

WEBS OF INTERACTIONS:  
INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON CULTURAL  
MUSIC MEDIATION AMONG ADULTS AND YOUNG CHILDREN

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by  
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## ABSTRACT

In this qualitative phenomenological inquiry, I explore how an international group of early childhood music teachers describe creating music-learning environments for young children. As members of the Early Childhood Music Education Commission of the International Society for Music Education, the nine research participants share a common interest in contributing to early childhood music education. I was interested in understanding how members of that group perceived creating music-learning environments for young children. I wondered: What are early childhood music teachers' perceptions of music-learning environments for young children; What shapes their perceptions; and How do early childhood music teachers strive to create an environment conducive for young children's music learning?

Using tenets of narrative inquiry, I *re-story* this study as a conversation in a coffee shop. Imagine there's an international early childhood music conference in your town. During a conference break, I walk into your favorite coffee shop. You stand in a long line waiting to order. I walk in and take my place behind you in line, and we begin a conversation about children's music learning. Eventually, colleagues who are attending the conference (i.e., the nine research participants) join us.

During our conversation, you and I discuss our experiences with understanding and creating early childhood music-learning environments. Next, we talk with the nine research participants about how they create music-learning environments for young children and I reveal the essence of their shared experience: participants view themselves as cultural music mediators, believing it is their job to mediate music interactions among adults and young children.

Finally, you and I discuss implications for parents, early childhood music teachers, early childhood general education teachers, and pre-service music and general education teachers. We talk about ways they can become cultural music mediators, and create webs of music interactions for adults and young children.

After reading this study, I invite you to visit my Facebook page, Music-Learning Environments for Young Children, to contribute thoughts and questions.

“Be yourself—not your idea of what you think somebody else's  
idea of yourself should be.”  
- Henry David Thoreau

To Cynthia, Sarah, and Alison. Thank you for constantly encouraging me to be nothing  
more and nothing less than myself.

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## PROLOGUE

Have you ever thought about young children’s music learning? If you have, you may have sought answers through reading books or parenting magazines, or participated in early childhood music classes. But, have you ever wished you could sit down and solicit advice from multiple expert early childhood music teachers? Think of what that conversation could yield. You could ask them questions like, “What is a music environment for young children?” or “How do I create a music environment for young children in my life?” Today, I invite you to begin exploring ideas and answers to those types of questions. I ask you to begin or continue that journey by joining 10 expert early childhood music teachers as we talk about music-learning environments for young children. No previous music experience is required to join the conversation.

Imagine there’s an international early childhood music conference in your town. During a conference break, I (KERRY) walk into your favorite coffee shop. You see the couches, chairs, and barista bar placed where they always are in the coffee shop. You stand in a long line waiting to order. I walk in and take my place behind you in line. You turn around and smile. You mention the line is unusually long today.

In the following scenario, you (YOU) and I (KERRY) continue our conversation, which turns from exchanging pleasantries to talking with each other about children’s music learning. Eventually, colleagues who are attending the conference join us. Throughout our conversations, I encourage you to contribute your own experiences, thoughts, and questions.

PART ONE  
INTRODUCTIONS

(YOU and KERRY chat informally. YOU carries an iPad case and KERRY carries a large bag.)

YOU

What do you do for a living?

KERRY

I'm an early childhood music teacher. I also work at a university in Western New York and conduct research. I'm in your town for an international early childhood music education conference.

YOU

You know, I'm continually amazed at how musical young children are. Many of them seem to sing throughout the day. What a wonderful way to live life. I've often wondered if other people have noticed the same thing.

KERRY

(Checks her iPhone for the time.)

I have some free time. Would you like to sit down and talk for a bit?

YOU

That would be great.

(YOU and KERRY sit and chat. YOU talks about herself/himself and KERRY listen with interest. YOU tells KERRY how he/she's guiding child(ren) musically, and what's happening at home or at school.)

How did you become interested in early childhood music?

KERRY

(Laughs.)

Well, that's a long story!

YOU

That's okay, I'd love to hear it.

KERRY

(Smiles.)

I have dedicated my career to understanding how young children learn music. Working with young children over the years, I have been captivated by their sense of curiosity, openness, and willingness to collaborate. Yet, the essence of their music learning has eluded me. What is vital? What is expendable? Who do children need in their lives to guide their music journey? Do they need anyone? And, what is my role?

I have read that music learning, like many other types of learning, is a complex dance between potential and environment (Plomin & Bergeman, 1991). No one knows who the leader is in the dance pair, but it is commonly accepted that both are influential. It seems that a child's potential for learning music, known as music aptitude, is highest at birth and fluctuates (i.e., is *developmental*) until stabilizing around the age of nine (Gordon, 2007). If that is truly the case, then early years of music learning (known as *early childhood*), generally agreed upon as ranging from birth through age eight (UNESCO, 2012), critically establish a foundation for a child's lifelong music learning.

YOU

(Opens iPad case.)

Hmm, this is really interesting. I'm going to jot down some thoughts so I can remember our conversation.

(Begins typing on iPad.)

KERRY

Okay. So, environment plays a major role in children's developmental music aptitude (Gordon, 2007), which raises an important question: "What is a good music-learning environment for young children?" When I first considered that question, I had already been teaching for several years. Though I sought out literature about it, and tried changing my students' current music-learning environments, only recently did I choose to reflect on my own music background for understanding.

According to my mom, my music education began in utero. She and my dad went to hear the Boston Symphony Orchestra play at Tanglewood in Lenox, Massachusetts. My mom says I "kicked with delight" as the concert progressed. A year later, I went to my first out-of-womb concert at Tanglewood. After watching me react to the music, a woman from the Tanglewood Festival Chorus approached my mom and said, "Make sure you get your child involved with music and dance. She has a knack for it."

YOU

(Smiles.)

KERRY

My parents tell me that was a major moment for them. They assumed the woman's comment meant I was musically gifted. Maybe I was or maybe it was just the natural reaction of a child listening to music. Whatever the case, that experience profoundly shaped music's role in my life. From that moment on, my parents played music and sang

throughout the day. There's a picture of my mom playing guitar and singing as I listened intently with wide eyes and an open mouth. There were multiple record players and tape players in the house, each used daily. I remember dancing freely to "Uncle Albert/Admiral Halsey" (McCartney & McCartney, 1971), one of my dad's favorite songs, one moment and then dusting and humming happily to Puccini, one of my mom's favorite composers, the next. It's no surprise that my parents' music preferences shaped my early music preferences (Custodero & Johnson-Green, 2003; Filsinger 2012; Upitis, 1990; Young & Perez, 2010). I loved classical music because my mom loved it. I loved rock because my dad loved it. I hated jazz and country because my mom and dad disliked those music styles.

My earliest memory of creating my own music was at six years old. I had been taking piano lessons for a few months and would visit the piano often throughout the day. I didn't like piano lessons. I didn't like to practice. I remember conveniently forgetting my theory book every week. But I would sit at the piano for what seemed like hours creating songs, revising them, writing down the lyrics, and figuring out how to notate so I could preserve them. Each night, I would have to stop creating when my mom would tell me I needed to practice. To appease her, I'd play through my assignments to finish as quickly as possible and then go back to creating.

I remember my piano recitals, walking up to the piano, hands shaking as I approached it, feeling all eyes on me, my body stiff as a board. And each and every time, I would play at least one wrong note. I hated that experience. Why, I wondered, couldn't I play my own songs, or at least music I liked?

No one ever asked to hear my songs. “Why don’t they ask?” I thought. I was confused because my parents always asked to read stories and view pictures I created.

YOU

(Sighs sympathetically.)

KERRY

For example, I remember sitting in my room when I was four and telling my mom a story. “Would you like me to write your story down?” she asked. “Yes!” I replied enthusiastically. I told my mom a story of how a cat sat on a mat and she wrote the story down. Side by side we sat revising the story together. It was fun. I was with my mom and she valued my ideas and opinions. She wrote the story down because I could not yet read or write, but I illustrated the work. I remember running into my dad’s arms when he came home from work and proudly sharing my book. We read the book together.

*That was an important day in my life. It was the day I became an author.*

Patiently, I waited and waited for someone to value my songs as much as they valued my writing or painting. I don’t blame my parents; I don’t think it ever occurred to them to ask. Still, I waited and waited. Finally, when I was eight, at the end of what many educators consider early childhood, someone asked me to share my song. It was my elementary general music teacher. She had just received a Ph.D. from Temple University where, she studied with numerous professors including Edwin E. Gordon. Side by side, during my lunchtime, we sat at the piano in the Spring Glen Elementary School music room. I sang my song. She began playing chords on the piano as I sang. I had no idea my song fit with chords! I asked her if she could teach me how to play the chords and she did. And, because I could not yet read and notate music fluently, she wrote down my

song. I remember going home and sharing my song with my parents. They were very excited. I remember my mom writing song lyrics with me.

*That was another important day in my life. It was the day I became a composer.*

YOU

Hmm, interesting.

KERRY

As I reflect upon those early experiences, I realize they laid the foundation for my future music learning. Listening, moving, exploring, improvising, and composing were central to defining myself as a musician. And I realize that, through social music interactions with a More Knowledgeable Other (Vygotsky, 1978), I was able to propel my learning. Without the help of a More Knowledgeable Other, I remained stagnant. With the imposition of a clearly outlined sequence with no room for self-expression (e.g., the teaching method my piano teacher used), I faltered; with space for self-exploration, I flourished.

In unstructured music settings such as my living room and elementary music room during lunchtime, I informally interacted with people (Gordon, 2003; Valerio, Reynolds, Bolton, Taggart, & Gordon, 1998). They assessed my understanding and guided me to a heightened level of awareness that, independently, was just out of my reach. Looking back, I realize they accomplished that through observing my interests and through entering the world of play with me. To me, music *was* play. The experience was enjoyable and risk-free (Sloboda, 1994; Upitis, 1990). The moment it felt laborious, I shut down (Pound & Harrison, 2002).

Though my parents didn't have formal music training, they interacted with me musically. They also sought guidance from others, including my elementary general music teacher. With her help, my parents learned how to enrich and encourage my music making at home, experiencing first-hand the power of music creativity.

Those early experiences influenced what I accepted and what I rejected during my undergraduate work, and ultimately guided how I thought of music-learning environments for the young children with whom I would work. My elementary general music teacher was a huge music role model. Of all the music teachers I had as a child, she was the greatest influence—I found her high level of musicianship and willingness to creatively collaborate with students inspiring.

Later, during my undergraduate studies, I remember watching a short video in an early childhood music methods class. That was the first time I realized someone had devoted time to constructing a theory of how people learn music when they learn music (Gordon, 2007). Dr. Gordon appeared on the television and began talking about connections between music and language acquisition. As he spoke, I realized I was experiencing a sense of *déjà vu*. There was something familiar about what this man was saying. Then it clicked.

YOU

(Smiles.)

KERRY

Just as my parents sought guidance from others to help me grow musically, I found people who understood Music Learning Theory (Gordon, 2007). I sought out resources that fueled my interest in general and early childhood music. Sifting through the stacks of

Sibley Music Library at the Eastman School of Music, I remember when I first found the *Jump Right In: The General Music Series* (2000) and *Music Play* (1998) books. I remember pulling them all off the second shelf from the bottom, sitting on the ground, and browsing through them for hours. I also remember integrating repertoire from those books into every class I taught.

Concurrently, I experienced my first early childhood music setting. I remember walking into a Music Times Two class at the Eastman Community Music School to observe. I have always been comfortable around young children because my mom is Director of a preschool. However, I was unsure what to expect in a strictly music context. I remember instantly falling in love with the class. The children were free, open, and curious. Many of them, unafraid of a stranger, toddled up to me and smiled and ran back to their mother or father with delight. At the beginning of class, I noticed the teacher and teaching assistant providing free and uninterrupted time for children's music exploration and play (Berger & Cooper, 2003). There were music toys and books out for children to explore at their leisure. Then, came a signal song that it was time to clean up, followed by a hello song. Though structured, the class had an informal and relaxed air to it (Gordon, 2007). Children were free to participate or just observe. The teachers provided opportunities for children and their parents to move freely (Valerio et al., 1998; Taggart, 2000), and to explore and create sounds with instruments and their voices (Fox, 1989; Kenney, 2004; Littleton, 1991).

During that class, I observed that children had already formed music preferences (Ilari & Polka, 2006), and although they seemed to enjoy loud and fast music (Greer, Dorow, & Randall, 1974), they could also lay down and listen to music for an extended

period of time (Acker, Ferris, & Nyland, 2010)—perhaps because the teacher had already presented that music during previous classes (Ilari & Polka, 2006; Lamont, 2003). I also noticed the room was empty. Because it served as a university classroom during the week, there were chairs and tables scattered about. Before class began, I helped the teacher turn the chairs and piano to face the wall. The only items in sight were props and instruments that were set out of the children’s viewpoint and reach. The teacher used props to engage children in the music activities and promote music exploration (Fung & Gromko, 2001; Gluschkof, 2008) as parents looked on and engaged with their children.

Speaking with the curriculum director, Donna Brink Fox, I learned that she designed classes to help parents make music at home with their children. She acknowledged that children’s music-learning environments were part of their daily lives (Custodero & Johnson-Green, 2003) and provided handouts every three weeks with songs, finger plays, and recordings teachers had used in class.

YOU

(Nods head.)

KERRY

Upon graduating, if anyone asked me what a music-learning environment was, I was ready with my stock answer: a music-learning environment has music in a variety of tonalities, meters, and styles (Gordon, 2012; Valerio, et al., 1998) and occurs when adults set clear parameters within children are free to explore music. The reasoning behind that made sense to me: variety provides opportunities for adults to guide children in making comparisons. As Gordon (1999) says, although a “variety of sounds may at first puzzle [children], the development of their musical achievement is the result of their attention to

the musical diversity of the music the parent and/or teacher sings and chants” (p. 39).

Further, adults can act as models for children’s music learning. Through determining a structure in the physical space and class time, children will become accustomed to the routine and be willing to take musical risks.

I went into my first teaching placement, a pre-K through grade 2 school, ready to create my music-learning environment. I assumed that all my students had no music background before I got there, which was kind of funny: I had received this position to replace a teacher on maternity leave in February, mid-way through the school year. I immersed them in music that represented a variety of tonalities, meters, and styles. I repeated songs during class and between classes because I learned that was important (Gordon, 2003). I sang and chanted tonal patterns informally to children (Valerio et al., 1998). I had also learned that researchers found an increase in children’s vocalizations after hearing unfamiliar music (Reynolds, 1995; Valerio, 2006), which gave even more rise to the importance of creating a varied listening environment. That meant performing music I was not very comfortable with, and led to a journey of trying to increase my music vocabulary in non-major and minor tonalities and non-duple and triple meters.

Because of the extensive thought I had given to the overall environment I was creating, I felt confident. Regarding the physical space, I adhered to expert suggestions for little distraction (Gordon, 2003)—I did not include much in the room. I removed chairs and tables that got in the way. After a day of the kids going crazy on me because of the lack of physical boundaries, I taped off areas of the carpet, creating spaces for children to interact closely and others for movement. I plastered the walls with familiar notated songs trying to create a notation-rich environment. I also used props to promote

individual music expression (Custodero, 2002), and exploration (Fung & Gromko, 2001; Gluschankof, 2008), elicit vocal responses (Etopio & Cissoko, 2005; Hornbach, 2010), and help children coordinate movement, breathing, and singing (Bolton, 2012; Valerio et al., 1998).

In my bubble, I was confident that I was creating a rich music-learning environment for my students. However, it still felt as though something was missing. The children were still not one hundred percent on board with me and I was not one hundred percent on board with the way I had learned to guide children in developing musicianship. I realized that, in my application of those ideas, I was focusing more on creating structure than allowing for children's individual creativity. Perhaps, at that time, I was too busy learning how to teach groups of children, and trying to incorporate new methods and techniques into my teaching. I remember the day I first incorporated improvisation, a type of music creativity, into instruction. I was singing "Mary Ann" with a first grade class. Do you know that song?

YOU

(Pauses to think.)

Hmm, I'm not sure.

KERRY

It goes like (Sings song). I'll send you a link to the song (Click here to hear song.)

YOU

(Sings part of song.)

Oh, that's catchy.

KERRY

Yeah, it's a great song. After my students could sing the melody to the song, I began modeling improvising question and answer phrases, which music teachers usually call antecedent and consequent phrases (Azzara & Grunow, 2010)<sup>1</sup>. Here's an example.

(KERRY sings an antecedent phrase from "Mary Ann" and models improvising a consequent phrase.)

Now, you try! I'll sing that same antecedent phrase and you improvise a consequent phrase.

YOU

(Laughs.)

Okay, I'll give it a try.

(KERRY sings antecedent phrases from "Mary Ann" and gestures for YOU to improvise consequent phrases.)

Okay, I hear how it works.

KERRY

I led my students through a similar activity. Then Harriett, a tiny blonde-haired 7-year-old, said, "I can do a whole one." I assumed she meant she could sing a whole solo over the A section, so that's what I invited her to do. I think I have a video of her singing on my phone.

(KERRY looks at her iPhone and then hands the phone to YOU. KERRY and YOU watch the video together.<sup>2</sup>)

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<sup>1</sup> For more information about improvisation, and to hear "Mary Ann" and improvisation examples of antecedent and consequent phrases, refer to (Azzara and Grunow, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> To hear Harriett's song, click or visit <http://youtu.be/LEf392G3jGw>

I have shown that video to pretty much everyone I know because I still can't believe what I heard that day. I am still in awe that children are capable of expressing themselves in such musical and creative ways.

(YOU hands iPhone back to KERRY.)

*That was an important day in my life. It was the day I realized I didn't have all the answers.*

I learned several important lessons from Harriett. The first was realizing she knew the song very well. It was familiar to her (Gordon, 2007). The second was that she had learned it before she came to music class. I did not teach her this song. I merely guided her in learning it more deeply (Azzara & Grunow, 2006). That rocked my world. What? I was not the all-knowing teacher? How could that be? If I was not the all-knowing teacher and one hundred percent of the knowledge was not coming from me, then where was it coming from? After having a conversation with her mother, I learned that music was part of Harriett's daily environment. Her mom said they had a song for everything: a brushing your teeth song, a getting dressed song, even a "you're in trouble" song. She made many quality music recordings with folk songs accessible to Harriett and sat with Harriett, singing along as they listened.

YOU

(Smiles.)

KERRY

I started thinking differently about how young children learn. I realized that music creativity needed to play a much larger role in music class. I also realized that I needed to understand what was happening musically with my students outside the walls of the

music classroom. What was happening in the home, in the school cafeteria, and on the school bus? I began taking more chances and caring about the children as individuals—taking time to understand their interests and learning levels, both musically and non-musically. In other words, I stopped thinking of them as music lab subjects and more as dynamic humans who used music to express themselves and make sense of life. I realized I needed to stop imposing only my music on my students. Yet I felt a cultural responsibility to pass on music that I considered quality, and also share with them music that I loved. I thought it was important for them to see me fully in love with a piece of music and fully motivated to learn that piece of music as well as possible.

Consequently, repertoire used during music class became a combination of their music, my music, and what I referred to as “pass-on” music. As that shift occurred, I noticed that my concept of music-learning environments was expanding. It seemed impractical to think of the music class as children’s only music environments (Burton, 2002; Campbell, 2010; Campbell & Wiggins, 2013; Moog, 1976). There was so much happening outside those four walls elsewhere in the school and outside school. There were so many other people involved. I started getting anxious. What was a music-learning environment for children? I realized that even though I had been teaching for five-and-a-half years, I was more confused than ever. I was frustrated. I had so many questions that needed to be answered.

YOU

(Nods head.)

## KERRY

My understanding of music-learning environments for young children became even more convoluted when I visited Temple University, at the prospect of pursuing a Ph.D. There, I experienced two remarkable events. The first occurred in an infant class that was part of the Early Childhood Music Foundations program at Temple Music Prep. As I walked in, I noticed the familiar bare room very much like the setting for the early childhood music classes at the Eastman Community Music School. However, instead of many manipulatives, there was just a drum in the middle. Diego, the teacher, sat at the drum with four babies and their parents. I remember feeling uncomfortable because he would sing and then would leave silence. It seemed that I was the only one who was uncomfortable though. Everyone else sat peacefully. I wasn't sure what he was doing but had read in *Music Play* and *Music Learning Theory for Newborn and Young Children* that silence helps children absorb music and contribute musically through vocalization and movement (Hicks, 1993; Reynolds, 1995, 2006). After what seemed like an eternity, a child began waving his arms and legs while singing the resting tone of the song Diego had just sung.

*That was an important moment in my life. It was the day I realized even the youngest children are capable of making music.*

During that trip, I also joined Alison Reynolds and Jill Reese at a nearby daycare they visited frequently. Dr. Reynolds and Jill walked into the toddler room without saying a word. They just started immersing the children in singing, chanting, and moving. They were amidst toys and distractions and yet the children were still responding musically. They were simply sitting on the floor with children, making music and

improvising with the children, the music, children's music, toys in the room, and the activities (Reynolds, Long, & Valerio, 2007). Those experiences at Temple University further expanded my understanding of music-learning environments for young children. I realized there were many different ways to create a music-learning environment. Yet, I believed there were general tenets, regardless of setting and even cultural context that existed. I became very interested in understanding what those tenets were. I realized if I wanted to understand how, when, and where music fit, I needed to learn more about children's daily learning environments.

(YOU takes a deep breath and smiles.)

Sorry, that was a long-winded answer.

YOU

(Laughs.)

That's okay.

(Shares information about his/her music background with KERRY.)

As a researcher, do you conduct research about music-learning environments for young children?

KERRY

Yes, in fact, I just finished conducting a research study about that very topic. But my interest in researching music environments began back in 2011 when I visited Italy.

In preschools and infant-toddler programs in Reggio Emilia, Italy, teachers place high value on environment. They consider environment *the third teacher* (i.e., children's third teachers)—naming parents as children's first teachers and teachers as children's second teachers. Wanting to learn more about that, I submitted a proposal to Temple

University for a Presser Music Award grant to travel to Italy and study with the teachers in Reggio Emilia. To my surprise, I received the funds and, began my journey in June, 2011.

I was also aware of skilled Italian music teachers who were creating rich music environments for their students. During my travels, I visited teachers affiliated with two well-known Italian early childhood music education organizations—Musica in Culla and the Associazione Italiano Gordon per l'Apprendimento Musicale (AIGAM).<sup>3</sup> AIGAM and Musica in Culla share influences of Edwin Gordon and his Music Learning Theory for Newborn and Young Children (Gordon, 2003). Both organizations interpret Gordon's work through an Italian social lens, which helps them communicate effectively with Italian early childhood teachers and caregivers. Italian early childhood education models and Gordon-inspired Italian early childhood music education models share two commonalities. Teachers (a) provide time for children to absorb and explore learning environments, and (b) interact with children to deepen and extend learning experiences.

I went to Italy with two questions: What is an ideal learning environment for young children? What is an ideal *music-learning* environment for young children? I was hoping, perhaps naively, that I would find concrete answers to my questions. I began by formally interviewing and observing teachers affiliated Musica in Culla and AIGAM. While in Italy, I observed two early childhood music programs with seemingly dramatically different music environments. When observing a Musica in Culla-affiliated teacher, I noticed the room in which she taught was warm and inviting. Mostly mothers

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<sup>3</sup> For more information about Musica in Culla and AIGAM, click or please visit <http://www.associazionesintonie.com/musica-in-culla> (Musica in Culla website) and <http://www.aigam.org> (AIGAM website).

who sang beautifully brought their children to music class. There was an air of caring and mutual respect in the room. While observing several AIGAM-affiliated teachers, I noticed the rooms in which they taught were sparser. Yet when the children entered the room, I observed a high level of musicality from both them and their teachers. It was so interesting teachers affiliated with two organizations rooted in the work of Edwin Gordon could be so different—even teachers affiliated with the same organization demonstrated pedagogical differences. But through interviews with Musica in Culla and AIGAM-affiliated teachers, though I found no concrete answers, I found teachers shared common ideas about music-learning environments for young children. I think I still have the essence of their commonalities from that study saved on my phone!

(Checks email account on her iPhone, nods, and hands the phone to YOU.)

YOU

(Takes iPhone from KERRY and reads aloud.)

Our culture is full of noise and distractions. In the context of daily life, amidst school, television, laundry, dinner, soccer practice, vacation, work, brushing our teeth, doctors appointments, and everything else, we encourage people to spend just a little time each day focusing on music. Our essence is space for everyday music. We must provide space through carving out moments of the day and limiting the number of distractions for everyday music; music that is of the people, music that occurs everyday. Through heightened awareness, we can build musical communities, which provide the space. (Filsinger, 2012)

(Gives iPhone back to KERRY.)

KERRY

While that research experience was formal, I had a more informal but still rigorous research experience in Reggio Emilia. I played. I laughed. I struggled. I fell into the water and felt the cool running brook. I listened to the sounds of bugs, and birds, and trees and danced with them in the meadow. I experienced life. I explored, formed questions,

created and improvised within nature, documented, reflected on that documentation individually and with others, and arrived at a heightened awareness. None of that would have been possible without my co-researchers from all over the world—my peers and teachers. I lived with them, dined with them, and danced with them. We shared stories of our lives, our hopes, and our dreams. Our learning environment *was* our daily life.

Though I was not comfortable with my teachers' idea of music (i.e., they focused more on sound exploration than music learning), the experience helped me better understand my role in children's learning, specifically how I fit into children's learning. Prior to that experience, I was trying to fit the children into *my* learning. I realized that didn't work.

When I arrived home from that trip, I had a very different idea of what a learning environment was. It was difficult if not impossible to teach as I had been teaching. I found myself craving to better understand children musically within the context of their daily lives: in *their* element. I searched online for constructivist-based preschools and found one called "Project P.L.A.Y. School." The name seemed to say it all. The acronym P.L.A.Y. symbolizes the school's directors' emphasis on creating a play-based environment and represents the phrase for "partners in learning about you" (Chayot & Goldenberg, 2010). I'll show you their website.

(Searches for Project P.L.A.Y.'s website on her iPhone.)

YOU

(Takes the iPhone from KERRY and reads aloud.)

Project P.L.A.Y. School offers a beautiful atmosphere of discovery. We believe the environment is the third teacher and we create a serene space for children that is reflective of that. The inspiring supportive environment encourages choice, exploration, collaboration and social interaction. Daily opportunities for creative expression as articulated in the 100 Languages of Children are tailored to each child's needs. These avenues include poetry, painting,

sculpture, music, wire, clay and more.

We develop sincere relationships with children, families and community built on mutual respect, commitment and joy. At Project P.L.A.Y. School children achieve, succeed and grow through heartwarming and caring relationships. Parents are recognized as a child's first teachers and therefore parenting philosophies are respected and used as tools for learning in the classroom. Family and community get-togethers reinforce the relationships that are vital to the intimate nature of our school.

Principles inspiring our school are drawn from the Reggio Emilia approach and constructivist education. We believe children are competent, capable and have unlimited potential. Children, parents, families, teachers and community are interactive and work together. Teachers and children construct knowledge through authentic relationships and negotiated learning. Teachers are facilitators of each child's learning experience. Time not set by clock but by respect for children's pace. Relationships remain constant by children staying with same teachers for several years. Emergent curriculum follows children's interests and gives the opportunity for children to return again and again to add new insights. Observation and documentation of children's knowledge and thoughts are used to make learning visible (Project P.L.A.Y. School, 2012).

Sounds like a rich learning environment.

(Gives iPhone back to KERRY.)

KERRY

It is. I suspected it was a setting where teachers, caregivers, and children co-constructed learning. It seemed like a place where I could observe children being free, figuring out how music was already part of their lives and where the other teachers, the parents, and I fit into that learning.

There, I learned about different types of interaction. I learned that children benefit by interacting musically with peers—that they represent a “cultural group . . . all its own, with its own distinctive folk-ways” (Campbell, 2010, p. 95) and at times seemed to perceive and make music differently than I (Gluschkof, 2002; Pond, 1992). I also learned that valuing children’s music contributions encouraged their music play and

music development (Perez, in press; Reynolds & Filsinger, in press; Reynolds, Long, & Valerio, 2007; Smithrim, 1997).

I observed and experienced many different ways adults could interact with children. They could model, validate, engage in, and mediate children's music learning (Tarnowski, 1999). Acting as music conversationalists, they could "interact musically with [children] to invite, entice, and encourage young children to claim their music learning potentials as they participate as co-constructors of music knowledge and skills" (Reynolds, Long, & Valerio, 2007, p. 214).

I was lucky to study in Reggio Emilia and work at Project P.L.A.Y. School with my Ph.D. advisor, Alison Reynolds. Because we formally conducted a research study while visiting Project P.L.A.Y. School weekly, we decided to share our findings with other early childhood music educators. In July 2012, we presented in Corfu, Greece at the Early Childhood Music Education (ECME) Commission Seminar, part of the 2012 International Society for Music Education Conference. Participants predominantly are experienced early childhood music educators, many with university affiliations, who engage in frequent work with young children. A majority of members are considered experts in their field and largely contribute to shaping a global understanding of early childhood music education. The organization cites five goals (International Society of Music Education, 2013) I would summarize as

(KERRY holds out fingers as she lists the goals.)

1. Promote music in the lives of young children, regardless of talent, to create an enhanced environment that will result in the well-being and development of the whole child.
2. Provide an international forum for the exchange of ideas regarding music and the young child, birth to age eight.

3. Stimulate the growth of quality music instruction, teacher training and research in musical development and instruction with the young child.
4. Compare and discuss similarities and differences in music instruction and music learning across cultures.
5. Examine issues including the preservation of cultural traditions in the light of the breakdown of cultural barriers.

(YOU nods heads and types notes on iPad.)

In light of those goals, ECME Commission members strive to understand both the universal and culture-specific qualities of children's music learning from international perspectives.

As I listened to presentations and talked to participants during the ECME seminar, I began thinking that understanding how they create music-learning environments could be helpful for early childhood music educators, parents, policy makers, and myself. What beliefs did they share?

I realized a way to learn answers and contribute to the broader conversation about music-learning environments for young children was to conduct a study. In an effort to contribute to the conversation, I sought to find the essence of how ECME members described creating music learning environments for young children by asking three research questions: What are early childhood music teachers' perceptions of music-learning environments for young children; What shapes their perceptions; and How do early childhood music teachers strive to create an environment conducive for young children's music learning?

Through investigating ECME members' perceptions, I hope to

- (a) Help early childhood music teachers understand educational implications for lived experiences both within and beyond the ECME Commission.

- (b) Develop early childhood music teachers' personal self-awareness of how they perceive creating music learning environments for young children and that the awareness helps them make informed recommendations to pre- and in-service early childhood music teachers, caregivers, and policy makers.

I was interested in interviewing people who had experienced creating music-learning environments for young children. Specifically, I was interested in finding those who I considered "information-rich" who could yield a great deal of information about this particular phenomenon. Upon International Review Board (IRB) approval for this study, I recruited participants affiliated with the International Society for Music Education (ISME) Early Childhood Music Education (ECME) Commission. One hundred and six members presented at an ECME Commission seminar at least once between 2008 and 2012. That number included the primary investigator of this research Alison M. Reynolds, and myself. Both of us live and work in the United States in North America. The remaining 104 ECME members represent each of the world regions as defined by the United Nations (United Nations, 2012); Asia, Africa, Europe, Americas, and Oceania.

I needed to employ a theoretical construct that allowed me to explore the purpose of my research (i.e., how ECME members describe creating music-learning environments for young children) and my research questions. I believe that music-learning environments are individualized, based on the setting, culture, and individuals. After comparing my experiences with what I learned during my study in Italy two years ago, and continuing to read research and best practice literature, I also believe that music-learning environments have a common tenet. I sought to understand that tenet as the basis of this research. In other words, I wanted to understand the nature of the ECME

members' experiences within their culturally specific contexts. Phenomenological inquiry is the process of finding "the nature or meaning of everyday experiences" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 9). In this case, the phenomenon is creating music-learning environments for young children.

YOU

Can you tell me more about phenomenological inquiry?

KERRY

Phenomenological inquiry is grounded in two assumptions. First, people are not separate from objective things (Patton, 2002). They are connected. Therefore, it is not important to understand the facts behind what occurred, but how those who experience them perceive their experience. To Husserl (1913), perceptions constitute reality. Second, researchers conducting phenomenological inquiry assume an essence of shared experience will emerge. As Patton (2002) explains,

These essences are the core meanings mutually understood through a phenomenon commonly experienced. The experiences of different people are bracketed, analyzed, and compared to identify the essences of the phenomenon . . . The assumption of essence, like the ethnographer's assumption that culture exists and is important, becomes the defining characteristic of a purely phenomenological study. (p. 106)

Because I had conducted a similar study on music-learning environments a year ago and found an essence, I was confident that an essence would emerge in this study as well.

(YOU types notes on iPad.)

To achieve the first assumption, researchers use in-depth interviews. I chose Seidman's (2006) phenomenological in-depth interview structure to frame interviews. His three-interview structure allows for an in-depth examination of participants' experiences with a phenomenon and the researcher to understand the context of

participants' experience. It also gives the participants and researcher time to reflect upon topics between interviews (May, 1991). In the first interview, the researcher focuses on the life history of each participant. The researcher asks participants to share early experiences leading up to experiencing the phenomenon. In the first interview of this study, I asked participants to describe their music-learning environments they experienced growing up, music and teacher training experiences, and consequent perceptions of ideal music-learning environments. In the second interview, the researcher asks participants specific details about their experiences with the phenomenon. In the second interview of this study, I asked them to describe how they create music-learning environments for young children, including the physical and auditory spaces, and relationships with children and caregivers. In the third interview, the researcher prompts participants to reflect upon the meaning of their experiences and potentially make connections between their previous experiences and their experience with the phenomenon (Seidman, 2006). In this study, I asked participants to describe how their culture and previous experiences with music learning and teaching influenced how they experienced creating music-learning environments for young children.

When determining interview lengths, I was cognizant of participants' time and availability. During my previous phenomenological study with Italian teachers, I wanted to I conducted a one-time 30-minute interview with each participant. However, such limited interactions with participants did not seem sufficient. For this research, I decided to employ a two-interview series to increase my "chance of understanding the context, and thus the meaning, of participants' experiences . . . [help] participants feel a sense of safety with the interviewer . . . [allow] examination of additional content that may have

been stimulated by the first interview; and [enable] either party to clarify any potentially confusing elements of a first interview” (Knox & Burkard, 2009, p. 7). I folded in topics covered typically in the third interview of Seidman’s (2006) design, such as participants’ perceptions of how exploring their past experiences will shape their future teaching, into the second interview and subsequent email communication with participants.

Though all ECME members would have offered rich perspectives, I wanted to find people who could “purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). I employed purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2007). Specifically, I used criterion sampling, recognized as an appropriate sampling technique in phenomenological inquiry because people need to be chosen who have directly experienced a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). I set additional criteria as including those of who are members of ECME and known for contributing to the music education field through research, publications, and conference presentations.

YOU

(Nods head and types notes on iPad.)

KERRY

Due to the intense time commitment, I was afraid no one would agree. However, out of the 21 people I invited to participate, 14 people agreed to participate. Of those 14, I chose to use nine participants’ interviews in my analysis because I considered their perspectives the most diverse and information rich. In the midst of interviewing participants, I decided to also include my Ph.D. advisor Alison Reynolds as a participant. I believed she could add a perspective on music-learning environments that was not yet represented.

YOU

Tell me more about the interviews.

KERRY

Each interview ranged from 35 to 60 minutes. Using a semi-structured interview approach (Seidman, 2006), I asked participants four broad questions and asked them to respond to those questions. Broad questions were How would you describe your music-learning environment when you were growing up? How would you describe your background in early childhood music education? What is a music-learning environment for young children? and How do you create a music-learning environment for young children?

During interviews, I attempted not to impose my view on participants. However, sometimes I found the interview so conversational that I began sharing my experiences and opinions. When I succumbed to that, it was usually after participants had answered broad and follow-up questions. In a previous phenomenological study, I found myself making evaluative comments like “great” and “excellent” after participants gave answers, which placed value on their answers (Moustakas, 1998). In this research, I tried avoid those evaluative comments, attempting to stay more neutral using phrases like “thank you” or “okay.” Still, there were several times that I could not help engaging in conversations with the participants. In those moments participants may have sensed value I ascribed to the topic of conversation.

Because I had used a phenomenological framework in the Italian study, I was less overwhelmed by the analysis process in this study. While analyzing data during the previous study, I felt lost in a sea of data. During that study, I began analyzing data using

the process Moustakas (1994) recommended. However, I found myself trying to cut corners. Unsuccessful, I always had to go back to the beginning steps of the process and try again. This time around, I decided, “No shortcuts.” Instead, I completed the process outlined by Moustakas (1994), and included other qualitative research experts’ suggestions in my analysis (Denzin, 1989; Katz, 1987).

Am I overwhelming you?

YOU

(Smiles and laughs.)

A little, but I’m interested. I’d like to hear more.

KERRY

(Smiles and laughs.)

Okay. The first stage of analysis began before I looked at the transcripts. It began with epoche, a process that required me to examine my relationship with the phenomenon before trying to understand participants’ experiences. Katz’s (1987) description helped me better understand epoche. Maybe it would be helpful for you, too.

(KERRY finds the description on her iPhone and hands the phone to YOU, who takes the phone and reads aloud.)

YOU

Epoche is a process that the researcher engages in to remove, or at least become aware of, prejudices, viewpoints or assumptions regarding the phenomenon under investigation. Epoche helps enable the researcher to investigate the phenomenon from a fresh and open viewpoint without prejudice or imposing meaning too soon. This suspension of judgment is critical in phenomenological investigation and requires the setting aside of the researcher’s personal viewpoint in order to see the experience for itself. (pp. 36-37)

(Hands iPhone back to KERRY.)

## KERRY

I found it very hard to separate myself from the transcripts. Many times I noticed my experiences creeping in as I read participants' transcripts (Katz, 1987). However, I was aware this time around. Each time my personal experiences crept in, I made a note in the margins of the transcript I was reading and reminded myself to continue with an open mind.

Typically, next comes the process of phenomenological reduction, which involves bracketing (Husserl, 1913). Bracketing involves the process of temporarily removing “the world and presuppositions to identify data in pure form, uncontaminated by extraneous intrusions” (Patton, 2002, p. 485). To achieve that, Denzin (1989) recommends

(KERRY holds up fingers as she lists recommendations)

1. Locate significant statements that “speak directly to the phenomenon in question”
2. Interpret those meanings as an informed reader.
3. Inspect these meanings for what they reveal about the essential, recurring features of the phenomenon being studied.
4. Offer a tentative statement, or definition, of the phenomenon in terms of the essential recurring features identified in step [3]. (pp. 55-56)

However, for this research, I believe it is not possible to separate participants from their cultural contexts. Perhaps that is why I chose not to employ bracketing in the Italian study, and—for this study—chose only to bracket out my personal experiences. The type of bracketing that aligns most closely to my perspective is known as *reflexive bracketing* (Geering, 2004, p. 1437).

## YOU

(Nods head and types notes on iPad.)

Tell me more about the steps you used.

## KERRY

I used seven major steps. First, I read through all transcripts, making notes in the margins about possible significant statements. Moustakas refers to that process as *horizontalization* (Creswell, 2007, p. 61). I highlighted and noted any statements that helped me understand participants' experiences creating music-learning environments for young children.

Second, I read my notes and highlighted statements to get rid of any that did not meet the criteria of *invariant constituents* of the experience (Moustakas, 1994, p. 120). Those requirements include statements that “contain a moment of the experience that contains information that communicates something essential and necessary for understanding it” (p. 57). Throughout that stage, I kept notes to ensure I was seeking unique, or non-overlapping statements.

Third, I clustered significant statements into themes. During that process, I situated each theme with ample space around it to allow me to view each independently and dynamically. Specifically, I performed an “imaginative variation on each theme . . . moving around the statue to see the same object from differing views” (Patton, 2002, p. 486). That allowed for a more dynamic view of each theme.

Fourth, I looked at remaining significant statements and themes to check that they directly aligned with participants' words. When satisfied, I shared those significant statements and emergent themes with participants and solicited their advice: I asked each participant to verify whether the significant statements and themes adequately represented their perceptions.

Fifth, after validating themes, I began to create individual, *textural descriptions*

(Creswell, 2007, p. 60) about how each participant creates music-learning environments for young children. I sought “an abstraction of the experience that provides content and illustration, but not yet essence” (Patton, 2002, p. 486). I supported each textural description with “verbatim examples” (Patton, 2002, p. 486) from each participant’s transcripts.

Sixth, after creating the textural description, I created a *structural description* (Creswell, 2007, p. 61) for each participant. Whereas the textural description describes *what* they experienced, the structural description describes *how* they experienced what they experienced. Unlike the textural descriptions, which were individual descriptions, I created the structural description at the group level (Moustakas, 1994). In that description, I tried to seek underlying meanings behind participants’ experiences and commonalities among their experiences. At that stage, I reflected “on the setting and context in which the phenomenon was experienced” (Creswell, 2007, p. 159). I described participants’ experiences in relation to their cultural contexts, educational experiences, musical backgrounds, and physical teaching setting.

Seventh, I wrote a composite description through combining the textural and structural descriptions, representing what I believe to be the essence of how the group described *creating music-learning environments* for young children.

(Stops suddenly and laughs.)

I probably just used way too much research jargon. I tend to get carried away. Researching music-learning environments for young children is a passion of mine.

(Pauses and laughs.)

Okay, enough with the research talk.

YOU

I'd love to read your dissertation. Maybe it could help me better understand music-learning environments.

KERRY

Well, see those people standing in line? They all participated in my research study. I invited them here to have coffee with me because they asked to learn the essence that emerged from the data. I'm sure my colleagues would love to talk with you about the topic right now if you have time.

YOU

That would be great! Thanks for sharing your story with me and listening to mine.

KERRY

(Smiles.)

Thanks for sharing your story. I could talk about young children's music learning all day.

PART TWO  
INTERACTIONS<sup>4</sup>

(KERRY greets BEATA, JOSÉ, RACHEL, DONNA, CLAUDIA, JOANNE, RICARDO, ALISON, SUSAN, as they are in line for coffee. KERRY invites them to join the conversation KERRY's having with YOU. Everyone finds a seat on the comfortable sofas. KERRY introduces YOU to the others.)

YOU

I hear you participated in a research study about music-learning environments for young children. Kerry and I have been talking about that research process and our experiences with young children's music learning. I find the research very interesting and would love to hear your thoughts about creating music-learning environments for young children.

BEATA

(Smiling.)

Young children I think are *amazing* creatures. It's just an amazing time of life. Everything is an opportunity.

JOSÉ

They are very open. They are even open to contemporary music.

JOANNE

They're like sponges.

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<sup>4</sup> In Part Two, I extracted the nine research participants' words directly from participants' interview transcripts. Participant descriptions can be found in Appendix C.

## BEATA

Yes, young children *are* like little sponges. They absorb everything that's around them. There's such a thing as the open ear hypothesis. So it's a nice time to expose them to as much as you can. The more things we present, the better.

## RACHEL

And if they're hearing a lot of music they will eventually do something similar to the music they hear. It's their way of showing us their music vocabulary and experiences. For example, I had one student who repeatedly sang this Black Sabbath song. So the first thing I thought of was 'I want to get a look at this kid's parents because they're probably really into classic rock.' That's what that child has experienced musically so that's what he's putting into the environment. If you're listening to Black Sabbath, you're going to sing Black Sabbath.

## DONNA

And a lot of children's music learning is demonstrated through play, too. I even go back to the *Pillsbury Studies* (Moorhead, & Pond, 1941) and look at how they documented those children learning music. I remember hearing this Pillsbury recording with about five or six preschool children and they were making a train. This boy invents this kind of call, which is like a conductor, sort of getting everybody on the train. Then they're all making these train sounds and he's got this beautiful little melodic call that's going over the top. It's an amazing construction but it's all just emerging from their play. And no one is saying it's wrong, no one is saying it's right, no one is saying it has to be a certain way. Their engagement in sound and their interest in sound is very personal and very

emergent. And the fact that they just sort of figure out a way to make it happen is phenomenal.

CLAUDIA

And unlike adults, young children don't think in a linear way. They think very associatively. They are not divided into now it's time for music and now it's time for play and now it's time for reading or being read to. I think we have to let them do that. I think in early childhood, a fixed curriculum is very good for the adults. But, I don't think that children need it.

JOSÉ

Yes, young children have to experiment with the environment first to understand it's causal relations. So you need to find time to let them experiment with it.

BEATA

You know I like the metaphor that children are like scientists. They experiment with things all the time. So I think exploration is really important in a musical sense because they are being scientists too. They're turning things around, exploring sounds, seeing the sounds that they produce, and seeing the sounds that their bodies make. They're learning about themselves and about the environment.

DONNA

And that's all before they get formal instruction, right? Before someone comes in and says "Try it my way."

SUSAN

You know, a few years ago when we realized how important the first few years of life were, people began creating books about how to teach children everything when they

were two. And I think it was a misinterpretation of the importance of those early years. It's not to sit those children down and lecture to them but to recognize the absorption that's going on in the environment that we may not even be conscious of.

#### JOANNE

That reminds me of two conversations I've had with parents. Talking about her three-year-old daughter, the first parent who was a musician said, "You know my daughter is singing in tune. Is that unusual?" And I said, "It's normal but unfortunately it's not typical." And it's no surprise because she was in a house where music was just what they did. It wasn't a 'sit down and teach the kid' kind of thing, music was just in that environment. Conversely, the second parent who was not a musician said, "I want to get my kid in music so what instrument can they learn?" That's like saying "I want my kid to be a good communicator in language, so should I teach him to learn a Mac or a PC?" Well if they don't know a language and have nothing to say, I can teach him on a computer but it doesn't mean anything. And it's the same with instruments. They can learn to push buttons and learn to make sounds but if they don't have the music inside of them it's not going to come through the instrument.

#### DONNA

I think the definition of music for many adults is taking lessons and performing on stage. While it might lead to that, there's so much that happens before those formal kinds of instruction. And we have to remember too that children don't just develop in a random fashion. There are frameworks and structures underneath these children's behaviors. There are these principles that we can learn to recognize. They are these sort of built-in trajectories that children have.

ALISON

Using a framework has really helped me understand how young children can develop their expressive musicianship. For me, a framework was never a limit. It was a catalyst. The framework helps me think about how I can shape what I'm hearing this child initiate so that I'm able to use music to extend the child's continued music making, or music fluency.

BEATA, DONNA, ALISON, and RICARDO

(Together.)

Just like we would in language.

(ALL laugh.)

JOANNE

How do we learn our native language?

SUSAN

It starts in the womb.

JOANNE

Yes, and eventually out of the womb we hear it over and over again. We hear complicated language, very simple language, we have people speaking to us, and we hear language in the background. I really believe that is the beginning of how we learn music. Some of that happens to *all* kids—they can't *not* hear music—but what I think happens to many young children is they don't have anyone to speak music to them. So they hear music on TV and they hear language or their parents talking but they don't have the music equivalent of someone coming up to them saying, "Bottle, do you want your bottle?"

CLAUDIA

You know, enculturation is the huge part of music learning. Sometimes I say, “Well if it’s only enculturation I will not have work. I’ll have to start looking for another job.”

(ALL laugh.)

So what am I supposed to do? What is my role? I think that it’s enabling and giving all the possibilities. And mediating between caregivers and children, helping them find ways to discover music.

DONNA

For me, that *personal* connection, that people connection, that social connection is a really critical part of the music making of young children. So children learn from sort of hearing sounds and making sounds but they also learn what’s the value of those sounds by the response of other people, particularly the adults in their environment.

BEATA

A couple of months ago, I was talking with a linguist studying babies, and she was telling me about an experiment they were doing with very young babies with interactive monitors. She said the most interesting thing is when you put two babies together—sometimes you have a one-year-old or an 11-month-old—and there is one who is always more bossy than the other. But it’s the relationship that really matters. I know that other things like technology can really help and it’s part of children growing up but I don’t think it can replace the human interaction facet.

CLAUDIA

Sometimes I’m concerned that young children stay only with technology.

For me too, music is more of a communicative thing—a more human thing. If it's only with technology, I am afraid that they may lose feeling the togetherness of music.

RACHEL

And when are you going to sing and dance and play and move if you're not going to do that in early childhood? I got that idea from an art teacher I worked with—it was just around the time when graphic art was coming out—there were possibilities for art on computers and it was starting to become part of what we do. And I said to her “Are you ever going to get into that?” and she said “*No*” and she was really adamant about it. She said “No, when are they going to play with clay, when are they going to weave, when are they going to sketch, when are they going to finger paint if they don't do that in early childhood? They can always learn technology later but if they don't do it now they are never going to explore that.” And that's true—I have not done a lot of those things since I was that age.

SUSAN

I agree but I also think technology is so amazing. We watch children play video games from a very early age and know they are drawn to play them. Their natural desire to be in control is satisfied as they push buttons here, and draw lines there. So there must be meaningful and positive ways to include music as a part of the technology experience.

JOSÉ

It can be an enhancement. I think you can learn from technology. It depends on how you treat technology. You can reject it or you can see what it can bring you. But only technology? No I don't think so. You need the one-to-one human interaction.

## RICARDO

We need to have music *with* people, and people who do music, and people who make music, so music looks like something that people do. I like when children have the image of me as a singing person and their parents say, “Oh! My child thought that you just sang all the time! She never imagined that you could speak!” So when they say that to me, it’s one of the biggest compliments I can have. Really to imagine that it is possible to have a world just full of sounds and music. And I get those remarks because I try to have this environment where it’s like a music language: everything’s music.

## ALISON

At this stage of my life, I have difficulty convincing myself that every sound and every movement from children is *not* music. That shapes my thinking about my role when immersing children in music. When I am with young children, instead of spending a lot of time singing with words or talking to parents and children, I try to cut the language out so as many of the interactions as possible stem from music and movement. Our music becomes our connection. Being able to model that perspective for parents has been exciting! Parents and caregivers seem to joyfully embrace making music—*playing*—with the sounds and movements infants or young children make. The improvisatory music and positive energy that emerges from those interactions seem powerful. Parents seem to enjoy discovering ways to extend young children’s musical ideas; young children seem to enjoy hearing the music the parents make.

## SUSAN

And that music immersion should start in the home, where children learn through listening to and observing the most significant adults in their lives participating in music.

The first music lessons are from the parent, from the mother and the dad or whomever the caregivers are. Those adults sing to their children in loving ways so that music is associated with love, and caring, and bonding. So, those early environments of just living in a home where there's a lot of music and parents who value music provide the foundation on which all future music learning builds. Those parents are making music for the child but they're also making music for themselves.

JOANNE

Ideally, children would have a parent who is a musician. I struggle with this because I think children need good models, and if you have parents who are singing in the speaking-voice range all the time the children will emulate that sound and won't continue to use other parts of their voice. But I also think it's important that children interact musically with their parents. It's a kind of a bond with the parent and the child.

CLAUDIA

I think parents should sing even if they are out-of-tuners—just as a way of expression, as a way of communication, as a way of sharing. And that's one way early childhood music teachers can help. We can fill that void. It's the same in schools. Teachers should sing even if they sing out of tune. Then, the early childhood music teacher can be the model for in-tune singing.

DONNA

Another way we can help fill that void is by helping caregivers open up and make sense of children's music contributions, and get into children's musical worlds. I was talking with a colleague who said, "Donna I need your help because my children are singing this song and I don't really know what they're saying because they're making up new words.

And here's the tune." I figured out what tune they had and he goes, "Oh! I know! Okay, now I know how to play with that song that they're bringing from their daycare environment. But they're inventing all kinds of new words and I don't know this song." So he got a little bit of a key to get into that musical play with them by just recognizing what it was they were trying to sing about. He wanted to be part of that musical invention that they were sharing with them but he didn't know how to play. That idea of children making up their own musical material, of children making up their own tunes, generating snippets of tunes they've learned elsewhere, patterns that they've learned elsewhere, just as they put together words, and phrases, and sentences with their language learning.

RACHEL

And I think children gain music richness in everyday life, from people other than their parents and settings other than their homes. Their music-learning environment *is* their daily environment.

BEATA

But I think everyday life is not as simple as we think. We navigate a lot. It's the home. It's work. Maybe we go to church. Or maybe we participate in some community service. And there's the media. We all turn on the TV. So there are all these different environments, which ultimately influence children. We navigate in these environments. So there's this combination of all these things going on and the young child picks up on all these influences, which we present to him or her through different sources.

RACHEL

When you think about it, any setting really is a music setting for children and we just have to be able to tap into what they're doing musically and go with that.

## BEATA

Yes, I strongly believe teachers can help by being facilitators of music. They can collaborate with children, teachers, and parents, if they believe there are no limits to what they can do when working with others. So I don't think teachers have all the authority or are all knowing. No, we all know music to some extent and we can share our experiences and exchange ideas. Maybe teachers will learn things they never heard before. After all, what happens in the classroom is not completely disassociated with what happens at home.

## DONNA

That's why I chose to start with classes for very young children where the parents would actually be involved. So we're helping parents become more musical and helping parents become more aware of how they can be interacting with their children rhythmically, tonally, responding to recorded music, and initiating their own invented kind of music, but also sharing some repertoire they might learn in that non-home environment. So, we're promoting an exchange of ideas so that parents can have this, it's like a web of interactions with the adults and the children in their environment.

## ALISON

At Project P.L.A.Y. School<sup>5</sup>, there are no parents. When Kerry and I were seeking ways to communicate with parents about children's music making, we realized that when parents aren't *there*, words alone seem insufficient for sharing children's music play. What fun to create a video montage of musical moments among the children and adults in that setting! When in a parent-child music class setting, I guess I assume parents have

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<sup>5</sup> See Part One for school description.

chosen to seek an extension of their child's 'natural' music environment. Being sensitive to the range of parents' desires and expectations—even their anxieties—about being with their children in 'music class' is essential. I try to notice parents' and children's shared musical moments that emerge naturally. And I try, gently and musically, to celebrate them. I seek playful opportunities for children's music focus to be on their parents. Otherwise, I've found we can become so delighted and satisfied by the children's musical socializing with the children or teacher that we miss in-the-moment opportunities to ease some parents' habits and comfort levels with ways music play can happen between them at home.

JOANNE

I find it's important to find ways to educate parents during music class. I speak with them about music expectations for children and appropriate ways for the parents to interact with their children.

RICARDO

For usually 2-3 minutes, right before the last song of music class, I will talk a little bit to the parents. I will bring back some important things that happened in the class and tell them some of the things that are going to happen. So there is a moment that I really connect with parents every class.

JOANNE

Often I'll say to parents, "Watch how I interact with your children and then you interact with them." It's the same with preschool teachers, too. I want the caregivers there to see how I interact with kids and I want them to interact. But I have some difficulty getting them to stop talking. They want to talk to the kids. Sometimes they want to make it a

more formal environment. And so I have to communicate with them a little bit. “Just watch how I interact with the kids. Instead of through talking, engage the kids through your movement or through your singing.”

BEATA

It’s really about making those adults feel comfortable, too. If adults are comfortable, children will feel more comfortable. I think we saw a very, very, strong parent participation in our program because we tried to connect with them as best we could.

RICARDO

The big issue is for all in a class to get to know each other with music. In the beginning of the year, we have about four classes where we work on getting to know each other. It begins with the teachers telling parents through music who the teachers are. And we go around the circle and ask each parent (RICARDO sings) “On a Sunday morning what do you like to do?” And each parent will tell what they do with the kids. And so we try to know each other and use songs that will allow us to know each other. And when we do that, music class is different because it’s easier to sing after that song experience. We have songs that work this out, so singing is no problem. Because they’re not worried about what people think about them. Because you’re not going to be shy or feel ashamed of each other or be judged because it’s a group.

BEATA

I think the adult’s attitude has a lot to do with it, too. For example, you could have a teacher who is very controlling and very concerned about having everything neatly in place. I had a professor who said, “working with young children is a little bit messy but that’s okay” and it’s something that stuck in my head. Sometimes you have a little bit of

chaos and that's okay because that's part of who they are. Children are organizing their internal selves. We have to strike a balance. We shouldn't be too restrictive—we need to let kids be a little bit free with still some structure.

#### DONNA

That's one reason I think children also need, in addition to group music environments, to step away from the group and have a chance to try something on their own—individual or just one or two kids at a time. Because when they're part of a very large group, and I mean large like 15 or 20, they get lost sometimes in the group effort or the group initiative tends to be more teacher directed, less child-directed and less child-oriented when you have to keep 15 kids attending to something at the same time. This opportunity to have exploration time or discovery time in a learning center or a music learning area in the classroom I think can be really valuable in helping children find out for themselves what are some of the principles of music construction, whether it's some of the principles of music making and the fact that they could do something by themselves.

And in those centers, I think there could be a very important role for a teacher. Because otherwise a child can sometimes perseverate and just keep doing the same thing over and over and over. I think there's a series of things that a teacher could do and that a parent could do at home as well. If at first a child is playing, a teacher could give some type of affirmation by just looking on. Children can get refueled by looking at their moms even though they don't have to go back and physically touch them, just connecting with your mom can give you some power when you're two years old. If you're a little bit older and you're playing and you look up at the teacher and the teacher smiles and nods her head and the child goes, "Oh, I'm doing a good thing here." Just nonverbally the teacher is

affirming what's going on. And then the teacher might say something or actually give a label to what the child is doing like "Oh, you're playing the xylophone!" Or, you might say, "That's really beautiful." Just kind of labeling what it is the child is doing—beginning to use language to interact with the child on their ideas. And then the teacher might say, "Can you try it faster?" or "Can you try it slower?" or "Can you try it with a different mallet?" or "What would happen if you tried it with this mallet?" "What do you think it would be like if you put that on the drums instead of on the shakers?" Pushing a little bit, prompting a child to change what they're doing. And from my experience that's the point where you'll either get pushback and the child will say, "Get lost, I like what I'm doing." "I'm very happy with this. What's your problem, Teacher? What's your problem, Mom?" Because it's like "I don't need any intervention because I'm very satisfied with what I'm doing." But if you ask that question and sort of offer an idea, and a child is willing to take that idea, that means they're willing to move out of that sameness of what their doing, the repetition of what they're doing and try a new way.

#### SUSAN

Yes, our program focuses on that individual and small group-exploration time. We have a 15-minute circle music time, but the rest of hour-long music class time is devoted to children exploring music centers with their peers and parents. And, pre-service music education majors and I float around to observe and sometimes offer a suggestion or ask a question to encourage further exploration of the child-child and child-parent music interactions.

CLAUDIA

That gets into the music content in these music environments. I think we can all agree a musical learning environment is an environment where there is music.

(ALL laugh.)

RICARDO

We have to put music in the center and all the other activities would be around it. So everything would look to music and through music.

ALISON

Yes, and children should be immersed in a rich music environment full of a variety of styles, tonalities and meters, and movement, regardless of the setting.

RICARDO

We use repertoire without words in a variety of tonalities and meters that are mostly created by Gordon-influenced teachers. So I have songs by Beth Bolton, by myself, and by Edwin Gordon. That's one part of the class. Then, I try to pick many folk songs from pop culture. And I use those many times during movement and quiet time activities. Because people like lullabies and songs that are from pop culture. Like, I would sing "Tears in Heaven" by Eric Clapton. I also take some songs from Brazilian culture and I bring songs that were important for me when I was a kid—songs that *I* really like.

DONNA

I also chose, from the very beginning of our program, popular song material, so that there was the incorporation of music that parents might teach more easily. Even parents without all the formal experience go to movies and listen to television shows and there is music in that every day. I remember the very first class that we taught, I used the theme

from Beverly Hills Cop to use music that would feel familiar to parents so it wasn't all foreign; it wasn't all new. It was like "Oh yeah, okay. This is music that I can find an immediate personal connection to." So that sense of familiar style, and that might be, depending on where you are, folk music of an area, might be that recorded music from media—from television and movies, that sort of thing.

ALISON

I think it's so important that we connect with parents' music interests, whether it's the music they listen to or music they make. Whether in a setting like Project P.L.A.Y. School or in a parent-child music class, taking time to learn about parents' music identities and interests can be a challenge; but, it's a great way to bridge the conversation about what we're trying to offer as the 'early childhood music teacher' when we're making music all together.

JOANNE

I tell parents and teachers to play the music they enjoy around children. Don't just go to the toy store and buy children's CDs. The music you like may be the music they like. So share your own music with children and then try to broaden your own repertoire.

RICARDO

And build on music you like by using the music we share in class and do the activities from class that you like. When you believe you can sing with children, then we can go to the stage of what to do and how to do it. But first you need to experience *doing* it.

JOSÉ

Keep it simple. Create a 'music communication' space. It doesn't matter what materials you have. Just make music together.

CLAUDIA

Sometimes observe them. Sometimes join in their music exploration.

DONNA

And a big question is who to involve in children's music-learning environments. The question of having parents and children making music together in a class, that's one model. The other challenge that we have in my early childhood music program is the college students—involving college students as volunteers and assistants. There's teachers, and parents, and college kids, observers, all these people with multiple roles all kind of in one class at the same time. Who to bring into the environment and how do you manage them all, making sure everyone's getting the attention they deserve? That's been fun to think “Oh if someone's seventeen, thinking about going into music education. Isn't this a good opportunity for them to see a lot of action on a Saturday morning in 29 classes.” You have a certain laboratory for pre-service and in-service teaching that's going on. That's another level. It's like all these layers and things that are going on at the same time.

CLAUDIA

Yes, see it as a joint music adventure.

KERRY

Thank you for providing YOU with a summary of our one-on-one conversations. After all of your conversation and your individual interviews, you all seem to consider yourselves each on a joint music adventure with children and their caregivers. Therein lies the essence of this study. You care deeply about the music bonds that form among adults and children. It seems you think relationships between parents and children,

teachers and parents, teachers and children, and children and children are critical to children's music learning and quality of life. In essence, you volunteer yourselves as *cultural music mediators*—mediating the web of interactions that occur children's daily lives. You've come to these realizations based on your music upbringing. Some of you had experiences that your music interests or needs were not valued. Some of you had experiences that your music interests or needs were valued. Regardless, those experiences, especially the bonds you may or may not have made, shape your perceptions about creating music-learning environments for young children.

#### YOU

Thanks to all of you for sharing your perspectives. This has been an unexpectedly wonderful trip to the coffee shop. You've all given me a lot to think about.

(Everyone shakes hands goodbye and exchanges pleasantries. As DONNA, RICARDO, JOSÉ, BEATA, ALISON, RACHEL, JOANNE, CLAUDIA, and SUSAN leave, KERRY and YOU remain seated.)

PART THREE  
INTROSPECTION

YOU

(Sighs a content sigh.)

Your colleagues are so easy to talk to.

KERRY

They are. I've learned so much from them. You know, I remember sitting in my undergraduate educational psychology class learning about Lev Vygotsky. I learned basic information about *scaffolding*—the process of guiding children to a learning level just out of their independent reach. Vygotsky's ideas always hovered in the back of my mind but it wasn't until beginning my doctoral degree that I spent a great deal of time thinking about his work. Vygotsky built upon Piaget's constructivism theory that children gather knowledge through exploring their environment (Byrnes, 2008). Vygotsky extended those ideas, suggesting children do not just explore independently but gain knowledge through interacting with More Knowledgeable Others (Bruner, 1983)—adults or peers who help children achieve a level of learning just out of their independent reach. Vygotsky (1978) referred to that process as *cultural mediation*: children develop higher mental functions through interacting with, as Beata referred to them, “significant people in their lives.”

In this study, several themes emerged regarding how participants perceive creating music-rich environments for young children. Those include choosing appropriate repertoire for children and caregivers, promoting a relaxed and informal setting, acknowledging children's propensity towards music creativity, the role of technology,

and connecting with caregivers (Gordon, 2003; Kenney & Persellin, 2000; Rideout, Vandewater, & Wartella, 2003; Valerio et al., 1998). However, participants' prioritization of interaction binds those themes (Campbell & Kassner, 2002; Reynolds, Long, & Valerio, 2007).

#### YOU

As Donna said, "It's that people connection" that matters.

#### KERRY

Yes! Aligning with a Vygotskian perspective, participants view themselves as cultural *music* mediators: they believe they can foster meaningful music connections among children and adults (Valerio, Reynolds, Gruhn, Apostoli, Rodrigues, & Poskute-Grün, 2008). Participants' notion of cultural music mediation is multi-faceted. They believe cultural music mediation can occur among themselves, children, parents, and pre-service and in-service early childhood general and music teachers. To promote music interaction, participants create lab-type music environments where they can help children and caregivers build music interaction strategies, which they refer to as *webs of music interactions* (Froehlich, 2007). They create those environments with the hope that children and adults will apply learned music interactions into everyday life contexts (Custodero, Britto, & Brooks-Gunn, 2003; Young, 2008).

There are many different ways participants describe creating lab-type music environments for children. They play and interact musically with children and caregivers in large-group, small-group, and one-on-one contexts. Those social music interactions (Reynolds, Long, & Valerio, 2007) may occur in school or private music class settings, during unstructured or structured music times, and with or without adult involvement.

When creating environments, participants reflect deeply upon, as Donna says “who to involve.” They identify four influential stakeholders in children’s daily music lives. The first are children. Participants believe children benefit from interacting with children their of their own age and other ages. The second are parents. Participants consider parents as children’s first music teachers (Trehub, 1999), and believe the music bond between children and parents is powerful. The third are early childhood general education teachers. Since early childhood general education teachers spend so much time with their students, they have a unique opportunity to interact musically with children on a daily basis. The fourth are pre-service teachers; both music education and general education majors. Participants consider themselves responsible for guiding future generations in learning to understand and interact musically with young children.

Participants create lab music-learning environments to work with those stakeholders, helping them develop webs of music interactions among all people in children’s daily music lives. Participants strive to empower stakeholders to interact independently with other stakeholders in hopes they can gradually extract themselves from those interactions. For example, Rachel guides pre-service music education majors in interacting musically with preschool children. Through mentoring those pre-service teachers, she empowers them to eventually interact musically with preschool children without her mediation.

YOU

(Nods head.)

## KERRY

Before this study, I viewed myself as a music mediator between children and their culture. However, I'm not sure I viewed myself as a cultural music mediator among children and adults. Yet, when I reflect upon my experiences growing up, my most memorable music moments gained and lost occurred through interactions with adults from a variety of music backgrounds and experience levels. As a teacher, I tried to connect with parents and fellow teachers of the children I taught, but I'm not sure I made an effort to understand them as people and musicians. Perhaps I needed to first understand those adults as people—their personal contexts, their anxieties, their perceptions of music-learning and music-learning environments—and their family relationships and school relationships before offering or imposing advice on how best to guide children musically.

However, after finding the essence of participants' shared experience, I wondered, "Do children and caregivers even want me to assume a role of cultural music mediator? After all, children often form their own music cultures and it is I who am the outsider (Campbell, 2010). In those cases, children mediate learning for *me*. In turn, I can then mediate between them and their caregivers. Similarly, adults can mediate music learning for me. Through getting to know them as people and musicians, I invite opportunities for adults to share their music backgrounds, experiences, and interaction ideas with me.

In general, I've done a much better job interacting with parents than teachers. I have taken time to get to know parents in my early childhood music program. However, I did not spend as much time to get to know parents of children in my public school elementary general music classes, nor at Project P.L.A.Y. School. "Why?" I asked

myself. I believe it was because parents were not present when I was working with children. They were silent partners. Participants in this study taught me the importance of connecting with parents, even when they are not physically in the room in which I am working with the children. Further, I did not pay classroom teachers much mind. I appreciated that the Project P.L.A.Y. School teachers made an effort to sing when I was there but I did not expend effort trying to get to know their music interests or experiences, or really getting a good picture of what happened musically when Alison and I were not there.

In this study, participants acknowledge that children and adults may not always want or need cultural music mediation (Campbell, 2010; Custodero & Johnson-Green, 2003; Gluschkof, 2002; Pond, 1992) but believe interacting musically with children and adults helps extend their learning. Further, participants believe interactions between children, parents, general education teachers, pre-service teachers, and early childhood music teachers are reciprocal. For example, while parents may mediate children's music learning, children may in turn mediate parents' music learning.

YOU

Hmm, that makes sense.

KERRY

The essence of this study provoked thought about how I could help children and adults weave webs of music interactions. However, the essence led to more questions than answers. Thinking of participants' stories, I considered various settings: should I create a music-learning environment in a school or daycare setting, a private music class, or work in homes with parents and their children? What are my goals for creating the

environment? How natural do I want the environment to be? Who do I include in the environment?

My experiences with this study have led me to identify and use a five-step recursive process when helping build webs of interactions among children and adults:

(Uses fingers to list steps.)

Reflect upon

1. Who I am as a musician, teacher, and person.
2. My perceptions of how young children learn music with existing research and best practices.
3. My teaching goals based on my perceptions, research, and best practices.
4. Opening up the music environment to include other stakeholders.
5. Building adult awareness about children's music learning and personal musicianship development.

First, I need to continually reflect upon who I am as a musician, teacher, and person (Daniels, 2013). After engaging in a deep retrospective of my upbringing, I realized I had several people, such as my parents and elementary general music teacher, who acted as cultural music mediators. After reflecting upon my experiences interacting musically with children, I realized that children, such as Harriett, have acted as *my* cultural music mediators.

My lived experiences shape my current perceptions—looking inward helps me understand my context for thinking about music-learning environments for young children. Reflections have helped me gain a greater understanding of my perceptions of children's music learning, how those perceptions influenced my perceived role in that

learning, how I interacted musically with children and adults. I'm not the only one who was influenced by this soul-searching investigation. Participants also seemed interested in recalling their past music experiences and reflecting on how they influenced their present teaching (Seidman, 2006).

YOU

Really? How so?

KERRY

For example, Donna told me that she enjoyed talking because she “never gets to talk about this stuff,” meaning her experiences with early childhood music. Similarly, Alison commented, “early childhood music is my passion and yet it’s only a fraction of what I get to do in my work.” In an email, José wrote, “Thank you for the very nice interview. It really makes me think about things again in different ways. Lovely.” In her interview, Susan remarks, “You know, I ask my students to reflect upon their early childhood music experiences, but I never have.”

Second, I need to compare perceptions of how young children learn music with existing research and best practices. In other words, how do my perceptions match up with what’s known? As Donna and Alison mention in Part Two, there are frameworks that can guide us in understanding how children learn in general and music terms. Further, how do my perceptions fill in what isn’t known?

I realized that most participants also have moved from highly structured music interactions to more organic ways of interacting with children (Custodero, 1998). They acknowledge that shift and attribute it to two reasons: 1) When they started teaching, they really didn’t know how to interact musically with young children. They sought resources

and created resources when those they found were insufficient and 2) They became more aware of how children learn music through their experiences, research, and connections with other early childhood music educators—especially through the Early Childhood Music Education (ECME) Commission.

Third, I need to reflect upon teaching goals and aims based on my perceptions, and understanding of research and best practices. For example, participants in this study harbor an underlying anxiety about caregivers' potential inability to meet the music needs of children. To relieve that anxiety, they aim to create lab opportunities for adults to observe and practice crucial music interaction skills with children. When determining the physical space and curriculum, they use their perceptions of children's music learning, as well as their knowledge of research and best practices. Those labs typically materialize as private early childhood music classes, centers in preschools and kindergarten, or more structured preschool and kindergarten music classes.

In those lab situations, it seems participants play several roles including observer, playmate, extender, connector, comforter, and inquirer (Tarnowski, 1999). As observer, they watch and listen for children's music exploration and play, and interactions with peers and adults. As playmate, they connect with children in large-group, small-group, and one-on-one contexts. As extender, they offer children, parents, general education teachers, and pre-service teachers ideas of how to enrich learning and guidance opportunities. As connector, they bring different stakeholders together to create a web of music interactions. Finally as comforters and inquirers, they create a safe music-learning environment for stakeholders, finding ways to get to know stakeholders through music and connect with their music interests.

Through integrating those different roles, early childhood teachers hold the unique opportunity to become cultural music mediators among adults and children. They can identify children's natural music behaviors and create a space for children to extend these natural behaviors through creating spaces to explore, manipulate, create, and play with sound (Bolton, 2012; Custodero, 2002; Fung & Gromko, 2001; Gluschkof, 2008). Early childhood music teachers can help adults become aware of children's natural music behaviors. Through immersion in music environments, modeling and one-to-one interactions, they can help adults learn to identify music behaviors and interact musically with children. Early childhood music teachers can also help adults use music to connect with children as a way of bonding (Custodero, Britto, & Brooks-Gunn, 2003; Nardo, Custodero, Persellin, & Fox, 2006; Valerio & Freeman, 2009).

Fourth, I need to reflect upon ways to open up the environment to include other stakeholders—increasing potential webs of interactions. Several participants are also university professors. Whether or not their job description includes guiding pre-service teachers in understanding early childhood music environments, they have all found ways to incorporate it into their daily interactions with college students. Also, like many of the participants in this research, I struggle with finding time to create music-learning environments for young children. I feel many anxieties, like how to make time to continue improving my musicianship, understanding pedagogy and children's general learning principles, and understanding parents and general education teachers. All of those components take time. Thus, as a university professor, I find myself in a quandary. Currently, my job description has nothing to do with early childhood—early childhood is not even on the radar. In the fall, I will begin teaching an elementary general music

methods course. That's as close as I get. So I am preparing a new generation of teachers to go out and ignore early childhood. That is a problem. Another problem or blessing, depending on how you look at it, is that early childhood is so widely defined. As José mentions, birth through eight is a huge spread within the United States. Where do I concentrate my efforts? As part of the elementary general music methods course, I can address age four (pre-kindergarten) through age eight (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) but I also must go through age 11 (fifth grade) to prepare college students for teaching certification.

So who's teaching college students about our youngest students (Reynolds, Filsinger, Turowski, & Waters, in review)? What is the solution to that very common issue? Is it to teach music in early childhood contexts as Alison and Rachel do, even though some states are not certifying students pre-k music and there are few dedicated courses for early childhood music? Is it to become an administrator to influence the power and policy of early childhood music in the university as Ricardo has done? Is it to partner with on-campus programs as Joanne has done? To work with area schools as Claudia has done? To create community music programs as Donna and Beata have done? Or to create a private music program separate from a university as José has done? At this point, I am not sure but I know that I must find ways to continue interacting musically with young children. And now, after conducting this research, I extend that to say I must play and interact musically with young children and their caregivers. And since I work at a university with music education majors, I extend that even more to say I must play and interact with young children, their caregivers, and pre-service teachers to create a music-learning environment that promotes a web of music interactions.

Fifth, I need to guide caregivers and pre-service teachers in building awareness about children's music learning and themselves as musicians. I need to help them find ways to understand musical and social bonds that may tie children with adults (Custodero, Britto, & Brooks-Gunn, 2003; Nardo, Custodero, Persellin, & Fox, 2006; Valerio & Freeman, 2009) and tools for extending music environments beyond music class (Fox, 1989). I also need to continue to facilitate hands-on experiences for adults to interact musically with children in a risk-free environment.

Though participants express interest in engaging in a "joint music adventure" with caregivers, they seem to harbor underlying tensions with caregivers. Participants encourage adults to share music they love with students (Filsinger, 2012; Upitis, 1990; Young & Perez, 2010) but they are cautious to remark that adults should also expose children to other music, particularly a variety of music (Gordon, 2003). Their idea of appropriate music for children may conflict with caregivers' perceptions (Ilari, 2005; Lamont, 2003; Young, 2008). As Beata points out, children are open to everything (Kopiez & Lehmann, 2008) and this is the time to expose them to as much music as possible (Gordon, 2003; Valerio et al., 1998).

YOU

(Smiles, nods head, and types notes on iPad.)

KERRY

Engaging in this research reassures me that I am not the only one who has dedicated her career to understanding how young children learn music or who is captivated by children's sense of curiosity, openness, and willingness to collaborate. I was most struck by participants' enthusiasm and joy. I also was amazed at how giving they were: they

devoted so much time to talking with me. To enrich their interviews, they sent theses, video, and websites about their programs. At first, I was unsure they would be open to discussing their programs. However, I found their openness inspiring: they truly wanted to contribute to advancing the early childhood music profession.

At the beginning of this research, I was also concerned because, to me, participants seemed so different from each other. Though members of the same profession, they came from many walks of life with different methodological backgrounds. I was unsure if they would have anything in common. Yet, from participants' stories, common tenets were revealed. Though participants may differ in the repertoire they consider appropriate for young children and their specific educational goals and aims, they unify in their commitment to connect with children and adults.

YOU

Has your definition of music-learning environments changed since conducting this research?

KERRY

Well, I'd keep my previous definition: a music-learning environment has music in a variety of tonalities, meters, and styles (Gordon, 2012; Valerio, et al., 1998), and occurs when adults set clear parameters within which children are free to explore music. But my concept of environment has greatly expanded. Now, it includes children's everyday life contexts—something I strive to understand better (Custodero & Johnson-Green, 2003). I am not a parent. I am not a general early childhood education teacher. I do not spend all day with the same children and understand their daily life contexts. In this study, participants kept thinking outside the early childhood music classroom. In fact, they spent

considerably more time talking about the home music environment. How much research do we have on the home music environment? Not enough. There have been a few notable studies (Burton, 2002; Custodero & Johnson-Green, 2003; Moog, 1976) that have let us peek into the music worlds of parents and children—but from a very limited slice of home lives (Reynolds, in review). Researchers have also created measures for parents to provide information about home music environments (Brand, 1985; Valerio, Reynolds, Morgan, & McNair, 2012; Wills, 2011; Zdzinski, 2008). Still, we really do not yet know how children learn music, especially in the home.

What complicates things further is that there is no “clinical definition,” as José says, for how children learn music, or, as Claudia mentions, no “recipe” for creating a music-learning environment for young children. However, there are frameworks. Looking to the general education literature, we know, as Donna mentions, “Children don’t just learn in a random fashion. There are identifiable patterns” (Beilin, 1992; Bruner, 1974; Vygotsky, 1978). What then are the identifiable patterns, trends, or tendencies in music learning (Gordon, 2003)? And how can we use those to help adults create music environments for children that aid their music-learning and overall quality of life?

I’ve learned from participants that creating a music-learning environment is beyond just facilitating young children’s music learning. Though I think of children as free and capable people, I’ve been limiting my understanding of children to *music*. During her interview, Alison shared with me that, when she first heard about early childhood music teachers “doing research,” she conjured up images of people in white

lab coats studying babies during music class. In a way, that is not that far off from how I viewed myself with children.

YOU

Now I'm thinking about how I can become a cultural music mediator. How can I create webs of music interactions with children?

KERRY

That's an interesting question. Though my colleagues and I cannot give you a recipe for how to create a music-learning environment for young children, we can provide a guide based on our contexts and experiences.

We invite you into our web of music interactions. We urge you to explore ways to become a cultural music mediator for children and to open yourself up to being culturally mediated by children. To begin, look within yourself. Find your inner musical child. Ask those around you who knew you when you were young what your early childhood music experiences were. Take away the constraints: don't limit yourself to thinking of music as a formal activity. Embrace that you cooed as a child. Embrace that you banged on pots and pans. Your early music experiences and interactions with others have impacted your music-learning skills, view of music, and view of music education. In other words, they have set the foundation for how you view the world through a music lens. Next, open up your mind to your surroundings. Suspend your preconceptions about music learning. What do you hear? What do you see? Finally, trust us to guide you in developing a web of interactions among you and children. Let us be your cultural music mediators and we, in turn, will let you be ours.

(Pauses.)

YOU

You seem hesitant. What is it?

KERRY

You've been very quiet during this conversation. I've shared my perspectives and my colleagues have shared theirs, but what would be interesting and helpful for us is hearing your perceptions of defining and creating music-learning environments for young children.

YOU

(Smiles.)

Well, let's schedule another time for coffee or a Skype call. You know, I was afraid when I asked you to tell me about your research that I wouldn't understand what you were talking about. I've been overwhelmed by research reports when the use research jargon clouds the meaning of that research for me. But I understood what you and your colleagues were talking about. I can't wait to talk with my friends and family about music-learning environments for young children.

(Laughs.)

KERRY

(Smiles.)

What?

YOU

Here comes my FRIEND.

(KERRY and YOU exchange contact information as YOU's friend walks over, smiles, and greets YOU and KERRY warmly.)

FRIEND

What were you two talking about that is causing you both to smile so broadly?

YOU

Research about music-learning environments for young children. Kerry is an early childhood music teacher and has shared her experiences teaching young children music. Several of her colleagues were just here sharing their experiences, too.

FRIEND

Oh really? That sounds interesting. Let me get a cup of coffee and you can fill me in on your conversation.

KERRY

(Smiles.)

I'll leave you two to talk.

(KERRY exits the coffee shop, confident that YOU will pass on KERRY and her colleagues' stories. FRIEND takes KERRY's seat and begins a long conversation with YOU about perceptions of defining and creating music-learning environments for young children.)

## EPILOGUE

Thank you for joining the conversation about young children's music learning. Because your voice is important to understanding how adults define and create music-learning environments for young children, I invite YOU and your FRIEND to share thoughts you have generated while reading this dissertation with myself, my colleagues, and other caring adults. Please visit my Facebook page, Music-Learning Environments for Young Children, and contribute your voice to the conversation!

As a fellow cultural mediator, I ask you to encourage family, colleagues, policy makers, and other community members to reflect upon music-learning environments for young children. Share your reflections with them and suggest they add their voice to the conversation, too. Collaborate to brainstorm, expand, and refine the webs of music interactions you create with young children.

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## APPENDIX A

## INVITATION EMAIL

Email Invite Early Childhood Music Teachers to Participate in Project

*I emailed selected ECME members the following message:*

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ (insert name of Early Childhood Music Education Commission Member),

My name is Kerry Filsinger, and I am pursuing a doctorate in Music Education from Temple University. I attended the 2012 ECME Commission Seminar with you in Corfu.

With the help of my Ph.D. advisor, Alison M. Reynolds, Ph.D., I have developed a research study for my dissertation that focuses on understanding how early childhood music teachers perceive music-learning environments for young children.

The purpose of this study is to describe how an international group of early childhood music teachers describe creating music learning environments for young children. I am interested in learning the perspectives of ECME members on this topic. My research questions are

1. What are early childhood music teachers' perceptions of music-learning environments for young children?
2. What shapes their perceptions?
3. How do early childhood music teachers strive to create an environment conducive for young children's music learning?

If you agree to participate in this research, you and I will schedule an individual interview between the dates \_\_\_ and \_\_\_ (to be inserted relative to IRB approval date) through a Web 2.0 audio chat application at a date and time that is convenient for you. I will audio record your interview.

I predict the total time required for your participation in this study would be two hours or less.

If you are interested in being interviewed and audio recorded for this research, please read the attached consent form and reply to this email by \_\_\_\_\_ (date to be inserted relative to IRB approval date). Please include the statement "I consent to participate and be audio recorded."

Thank you very much for your time! Please email me ([kerryfilsinger@temple.edu](mailto:kerryfilsinger@temple.edu)) or call (215) 490-2665 with questions you may have.

Sincerely, Kerry Filsinger

## APPENDIX B

## CONSENT FORMS

## Consent to Participate

**Title of the research study:** Music Learning Environments for Young Children: Cross-National Perspectives

**Name and Department of investigator:**

Principal Investigator: Alison Reynolds, Ph.D. Presser Center for Research and Creativity in Music

Department of Music Education and Therapy Boyer College of Music and Dance Temple University, 2001 N. 13th Street, Philadelphia, PA

19122 Contact Information: (215) 204-1660

reynolda@temple.edu

Student Investigator: Kerry Filsinger, Doctoral Candidate Presser Center for Research and Creativity in Music Department of Music Education and Therapy Temple University, Philadelphia, PA

Contact Information: (215) 490-2665 kerryfilsinger@temple.edu

This study involves research. The purpose of the research is to describe the essence of how a group of international early childhood music teachers describe creating music-learning environments for young children.

What you should know about a research study:

1. Someone will explain this research study to you.
2. You volunteer to be in a research study.
3. Whether you take part is up to you.
4. You can choose not to take part in the research study.
5. You can agree to take part now and later change your mind.
6. Whatever you decide, it will not be held against you.
7. Feel free to ask all the questions you want before and after you decide.

The estimated duration of your study participation is two hours or less. The study procedures are:

- You and I will schedule an individual interview through a Web 2.0 chat application at a date and time that is easy for you. I will ask you questions about creating a music-learning environment for young children.

- Unless you send me an email indicating you want me to use your given name instead of a pseudonym, I will assign a pseudonym to you. I will refer to you by your pseudonym throughout the project. Your interview transcript will not reveal your name.
- I will audio record your interview, and take notes while we are talking. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes.
- Word-for-word, an undergraduate research assistant or I will transcribe your audio recorded interview. I will email a copy of your interview transcript. I ask you to read it, deciding whether it accurately represents your thoughts. After you read the transcript and make any necessary changes, I ask that you return it by email to me. Reading your transcript should take 60 minutes or less. I may ask you to share information to supplement your interview, such as videos of your early childhood music teaching. I will share written portions of your transcript with my Ph.D. advisor. I may share audio recordings with my dissertation committee, an undergraduate research assistant, a research auditor, at conferences and, for educational publication. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts. The benefit you will obtain from the research is knowing that you have contributed to the understanding of this topic. The alternative to participating is not to participate. Please contact the research team with questions, concerns, or complaints about the research and any research-related injuries by calling (215) 490-2665 or e-mailing [kerryfilsinger@temple.edu](mailto:kerryfilsinger@temple.edu). This research has been reviewed and approved by the Temple University Institutional Review Board. Please contact them at (215) 707-3390 or e-mail them at: [irb@temple.edu](mailto:irb@temple.edu) for any of the following: questions, concerns, or complaints about the research; questions about your rights; to obtain information; or to offer input. Confidentiality: Efforts will be made to limit the disclosure of your personal information, including research study records, to people who have a need to review this information. However, the study team cannot promise complete secrecy. For example, although the study team has put in safeguards to protect your information, there is always a potential risk of loss of confidentiality. There are several organizations that may inspect and copy your information to make sure that the study team is following the rules and regulations regarding research and the protection of human subjects. These organizations include the IRB, Temple University, its affiliates and agents, Temple University Health System, Inc., its affiliates and agents, and the Office for Human Research Protections. Replying to the invitation email stating “I consent to participate and be audio recorded” indicates you have read and understand the contents of this Consent Form, agree to take part in this study, and agree to be audio recorded. Keep this copy of the consent form for your records.

## Permission to Audiotape

Project Title: Music Learning Environments for Young Children: Cross-National Perspectives

Principal Investigator: Alison Reynolds, Ph.D. Presser Center for Research and Creativity in Music

Department of Music Education and Therapy Boyer College of Music and Dance Temple University, 2001 N. 13th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19122 Contact Information: (215) 204-1660 Alison.Reynolds@temple.edu

Student Investigator: Kerry Filsinger, Doctoral Candidate Presser Center for Research and Creativity in Music

Department of Music Education and Therapy Boyer College of Music and Dance Temple University, 2001 N. 13th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19122

Contact Information: (215) 490-2665 kerryfilsinger@temple.edu Date:

I give Kerry B. Filsinger permission to audiotape me. This audiotape will be used only for the following purpose (s):

EDUCATION AND RESEARCH The audio recordings may be played in presentations for future teachers, current teachers, and researchers, or included in publications related to early childhood and music education.

WHEN WILL I BE AUDIOTAPED?

I agree to be audiotaped during my one-on-one interview to be determined at a date and time of my choosing.

WHEN WILL I BE AUDIOTAPED?

I agree to be audiotaped during the time period: During my one-on-one interview to be determined at a date and time of my choosing.

HOW LONG WILL THE TAPES BE USED?

I give my permission for these tapes to be used from: \_\_\_\_ (start date inserted upon IRB approval) to \_\_\_\_ (three years after start date inserted upon IRB approval).

Recordings will be stored in a locked computer folder for three years. After three years, I (Kerry) will erase all computer files.

WHAT IF I CHANGE MY MIND?

I understand that I can withdraw my permission at any time. Upon my request, the audiotape(s) will no longer be used. This will not affect my relationship with Kerry B.

Filsinger or Alison M. Reynolds in any way.

#### OTHER

I understand that I will not be paid for being audiotaped or for the use of the audiotapes.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

If I want more information about the audiotape(s), or if I have questions or concerns at any time, I can contact:

Investigator's Name: Kerry B. Filsinger Presser Center for Research and Creativity in Music Department of Music Education and Therapy Boyer College of Music and Dance, Temple University 2001 N. 13th Street, Philadelphia, PA, 19122

Email: [kerryfilsinger@temple.edu](mailto:kerryfilsinger@temple.edu) Phone: (215) 490-2665

This form will be placed in my records and a copy will be kept by Kerry. A copy will be given to me.

Replying to the invitation email stating "I consent to participate and be audio recorded" indicates you have read and understand the contents of this Consent Form, agree to take part in this study, and agree to be audio recorded. Keep this copy of the consent form for your records.

## APPENDIX C

## PARTICIPANT DESCRIPTIONS

Alison: Alison began her music journey when her parents took her to Mrs. Anderson's Musical Kindergarten in Oregon. She continued pursuing her passion in music by becoming an elementary general music teacher in Texas. Interested in attaining a Master's degree in music education and learning from Edwin E. Gordon, Alison enrolled in the music education program at Temple University. Alison describes what happened next as a "happy serendipitous accident." While a graduate student at Temple, her friend and graduate-school colleague, Wendy Hicks (Valerio), invited her to observe the early childhood music program at Temple Music Preparatory. "I couldn't even imagine it," Alison said. "I had this bizarre image of women in lab coats and clipboards crawling around on the floor doing research." She realized that early childhood music education was different than her preconceived notions and "became interested in what was happening in the early childhood music classes." Soon after, she observed Beth Bolton engage parents in early childhood music classes in harmonizing. Through those experiences and her research, Alison shaped her views of the importance of social music interactions among adults and children. Currently, Alison is Associate Professor of Music Education at Temple University in Philadelphia, PA and visits Project P.L.A.Y. School, an area preschool, to informally interact musically with children.

Beata: Beata began her music journey through playing the violin. Music played a large role in Beata's upbringing. Both parents sang to her, though neither parent was formally trained. Originally interested in instrumental music education, she became interested in early childhood music education after reading Jayne Stanley's work about

how music can save babies in intensive care units. As Associate Professor of Music at a university in Brazil, she created and ran an early childhood music program. In that program, she guided pre-service teachers in interacting musically with enrolled students and caregivers. Currently, Beata is Assistant Professor of Music Education at a university in the western part of the United States, where she conducts research on music and cognition with young children.

Claudia: Claudia loves to dance and create music. As a child, she was not given the chance to improvise, especially when she studied piano, because her mother played the piano and considered it “a serious thing.” “You played real music or you didn’t play there,” she remarked. That experience helped shape her perceptions of how children learn music: “I prefer children don’t develop in that way,” she remarked. Claudia received her music education training through becoming certified in Dalcroze, Kodaly, and Orff. When she began teaching in a kibbutz, the administrators asked her to work with the babies and toddlers. Though Claudia had no previous experience, the administrators said, “Do your best.” Claudia continued to work with those age groups and with older children in kindergarten. She continues to teach kindergarten students and mentor pre-service education and music education majors. Currently, Claudia is Head of Music & Movement Studies in the early childhood department and researcher at the R&D Authority at Levinsky College of Education in Tel Aviv, Israel. At Levinsky College, Claudia works part time in the education department and part time in the music department. She remarks, “I think I have much more influence in the early childhood department and it’s because of my ideology that those who are important in the education of young children are the kindergarten teachers and not the music specialists.”

Donna: Donna describes her experience in early childhood music education as “a series of amazing opportunities.” Belonging to a “very conservative” Dutch Calvinist church, religious music was a large part of her upbringing. Donna asked her mom to begin piano lessons after observing her sister play. She explained, “My mother didn’t think it was time for me to start playing piano yet so I figured it out on my own.” During her studies, Donna spent a great deal of time learning about how children learn through play and was influenced by the early childhood music program Susan Kenney created at Brigham Young University. She designed her early childhood music program at the Eastman Community Music School based on her observations and research. Currently, Donna serves as Associate Dean of Academic and Student Affairs and the Eisenhart Professor of Music Education at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, NY, USA, and as Director of the Eastman Community Music School Early Childhood Music Program.

Joanne: Joanne is Professor of Music Education at The Pennsylvania State University in University Park, PA, USA. When she first started working there, a university daycare opened next door to the music building. Joanne made contact and began working with preschool students. She describes her initial early childhood music teaching approach as “watered down kindergarten” and “formal.” After observing Cynthia Taggart teach an early childhood music class at Michigan State University and working with Alison Reynolds from Temple University, Joanne decided to make her teaching approach more “organic.” “I didn’t know exactly what I was going to do but I was just going to do it,” she said. She describes creating informal music environments as being a “participant” as opposed to “modeling” in formal music environments.

José: José describes her childhood music environment as one where there “was always music.” She credits her grandmother, mother, and father for her music upbringing, describing their influence bringing her to concerts, singing, and playing recorder. José is founder of the VMEcentrum, a music school for young children and a research center for early childhood music researchers. A pianist by training, she became certified in Music on the Lap, a program started by fellow Netherlander Annie Langelaar in 1981.

Rachel: Rachel grew up singing: “my primary instrument my whole life has been my voice,” she says. She reflects upon how her early listening experiences have influenced her lifelong music preferences: “it’s all related, it all comes full circle.” As a child, she listened to country music and she’s “not surprised” she still listens to and performs that style of music. Rachel began her work with early childhood music when the principal at the elementary school where she taught general music allowed her to teach kindergarten. “I had never taught children that young before in student teaching,” she said. “We really didn’t cover birth through age 4 or 5” so she had to teach through experimentation and through participating in professional development workshops. A few years ago, Rachel received a grant from The PNC Foundation to create her dream early childhood music program, *Grow Up Great: Early Childhood Music Initiative*. As Assistant Professor of Music Education at Duquesne University, Mary Pappert School of Music in Pittsburg, PA, USA. she decided to connect with area preschools to provide music services and mentor pre-service music education teachers. Growing up,

Ricardo: Professor of Clarinet at Universidade de Brasilia in Brasilia, Brazil. Ricardo also serves as director of the outreach program for children *Música para Crianças*, where he teaches early childhood music classes, conducts the string orchestra

and organizes the pedagogic contents for the program at his university. He first encountered early childhood music classes taught by Cynthia Taggart while pursuing doctoral work in clarinet performance at Michigan State University. Believing early childhood music classes were “more for women,” he decided accompany his wife who took his two boys to the early childhood music classes there. He describes that first encounter as “falling in love with early childhood music.” Ricardo believes his dedication to understanding how young children learn music has helped him think more like a musician and his dedication to clarinet performance has helped him become a better early childhood music teacher.

Susan: Susan describes herself focusing on music after “failing dance” as a child. “It was a creative dance class. I needed help! I have thought so many times, “What was wrong with this teacher? I needed her help,” she muses. She recalls her mother loving music and singing to her all the time as a child. As a member of the Mormon church, Susan credits the rich music environment affiliated with that religion as being a strong part of her early music environment. When it comes to teaching young children, Susan describes herself as “self taught.” Barbara Andress, a professor at Arizona State University, and educational psychologists Piaget and Vygotsky have influenced her pedagogical choices. With Barbara Andress, Susan created and organized a seminal early childhood music education conference at Brigham Young University. In preparation for that conference, she and Barbara created an early childhood music lab for children and their parents. There, she set up centers for children that have evolved into reflecting the National Standards for Music Education (National Coalition for the Arts, 1994). Currently, she is Professor of Music Education at Brigham Young University.

Kerry: Kerry is a Ph.D. Candidate and University Fellow at Temple University. She also serves as Lecturer of Music at SUNY Buffalo State and SUNY Fredonia. She holds a B.M. in both harp performance and music education, and an M.M. in music education from the Eastman School of Music. She is also a 2012 Presser Music Award recipient. Kerry taught pre-kindergarten through fifth grade music for six years in the Western New York area where she prioritized creativity and improvisation in music curricula. Additionally, she has taught through the Early Childhood Music Foundations program at Temple University and the Early Childhood Music program at the Eastman School of Music. Kerry is an active researcher, conference presenter, and clinician, at the state, national, and international levels. Her research interests include the role of environment in music learning, creativity, improvisation, and music literacy in early childhood and elementary music settings.

You: Who are you? Reflect upon who you are as a person and musician—even if you do not have a lot of music experience.

## APPENDIX D

## EXAMPLES OF SIGNIFICANT STATEMENTS AND TEXTURAL DESCRIPTIONS

*Donna's Significant Statements*

- I didn't really know very much about K, 1, and 2.
- The little ones were not really . . . were not really on my radar.
- 'I have no idea where music fits into the everyday life of a preschool-aged child.'
- I knew where music fit when I was a school music teacher and in one building I had a room
- You know for that whole year I kind of experimented and you know tried things, and you know of course we did a lot of group activities and that's really where my mindset was at the time.
- How do these children make sense of their world and where and how can we construct musical experiences for them?
- One is sort of teacher directed, right, which is how I learned to teach in the early 1970s, which is, you've got a class of twenty children and it's a large group effort and what I was learning to understand from young children is that is a part of what they might do as a learner is to be part of a group
- . . . but there's this whole sort of individual agenda. Individual initiative, personal investigation, personal exploration and from my reading of the Pillsbury Studies I would say recognizing how important that is and how much music children can uncover and discover in their life when they're given the opportunity to do that.
- 'Cause really when you're teaching parents and children together you're really teaching parents because you want them to take it home.
- And in writing the parent guide and trying to think of how the child would play with this toy over a developmental, of years, I had used that framework of play that I had used in my doctoral work.
- Within that paradigm that I wrote for them, should be about 1986 or 7, I kind of set and placed those four levels of the program and then unfolded a curriculum to follow those ideas.
- You know the thing about it is when you look backwards, at the time I didn't see the integrated nature of what I was doing.
- That question of watching, of observing, and then trying to find the theoretical support for the behavior I saw. For me that's always been an important part of what I've tried to get students to understand is that there are frameworks and structures underneath these children's behaviors. It's not just random. Children don't just develop in a random fashion.
- They are these sort of built-in trajectories that children have.
- I said, "Well I wanna play the piano" but my mother didn't think it was time for me to start playing piano yet so I figured it out on my own
- For me, that *personal* connection, that people connection, that social connection is a really critical part of the music making of young children. So children learn from sort of hearing sounds and making sounds but they also learn what's the

value of those sounds by the response of the other people, particularly the adults in their environment.

- They learn through play
- Unless you can manipulate the sound, unless you can do something to the sound, it doesn't always sustain the interest of the child.
- That the one has kind of a single purpose and children will be interested in it and then they'll discard it and go for something else. That they can play with it one way today and they can try something else when they're six months older and something else when they're six months older than that.
- "I can act on this sound and I can make something happen" which is empowering,
- That really revolutionized children's ownership of music
- We're talking about parents who understand what it means to make music with their children. We're talking about family members who are naturally making music and having it supported and reinforced by the adults in their environment.
- I watched that over the years to try and figure out what it is that really helps children value music and helps children develop their skills in music.
- It's why I chose to start with classes for very young children here where the parents would actually be involved.
- A web of interactions with the adults and the children in their environment.
- "Pay attention to the music in your life."
- It can be a kind of almost like sanitizer [rubs hands] I'm thinking of the Purell sanitizer.
- Natural points of interaction
- He didn't know how to get into that.
- So that idea of trying to be creative I think could be part of every families life.
- The definition of music where you know they think it means taking lessons and performing on stage.
- The opportunity to work with like-age children and to have that—it's a more horizontal whereas the parent and child is a more vertical relationship
- To step away from the group and have a chance to try something on their own—individual or just one or two kids at a time.
- Making up their own version of what they learned before.
- Perseverate and just keep doing the same thing over and over
- Just nonverbally the teacher is affirming what's going on.
- And from my experience that's the point where you'll either get pushback and the child will say, "Get lost, I like what I'm doing" [K laughs]. "I'm very happy with this. What's your problem teacher? What's your problem Mom?" Because it's like "I don't need any intervention because I'm very satisfied with what I'm doing."
- It is a signal to me if they're ready for private instruction or not.
- It needs to have sonic space so that when children begin to invent they're not competing with the video games or television or other maybe other family members or other classroom sounds or noises.

- Although young children in a classroom, they are so capable of screening out [laughs] things that I think are incredibly distracting. Because I'm paying attention to all of those things and often they're not. They're focused.
- The lack of time. Parents are very busy.
- I do think that's why we have a lot of people come to our classes with babies and toddlers because they're scheduling the music encounter.
- It gives them the routine, gives them the schedule to make music.
- An ideal space would be one with nothing in it.
- We really do have access to the whole world of musical ideas.
- "Oh yeah, okay. This is music that I can find an immediate personal connection to." So that sense of familiar style
- Range of musical material
- English-speaking folk material for a lot of the songs we use in our class.
- Instruments are really an extension of you as a music maker.
- If they can't do that physically with their bodies and then you give them an instrument, you've just sort of muddied the waters in terms of really knowing as a teacher is the child not able to do this because the instrument is complicating things for them or is the child not able to do this because they don't hear in the music where this instrument is supposed to be played.
- Who to involve in the environment

#### *Donna's Textural Description*

Donna believes that the most vital part of music-learning environments for young children is the "people connection." She compares music learning to language learning, saying children "absorb" music in their environment." She says, "they're gonna listen and listen and listen and then they're gonna make these beginning vocalizations." Through vocalizing, "they begin to participate in the music making in one way shape or form." And how they children grow as musicians is "predicated on the response of the adults and their environment."

Growing up, Donna became a self-taught musician. When her mother said she couldn't start piano lessons at age six, she "figured it out" on her own. Later on, she studied how children figure things out on their own. She believes children need time to explore music on their own but that adults can facilitate that process to prevent the child from "perseverating and just keep doing the same thing over and over and over."

When thinking of what type of early childhood music program to create, Donna decided to create an early childhood music program “that there should be a possibility of teaching parents.” She created music classes for infants and their parents, trying to guide parents and children in creating a “web of interactions” both at home and in music class. She tries to connect with parents by infusing popular music like the “Beverly Hills Cop theme” into the “traditional folk music” she typically plans for music class.

## APPENDIX E

## GROUP STRUCTURAL DESCRIPTION

Early music-learning experiences greatly influence this group's perceptions of creating music-learning environments for young children. Starved for music creativity as children, they believe it is vital for children's music learning. Feeling stifled by formal learning experiences that were not developmentally appropriate, as they later learned through research and observation, they believe in creating an informal atmosphere for children to learn.

Through experience and research, participants have learned that they should not solely be responsible for children's music learning. They try to connect with parents and early childhood teachers through understanding their music interests, seeking information about their home music environments, and planning engaging music repertoire for music classes.

Participants stress that there is no possibility of a one-size-fits all clinical definition of creating music-learning environments for young children but it appears they share common tenets. Though funding, physical space, cultural context, parent influence, student interest, and student age are all vital in understanding how best to create context-specific music-learning environments, they believe connecting with people is the most important part.

## APPENDIX F

### GROUP ESSENCE

Participants consider creating music-learning environments a joint music adventure with children and caregivers. They care deeply about the music bonds that form between adults and children. They think relationships between parents and children, and teachers and children, and children and children are critical to children's music learning and quality of life. In essence, they volunteer themselves as cultural music mediators—mediating the many types of interactions in the web of children's daily lives. They've come to those realizations based on your music upbringing. Some had experiences where your music interests or needs were not valued. Some had experiences where your music interests or needs were valued. Regardless, those experiences shape their perceptions about creating music-learning environments for young children.

## APPENDIX G

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

#### Interview Questions

##### Broad Questions

- 1) How would you describe your music-learning environment when you were growing up?
- 2) How would you describe your background in early childhood music education?
- 3) What is a music-learning environment for young children?
- 4) How do you create a music-learning environment for young children?

##### Sample Follow-Up Questions

- 1) What detracts from a music environment?
- 2) How has your culture influenced that description?
- 3) How has your music education influenced that description?
- 4) What types of music are present in your music environment?
- 5) What types of movement are present in your music environment?
- 6) How do you set up your music space?
- 7) In your created music environment, what music sources do you use (i.e., voice, recorded music)?
- 8) In your created music environment, what music sources do you choose not to use (i.e., voice, recorded music)?
- 9) In your created music environment, what instruments (if any) do you play? Why do you choose to play these instruments?
- 10) In your created music environment, what instruments (if any) do you choose not to play? Why do you choose not to play those instruments?
- 11) What difficulties have you encountered when creating a music environment for students?
- 12) What advice can you give parents who are interested in creating music-learning environments at home for their children?

## APPENDIX H

## INTERNATIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER



Protocol Number: PI: Review Type: Approved On: Approved From: Approved To:  
 Committee: School/College: Department: Project Title:

**21069REYNOLDS, ALISON** EXEMPT 19-Dec-2012

B BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCESBOYER COLLEGE OF MUSIC & DANCE  
 (2200)MUSIC: EDUCATION (22060)Music Learning Environments for Young Children:  
 International Perspectives

**Office for Human Subjects Protections Institutional Review Board**  
 MedicalInterventionCommitteesA1&A2 Social and Behavioral Committee B  
 Unanticipated Problems Committee

Student Faculty Conference Center 3340 N Broad Street - Suite 304 Philadelphia,  
 Pennsylvania 19140 Phone: (215) 707-3390

Fax: (215) 707-9100 e-mail: irb@temple.edu

### **Certification of Approval for a Project Involving Human Subjects**

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 ----- The IRB approved the protocol **21069**.

If the study was approved under expedited or full board review, the approval period can be found above. Otherwise, the study was deemed exempt and does not have an IRB approval period.

Before an approval period ends, you must submit a "Continuing Review Progress Report" to request continuing approval. Please submit the form **at least 60 days before the approval end date** to ensure that the renewal is reviewed and approved and the study can continue.

Finally, in conducting this research, you are obligated to submit modification requests for all changes to any study; reportable new information using the Reportable New Information form; and renewal and closure forms. For the complete list of investigator responsibilities, please see the Policies and Procedures, the Investigator Manual, and other requirements found on the Temple University IRB website:  
<http://www.temple.edu/research/regaffairs/irb/index.html>

Please contact the IRB at (215) 707-3390 if you have any questions.