

SOCIAL INTERACTIONS IN THE PRESCHOOL MUSIC CLASSROOM:
AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY

by

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Social Interactions in the Preschool Music Classroom: An Exploratory Case Study

This exploratory case study was designed to observe the social and emotional behaviors and interactions of preschool-aged children as well as those of their parents and teachers. In this study, I observed three preschool music classes with two different sets of teachers. I documented and analyzed behaviors, interactions, and musical experiences to study the varied social and emotional experiences that occur in preschool music classroom settings. I observed this setting over a six-week period of time; and created word lists to reduce the data and develop categories. Additionally, vignettes are provided for each category to demonstrate examples of these categories seen throughout this study. The six categories I identified are verbal expressions, non-verbal expressions with instruments, musical expressions, the a cappella phenomenon, activities encouraging empathetic understanding, and varied expressions in imaginative play. This study provided a look into social and emotional expressions, gestures, and interactions through a preschool musical experience.

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Chapter 1: Statement of the Problem

The development of social behaviors and social interaction in young children is an important aspect of overall child development. Lantieri and Nambiar (2012) suggested that Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is the missing piece in efforts to improve education for children. The premise is that SEL is the process through which children “develop fundamental skills for success in school and life” and that SEL “teaches the personal and interpersonal skills we all need to handle ourselves, our relationships, and our work effectively and ethically” (p. 29). According to Lantieri and Nambiar (2012), the primary attributes of SEL are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. SEL includes learning a sense of self and sense of others, as well as the prosocial behaviors (both verbal and non-verbal) that accompany these developments. Several researchers have drawn on the importance of understanding social competence and the need to understand social development, as it relates to success in peer and family relationships as well as academic success (Gooding, 2011; Vaughan van Hecke et al., 2007; Zins et al., 2004). Many authors and researchers agreed that understanding social and emotional learning is important and the need for more research is evident.

The Process and Multiple Facets of SEL Development

Sense of self, or “personal agency” is the first step to understanding others (Brownell & Kopp, 2007). Two of the most prominent ways children make sense of social interactions are exploration/play and through observation and imitation taught through modeling adult and peer behaviors. The research looking at play shows that it appeals to learning more about sense of self through self-explorative activities and as a means for interactions between or among children through observation, imitation, and interactive games (Bruner, 1972; Bukowski, Buhrmester & Underwood, 2011; Hay & Cook, 2007; Thompson & Goodman, 2011; Tudge & Rogoff, 1989, Vaughan van Hecke et al., 2007). Bukowski, Buhrmester, and Underwood (2011) collected information from prior studies and concluded that toddlers and preschool children make sense of early relationships through coordinated play. The authors concluded that for peer interaction to occur in play, children must establish a common ground, exchange

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information, manage conflict, and engage in self-exploration (Bukowski, Buhrmester, & Underwood, 2011, p. 159).

Playful activities help facilitate environments that are conducive for self-exploration and social development. However, the spectrum of behaviors that are observable in these environments can greatly range from verbal to non-verbal, and prosocial to anti-social. Hay and Cook (2007) described three categories of prosocial behavior: feeling for others, working with others, and ministering to others. Multiple types of prosocial behaviors were listed by Hay and Cook (2007) including positive response to others' needs and welfare, helpful responses to others, response to need or suffering, comforting others, protecting or rescuing others, assisting, sharing, being kind and considerate, cooperating, and showing empathy and sympathy.

The category, feeling for another, is not always observable, but working with others and ministering to others are both observable behaviors. Working with others involves some type of activity, either playful or serious, that involves engaging with another person. Ministering to others (defined as a response to a given situation) involves understanding someone else's needs or circumstance. Ministering to others goes beyond working, in that it requires a response to another person's need (sharing a toy when there is a lack of toys, etc.).

In early childhood, specifically with children who are not yet verbally competent or for children who have disabilities, alternate measures of prosocial behaviors which include physical engagement and body movement, have been observed for nonverbal social behaviors (Bruner, 1972; Hay & Cook, 2007; Thompson & Goodman, 2011; Tudge & Rogoff, 1989; Vaughan van Hecke et al., 2007). Rabian-Jamin (1989) argued that non-verbal communication is important to future success.

Further, Tudge and Rogoff (1989) suggested that children learn to speak through gestures and develop social significance in those ways as they begin to learn to verbalize their communications. Vaughan Van Hecke, Mundy, Acra, Block, Delgado, Parlade, Meyer, Neal, and Pomares (2007) examined attention and temperament in infants to check for social competence. The behaviors specifically discussed in this study were "joint behavior skills," which are observable through a range of different

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types of body language and gestures, such as eye gaze or pointing, showing interaction with adults. These behaviors provide important insight into types of measures of social skills in young children (before speaking age) and/or children with special needs. The study found a relationship between these infant joint attention behaviors and social competence measures when students entered preschool. Clements (2018) also argued that preschool aged children showed more empathy after joint music making experiences. Both of these studies point to social and emotional benefits of joint behaviors, which include non-verbal communications or synchronizations with others.

The importance of play, “center time,” and child-centered activities permeates much of early childhood literature (Fox & Liu, 2012; Niland, 2009; Turner, 1999). Turner (1999) discussed how children come to understand their world, develop and refine social skills, and develop emotional and affective qualities (such as self-concept, self-regulation, and self-efficacy) through playful activities.

Early childhood literature notes the importance of adult intervention because children learn much from observation and imitation of adult modeling (Bruner, 1972; Hay & Cook, 2007; Thompson & Goodman, 2011; Tudge & Rogoff, 1989). Bruner (1972) suggested that children’s observational learning (used as a broader term encompassing much more than imitation learning) through adult modeling and interactive play are important to social development in both animals and young children. Thompson and Goodman (2011) expanded this concept to add symbolic learning as an important piece of observational learning. This symbolic learning which occurs purely through observation even when imitation is not necessarily present (storytelling, television, etc.). Children are social beings from their beginnings, even during these pre-verbal and observational times, but need aid from adults and other peers to foster their social and emotional abilities (Tudge & Rogoff, 1989; Hay & Cook, 2007).

Musical Learning and SEL Development

Using music to develop a sense of others through playful activities is a prominent theme in early childhood music literature (Fox & Liu, 2012; Niland, 2009). This body of literature supports the use of musical play as both a means of learning sense of self and sense of others. Niland (2009) stated that observing musical play in children shows evidence that children develop socially through exploration.

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Niland (2009) described six different types of musical play prominent in a music classroom. The six types are co-operative music play, functional music play, constructive musical play, dramatic music play, kinesthetic music play, and games with rules (Littleton, 1998, as cited in Niland, 2009, p. 19). The first, “co-operative music play,” and the last, “game with rules,” both involve verbal or non-verbal interactions between or among people, while the other forms of play can occur through one child’s own solo play experience. Fox and Liu (2012) further supported the importance of play in the musical curriculum by stating that curriculum should be designed with developmentally appropriate playful experiences to support social, cognitive, and emotional development in children. Custodero, Cali, and Diaz-Donoso (2016), however, noted that spontaneous music making and play are more likely to occur in younger children, rather than older children.

Ilari, Helfter, and Huynh (2020) noted that synchronization of activities in music is a catalyst for encouraging prosociality. They discussed that a play-based music program that supports singing, listening, playing, taking turns, imitating, imagining, and emoting can serve as an environment for prosocial behaviors. Additionally, Clements (2018) discussed how synchronization occurs better in live settings, than with audio-visual, or just acoustic situations. These joint experiences of synchronicity in movements, singing, and playing instruments demonstrated an effect on prosocial and empathetic behavior.

Jordan-Decarbo and Nelson (2002) stated that studies investigating music’s effect on social skills have been neglected. The majority of these studies involve exceptional populations of children with learning delays (Duffy & Fuller, 2000; Simpson, 2013). Studies for early childhood music and socialization focus on home environments or relationships between adults (parents, teachers, and caregivers) and children, but neglect the entire environment of parent-child, peer-to-peer, and teacher-student interactions that all occur in a musical preschool classroom setting.

While research and theories on child development has been present for many decades, research on early childhood music education has expanded primarily in the last few decades. The importance of music encouraging social development is often mentioned in research, but there is little researched and

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observed evidence on how music plays a role in social development (Campbell, 1991; Harris, 2011; Koelsch et al., 2010). Koelsch et al. (2010) discussed not only matters of how music affects brain functioning, but also argued for the necessary function of music in social and emotional development. They described seven social functions of music that affect psychological (emotional) and physiological needs in humans. These seven functions are contact, social cognition, co-pathy (feeling with others), communication, coordination, cooperation, and social cohesion.

There are three broad categories that link musical learning and SEL development. The first is in early childhood music philosophical and prescriptive writings, as well as some cases of research supporting these writings. In the research to accompany this section, musicality is the goal and social connections can be seen as potential extra-musical by products. Campbell (2000) supported SEL theory in music instruction philosophically by stating that through music children learn to “socialize, vent emotions, and entertain themselves” (p. 32).

This body of literature supported the importance of musical learning as a part of social development (Campbell, 2000; Fox & Liu, 2012; Niland, 2009). Early childhood researchers stated that music plays an important role in social, emotional, and cognitive development. These researchers, however, rarely isolated and observed what components of musical development related to these different realms of development, especially social development (Campbell, 1991; Forrester, 2009).

The second body of literature supported music therapy as another area where social skills can be seen as the goal, and music was used as a tool to aid in social development. There is a growing body of research in music therapy, but less regarding classrooms of students who are considered to be developing at a typical level. Studies often targeted prosocial behaviors and the ways music has been used to encourage these types of behaviors (Duffy & Fuller, 2000; Simpson, 2013).

Third, and lastly, musical play-centered studies that focused on adult-child or peer-to-peer interactions and on music as a facilitator of these interactions contributed much to our understanding of the role of music in social development. These studies often focused on observing behaviors in preschool

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classrooms and bringing in outside observers to document behavioral occurrences (Berger & Cooper, 2003; Harris, 2011; Love & Burns, 2007).

All of the prior research contributed greatly to an understanding of how children begin to express communication, what seems to foster communicative environments, and what does not seem to foster these environments. There is little research that examines the complex patterns of behavior related to various orientations of social interactions (peer, parent, teacher), the types of social interactions (verbal, non-verbal, musical), and how the style of music, the activities that accompany it, and the directions given by teachers guide behavior and interactions in the preschool music classroom. While all of this research contributed many important findings to the fields of early childhood music education and music therapy, many questions are yet unanswered.

Problem Statement

Research suggested that Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is important for all ages and stages of development and is especially necessary in the preschool and elementary years, yet there is a lack of research looking for prosocial behaviors that occur, especially in alternative classroom styles. Further, the importance of free play and exploration in social development and overall child development has been noted by many researchers (Bukowski, Buhrmester, & Underwood, 2011; Fox & Liu, 2012; Niland, 2009; Turner, 1999).

While research has been conducted to show the importance of musical learning in the social development of children and adolescents and for students with disabilities, little research has been conducted to examine its role in social development of typically developing toddlers and preschool aged children. In addition, although researchers have looked at interaction between adults and children, research that examines peer-to-peer, teacher-student, and parent-child interactions simultaneously is lacking. There is a need for more research to observe the development of social and emotional learning and accompanying behaviors in early childhood music classrooms.

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Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to observe preschool-aged children, their parents, and the teachers' social behaviors and interactions during the preschool music classroom setting. I hoped to capture and document behaviors and interactions to learn in what ways musical experiences allowed for or interacted with social behaviors among children and adults present in this study.

Research Questions

1. What do preschool music teachers and parents of preschool music students believe the role of music is in the overall social development of children?
2. What types of interactions occur in this musical preschool setting? How are non-verbal, verbal, and musical gestures being utilized to communicate (imitation, question/answer, etc.)?
3. In this specific setting, does the choice of music repertoire, specific genres/styles (fast/dance or slow/lullaby), or specific activities (movements, dance, etc.) seem to facilitate interactions between/among children/parents/teachers? If so, what types of interactions occur?
4. During these interactions, are they oriented towards parent-child, peer-to-peer, or student-teacher relationships? In what ways do adults model or encourage interactions between/among children, or between/among children and instruments? How do these differ in activities and/or musical styles and genres?

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

This chapter will present research on three topics related to social development during toddler and preschool years and music education's role in social behaviors, interactions, and development. This chapter will first define social and emotional learning (SEL) from a general education and human development perspective and then tie it to early childhood music education. There are three main categories of research where evidence of SEL development is evident in early childhood music education. These three categories are: music and early childhood research, music therapy research, and musical play research. The first category, music and early childhood research, focuses on musical development as the goal and sometimes finds social behaviors as byproducts of musical experience. In music therapy research, related to social skills, the goal is for children to increase their social behaviors, and music is used as a tool to increase social skills. Lastly, musical play research often blends the two previous areas by focusing on musical and extra-musical qualities simultaneously. Research regarding musical play allows room for exploration and student-generated learning that results in multi-faceted development. For the purpose of this study, the literature here will focus on music's relationships to social development in early childhood settings.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

Recent research suggested that social learning and emotional learning interrelate, in that they do not occur separate from each other, but that they intertwine and complement each other. Brownell and Kopp (2007) supported this idea that "no developmental achievement occurs in isolation from others" (p. 16). Instead, they suggested physiological, attentional, cognitive, social, and emotional developments affect each other. Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, and Walberg (2004) defined SEL and described what the outcomes of SEL education should be. They stated, "social and emotional education involves teaching children to be self-aware, socially cognizant, able to make responsible decisions, and competent in self-management and relationship-management skills so as to foster their academic success" (Zins et al., 2004, p. 6).

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Brownell and Kopp (2007) described the developmental levels of communication during the toddler years. The first half of the second year of life (approximately 24 to 30 months) includes mostly primitive forms of communication, while the second half of year two (30 to 36 months) includes a sense of ownership, personal space, and language to describe feelings. While there was not a clear distinction on what this “primitive” form of communication looks like, the idea of a sense of self (personal agency) which would lead to a sense of others, and emotional language only begin developing around the time children are approximately 30 months of age. The development of sense of self allows these early communications during the toddler years.

Part of the social learning process is developing a sense of self, sometimes referred to as personal agency. Brownell and Kopp (2007) described the development of personal agency that occurs during the toddler years. Drawing on research from other studies over the last few decades, they drew conclusions on personal agency in the toddler years.

Brownell and Kopp (2007) stated that personal agency:

Permits self-initiated, goal-defined activities that lead to a sense of mastery, social interactions with others that involve intentional gestures to refer to objects and events with the goal of sharing experiences or knowledge, cooperating with others . . . and testing the limits of agency and autonomy in interactions with adults and siblings. (p. 14)

Types of Social Interaction, Behavior, and Competency

Beyond a sense of self (personal agency), one of the most fundamental aspects of SEL is the concept of awareness of others. It is during these toddler years that children begin to interact with peers. Howes et al. (1992) described four social orientations based on work by Galluzzo et al.(1988): child-adult, child-peer, child-both adult and peers, and solo child (p. 452). In addition to the four orientations, this study looked at five varying levels of interaction. A version of the “Peer Play Scale” from a prior Howes study was used to look at these five levels: un-involvement, child as an onlooker, child engaging in interaction, child engaging in competent social play, and child engaging in competent social pretend play (p. 453).

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The first two levels of interactions are fairly straightforward with the child either being uninvolved in socialization (solitary), or the child observing (onlooking) a social interaction. The boundaries among the next three levels of social interaction are more subtle with peer contact involving “activity with other children that at least includes parallel activity with some mutual awareness” (p. 453). The next two steps involve a difference in play based on imitation and play on imaginary activities. “Competent social play was defined as at least complementary and reciprocal action-based role reversals,” whereas, “competent social pretend play was defined as at least cooperative social pretend play in which children act out nonliteral roles” (p. 453). These different levels of social interactions were informative in my study as I observe what types of interactions are occurring: no interaction, observation, imitation, and participation (verbal, musical, or non-verbal).

Vaughan Van Hecke et al. (2007) conducted research on joint attention in preschool-aged children. Joint attention or joint behavior skills are observable non-verbal types of communication seen through body language and gestures (such as eye gaze or pointing). These are often noted in infants with how they communicate with parents or other adults before early forms of verbal communication begin. This study was longitudinal and looked at 52 children over an 18-month period of time. The children were tested at 12 months of age, and again at 15, 24, and 30 months. During the initial checkup, children were observed for joint attention skills. At 15 months, temperament was rated. At 24 months, cognition and language were observed. Finally, at 30 months, overall social competence and externalized behavior were tested.

Vaughan Van Hecke et al. (2007) noted that understanding what constitutes “social competence” is extremely complex, and so they defined it in three dimensions of behavior. These three dimensions are the ability to express agreeableness, interest in others, and positive emotions with peers. Vaughan Van Hecke et al. (2007) also states, “the ability to integrate the behavior of self with others in the dynamic flow of social interaction, and the ability to regulate attention and emotional reactivity” are important to social competence (p. 53).

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These types of early interactions have an effect on overall social development. Looking for behaviors – both positive and negative – and the ability for children to regulate emotions and understand others has an impact on their social development as they get older. These definitions of joint attention behaviors are important to understand in relation to the Howes et al. (1992) study which labels “onlooking,” or observation, as the second level of interaction. Children who may not be verbally or physically engaged in activities, but who are actively making eye contact are still socially interacting. These three dimensions might be summarized as positive peer relations, understanding relation of self to others, and ability to regulate emotions.

Kim (2017) discussed critical thinking, creative thinking, communication and collaboration (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2009) as broad learning goals for all ages. This research drew upon prior research, stating that “education needs to provide environments for learning which are participatory, personalized, and problem based and which also encouraged communication and collaboration (Kim, 2017, p. 183).” Of the Four C’s, the two that pertain most to my research are communication and collaboration.

The collaborative work seen from previous literature included free play as the main vehicle for collaborating with others. This included imitation, turn taking, helping, encouraging, and other forms of prosocial behavior. Kim (2017) also differentiated parallel versus collaborative play, which are both social forms of play. Parallel play was described as children playing side by side without a clear leader, follower, or “role,” whereas collaborative play was described as displaying a differentiation of roles. Play that is also used for a specific purpose can encourage positive engagement and an outcome of working together, Kim (2017) stated. Kim (2017) also noted that music can be used to communicate efficiently with children about routine, behavior, and academic skills. The researcher also noted that these communication supports are especially beneficial for children with special needs.

Koelsch, Offermanns, and Franzke (2010) drew on earlier studies that indicate that music making, dancing, and musical listening stimulate brain structures related to cognitive, sensorimotor, and emotional processing. They concluded that music listening has an effect on emotional processing. Following much

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of the same thinking as authors discussed earlier (Zins et al., 2004; Brownell and Kopp, 2007), Koelsch et al. (2010) speaks of the emotional and social importance of music as intertwined concepts instead of serving two different functions. Koelsch et al. (2010) states that “the ability and need to practice these social functions is part of what makes us human” (p. 308). They further lay out the seven social functions of music, labeled as the “Seven Cs.” Some of the concepts are fairly straightforward, while others require a little background information to fully grasp. The first is contact, described as a natural human need – to be in contact with other individuals. Social cognition is the second one, and the authors use brain research to suggest how music aids in social cognition. The studies that were referenced used fMRI testing to observe the brain when non-musicians listened to music that was not tonal. The part of the brain that is used to try to make sense of something (music that sounds “odd” or someone else’s emotions, ideas, and intentions) was activated.

The third concept is co-pathy, or a sense of emotional connection with others. This concept interrelates quite well with the seventh concept, group cohesion. A sense of feeling connected leads to this group cohesion that includes a sense of belonging. Concepts four and five are communication and coordination. Other studies that were referenced showed links between language processing and communication skills when young children were taught lullabies. In addition, the concept of nonverbal communication skills in music therapy settings was also addressed as a potential social function of music. Finally, coordination is addressed and the ability to synchronize movement and work towards common goals is linked with cooperation skills in many ways. The use of synchronized movement to encourage cooperation has been linked to social skills development in music specific settings.

The sixth and seventh concepts are cooperation and social cohesion which are more associated with a classroom setting. Naturally, in an ensemble or classroom a common goal must be met for musical performance, which requires individuals to understand and cooperate with each other. While these traits (co-pathy, social cohesion, and cooperation) were identified by looking at older students these social functions found in music settings are crucial for social development. The ability to think about one’s own feelings and learn to cooperate and understand others are some of the crucial pieces of Social and

Emotional Learning (SEL) described by authors (Brownell & Kopp, 2007; Lantieri & Nambiar, 2012; Zins et al., 2004).

Social Interactions with Peers, Parents, and Other Adults

The importance of interactions between parents and children is noted widely across child development literature, but how parents interact with children in classroom settings to encourage sociality with them, other children, and other adults is less widely discussed. Hay and Cook (2007) stated that prosocial behaviors, as described in chapter one, begin during the toddler years and continue to expand throughout the other preschool years. These various prosocial behaviors are the following: positive response to others' needs and welfare, helpful responses to others, response to need or suffering, comforting others, protecting or rescuing others, assisting, sharing, being kind and considerate, cooperating, and showing empathy and sympathy. According to Hay and Cook (2007), these behaviors begin to develop more as children have the ability to be in classroom settings and these behaviors are modeled and "exhorted by their parents and teachers" (p. 101).

Ilari, Helfter, and Huynh (2020) further argued that music making allows growth in prosocial behavior. They performed an exploratory study which examined how children engaged with each other in prosocial tasks, while also looking at the amount of time children had spent in formal music education lessons and home musical experiences. Thirty-six children between three and five years old, all who had participated in weekly hour-long music programs for 1 to 54 months, were observed in this study.

Instrumental helping and sharing were the prosocial behaviors observed in this study. Ilari et al. (2020) invited children to participate in a prosocial game, and parents remained in the room but were asked to not participate. All children in this study engaged in the activity. While age did not seem to affect whether children demonstrated prosocial behaviors, children who had spent more time in the music program and participated in more musical experiences at home correlated positively with instrumental helping tasks and sharing. Researchers agreed that instrumental helping seemed to be simpler, as children met that need to support a goal, whereas sharing is more complex because it requires resource allocation and the ability to desire equality and overcoming a desire to acquire and consume all resources.

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Koops (2014) investigated music-making in the family through a qualitative case study of musical experiences in the family car. This study observed children's music making through singing, clapping, waving, kicking, and bobbing to music. Additionally, Koops (2014) used journal entries from parents as well as videos. The children in this study were 10 months to four and half years old, and all participated in a preschool music program. Parents noted that lack of eye contact may have been a factor in children feeling less embarrassed to express themselves and also a reduced amount of distractions, as well as support from siblings.

Gordon (2003) described the development of audiation and music is similar to that of linguistic thought and verbalization. Gordon explained that the first step in learning to audiate and produce musical utterances is through perceiving sound and music through acculturation. The process of acculturation is largely mediated by the environment. In language development as well as musical development, this includes listening to and observing parents, caregivers, siblings, peers, and other adults. Gordon (2003) encouraged parents to sing to their children, expose them to a wide range of music and activities, and allow children to respond to music in whatever way they choose. As Gordon (2003) cautioned, "It is important for adults to understand, that young children's attention is not always continuous, nor is it always obvious, so that at times it may seem that children are not attending to the music when they are receiving structured or unstructured informal guidance" (p. 43). He then elaborated that *a* response is important, not necessarily *the* (a specific) response – or *activity* is important, but not necessarily *the* (a specific) act. Acculturation is then further broken down into three stages. The first is a response through listening, the second is through babbling and movement not particularly related to the activity, and the third is sounds and movements that are in response to the activity.

After acculturation, imitation and assimilation follow as children begin to think about how their musical responses match or do not match those of the environment. Beginning at about age two, three, or four, children begin to imitate more specifically to match the sounds they are hearing. Around ages three, four, or five, assimilation begins as children coordinate by moving and singing together. It is important to note that all of these steps are helped through adult modeling and encouragement but occur at different

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times and in different ways for individual children. Observing these different types of musical responses and interactions with others was fascinating during this case study.

Music and Early Childhood Education Research

Campbell (1991) compiled historic information on the introduction of rhythmic movement into the early childhood music classroom. She described the structure of music instruction before the 1930s, when music instruction focused entirely on note reading and singing in tune for the primary age groups. From the late 19th century and into the 20th century, what became known as the “New School” of Progressivism in education affected music classrooms and the world of education as a whole. Her article focuses on the impacts of the progressive education movement on the music classroom.

Some of the early reformers cited by Campbell (1991) were Friedrich Froebel, G. Stanley Hall, and John Dewey. Froebel’s collection titled *Mother Play and Nursery Songs* (1878) included dramatizations and rhythm games that became models for future early childhood music methods and materials. G. Stanley Hall wrote on the importance of rhythm as being the fundamental element in music. He suggested that it be developed during early childhood. According to Campbell, Hall believed that “a thorough understanding and appreciation of music could only occur through movement” (p. 13). John Dewey’s child-centered approach to education influenced many “Deweyan” supporters of rhythmic movement. As stated by Campbell, “rhythmic training provided the body with a means of expression that was natural and wholesome, and it brought unity to the physical, intellectual, and emotional capacities of the child” (p. 14).

Notably in music education literature, the philosophy of Eurhythmics, developed by Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, is based on movement in the music classroom. Many educators who were still prone to the “old school” of thought rejected the idea of rhythmic movement and thought that music should be left as an “intellectual” art, while movement should be left to physical education and recreation. The approach to child-centered education by John Dewey allowed rhythmic movement to become viewed as a piece of a holistic approach to child development and a combined effort of the mind and body.

Campbell explained trends in music education from 1920 to 1936 in the following way:

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Goals of music education were broadened to include not only development of singing and reading skills but also the refinement of abilities to listen to music, to respond kinesthetically to it, and to acquire a taste and appreciation for music. Music came to be viewed in a Deweyan way . . . as a means of reaching the whole child—ear, voice, mind, body, and soul. (p. 17)

This holistic approach to music education is crucial to understanding how early childhood learning approaches developed. I am interested in social development and social-emotional learning because it is an aspect of education that has not received an adequate amount of attention in the classroom. As mentioned in Chapter One, Lantieri and Nambiar (2012) suggest that social and emotional learning (SEL) is the “missing piece” to improve overall education. Zins et al. (2004) described awareness of others as one of the most important aspects of SEL. Students learn this through interaction and incorporating movement in the classroom. Rhythmic movement, including dancing and synchronized movement, allow a communication to occur that extends beyond verbal communication. The inclusion of movement-based activities in the preschool music classroom adds an additional means to encourage socialization among students at the pre-verbal and “learning” to verbalize stages.

Forrester (2009) conducted a longitudinal single case study, looking for what emerged musically and as a byproduct of musical production in a naturalistic setting. This study followed one child from age one to almost four years of age (3 years and 10 months). The prior body of research suggests that infants have a tendency to imitate and respond to rhythms. This imitation through musicality is referred to as “sympathetic” imitation, or reciprocation. This imitation was also described by Forrester (2009) as including vocal exchanges that occur between parents and infants. This is referred to as “synchronic attunement” of child-parent interactions, and it is considered “a key factor for social, emotional and cognitive growth during the pre-school years” (p. 132).

The video recordings occurred during family mealtimes over the course of nearly three years. Twelve hours of video were recorded, and musical events occurred during 28 minutes of these twelve hours. The evolution of this emerging musicality was looked at by the researcher and independent coders. Three phases were identified according to age: Phase one (under two years old), Phase two (two to two

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and a half years), Phase three (just over two and a half until almost four years). During the first phase, rhythmic interaction such as rocking motions and song-sound imitation were most common. The second phase produced more musical independence with use of wordplay, repetition, imitation, and singing for attention. The final phase included more musical creativity and spontaneity as narrative was included in musical play, pretend play singing, and dialogue were included in these expressions of musicality.

Custodero, Cali, and Diaz-Donoso (2016) observed spontaneous music making, which would include preschool aged children in Forrester's (2009) phase three. Unlike other studies, the researchers did not observe children in a comfortable or private setting, but in a public setting on the subway. These observations included children from infancy through approximately age 10. Most musical materials were spontaneously invented using resources from the environment. Custodero et al. (2016) stated that the most frequent function of music making was to comfort or entertain self, and these behaviors were performed as a solitary action. However, communicating with others accounted for about a third of the observations.

In order to observe this naturally occurring phenomena, the observers did not interact or initiate contact with the subjects. Singing, moving, chanting, and instrumental play were the original behaviors on the protocol, but observers added spontaneous vocalization, listening, and humming, based on what they observed. Additionally, the observers classified materials as invented, learned, object (anything used as an instrument or for imaginary play), combination (learned combined with invented), responsive (in response to external sound or someone else), or imitation. Lastly, three social contexts were distinguished for these behaviors. These were solitary, cooperative, and parallel engagement.

The data showed that there was an average of over five musical behaviors observed each hour in each single subway train. When observers considered how few children were seen in each train, this suggested that music is an important tool that children use to adapt to new environments. Observers noted that the majority of music was solitary, used to entertain or comfort self, and was mostly invented vocal material. Interestingly, children most often engaged in musical behaviors when there was no adult interference but usually stopped when acknowledged by anyone or when hushed.

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In my study, I focused on children who are two, three, and four years old. The shift from imitation focused to exploratory/student-generated learning is fascinating in this age group and it was interesting to see, especially in the multi-age classroom. Custodero et al. (2016) also observed parent-child interactions during musical moments instead of an entire preschool classroom setting, spontaneous behaviors, or specific actions that would occur after music making. In order to gather more instances of emerging musical interactions and to observe how these differ between parent-child, peer-to-peer, and student-teacher, I observed the musical preschool classroom setting to see what these interactions looked like in a structured setting, versus spontaneity in a public setting like a subway.

Clements (2018) examined synchronization and joint music-making experiences in live settings versus audio-visual or only acoustic settings. After reviewing multiple studies, Clements (2018) concluded that group music training and the synchrony accompanying activities in group settings could positively impact prosocial behaviors and social development. Even with participants who were infants, studies showed an establishing of group identity and social bonding when group music making occurred. Clements noted that a sense of group identity promoted helping and cooperation in several studies. Since much research has implied that group settings create environments for prosocial behavior, I observed an organized preschool music program to see what prosocial behaviors could be seen.

Music Therapy and Social Skill Development

Music therapy research is important to my study because many music therapy researchers have contributed data about music and social skills development for those with disabilities. Music therapy researchers also focus on social skills development as the goal, using music as the tool to assist with these skills. In contrast, the majority of early childhood music research focuses on musical development as the goal and extra-musical functions are only potential byproducts of the musical experience. Both bodies of information can inform investigations of social interactions among a group of students who are in the early stages of peer social interactions and verbalization.

Duffy and Fuller (2000) conducted a study with the goal of looking at what role music plays in the process of facilitating social skills development in a music therapy setting. The method for this study

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required the creation of two therapy social skills programs. One was based in music (MP) and the other was based on a non-musical social skills program (NMP). Five target social skills were identified for these programs: initiation, turn-taking, vocalization, imitation, and eye contact. The programs were set to have sessions that were 30 minutes in length and followed a tape with instructions on activities that were either musical or non-musical. Thirty-two children participated in this study between the ages of five and ten years old. All children were considered to have a moderate form of an intellectual disability and were selected from school programs that specialize in helping children with moderate to high intellectual disabilities.

Staff members were trained specifically to know what target behaviors to examine in this study. The design used was a pretest and posttest format and the tests were video recorded for evaluation purposes. The test was approximately five minutes long. The five target social skills using tabletop activities were assessed using a Likert scale (1 – very poor to 5 – skill well-developed). The videos showing the students performing the assigned activities were then looked over by the researcher and an independent observer to rate each child's social skill competence.

The results were analyzed for relationships and changes seen over the course of the intervention. When observing changes in MP and NMP groups, *t*-tests indicated significant increases from pretest to posttest on all five skill dimensions in both the musical and non-musical therapy conditions. The tests found no significant difference between posttest results in the MP and NMP groups.

All staff members completed an evaluation form after the eight-week intervention. The staff members were asked to rate effectiveness of activities on a three-point scale. The ratings show that the staff in both programs believed that the programs were beneficial for imitation skills, increasing anticipation for turn-taking behaviors, and providing an enjoyable experience. Comments on the experience included that the teachers thought the music selection for some sections may have been too long because the children were losing focus. They suggested that, for further studies, sometimes the lessons and sections of activities should be shorter. However, those who worked with the NMP indicated

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that they thought the activities were short and there was “no time for the children to get bored” (Duffy & Fuller, 2000, p. 86).

Results showed that both the MP and NMP were effective means of social development intervention. However, the only significant difference for music from pretest to posttest was seen in imitative behavior that occurred as a result of rhythmic synchronization. Additionally, the commentary from the observers and assistants was particularly interesting. For the NMP groups Duffy and Fuller (2000) did not suggest a change in duration of time for the activities was needed. However, they suggested that the MP group music lessons be shorter. While both groups showed a positive effect on social behaviors, the significant finding of change in imitation in the music program was particularly interesting.

Simpson (2013) conducted a study with a non-profit organization located along Alabama and Florida's gulf, which serves individuals with disabilities and their families. Subjects ($N = 25$) were selected from the preschool program and included both students with disabilities and those who were considered at a typical developmental level. A total of 13 females and 12 males ranging from three to five years of age participated in this study.

The students were then split into two groups. The control group had nine typically developing students, one with speech delay, and one with seizures and microcephaly. In the experimental group, there were three students with developmental delays (one of which also had other symptoms), one with autism, two with Down syndrome, one with cerebral palsy, one with Williams syndrome, and the other six had varying disorders. The students were selected by the facility administrator as a convenient sample but then randomly assigned as groups to their respective conditions (control or experimental).

The primary measure used was a researcher-created assessment form. This form is titled the Music Therapy Social Skills Brief Behavior Rating (MTSS Brief Behavior Rating) and was adapted from the Social Skills Brief Behavior Rating by Gooding (2010). The design of the form is a 14-item questionnaire that addresses 13 different social skills, using a Likert scale rating (1 = not competent to 10

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= extremely competent). A pretest and posttest format was used to assess the social skills competency of the subjects.

On-task and off-task behaviors were observed and scored using an adapted form by Madsen and Madsen (1998). Observers were trained how to use these forms prior to beginning the experiment. Students were measured during the 30-minute therapy sessions and notes were taken every three minutes. Three observers (six total) were assigned to each group (control and experimental) to observe and score behaviors. This ratio of observers to students added up to about three to five students per observer.

Over the period of six weeks, one new social skill was introduced, and previous skills were reviewed. According to Simpson (2013), “experimental group tasks included hello and goodbye songs, dancing, structured movement to music, free movement to music, instrument playing, books read to song, rhythmic chants, call-and-response songs, musical instruction movement with various props such as ribbons and beanbags, songs with hand motions, and follow-the-leader type activities” (p. 17). The control group used similar activities but did not include any music integrated with the activities.

The researcher used a Mann-Whitney U test to look at the differences between both pretest scores and the overall change in scores for the duration of therapy. The difference in the initial pretest scores were significant ($U = 130$; $p < .05$), while the changes between pretest and posttest scores overall came as non-significant ($U = 64.5$; $p > .05$) between the two groups. The baseline differences in pretest scores were noted and adjusted to determine the differences in posttest scores.

As I read the results, I noticed a couple points that were not mentioned by the researcher. Particularly, I noted that the difference from the pretest to posttest for the control group (who received no musical instruction) was 24 to 28. The overall range of difference was fairly small (approximately a 20% change in either direction) compared to what occurred in the experimental group. The experimental group’s change between pretest and posttest scores ranged from 28 to 70, showing a greater range of scores from pretest to posttest scores. The researcher concluded that these non-significant results may have been accounted for by the small numbers of participants in the control group ($N = 11$) and the experimental group ($N = 14$).

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While the overall changes were shown to be non-significant, the specific rubric for each of the five sessions (the sixth was a review), shows improvement in all five for the experimental group and only one in the control group. The researchers focused on the following behaviors during each session: Session one – greeting others, initiating conversation, and demonstrating verbal planning; session two – demonstrating self-control, focused attention, impulse control, and following directions; session three – using appropriate eye contact and responding to nonverbal cues; session four – awareness of others and using appropriate personal space; and session five – cooperating with peers and actively listening. In addition, on-task and off-task behavior was analyzed. A 2 x 6 Chi-square test was performed. A *p*-value of .545 showed that the percentages of on-task behaviors between the control and experimental groups were not significantly different. The only correlations found were that on-task behaviors were highest during sessions one, two, and five.

While the MTSS Brief Behavior Rating may not be particularly conducive for my own personal study, many other aspects of Simpson's (2013) study are useful in showing how to target social behaviors for this age range and that all of these behaviors line up with musical activities that are present in preschool music programs. Learning to greet others, show self-control and focus attention (songs such as walk-and-stop, and rhythmic control in keeping steady beat), eye contact, personal space, cooperation, as well as initiation and individual vocalization are all skills that are focused on in many preschool programs. Looking at how parents, peers, and teachers all encouraged or influenced these behaviors in this particular program, and what role music plays in influencing these behaviors was interesting to note.

The Importance of Play

Berger and Cooper (2003) conducted a study on preschool age students and their parents. The study took place once a week for 45 minutes over the course of ten weeks with four time periods set aside for musical activities. These activities alternated between free music play time and group music time. Four observers were brought in as “outsiders” for each of the meetings to watch student and parent interactions and take notes on their observations. In addition, two video recorders were set up for each meeting.

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After looking through the observation notes and watching video footage for anything that may have been missed in observation, the researchers drew a few conclusions. The first was that there were three main categories of similarities seen in the interactions between the children and their parents. Each of these three main categories then has three different observable actions of behaviors to accompany it. The three categories were unfinished play, extinguishing play, and enhancing play. The first interaction, unfinished play was observed when students either dismissed group activities to continue with individual play, interacted with the group from afar, or brought elements of their play to the group (toys, etc.). Extinguishing play and enhancing play both take parental interference into account. In extinguishing play, the parental interaction in some way hinders students from wanting to continue with the musical activity. The three main observable actions/behaviors that affected the children's play were caused by physical proximity of another child or adult extinguishing the child's interest in play, adult correction or criticism, and unsuccessful individual attempts by children resulting in extinguished play. On the other hand, enhancing play occurs when the interaction furthered the child's musical play. The primary actions/behaviors included displaying value of all musical behavior, adequate time and tools, and adult encouragement.

Berger and Cooper (2003) concluded with suggestions for teachers and other adults in children's learning experiences. The first was that educators should not focus so much on performance objectives, but instead encourage open-ended instructional strategies. Second, all adults involved in music education, need to provide "ample and appropriate opportunities for free musical play" (p. 163).

Love and Burns (2007) investigated social constructive and pretend play in a preschool classroom through incorporating music. They described the purpose of constructive and pretend play as "contexts in which young children engage with others and develop the abilities to focus their attention and control their impulses in favor of more planned actions" (p. 383). Through a review of literature, the authors deduced that music instruction and music play increase attention and engagement in children. Then the researchers designed their study "to use carefully selected music and examine how it might facilitate social constructive and sociodramatic play via its effects on children's cognitive performance, attention,

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and engagement” (p. 384). The purpose of this study was to observe the frequency of behaviors and interactions that occurred for specific music (fast music versus slow music) and for time blocks with no music playing. The three main actions and behaviors observed in this study were movement into and out of the block area, occurrences of group play, and occurrences of specific play themes.

This study occurred in a private nursery school with 20 children (10 girls and 10 boys). The mean age was 49.4 months (just over four years old), with children ranging from 38–61 months (a little over three years through a little over five years old). Out of the 20 children, 95% were Caucasian and 5% were Hispanic. The parents of these children were middle class or upper middle class in terms of SES. The entire study was conducted through observation.

The observations took place over five consecutive weeks with approximately an hour of free play time (ranging from 54–100 minutes). Months prior to the study, teachers reported observing that few students played in the block area. In order to facilitate more play, various materials and toys were added to the area to encourage pretend play. Similar to Simpson (2013), a three-minute sampling procedure was utilized to observe children in and out of the block play area. The social play observed was joint attention of two or more children performing a single activity together (as described in Vaughan Van Hecke et al., 2007). Additionally, play themes were observed as children incorporated role playing by using props and sound effects.

The frequency of each movement and look at the music was analyzed as a function of the independent variable (fast music, slow music, and no music). The results showed that students spent more time in the block area when music was being played. According to results, the children exited and reentered the block area once or twice during the hour of free play time. Children left the block area more often when no music was played, at approximately twice during the hour when no music played ($M = 1.70$ times leaving the play area), and approximately once when music was played ($M = 1.34$ for slower music and $M = 1.25$ for faster music).

Additionally, it was observed that dyads played twice as long (averaging 31 minutes per day) as did students who participated in groups of three or four (averaging 16 minutes per day). However, no

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differences in preference of dyad play versus group play of three or more children was observed. During this play, three predominant themes occurred in the students play. Quiet, caretaking roles (sleepy, mommy/daddy with a baby, walking an animal, etc.) were observed during slower music. Flying rocket ships, citing “targets” or enemies, and disasters (storms and fire) often occurred when the tempo of the music was faster. The impact of background music style on roles of playing, dyadic play, and duration of play time are evident in this study.

Harris (2011) observed one multi-age preschool classroom over a 20-week period. This classroom included children aged nine months to four years, while the majority of the 17 children participants were under two years old. The focus of the study was how parents and practitioners supported the children’s communication, language, and literacy skills. Interviews with parents and teachers occurred before and after the study. The four research questions being asked in this study were the following:

What music skills are being fostered and how could these support communication, language and literacy skills? How do the music specialist and practitioners use music to develop communication, language and literacy skills? What role do parents/caregivers play in supporting children’s communication and language skills in music sessions? What are the benefits of musical activities in pre-school education as perceived by parents and practitioners? (Harris, 2011, p. 142)

This particular preschool class had a learner-centered approach where children were able to explore instruments and adults only facilitated when appropriate. Observers focused on the differences in child-initiated approaches versus adult-led approaches. The findings of the study indicated that a variety of musical skills were being addressed during the structured adult-led sessions and children would join in with actions, but not necessarily singing. However, during child-led activities, a wider range of musical skills were fostered, and children were more likely to sing during child-initiated learning. This seemed to be different than what Harris (2011) had found in previous research looking at adults’ impact on musical learning.

These exploratory play activities included many instances of communication, language, and literacy skills being formed. Children in the pre-verbal ages communicated through smiling, pointing, and

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other non-verbal gestures, while parents modeled language and encouraged language skills in the older children. The ways that the music specialists encouraged these various social and literacy skills was through asking open-ended questions, modelling language, and developing conversations around how children were playing.

What was most interesting about this study is that parents described that they expected “that children would develop social skills through music” (Harris, 2011, p. 144). However, the 20 weeks did not necessarily show social skills as an overriding benefit. When analyzing the data presented, it does not seem to focus on the peer interactions that occurred and how those may or may not be considered as part of the social skills. Instead, the use of language with parents during the course of the 20 weeks was seen as the primary source of social skills development in the class. While the parents stated that getting to know other children and mixing with others were parts of how they believed the children would develop social skills, the influence of peers or how the music played a role in these interactions was not analyzed in this study.

Harris (2011) provides insight into music being used to encourage language and literacy types of skills but does not look at overall social development – including peer awareness, non-verbal skills, and cooperation with peers, parents, and other adults as part of the focus. The interviews with parents revealed that they believed music was important in social skills, but not necessarily what role music played. My study examined the entire ecosystem, including peer-to-peer, parent-child, siblings (when applicable), and teacher-student relationships in a slightly older population (ages two through four). In this study, many of the children/infants were at a pre-verbal stage, but my group had some verbal ability.

Summary

From these many studies, the importance of social and emotional learning and the need for more research is evident. The importance of music encouraging social development is often mentioned in research, but there is a little evidence on how music plays a role in social development (Campbell, 1991; Harris, 2011; Koelsch et al., 2010). The Berger and Cooper (2003), Love and Burns (2007), and Harris (2011) studies were influential in the development of my methodology. All of this research contributes to

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an understanding of how children begin to express communication, what seems to foster communicative environments, as well as what does not seem to foster these environments. However, research is still lacking in looking at various orientations of social interactions (peer, parent, teacher), types of social interactions (verbal, non-verbal, musical), and how the style of music, the activities that accompany it, and the directions given all interact in the social preschool music classroom. While all of this research contributes many important findings to the fields of early childhood music education and music therapy, many questions are yet unanswered. I hoped to add to this growing body of research through my case study of a musical preschool classroom.

Chapter 3: Method

I used a case study design. Merriam (1998) suggested that case studies are likely to be the best design for an area of research if there may be variables that are unidentifiable, as in the case of behaviors and interactions, prior to the beginning of a study. For this investigation, a large variety of behaviors and interactions could have occurred, so it was most beneficial to use a case study design. The design was based upon the Berger and Cooper (2003) and Harris (2011) studies, using a case study format in order to capture the best overall picture of what is occurring in this preschool music program. The methods for data collection and analysis I used for this case study were similar to these studies as well, but there was not a break between group sessions as in the Berger and Cooper (2003) study – each classroom met entirely as a group in one session.

Setting and Participants

The setting for this study was a university organized music preschool program where teachers employ a mixture of well-known early childhood songs, dances, and methods. The program was in a large Midwestern university town. Preschool age children between two (or turning two during the course of the study) and five years of age and their parents or other caregivers were invited to self-select to participate in this study. I looked more specifically at all two, three, and four-year old children, their parents, and the teachers within this preschool music program. The program allowed siblings to participate in the same classrooms, so the ages have been expanded slightly in order to include all children within these three preschool aged classrooms. The toddler classroom (approximately 12 months – 22 months of age) was excluded from this study due to the lesser verbal ability of this particular age group. All children and adults mentioned in this study were given pseudonyms to protect anonymity.

In addition to the children; all parents, grandparents, and guardians who attended the musical preschool program were invited to participate. Many of the parents were in some way affiliated with the university as students or employees or received education from the university. This particular classroom encouraged adult involvement as both facilitators and encouragers of their child/children's interactions.

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The two lead teachers both received graduate level degrees from the local university. One finished her M.S. degree in music education with teacher licensure and was teaching elementary music in the area when the data was collected. The other was an experienced elementary music teacher who was pursuing her PhD in music education during this study. There was one teaching assistant for each classroom, and both of the assistants were undergraduates in music education at the university. I invited all parents of the 20–25 children, the teachers and the assistants to participate.

Data Collection

I collected data through observations with field notes, researcher journaling, questionnaires, interviews, and transcription. I video recorded the participants during each lesson and transcribed all of the data from the video. During the transcription process, I assigned pseudonyms to all participants in order to preserve anonymity. I took field notes during these observations and kept a researcher journal as well. After videos were captured, I time-coded the videos for duration of behaviors during the instructional time.

In order to capture the best view of what occurred, two video recording devices were placed in opposite corners of the room to capture all of the participants. A total of 18 videos recordings were made during this study, each collecting the entire 30 or 45-minute class periods. Through both the live field notes and transcriptions, I captured all statements, musical expressions, vocalizations, behaviors, and non-verbal interactions made by the participating children and adults. I also found transcriptions for many of the folk songs used and referenced in this study online.

Questionnaires were given to parents and teachers/assistants to investigate their opinions on the roles that they believe music plays in social development (see Appendix A). These questions were designed to capture personal experience of what they witnessed in their own child/children/students' interactions with music, as well as experiences they had seen in the musical preschool classroom.

Procedures

I received IRB approval to video record and observe these three classes over the spring semester. The sites for this study consisted of three different two-, three-, and four-year-old preschool music

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classrooms, taught by two teams of teachers (one team taught two of the classes). I observed these classes in February and March. Each classroom had 6 weekly 30–45 minutes lessons videotaped. At the beginning of the study, parents, teachers, and assistants who were familiar with the classroom and students completed a questionnaire. All questions were reviewed and edited by a qualitative research expert. All of these questionnaires were sent out via email. I did not provide parents and teachers with a definition of SEL because I wanted to learn in what ways they interpreted SEL and thought about the role of music classes in children’s social development. The items on the questionnaire became progressively more specific, asking if the adults have witnessed evidence that music may impact SEL development. Adults were also asked to describe the types of music or activities that they believe encourage social and emotional development (see Appendix A).

Both the parent and the teacher questionnaires included three questions to investigate the participants’ beliefs on music making’s role in social development. A total of eleven parent responses were collected, as well as three teacher responses. Due to inconsistency in attendance, specifically in the larger multi-age preschool classroom, I was unable to collect more questionnaires from the parents. However, I brought the questionnaire data to the participating parents during the last class periods and shared my results and asked for their feedback to confirm that it reflected overall beliefs of parents who did and did not fill out the questionnaires. Findings in this study and answers to the research questions reflected many of the parents’ beliefs about the role of music in social development.

Data Analysis

I analyzed this data by creating a word list to reduce the data set of field notes, interview materials, and transcriptions, and find the essence of each sentence. From the word list, I developed categories and examined them for themes. Additionally, all music used was analyzed to see if tempo, character, or word in the music seemed to influence behavior (ex. when the song “Clap Your Hands” played, students clapped their hands). I also analyzed time coding data for patterns that relate to the social behaviors noted in field notes and the researcher journal. This material was reviewed by an independent

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coder to see if they come to the same conclusions. Findings from this analysis were brought back to adult participants to check the accuracy of my interpretation (member checking).

Limitations

This study is not generalizable to a larger population due to the uniqueness and smaller class size of this program and the nature of qualitative research which looks deeply into a single setting, time, and group. Additionally, there were a few limitations regarding observation of social behaviors. Research suggests that social and emotional learning occur together rather than separately (Brownell & Kopp, 2007). Types of interactions and behaviors that could occur in a case study like this one are endless. While many checklist models of assessment look at both social and emotional behaviors and blend the two, I planned to honor the complexities of interactions that may occur by looking for prosocial behaviors as defined by Hay and Cook (2007) and any other emerging behaviors resulting from the interactions, relationships, and musical expressions in this classroom setting. The results from this study could be compared to prior research to support and further inform theories on preschool SEL learning within the context of a music classroom.

Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this study was to observe preschool-aged children, their parents, and the teachers' social behaviors and interactions during the preschool music classroom setting. In this chapter, findings are described from the case study analyzing social behaviors and interactions. The findings are discussed by first describing the setting and participants, then exploring the six categories that emerged during analysis. The six emergent categories were verbal expressions, musical expressions, non-verbal expressions with instruments, a cappella phenomenon, activities encouraging empathetic understanding, and varied expressions in imaginative play. This chapter concludes with a summary that discusses the four initial research questions and how these emergent themes and vignettes illustrate social and emotional learning that occurred in this preschool music setting.

Characteristics of Classes and Participants

The three classes differed regarding the ages of students and numbers of students. Class One consisted of approximately 10 students (however this changed from week to week) and their parents/guardians. The students ranged from just under two years old to nearly five years old. About half of the students had been in this preschool music class before and the other half were new this year. The teacher of Class One will be referred to as Lindsey for purposes of this case study. A couple weeks into the study, a teaching assistant was added to the class. Her name will be Mary for purposes of this study.

The setting for Class One changed after the first two weeks. It began in the same small, stuffy, brightly colored room with approximately ten children every week with their parents or guardians, but changed to a larger, duller, less colorful, and more open room. This class was led by Lindsey with assistant, Mary, joining week two.

Lindsey used student-generated responses multiple times in every lesson. Some of these were ideas she would ask for from the children, and other times she would observe what the children would do in play. The first example of the teacher observing the children can be seen even in the first week of this study, when one little boy named Peter used the rhythm sticks as "antennae." Additionally, Lindsey's structure provided lullabies or stories about two-thirds of the way through each lesson.

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Classes Two and Three were taught in both the first, stuffier classroom downstairs and the brighter classroom upstairs. Both classes were led by the teacher who will be named Rachel and her teacher assistant who will be named Oliver, for purposes of this study. Class Two had four or five children each week and Class Three had four or five children each week. Class Two was predominantly children ages two to four, while Class Three had children ranging from one to five.

Rachel's lesson structure was similar to Lindsey's, beginning each class with a hello song and ending each class with a goodbye song, along with smooth transitions between activities. In addition, Rachel incorporated movement throughout the lesson and transitioned between segments with some type of musical, storytelling, or movement activity. When incorporating student-generated responses, Rachel provided even more opportunities for question and answer and many of the creative activities were student led. This was seen in both classes as children directed the exploratory and creative movement activities throughout the six weeks.

While the classrooms shared similarities in structure and repertoire, two primary differences that can be noted throughout the study are the environment of each classroom and the class size. Class One had about ten children with families consistently every week, while Classes Two and Three had fewer children in them each week.

Emergent Findings: Observations of Prosocial Behaviors in Musical Preschool Classrooms

Throughout the course of this study, verbal, non-verbal, and music gestures were identified. The following six categories describe the verbal, non-verbal, and musical social-emotional interactions that occurred. In addition, this study provided an opportunity for emerging categories. Of the six total categories reported here, the last three categories I observed included activities encouraging empathetic understanding shown through child-initiated behaviors, varied expressions seen through imaginative play, and the a cappella phenomenon.

Verbal Expressions

Verbal interactions were one of the most apparent forms of prosocial behavior, and therefore an explicit example of this in the classroom setting. These interactions were primarily teacher-prompted

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through question and answer techniques. Verbal interactions that accompanied and influenced musical interactions were apparent throughout the study. These were often observed in question and answer scenarios from teacher to student, where they were teacher-initiated directions that led to responses from children. Many of these verbal and musical expressions consisted of incomplete sentences comprised of one or a few words that either answered teacher's questions or built upon ideas by fellow classmates. Examples of this occurred frequently in both classrooms.

One example occurred in Lindsey's class. One afternoon, during the regular hello song, Lindsey stated that when a child heard his or her name, they could choose how they would sing hello. First was a vocal three-year-old who, for the purposes of this study, will be named Jeremy. When singing hello to Jeremy, he shouted, "We can be zoo animals!" Lindsey, prompting him for a motion, asked, "How should we say hello?" At this point, he said, "We can be gorillas!" The class used the hello song to do a gorilla motion. After finishing his turn, Lindsey asked the second child, a shier young lady, named Elizabeth, her idea. Enthusiastic Jeremy shouted: "A MONKEY!" Afterwards, his mother reminded him quietly that it is not his turn, however, the young lady agreed to greet everyone by doing a monkey swinging motion.

However, this example of building upon Jeremy's idea of a gorilla seemed to create a bonding experience between Jeremy and another boy named Carter. While the class continued to sing hello to Elizabeth, both he and Carter made monkey or gorilla sounds and crawled towards each other to express these primate expressions both of them agreed upon. Another toddler in the classroom, just over a year old, saw this expression and began to crawl. However, it was time for the third student, which was Elizabeth's sister Rebecca. She thought for a moment, which Jeremy exclaimed "a tiger!" After thinking, Rebecca said, "each animal," so all would have a choice.

When Lindsey noticed the toddler crawling, she instantly skipped to singing this toddler's name, and told the class to crawl like him. The fourth child in the sequence was Carter, and he said they should greet each other like puppies. Finally, the fifth child who exclaimed a "rawr" as her answer to how they should greet each other. When Lindsey asked the fifth child, Emily, what the "rawr" was for, she finished

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by saying, “gorillas.” After completing this motion, Jeremy finished by stating they could all move like orangutans.

This exchange of ideas and building upon one another, not only demonstrated cooperative play, but also prosocial behavior in listening to one another. Until Emily’s turn, the children were not repeating one another but demonstrating a sequencing of building and linking one idea after another. While the teacher initiated the question to each child, every child chose to pick an animal to build upon what was previously said, following Jeremy’s initiation as the child-leader. The first chose a gorilla and playfully added a monkey idea, which the second agreed to. The third child chose to appease everyone with a free choice animal. The fourth was non-verbal, so Lindsey imitated his crawling. This crawling seemed to prompt the fifth child to choose a puppy, the sixth child exclaimed a “rawr” to come back to the gorilla idea, which was finished by our leader in this scenario, Jeremy, with an orangutan.

In addition to encouraging children to think how creatures would move, Rachel used stories that incited compassion in the children. She mentioned how students, parents, and teachers would all encourage one another with applause, cheers, and kind words. Rachel also mentioned that she facilitated discussion and imaginative play to allow for children to express compassion when accompanying stories and songs. Examples of how Rachel facilitated this compassionate interaction was by asking children how baby and parent animals would interact and encouraging children to do the same with their parents. Another example Rachel demonstrated was asking children how to treat an animal with respect and care. These discussions and facilitations of imaginative play to show compassion encouraged the empathetic understanding seen in Rachel’s class. Parents also described music as being a connecting point for bonding and safe environment for expression. This encouragement of creativity, expression, compassion, and bonding described by parents and teachers allowed the music classroom to be a place where we see children flourish in social and emotional connections with the music and others.

Musical Expressions

Musical expression included ways in which teachers initiated interactions and children responded musically. These interactions could include singing or call and response techniques on instruments.

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Specifically in Rachel and Oliver's older class, Class Three, musical imitation singing was observed clearly. One afternoon, Rachel sang on a neutral "loo" syllable bichordal and tritonic patterns of sol-la-sol, sol-mi-do, and do-mi-sol for students to echo back to her. Three students were present this day of instruction. In order to encourage that confidence, the teachers used a knit microphone toy to pass around for student's imitation solos. At first, Rachel and Oliver imitated and shared leading and echoing each other. Afterwards, Oliver led the bichordal and tritonic patterns and passed the microphone to each child. All three children imitated these musical expressions.

Oliver did not make mention of specific genres, but instead said that music, because of pauses or rests, encouraged the social skills such as turn-taking and responding at appropriate times. This could be seen musically in songs such as "Walk and Stop" (Figure 3) where children suggested motions and then all participated in these movements and stopped together on the word "stop." This synchronicity in movement and with sound and silence was also observed in children participating in swaying together on songs such as "The More We Get Together." These songs also encouraged prosocial behavior in the lyrics by encouraging movement or togetherness.

One other example I saw of children showing prosocial behavior in musicality, was how children would make sure to get or share instruments and props with parents. The first week I observed Rachel and Oliver's class, the children shared their drums with their parents and went to grab scarves for the adults too. Additionally, in a movement activity where the children were on a pretend train, they all grabbed their adult by the hand and made sure they went with them. These prosocial behaviors of sharing materials and experiences with one another was apparent in this study.

Non-Verbal Expression with Instruments

Non-verbal expressions, including eye contact and waving, are noted throughout SEL literature as prosocial behaviors (Vaughan Van Hecke, 2007). In this music classroom, I focused on specific non-verbal communication through instruments to show non-verbal prosocial gestures that are specific to a music setting. Like the verbal expressions, these non-verbal expressions began as teacher-initiated opportunities for question and answer or imitation and evolved into child-led continuations of non-verbal

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musical interactions. Rachel's class used instruments regularly throughout each lesson. Drumming was included in every lesson, and often jingle bells or shakers at some point throughout the lesson.

During the first two weeks Rachel taught the song, "Hop Old Squirrel" to encourage children to play sound on the words "hop old squirrel," and silence for the "eidle dum" portion of the song (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Hop Old Squirrel. From Beth's Notes, by B. Thompson. <https://www.bethsnotesplus.com/2011/11/hop-old-squirrel.html> Copyright 2020 by B. Thompson.

HOP OLD SQUIRREL

FOLK SONG

1. Hop old squirrel, ei-dle dum, ei-dle dum. Hop old squirrel, ei-dle dum, dum.

Hop old squirrel, ei-dle dum, ei-dle dum. Hop old squirrel, ei-dle dum dee!

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2. Jump old squirrel...
3. Run old squirrel...
4. Hide old squirrel...

The first week Rachel introduced this song to Class Two, one little boy, Ryan, talked openly about his thoughts, interests, and activities he had been a part of from the beginning of the lesson. The other two children, Mark and Beverly, remained quiet through the first fifteen minutes until the drums appeared. After the drums appeared, children erupted with excitement and began to chatter and smile at the introduction of the drum into the lesson. Rachel led the three children and their parents to play the drums in a structured sound and silence sequence with the song. Even though Mark and Beverly had not previously spoken, as soon as the drum appeared, both children played the drums. By week two, Rachel moved this activity earlier in the lesson and all three children jumped right into playing on the drums,

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rather than speaking or singing. Rachel noticed the children's motions on the drums and used these ideas to “move” the squirrel in other ways. After asking children to demonstrate how the squirrel might move, children created their own variations of squirrel movements on the drum. These included creative variations, such as turning the drum over, or using one or two fingers to hop, spin, or scratch the drum.

All of the teachers expressed the importance of music in building self-confidence, or how active musical experiences provide children an opportunity to become more confident in their own musical expressions. Rachel drew to mind personal experiences she had about music impacting her own self-confidence as a child. She described herself as shy when she was younger, where she “barely spoke a word at school.” Rachel described that she has seen similar changes in children she teaches too. She noted that sometimes the shiest students or students with large behavior problems became some of the most enthusiastic helpers who are always smiling and interacting with the other students. She believes that being in the music classroom increases this self-confidence through a “feeling of acceptance in this [classroom] community.” Additionally, she said that her students have even told her that they take this music at home and share it with their families. I also observed what Rachel described as self-esteem, self-confidence, pride, and development of musical skills interacting in this preschool classroom.

This spirit of music encouraging self-esteem and confidence was evident in how Rachel encouraged children to echo sing solos. She described this process of encouraging students who were shy at first to gain independence by using parents or siblings as helpers. Oliver expressed beliefs that mirroring and imitation both lead to student-generated responses, which in turn made students more comfortable by participating in solo situations. In his words, he found it is “fascinating how children become immensely more comfortable with participating musically in a solo situation when their parents are eager about the participation.”

The synchronous drum participation coupled with the open-ended questions for students to express and improvise, created an environment where this self-confidence that Rachel described could be seen in a non-verbal setting. My personal field notes describe what I saw when I wrote, “When children feel shy and not ready to speak, they often speak through their instruments. This happens especially with

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the drums when the teachers ask questions and sometimes the children answer back on instruments by doing motions.” In the parent questionnaire, one parent stated that music was a “universal language” shared by all, which other parents described as a “common ground.” Even though the children were not verbalizing, they were still communicating this “common ground” expression of playing the drums in synchronicity.

The A Cappella Phenomenon

The a cappella phenomenon demonstrated the power of a cappella voice on children’s prosocial behaviors and interactions. When the teacher sang a cappella lullabies and stories for purposes of “stillness” instead of movement, I noticed a calming effect and attentive engagement in the children. The teacher’s a cappella singing also seemed to produce a bonding experience between parents and their children. While the teacher initiated the lullaby singing, responses to this were child-initiated and included prosocial, parent-child bonding interactions. For example, Lindsey added a lullaby about two thirds of the way through each lesson. In week one, Lindsey began a jingle bells activity half-way through the lesson. While the children were very excited to use the jingle bells, this turned into more of an exploratory and chaotic time as children started to demonstrate off-task behaviors. Noticing this, Lindsey quickly transitioned to clean-up followed with the lullaby “All the Pretty Little Horses” (see Figure 2).

Within a three-minute span, I saw the difference in student demeanor with this softer, slower lullaby and the parent-child interactions as parents hugged and held most of the children. Many of the parents also swayed with the lullaby as they held their child. In the parent questionnaires, parents responded that they believed music provided not only an opportunity for socialization, but also bonding. This moment suggested a clear social and emotional connection, or “bonding,” among parents, children, the teacher, and musical listening as everyone slowed down, became quiet, listened, and swayed with their parents in synchronization.

After observing this a cappella lullaby “phenomenon,” I wondered if the children’s reactions to lullabies would be consistent through different mediums (electronic, or with instrumental accompaniment) as well as consistently throughout the study. Strangely enough, in week two Lindsey had

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a piano accompanist playing for the lullaby moment. Not only was one new child running around the room, with Lindsey's assistant Mary trying to frantically calm this child down, but even the children who were calmed by the a cappella lullaby during the previous week were fidgeting throughout the entire lullaby. Even though it was slow in tempo and lovely as we had heard from "All the Pretty Little Horses," there seemed to be an agitating effect on more of the children, instead of the calming effect from the a cappella lullaby previously noted. This occurrence made me think about how the human voice, when singing lullabies and slower tempo music, may have a different and more calming effect than percussive music and accompanied music.

Figure 2

All the Pretty Little Horses. From Beth's Notes, by B. Thompson.

<https://www.bethsnotesplus.com/2013/08/all-pretty-little-horses.html> Copyright 2020 by B. Thompson.



By week three, Lindsey's class had moved to a newer, more open, duller and less colorful classroom upstairs in the building. While the classroom was larger, the majority of activities still remained on a carpeted square in a corner of the room. This week, a new family joined the group. This fiery, active, and talkative toddler came in ready to explore. Nearly twenty minutes passed by with the mother trying to contain this explorer while Lindsey continuously tried to engage him by speaking his

name. None of this seemed to be working to get him to participate during his first week. However, when we arrived at instrumental time, this new child, who we will name Matthew, became intrigued and decided to join the group, but was still not following Lindsey's leading.

After a few minutes of jingle bells through "Shake and Stop," a variation of the words for the familiar song "Walk and Stop" (see Figure 3), Lindsey sang her clean-up song and Mary transitioned to the book, *We're Going to the Zoo* (Paxton, 1996).

Figure 3

Walk and Stop. From Beth's Notes, by B. Thompson. <https://www.bethsnotesplus.com/2015/04/walk-and-stop.html> Copyright 2020 by B. Thompson.



Even before lullaby time, Mary sang the words to the book a cappella, and the same phenomenon occurred—the children stopped to listen, even Matthew who had not stopped moving for nearly twenty minutes paused to listen to the majority of the book. After the completion of the book, Lindsey pulled out a violin and began to play. Matthew went back to running around again. Then suddenly, Lindsey put away the violin and sang an a cappella Irish lullaby, "Too-ra-loo-ra-loo-ral" (see Figure 4) and the children all became captivated by the a cappella singing. Similar to the previous occurrence, all children,

including Matthew, calmed down and listened to this Irish Lullaby. Some of the children even began to lay down as though they were going to go to sleep.

Figure 4

Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral. From Beth's Notes, by B. Thompson.

<https://www.bethsnotesplus.com/2018/01/ra-loo-ra-loo-ral.html> Copyright 2020 by B. Thompson.

TOO-RA-LOO-RA-LOO-RAL
(THAT'S AN IRISH LULLABY)

JAMES ROYCE SHANNON, 1913

O-ver In Kil-lar ney, Ma-ny years a-go, My Mo-ther sang a song to me In tones so sweet and low; Just a sim-ple lit-tle dit-ty, In her good old I-rish way, And I'd give the world to hear her sing That song of hers to-day. Too-ra-loo-ra-loo ral, Too-ra-loo-ra-li, Too-ra-loo-ra-loo ral, Hush now don't you cry! Too-ra-loo-ra-loo ral, Too-ra-loo-ra-li, Too-ra-loo-ra-loo ral, That's an I-rish lul-la-by.

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Oft, in dreams I wander to that cot again,
I feel her arms a huggin' me as when she held me then.
And I hear her voice a hummin' to me as in days of yore,
When she used to rock me fast asleep outside the cabin door. *Refrain*

In another example of the effects of a cappella singing, during a later session of Lindsey's teaching, she encouraged children to "have some beautiful dreams" and pretend to rest while listening to Claude Debussy's "Claire de la Lune." Even with guided instruction to rest with Lindsey's words and her action to lay her head on her hands, most children imitated the instruction, but were still restless. One child continued crawling and toddling as the music played, three looked around and kept shifting their

weight and focus from side to side in the room, and two more interrupted their resting positions until turning back to them. However, in a later class which also occurred in this newer environment, the song “The More We Get Together” was sung by Lindsey and all of the parents. Before the singing occurred, the youngest child, Brandon, began to cry. When everyone joined in to sing together, he became silent and looked around the room to observe the other children and parents swaying to this song. Lindsey’s assistant, Mary, encouraged Beverly’s mother to sing it in Mandarin. While two languages were being sung, the phenomenon of synchronous swaying and silent observation to a cappella lullabies continued, as all children quietly listened or swayed to the music.

Activities Encouraging Empathetic Understanding

Empathetic understanding, in this study, is described as any form of interaction from one person towards another person or object that demonstrated regard for an emotional, or potential emotional state. While verbal and non-verbal expressions included activities led by teachers and initiated for response, this category displayed child-initiated prosocial-emotional behavior. The behavior demonstrated in this section expressed social-emotional learning organically without specific coaching from an adult.

One of the best examples of empathetic understanding, came from the “Hop Old Squirrel” activity (see Figure 1). In the example with Rachel and Oliver, Rachel asked Beverly and Mark to show how a squirrel might move by using their drums. Both children demonstrated different techniques, such as playing the drums with fists, scratching the drum, or flipping the hand drum over to play it. After the two children invented a couple ideas, Rachel and Oliver led them through some more ideas, ending with “tip toe” which was quiet, and Rachel asked for a “round of applause” where they played the drums loudly. After asking for two rounds of applause, each interrupted with “freeze,” Rachel exclaimed, “You are such good listeners!” At this point, Mark began to let out one more round of applause before saying “My drum is pretty tired.” While sleep, or feelings of instruments were not mentioned, Mark showed empathetic understanding by showing self-awareness for how he was playing the drums, and also considering how this inanimate object may be “feeling” because of his actions.

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The teacher's ways for communicating empathetic understandings were interesting, because Rachel and Lindsey did not explicitly teach it. Instead, both teachers used stories that inspired compassion in the children. Rachel also mentioned that she facilitated discussion and imaginative play to allow for children to express compassion. For example, she would ask the children how baby and parent animals would interact and encourage them to do the same with their parents. While Rachel and Lindsey initiated open-ended questions, the children had the opportunity to imagine and create responses. In one example, Rachel was asking students to imagine what animals they would see on an adventure.

Rachel asked the two children in class one day what animals they saw at the fair. She asked if they saw any baby animals. One little boy, Robert, excitedly jumped and pointed at a spot on the floor and said there were lions there. When Rachel asked what sound they made, Robert began to make a gentle petting motion and a soft "meow" sound to represent the gentle and quiet nature of a lion cub. Even though "baby animals" was part of her question, when Robert decided upon a lion, a strong animal choice, he still took the initiative to show gentleness and compassion in this imaginative situation by pretending the lion was a baby and treating it more like a kitten.

The parents also described music as being a connecting point for bonding and a safe environment for expression. This encouragement of creativity, expression, compassion, and bonding described by parents and teachers allowed the music classroom to be a place where we see children flourish in social and emotional connections with the music and others.

Varied Expressions in Imaginative Play

Imaginative play expressions were student responses to teacher-led activities, and then often became student-led behaviors that were supported by teachers. Imaginative play demonstrates prosocial learning because it encourages free expressions of ideas from the students. Teachers inspired the students to use cooperative play strategies in turn-taking, and role-reversals that allowed for student leadership. Both Rachel and Lindsey asked for student input in stories and imaginative play. In addition to teachers inviting children to imagine how animals moved, they also asked children to imagine how animals felt in different situations. Children often expressed themselves in both verbal and musical ways during these

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instances. Parents described this process by talking about the music classroom as being a place for expression and creativity, as well as inspiring the children to share and take turns.

The questions that teachers posed included ideas about what animals the students “saw” in their adventures, or how these animals moved, and what the animals would be doing or eating. The answers given by students shaped the types of musical interactions and physical movement in the scenarios. For example, if one child mentioned moving like an elephant, the teachers might model drumming louder and slower and the children responded with bigger and heavier stepping/movement as well as lower and slower singing. If a student mentioned moving like birds, then the teachers modeled higher and faster singing, and the children’s movement included faster and lighter movement throughout the room.

In both classrooms, this was especially apparent with the welcome song. They sang, “Let’s sing hello to _____,” to each individual, then would pick motions for everyone to imitate for the greeting song. For example, the children called out ideas, such as “wave,” so all would sing, “Let’s wave hello to everyone.” In another lesson, Rachel and Oliver read the book *If You’re Happy and You Know It!* (Ormerod & Gardiner, 2003). In the book, there are many pictures of animals. At each page, Rachel stopped and asked the students to identify the animal and tell or show what the animal would do. For many of the animals, students also incorporated sounds to accompany the motions.

Summary

The following summary discusses how the findings from observations and questionnaires answered the research questions. Research question one, “What do preschool music teachers and parents of preschool music students believe the role of music is in the overall social development of children?” was answered by teachers and parents with similar notes about the role of music in overall social development of children. Both parents and teachers believed that music allowed for socialization, bonding, sharing, and turn-taking which are all prosocial behaviors. Bonding, sharing, and turn-taking were seen in activities using instruments where children shared them with their parents, as well as how children took turns sharing and trying each other’s ideas on the teacher-directed imaginative play.

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In addition, parents mentioned that musical experiences allowed for a safe environment, so it is “universal,” as described by parents, and shareable amongst everyone. Teachers also contributed thoughts on the emotional aspects of social development with music, stating that they believe it helped to inspire confidence and teach compassion towards others. Teachers said they believed that the inclusion of parents in the classroom helped students become more independently confident over time because they had a helper if needed or wanted or could choose to answer independently. Opportunities for confidence-building and compassion towards others was apparent in how clapping, applause, and encouragement were used every time someone sang a solo, as described in activities that encourage empathetic understanding. Additionally, compassion was encouraged in imaginative play settings, especially ones where children were asked to pretend to be baby animals, or to be quiet when someone was sleeping.

Teachers and parents stated that they believed in the importance of music and musical knowledge, including instrumental playing and singing, as well as the social and creative benefits music allowed. Having a shared belief on the importance of music provided a framework for students where they could express themselves freely and with encouragement.

In regard to research question two, “What types of interactions occur in this musical preschool setting? How are non-verbal, verbal, and musical gestures being utilized to communicate (imitation, question/answer, etc.)?” all three forms of communication (verbal, non-verbal, musical) were clearly observed in the classroom settings. I observed teachers using question and answer to elicit communication efforts from the students. Teachers provided opportunities for students to answer musically and verbally through imaginative play opportunities. Imitation was seen in movement and instrumental playing where others would follow the leader (teacher or student-initiated idea) in a synchronized dance, movement, or instrumental pattern in both classrooms. I observed vocal imitation in Rachel’s classroom through echo games. Additionally, having a parent with them for support allowed children to simply imitate adults and others or lead independently in question and answer scenarios. All of these aspects of a safe, expression-encouraging environment made this classroom conducive for non-verbal, verbal, and musical expressions.

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Research question three, “In this specific setting, does the choice of music repertoire, specific genres/styles (fast/dance or slow/lullaby), or specific activities (movements, dance, etc.) seem to facilitate interactions between/among children/parents/teachers? If so, what types of interactions occur?” was answered by observing the teachers and parents and the choices the music teachers made about each piece of music and where to place it in the classes, as with the a cappella phenomenon that teachers used to calm students and support parent-child bonding. While genre and styles of music were not specific in the questionnaires to parents or teachers, both parents and teachers stated that movement and musical knowledge as being important in social and emotional development. Rachel specifically stated that she has heard accounts from parents and teachers at K-12 schools that students sing as a way to soothe themselves while working. Lindsey noted that storytelling and rhymes also encourage imagination through open-ended questions, which enriched overall communication skills. She noted the calming effect of the lullaby too, as noted in the a cappella phenomenon, where she said that “children usually know immediately when it’s time for a lullaby” and that she saw child-parent interactions during this time. Oliver did not make mention of specific genres, but instead said that music, because of pauses or rests, encouraged the social skills such as turn-taking and responding at appropriate times.

A direct connection between genre and interaction was most clearly observed with the a cappella phenomenon. All other styles and genres of music were used to facilitate specific interactions based on the style or directions in songs. An example was the song “Walk and Stop,” that encouraged children to follow the instructions in the song. Another example would be teacher-initiated instruction as was the case in “Hop Old Squirrel” where children were prompted to only make sounds on the drums on the words hop old squirrel and asked to decide what other movements the squirrel would do. Whether songs were used for instruments, movement, vocal expressions, or creative story-building in imaginative play, some songs had specific instructions embedded in the words or in the teacher’s questions. Lullabies, from my observations, were used most organically to show natural reaction that children seemed to show without prompting.

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The final research questions, “During these interactions, are they oriented towards parent-child, peer-to-peer, or student-teacher relationships? In what ways do adults model or encourage interactions between/among children, or between/among children and instruments? How do these differ in activities and/or musical styles and genres?” provided a cumulative look at how parents, teachers, and children encouraged interactions amongst each other, or towards the children and instruments.

Both parents and teachers modeled this for children with encouragement and praise by clapping for children as they sang solos in Rachel’s classroom. Parents and teachers not only provided numerous opportunities for verbal and non-verbal expression in question and answer, imaginative play, vocalization, and instrumental playing, but also consistently encouraged children participation with applause and smiles after every solo.

These findings demonstrate that the preschool music classes I observed both taught and encouraged prosocial behaviors in several different ways. Through these classes, the children demonstrated empathy, compassion, synchronicity, imitating adults or other children, cooperative music play, and verbal and nonverbal interactions. In this study, it became clear that the music instruction in these classes was rich in musical, social, and emotional learning.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Limitations

This study investigated the teaching and beliefs of teachers and parents who interact with children in a single preschool music teaching program. This program is unique to the participants and to the small Midwestern university town. Many towns do not have active preschool, extra-curricular music programs. It was a unique opportunity to observe organic, first occurrences of organized classroom music with this group. Additionally, this study was bounded by time. I was only able to observe these classes over a six-week period. My observations took place a couple weeks into the spring semester of the early childhood music program. That six-week period may have looked different if I observed the class during the beginning of a semester or later in a semester as students have had more opportunities to interact. The findings from this study are not intended to be generalized for the entire population but, rather, to provide a window into understanding social and emotional growth.

Relationship of Findings to Prior Research

In answers to research question one, parents and teachers noted that music allows for socialization, bonding, sharing, and turn-taking. All of these behaviors, including learning to greet one another, focusing attention and self-control in musical ways (such as starting and stopping movement, or showing rhythmic control), cooperation, and initiation of individual expressions all support Simpson's (2013) research that these would be considered target prosocial behaviors in a preschool classroom.

The findings related to research question two support the research of Hay and Cook (2007) with three categories of prosocial behavior being observed: feeling for others, working with others, and ministering to others. I observed teachers encouraging children to show feeling for others in empathetic understanding, such as when Robert personified and noticed how much he had been playing the drum, and how it might "feel." Working with others was apparent in how children responded to each other's ideas and participated in the activities. Ministering to others was observed in how children made sure to bring parents along with them for "adventures" or provided instruments and props during the activities. As noted by Ilari et al. (2020), I observed instrumental helping and sharing in my study.

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When observing musical genre/style and specific activities for question three, many of the examples encouraged specific movement, like the “Walk and Stop” example. However, the a cappella phenomenon seemed to go beyond what has been observed in previous research regarding synchronization and provided a unique finding in relation to research question three. Synchronization, as described by Clements (2018), refers to movement, such as everyone is dancing or clapping together, or playing instruments, which then demonstrates an effect on prosocial or empathetic behavior. This phenomenon, however, seemed to create almost an “emotional synchronization.” Where external movement synchronization can be seen in swaying or clapping, this example showed an emotional synchronization characterized by a calming and resting attitude and position from children.

The final research question about types of interactions and how adults encouraged interactions was seen a few different ways. The teachers encouraged children to be prosocial through open-ended questions and giving the children freedom for expression and creativity in how they responded. Supporting the work of Berger and Cooper (2003) and Gordon (2003), children in my study were provided ample opportunities to respond in free musical play in a wide range of activities. In the Kim (2017) study, parallel and cooperative play were both noted as forms of social play. Howes et al. (1992) noted five levels of involvement, where the last three are a child engaging in interaction, a child engaging in social play, and lastly, a child engaging in competent social pretend play. These open-ended questions by the teachers in my study gave children the opportunity to become leaders and followers in cooperative, explorative, pretend musical play, further supporting the opportunity for children to show high levels of involvement leading to prosocial behavior.

Implications for Future Practice

The findings from this study suggest some teaching practices that might be valuable to recommend to teachers who work with preschool children. The important and rich opportunities that free, creative musical play offers should not be ignored, as creative musical play has been noted as an important SEL learning experience in this study and previous research. The varied spontaneous interactions seen among children, which the teachers allowed and encouraged, were fascinating to

compare with previous SEL research. While Koops (2014) noticed how children used spontaneous music making in the subways to soothe themselves; in a classroom setting, spontaneous music making is almost entirely done to be shared by others. The prosocial nature of musical play should be made available to children, especially in an environment where children are free to also interact with others. Children use spontaneous music making independently too, as seen in Koops's (2014) subway example. However, the prosocial possibilities that come from musical play can be experienced more fully when children are in an environment, like a classroom, where they can experience creative musical play with others.

Clements (2018) research on synchronicity further supports my finding that rhythmic and musical synchronicity can provide students with a sense of togetherness. In my study, the a cappella phenomenon was apparently related to a movement-oriented, emotional synchronicity where all became calm together. Researchers should continue to investigate the emotional effect that calming a cappella music seemed to have on children in order to see if there can be more generalizations made to a larger population.

Implications for Further Study

This study was exciting because I observed some of the first interactions children could have in an American, organized musical setting. For other areas around the country, children might not have access until kindergarten or first grade (ages five or six). I suggest that similar studies be conducted in a variety of kindergarten music programs or preschool music programs. To draw more connections with social/emotional learning and music, more case studies should be conducted in different regions to see how music has been and is currently being valued socially in different regions. In these different regions, researchers can record the differences in repertoire or instrumentation for differences in types of interactions. Researchers might also consider conducting longitudinal case studies to investigate the transfer of behaviors and activities from one environment to another. Some studies may focus on classroom settings exclusively, while other studies focus on home settings, and others may focus on solitary settings. Future research looking at how these interactions with the music are similar or different in different settings may provide insight into how children use music for social and emotional benefit in these different settings.

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I also suggest studies that survey more educators on practices they are using that encourage prosocial behaviors through music. The questionnaires in this study provided a rich look into parents' and teachers' thoughts on music and social and emotional development. Questionnaires for future research may look different if definitions are provided by the researcher about what specific musical interactions, genres, or social behaviors researchers would like teachers and parents to comment on. If future researchers choose to use variations of my questionnaires, I may suggest providing a definition of social and emotional development to see how responses may differ from questionnaires. A specific definition may elicit more specific responses if behaviors or interactions are defined. However, in my study I chose to keep this open-ended in order to receive any and all responses parents and teachers would include about the role of music in social development.

I would also suggest a quasi-experimental study that would include three different preschool music classes taught by a music teaching expert. One class would focus on activities to encourage prosocial behaviors with repertoire that speaks to prosocial behavior development, one class would have individual music learning as the focus with repertoire speaking to prosocial behaviors, and one class could focus solely on individual musical growth with repertoire that does not have text referring to prosocial skills. Independent judges could rate the starting and ending prosocial behaviors demonstrated by the children in each of the three classes. Such a study could help us understand if it was musical learning itself, repertoire that encourages prosocial skills, and/or specific teaching strategies that may influence prosocial behaviors.

While it is widely believed that music elicits emotional responses, or that there is something innately social about listening to music, there has been little research about what kind of impact both the repertoire and teaching activities have on children's social and emotional experiences. Qualitative research methods, as were done in this study, provide an opportunity to organically see different ways music settings and musical instruction impact social and emotional behaviors in people.

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Appendix A: Teacher Questionnaires

Teachers and Assistants:

1. Please described what role you believe music plays in the overall social development of the preschool-aged child?
2. In your experience, how does music impact social development in young children? Can you give me some examples of how you have seen music impact children's social development?
3. Have you seen specific instances of music's impact on children's social behaviors and interactions? (These can include peer-to-peer interactions, student-teacher, and/or student-parent interactions).

Appendix B: Parent Questionnaires

Parents/Caregivers:

1. What personal benefits do you believe enrolling your child in music preschool classes offers?
2. What role do you believe music plays in social development?
3. Have you seen specific instances of music's impact on your child/children's social behaviors and interactions? (These can include peer-to-peer interactions, student-teacher, and/or student-parent interactions). Please elaborate.