

QRME

Qualitative Research in Music Education

Jennifer S Walter, Editor
Volume 2, Issue 1
June 2020



UNC
GREENSBORO

Table of Contents

From the Editor	2
Jennifer S. Walter	
The Perceptions of Adult Students and Collegiate Teachers in an Adult Group Piano Class: A Case Study	4
Diana T. Dumlavwalla	
Musicians Almost Absent from Community Band Participation: A Multiple Case Study	40
Joshua E. Long	
Music in Family Dynamics and Relationships: A Case Study	63
Claudia Cali	

From the Editor

Scrambled. That is how I describe the last 12 months since the first issue of *QRME* was published. I have scrambled around for months working, curating *QRME*, being a dynamic family member, raising a child, caring for our two rescue dogs, going up for full professor, coordinating the music education program, and the list goes on. And then everything kicked into even higher gear when we were sent home from our respective schools (my partner is a teacher also and my child is school-aged), and we were required to move to online instruction within one week due to COVID 19. So I scrambled more in order to make homeschooling work, to share spaces so we could all work from home, to meet with colleagues and students on various internet platforms, to make videos and content which never existed except in my head prior to now, and to make sure my students were alright, and remained healthy and engaged.

And then all of that scrambling came to a halt as I became aware that Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd were murdered. In fact, I can best describe it as the complete and utter cessation of everyday life: it occurred in both real time and slow motion simultaneously. I could not continue scrambling around when Black women and men, Ahmaud, Breonna, and George to name three of the most recent, were dying at the hands of others.

So I have spent the last weeks paralyzed by angst and overwhelming emotions. I have barely scraped enough brain power and motivation together in order to get through the day to day requirements of life, with little ability to articulate how horrified and worried I have been. My emotions have ranged from grief, sadness, and despondency to rage, terror, and disgust. I have been immobilized and completely shut down by the fear that one of my loved ones would be next to lose their life. You see, one of my very best friends in life and the maid of honor at my wedding is Black. My best friend from PhD school is Black. And one of my beloved longtime

colleagues is Black. Their families are Black. My students are Black, and Brown, and Indigenous, and Jewish, and Muslim, and members of the LGBTQ+ communities. And yes, they are MY students. I claim them because I love and care for them. And I cannot imagine losing any one of them to the violence that has been and continues to be perpetrated on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color and on all those who are marginalized.

So what does violence against marginalized populations have to do with qualitative research and this journal, *QRME*? It's taken me several weeks to figure that out, and here it is. As a researcher and an Editor, I have a voice to tell their stories and state their truth. As a White woman, I have a platform to share the stories of my loved ones and my students. I can continue to learn about how music functions and what it means in the lives of marginalized children and adults, and those who are especially at risk of racism, anti-Semitism, and hate. I can educate myself and others and then in turn, as a White person, I can do a better job of recognizing and stamping out racism everywhere it exists in my life. I can use my power to speak up and write for others who have no voice. I can be a better advocate and a better ally. Will you join me?

Jennifer S. Walter, Founder and Editor-in-Chief

**The Perceptions of Adult Students and Collegiate Teachers in an Adult Group Piano Class:
A Case Study**

Diana T. Dumlavwalla¹

Abstract

This intrinsic case study examined the perceptions of adult students and collegiate student teachers in a university-sponsored adult group piano class. Common themes related to the collegiate teachers' pedagogical development and the adult students' progress specific to this learning setting were identified. Additionally, recommendations were provided for classes with similar settings, helping to continue the discussion about pedagogical implications related to instruction for older adult students.

This learning environment was a hybrid of the group and traditional private lesson settings. A lead collegiate teacher provided instruction to the whole class while additional collegiate teachers rotated throughout the piano lab providing specialized instruction to individual adult students. The adult students were drawn to this particular music learning setting because of the social nature of the class. They were motivated to practice regularly and appreciated the enthusiasm of the younger teachers.

The collegiate teachers were drawn to volunteer for this class in order to gain experience teaching in a non-threatening environment and learn more about the field of recreational music making. They all discovered that the goals of this particular student population were not the same

¹Florida State University

Correspondence Author:

Diana Dumlavwalla, Florida State University, 122 N Copeland St., Tallahassee, FL 32306, USA.

Email: ddumlavwalla@fsu.edu

as their own or others that they teach and they anticipated and observed the physical challenges that the adult students faced in this class. This analysis can help to maintain the discussion of how piano pedagogy plays a role in serving aging adult populations. It furthers the dialogue of assessing piano instruction formats, enhancing and expanding the options available to adult students. Finally, it addresses the development of social interactions among individuals of varying generations and how music lessons can enhance those connections.

Keywords: group piano, adult learners, piano pedagogy, teacher training, intergenerational learning, lifelong learning

Introduction

At the age of 85 years, Peter was flipping through a university's community outreach pamphlet and came across a notice about a group piano class.² He had taken a few saxophone lessons many decades ago but other than that had no formal musical training. Nevertheless, he always had an ear for music and playing the piano intrigued him. Prior to retirement, his wife was a music teacher and they always had a piano in the house. She jumped at the chance to join the piano class to help revitalize her playing skills and she urged Peter to join her. He was hesitant at first since he could not read music notation and had very little experience playing an instrument. After some cajoling, Peter's wife convinced him it would be a good experience for the two of them. He attended the class regularly and while he faced some frustrations, he also gained a lot of satisfaction from the class and his progress.

The aging population is a phenomenon experienced in all regions of the world. As life expectancy increases, individuals look for meaningful activities to explore and improve their well-being (Fung & Lehmborg, 2016). The field of piano pedagogy recognizes this growing need. In his well-received textbook about teaching piano in groups, Fisher (2010) noted that the those above age 50 might currently be the fastest-growing group of music students. Many teachers specialize in offering private piano lessons to adult students, particularly senior citizens (Fisher, 2010; Pike, 2017). These adult students receive undivided attention, and lessons are customized according to their needs and learning styles. In the United States, there is also a strong tradition of group piano lessons where one skilled teacher simultaneously instructs several adult students, providing increased socialization and motivation for the participants (Fisher, 2010; Pike, 2017). This group setting is increasingly being seen as a viable option for providing

² The name "Peter" is a pseudonym for this particular adult student in the class.

high-quality, enjoyable piano instruction to older learners (Fisher, 2010; Haddon, 2017; Pike, 2017; Wristen, 2006). As with any other defined student population (e. g., young children, teenagers, students with special needs), teachers encounter pedagogical issues and challenges specific to older learners in the group setting. Pedagogy courses and degrees often provide burgeoning teachers with opportunities for experiential learning in a wide variety of settings and address teaching topics that are characteristic of each student population (Cheng, 2016). Since adult piano classes are becoming more prevalent, it is important to expose pre-service piano teachers to this learning environment in order to enhance their preparation for their future careers.

Researchers have examined some of these group piano-learning settings for the older population. Wristen (2006), Taylor (2011) and Bugos (2014) all focused their investigations on the reactions and opinions of the adult students in the group setting. In her study of a semi-formal performance class for amateur adult learners, Haddon (2017) shed some light on how the class leader developed pedagogical strategies as well as findings related to the adult students' musical development. Studies have also examined older learners who engaged in private piano instruction (Adamyán, 2018; Coutts, 2018; Jutras, 2006). Additionally, there has been some research conducted regarding the perspectives of the facilitators and class leaders of other music settings (Hallam, Creech, McQueen, Varvarigou, & Gaunt, 2016; Villar, Celdrán, Pinazo, & Triadó, 2010). What has not been considered are the perspectives of pre-service teachers who provide instruction for piano classes geared towards senior citizens. Together with the viewpoint of their adult students, those involved in teacher training may gain insight regarding how our profession can best prepare the piano instructors of the future. Therefore, the purpose of this

study was to examine the perceptions of both the adult students and their pre-service collegiate teachers in a group piano class setting and track emergent themes related to teacher training.

Literature Review

Research surrounding the effects of music-learning and music-making settings involving older adults has gained traction in recent years. The results of these studies can provide us insight regarding common practices used when working with older learners. In particular, the following four topics relate directly to the current study and will be explored: motivating factors for older adult music students, the perspectives of the facilitators/instructors, intergenerational experiences, and adult students studying the piano.

Motivating Factors of Older Adult Music Students

Within the framework of this topic, it is helpful to understand what motivates senior citizens to engage in music instruction at this stage in their lives. Music is important to many older adults. Any music lessons and experiences they may have had earlier in life do have an impact on them in later years and may contribute to their motivation for resuming music study (Taylor, 2010). Many mature learners are also motivated to start music lessons due to the perceived benefits. Participation in musical activities has been linked to the health and wellbeing of senior citizens (Coffman, 2002; MacDonald, 2013). In their book, *Music for Life*, Fung and Lehmborg (2016) compared two of their case studies involving a church choir and a blue grass group. Participants in both studies identified that improvement to their quality of life was a crucial factor for continuing their participation in these activities. They enjoyed the friendships and connections they made during their rehearsals. Another study noted that older people experienced cognitive, social, emotional and mental health benefits from their participation in group music-making activities (Varvarigou, Creech, Hallam, & McQueen, 2012). These benefits

included improved concentration and memory, a sense of belonging, structure to life, improved confidence, and protection against stress and depression. Bugos (2010) compared the effect of active music instruction in piano versus music listening instruction on the executive functions of older adults. No significant difference was found between the instruction settings (both types increased the participants' scores of executive functions). However, those who participated in active piano music instruction did experience a significant positive effect on their enhanced processing speed, verbal fluency and cognitive control. A case study in China (Li & Southcott 2015) noted that older individuals involved in piano study experienced improvements in their emotional and physical well-being.

Myers, Bowles and Dabback (2013) identified motivating factors and instructional strategies that help older adult music students progress in their studies. They suggested that facilitators and instructors should encourage this population to self-define their needs, goals and motivations, engage in problem-solving applications, nurture self-directed learning, acknowledge cognitive and physical changes and draw from their own life experience and background. The authors also noted that older learners want to feel they will be competent at the task at hand and be autonomous. They observed that this population enjoys developing camaraderie with facilitators and fellow students and having external forms of motivation.

The Facilitators'/Instructors' Perspectives

Overwhelmingly, instructors and facilitators of older learner settings have expressed a positive attitude towards working with an older population. A case study in Spain focusing on a non-music educational setting found that teachers gained fulfillment working with older adult students since the older adult students were perceived as having more intrinsic motivation than younger adult students (Villar, Celdrán, Pinazo, & Triadó, 2010). The instructors felt that their

efforts had an immediate return in terms of activity, participation, and interest in the classroom. They also felt they received more appreciation and gratitude from older adult students. Another study examined the reflections of conservatoire students involved in a 10-week program teaching older adults in private lesson settings (Perkins, Aufegger & Williamon, 2015). The experience gave the instructors a chance to learn about teaching through practical experience and broadened their existing instructional skills.

In her article, “Geragogy! The Joys of Teaching Older Adults”, Schoen (2018) defined the geragogical model as a partnership. She identified physical (eyesight, hearing, memory, psychomotor skills, other health issues) and emotional (insecurity, performance anxiety) considerations that piano teachers should keep in mind when working with older adult students. She also described the positive aspects regarding teaching this population (self-motivation, more time to practice, interesting and fun people).

Researchers explored the benefits and challenges identified by those facilitating music-making experiences for older people (Hallam, Creech, McQueen, Varvarigou, & Gaunt, 2016). Several common factors were expressed by those in facilitator roles. For example, the facilitators agreed that it was rewarding for them to see others develop skills and enjoy the music-making process. They also spoke about a sense of personal fulfillment and the role that the experience had in their own professional development. These same facilitators identified a number of challenges they encountered in their roles. They sometimes struggled adapting to a diverse range of adult students and also found that some older participants were stuck in their ways, making it difficult to help the older adults try new things. Furthermore, ensuring a quality experience for the older learners required significant preparation and time finding the necessary resources.

Facilitators also noted there was a lack of staff support to assist with classes and there were minimal training opportunities.

Intergenerational Experiences

Since most individuals are formally educated during their formative years, many are accustomed to the traditional learning setting where the instructor is the older individual (often perceived as wiser) passing down information and facilitating the education. However, with older adult students, the roles of this conventional arrangement have often been reversed (the older individual has been the student). Bringing together individuals from different generations in various learning settings where the younger individuals were assisting the learning of their elders has proven to have an impact on all participants involved. Dow, Joosten, Biggs and Kimberley (2016) found that while their study's participants were aware of the negative perceptions associated with the other generation in their group, they viewed these perceptions as stereotypes and stated that they did not have an impact on their own experiences with the other generation. In this study, the participants felt there was a lack of engagement between generations outside the family setting. They regretted that they had not had more opportunities for intergenerational exchange outside their families. Additionally, Beynon and Alfano (2013) highlighted two case studies of two ensembles made up of participants from multiple generations and explored the dynamics of intergenerational music learning in both community and school environments. A number of advantages were identified in these settings. Both young and older participants learned from each other; they developed relationships and a deep respect for one another. They also found that learning became less intimidating, and a unique synergy emerged from the arrangement. They learned how to interact with one another inside and outside the musical setting. Other studies involving participants from different generations noted similar

positive outcomes for all those involved. The older learners expressed a desire for additional opportunities involving the same interaction. Younger learners felt the experience changed the way they viewed the aging process (Borrero 2015; deVries, 2012).

Adult Learners and the Piano

The piano is often identified as an instrument many adults would like to learn how to play (Murphy & Flowers, 2001; Taylor, 2010). Several studies have looked at the different perspectives related to private lessons for this student population. Jutras (2006) identified the importance of 31 potential benefits associated with adult piano study. The benefits were categorized into three groups: personal, social/cultural, and skill-based. The researcher suggested that adult students were more interested in skill-based benefits (such as development of technique) rather than the social advantages. However, they still strongly valued personal benefits such as fulfilling a life-long dream. Adamyan (2018) identified some of the challenges adult beginners encountered when they learned more advanced repertoire. They included: reading two staves at a time, memorizing music, maintaining extended technical practice, learning large-scale works, and performance anxiety. She provided recommendations to help make their practice time more productive and address these challenges. Coutts (2018) highlighted the pedagogical thought process she experienced during repertoire selection. When she started teaching adult students, she would choose repertoire that would be easy for them to learn as well as selections that she was familiar with, however, the students lacked motivation to practice. She soon discovered that she needed to look past her usual approach, listen to her adult students, and align repertoire selections more with their interests. As a result, she chose more challenging repertoire along with pieces that were new to her.

As alluded to earlier, there has also been some research related to adult piano students in the group setting. Wristen (2006) examined an adult piano class and found the group setting to be a positive experience. She reemphasized the importance of teacher support. In his textbook regarding group piano teaching, Fisher (2010) dedicated an entire chapter to teaching mature adult students who enjoy piano-playing as a hobby. His suggestions for instructors working with this age group included adopting a flexible, self-directed approach, helping older learners to feel successful early on in their studies, establishing and maintaining practical expectations, and using verbally-oriented approaches with lots of analogies. In addition, Bugos (2014) highlighted that although older learners can self-regulate to help achieve their goals, they still need encouragement, knowledge, and patience from their instructors. Half of the participants in her study preferred group over private instruction.

Researchers have demonstrated that adult learners were motivated to study music based on many factors related to their quality of life, health, and camaraderie. Their facilitators/instructors feel a sense of personal fulfillment working with them, and those that interact with younger instructors enjoy the intergenerational interaction. Finally, the piano has often been a preferred instrument for adult learners and recommendations have been made to enhance their progress in this discipline. However, no study has focused on how these four themes could be blended within the setting of a group piano class and what the implications might be if pre-service teachers were involved.

Purpose

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions and activities of both the adult students and their collegiate teachers in a university-sponsored adult group piano class. A secondary purpose was to determine themes that emerged from the adult students' and

collegiate teachers' perceptions of the class. The themes will assist the researcher and others in structuring similar piano-pedagogy experiences. In particular, the researcher wanted to gain insight regarding the following research questions:

- 1) What motivated the collegiate teachers to volunteer as teachers for the class and the adult students to join the class?
- 2) What were the expectations of the collegiate teachers and adults students prior to the start of the class?
- 3) How did the collegiate teachers structure the class, especially since the adult students were of differing levels? What types of activities were used as part of the curriculum?
- 4) Was there anything about the class structure and curriculum that the collegiate teachers and adult students did not find particularly advantageous?
- 5) After this class experience, would the adult students prefer the private or group setting for piano instruction?
- 6) How would the collegiate students react to teaching students who were older than them?
- 7) How would the adult students react to being taught by individuals younger than them?
- 8) What would the adult students and collegiate teachers identify as benefits and challenges for participating in this type of class?

Method

This intrinsic case study examined the activities of an adult group piano class offered by graduate and undergraduate piano pedagogy students at a university in the Southeast region of the United States. This particular setting was unique. One lead collegiate teacher provided instruction to the whole class while one or two assistant collegiate teachers rotated throughout the piano lab providing specialized instruction to individual adult students. This arrangement

allowed older learners to benefit from the interaction of the group setting and the individualized instruction of a private lesson. All collegiate teachers were volunteers and did not receive any financial remuneration for their services.

This adult group class was held in a typical piano lab. Digital keyboards were connected to one console at the front of the room with the teacher's keyboard. Adult students listened to their own playing through headphones. Therefore, they could all concurrently practice individually or listen to each other in different configurations. Classes lasted for 50 minutes in length and were held on a weekly basis.

A narrative analysis approach was chosen for this intrinsic case study (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004; Creswell & Poth, 2018). This particular case study was chosen because it involved a group piano class for older adults, collegiate teachers served as instructors, and the adult students had the benefit of learning in the group setting as well as receiving individualized instruction. It was important to gain a full understanding of the interactions between the adult students and collegiate teachers over the course of one semester of classes. In addition to identifying the perceptions of the adult learners, the current study also addressed the viewpoints of the collegiate teachers. A single case study was chosen for this analysis to gain a deeper understanding of this particular teaching and learning environment (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The perceptions and activities of the group class were tracked through observations and interviews during one semester that lasted four months. All collegiate teachers and adult students were interviewed twice during this period. Interviews were conducted in private and in conversational style, and were guided by four short questions (see appendix) (Roulston, 2014). The use of interviews and observations for data collection mirror the ethnographic approach found in studies examining musical learning experiences involving senior citizens (Fung &

Lehmberg, 2016; Varvarigou, Creech, Hallam, & McQueen, 2012; Villar, Celdrán, Pinazo, & Triadó, 2010). It was the researcher's goal to gain a deep understanding of the dynamics and culture of this group piano class (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Table 1. Data collection.

Data Collection Type	Details
Observations by researcher	8 in-class observations 3 video recordings of classes
Interviews by researcher	Collegiate teachers interviewed: 1) prior to start of classes 2) during the 6 th or 7 th week of classes. Adult students interviewed: 1) prior to start of classes 2) during weeks 5, 6 or 7 of classes.

During the in-class and video recording observations, the researcher took copious field notes to illustrate the dynamics of the class and provide suggestions for the lead teacher to improve instruction. Schmidt (2014) stated that it is important to use concrete, descriptive terms when recording observations. Acquiring information through multiple sources (live observations, video observations, and interviews) allowed for the triangulation of data, which illuminated common themes and validated assertions. The data were organized and categorized according to the research questions. Then the researcher identified commonalities amongst the responses to determine the prevalent themes related to each research question. The multiple sources of data regarding the same class setting allowed the researcher to see if there were any conflicting opinions between the participant groups or between the information collected during interviews versus the observations made by the researcher.

To clarify any potential researcher bias, it was also important to note that I, the researcher, was the main pedagogy instructor of the collegiate teachers. Therefore, I was

observing their involvement in this class through the lens of their pedagogical development. As Schmidt (2014) noted, it was important to identify the benefits and limitations of the researcher's subjectivity. I was not involved with actually providing instruction for this group piano class. However, I provided feedback to the lead teacher so that she could gain constructive advice from this formative teaching experience. The methodology was approved by the institutional review board of the researcher's home institution. Upon completion of the observations, interviews and review of the video recordings, data were examined through narrative analysis (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004). Internal validation was upheld through participant checks, triangulation, long-term observation and noting any bias by the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Profile of Participants

The following table contains a summary of the backgrounds of the collegiate teachers.

Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of all participants.

Table 2. Collegiate teacher profiles.

Name	Level of Study	Prior Teaching Experience	Age Range
Melanie	Master's degree	Maintained a small studio of 3 to 6 students during undergraduate degree. Taught one adult student privately for a short period of time. Holds an assistantship teaching group piano for music majors	Mid 20s
Sarah	Master's degree	Taught kids from church during high school years – "Didn't know what I was doing!" Provided piano, voice and theory instruction in a music store during her last year of high school. During this time, she taught 2 adult students for one semester each.	Early 20s
Eleanor	Bachelor's degree	No prior teaching experience	Early 20s

Mia	Bachelor's degree	No prior teaching experience	Early 20s
Walter	Bachelor's degree	No prior teaching experience	Early 20s
Karen	Master's degree	Some private teaching experience	Early 20s

The following table contains a summary of the backgrounds of the adult students. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of all participants.

Table 3. Adult student profiles.

Name	Past Musical Experience	Age Range
Caroline	Completed an undergraduate degree in Clarinet	80s
James	Took 2 years of piano lessons but mostly self-taught; already an advanced player; sang in the high school choir	Late 60s
Edward	Played in band in high school; started playing the banjo in his 30s; Mother played piano	60s
Tina	Completed undergraduate and graduate degrees in Clarinet; took piano lessons for 2 years as a child and another 2 years of group piano during undergraduate degree	Late 70s
Laura	Played flute since grade 4; plays in a community band; sings in a community chorus	Preferred not to give age
Peter	Only took a few saxophone lessons in 1940	Late 80s

Results

As a result of the interviews with the participants and observations of the classes, responses to the research questions were identified. Common themes were pinpointed and specific quotations from participants illuminated their opinions and attitudes regarding this class setting.

Research question #1: What motivated the collegiate teachers to volunteer as teachers for the class and the adult students to join the class?

All collegiate teachers had varying but related motivating factors for serving as teachers in this class. The collegiate teachers completing graduate degrees wanted to gain more

teaching experience in the group setting while working with a different population of adult students. Sarah expressed specific interest in learning more about the recreational music-making setting. She also noted that she was willing to volunteer her time because she enjoyed teaching those who are motivated to learn how to play the piano. Melanie mentioned that she has a natural affinity for working with older adults as she enjoys their company. She attributed this to the fact that she had a special relationship with her grandfather. The researcher took note that Melanie would always stay after class to converse with some of the adult students who wanted to chat. She easily carried a conversation with them and her interest in them was genuine. Karen had a simple but honest response regarding why she joined the class. She said, “I feel good that I’m helping other people.”

All the undergraduate collegiate teachers wanted to gain some experience teaching in a friendly environment. They also wanted to observe how a group class functioned since they were only familiar with private one-on-one lessons. When asked why they continued to volunteer even in the midst of a busy semester, they provided the following responses:

Mia: It’s rewarding! I feel nice and happy after the class, especially because it’s in the middle of the week. It’s a stress reliever.

Walter: It’s a relaxed way to ease yourself into teaching. To be honest, I didn’t expect it to be this much fun! Before this class, I was not thinking about teaching for my future career but now I realize that teaching is enjoyable!

Eleanor: It’s a new experience for everything! I wanted to jump right in.

Research question #2: What were the expectations of the collegiate teachers and adults students prior to the start of the class?

The graduate collegiate teachers anticipated that although the adult students would quickly understand skills and material from a conceptual standpoint, they expected that the older learners may encounter some physical coordination challenges. Sarah anticipated that “they may have trouble trying new things and may get frustrated sooner since they understand things faster.” They also predicted that it would be difficult teaching one class with individuals of varying levels.

The undergraduate collegiate teachers did not go into the class with many expectations. Eleanor knew she would be engaging with “sweet people” who would be motivated to learn. Other than that, they did not know what to expect. Mia did not even realize that a group piano class for older adults was “a thing” and Walter started volunteering with an open mind to “see what happens.”

Some of the adult students expressed specific expectations for the class. Edward wanted to entertain himself and learn to play, “House of the Rising Sun” and Peter was interested in learning how to play some pieces by Scott Joplin. Laura expected that she would figure out how to coordinate her hands so she could play them together and also improve her reading in the bass clef. Tina wanted to regain skills she had during her undergraduate years and Caroline would be “just glad to play anything.” As the most advanced student entering the class, James said he expected to get through more repertoire and have the opportunity to rehearse accompaniments for choral repertoire.

Research question #3: How did the collegiate teachers structure the class, especially since the adult students were of differing levels? What types of activities were used as part of the curriculum?

As the researcher, I was able to observe that the collegiate teachers engaged the adult students through a number of different activities in each class. They included ensemble playing, singing and rote learning, listening activities, sight-reading, chord structure/harmonization, personal practice time, smaller group work, playing pieces by ear, and repertoire sharing sessions. Approximately one-third of the class time was reserved for personal practice so that adult students could pursue individual interests and the teachers could provide individual attention. During the course of each session, the lead teacher provided the main source of instruction for the adult students as a whole. The assistant teachers checked on the adult students and provided help when needed without disrupting the flow of the class. An example of a lesson plan from week 3 at the beginning of the semester can be found in figure 4.

Objectives: Introduction to the grand staff, C and G chords, listening activity	
5 min	Introduction
5 min	Two-handed rhythms Hands separate/hands together; advanced adult students tap with a specific rhythm
5-10 min	Introduce grand staff Highlight middle C, guide notes treble G and bass F Find 2 nd and 3 rd intervals above and below the three notes listed above and reinforce with flashcards.
10 min	C and G chords Review 5-finger position in C and create C chord Teach G7 chord by rote Go through several examples in the book and explain how chords match up with melodies. Adult students play along.
5-10 min	Listening – Chopin’s Prelude in E minor Listen, class reactions, talk about harmony, find a volunteer to present a piece for next week.
15-20 min	Individual practice time

Figure 4: Sample lesson plan for the third class

Within the first four weeks of classes, most of the adult students were able to play simple single-line melodies, including those students who had a limited musical background. As a result, the collegiate teachers could engage in group activities where everyone participated at their own level. These activities developed ensemble and harmonization skills and helped the adult students to acquire facility with chord progressions. Since the adult students were working at vastly different levels, ensemble arrangements helped to demonstrate how everyone could be engaged at the same time. Those who were more advanced were asked to improvise on an accompaniment based on the harmonization outlined for the adult students. Those who were at the earlier stages of learning the piano played the single melody line. The collegiate teachers guided them to find patterns that suited their individual levels. Playing together helped to foster the skills of collaboration, maintaining a steady pulse, listening, improvising and gaining familiarity with basic chord progressions. The group effort was most certainly motivating and helped keep everyone focused.

Once the adult students had an understanding of how chords or triads were formed at the piano, they were introduced to common chord progressions often found in popular songs. For example, in one class, the lead teacher guided the adult students to play the common chord progression C major, G major, A minor, F major. Prior to this segment, she had shown the class how to create each chord at the keyboard. Visually, it was an easy progression for the adult students to quickly acquire since no black keys were involved. Once the adult students were able to find the chords, they proceeded to sing several popular songs as a class that were all based on this same chord progression. This activity encouraged repetition so that the adult students developed the muscle memory to move from one chord to the next. Also, for those able to

progress faster, they had the option to play the chords in different figurations for an additional challenge. From this one chord progression, they played and sang melodies from the following popular songs: *Time to Say Goodbye*, *Don't Stop Believing*, *Can You Feel the Love Tonight*, *Country Roads*.

The class also had a “repertoire sharing session” at the end of the semester, rather than a recital. The adult students remained at their keyboards and played at the instruments they were used to working on in class. This was a very jovial event. The adult students shared their solo pieces they had been practicing throughout the semester. The group also enjoyed playing their ensemble pieces together.

Research question #4: Was there anything about the class structure and curriculum that the collegiate teachers and adult students did not find particularly advantageous?

Both the collegiate teachers and adult students overwhelmingly had positive comments regarding the class structure and curriculum. However, Melanie noted that inconsistent attendance amongst the adult students did affect lesson planning. She was not expecting this and had to be flexible when preparing for each class due to one adult student's illness and another adult student's work schedule. In order to maintain the relaxed nature of the class, attendance was not mandatory for the participants with the understanding that sometimes they needed to attend to other matters in their lives. The adult students only commented on two minor logistical issues. James commented that parking could sometimes be difficult and Edward preferred a slightly later class time due to his schedule. Caroline mentioned that her only disappointment was that she had to miss some classes due to health issues.

Research question #5: After this class experience, would the adult students prefer the private or group setting for piano instruction?

At the end of the semester of classes, the adult students were asked whether they preferred individual or group instruction. Nearly all adult students preferred the group setting because it was less intimidating and more relaxing. In particular, James enjoyed the social interaction and felt that the group setting offered less pressure than private lessons. Edward acknowledged that he would have preferred individual instruction as it would have allowed him to progress a little faster. However, he said that group instruction was better than no instruction.

Research question #6: How would the collegiate students react to teaching students who were older than them?

When asked what it was like to teach adult students that were from a much older generation (in contrast to their typical students who are younger than them), the collegiate teachers used the word “respect” in their responses. They were mindful of the fact that the adult students had a significant amount of experience and knowledge they could share.

Melanie: It is different. You still want to show them respect because they have all this life experience...not that I don't respect the younger ones. There are many things these students know that we (the young teachers) don't know. I have learned to be happy with any progress.

Sarah: It's fun! I learn from them too. They feel like they can tell me things. There is a lot to learn from their life experience. It takes a different type of respect to work with them. I respect younger students too but this is a different situation. We relate about different things.

Others said it was important to figure out the student's priority and to match his/her expectations. They said that sometimes it was challenging to figure out what type of help the adult students required and if they indeed wanted the assistance. They were learning when to

help adult students versus when to let them solve problems independently. This clearly demonstrated that the collegiate teachers were learning to facilitate and assist their adult students with their musical journeys rather than direct their studies. Karen said that some adult students were more tentative when the class started and did not always speak up when they were confused. This was different from her experience teaching younger students who may have fewer inhibitions. Walter saw how both adult students and children exhibited the same passion for music. All collegiate teachers said they sincerely looked forward to this class every week and considered it a highlight of their schedule. Eleanor said it was “Very rewarding to see their progress and see when the light bulb switched on.” She went on to say, “It was great to see them enjoy themselves and laugh together.”

Research question #7: How would the adult students react to being taught by individuals younger than them?

Working with younger teachers did not seem to be an issue for the adult students. Most noted that they did not even think about the age difference. James remarked, “I know they know more than I do, so what does it matter how old they are?” Laura said she liked the younger teachers as they still have patience and passion. Edward stated, “I have no feeling either way about being taught by someone younger and kind of expect it in this setting and at my age. I imagine younger instructors would have access to newer techniques.”

During my observations, the respect that both the adult students and collegiate teachers had for one another was palpable in the room. With a slight tilt of the head or glance in the direction of a collegiate teacher, the adult students knew that they could rely on the lead teacher and assistants when they needed help. Meanwhile, as the adult students worked on their individual and group activities, the collegiate teachers kept a close eye on the class, carefully

observing the progress of the adult students. They learned to know which adult students were likely to call on them for help and which ones would likely need more independent time.

Instruction looked more like conversation and I saw and heard lots of laughter, saw lots of smiles and witnessed many meaningful interactions.

Research question #8: What would the adult students and collegiate teachers identify as the main benefits and challenges for participating in this type of class?

All teachers identified a number of benefits associated with their participation. Sarah found the adult students to be motivating for her, particularly as she was learning to balance the performance and academic demands of graduate school. She said, “They remind me of why I’m a teacher and musician. They remind me of the joy of simple music.” She went on to say, “They enjoy whatever skill they have. That’s inspiring for me because I can get caught up in all the details of playing and teaching.” Although the experience of instructing this age group was new to her, she was already thinking about how she could start something similar after graduation. Through this hands-on experience, she learned how to help with physical coordination for this age group.

Melanie identified some administrative skills she acquired as a part of this experience. She learned how to advertise, recruit participants and organize this type of class setup. She also addressed the fact that she learned she needed to spend more time creating lesson plans and refining her organizational skills to help all adult students be engaged. She discovered that she constantly needed to remind herself that it was a fun class; the adult students were learning the piano as a hobby. She had to reconsider the way she presented material so that it was always appealing to the adult students. Melanie went on to say that she was still learning to adjust to teaching for this population. She realized that everyone in the class needed patience. Both

collegiate teachers and adult students needed to set realistic expectations and she felt she always needed to remind the adult students to enjoy the journey. She noticed that the adult students could easily get frustrated. Since they already had sophisticated tastes, they could be disheartened if not satisfied with the product of their efforts. Melanie learned that she had to teach the adult students to be patient with themselves.

The undergraduates also identified a number of benefits they experienced as a result of helping with this class. Their reflections included:

Eleanor: It's really neat that I'm getting to know them by teaching them.

Mia: I'm forced to think about things related to piano that I haven't thought about in a while. It is eye-opening. I'm learning how to communicate and find different ways to explain the same thing.

Walter: I'm figuring out the process of learning things and what are the basic fundamentals of playing the piano.

Karen: It's an easier way to start teaching because the participants really want to be there.

The undergraduate assistant teachers also learned how to predict which tasks might be more challenging for some of the adult students.

Although this was overwhelmingly a positive experience for the collegiate teachers, they did identify some specific challenges. Walter said that it was a bit hard to interact with them during the initial classes since they were strangers. Karen mentioned that it was difficult to figure out what type of help the adult students needed or wanted and what each individual's priority was for their piano study.

Many of the adult students identified a number of benefits associated with participating in this class. They emphasized that they liked the social aspect of the class and noted that the teachers' enthusiasm was a significant positive attribute of the experience. They looked forward to being with a group of people who enjoyed music. Laura mentioned that having the class every week motivated her to practice regularly. A number of the adult students noted that the class gave them the opportunity to take piano lessons without making a large financial investment. The adult students felt that generally, the teachers introduced concepts in a well-paced manner, allowing them to catch on or catch up even if they entered the class later in the semester or were absent for some classes. All adult students were motivated to practice and would make time for the piano every day ranging from as little as 15 minutes a day to as much as an hour.

The main challenge identified by the adult students was the pace of the class. Since James was more advanced than the others, he sometimes struggled with holding back and staying with the general pace of the class. Edward acknowledged that it must be hard for the lead teachers to adapt to everyone's levels. There was also a husband-wife team in the class and Tina noted that the most challenging part of the class for her was keeping her husband, Peter on track!

Discussion

A number of benefits related to recreational music making and teacher training can be gleaned from this music class setup and relate to many of the findings cited in the recent literature. Upon analysis of the data, common themes were highlighted and have led to the following assertions. Connections with other recent literature will be referred to when appropriate for each assertion.

Advantages for the Adult Students

For adult students who would not otherwise have the opportunity or motivation to take up piano studies, this group piano class setting provided the incentive to try out something new or fulfill a lifelong passion. The group setting helped to make piano lessons more appealing to this particular set of individuals. It was less intimidating, and even though there were varying levels in this particular class, the collegiate teachers planned carefully and the adult students could still advance at their own pace. The chance to interact with others in the same social group was most appealing and this aspect significantly heightened their enjoyment of the class. The social aspect was clearly a motivating factor for many of the adult students to join the group and reflected the responses of the participants in the case studies by Fung & Lehmberg (2016). This was in contrast to the study by Jutras (2006) which found that older learners were more interested in developing technique rather than the social benefits of pursuing piano study. The difference of these results could be related to two issues: a) the current study involved a much smaller population and the adult students were drawn from an already established social group; or (b) many of the adult students in Jutras' study may have been involved in private piano lessons and so the social benefits were not readily obvious. In the current study, many of the adult students were already friends outside of the class and the chance to spend time together in a laid-back and enjoyable setting could have influenced their decision to join the class. The adult students in the present study were able to positively contribute to the class and the overall group dynamic.

Benefits for the Collegiate Teachers

This class offered collegiate teachers another type of pedagogical experience in a specific setting for a particular population. Several of the collegiate teachers who volunteered for this class noted that after this experience, they would like to start similar programs in the future. Although they experienced the challenge of adapting to adult students of varying levels who had

different learning needs than other students they had encountered, the experience was fulfilling for them. These positive attitudes towards working with older adults echo the findings of previous studies (Borrero, 2015; Hallam, Creech, McQueen, Varvarigou, & Gaunt, 2016; Perkins, Aufegger & Williamon, 2015; deVries, 2012.) They found it to be a non-intimidating and enjoyable way to start gaining experience in teaching since the adults were self-motivated and wanted to be learning the piano. This opinion expressed by the teachers concurs with Villar, Celdrán, Pinazo and Triadó (2010) and Hallam, Creech, McQueen, Varvarigou and Gaunt (2016).

The collegiate teachers learned that this class setting was unique and that these adult students deserved a different type of respect than what was typical with their other students. The intergenerational blend really helped to foster an amicable learning environment. The comments about respect reflected the findings of Beynon and Alfano (2013) as they looked at the interactions of an intergenerational setting. The enthusiasm and musical expertise of the young teachers combined with the wisdom of the older adult students created a class that was nurturing, supportive and inviting. The experiences observed in this class and reported by the participants paralleled those found in previous studies (Dow, Joosten, Biggs & Kimberley, 2016; Beynon & Alfano, 2013).

The collegiate teachers learned how to facilitate physical coordination with adult students at the piano. They learned that the most important strategy for this was patience and managing expectations based on the adult students' goals and interests. They also found this experience to be a healthy reminder about the purpose and joy of music. Many of the collegiate teachers, especially those who had little pedagogical experience, found this setting to be an excellent way to ease into teaching and develop some ways of communicating basic pianistic fundamentals to

other individuals. Walter's response was particularly telling when he stated, "...now I know that teaching is enjoyable!" For some like Walter, this was their first time teaching anyone and since the adult students were self-motivated and eager to learn from them, it was a positive experience. Therefore, the chances of the collegiate teachers seeking out other pedagogical opportunities would be highly likely. This teaching experience may have been the perfect setting to whet the pedagogical appetites of developing musicians.

Recommendations for Future Classes

A number of recommendations can be gleaned from the study of this class setting, particularly for those interested in setting up a similar class in the context of teacher training. If there are varying levels of adult students, it is especially essential to have one or two assistant teachers. This makes this class arrangement an ideal setup for those with little teaching experience and looking to increase their confidence as they explain concepts to others. It is a low risk, non-threatening environment for teachers in training to help develop their verbal pedagogical explanations. The assistant teachers can gradually start to build their pedagogical confidence, knowing a more experienced lead teacher is in the room if questions arise. Also, if a more advanced student-teacher will be leading the class, it is advisable to choose an adult method publication. This will provide some structure as the classes are planned.

Teachers should be chosen carefully. Those leading the class should definitely have pleasing, non-threatening personalities to help make the experience enjoyable for everyone. Instructors and facilitators with open minds will develop flexibility and respect when working with adult students. Teachers need to understand that this pedagogical environment is very much a collaborative one where the teacher acts as facilitator rather than instructor. Adult students are self-regulated and much more independent than students who are children, teenagers, or young

adults (Myers, Bowles, & Dabback, 2013). Additionally, collegiate teachers will not necessarily be able to apply the same approaches their own teachers use with them. Adult students appreciate a relaxed and non-intimidating environment, since most of these individuals are pursuing piano studies for recreational purposes.

The social nature of a group class can be very appealing to adults. Those adult students who seek out a group class may be searching for an interactive opportunity. Therefore, it is important to highlight the collective nature of the class through the use of ensemble repertoire, listening activities and “repertoire sharing sessions.” Rather than recitals, repertoire sharing sessions can often be less intimidating for adult students and they can help maintain the relaxed atmosphere of the class (Schoen, 2018). In this way, adult students can play from their individual digital instruments rather than being singled out on a stage.

It would be ideal for the coordinating teacher to incorporate a variety of activities in each class. Introducing musical notation, playing by ear, ensemble repertoire, playing chord progressions, harmonizing melodies, and listening to recordings are just some of the ways teachers can help adult students achieve satisfaction at an early stage in their piano studies (Fisher, 2010). The group setting can be particularly useful for developing these skills since participants can bounce ideas off one another and be motivated by the teamwork. The listening activities can serve as great opportunities for participants to take a break in the middle of the class and reflect on chosen repertoire. This is also a chance to broaden their horizons about music with which they might not otherwise be familiar.

Finally, personal practice time is crucial for a group class, especially if students are of varying levels. Adult students will need the chance to synthesize the information sink, which can be accomplished during personal practice time with a teacher nearby to answer questions. Also,

for those who are more advanced, they can have the chance to work on other repertoire and get some individualized feedback.

This particular class setting has the potential to make a sizeable positive impact in the lives of older learners and burgeoning piano teachers. It promotes music learning in a social setting and encourages individuals of varying generations to mingle and learn from one another. New teachers can develop their pedagogical abilities with adult students who are motivated and eager to learn a new skill. If future investigations involve a number of classes encompassing a larger number of participants, researchers could explore ways to optimize the learning possibilities for individuals in this class setting of varying levels. Additionally, it would be useful to quantify the benefits of this type of intergenerational interaction from a sociological and psychological perspective.

Let us think back to Peter, the octogenarian we were introduced to at the beginning of this paper. At the final session, the collegiate teachers organized a repertoire-sharing session for the adult students. The adult students played solos and ensemble pieces they had been working on throughout the semester. Peter chose to play the English folk song "Lavender Blue." It consisted of a melody in the right hand with a chord-based accompaniment in the left hand. All the adult students and collegiate teachers were really captivated by his musical performance of this melody with a simple texture. Towards the end of the piece, he made a slight stumble at the final cadence. However, he took that opportunity to improvise a new ending, bringing a smile and laugh to everyone's face. This ability to adjust and communicate something with music reinforced that this type of group piano class can indeed accommodate the adult students' goals, enhance their quality of life and bring joy to all those involved including the teachers.

References

- Adamyán, A. (2018). Music education issues for adult beginners in Armenia: Specifically the analysis of the difficulties of piano playing. *British Journal of Music Education*, 35(2), 191-202. doi:10.1017/S0265051717000249
- Beynon, C. & Alfano, C. (2013). Intergenerational music learning in community and schools. In K. K. Veblen, S. J. Messenger, M. Silverman & D. J. Elliott (Eds.), *Community Music Today* (pp. 121-132). New York, NY: R & L Education.
- Borrero, L. (2015). Intergenerational service learning: Bringing together undergraduate adult students and older adult learners to engage in collaborative research. *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, 13, 188-192. doi: 10.1080/15350770.2015.1025679
- Bugos, J. (2010). The benefits of music instruction on processing speed, verbal fluency, and cognitive control in aging. *Music Education Research International*, 4. Retrieved from <http://cmer.arts.usf.edu/content/articlefiles/3122-MERI04pp1-9.pdf>
- Bugos, J. (2014). Adult learner perceptions: Perspectives from beginning musicians (ages 60-86 years). *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education*, 32(2), 26-34.
- Cheng, X. (2016). *Perceptions of collegiate and early-career piano teachers regarding master's piano pedagogy degree program*. Retrieved from Proquest Dissertations Publishing. (10120705)
- Clandinin, D. J. & Connelly, F. M. (2004). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Coats, S. (2006). *Thinking as you play*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Coffman, D. D. (2002). Music and quality of life in older adults. *Psychomusicology*, 18(1-2), 76-88. doi: 10.1037/h0094050

Coutts, L. (2018). Selecting motivating repertoire for adult piano students: A transformative pedagogical approach. *British Journal of Music Education*, 35(3), 285-299.

doi:10.1017/S0265051718000074

Creswell, J. W. & Poth, C. P. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design*. Glasgow, UK: Sage Publications, Inc.

deVries, P. (2012). International music making: A phenomenological study of three older Australians making music with children. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 59(4), 339-356.

Dow, B., Joosten, M., Biggs, S., & Kimberley, H (2016). Age encounters: Exploring age and intergenerational perceptions. *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, 14(2), 104-118. doi: 10.1080/15350770.2016.1160731

Fisher, C. (2010). *Teaching piano in groups*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Fu, H-J. (2007). *A status and vision investigation of US university piano pedagogy programs*. Retrieved from <https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc3671/>

Fung, C. V. & Lehmborg, L. J. (2016). *Music for life: Music participation and quality of life of senior citizens*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Haddon, E. (2017). Piano performance: Group classes for the lifelong learner. *Research Studies in Music Education*, 39(1), 57-51. doi: 10.1177/1321103X17702972

Hallam, S., Creech, A., McQueen, H., Varvarigou, M., & Gaunt, H. (2016). The facilitator of community music-making with older learners: Characteristics, motivations and challenges. *International Journal of Music Education*, 34(1), 19-31.

Li, S. & Southcott, J. (2015). The meaning of learning piano keyboard in the lives of older Chinese people. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 34(3), 316-333.

Jutras, P. (2006). Benefits of adult piano study as self-reported by selected adult piano students. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 54(2), 97-110.

MacDonald, R. A. R. (2013). Music, health, and well-being: A review. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being*, 8. doi:10.3402/qhw.v8i0.20635

Murphy, J. W. & Flowers, P. J. (2001). Talking about music: Interviews with older adults about their music education, preferences, activities and reflections. *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education*, 20(1), 26-32.

Myers, D., Bowles, C. & Dabback, W. (2013). Music Learning as a Lifespan Endeavor. In K. K. Veblen, S. J. Messenger, M. Silverman & D. J. Elliott (Eds.), *Community music today* (pp. 133–150). New York, NY: R&L Education.

Perkins, R., Aufegger, L. & Williamon, A. (2015). Learning through teaching: Exploring what conservatoire students learn from teaching beginner older adults. *International Journal of Music Education*, 33(1), 80-90. doi: 10.1177/0255761414531544

Pike, P. (2017). *Dynamic group-piano teaching: Transforming group theory into teaching practice*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Roulston, K. (2014). Conducting and analyzing interviews. In C. M. Conway (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of qualitative research in American music education* (pp.250-270). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Schmidt, M. (2014). Collecting and analyzing observation of music teaching and learning data. In C. M. Conway (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of qualitative research in American music education* (pp.227-279). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Schoen, G. (2018). Geragogy! The joys of teaching older adults. *American Music Teacher*, 68(2), 16-19.

- Taylor, A (2010). Older amateur keyboard players learning for self-fulfillment. *Psychology of Music*, 39(3), 345-363. doi: 10.1177/0305735610376262
- Varvarigou, M., Creech, A., Hallam, S. & McQueen, H. (2012). Benefits experienced by older people in group music-making activities. *Journal of Applied Arts & Health*, 3(2), 183-198. doi: 10.1386/jaah.3.2.183_1
- Villar, F., Celdrán, M., Pinazo, S. & Triadó, C. (2010). The teacher's perspective in older education: the experience of teaching in a university for older people in Spain. *Educational Gerontology*, 36(10-11), 951-967. doi:10.1080/03601277.2010.485037
- Wristen, B. (2006). Demographics and motivation of adult group piano students. *Music Education Research*, 8(3), 387-406.

Appendix

Interview Guide

These questions were used as a way to get the conversation flowing with the interviewees. Free responses were encouraged so as to glean as much detail as possible from the participants. The researcher chose 3 or 4 questions to guide the conversation with each participant.

Questions for adult students prior to the first class:

- 1) What is your approximate age range?
- 2) What is/what was your job?
- 3) Do you have any musical training?
- 4) What is your motivation for joining the UMA class?
- 5) What are your expectations for participation?
- 6) Is there a specific reason why you joined the UMA class rather than taking lessons elsewhere?

Questions for adult students during the course of the semester:

- 1) What do you enjoy the most about the class?
- 2) What do you enjoy the least?
- 3) What is the most challenging part of the class?
- 4) What is the least challenging part of the class?
- 5) Are you able to practice at home? How much?
- 6) If given a choice, would you prefer individual or group instruction? Please explain why you feel either the individual or group format would work the best for you.
- 7) What is it like being taught by people younger than you? Do you feel there is a difference when you are being taught by someone older than you?

Questions for teachers prior to the first class:

- 1) What is your age range and educational background?
- 2) Describe your teaching experience. Do you have any experience teaching adult students?
- 3) What is your motivation for participating in the UMA class as a teacher?
- 4) What are your expectations? What do you think will be the adult students' learning needs? What challenges do you anticipate?
- 5) What benefits do you perceive to come from this experience?

Questions for the teachers during the course of the semester:

- 1) What are the benefits of this experience? What are the benefits working with this population?
- 2) What are the challenges that you are facing?
- 3) What skills are you developing that can help assist with your teaching career?
- 4) What is it like teaching people that are older than you? Is it different than teaching those younger or around the same age as you?

**Musicians Almost Absent from Community Band Participation:
A Multiple Case Study**

Joshua E. Long³

Abstract

Community music, activities for musicians to engage in a wide range of musical contexts (Higgins, 2012), exist when common attentiveness is shared by participants in a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). Community music happens primarily in ensembles, made mostly of volunteers, and can only perform when there are active participants. The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study (Creswell, 2013) is to investigate the almost absence of past participants in community bands. Six Low Active Participants (musicians who are active less than 6 months a year) were interviewed to describe their music making experiences during past community band participation. This study also included document collection and observations of both active and non-active community band musicians. Results indicated participants focus their involvement with musical engagement, ensemble appeal, organization practices, and motivating experiences.

Keywords: adult learning, situated learning, community of practice, community band, music making

³Director of Bands and Lecturer of Music, Marist College, Poughkeepsie, New York, USA

Corresponding Author:
Joshua E. Long, Marist College, Music Department, 3399 North Road, Murray Student Center,
Office 4025, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601
Email: joshua.long@marist.edu

Introduction

“Community music consists of music teaching-learning interactions and transactions that occur outside traditional music institutions like schools and university music departments” (Higgins, 2012, p. 77). Participants in such communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), engage in ensembles such as church choirs, bands, drum corps, brass bands, choruses, orchestras, and small jazz combos, to provide a service of entertainment at concerts, parades, and other ceremonial events (Veblen & Olsson, 2002). Opportunities for lifelong learners (Mantie, 2012b), musician social support (Carucci, 2012), identity (Dabback, 2008), self-expressed interests (Bowles, 1991), and aesthetic responses (Ruggeri, 2003) are mediated using tools such as musical instruments within a particular ensemble environment (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

This research focused on six Low Active Participants of community music, specifically community bands. These musicians were active less than 6 months a year, according to a previous survey of participation, which suggested involvement would increase with unique repertoire performance experiences (Long, 2014). Through interviews, observations, and document collection, the purpose of this study was to investigate community band participation, under the lens of musicians who choose little involvement. The following question was addressed: How do low active adult musicians describe music making experiences during community band participation?

Literature Review

Community of Practice

A common area of interest where individuals share the same curiosities and obtain meanings together, constitutes a community of practice. These practices exist everywhere, they are various, and individuals can be involved with several interests of a community without even

knowing. Wenger (1998) began this idea by referring to what has been experienced through mutual engagement of activities, happening inside collective exercises, such as making music in an ensemble setting. Communities of practice contain shared ideas, commitments, and memories, with the use of tools, routines, vocabulary, symbols, and knowledge, which accumulate in the community (Wenger, 1998). It involves ways of doing shared activities among members of the community.

Since a community band needs individuals to fill their woodwind, brass, and percussion sections, participants should share a common interest of performing, identity, and self-expression together. Therefore, participation in this community of practice (a community band) shares common goals, tools such as musical instruments, symbols such as uniforms, and musical knowledge accumulated from band repertoire. Higgins (2008) stated “community music grew from the general ‘attitude’ of community arts” (Higgins, 2008, p. 27). This ‘attitude’ was established from a vision of a broad community of practice, community music (Higgins, 2008), by looking at all forms of music participation. Musicians can be involved in various communities of practice, in this case both the practice of community music and community band only if participation transpires together with other musicians.

Learning occurs informally from experiences and practices, which will be furthered in the next section with Lave and Wenger’s (1991) conceptualization of situated learning. However, Boud and Middleton (2003) observed learning that occurred from interactions of others, during a workplace community of practice. This informal learning in the workplace occurred only when the group reformed together. In comparison with community bands, successful performances of repertoire will only occur if the band musicians are participating together. Therefore, a band

would need high participation to function as an ensemble, very similar to the workplace interaction research of Boud and Middleton (2003).

Situated Learning

Situated Learning was first proposed as a way to focus on understanding in a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Learning (proposed as a social experience) and knowledge (a skill originating from a task) are a co-constructed process. Therefore, learning is embedded in the context. There is no way of looking at just one attribute that constitutes learning. Learning is understood after noticing what has been learned and by looking at all influences which have affected the process. Jean Lave, in particular, proposed learning takes place in all situations and experiences, specifically outside a formal classroom.

Rose (1999) focused on the teaching and learning of a concept in biomechanics of physical therapy; the frame of mind that informed concept, technique, and skill, ‘the here and the now.’ “Ortho II [physical therapy class] acquires these tools through guided and sustained practice; the students' learning is "situated," then, both in a tradition and, more immediately, in the conditions created by the instructors which enable them to develop competence” (Rose, 1999, p. 150). Learning was guided, situated, by instructors and the community of practice, to develop skills in a physical therapy setting. This learning could relate to how instructors in community band situated music repertoire concepts and technique, to progress community band performance.

Therefore, situated learning was defined by Finnegan (2007) as “looking at practice rather than formalized texts or mental structures, at processes rather than products, at informal grass-roots activities rather than formal structure,” (p. 8). Finnegan’s purpose was to witness the community music and how music making was situated. Through observation of brass band,

musical theatre, jazz, rock, pop, country, folk, and classical music, learning developed “in the context of practice and performance” situated as informal learning (Finnegan, 2007, p. 140). Each practice of community music was co-constructed in a social process of music making, constituting learning embedded in the context of musician interactions. Situated learning in this case according to Illeris (2009), was valued through particular practice situations, community music participation.

Learning in a practice is remembered through the use of tools. Learning is never facilitated through the world directly, since mediation through the world occurs with the use of tools only when participation occurs together. Lundin and Nuldèn (2007) stated, “learning is understood to be either the equipping of [police] officers with knowledge as tools for carrying out work or it is described as being socialized into practice” (p. 223). In conducting research of Swedish police officers, tools of, for example, an officer’s belt (keys, pistol, radio, car, and nightstick) were mastered by newcomers, which mediated their understanding of the community. Only through this repeated social use of tools, meaning was situated. This study revealed that the use of police tools resulted in conversations, a vital part of the community police practice understanding. Learning therefore embedded in tools, can be found in every community of practice such as community band’s mediation of brass, woodwind, and percussion instruments only during collective musician participation.

Mantie (2012a) discussed Lave & Wenger-inspired situated learning to research how music education might facilitate interactions between school, community, and lifespan engagement in adult music makers. These participants viewed their school music participation as a legitimate “induction into a ‘real’ musical practice, or rather as just another school subject taken on the path toward high school graduation” (Mantie, 2012a, p. 37). Participation in school

bands were intended for the outcome of instruction, then music learning will take place. The investigation continued further into the characteristics, attitudes, and perceptions of community band attrition. Mantie (2012a) stated, “if carryover is to be valued in music education, better theories of avocational music participation are needed” (Mantie, 2012a, p. 39). Thus, the suggestion was that students should continue to actively interact with other band practices beyond high school, since their constructed meaning happened during participation. This suggestion was the impetus, therefore, of the current investigation into why musicians may choose to be minimally involved in adult community bands.

Method

Participant Profiles

The six contributors were past community band research participants of the two-hundred-sixty-one ensemble members from Connecticut, Maine, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania *Finding Retention in Community Music Ensemble Participants* (Long, 2014), who indicated their willingness to participate in this study. Since these participants indicated low participation, communication was initiated via email to set one hour phone call interviews. Each individual expressed enthusiasm in providing their views on community band participation, often making phone calls longer than one hour.

Brief background information on each participant is provided below, including approximate age. Please note that each participant was given a pseudonym to provide confidentiality:

- Mark – upper 40s, non-practicing music educator, and over 20 years of community band.
- Anthony – upper 30s, non-music professional, and band participant through college.
- Jane – mid 50s, non-music professional, and years spent with community band.

- John – mid 40s, practicing music educator, and dedication to jazz community ensembles.
- Mary – upper 50s, non-practicing music educator, and over 30 years of small community ensembles.
- Louise – mid 70s, non-music professional, and dedicated to music making.

Interviews

The interview strategy was constructed by consulting Turner's (2010) qualitative interview protocol, which explores ways to conduct in-depth conversations rather than just a question and answer format. Interviews were structured with common themed questions but were open-ended to encourage participants to provide much detailed responses and to allow the researcher to ask probing questions to follow-up (Turner, 2010). One hour detailed conversational interviews were conducted, focused on music-making experiences during community band participation. Six Low Active Participants were chosen based on their irregular participation in community bands. Results were briefly analyzed using the qualitative multiple case study of Creswell (2013). Themes emerged from the coding process and the researcher engaged in member checking (Guba & Lincoln, 1985) by clarifying main ideas, and verifying the experience with the participant after the interview process. This member checking was done to maintain accuracy of the data collected (Krueger, 2010).

Interview topics included the following: What are your priorities in life and how do community bands play a role in this plan? What appeals to you about community bands? What issues, challenges, disservices do you see with these ensembles? What would strengthen these organizations? What stopped your participation in community bands? How can the organizations help facilitate a better experience for you? Why might other musicians not participate?

Observations

Approximately five hours of observations of active community band participants, happened during four consecutive regular evening rehearsals in a middle school band room. This community band was chosen to see how active musicians interact with each other. Also, approximately five hours of observations at the home of Louise, the practicing musician but non-active community band participant, was completed. She was observed in one week, for two afternoon practice routines. For both observations, tacit patterns were the focus (Rossman & Rallis, 2003), which included space, activities, groups, and demeanor.

Document Collection

Individuals were explored in depth using their explanations of community band participation, and information was collected using responses and document collections of shared suggestions during the interviews. These documents included pictures, programs, awards, schedules, and audio compact disc of ensembles the participants were strongly passionate about. All documents corresponded to the community band experiences participants were sharing pertaining to the interview topics and ideas. Conversations became more detailed as participants remembered more of the experiences after looking at pictures and past performance programs.

Analysis of the documents was used to map time and space of the community of practice of community bands, since I was an insider-researcher (Kanuha, 2000). People created these documents (such as Anthony's concert schedule) and may have kept them for the purpose of remembering the experience. For example, Louise shared a 1965 New York World's Fair concert picture and Mark shared a 1970's drum corps recording in Corning, New York proving their participation in the ensembles. Seeing and hearing these ensembles gave the researcher a better understanding of the communities of practice these participants were discussing, along with associating the era with which these participants were connecting. Overall, these documents gave

the researcher an understanding of the ensemble with which these individuals socialized, experienced, and interacted, along with an introduction to the other musicians during participants' past active participation with a community band.

Reporting of Positionality

Since this researcher is an active community band conductor and musician, questions pertained to participants' interest, involvement, engagement, and how they started with community bands. To get more of an in-depth understanding from the interviews (Rossman & Rallis, 2003), further questions then were geared to be more descriptive about style, appeal, and participation of music. As the interview moved forward and the context was justified, questions were then prompted to go elsewhere (Schram, 2006). Such questions emerged about audience expectations, the conductor, and the structure of the community organization itself. Each interview did not receive the same number of questions, as the researcher guided the discussion, rather than joining in (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008).

Results and Discussion

Through the entire interview process, participants were more than happy to share their experiences and documents via mail, email, and in person. Many of the interviews and observations, went over the scheduled time. While analyzing the interviews, observations, and documents, the following themes emerged from the data: musical engagement, ensemble appeal, organization practices, and motivating experiences.

Musical Engagement

During interviews, participants initiated many conversations about how they engaged with performing music. This musical engagement was realized when Jane stated, "It's difficult for me to take my focus off my work, so music allows me to go somewhere and not have a

choice but to play music.” According to her perceptions, she gravitated to music-making as a release from reality. Music took control of her body, made her feel “good” and her stress disappeared. The researcher observed the same behavior seen during a community band rehearsal observation, when the musicians looked involved with performing. They had a peaceful expression on their face, and when the conductor gave the down beat with his baton, they responded using their instruments. Although during a past band rehearsal, when Jane felt pressured, she found herself not motivated to participate. Jane’s conversation with the researcher indicated how important these community organization opportunities were, but also described the “burdens of band;” what she perceived as pressure from the conductor and feeling guilty with being present at all events. These burdens, as Jane relayed it, eliminated her musical release.

Participant Mary defined the idea of musical engagement as being connected with the music, and “seeing a large number of players in the ensemble since it is hard to find people to participate, and yet the community expects a band to be present at events like parades.” Mary continued, “when everybody is engaged with the music, they will do the best they can.” Anthony described this engagement similarly as, “more opportunities to show off...to have some fun,” with enjoyable repertoire, many musicians, and regular concerts. An effective concert schedule was important to keep the engagement and interest of the musicians, especially when performances were held every few months. This engagement was found in a past community band concert schedule Anthony shared.

Mark explained his lack of engagement by expressing that many historical musical pieces were not taught in public schools. Since today we have numerous recordings available with technology, “any child will only like what they are exposed to. If not told how music tells a story, today [music] is junk food of the ear. Our culture has changed; people are accepting

garbage. We accept mediocre music for so long, we accept mediocre musicianship. So, audience and musicians have no interest in serious music!” This statement references popular music used in television and public school music programs, which may decline engagement or at least not provide enough understanding for a student to comprehend serious pieces of music. According to Mark, not “dumbing down music” or arranging music to be too simple, and then not “rewarding bad musicianship” may motivate more community band participation.

Another thought about motivating more consistent engagement in community band came from Louise, who stated, “knowing you are in tune, when the band sounds like it should and you know it.” Louise, who proudly showed her community band Hall of Fame awards and significant performances such as the 1965 New York World’s Fair concert picture doesn’t perform in the community band anymore. However, she was observed constantly playing her trombone throughout the day. Louise always had the instrument out of the case, with music on the stand, which engaged her music making.

Participants of this research wanted newness, low-pressure situations, social relationships, a tension release, yet seriousness in music making in band. Musical engagement was seen in a plain form of “chop time” or time “actually performing on your instrument” according to John. Although each participant was hardly involved, they eluded to music making with others, a benefit found by performing in a community band. Even Louise who is performing on her own, continued with this music making element, which could be enhanced with others. Music making was seen maximized during a community band observation when everybody was performing together, which is what Gates (1991) calls an aesthetic benefit.

Ensemble Appeal

Many interview discussions focused on whether participants would become more active if their community band experience became more satisfying. Questions were then focused on what attributes would make community bands more appealing. Mark suggested music repertoire was an appeal of any ensemble since “classical or mixed [music], keeps [band] interesting.” Having popular, jazz, and symphonic pieces, keeps the members and audiences interested. Here was where the band received applause, Mary described that the “thrill happens when the band marches in a parade and the people on the street cheer for us.” Sharing a recording of a drum corps marching show from 1970s in Corning, New York, you can hear the loud crowd cheering and applauding, which today still gave Mary chills, increasing the appeal of her involvement with a music ensemble.

The music camaraderie, keeping the technique or “fingers moving,” and seeing people “smile when they hear music,” was the way Anthony described an effective ensemble. This community band, as portrayed by John will “give back to the community.” Especially when this ensemble “wears the same uniform, acts the part, and are one big family,” Louise believes this band will please everybody. Louise expressed that the band was, “sort of like a military group, but more like a bunch of friends with the same respect and motivation.” As Louise shared a picture of a 1950s-group performing in a band shell when she was a teenager in the band, the professionalism from the ensemble was discussed. Louise indicated that the action of dressing in the uniform gave the participants a sense of belonging to the band, which began to provide the researcher with more information about how this uniform was appealing to participation.

However, the appeal in participating in a community band was different for everybody. Jane stated, “over the years we have made many good friends through the band. My husband has hired band members as secretarial workers in his business, we have made friends with a couple

that we socialize with outside band activities.” In other words, the social aspect of community band may have also influenced the appeal. Regardless, there is some sort of ensemble appeal, which could influence community band participation levels.

Organization Practices

The organization of the community band was a topic many participants mentioned, which resulted in a discussion of how the ensemble practiced. John stated, “I am a trained musician. I can read [music repertoire] once and play the concert. When music is at a level of middle school, and we have three months of rehearsals...I am bored. I want to be challenged.” He was referring to the organizational procedures where musicians were presented new repertoire for the next concert season. John found his attention and motivation for the music decreased when the ensemble spent too much time preparing for upcoming concerts. On the opposite side, Anthony disliked the “pressure of screwing up” or not playing the repertoire correctly. He referred to the pressure of being perfect, just like the conductor in front of the group, who needed to know all the musicians’ parts, to give correct tempos and good direction.

Community bands have to be organized for participants to continue supporting them. For the most part, this band was a volunteer organization and many of the participants indicated that wasting time should be avoided. For example, Jane stated, “at one point, the band would sometimes have less than 20 players at a concert. Sometimes as low as 12-15 with only one player on a part, or none in some sections. Because it is a ‘no auditions’ group, I think that some people might not take the commitment as seriously as others. During that period, the director was not a motivating leader and it greatly impacted the player participation. This led to my disinterest.” In this situation, Jane detailed a time-wasting experience since the band musicians

were missing due to organizational issues and the motivation of the director, who had a large impact on the development of the community band.

Mark shared a similar view:

“I think with any group, the leader (be it coach or conductor or even a teacher in a classroom) has to set the tone, the "mood", if you will of the rehearsals. People will do hard work, if they see a point to it, or if the leader can make the experience pleasurable (or at least not a bummer). Again, in my own case, as a conductor/teacher/pastor/manager, I personally have found the phrase "Ok, that was good, how can we make it better?" and then LISTEN and apply what others say and really make it a group effort, greatly increases participation, from even the most reluctant member. The leader has to be self-confident enough to realize that what is being said is not a PERSONAL attack, and to stop any back-biting between individuals. Yeah, Timmy the tuba player may not have bathed in a month, but during rehearsal in the group setting is no place to bring it up, stick to the topic at hand in a group setting. It can be like juggling live hand grenades, so this approach is not for the faint of heart. Unless this "good, let's make it better" approach is done correctly, it can come across as "You're never good enough". I think that's why some conductors come across as dictators. Still, if people see the leader is firm, but fair, and the leader works alongside the others, give a LOT more praise than criticism, people will WANT to stick around.”

The words which were capitalized above, show what Mark emphasized as he was speaking. Mark believed that if the director of the community band approached rehearsals in such a way, this approach would create a connection among musicians. Especially since most of the musicians wanted to believe their contribution was meaningful, helpful, and needed, even though their music-making might need some work. Louise also stated something similar, in that, “when the band feels connected to the performance, there is a commitment” to the ensemble.

Along this same concept, Mary commented “I can't stand when we have too many cooks [administrators] in the kitchen [organization]. I was in an experience where two people felt they were in control. Did not care what the rest of the group felt nor worried about working together. The best band would be one where everybody has the same ideas.” Mary continued to discuss this small participant community band, which suffered with performances due to inactive musicians. This low participation was similar to Jane's comment above “with only one player on

a part,” when there is only one musician in each instrumental section, making performing certain musical selections problematic.

In general, this concern echoed by several participants was with organizational practices of time, commitment, preparation, flexibility, and professionalism. As John relayed, “a conductor has to be prepared for what might go wrong so I do not have to be in charge.” There also needed to be flexibility in commitment, as three participants mentioned feeling “tied down” (Anthony, Jane, and John) to the organization.

Motivating Experiences

Each participant was very compelled to tell their stories of past community band experiences. These conversations were centered on what experiences the subjects found motivating. Timing has been an overall concern with participation in this study. Mark reiterated his concern with timing with other commitments such as his church. He could be motivated to take the time to perform in a community band with a “performance that is not dumbed down.” During his interview, he recalled and shared concert programs from his past involvement in high school and the local community bands, which both performed challenging music; he recalled music that was “grade 4 or higher.” He was referring to most publishers who organize music into grade categories of one through six, one beginning the easiest and six being the most technically challenging. This attitude was the same as John who said that he would participate, “when I am challenged.” This challenge was also what Anthony referred to when he said, “playing music that does not drag.” However, Anthony would rather be involved with something different, a performance that was more of a “once in a lifetime” experience such as the “Willy Wonka musical band.” This involvement could be an atypical performance, something new, or possibly

an overall goal for the organization, which would push individuals to perform at their highest level.

Jane explained, “anything that creates a community of players strengthens the band. Current examples in place might be the rehearsal picnic in the summer and the winter potluck at the beginning of a new season.” Jane was referring to more social aspects of the community organization, which was of most importance to her participation. Although these motivations were more outside the practice of performing music, almost all the participants referenced (to some degree) making friends, or at least being social with others. This social support was important to many musicians especially if this encouragement was something they do during retirement.

Mary indicated, “when there is a large audience showing up for the concert...I will participate. This will only happen if we have showmanship.” Mary was referring to the entertainment aspect of the performance. Music in this case would be entertaining and this engagement will happen when the band shows off their abilities to the audience. Mary continued to reference the showmanship of the uniform, especially when she showed the researcher a picture of an old band uniform. The symbol (Wenger, 1998) of the uniform, became the visual appearance, showmanship, and presentation of the band, in some cases. This symbol was important especially when the audience respected or honored the band in militaristic uniforms.

Continuing on with the concept of an audience, Louise believed, “when my friends are tapping [engaged] with the music, they are entertained, having fun, and this is the point of a band, right?” She was referring to music as being an entertainment art form and even though other viewpoints may differ, Louise wanted to entertain the audience, especially her friends. This engagement led to a discussion of musical artists such as Tommy Dorsey, Glenn Miller, and

Hoagy Carmichael. Louise also insisted on sharing a few compact discs with the researcher, containing recordings of the U.S. Marine Band under the direction of Lieutenant Colonel Albert F. Schoepper. She felt anybody who is interested in bands, needed to listen to these recordings.

Participants' experiences varied from repertoire, entertainment, camaraderie, variety, and keeping a sufficient balance of challenges for both the ensemble and the music. All of these discussions led to conversations of what Jellison (2000) considers meaningful music experiences. Mark indicated, "music is not one thing. You have to have a combination of things. Not just playing the notes. I can get the computer to play the music. Without human factor, it is just notes. With music, we have to put our soul into it." Mark was referring to music-making that is meaningful, containing musical expression from musicians, the sound observed during a community band rehearsal, and not sounds from a machine.

Overall from the interviews, observations, and document collections, results indicated participants focused their community band involvement with musical engagement, ensemble appeal, organization practices, and motivating experiences. Each participant expressed that they would not avoid returning to community bands in the future, but stated that the current experiences were not satisfying enough to participate regularly.

Conclusions and Future Research

Each participant of this study graciously expressed the positive impact community bands have on participants. The concern of low active participation in these community bands still remained, especially for Louise and Mark who were very engaged with music-making but chose not to participate in a band. The rest of the participants, (Mary, Jane, Anthony, and John) seemed to at least perform a few times a year with a community band. This lack of participation was odd, because these musicians were more than happy to discuss their music-making involvement in

community bands. This involvement may be a case of facilitating the goals of adult learners by understanding their instructional needs in a community band setting.

Even though community bands were made up of participants of all ages, these adults were generally older, therefore music learning may need to be approached in a different way. It could be the importance of the delivery system, just as much as the information being relayed and experienced by the community band participants (Fenwick, 2000).

Regardless, the idea of this form of music education remains very different than the traditional K-12 institutional focus. For example, historically there have been no mandated standards for community music organizations; just community group organizers relying on the intrinsic motivation and dedication to music from the adult learners who stay involved. The assumption was that the participants wanted to participate in a community band to satisfy their need for music engagement. Interestingly, the music engagement results of the current study were most compelling. It was fascinating how these participants held onto certain situations, and remembered experiences, which was the main motivation for their involvement in a community band. This involvement suggests their participation and learning was situated (Lave & Wenger, 1991) by the environment, conductor, the ensemble itself, the uniforms, and the instruments, the tools of such practice (Rose, 1999). Even though research has been conducted on amateur musicians who wish to engage in music for aesthetic reasons (Ruggeri, 2003), it might be useful to investigate how conductors and groups engage with music aesthetically since many participants discussed unique performances. The relationships between the thoughts and feelings of the participants while making music, represent the aesthetic responses or what musicians consider meaningful music-making (Jellison, 2000). “The act of musicking [music making]

establishes in the place where it is happening a set of relationships, and it is in those relationships that the meaning of the act lies” (Small, 1998, p. 13).

This research focused on six Low Active Participants of adult community bands and through interviews, observations, and document collection. The purpose of this study was to describe music making experiences during community band participation. Looking at community bands as a community of practice (Wenger, 1998), and learning as situated (Lave and Wenger 1991), has been useful in analyzing the results. Participants focused on aspects of musical engagement, ensemble appeal, organization practices, and motivating experiences. The participants relayed that playing in community bands could be an enjoyable activity and this engagement may be due to the direction and leadership of the organizations.

References

- Boud, D. and Middleton, H. (2003), Learning from others at work: communities of practice and informal learning, *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 15(5), 294-202, doi: 10.1108/13665620310483895.
- Bowles, C. (1991), Self-expressed adult music education interests and music experiences, *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 39(91), 191-205, doi: 10.2307/3344719.
- Carucci, C. (2012), An investigation of social support in adult recreational music ensembles, *International Journal of Community Music*, 5(3), 237-252, doi: 10.1386/ijcm.5.3.237_1.
- Creswell, J. (2013), *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.), London, England: SAGE Publications.
- Dabback, W. (2008), Identity formation through participation in the Rochester New Horizons Band programme, *International Journal of Community Music*, 1(2), 267-286. doi: 10.1386/ijcm.1.2.267/1.
- Fenwick, T. J. (2000), Expanding conceptions of experiential learning: A review of the five contemporary perspectives on cognition, *Adult Education Quarterly*, 50(243), 243-272, doi: 10.1177/07417130022087035.
- Finnegan, R. (2007), *The hidden musicians: Music-making in an English town*, Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press.
- Gates, J. T. (1991), Music participation: Theory, research, and policy, *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, 109, Summer, 1-35.
- Gill, P., Stewart, K., Treasure, E., and Chadwick, B. (2008), Methods of data collection in qualitative research: Interviews and focus groups, *British Dental Journal*, 204, 291 – 295, doi: 10.1038/bdj.2008.192.

- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1998). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues* (pp. 195-220). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Higgins, L. (2012), *Community music: In theory and in practice*, New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.
- Higgins, L. (2008), Growth, pathways and groundwork: Community music in the United Kingdom, *International Journal of Community Music*, 1(1), 23-37, doi: 10.1386/ijcm.1.1.23/1.
- Illeris, K. (Ed.) (2009), *Contemporary theories of learning: Learning theorists...in their own words*, New York, New York: Routledge.
- Jellison, J. (2000), How can all people continue to be involved in meaningful music participation?, In C. Madsen (Ed.), *Vision 2020: The Housewright Symposium on the Future of Music Education* (109-138), Music Educator's National Conference.
- Kanuha, V. K. (2000). "Being" native versus "going native": Conducting social work research as an insider. *Social Work*, 45(5), 439-447. doi:10.1093/sw/45.5.439
- Krueger, R. A. (2010). Using stories in evaluation. In J. S. Wholey, H. P. Hatry, & K. E. Newcomer (Eds.), *Handbook of practical program evaluation* (3rd ed.; pp. 404-424). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.
- Kruse, N. (2009), 'An elusive bird': perceptions of music learning among Canadian and American adults, *International Journal of Community Music*, 2(2&3), 215-225, doi: 10.1386/ijcm.2.2&3.215/1.
- Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991), *Situate learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*, Cambridge, England: University of Cambridge Press.

- Long, J. (2014), Finding retention in community music ensemble participants, *The Recorder, The Journal of the Ontario Music Educators' Association*, 57(1), Autumn, 16-24.
- Lundin, J. and Nuldèn, U. (2007), Talking about tools – investigating learning at work in police practice, *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 19(4), 222-239, doi: 10.1108/13665620710747915.
- Mantie, R. (2012a), A study of community band participants: Implications for music education, *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, 191, 21-43.
- Mantie, R. (2012b), Learners or participants?, The pros and cons of ‘lifelong learning’. *International Journal of Community Music*, 5(3), 217-235, doi: 10.1386/ijcm.5.3.217_1.
- Rose, M. (1999), “Our Hands Will Know”: The development of tactile diagnostic skill – teaching, learning, and situated cognition in a physical therapy program, *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 30(2), 133-160.
- Rossmann, G. B., and Rallis, S. F. (2003), *Learning in the field: An introduction to qualitative research* (2nd ed.), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Ruggeri, S. (2003), *Passionate devotion: A study of aesthetic learning among amateurs, in four movements*, (Doctoral Dissertation), The Pennsylvania State University, Pennsylvania, Available from UMI Films in ProQuest, (UMI No. 3106317).
- Schram, T. H. (2006), *Conceptualizing and proposing qualitative research* (2nd ed.), Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Small, C. (1998), *Musicking: The meanings of performing and listening*, Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press/University Press of New England.

Turner, D. W., III (2010), Qualitative interview design: A practical guide for novice investigators, *The Qualitative Report*, 15(3), 750-760, Retrieved from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR15-3/qid.pdf>.

Veblen, K. and Olsson, B. (2002), Community music, In R. Colwell & C. Richardson (Eds.), *The New Handbook of Research on Music Teaching and Learning* (p. 730 – 753), New York, New York: Oxford University Press.

Wenger, E. (1998), *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*, Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, Inc.

Music in Family Dynamics and Relationships: A Case Study

Claudia Cali⁴

Abstract

The role of parents is central in children's musical lives throughout childhood, yet it serves distinctive functions in different developmental stages. During early childhood, literature documents parents' and children's spontaneous musical interactions in daily life as a means for creating and sustaining bonding and mutuality. As children begin compulsory schooling and become involved in formal music instructions, research tends to highlight the influence and contribution of parents in children's music learning process. In this case study, I present the musical life of one family with a toddler and a school-age child as a qualitative case study and document the full range of their musical experiences—spontaneous musical interactions and music learning activities—in which they are engaged on a daily basis. Through the portrait of a family highly immersed in music, I intend to depict the complex web of family members' reciprocal influences and provide insights into their distinct but interconnected emotional worlds. Data analysis indicates that music is an enriching presence in family life, a source of emotional closeness that served to balance tensions and frustrations and develop relationships of mutual responsiveness. Whether dancing together at home, making up songs at dinner time, attending a Broadway show or practicing piano, music enabled family members to spend meaningful time

⁴New York University Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development

Corresponding Author:

Claudia Cali, New York University Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, 82 Washington Square E, New York, NY 10003

Email: cc6725@nyu.edu

together, attuned and drawn to each other by their shared musicality. Implications for music education research and practice are provided.

Keywords: musical parenting, spontaneous musical interactions, family musical relationships, case study

Introduction

The role of parents is central in children's musical lives throughout childhood, as documented by a large body of literature depicting family musical life from different perspectives and around the world. A thorough analysis of this literature, and especially that related to family musical dynamics and the influence of music on parent-child interactions, seems to reveal two main lines of research. One such line of inquiry is early childhood research examining how music—particularly the extemporaneous exchange of singing sounds and dancing gestures—serves to create and sustain affective bonding in families (e.g., Custodero & Johnson-Green, 2008; Dissanayake, 2000; Malloch and Trevarthen, 2002; 2009; Papousek, 1996; Sole, 2016; Trevarthen, 2011). Another line of inquiry is a large body of literature addressing the role of families in children's musical education, as it pertains to the school setting (e.g.: Brand, 1986; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 2005) and extra musical activities related to the formal acquisition of musical skills and the mastery of a musical instrument (e.g. Creech, 2009; Creech & Hallam, 2003, 2011; Davidson & Borthwick, 2002; Davidson & Pitts, 2001; Koops, Kuebel & Smith, 2017; McPherson, Davidson & Faulkner, 2012; McPherson & Davidson, 2006), and therefore involves school-age children.

The first line of inquiry reflects a developmental perspective where music is viewed as a means for socialization and emotional growth (Ilari, 2017), and parents and children described as both equal agents in the construction of their relationships. Music is naturally woven into family's daily routines, such as diaper change (Addessi, 2009), journeys in the car (Koops, 2014) or pre-sleep transitions (Sole, 2016). It shapes family rituals (Barrett, 2009), serves as a means for communication (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009), and creates a sense of belonging to a shared family culture (Gratier & Apter-Danon, 2009; Ilari, 2009). For Dissanayake (2000), parents and

children's spontaneous musical interactions are the ultimate expression of mutuality as they reflect their shared need to be emotionally meaningful for one another. A pedagogical lens seems to rather characterize the second above-mentioned line of research, which highlights the influence and contribution of parents in children's music learning process, as children enter the compulsory school-age period and become more engaged in formal learning. Asserting the centrality of parents in children's learning, this research called us to recognize that children's musical development is closely connected to their family, and specifically to their home environment (Ilari & Young, 2016), to the parents' values, beliefs, and ability to let their children access a variety of musical opportunities.

In this article, I present the musical life of one family with a toddler and a school-age child as a qualitative case study (Merriam, 1998). I document the full range of musical experiences—spontaneous musical interactions and music learning activities—in which the family members are engaged on a daily basis and seek to explore how music can become a source of bonding and mutuality, shaping members' relationships, interpersonal dynamics, and self-perceived role. Through the portrait of a family highly immersed in music, I intend to depict the complex web of family members' reciprocal influences and provide insights into their distinct and yet interconnected emotional worlds. Such investigation might deepen our understanding of the richness that music may bring in the life of families and suggest pathways for engaging them more meaningfully in our music education settings.

The Case Study

The Foley family included parents Sylvia (37 years old) and Gregory (36 years old), who held administrative positions in musical theater, and two boys, Ben and Gabe, 7- and 3-year-old, respectively, at the time of the study. Gregory had worked as a professional actor for a few years

before marrying, while Sylvia's involvement with musical theater had always been exclusively administrative. Residents of a borough of New York City, they were part of a multiple case study that documented current musical experiences and musical memories of ten families with children in middle childhood (Cali, 2015). The Foley family represented a household where music was central to daily life in many ways: it surrounded the parents' jobs; it was valued and chosen as an important means to an educational end; and it was cherished as a significant aspect of the family life, providing opportunities for spontaneous music making and for meaningful sharing. It was illuminating to see how in a family where music was so central, but not pursued as a professional artistic career, all the musical activities and experiences shared within the family context influenced members' interactions and relationships. This family was chosen as an exemplary case to achieve as full an understanding as possible of the role of music in family dynamics and relationships (Merriam, 1998).

Methodology

Data collection took place over a 5-month period and comprised two 4-to-5-hours long home visits. During the first one, I conducted individual semi-structured interviews. All the interviews were audio recorded. I also asked family members to document their musical experiences over a period of seven weeks, three times per week. Each member filled out individual journals formatted in a booklet, in which they were asked to write their musical experiences (Figures 1, 2, 3). The younger child did not independently fill out a journal, but added some drawings to his mother's journal.

During the second home visit, I conducted a collective "show and tell" interview, in which members were asked to present and describe personal artifacts related to music such as songs, pictures, musical instruments, concerts programs, or videos. Artifact gathering shed light

on the emotional meanings of family musical life; it exemplified stories recounted during the first interview, illuminating contexts and functions of their most recent experiences. Family members were also asked to individually and collectively comment on the journals they had previously filled out, for validation in the form of member checks (Kvale, 2007).

The coding process of interviews transcripts, journals, and musical artifacts comprised first dividing the reported episodes into two groups (spontaneous musical interactions and music learning activities), as established in my research purpose, and then developing codes about the setting, the subjects' ways of thinking about music in relation to each other, and the perspective held by the subjects about music (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I subsequently identified emerging themes regarding family members' self-understanding and awareness of each other's feelings and thoughts. Interpretation was also informed by a linguistic analysis of oral and written texts of each participant (such as recurring linguistic forms, metaphors, personal or impersonal pronouns) and by considerations of the contexts in which each data source was collected (Bruner, 1987; Peräkylä & Ruusuvuori, 2018). Consistencies and differences in members' account of the same musical episodes were also examined. To enhance accuracy of interpretation, I also used peer debriefing, and asked colleagues to examine the data collected and some of my analysis, in order to find insights that may have been overlooked (Creswell, 2019). Excerpts from the interviews and journals in Figures 1-3 exemplify the process of coding and the grouping in one of the themes.

Aware that entering the private life of a family could be perceived as intrusive (Graue and Walsh, 1998), I was sensitive to the fact that family is a particularly intimate space requiring permission beyond the formality of the collected consent form in conformity with IRB approval. As researcher, I was especially aware of discomfort that comes from talking to an outsider about

private aspects of their lives, and I strove to respect the unique contribution of each member as individually expressed.

Findings and Discussion

Family Musical Interactions and Activities

Music seemed to be pervasive in the Foleys' daily life, working seamlessly into their emotional state as well as the children's musical development. Singing and dancing accompanied their daily routines and they inspire moments of spontaneous musical creativity everywhere they went. Below, the dynamics underlying such interactions are described.

Singing: A father- son activity. Singing occurred throughout the day: at bedtime, travelling on short or long car rides and sometimes at the table, during dinner. Throughout the data collection period, Sylvia began realizing how often her family, specifically her children, sang on a daily basis. During the second visit, she revealed that journaling made her increasingly aware of the ubiquity of singing in their family life, especially recognizing that her 7-year-old son Ben, "sings all the time, which is very similar to Gregory, and I had forgotten how much he does it." She proceeded to explain that even some of their family friends had noticed that Gregory, like Ben, is always singing. Gregory also displayed awareness that his intense attraction to singing was shared with his older son. He recognized that for Ben singing served as a musical form of storytelling that framed his daily experiences; there always seemed to be a good reason to make up songs, whether to express pleasure for the vegetables that he ate at dinnertime, or to provide a soundtrack for when his brother threw a temper tantrum. Recognizing himself in Ben's overflowing need to sing, Gregory often struggled to find a balance between understanding this tendency and educating his child in proper manners and social behavior. Gregory observed,

Sometimes Ben says, "Ah! I can't control it!" and I remember feeling that way when I was a kid, I was just sitting here and all I'll do is I'll sing; that's how it is! I know that is

what he feels but he's got to be mindful of the situation and what is going on around him, when it's appropriate and when it's not. And we don't really bug him about singing, he just sings whenever he wants outside of the table and when [it] is not disruptive to something bigger going on, like his brother getting in trouble. You do not sing about being in trouble! (*Individual interview - first visit*)

Despite Gregory's frustration with Ben, their shared yearning for singing seems to have connected them emotionally (see Figures 1, 2, 3). They expressed such musical bonding through different modalities, while Sylvia appeared to observe this with awe. This was particularly evident in a journal entry, where Sylvia, Ben and Gregory recounted the same episode—watching the soccer game on TV and singing the national anthem. However, each of them described it slightly differently. Gregory observed that he felt, “excited and patriotic” because the soccer game gave him an opportunity to show his child some of the traditions with which he grew up. Data analysis indicated that Ben sought moments of meaningful sharing through singing with his father. In his journal he often used expressions such as, “I like singing with my dad” or, “I would like to sing more with my dad,” and in fact his father was mentioned in all the entries related to singing at home.

Conversely, looking at father and son from outside the dyad, Sylvia recognized their musical talent and proudly noted their shared musicality. She recounted,

Gregory had Ben stand with him, place his hand over his heart and sing the national anthem. So sweet, Gregory has a beautiful voice and when he sings with Ben he melts my heart. (*Journal entry 2 - Week 1*)

WEEK 1 - Entry No. 1	
Date: 6/22	
HOW did you feel?	Silly, patriotic
DESCRIBE & COMMENT	<p>excited about the world cup like to show the some of traditions I grew up with</p> <p>Gregory singing with Ben</p>

Figure 1. Gregory's journal entry 1, excerpt

WEEK - Entry No. -	
Date: -	
HOW did you feel?	In love
DESCRIBE & COMMENT	<p>Gregory had Ben stand with him, place his hand over his heart and sing the national anthem. So sweet. Gregory has a beautiful voice and when he sings with Ben it melts my heart. I also love America, and I love seeing a dad teach his son the words to our national anthem.</p>

Figure 2. Sylvia's journal entry 2, excerpt

WEEK 1 - Entry No. 2	
Date: _____	
HOW did you feel?	I felt really good with my Dad and my Self.
DESCRIBE & COMMENT	I like singing 1 with my Dad more often. I felt more good 2 watching the soccer game. I would like 3 to sing more with my Dad.

Figure 3. Ben's journal entry 2, excerpt

Ben and Gabe's familiarity with singing seemed to stem from their parents introducing them to musical theater more frequently than any other musical genre. Recently, however, Ben's repertoire was expanding, as a result of new friendships with school peers who listened to pop songs and contemporary music. During the summer, Ben also attended a musical theater camp where he learned many Broadway songs, and he was repeatedly selected for leading roles. Ben spoke extensively about this experience during my second visit and shared four videos featuring him singing. While Gabe was still primarily drawn to children's tunes and cartoon songs, he seemed to be influenced by his older brother's musical experiences. During my second visit, I noticed that Gabe continued singing every song that Ben had mentioned and shared with me, even when our conversation had moved on. Ben appeared to serve as a musical resource for Gabe, whose musical responses were often triggered by his brother's stimuli.

Dancing as a family. Dance parties represented a building block of the Foleys' life. In all the interviews, dance parties were described as spontaneous moments of moving freely to the music whenever they, “feel inspired as a family,” as Gregory once noted. Engaging with music together was reported as a means for this family to cope with the intensity of their work and school life, as well as to understand each other and connect emotionally. Usually Sylvia initiated these moments when she sensed that “everything gets a little too hectic” and they all needed to “get all their wiggles out.” She furthermore illustrates:

Dance parties? [They] often [happen] before bath time. I consider from 4pm to 6pm the witching hour and that’s when the kids melt down because they are tired, and they had a long day and they are hungry; so whenever I find myself just yelling at them too much, we just put on music and dance and then just do that for 10-15 minutes and then everything is ... okay, it’s like a reset switch. So then we can just do something else.
(*Individual interview - first visit*)

These moments seemed to occur even when they were outside. This was evident in one of Sylvia’s journal entries:

Ben, Gabe and I were walking to Ben’s piano lesson. We walked on the sidewalk in a place of our neighborhood where people set up chairs and play music most summer evenings. Lots of people were playing their radios, but one guy was cleaning out his car and was blasting Spanish/Latino music. At first I was annoyed that he was playing the music so loudly, but when Ben and Gabe broke out into spontaneous dancing, I couldn’t help but smile. They danced down the block and other folks smiled at the boys too. The boys are always a good reminder to find the joy in life. (*Journal entry 15- Week 5*)

In this, as in other circumstances, dancing influenced family members’ moods and attitude.

Sylvia reported that dancing served to release negative feelings and influenced their perception of experiences and situations.

From Ben’s perspective, dance parties were opportunities to watch and cherish Gabe’s unfettered clumsy movements along with the music—a scene that unanimously brought laughter to the whole family. Recently, Ben had developed new musical interests, choosing to take on learning challenges like tap dancing. Sylvia reported how Ben defined tap dancing as,

“drumming for your feet,” and was continuously, “trying to tap a rhythm song out with his feet.”
(*Journal entry 11 – Week 4*)

Playing the piano. Although supportive of spontaneous family music making, Sylvia also believed in the formalized experience of music instruction as a means to cognitive and cultural growth for her children. Therefore, as soon as Ben reached what Sylvia defined as, “the right age,” she started taking him to piano lessons, firmly convinced of the invaluable richness that playing an instrument can bring into a person’s life. Piano did not seem to be Ben’s favorite musical activity, but he trusted his mother and her parental choice and practiced the piano daily.

Since the keyboard was located in the living room, Sylvia and Gregory had developed strategies to constantly monitor Ben’s practice sessions, especially when they were not able to sit next to him and directly help him. Fully aware of their son’s reluctance to practice piano, they continuously negotiated with him, attempting to obtain a more consistent practice commitment. Sylvia was more involved than Gregory in this learning process: she took Ben to piano lessons and strove to consistently attend to his practice time. Yet, this involvement came with some frustration since, in her words, “He has taken lessons for a year and already a year of piano is further than I know. So I can’t necessarily (*pause*)... if he’s not playing correctly I don’t know how to help him” (*Individual Interview – first visit*). She believed that to be more effective, she should study music herself, and was frustrated that she lacked the time to do this. In the first interview, she connected this frustration to a negative childhood experience with piano that led her feeling inadequate.

Ben seemed to trust what she wanted for him. He accepted that his mother knew what was best for him and he took piano lessons contrary to his personal preference. He expressed his reluctance by saying,

I love playing drums...drums are fun...and the piano is... I... don't...I want a drum lesson, but to unleash drums from my spirit, you have to go through piano until 18. My mom said that I need to go through piano until I'm maybe 16 or 18. (*Individual interview – first visit*)

This definitive decision to focus on piano seemed to be rooted in Sylvia's childhood experience.

She corroborated,

I played piano for a year and I begged my mom to quit, because my peers were so much more advanced while I was doing scales, and I was like, "Oh, this is embarrassing to me." And so she let me quit after a year and I regret that because I wish I could have started earlier, because...well, especially how much my life has to do with musical theater and editing books, just knowing music better would be helpful in a lot of different ways, and that's the reason why I want Ben to stick to it. (*Individual interview – first visit*)

Family Dynamics and Musical Roles

While the Foleys all seemed to share a common interest and love for music, data analysis revealed distinctive and unique musical roles that each family member held, as described below. The individual perceptions of their family musical roles coincided with their descriptions of each other.

The musical talent: Gregory. Gregory was the performer of the family. He started performing in high school as a musical theater actor and continued professionally until he and Sylvia settled down and started raising their own family. During the data collection period, he was pursuing Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree in Marketing. He explained that the lifestyle of a Broadway performer required being always on tour, away from one's family: "It was fine for my twenties, but it was not what I wanted to do for my entire life," he said.

Raised in a highly musical family, Gregory learned to play several instruments, sang in a choir, followed the marching band of his father—a high school music teacher and band director—through parades and competitions, and attended arts and music summer camps. However, playing instruments and sight-reading never held his interest. Rather, from a young

age he developed a passion for musical theater, and found himself involved in shows through school and the community. Singing seemed to come naturally to Gregory. His interviews and journal were full of references to singing. During the interviews, he talked about some current and past songs and performed them informally; he imitated Ben's made-up songs and recalled the singing rhymes of his childhood—those that his father used to improvise as a musical storytelling of their day for him and his brother at bedtime—complete with lyrics. The awareness of Gregory's fine musical talent seemed to be strong in Sylvia and Ben, who consistently referenced his beautiful voice, musical competence, and natural aptitude (Figure 2). Comparing her relationship to music to Gregory's, she stated: "Gregory is musical to me because he can listen to people sing and know the notes that they are singing and speak about it fluently. I know what I like to hear, and I know what I don't like to hear and that's about it for me" (*Individual interview – first visit*).

The synchronizer of family musical experiences: Sylvia. Sylvia appeared to perceive herself as the least musical member of her family: she did not play any instrument, and she described herself as lacking both intonation and the sophistication of musical taste. When asked if she considered herself a musical person, she replied in a low tone of voice, but with intensity, "I don't! I'm around way too many musicians to consider myself musical."

Despite this low confidence in her musical abilities, Sylvia presented as the main force behind the family's daily involvement with music, in both spontaneous and formal contexts. She referred to the use of dancing to help the children through daily moments of irritability: "When everything gets a little too hectic, we stop and have a dance party and get all our wiggles out" (*Individual interview – first visit*). Sylvia used singing and playing recorded music, especially in the car, as a strategy to keep the children engaged and emotionally in sync with her and Gregory.

Throughout the interviews and in many journal entries, Sylvia spoke about learning piano as an essential component of her children's education. She regretted prematurely interrupting her piano studies as a child and emphasized that she is strongly motivated to ensure Ben kept learning piano. She observed,

My decision to quit piano as a child is the reason I make Ben stick to it, because it is a huge regret. I read studies where if a child studies music they are also better at math, and I have also struggled with math. Now [I wonder] if I hadn't stopped doing it, if math would have [been] easier for me in college and high school. I'm hoping that I can offer that opportunity and see if it influences them. I don't want them to become piano players, but I'd love them to have an appreciation for it, and I'd love for them to be able to translate to the rest of their studies (*Individual interview – first visit*).

Sylvia's motivation and determination to provide educational opportunities to her children seemed to drive their learning processes.

The intensifier of family vitality: Ben. For Ben, music seemed to function as a way to express and release his mental and physical energy—an embodiment of his inherent vitality. He recognized that his favorite activities were all connected to moving and exercising and that he was constantly seeking opportunities to make his body active. “Except for videogames and some cartoons,” he noted that all he does, “ends up into exercising.” And while talking together during my first visit, he continuously expressed his thoughts through bodily gestures and facial expressions. His notion of music appeared to be connected to movement, as expressed in this instance:

Music is fun, you get to unleash your talent of music, you get to unleash piano, you get to unleash anything that you are really good at... combined into music... Music is everywhere ... I mean like sounds ... sounds like we are talking right now. Music is everywhere ... if I move this chair, this is music, and if you do this [*he moves a box, making some sounds*], this is music. Everywhere is music. I mean...because anything that moves is music, because it makes a sound and sounds are music (*Individual interview – first visit*).

The connection between music and movement drew him naturally towards musical

experiences in which he could release his physical energy, such as playing the drums or tap dancing, and his mental energy, as with singing. This focus on movement was demonstrated by his choice of artifacts—four videos of him singing and dancing improvised and learned songs—and particularly evident in the language used to describe his feelings in the journal entries related to singing. The most frequently recurring words include terms such as “feeling really good,” “energetic,” “awesome,” “exciting,” or expressions such as “I had lots of energy.” His vitality seemed often to be overflowing, forcing his parents to develop strategies to contain or channel it.

Gregory described family mealtime:

Whenever you are trying to eat or have a conversation, trying to learn about people’s day... Ben loves to talk and you know, getting him to stay quiet while we are sharing time with everybody and giving mommy an opportunity to share her peak and pit, it’s challenging when someone else is singing *I love broccoli...broccoli, broccoli (singing in a rock style voice)*; try to steal focus and try to get back attention over to him. It’s a family meal! (*Individual interview – first visit*)

The musical explorer: Gabe. During my two visits to the Foleys' home, Gabe never engaged in direct conversations with me or with his family members. Rather, he seemed to prefer playing on his own with toys or an iPad, or running around the living room. In two of the three visits, he fell asleep in his parents’ arms during our conversations. Gabe turned three during the data collection, which was also the period when Sylvia and Gregory started transitioning him into new routines, including sleeping in his own bed. Musically, Sylvia refers to Gabe as the, “singing-off-key” family member, implicitly underlining the differences between him and his older brother. In her journal, she explained, “Gabe is often over-shadowed by his bigger talkative brother” (*Week 2 – Journal entry 6*). She continues, “I adore hearing him sing—he’s off key (like his mom) but very enthusiastic.” Her words meant to suggest her belief that she and her son were musically less gifted than Ben and Gregory. She explained:

Gregory was pushing Gabe in the shopping cart [at the grocery store], and was one aisle over from where Ben and I were. I was talking to Ben when I heard Gabe start singing at the top of his voice with gusto, “Down by the bay.” Gregory and I joke that Gabe sings like a drunk person: off-key, no melody and a little too loud. It was adorable hearing him sing the song with seriousness and commitment (*Week 6 – Journal entry 17*).

Despite the presence of his more extroverted brother, Gabe’s musical presence still permeated the Foleys’ life, as he exhibited a sense of genuine wonder and joyful spontaneity. Gabe was highly receptive to the ever-present musical content in his home, especially the musicality of Gregory and Ben. For instance, during the second visit, while his father was talking about loading a video of Ben on the computer, Gabe began improvising a song based on the word “loading” on the pitch of SMLSM, echoing and expanding the music-making at home.

Discussion: Bi-Directionality and Mutuality in the Foley Family

According to social relational theory (Sameroff, 1975, 1994, 2009), the Foley family exemplifies the mutual emotional influence between parents and children and demonstrates how the meaning given to their musical exchanges affected the way they responded to each other. Music was ingrained in the Foleys’ life; it was largely present on a daily basis in different forms, providing the rhythm of their interactions and shaping their relationships through mutual contributions (Bell, 1968; Collins & Madsen, 2003; Kuczynski, 2003). Music seemed to create a dynamic matrix through which family members experienced—are receptive and vulnerable to—each other. Whether dancing, singing, listening to music, playing piano or taking part in musical theater events, their musical interactions and behaviors, their emotions and thoughts were reciprocally and causally interconnected (Kuczynski & Parkin, 2009; Kuczynski, Parkin & Pitman, 2014). Their shared passion for musical theater brought emotional intensity to the family interactions with music. Such intensity was experienced in terms of vitality, or a sense of “being

alive" (Stern, 2010) that drove their shared musical activities, and caused them to be highly receptive to each other's emotions, states of mind, thinking processes, and musical preferences.

The Foley's musical interactions and behaviors were shaped by an effort to be constantly attuned to each other, which presented as similar to the intersubjectivity observable in mother's-and-infant's early exchanges (Dissanayake, 2000; Trevarthen & Aitkin, 2001). Ben accepted the experience of piano lessons because he perceived the significance of piano in his mother's life, in an effort to keep himself attuned to Sylvia's musical interests and aspirations. By putting his desire to learn drumming on hold, Ben appeared to prioritize the emotional communion with his mother over his natural musical disposition. In doing so, he demonstrated her influence over him and the degree to which he actively strove to adjust to her intentions and emotions. Gabe tended to constantly be attuned to the musical people that surrounded him, by imitating and mirroring their musical expressions (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009), especially those of his older brother. Meanwhile, Sylvia's awareness of the significance of music in her family's life was often awakened by the musical vitality of her children, which affected her mindset and mood. Sylvia listened deeply to her children's needs, and often used music to actively help them through emotional daily transitions. Such interdependence often prompted a shift in her musical attitudes, emotions, or state of mind, in order to match her children's. While transmitting his love for singing to his sons, Gregory was also receptive to their responses to his singing attitude, which became the context for passing on his musical interests as well as a family musical spirit (Custodero, 2009).

Employing Custodero's definition of mutuality (2005b), I posited that Sylvia and Gregory strongly recognized themselves in the musical actions and expressions of their children. Such mutual mirroring (Dissanayake, 2000) stemmed from moments of collaborative musical

interactions, and was deepened by reflective observations of their children's relationship with music.

For Gregory, recognizing himself in his son's continuous and uncontrollable need to sing deepened this awareness. Ben's singing was so constant that it almost constituted a soundtrack of his daily happenings. Consequently, it may sometimes have occurred in inappropriate moments: when his brother threw a temper tantrum, or during dinner, interrupting family conversations. Gregory understood that when Ben said, "Ah! I can't control it!" he fundamentally found it difficult to stop singing. He remembered feeling the same way, but he did not seem to realize that he still sang all the time, as reported by his wife and friends. As a consequence, Ben and Gregory's engagement with singing was a source of mutuality that drew them closer and generated a sense of mutual mirroring (Dissanayake, 2000). However, singing might also have generated moments of tension that occurred when Ben's musical exuberance raised the intensity of their emotions so high that Gregory felt the necessity to exert his parental authority and reprimanded him. Sylvia also recognized herself in her younger son Gabe and especially in his less exuberant way, compared to Ben, to express his musicality. Her belief that Gabe appeared to be less gifted than his brother seemed to be more a projection of her insecurity regarding her own musical abilities than an unbiased evaluation of Gabe's musical skill. She seemed in this way to long for the same emotional communion that she recognized Ben and Gregory both had.

The activities related to music learning were valued in the Foleys' musical life. Although Sylvia seemed to hold a vital role in this process (McPherson & Davidson, 2002), both parents continuously strove to create a learning partnership with their older son Ben, monitoring his piano practice from a distance, and providing active support and encouragement when his motivation decreased (Creech, 2009a; Creech & Hallam, 2011; Davidson, Howe, Moore &

Sloboda, 1996; McPherson, 2009). In spite of the centrality of formal music education, the spontaneous moments of responsive musical interactions were reported as the most joyful, fun, and bonding, for they served to regulate emotions and release stress (Gingras, 2012). Resembling rhythmic turn taking, melodic vocalizations and bodily gestures of mother's-infant's exchanges, these shared moments exemplified how, through music, parents and children continued to communicate emotionally with one another beyond infancy; the time spent together nourishes a musicality that sustained and enhanced their relationships in meaningful ways (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2002, 2009).

The emotional significance of these spontaneous interactions also became a source of mutual trust when the music learning was stressful and frustrating for Ben, since they fostered a sense of vitality and a positive disposition towards music. These interactions nurtured an affective bonding that went beyond the learning partnership during piano practice (Creech, 2009a, 2009b, Creech & Hallam, 2011). The family's emotional closeness deepened their experience of togetherness, of "being with" one another (Custodero, 2005a), and transformed Ben's experience of learning piano into a shared family activity.

Conclusions

Through the story of the Foleys, I portrayed how music becomes an enriching presence in family life, a source of emotional closeness that served to balance tensions and frustrations and develop relationships based on mutual responsiveness. Whether dancing together at home, making up songs at dinner time, attending a Broadway show or practicing piano, music enabled family members to spend meaningful time together, attuned and drawn to each other by their shared musicality. This calls music education researchers and teachers to acknowledge that music provides affordances for relationship-building and to recognize the extent to which music

continues to enhance family socialization, communication and well-being throughout childhood. It also reaffirms the vital role that family plays in children's development and is at the core of an advocacy for a student-centered approach to teaching music, where students' voices and contributions are valued and the sharing of individual interests and dispositions, as a reflection of the students' family culture, is encouraged. Cultivating connections with students' families might not only provide insights into salient aspects of the home musical environment, but also become a means for understanding which music learning experiences cross the boundaries of the classroom and influence students' lives in meaningful ways. Consideration should also be given to developing pedagogical strategies that allow the creation of spaces where children and parents may share musical experiences together throughout the school year: open lessons, shared concerts or inviting parents to be volunteers in children's musical events. These moments may become opportunities to spend meaningful time together, re-enforcing children's learning, and promoting a conjoined musical engagement.

References

- Addressi, A. R. (2009). The musical dimension of daily routines with under-four children during diaper change, bedtime and free-play. *Early Child Development and Care, 179(6)*, 747-768.
- Bell, R.Q. (1968). A reinterpretation of the direction of effects in studies of socialization. *Psychological Review 75(2)*, 81-95.
- Bogdan, R.C. & Biklen, S.K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods*. New York, NY: Pearson.
- Brand, M. (1986). Relationship between home musical environment and selected musical attributes of second-grade children. *Journal of Research in Music Education, 34(2)*, 111-120.
- Bruner, J. S. (1987). Life as narrative. *Social Research, 54*, 11-32.
- Cali, C. (2015). *Music in family: Experiences of mutuality in middle childhood*. (Doctoral Dissertation). (ProQuest, UMI Dissertations Publishing, 3707244)
- Collins W.A. & Madsen S. D. (2003). Developmental change in parenting interactions. In L. Kuczynski (Ed.) *Handbook of dynamics in parent-child relations* (pp. 49-66). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creech, A. (2009a). The role of the family in supporting learning. In S. Hallam (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of music psychology* (pp. 295-306). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Creech, A. (2009b). Teacher-pupil-parent triads: A Typology of interpersonal interaction in the context of learning a musical instrument. *Musicae Scientiae 13(2)*, 387-413.
- Creech, A. & Hallam, S. (2003). Parent-teacher-pupil interactions in instrumental music tuition: literature review. *British Journal of Music Education 20(1)*, 29-44.

- Creech, A. & Hallam, S. (2011). Learning a musical instrument: The influence of interpersonal interaction on outcomes of school-aged pupils. *Psychology of Music*, 39(1), 102-122.
- Creswell, J.W. (2019). *Educational research: Planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (6th edition). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Custodero, L.A. (2005a). Being with: The resonant legacy of childhood's creative aesthetic. *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 39(2), 36-57.
- Custodero, L.A. (2005b). Making sense of making special: Art and intimacy in musical lives and educational practice. *International Journal of Education and the Arts*, 6(15), 1-16.
- Custodero, L.A. (2009). Musical portraits, musical Pathways: Stories of meaning making in the lives of six families. In J. L. Kerchner and C. R. Abril (Eds.), *Musical experience in our lives: Things we learn and meanings we make* (pp. 77-90). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Custodero, L.A., & Johnson Green, E. A. (2008). Caregiving in counterpoint: Reciprocal influences in the musical parenting of younger and older infants. *Early Child Development and Care*, 178(1), 15-39. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430600601115>.
- Davidson, J. W. & Borthwick, S. J. (2002). Family dynamics and family scripts: A case study of musical development. *Psychology of Music* 30, 121-136.
- Davidson, J. W. & Pitts, S.E. (2001). People have talents: A case study of musical behavior in an adoptive family. *British Journal of Music Education*, 18(2), 161-171.
- Davidson, J. W., Sloboda, J. A. & Howe, M. J. A. (1996). The role of parents and teachers in the success and failure of instrumental learners. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 14, 399-412.
- Davidson, J. W., Howe, M. J., Moore, D. G., & Sloboda, J. A. (1996). The role of parental

- influences in the development of musical performance. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 14(4), 399-412.
- Dissanayake, E. (2000). *Art and intimacy: How the arts began*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.
- Gingras, P. (2012). *Music at home: a portrait of family music-making*. (Doctoral Dissertation) (ProQuest, UMI Dissertations Publishing, 2013. 3555024).
- Gratier, M. & Apter-Danon, G. (2009). The improvised musicality of belonging: Repetition and variation in mother-infant vocal interaction. In S. Malloch & C. Trevarthen (Eds.), *Communicative musicality: Exploring the basis of human companionship* (pp. 301-327). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Graue, M. E. & Walsh, D. J. (1998). *Studying children in context: Theories, methods and ethics*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ilari, B. (2009). Songs of Belonging: Musical interactions in early life. In Kerchner, J. L. & Abril, C. R. (Eds.). *Musical experience in our lives: Things we learn and meanings we make*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 21-37.
- Ilari, B. (2017). Musical parenting and music education: integrating research and practice. *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education*, 36(2), 45-52.
- Ilari, B. & Young, S. (2016). *Children's musical experiences across the world*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Koops, L. H. (2014). Songs from the car seat: Exploring the early childhood music-making place of the family vehicle. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 62(1), 52-65.
- Koops, L. H., Kuebel, C. & Smith, S. S. A. (2017). Mama's turn: A mother's musical journey. *Research Studies in Music Education*, 39(2), 209-225.

- Kuczynski, L. (2003). Beyond bidirectionality: Bilateral conceptual frameworks for understanding dynamics in parent-child relations. In L. Kuczynski (Ed.), *Handbook of dynamics in parent-child relations* (pp. 3-24). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kuczynski, L. & Parkin, M. (2009). Pursuing a dialectic perspective on transaction: A social relational theory of micro family processes. In A. Sameroff (Ed.), *The transactional model of development: How children and contexts shape each other* (pp. 247-268). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Kuczynski, L., Parkin, C. M. & Pitman, R. (2014). Socialization as dynamic process. In G. E. Grusec and P. D. Hastings (Eds.), *Handbook of socialization: Theory and research* (pp. 135-157). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Kvale, S. (2007). *Doing interviews*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Malloch, S. & Trevarthen, C. (2002). Musicality and music before three: Human vitality and invention shared with pride. In E. Fenichel (Ed.), *Zero to Three: The musical lives of babies and families*, 23(1), 10-18. Washington, DC: National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families.
- Malloch, S., & Trevarthen, C. (2009). *Communicative musicality: Exploring the basis of human companionship*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- McPherson, G. (2009). The role of parents in children's musical development. *Psychology of Music*, 37(1), 91-110.
- McPherson, G. & Davidson, J. W. (2002). Musical practice: mother and child interactions during the first year of learning an instrument. *Music Education Research*, 4(1), 14-155. doi: 10.1080/14613800220119822.
- McPherson, G. & Davidson, J.W. (2006). Playing an instrument. In G. McPherson (Ed.), *The*

- child as musician: A handbook of musical development* (pp. 331-351). New York: Oxford University Press.
- McPherson, G., Davidson, J.W. & Faulkner, R. (2012). A Family Dynamic. In G. McPherson, J. W. Davidson, & R. Faulkner (Eds.), *Music in our lives: Rethinking musical ability, development and identity* (pp. 137-154). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Moll, L., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & González, N. (2006). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. In N. Gonzalez, L. Moll & C. Amanti (Eds.), *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in household, communities and classrooms* (pp. 83-100). New York: Routledge.
- Papousek, M. (1996). Intuitive parenting: A hidden source of musical stimulation in infancy. In I. Deliege & J. Sloboda (Eds.), *Musical beginnings: Origins and development of musical competence* (pp. 88-112). Oxford, UK, Oxford University Press.
- Peräkylä, A. & Ruusuvuori, J. (2018). Analyzing talk and text. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 669-691). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.
- Sameroff, A.J. (1975). Transactional models of early social relations. *Human Development, 18*, 65-79.
- Sameroff, A. J. (1994). Developmental systems and family functioning. In R. D. Parke and S. G. Kellam (Eds.), *Exploring family relationships with other social contexts* (pp. 199-214). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Sameroff, A. (2009). The transactional model. In A. Sameroff (Ed.), *The transactional model of*

development: How children and context shape each other (pp. 3-21). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Sole, M. (2016). Crib song: Insights into functions of toddlers' private spontaneous singing.

Psychology of Music, 45(2), 172-192.

Stern, D. N. (2010). *Forms of vitality: Exploring vitality experiences in psychology, the arts, psychotherapy and development*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Trevarthen, C., & Aitken, K. J. (2001). Infant intersubjectivity: Research, theory, and clinical applications. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 42(1)*, 3-48.

Trevarthen, C. (2011). What is it like to be a person who knows nothing? Defining the active intersubjective mind of a newborn human being. *Infant and Child Development, 20(1)*, 119-135.