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The Effects of a Museum Art Program on the Self-Concept of Children

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Abstract

Research suggests that art programs have positive therapeutic effects on children, including improved self-concept. This pretest/posttest intervention study examined changes in self-concept in children (N = 176) who participated in an art program at the Dalí Museum in St. Petersburg, Florida. Results indicated significant, positive increases in self-concept from pre- to posttest with small to moderate effect sizes. This study provides preliminary evidence that art programs can be beneficial for the self-concept of children and draws implications for arts education and art therapy programming for diverse needs.

Introduction

Art offers myriad meanings to many different people. One person may see trees and clouds within the imagery of an abstract painting, and another person may see animals and people. To others, art has a more significant meaning: Art can improve one's quality of life. The therapeutic effects of art making have been extensively studied. For example, Hacking, Secker, Spandler, Kent, and Shenton (2008) reported increased feelings of empowerment and an overall improvement in mental health among patients after 6 months of involvement in participatory art projects that involved painting or drawing original compositions. Art therapy has been used with some success to improve the psychological condition of women who have trouble conceiving (Hughes, 2009), children coping with chronic asthma (Beebe, Gelfand, & Bender, 2010), prison inmates (Gussak, 2009), war veterans (Kopytin & Lebedev, 2013), and older individuals (Kim, Kim, Lee, & Chun, 2008), among other populations studied.

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A meta-analysis of the literature on art therapy with cancer patients (Geue et al., 2010) concluded that the mental health and quality of life of patients were improved via interventions that ranged from painting original artworks to teaching participants to critically analyze art and create their own works in response. The art therapy programs reviewed typically involved a mix of creative freedom and therapeutically focused instruction. The patients chose their medium and subject and the art therapist provided them with materials and guidance on technique and expression. Although the methods and materials differed across art therapy programs, the goal of most programs was to reduce stress, improve quality of life, and help cancer patients cope with their illness. Other meta-analyses of art therapy research suggest that individuals suffering from an array of psychological issues may benefit from participating in art therapy (Leckey, 2011; Maujean, Pepping, & Kendall, 2014; Reynolds, Nabors, & Quinlan, 2000; Slayton, D'Archer, & Kaplan, 2010).

Effects of Art Programs on Self-Concept

Mueller, Alie, Jonas, Brown, and Sherr (2011) found that art therapy might improve the self-efficacy of children living with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Although levels of self-esteem, depression, and behavioral problems remained unchanged after 50 sessions in which participants developed a comic book about their illness and challenges in life, participants were much better at controlling their emotions. Other studies reported the benefits that art education programs have on self-esteem, which in turn affected academic achievement (Boyes & Reid, 2005; Haynes, 1990). Of interest to the current study, O'Mara, Marsh, Craven, and Debus (2006) indicated from their meta-analysis of 200 studies that moderate, long-lasting increases in the self-concept of participants are possible regardless of their self-concept at the start of intervention when domain-specific aspects of self-concept are targeted. Self-concept in this context is defined as an ever-changing collection of self-representation formed by personal experiences and interpretation of the environment (Ellis-Hill & Horn, 2000).

To our knowledge, only one other study (White & Allen, 1971) has analyzed the quantitative effects of art programs on the self-concept of children. White and Allen administered the Tennessee Self Concept Scale, which revealed

that preadolescent boys who attended art counseling showed greater gains in self-concept compared to preadolescent boys in a non-art counseling program. The study utilized a small sample of 15 boys who engaged in art counseling for 8 weeks of daily sessions (5 days per week) of 90 minutes in duration. The participants created original works of visual art and were offered short and easy-to-complete tasks in order to provide successful experiences that emphasized the unique contributions of artists and the world of art.

Museum Art Programs

Among museum art programs discussed in the research literature, almost all those whose effects have been analyzed are geared toward therapy and counseling. Deane, Carman, and Fitch (2000) developed an intervention for breast cancer patients that included art museum visits followed by art creation. Participants reported improved self-expression and found better ways to cope with their illness. Silverman (1998) observed that people with dementia who attended tours at an art museum appeared to have improved self-esteem and social interaction. Among children's museum programs, Linesch (2004) and other art therapists at Loyola Marymount University developed a weeklong summer camp for middle school children at the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles. As with the program in the current study, the children learned about various works of art in the morning and created their own artwork in the afternoon. At the end of the week, friends and family were invited to see the works of art displayed in the museum. The experience solidified Linesch's belief in the importance of art therapy in a museum setting for increasing the visibility of art therapy and museum education programs alike. Stiles and Mermer-Welly (1998) reported that incorporating art museum visits into an art therapy program for pregnant teen mothers increased their self-esteem. Additionally, art education classes at a children's museum involving children with the autism spectrum disorders and their non-autism spectrum peers led to increased positive social interactions for both groups (Schleien, Mustonen, & Rynders, 1995).

Simply learning about art also translates into beneficial results for those involved. An extensive study by Burton, Horowitz, and Abeles (2000) that utilized qualitative and quantitative measures indicated that for their sample size of more than 2,000 students, engagement in arts activities within a classroom setting reduced prejudice and violent impulses. Art also enhanced children's self-esteem and improved their sociability and academic self-concept. Elementary school-aged students who engaged in visual art experiences and education achieved positive gains in writing, reading comprehension, and verbal expression (Catterall, 1998; Luftig, 1994). Salom (2011) noted that including museums in art therapy reinforces the role of art as a primary element in the therapeutic process. Additionally, museums offer viewers and patients artistic diversity that represents individuality and fosters tolerance for diversity (Salom, 2008).

Few programs described in the literature are designed simply for educational purposes. In contrast, the Dalí Museum Junior Docent Program at the Dalí Museum in St. Petersburg, Florida, which is the focus of the current study,

is a weeklong program with multiple sessions that take place during the summer. For 6 hours each day, small groups of children are taught about various pieces of art housed in the museum. Children also complete their own artwork to take home. After they learn various facts about the artist Salvador Dalí during the week, each participant completes the program by leading a tour of the museum as a junior docent for friends and family. The aim of the program is to introduce children into the world of art and to enhance their self-esteem by offering individualized attention, building better speaking skills, and rewarding them for the successful completion of a fun and immersive program. The Dalí Museum Junior Docent Program is not designed to deliver art therapy or to be used with a clinical population; however, previous research highlights the potential therapeutic benefits that it is capable of producing. Peacock (2012) asserted that the commonality between museum education and art therapy is that art is used to interpret and evaluate human experience. Thus we believe that it is valuable to study the Dalí Museum program for the important role that art education may play in therapeutic interventions.

The research conducted for this study expounds on data already discovered about the effects art programs have on self-concept and the hypothesis that participation in art programs improves the self-concept of children. Based on previous studies that provide evidence of the therapeutic power of art in both educational and museum settings, we hypothesized that the Dalí Museum Junior Docent Program would contribute to a noticeable improvement in the self-concept of the children who participated.

Methods

Participants

Participants were 176 children from the greater Tampa Bay, FL area enrolled in the Dalí Museum Junior Docent Program for its full length of 1 week. The participants were voluntarily registered for the program by their guardians and attended one of 11 weeklong programs conducted during the summers of 2010, 2011, and 2012. The applications for the registrants were reviewed by Dalí Museum education directors and accepted based on the date the applications were received. Every child who completed the program was included in the study. Individuals who did not complete both the pretest and the posttest measure were excluded. No child participated in the program more than once. The participants and their legal guardians signed consent forms that also informed the participants that their test data would remain confidential and only be used for research purposes.

A total of 69 boys and 107 girls took part. Ages ranged from 7 to 13 years. The average age of all participants was 10.0 years ($SD = 1.38$). Data on race, socioeconomic status, and prior experience with museums and art instruction were not collected. As described below, 138 children took the posttest measure after completion of all small group sessions but before the museum tour was conducted. Another 38 participants completed the posttest measure after the weeklong program and the museum tour.

Table 1 Dalí Museum Junior Docent Program Schedule

Day	Activity	Description	
Day 1	Introductions	Meet and greet peers and instructors Hand out art journals	
	Know, want, learn Guided tour	View artwork and develop questions about it Explore the whole museum and discuss previously developed questions with the teachers	
	Art lesson: 3-D Dalí face	Learn proportions by recreating an image of Dalí's face out of construction paper	
Day 2	Sketching in garden Scavenger hunt	Sketch in art journal Watch a documentary on Dalí and explore the museum to answer questions about Dalí and his art	
	Presentation selection	Pair up with one another to choose a picture for the final presentation and begin to analyze it	
	Art lesson: surrealistic self-portrait	Apply surrealism and newfound drawing techniques to create a self-portrait	
Day 3	Sketching in garden Dalí symbol search	Sketch in art journal Learn about symbolism in Dalí's paintings then search the museum for examples	
	Docent training	Review with teachers speech/presentation skills needed for the final tour	
	Dalí vocabulary Art lesson: pop-up collage	Overview general artistic terms and techniques Use newspaper/magazine pictures to assemble a surrealistic 3-D collage that depicts an idea/message	
Day 4	Sketching in garden Presentation practice Dalí crossword Art lesson: space elephant	Sketch in art journal Practice presentation in front of teachers and group Complete a Dalí-themed crossword puzzle Draw a picture with a surrealistic perspective using common symbols from Dalí's paintings	
	Day 5	Wrap-up Public tour	Finalize presentation with partner Conduct a tour of the gallery for patrons with the help of a teacher
		Family tour Reception	Conduct a tour of the gallery for family without help Eat with family and receive completion certificates

Procedure

Started in 1984 in conjunction with the local school system, the Dalí Museum Junior Docent Program provides students with a summer art workshop that exposes them to creating, analyzing, and appreciating art; enhancing their speaking skills; bringing together their families to celebrate their accomplishments; and building their self-esteem. Since then, the program has become unaffiliated with local public schools and is now run solely by the education department of the Dalí Museum. Although the goals remain the same, the activities and format have changed over the years. Table 1 provides an overview of the schedule in chronological order with a brief description of each activity.

On the first day, the children completed the pretest measure (described below) and participated in an introductory tour of the Dalí Museum and an analysis of key works of art to which they had no previous exposure. Facilitators included trained teachers and museum docents. Art journals were passed out for the children to keep their sketches in and to use for completed art projects. One example of the projects the students created was a pop-up collage made

from papier mâché, magazines, and newspaper clippings. This project used surrealistic techniques such as symbolism and juxtaposition that Dalí employed in his own paintings. Other projects included painting an image of an animal in a surrealistic style with watercolors and oil pastel (Figure 1), creating a three-dimensional portrait of Dalí and his well-known mustache using construction paper, drawing surrealistic self-portraits with colored pencils (Figure 2), and developing surrealistic landscapes on scratchboards. All projects were designed with the intention of teaching the children specific art techniques such as the proper use of proportion and depth, shading, hatching, and symbolism. After each assignment, the students reflected on their work in their journals and shared with the group why they created what they did. Artistry and technique were discussed in an effort to improve the participants' social and speaking skills and self-confidence.

On the final day of the program, the children conducted public tours of the museum for visiting patrons with the aid of an adult docent. Every child completed the posttest measure and then gave a thorough presentation to their friends and family about their assigned piece of artwork.

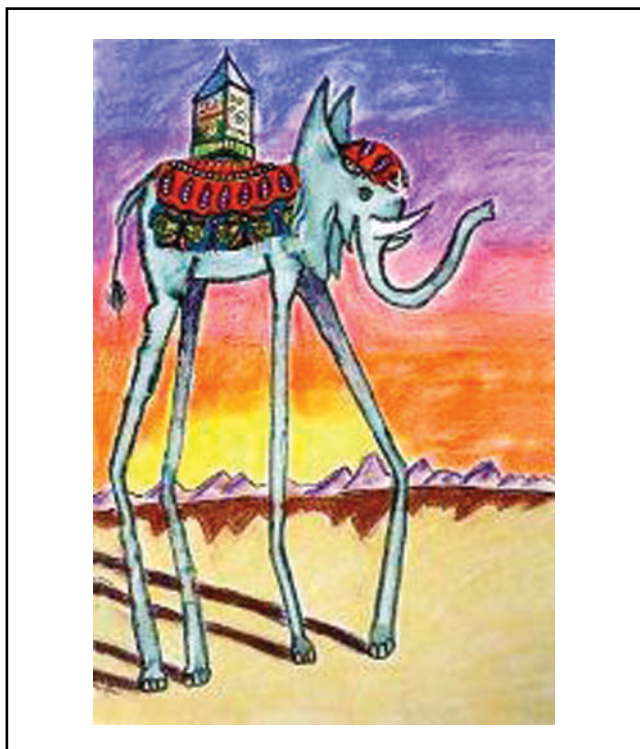


Figure 1 Space Elephant (Watercolor pencils and oil pastels on 9" x 12" watercolor paper)

The children were awarded certificates for their successful tours, marking the end of the program. As previously noted, only the last 38 students in the sample of 176 completed the posttest measure after the friends and family tour instead of preceding it.

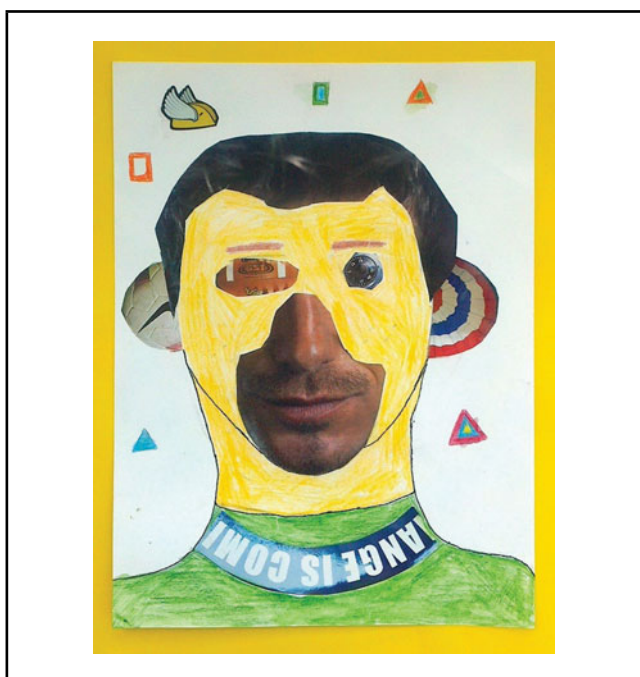


Figure 2 Surrealist Self-Portrait (Collage and colored pencil on 9" x 12" watercolor paper)

Measures

We used the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale 2 (TSCS:2; Fitt & Warren, 1996), an updated version of the 1988 Fitt and Warren measure used by White and Allen (1971) in their study of art programs and self-concept. Only 13 of the 34 original sub-scores were included in the second version and the new self-concept scale Academic/Self-Work was added. In our study all 176 participants were tested using the short form version of the TSCS:2.

The tests were conducted by investigators trained in administering the TSCS:2 and scored using standardized procedures. Each participant completed a 20-question short form pretest and posttest measure, in which only a total raw score is converted into a T-score. No subtest scores exist for the short form test. In addition 25 participants from two program sessions were given a 78-question long form pretest and posttest. The long form test consists of four validity scores, two summary scores, six self-concept scales, and three supplementary scores as outlined in Table 2. Response values for test items range from 1 (*always false*) to 5 (*always true*).

Each subtest had its raw score converted into a T-score using the norms found in the TSCS:2 technical manual (Fitt & Warren, 1996). T-scores within the range of 40–55 are considered average; T-scores below 30 indicate low self-concept and T-scores above 60 indicate high self-concept. Participants with T-scores above 70 on any of the validity measures suggest potentially invalid responses and should be interpreted with caution (Fitt & Warren, 1996). Reliability and test–retest reliability have been well established. Internal consistency estimates for the Children's Form range from .66 to .92 (median = .73) and test–retest reliability estimates range from .55 to .83 (median = .74). Validity was demonstrated using principal components analysis and correlational analyses with other self-concept measures (Fitt & Warren, 1996).

Data Analysis

To analyze the effect that the Dalí Museum Junior Docent Program had on participants, pairwise *t* tests were computed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (version 21). Results of the pretests were compared to the results of the posttests for the short form and long form TSCS:2. All short form and long form total T-scores and each validity score, summary score, self-concept score, and supplementary score were included in the pairwise *t* tests. Separate pairwise *t* tests were computed for the 38 participants who completed their posttest after conducting the museum tour. Data for three participants were excluded for not meeting the validity criteria of the Faking Good sub-score.

Results

One-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) revealed no differences in scores between gender and age. Chi-square analysis revealed that the percentage of participants differed by gender, $\chi^2(1, N = 179) = 8.50, p < .01$.

Table 2 TSCS:2 Subtest Descriptions

Subtest	Subtest Description
Inconsistent Responding (INC) ^a	Discrepancies in responses to pairs of items with similar content
Self-Criticism (SC) ^a	Criticism directed toward identifying common faults in oneself
Faking Good (FG) ^a	Tendency to have a falsely positive self-concept
Response Distribution (RD) ^a	Number of extreme responses (1 or 5) endorsed
Total Self-Concept (TOT) ^b	Overall self-concept and associated level of self-esteem
Conflict (CON) ^b	Differentiation of self-concept between agreement with positive items and disagreement with negative items
Physical Self-Concept (PHY) ^c	View of health, physical appearance, and sexuality
Moral Self-Concept (MOR) ^c	Perceptions of moral worth (being a “good” person or a “bad” person)
Personal Self-Concept (PER) ^c	Sense of personal worth and adequacy
Family Self-Concept (FAM) ^c	Feelings of value as a family member
Social Self-Concept (SOC) ^c	Feelings of self as perceived by others outside of the family
Academic/Work Self-Concept (ACA) ^c	Perceptions of academic performance
Identity (IDN) ^d	Description of one’s basic identity (positive or negative)
Satisfaction (SAT) ^d	Satisfaction with perceived self-image
Behavior (BHV) ^d	Perceptions of behavior and functioning

^aValidity score. ^bSummary score. ^cSelf-Concept score. ^dSupplementary score.

Table 3 presents the means, standard deviations, *p* values and Cohen’s *d* effect sizes of the pretest and posttest scores. All means and standard deviations are T-score averages. Effect sizes were calculated using methods presented by Cohen (1992). An effect size between .2 and .5 is considered small, whereas an effect size between .5 and .8 is consid-

ered medium and any effect size over .8 is considered large (Cohen, 1992). It is interesting to note that many of the children participating in the study began with above average self-concept.

Significant differences in pretest scores and posttest scores were found for both the short form and long form

Table 3 Results of the Pretest/Posttest Paired Samples *t* Tests

Subtest	Pretest		Posttest		<i>p</i> ^a	Cohen’s <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Short form total (<i>n</i> = 138)	55.4	9.8	58.1	10.0	<.001*	0.273
Long form total (<i>n</i> = 22)	58.4	13.1	62.9	12.5	<.01*	0.351
Self-criticism	42.5	10.0	42.2	11.1	.888	0.028
Conflict	43.5	6.2	40.8	7.6	<.05*	0.390
Physical self	56.1	10.9	59.2	8.2	.056	0.322
Moral self	60.7	12.6	62.8	13.7	.447	0.160
Personal self	56.0	11.2	58.1	11.6	.196	0.184
Family self	56.7	12.6	59.8	13.0	.114	0.242
Social self	55.0	12.3	59.3	13.1	<.005*	0.338
Academic/work	55.6	10.8	59.5	9.9	<.005*	0.376
Identity	56.0	12.7	58.3	13.4	.098	0.176
Satisfaction	61.0	11.0	65.4	9.7	<.05*	0.424
Behavior	55.3	12.6	59.5	12.1	<.01*	0.340
Short form total ^b (<i>n</i> = 38)	56.1	7.4	60.8	9.1	<.001*	0.576

^aTwo-tailed test, significant at *p* < .05. ^bPosttest conducted after completion of the museum tour.
*Significant differences.

tests. Short form total scores were 2.7 points higher on the posttest ($M = 58.1$, $SD = 10.0$) than on the pretest ($M = 55.4$, $SD = 9.8$), $t(137) = -4.62$, $p < .001$, $d = .273$. Long form total scores were 4.5 points higher on the posttest ($M = 62.9$, $SD = 12.5$) than on the pretest ($M = 58.4$, $SD = 13.1$), $t(21) = -3.17$, $p < .01$, $d = .351$. Significant differences in pretest and posttest scores were also found for many subsections of the long form test as indicated in Table 3.

Results from the short form total and long form total indicate small increases in the self-concept of the participating children after only 1 week of enrollment in the Dalí Museum Junior Docent Program. Of the sub-scores that showed significant differences between pretest and posttest, a decrease in the Conflict sub-score after the program suggests that children are more likely than before participating in the program to concentrate on eliminating the negative in their lives (Fitt & Warren, 1996). For example, when responding to the item "I am a bad person," children with a more positive outlook about their self-concept might think of themselves as less bad after completion of the junior docent program. According to Fitt and Warren (1996), increases in the Social Self-Concept sub-score imply that individuals have a better perception of how others view them. Higher posttest scores in the Academic/Work Self-Concept sub-score indicate a positive impact in how children feel they are doing with respect to their academics and grades. The Satisfaction sub-score, representative of how satisfied children are with their self-image, also increased, as did the Behavior sub-score, which assesses how well children think they are behaving.

Table 3 also includes the means, standard deviations, p values, and Cohen's d effect sizes of the short form pretest and posttest scores for the 38 participants who completed testing after the final museum tour. Significant differences were found for this group. Short form total scores were 4.7 points higher on the posttest ($M = 60.8$, $SD = 9.1$) than on the pretest ($M = 56.1$, $SD = 7.4$), $t(37) = -5.05$, $p < .001$, $d = .567$. Results indicate that participants in this set achieved a higher level of self-concept upon completion of their tour compared to the participants who took the posttest before completion of the tour. Posttest increases were two points higher for the former group and effect sizes were moderate. Effect sizes for the larger group were small.

Discussion

The results obtained from multiple paired t tests confirm our hypothesis that the Dalí Museum Junior Docent Program positively increases the self-concept of the children who participate, albeit with small effect sizes. However, the effect sizes are still large enough that they are not considered to be trivial (Cohen, 1992). They are definitive and quantitatively observable in the participants. For those who took the long form TSCS:2, effect sizes were greater than those who took the short form TSCS:2. This is important because the long form version of the TSCS:2 is a more comprehensive representation of the self-concept of the individual tested. It contains a larger and broader number of questions that are more extensive in measuring self-concept. The long

form also yields numerous sub-scores that allow researchers to identify specific areas of self-concept measured.

Furthermore, the 38 participants who completed testing after their final tour showed an even greater increase in self-concept with a larger effect size. Completing the public finale of their weeklong program led to more positive results. Feelings of anxiety about performing in front of friends and family may have depressed posttest scores in the children who had not yet completed their tours. Therefore, in the future children will be administered the posttest after they complete the final presentation. We hope that this change will yield more accurate and improved reflections of the children's self-concept.

An important limitation to this study is the lack of a control group and randomized experimental design. Any changes in self-concept cannot be definitively attributed to the Dalí Museum Junior Docent Program alone. Another limitation of our study is the relatively small proportion of participants who took the long form test. Almost all of the guardians of the participants allowed their children to undergo a 10- to 15-minute short form test before and after the weeklong program. Many parents showed resistance, however, in permitting their children to complete the long form test, which takes approximately one hour. A number of parents did not give informed consent for the long form version and thus we discontinued its use in favor of the short form test.

As mentioned earlier, the participants in the study tested above average in their self-concept at the start of the program. They did improve their self-concept, but we wonder what effects the program might have on children who begin the program with a below-average self-concept. Regan, Banks, and Beran (1993) suggested that among children with chronic medical disabilities, some are more susceptible to forming a negative self-concept. In another study hospitalized children who participated in art composition as part of their treatment regimen showed a significant increase in self-concept after completion of their treatment (Colwell, Davis, & Schroeder, 2005). Meta-analyses of various self-concept interventions show that interventions designed for treatment of children with below-average self-concept yielded much larger effect sizes than preventative interventions conducted with children who have average levels of self-concept (Haney & Durlak, 1998; O'Mara et al., 2006). Offering the program to a population susceptible to low self-concept may prove to have an added beneficial impact on the negative psychological consequences of low self-concept.

The study limitations coincide with the future direction we would like to see this program take. We plan to re-approach the idea of giving participants the long form version of the TSCS:2, as long as informed consent is given by the parents/guardians. We would also like to retest children months after their participation in the program to see whether or not the changes in self-concept are still present.

In summary, the Dalí Museum Junior Docent Program is an art education summer camp for children who are interested in learning about art. Although it is not conducted for therapeutic purposes, preliminary results reveal that it may

be therapeutically useful in bolstering self-concept. Many populations are at risk for below-average self-esteem. Children suffering from traumatic brain injury have lower levels of self-esteem compared to control groups (Hawley, 2012), as do children affected by AIDS-related deaths in their family (Zhao et al., 2009). Children with epilepsy have an increased risk of developing psychological disorders such as depression and tend to suffer from low self-image (Dunn & Austin, 1999; MacLeod & Austin, 2003). These populations may see an increased improvement in self-concept after participating in similar museum art programs.

Museum-based art programs have potential to be adopted by local schools and subsequently to improve the self-concept of children enrolled (Cowan & Clover, 1991). High self-esteem resulted from achieving meaningful success with art; creative expression of emotion led to more accepting views of self and others. Similarly, children who partake in the Dalí Museum Junior Docent Program are encouraged to express themselves creatively. Programs that are designed to give children a sense of accomplishment in social situations, such as conducting a tour of the Dalí Museum for friends and families, likely have unique therapeutic as well as educational benefits.

The potential is great for art programs to be expanded in scope and benefit for all children, and especially for children who are at risk for lower self-concept for various reasons. Many children have already experienced the therapeutic benefits of the arts in diverse educational settings. Hopefully the future will allow many more to do the same.

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