Music therapists' perspective on their collaborations with educational assistants during music therapy sessions

Educational assistants can help to facilitate sessions by regulating participants' behaviours and interacting with the group as a whole. All of the participants had experiences of educational assistants dealing with student behaviours during music therapy sessions (e.g.,

during transitional times when a student might become distracted; in large group settings when distractions could limit the music therapist's ability to be effective). "I've had educational assistants joining more and more throughout the time that I've been [leading a larger group at one school], especially as student numbers climb. They act as 'crowd control' in larger groups."

Educational assistants, with and without the music therapist's direction, often strive to maximize students' success and/or level of participation during music therapy activities. The music therapist participants noted that they often relied on educational assistants to help maximize students' success with hand-over-hand assistance during instrument activities and with responding to the music therapist or another student with a communication device (e.g., an iPad). One music therapist participant said, "I might get them to be the ones to [provide] hand-over-hand [support], or help with the touch … of the instruments." Music therapist participants also noticed that educational assistants worked one-on-one with their students if they had difficulty immediately participating in a group activity. Essentially, they set their student up for success in particular music therapy activities by practicing with the student on a smaller scale first.

Educational assistants can provide practical information and assistance throughout music therapy sessions. Students' success was perceived to increase when educational assistants were available to answer the music therapist participant's questions during sessions. For example, the music therapist participant might look to the educational assistant for his/her perspective on how much processing time is needed for a student to make a choice between two picture symbols based on his/her knowledge of the student. "I use collaboration not to expedite in the sense of making the session happen faster or [for] those events [to] happen faster, but [to make sure] that I [am] giving a fair representation of what the students [are] actually wanting."

Music therapists often provide practical support and validation to encourage educational assistants during music therapy sessions. One of the music therapist participants noted that they promoted and praised educational assistants' enthusiasm during music therapy sessions. Increased instances of educational assistants modelling ways of playing the instruments or moving to music was observed, which benefited students in the group. "[I] will promote and praise enthusiasm from educational assistants [if their] playing [or] singing along raises [the] energy of the group and models ways of playing instruments, moving, etc." The music therapist participant also believed the educational assistants' level of participation increased when the

20

music therapist provided them with concrete examples and tasks; especially for those who were not previously involved in music therapy groups.

Music therapy sessions focus on the students' needs and group dynamics with little attention given to collaboration. The participants identified that paying too much attention to the educational assistants could take the focus away from the students. "I may use quick humour or praise in the moment for an educational assistant's singing or dancing ability and then shift my attention back to the students if [that educational assistant's] enthusiasm is dominating the group dynamics." Another music therapist participant noted that most of the collaboration that takes place between herself and the educational assistants happens during the transitional portions of the session as opposed to the intervention components of the session. Another often worked with clients on an individual basis without educational assistants present which resulted in few opportunities for collaboration during sessions. "Obviously there is some collaboration there, but for the most part in my sessions, not 100% of the time but for my individual sessions, I don't have staff or educational assistants that come into the session."

Table 3

Category 1b with Related Themes and Subcategories

Category 1c	Themes	Subcategories
Music therapists' perspectives on their collaborations with educational assistants immediately after music therapy sessions	Socialization Learn about student from educational assistant Discuss upcoming events	The time immediately after sessions can involve friendly or practical interactions that have the potential to enhance the collaborative relationship
	Debrief on behaviours/incidents Evaluate session Discuss strategies for managing potential future incidents	The music therapist and educational assistant(s) may work together to strategize and problem solve for future sessions.

Descriptive Statements for Category 1c

Music therapists' perspective on their collaborations with educational assistants immediately after music therapy sessions

The time immediately after sessions can involve friendly or practical interactions that have the potential to enhance the collaborative relationship. The participants all interacted with educational assistants immediately after music therapy sessions in an informal way (i.e., scheduled meetings generally did not occur). They all felt that this was a good time to find out about upcoming special events involving their students (e.g., holiday parties, graduation, etc.).

> I would check in with regards to seasonal activities [like], 'When is your halloween party coming up?' or, 'What are the themes of the classroom?' So if something was coming up I would plan theme related things for that week depending on what was happening.

The music therapist and educational assistant(s) may work together to strategize and problem solve for future sessions. This time was also used to address challenging or unique student behaviours. One of the participants said, "I might notice a behaviour that has me curious in a session and I might check it out with an educational assistant afterwards if I want to think of

a strategy with regards to how to set up something for more success in the next group." Another music therapist participant who generally did not have educational assistants attend individual sessions used this time to debrief the events of the session with educational assistants when they picked up their students. "Overall, [the educational assistant] is checking in because they weren't with them [during the session]. They're checking in on how things went and I might give them a specific something that [the student] did or something that we worked on or did together." Music therapists and educational assistants might debrief on other types of incidents as well. "If there has been an episode … in the sessions or if someone has a seizure in the session … [I would ask if it was] a music trigger. It might be a teacher, myself, and the educational assistants who might be decompressing after something like that happened."

Table 4

Category 2 with Related Themes and Subcategories

Category 2	Themes	Subcategories
Aspects of working with educational assistants that music therapists find helpful	Educational assistants provide crowd control based on music therapist's instruction Educational assistants support students according to music therapist's modeling Educational assistants provide one on one support when music therapist is working with entire group Providing instructions to educational assistant Music therapist provides training/modeling for educational assistant(s)	Providing instruction and modeling so that educational assistants can manage students' individual needs while the therapist manages the group as a whole is helpful, especially in large group settings
	Educational assistants share observations with music therapist Educational assistants initiate ways to support student's musical participation Educational assistants share students' IEP targets	Educational assistants have information about the students that the music therapist needs to know
	Educational assistant understands music therapy Educational assistant picks up rhythms Students get ideas for playing instruments from the educational assistant Educational assistant can help to integrate music therapy techniques into students' daily lives	It is helpful when educational assistants have an understanding of music therapy
	Finding something that the educational assistant is enthusiastic about can increase their participation level Everybody present participates in the music therapy activities Reduce talking/background noise Educational assistants check out/take a break Having "buy in" from educational assistants	Knowing the individual strengths of educational assistants and engaging them in the session can reduce background talking and distractions to create an optimal environment for participation
	Fewer educational assistants can be helpful	Limiting the number of educational assistants in certain settings is necessary/helpful
	IEP meetings involving the music therapist and educational assistant(s)	The music therapist and educational assistant(s) can be on the same page regarding student behaviour strategies when they are both involved in IEP meetings

Descriptive Statements for Category 2

        Aspects of working with educational assistants that music therapists find helpful

        Providing instruction and modeling so that educational assistants can manage students' individual needs while the therapist manages the group as a whole is helpful, especially in large group settings. Each music therapist participant mentioned that it was helpful when educational assistants managed students' individual needs based on previous modeling and/or instruction so that they could focus on leading the interventions. "If I'm in a … small group session or a large group session where I'm tied up with more students, I'm giving my attention to more than just one student and there's a fair number of my students who use a communication device (e.g., iPad). If there's a really [helpful] educational assistant who knows how to help and facilitate that effectively, it's really helpful for them to help the student navigate [the device] to say something meaningful and to be part of that back and forth conversation with peers and with the music therapist."

        Educational assistants have information about the students that the music therapist needs to know. This participant also indicated that educational assistants sharing knowledge about their student(s) contributed to the overall success of the music therapy session. "In the past if I noticed that a student had a mobility goal I would ask what the specific target [was] for [that] term. It is helpful for me to know what [the student's] targets are so that I can provide an instrument that would meet or fit into this goal."

        It is helpful when educational assistants have an understanding of music therapy. Participants felt that sessions went better when educational assistants understood music therapy and how they could best support their student(s) in this type of context.

> … I have a pretty solid group of EAs right now [and] I don't feel like I need to explain much or do much with them. Whereas before, there were lots of times that I spent almost as much time explaining how to support the students [in music therapy] as I would on the interventions.

With groups involving educational assistants who may still be learning about music therapy, music therapist participants found modelling or providing training to be helpful. "For students who benefit from hand-over-hand support, it is helpful to model the minimal amount of support for the most independent participation [that] the student is capable of." Musicality was perceived

to be another helpful trait amongst educational assistants. "Seeing not just myself but another adult picking up the rhythms has been really helpful for the students to see and hear different ways [of playing] the instruments."

Knowing the individual strengths of educational assistants and engaging them in the session can reduce background talking and distractions to create an optimal environment for participation. For those educational assistants attending sessions, music therapist participants found that engaging the EAs in the session was helpful in reducing background talking and distractions.

> Everybody participates. There are no wall flowers. I find it cuts down on the background noise and chatter because, if only the students have the instruments, I feel like educational assistants would check out or feel that it's a coffee break.

This is related to having "buy in" from the educational assistants. To the music therapist participants, it seemed that if an educational assistant enjoyed an activity or saw it as valuable to the student, they were more likely to participate which helped to create an optimal environment for students.

Limiting the number of educational assistants in certain settings is necessary/helpful. In terms of managing the educational assistants who attended music therapy sessions with students, music therapist participants found that limiting the number of educational assistants was sometimes helpful. "Reducing the number of educational assistants in the room can be a positive solution when students are capable of participating independently." This participant went on to say that fewer educational assistants could enhance creative self-expression and reduce performance anxieties and inhibitions amongst students whose music therapy goals included increased independence.

The music therapist and educational assistant(s) can be on the same page regarding student behaviour strategies when they are both involved in IEP meetings. Although music therapist participants seemed to value IEPs, only one mentioned attending IEP meetings as part of her job.

I meet with teachers regularly and also attend, if I can because I'm at [multiple] schools and have a lot of students, IEP meetings [that include] teachers, family [members] social workers, [and] the student. I go to as many IEP meetings as I can.

The participant went on to say that educational assistants were also in attendance (especially if that educational assistant worked one-on-one with the student) when the IEP meetings occurred during school hours.

Table 5
Category 3 with Related Themes and Subcategories

Category 3	Themes	Subcategories
Aspects of working with educational assistants that music therapists find challenging	Limited time to connect with educational assistant	Time for collaboration and effective communication is limited
	During sessions, effective communication can be difficult in the moment	
	The educational assistant over-helps without prompting from music therapist	There are times when educational assistants unecessarily take charge
	The educational assistant speaks on behalf of student	
	Educational assistant acts like they are the sole authority on student(s)	
	Some educational assistants have limited training on how to assist their student(s) and other professionals	When educational assistants have limitations in their understanding, they do not engage effectively in the music therapy session context
	Some educational assistants have limited understanding of music therapy	
	Some educational assistants are uncomfortable with music therapy	
	Educational assistant treating sessions as personal therapy	
	Educational assistant becoming too engaged	
	Some educational assistants do not participate as much as the music therapists would like	Educational assistants' level of participation in sessions can be limited
	Some educational assistants talk with each other during sessions	
	Some educational assistants become distracted during sessions	

Descriptive Statements for Category 3

Aspects of working with educational assistants that music therapists find challenging

Time for collaboration and effective communication is limited. Sometimes, music therapist participants found collaborating with educational assistants to be difficult. This was due to a lack of time (for both the music therapist and the educational assistant) and/or educational assistants not understanding music therapy. "I haven't been in a situation where I have been fortunate enough to be in a team [meeting] with the educational assistants. As an independent contractor I fly in, fly out." Another music therapist participant said,

> I know I need to get better at communicating what I'm doing before the session. Some of that is time, right? You have this block with a student and you're working with them, and to explain everything you're going to do with that student in a session takes a lot of time that you don't necessarily have in a day. I've experienced a lot of [educational assistants], unfortunately, that don't get it. Even if you try to explain, it sometimes doesn't work out. It can be frustrating sometimes I guess … collaborating or working with [educational assistants] and them not getting what you're trying to do.

There are times when educational assistants take charge unecessarily. Music therapist participants indicated that it was challenging when educational assistants over-helped their student(s). "I don't need [educational assistants] to [provide] hand-over-hand assistance if [the students] don't need hand-over-hand assistance or if they're going to get aggressive because somebody is in their space all the time." One music therapist participant described a situation in which an educational assistant was acting like the sole authority on a particular student.

> An [educational assistant] gets very protective of her student. She knows them really well. She cares for them a lot. She wants to take care of [the student] and protect [the student], and pretty much has made it known that she's the expert on that student without having any training.

The music therapist participant went on to say that this educational assistant would do things for the student, not give them enough response time, or respond for the student (e.g., "She's really tired right now so I think you should just let her be.").

When educational assistants have limitations in their understanding, they do not engage effectively in the music therapy session context. Music therapist participants observed that some educational assistants became so engaged in a particular session or intervention that they had to direct their focus back to the students. "There's a fine line between [educational assistants] modelling so that the student will follow and their enthusiasm increases, and taking over and being the actual [client]."

> Sometimes [educational assistants] really come out of themselves, maybe [in a way] that they didn't expect. I've learned that it's not my [responsibility to be their therapist]. Our students are our clients so I would do closure [activities] with the students, but I feel like I shouldn't have to do that with the adults … I can't say that people aren't helpful. They're always trying to be helpful. The only thing is [when the educational assistant becomes] so enthusiastic that I need to rein them in a bit.

Educational assistants' level of participation in sessions can be limited. On the other hand, music therapist participants also noted that educational assistants who were not actively involved in every part of the session could easily become distracted. "Sometimes the educational assistants get bored because they don't have anything to do. Because [some] students are so independent, the EAs are sitting in the back [of the room] talking or something."

Table 6

Category 4 with Related Themes and Subcategories

Category 4	Themes	Subcategories
Other perspectives on collaborating with educational assistants in music therapy contexts	Music therapists may have more opportunities to interact with teachers than educational assistants	Music therapists may collaborate with other professionals (e.g., teachers and other therapists) more than educational assistants
	Music therapists tend to talk about goals/objectives with resource teachers or other professionals (e.g., occupational therapist) before having these discussions with educational assistants	
	Community approach	A community approach fosters a sense of equality amongst all those present in the session
	Educational assistants sit in music therapy circle as part of the group	
	Student and educational assistants are sitting beside each other during session	

Descriptive Statements for Category 4

Other perspectives on collaborating with educational assistants in music therapy contexts

Music therapists collaborate with other professionals (e.g., teachers and other therapists) more than educational assistants. Two of the participants identified that they collaborated with other professionals (i.e., teachers and other therapists) more than educational assistants.

> [Teachers have] always been my main point of contact. They are the ones in the treatment plans and meetings. I find it hard to pull the educational assistants aside because their job is to support the students. Once the music [therapy session] is done they may be on to the next thing so I may not be able to have a five to ten minute conversation with them.

The participant went on to say that teachers are often more available for meetings and/or discussions as compared to educational assistants. Another music therapist participant said, "More so I discuss with the teachers because … the teachers are all very involved in the planning because they are all case managing the students' individualized plans."

A community approach involves the educational assistants participate in the session alongside their student(s). One music therapist participant described how their experience with support workers in adult day programs changed the way they incorporated educational assistants into music therapy sessions in school settings.

> When I first started in the schools it was one on one (educational assistant with a student). Their policy was to have the student [be] most[ly] independent. My job, I felt, was to structure either the instrument or the song so that the student could be as independent as possible and the educational assistant was in the background, faded away, and not even part of the group. … now, the model that I've been exposed to more is that we're a big community, and everyone is equal in that community. The role that the educational assistant and the student [play within the music therapy session] is symbiotic in that they're there together. So to have [the educational assistant and student] sitting side by side and in the group has evolved as opposed to [the educational assistant] fading away as a non-entity just there to support the student.

Chapter 5. Discussion

Although there were a limited number of participants in this study, the results indicate that these three music therapists had both common and distinct perspectives regarding their collaborations with educational assistants in music therapy contexts. The purpose of this chapter is to contextualize the results within the existing literature and to suggest some possible reasons for the findings. Limitations of the study are presented as well as implications for practice and research.

Interpretations of the Results

Category 1a: Music therapists' perspective on collaborations they have had with educational assistants immediately before music therapy sessions. The three participants indicated that they had varying levels of collaboration with education assistants before music therapy sessions. Perspectives ranged from no collaboration (e.g., educational assistants were not present in sessions), to minimal collaboration (e.g., casual conversation), to moderate collaboration (e.g., educational assistants helped to set up for the session and engaged in conversation about their student[s]). None of the participants indicated that they had experienced a high or refined level of collaboration. That being said, the music therapist participant who did not collaborate in the majority of sessions was often too busy to include the educational assistants in discussions about her plans for the student. There was often variability in who would be supporting her client(s) on a given day and that this impaired her ability to build the relationship needed to collaborate more effectively. Bernstorf (2001) believed that this variability in support staff could cause stress for those responsible with leading groups of students with special needs. Since there is often little time from when an educational assistant arrives with a student to the beginning of the first activity, it can be difficult for the music therapist to find an adequate amount of time to help prepare the educational assistant on how to best support the students in this context.

Category 1b: Music therapists' perspective on their collaborations with educational assistants during music therapy sessions. Two participants used the words, "crowd control" when referring to the type of support they most appreciated from educational assistants during group music therapy sessions. This type of support from the educational assistants allowed the music therapist participants to focus on leading the activities in a more cohesive and uninterrupted way. This in turn helped the music therapist participants to more effectively

address the clients' therapy goals. In their study, Abbott & Sanders (2012) also found that educational assistants also identified this type of support as an important part of their role. "During music therapy sessions [educational assistants] used their expertise to support students, whereas the music therapists used their expertise to foster the therapeutic environment and lead the music experiences" (p. 61).

Another way in which the participants collaborated with educational assistants during music therapy sessions was by promoting and praising their enthusiasm. Berstorf (2001) also found that praising educational assistants and commenting on how their support helped the group as a whole was integral to success in future collaborations. Similarly, one of this study's participants noted that positive reinforcement pertaining to the educational assistants' support increased instances of constructive support (e.g., helping to model ways of playing instruments or moving to music). However, the same participant also found that she had to be careful to not pay too much attention to the educational assistants because focus could be taken away from the students. This could lead to students losing interest in the session and becoming distracted.

Category 1c: Music therapists' perspectives on collaborations they have had with educational assistants immediately after music therapy sessions. Similar to collaborations that took place before sessions, collaborations immediately after music therapy sessions were also reported as being mostly informal. Scheduled meetings did not occur due to time constraints (e.g., the music therapist participant was often rushing to lead the next group and/or the educational assistant was taking his/her student to the next activity). Although all of the music therapist participants indicated that scheduled meetings are rare, they also indicated that both parties (i.e., the music therapist and the educational assistant[s]) made time for discussion if an incident occurred during the session (e.g., a student throwing an instrument). This time would be brief, but a discussion about the event as well as planning for potential future incidents happened during these impromptu meetings immediately following music therapy sessions.

Managing student behaviours (a theme that emerged) became a major point of discussion within this category and appreciation of educational assistants' abilities in this area appeared throughout each interview. When two of the music therapist participants were asked to clarify whether that meant managing the behaviours of the student to whom that particular educational assistant was assigned or managing the behaviours of all students, the words, "crowd control"

came up again. It seems as though the music therapist participants in this study relied on educational assistants to manage the behaviours of the music therapy group as a whole. The music therapist participants indicated that this was because they did not have enough time or perhaps even the capability to manage multiple complex behaviours and also provide the students with the musical leadership and support that they needed to achieve their goals. While the Manitoba Teachers' Association (2013) identified managing student behaviours as one of the responsibilities of educational assistants, it is unclear whether this applies to the student(s) whom they are supporting or students in general. In a study by Patterson (2006) involving interviews with educational assistants, the interviewees felt that their primary role at large was managing behaviours. Furthermore, educational assistants felt respected when they were consulted and involved in planning regarding student behaviours (i.e., discussions related to creating plans of action for managing future student behaviours), and overall this had a positive impact on the students.

Category 2: Aspects of working with educational assistants that music therapists find helpful. The music therapist participants indicated that it was helpful when educational assistants had an understanding of music therapy that they had gained through past experience in assisting students during music therapy sessions. A study on special education program administrators' perspectives on the efficacy of music therapy programming by Ropp, Caldwell, Dixon, Angell, and Vogt (2006) found that those who were familiar with music therapy perceived programming to be more effective. One of the music therapist participants in the present study noted that the more "buy in" from the educational assistants, the easier it was to collaborate with them. For those educational assistants who were not necessarily familiar with music therapy, participants in this study identified modeling as being a useful way to help them to assist their students.

Modeling was also identified as a useful method of helping educational assistants who may not be musical, thereby increasing their contributions to the session. Berstorf (2001) encouraged the use of modeling and felt that it was important for those leading students in music experiences to provide a musical task that the educational assistant could successfully support and/or participate in. This could include playing an instrument in turn with his/her student which will also increase his/her involvement in the session. Music therapist participants in this study

identified educational assistants' musicality as being a helpful motivator for students during music therapy sessions. Participating musically in sessions "… benefits both the children and the [educational assistants], as the successes experienced together in a music [setting] will lead to better interaction during subjects that are more difficult for the children" (Bernstorf, 2001, p. 38).

Category 3: Aspects of working with educational assistants that music therapists find challenging. Time, or lack thereof, was identified by the music therapist participants as being one of the major deterrents for collaborating with educational assistants before, during, and after sessions. Specifically, taking the time to find the most effective ways of communicating (e.g., when the therapist needed assistance with an activity; when the therapist noticed that a student could benefit from specific help with an instrument) with educational assistants was noted as being challenging. There are many sources which discuss the challenge of educators who are generally skilled in communicating with students, but find communicating with their co-workers in school settings to be challenging due to time constraints. However, several also note that this could be remedied with instruction on how to more effectively communicate with collegues for professionals in the field of education in general (Giangreco, Edelman, & Broer, 2001; Guay, 2003; McKenzie, 2011, Patterson, 2006).

The music therapist participants also perceived that it was problematic when educational assistants over-helped their student(s; e.g., spoke on behalf of the student; chose an instrument for the student, etc.). This is also a major point of discussion in the literature both within and outside of music therapy contexts (French, 2003; Mathews, Clair, & Kosloski, 2001; McKenzie, 2011; Patterson, 2006). Music therapist participants in this study indicated that educational assistants knew a great deal about their students, but sometimes this led to the educational assistant speaking for the students, or even refusing an activity on their behalf before a student had the chance to express his/her own preference. French (2003) found that providing students with too much assistance can potentially have a negative impact on the student in other areas of his/her life (e.g., interacting with peers; making choices). Music therapist participants in the current study noted that lack of time and having difficulty communicating effectively in the moment made it difficult for music therapists to manage this issue.

Music therapist participants also found situations in which educational assistants were not engaged in assisting their student(s) during sessions to be challenging. One went so far as to use

the words, "coffee break" when discussing this issue of lack of participation on the part of educational assistants. This perceived break time could also lead to educational assistants talking to one another which can be distracting for students. One music therapist participant found that keeping the session fun for everyone (including educational assistants) helped to reduce incidents of background chatter amongst educational assistants. Bernstorf (2001) also found this to be true.

> "By making the music sessions as much fun for the [educational assistant] as it is for the students, the paraprofessional may see music [sessions] as being just as beneficial as coffee break, especially if the paraprofessional sees the activity as mutually rewarding for himself or herself and the student" (p. 38).

That being said, music therapist participants noted that they are careful not to pay too much attention to educational assistants for fear of taking focus away from the students. This led another participant to question at what point does music therapy become more about the educational assistants than the students.

Category 4: Other perspectives on collaborating with educational assistants in music therapy contexts. As noted previously, there are few sources in the literature that give concrete suggestions on how to improve collaboration amongst teachers and educational assistants. One of the music therapist participants in the current study suggested using a community approach to music therapy in school settings. She felt that this approach changed the way she incorporated educational assistants into sessions. Specifically, the participant found that by bringing educational assistants out of the background and into the music therapy circle, they were more involved in the session (i.e., more engaged in activities and discussions that took place during the session). Potential implications of incorporating this model into practice will be discussed below.

Limitations

This study has limitations that must be acknowledged. First, my lack of experience with the modified grounded theory methodology could have affected the ways in which I interpreted the data (e.g., allowing personal beliefs to interfere with the interviews; revisiting the data frequently enough during the coding process). Second, I found that my underdeveloped interview skills made me hesitant to ask in-depth questions of the music therapist participants for fear of posing leading questions. Third, while these interviews took place in Manitoba, all of the

participants were aware that I worked in the Manitoba school system. This may have led to assumptions on their part, which may have influenced their responses in a number of ways.

Due to my past involvement in two provincial school systems, I had several assumptions, which may have imposed additional limitations on the study. Although I tried to bracket these to the best of my ability throughout all phases of the research process, they may have inadvertently impacted how this inquiry was initially conceptualized, how I conducted the interviews, and how I analyzed and interpreted the data. I assumed: (a) If educational assistants and music therapists feel respected by administrators and colleagues, they will be more satisfied with their jobs, more engaged in their work, and better able to collaborate; (b) The level of preparedness and/or confidence of the music therapist before, during, and after sessions inspires confidence in the educational assistant(s); and (c) When the music therapist instructs an educational assistant about the purpose of music therapy at the school and shares the music therapy goals and objectives for his/her assigned students, the educational assistant will better understand his/her role within the session.

Implications for Practice

Although the results of this study are not generalizable and some variations existed amongst participants' perspectives, there are some concrete implications for practice. First, a lack of time was linked to many of the challenges faced during collaborations with educational assistants (e.g., explaining goals and objectives, modeling, etc.). However, even an occasional, brief and informal meeting after a music therapy session was perceived as being helpful (e.g., meeting to discuss future behaviour strategies if an incident occurred during a music therapy session). It seems important for music therapists to assess their work environments and make realistic plans to engage educational assistants in formal and/or informal discussions on a regular basis or whenever it is possible. In my opinion, this seemingly small gesture has the potential to make a big difference, at least in some situations.

Praising educational assistants during music therapy sessions was perceived as being helpful by music therapist participants. The literature also found this to be a useful way to demonstrate respect and appreciation (Bernstorf, 2001; Friend, 2000; Patterson, 2006). Creating a positive collaborative relationship was perceived to be as important as communication in the music therapist-educational assistant relationship (Abbott & Sanders, 2012; 2013). Music therapists working in school settings might therefore consider the ways in which they are

currently communicating with educational assistants. They would be well advised to be aware of the challenges that educational assistants may face in their jobs that lead to some challenging behaviours (see Category 3). Above all, acknowledging an educational assistant should be done in an authentic manner.

The music therapist participants all noted that a lack of time affected their collaborations or their ability to initiate collaborations with educational assistants. In some cases, this resulted in them deliberately excluding educational assistants because there was not enough time to effectively communicate the goals and objectives for the student(s) prior to the session. A practical solution might be to provide informational handouts for educational assistants (and other teaching staff) at the beginning of each school year. If logistically possible, an annual workshop could be held for educational assistants (and potentially other staff, perhaps during a staff meeting) to help them understand the role of music therapy at the school and collaborate with them regarding their roles and responsibilities during music therapy sessions. This could reduce the amount of time needed for preparing educational assistants during music therapy sessions and it could create an initial culture of mutual respect.

Finally, an interesting connection was made by one music therapist participant between educational assistants collaboration and community music therapy. Community music therapy works to "… form, build, or sustain communities through music therapy" (Bruscia, 1998, p. 229). Essentially, the overall wellbeing of the client is directly related to their environment in this model. In my experience, students with special needs are supported by an educational assistant for the majority of their day and it stands to reason that the students' environment is largely impacted by these individuals. "In practice, Community Music Therapy encourages Music Therapists to think of their work as taking place along a continuum ranging from the individual to the communal" (Ansdell, 2002, p. 1). Given the inclusive nature of this perspective, the Community Music Therapy model may provide some useful concepts for music therapists who are wanting to find better ways to include educational assistants into music therapy sessions.

Implications for Research

The perspectives explored in this study were delimited to credentialed music therapists in Manitoba, Canada because of potential variances in provincial school systems. Future research might include perspectives from music therapists in various provinces and territories across the country. It might also be interesting to note the variety of roles that music therapists play in

school settings. For example, what type of services does the music therapist provide (e.g., consultations; group sessions; individual sessions), how long do they spend at the school(s; e.g., once a week for a half hour; 5 days per week for the entire school day). The study was also limited to three music therapist participants due to time constraints related to writing a thesis. It is recommended that future research examine the perspectives of a greater number of music therapists.

The interviews in this study resulted in conversations that were largely unrelated to the students participating in music therapy programming. While it is a helpful first step to identify how music therapists and educational assistants are collaborating, future research might go further to study the effects of this collaborative relationship on the students. For example, it would be helpful to have a clearer picture of how music therapists and educational assistants can work together in order to avoid "over-helping" students, or how music therapists can give educational assistants clear ways on how to integrate music therapy goals into students' daily lives.

This study focused on music therapists' perspectives because of a gap identified in a recent study that explored only educational assistants' perspectives (Abbott & Sanders, 2012; 2013). Many participants in the current study noted that they collaborated with other professionals in the schools they visited just as much or more than they did with educational assistants. Potential areas for related research might include perspectives on collaboration among music therapists and a variety of professionals in school settings (e.g., teachers, resource teachers, other therapists, principals, etc.).

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Appendix A: Sample Interview Questions

Within the context of this research collaboration is being defined as all interactions that occur between music therapists and educational assistants that are related to planning, implementing, and evaluating music therapy sessions. These collaborations/interactions may be formal (i.e., a scheduled meeting, the EA is assigned to assist with MT sessions, etc.) or informal (i.e., a quick discussion in the hallway; the EA helps out with MT sessions but it is not a formal arrangement, etc.). Collaborations could also be in the form of written reports, informal notes, e-mails, voice mail messages, etc. Please keep these points in mind when answering the interview questions.

1. How would you describe the collaborations you have had with educational assistants just before (i.e., when planning) music therapy sessions? Can you give one or more examples? Were there aspects of this collaboration that worked well? If so what were they and why did they work well? Were there aspects of this collaboration that did not work well? If so what were they and why did they not work well?

2. How would you describe the collaborations you have had with educational assistants during (i.e., when implementing) music therapy sessions? Can you give one or more examples? Were there aspects of this collaboration that worked well? If so what were they and why did they work well? Were there aspects of this collaboration that did not work well? If so what were they and why did they not work well?

3. How would you describe the collaborations you have had with educational assistants after music therapy sessions (i.e., when evaluating and planning subsequent music therapy sessions)? Can you give one or more examples? Were there aspects of this collaboration that worked well? If so what were they and why did they work well? Were there aspects of this collaboration that did not work well? If so what were they and why did they not work well?

4. Is there anything else that you would like to say about your collaborations with EAs in group/individual music therapy contexts?

INFORMATION AND CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Study Title: Music Therapists' Perspectives on Working with Educational Assistants in Manitoba School Settings

Researcher:

Elizabeth Janzen, MTA

Master's student in Creative Arts Therapies, Music Therapy option

Researcher's Contact Information:

204-.955-5340.

msbethjanzen@gmail.com

Faculty Supervisor:

Dr. Laurel Young, Ph.D., MTA

Assistant Professor of Music Therapy, Creative Arts Therapies Department

Faculty Supervisor's Contact Information:

Faculty of Fine Arts

Concordia University

1455 de Maisonneuve O

Montreal, QC

H3G 1M8

514.848.2424 ext. 4682

laurel.young@concordia.ca

Source of funding for the study: N/A

You are being invited to participate in the research study mentioned above. This form provides information about what participating would mean. Please read it carefully before deciding if you want to participate or not. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you want more information, please ask the researcher.

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to further understand how music therapists and educational assistants might best collaborate by investigating music therapists' perspectives on their experiences of working with educational assistants in Manitoba school settings.

B. PROCEDURES

If you participate, you will be asked to describe your experiences of working with educational assistants in music therapy contexts in the Manitoba school system.

In total, participating in this interview will take approximately one hour.

Interviews will take place in-person in a rented private space (i.e., a classroom, boardroom, meeting room, etc.). Interviews will also be conducted via Skype when in-person meetings are impossible due to scheduling and/or distance.

Interviews will be audio recorded using the researcher's password protected iPad and laptop. The researcher's laptop will also be used to transcribe the interviews. The researcher will transfer the audio files from her iPad and laptop onto two USB drives immediately following the interviews.

As a research participant, your responsibilities will be to respond to the best of your ability to open-ended questions posed by the researcher in an audio-recorded interview.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

There are virtually no risks involved in this research. The researcher will do all that she can to make you feel as comfortable as possible. You are not required to share any information that you are not comfortable sharing. You have the right to discontinue the interview at any time.

You might or might not personally benefit from participating in this research. Potential benefits include:

- Contributing to research that may help other professionals to provide better services and programs in school settings.
- Having the opportunity to reflect upon your practice.

This research is not intended to benefit you personally.

D. CONFIDENTIALITY

The researcher will gather the following information as part of this research:

- Descriptions of your experiences of working with educational assistants in music therapy contexts in the Manitoba school system.

The researcher will not allow anyone to access the information, except people directly involved in conducting the research (i.e., the researcher and her adviser). She will only use the information for the purposes of the research described in this form.

The information gathered will be anonymous. That means that it will not be possible to make a link between you and the information you provide.

The researcher will protect the information by using her password protected iPad and laptop to record the interview. The same laptop will later be used to transcribe the interview. Two USB drives will be used to store the data. These, along with the paper transcripts of the recorded

interviews, will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's home. Files will be password protected and pseudonyms will be used.

The researcher intends to publish the results of the research. However, it will not be possible to identify you in the published results. You will have access to the study results once the researcher's thesis has been uploaded to Concordia's open-access thesis/dissertation database Spectrum. The researcher will notify you when the study is available via email with a link to the thesis.

The researcher will destroy the raw data five years after the end of the study.

E. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

You do not have to participate in this research. It is purely your decision. If you do participate in the interview, you can stop the interview at any time. You can also ask that the information you provided not be used, and your choice will be respected. However, if you decide that you do not want the researcher to use your information, you need to inform the researcher within two weeks after the date of the interview. If you withdraw your consent within this timeframe, the information that you have provided will be destroyed and not used in any way.

The researcher will tell you if she learns of anything that could affect your decision to stay in the research.

There are no negative consequences for not participating, stopping in the middle, or asking the researcher not to use your information.

The researcher will not be able to offer you compensation if you are injured in this research. However, you are not waiving any legal right to compensation by signing this form.

F. PARTICIPANT'S DECLARATION

I have read and understood this form. I have had the chance to ask questions and any questions have been answered. I agree to participate in this research under the conditions described.

NAME_____

<center>(please print)</center>

SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

If you have questions about the scientific or scholarly aspects of this research, please contact the researcher. Their contact information is on page 1. You may also contact her faculty supervisor. If you have concerns about ethical issues in this research, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 or oor.ethics@concordia.ca.

Appendix C: Certificate of Ethical Acceptability

CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY
FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Name of Applicant: Elizabeth Janzen

Department: Faculty of Fine Arts \ Creative Arts Therapies

Agency: N/A

Title of Project: Music Therapists' Perspectives on Working with
                       Educational Assistants in Manitoba School
                       Settings

Certification Number: 30004850

Valid From: July 23, 2015   to: July 22, 2016

The members of the University Human Research Ethics Committee have examined the application for a grant to support the above-named project, and consider the experimental procedures, as outlined by the applicant, to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

_____

Dr. James Pfaus, Chair, University Human Research Ethics Committee

Appendix D: Participant Recruitment Email

Seeking Participants for a study of Music Therapists' Perspectives on their Experiences of Working with Educational Assistants in Manitoba School Settings

Dear CAMT Members

Please find attached an invitation to participate in a study that is being conducted by MTA Elizabeth Janzen. This study has been approved by Concordia University's Human Research Ethics Committee.

Cher Membres AMC

Veuillez trouver en pièce jointe une invitation pour participer à une étude menée en anglais par MTA Elizabeth Janzen. Cette étude a été approuvée par le Conseil d'éthique de recherché d'Université Concordia.

June 18ᵗʰ, 2015

This is an invitation to participate in a research study being conducted by Elizabeth Janzen under the supervision of Dr. Laurel Young at Concordia University in Montreal, QC. This research study is being done in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master's program at Concordia University, and has received ethics approval from the University Human Research Ethics Committee (protocol #30004850). This study will examine music therapists' perspectives on their experiences of working with educational assistants in Manitoba school settings.

The researcher is looking to interview participants who:

- Are MTAs in good standing
- Have led group and/or individual music therapy sessions where they collaborated with at least one educational assistant
- Have led group and/or individual music therapy sessions in one or more schools in Manitoba within the last five years
- Are fluent in spoken English

The purpose of this study is to further understand how music therapists and educational assistants might best collaborate by investigating music therapists' perspectives on their experiences of working with educational assistants in school settings. This interview will take no more than one hour of your time and will be conducted in person or via Skype. The interview will be audio recorded and scheduled at a time (and location, if applicable) that is convenient for both the researcher and the participant.

Participation in the research study is voluntary and the identities of participants will be completely anonymous. Participants may withdraw up to two weeks after completing the interview. No identifying information related to the participants, their students, or the schools in which they have worked will be revealed.

If you are interested in participating or if you would like to find out more, please contact Elizabeth Janzen via e-mail at msbethjanzen@gmail.com. Only the first three participants who contact the researcher and meet the criteria for inclusion will be eligible to participate in this study.

Thank you for your time and support of music therapy research in Canada.

Elizabeth Janzen

Faculty supervisor:
Dr. Laurel Young, MTA, PhD, Professor of Music therapy
laurel.young@concordia.ca
514.848.2424 ext. 4682