



SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING THROUGH SKATEBOARDING: A GATEWAY TO SELF-EFFICACY

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Senior Honors Thesis

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RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION



Mental health is a primary contributing factor to a child's overall well-being (World Health Organization).

Emotional and behavioral disorders affect 10-15 percent of children worldwide (National Institute of Mental Health).

In the U.S. approximately 8.5 million children in 2016 were diagnosed with some form of emotional or behavioral issue (Center for Disease Control).

RELEVANT LITERATURE

A child's self-esteem is positively affected when they become more adept at sports (Kids Health, 2018).

"Children's enjoyment during team sport activities may transfer into positive self-evaluations (Roberts & Treasure, 1992)."

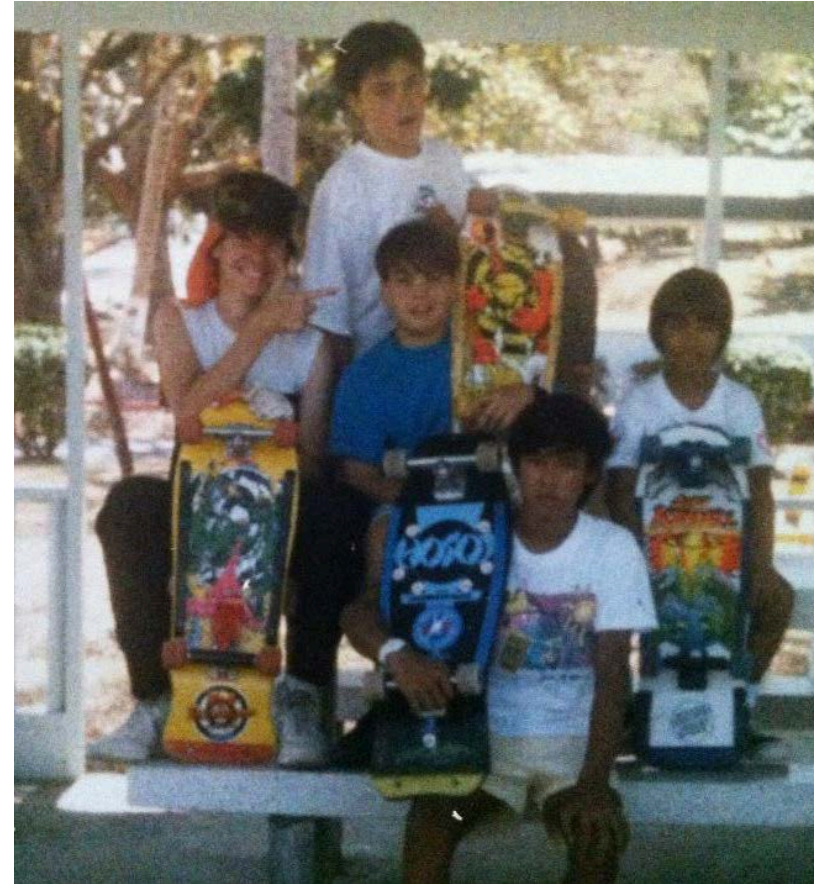
Positive engagements with peers as well as coaches and adults reinforce the feelings of self-worth and self-efficacy in children (Wong, Lau, Lee, 2012).

Participation in sports as been tied not only to improved mental health and happiness but also improved academic performance in school.

"Sport and exercise models... emphasize sport self-concept as one of the mechanisms by which sport participation impacts subsequent self-esteem (Fox & Corbin, 1989; Sonstroem, 1997; Sonstroem et al., 1994).

MY STORY

- My family moved to the Philippines summer of 1987
- Identified as a skater – began to connect with other skaters that I viewed as like-minded. Skateboarding gave me an identity and created my friend group
- Gave me self-confidence, motivation, focus, and self-reliance
- Learned to pay attention, problem solve and use my imagination
- Realized I was part of a community and would make life-long friendships



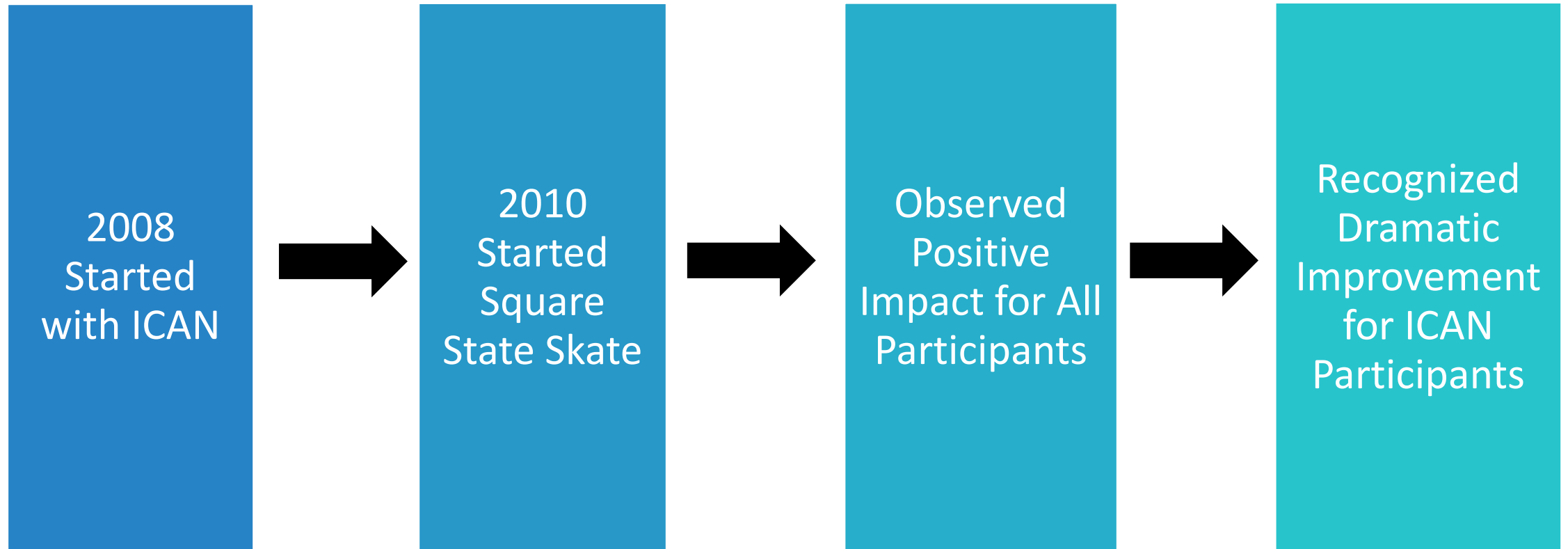
INTRODUCTION

Skateboarding requires the use of **physical abilities** - such as balance, gross and fine motor skills - coupled with **social emotional skills** such as self-confidence, self-awareness, and determination.

The inherent risks in skateboarding and the individualized benchmarks for success can serve as therapy – **creating change on a cognitive and affective level** - for many children, especially those identified with emotional disorders.

This study aims to address the question as to whether and to what extent social-emotional skills learned while skateboarding are transferred to **greater self-efficacy, self-awareness,** and **self-confidence** and whether skateboarding can serve as a therapy for some children.

THE STUDY: BACKGROUND





RESEARCH QUESTION

Are the skills learned while skateboarding transferred to greater self-efficacy, self-awareness and self-confidence in children with social-emotional disorders, resulting in usable life skills?

THE STUDY: OVERVIEW

- Four children have been attending Square State Skate programs at no charge in exchange for taking part in this study
- Three of the children are both participants and also students at the school in which I work. A fourth was a previous student
- An additional participant's parent approached me when she heard about my study, insisting that skateboard programs helped her child through traumatic time
- They have all stated explicitly and enthusiastically that they benefit from skateboard programs
- Parents and teachers have reported noticeable changes in behavior

METHODOLOGY

- 4 participants chosen via purposive sampling
 - All are ICAN students who regularly attend Square State Skate programs
 - 2 “Focal Students”
- Collected data through qualitative method: interview, surveys, and analysis
- Conducted interviews or surveys with families as well as teachers and therapists

METHODOLOGY

- Insider approach to data collection
- Interviewed or surveyed one parent of each child
- Interviewed the school psychologist and special education teacher for both “focal students”
- Conducted observations of four of the students, placing myself in the role of participant as observer
- Interviewed three skateboarding organizations that focus on social-emotional growth in their programs

NAVIGATING A SKATEPARK

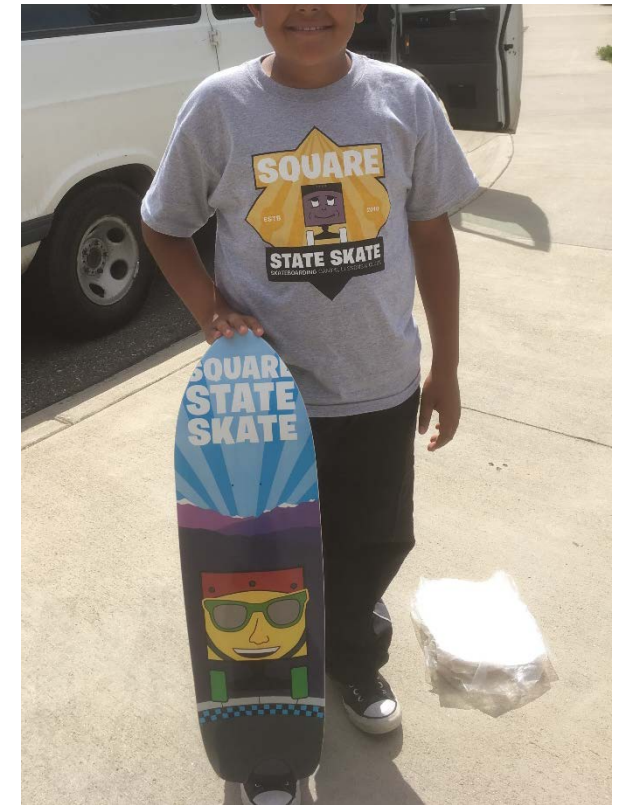


FINDINGS: FOCAL STUDENT 1 – “Lou”

“Lou” 10 year old boy with SED and depression

FORMAL OBSERVATIONS OVER THE SUMMER

- More connected
- Able to own mistakes, apologize, and make amends with adults and peers
- Motivated by how peers view him
- Self-motivated to achieve goals both on and off of skateboard
- Showed an ability to listen to and heed advice
- Learned to better manage anger and frustrations



FINDINGS: “LOU” – INTERVIEW

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST

“When children are connected with something they feel successful with and it allows them some emotional relief and thrill, it can **provide the necessary chemical releases in the brain** for a child to feel regulated.”

“[He] has used this new passion to **connect with other students** in school. “

“ [He] is now **feeling more connected** at his school and recently has been **increasing the time and focus on academic work**, which he was not capable of earlier this school year.”

“One of our teachers reminded [the student] about how a difficult situation in school related to situations in skateboarding and he quickly was able to see the link. He then was **quickly able to realize some strategies to regulate his emotions and behavior.** “

FINDINGS: “LOU” - SURVEYS

SPECIAL ED. TEACHER

- “He can make **quicker decisions.**”
- “He tries to engage students... his peers. He’s reaching out to make **connections.**”
- “He is showing much **more comfort in group settings.** And he feels that he has something to contribute.”

MOTHER

- “I have noticed, in the child, a **great change in behavior** and now he has more confidence in himself.”
- “Now he **believes in himself.** He knows that he can succeed in his goals.”
- “**I see him more happy and that gives me peace.**”

FINDINGS: FOCAL STUDENT 2 – “GRAHAM”

“Graham” – 12 year old boy with Oppositional Defiance Disorder

FORMAL OBSERVATIONS OVER THE SUMMER

- I observed Graham for multiple weeks over the summer of 2018
- He was more confident and self-aware
- Showed empathy
- Was more confident with friends and peers
- Was aware of his own mood and able to advocate for himself
- Mom took him off ADHD medication over the summer, stating that skateboarding was helping



FINDINGS: “GRAHAM” - INTERVIEW

SPECIAL ED. TEACHER

“(He) is **more self-confident** in **managing his big feelings**. I have noticed his skills transferring into him knowing what to do in different social settings.”

“He’s not sabotaging himself and **is taking responsibility for his mistakes**. He was always the victim... bad things happened TO him. Instead of things happening TO him, he **can better see his role in things**. He can apologize with no prompting”

FINDINGS: “GRAHAM” - SURVEY

MOTHER

- “He gets angry easy... (has) difficulty regulating emotions, he tends to be more on the shy side. He has a hard time approaching kids and it’s really tough for him making friends. So, I have to say, **we have seen a lot of significant changes for the positive.**”
- “He is **more aware if he is doing things when he might get hurt.** He’s more aware of cars and traffic... when he’s skateboarding in his neighborhood.”
- “We tried to get him in typical sports – baseball – and it’s not a good fit for him. With skateboarding... **it’s individual, but it allows him to identify with other kids his age and to help other kids and be a part.**”
- “He’s made a lot of friends at the skatepark and at school – seeing other kids that share his interest. **Without skateboarding, he would not be in any group or community.**”

FINDINGS: STUDENT 3 – “MILES”

“Miles” – 13 year old boy identified with Serious Emotional Disorder, Attachment Disorder, and Anxiety.

FORMAL OBSERVATIONS OVER THE SUMMER

- Helpful and showed empathy
- Continually willing to be “buddy” for younger participants
- Motivated by being seen as a leader and “veteran”
- Eager to connect and be seen as a skateboarder
- Pushed himself and showed determination



FINDINGS: “MILES” - INTERVIEW

FATHER

“I definitely see a change in Miles’ behavior when he gets home from skate camp. **He feels good about himself** and that makes him more pleasant.”

“I know he helps you guys [counselors] and **likes to help the younger skaters**. I think... I guess he takes that home with him and it’s easier to get him to do his chores.”

Noted Miles **has always struggled with sports** and has “never been successful” in summer camps except ones tailored toward kids with behavioral issues.

FINDINGS: STUDENT 4 – “ERIC”

“Eric” – 11 year old boy identified with Bipolar Disorder and Anxiety.

OBSERVATIONS OVER THE SUMMER

- I observed Eric for two weeks over Summer 2018
- Was able to sit in circle and share
- Connected with peers and adults
- Able to “turn things around” after problem



FINDINGS: “ERIC” - SURVEY

MOTHER

- “My son has become **more confident** and better able to reflect on his experiences and challenges. He has experienced a **supportive community of people his age and older who genuinely support each other.**”
- “We have done A LOT of camps over the years, but **this kind of experience is unparalleled and life-changing for kids.** I couldn't be more impressed...”

FINDINGS: “NOAH” – ADDITIONAL SURVEY

“Noah” is a 12-year old boy diagnosed with Oppositional Defiance Disorder

- Even though I did not formally observe Noah, I have noticed a significant increase in his confidence over the two years he has been attending skateboard programs
- He has become a leader in our community and is working toward being a junior counselor - assisting younger participants and being a role model
- Noah has expressed multiple times that skateboarding is his primary way of “coping” and dealing with stress

MOTHER

“The **sense of community** has been huge, the feedback and influence by the Counselors has been invaluable, the **friend connection** with someone that shares the same passion has been **very rewarding** for my son.”

FINDINGS: INDUSTRY SURVEYS



“Skateboarding has helped me to deal with personal challenges including social anxiety and building self-confidence.”

“Skateboarding is not just a sport or athletic activity, it is also an art form, a way of expression that can be used as a tool to improve mental, social, and physical well-being.”

“Skateboarding provided me with an unlimited amount of positive life interactions, lessons, personal and social skills.”

FINDINGS: SUMMARY

While this is still a work in progress, the data demonstrates that the skills used in skateboarding transfer to other aspects of a participant's life.

Data obtained from camp participants, company owners, teachers, and psychologists all confirm that skateboarding aids in social-emotional growth in children.

Skateboarding serves as a form of therapy for many children with emotional deficits, resulting in greater self-efficacy, self-awareness, and self-control.



STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

Convenience sample of skateboarding participants is not a complete representative sample

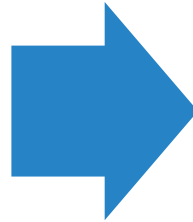
Sample does not include female subjects

All participants not only skateboard, but also attend organized skateboarding programs

I have a preexisting rapport with all of the participants

FUTURE DIRECTION

Apply skateboarding as
a therapy for children
with emotional and
behavioral special needs



Secure funding through
grants, scholarships, and
sponsorships for
skateboarding



I would like to thank you all for letting me share my passion with you.

I would like thank Professor Candan for the guidance, wisdom, and belief in this project.

To the participants and families that participated in this study, I appreciate your participation and support and am humbled by your courage.

And, of course, thank you skateboarding!



Brian Ball
Presentation Notes

QUESTIONS?