

Music-based groups to enhance the social functioning of children in early childhood

by

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Declaration of originality

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- Our Heavenly Father, whose Everlasting Arms embrace each and every child – may we tend with diligence and love to the smallest and most vulnerable of His great flock.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to Deon Brink,

the music in my madness

and the rhythm in my rhyme;

who shared this journey with me

first as sweetheart,

then fiancée

and finally husband.

*Thank you for believing in what I do, for honouring my dreams and for
not letting the music fade.*

Happy Valentine's Day...

Abstract

Music-based groups to enhance the social functioning of children in early childhood

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This study investigated the influence of music-based socialisation groups upon the social functioning of children in early childhood. A qualitative research approach was followed and a case study research design was employed to investigate the phenomenon at hand. Eight children (aged five to six years) from the Thando Westford Community Crèche in Pretoria, South Africa, were purposively selected to participate in ten music-based group sessions over the course of eight weeks. Each session was video recorded and focused observation was employed to collect data on seven social skills according to the model of Schiller (2009), namely confidence, curiosity, intentionality, self-control, relatedness, capacity for communication and cooperativeness. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants' teacher to examine the potential for transfer of skills learned in the group to the classroom and to explore the value and feasibility of facilitating such groups within the community crèche setting. Principles of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory formed the theoretical foundation for the design and implementation of the music groups and for the interpretation of research findings.

The research findings suggested that the music-based socialisation groups were able to promote each of the seven social skills, although the nature and extent of such influence differed among individuals. Music-based activities displayed several strengths as a medium for working with young children, including the cooperative and inclusive nature of activities. Both contextual and individual factors influenced

how the participants responded to the groups. Transfer of skills learned in the groups to general classroom behaviour was limited, perhaps due to a lack of follow-up activities aimed at this purpose.

Key words:

- Early childhood
- Music-based socialisation groups
- Social functioning
- Social skills
- Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of learning

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CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is a crucial stage for optimal development of the individual. In support of this, the Department of Social Development (2006:1) recognises that it is the most important phase in the human life cycle. Issues of early childhood development have been emphasised both internationally and by South African society and legislation. International perspectives (e.g. Darrow, 2011:28; Maulik & Darmstadt, 2009:531; Hester, Baltodano, Hendrickson, Tonelson, Conroy & Gable, 2004:7-8) highlight the critical role of early childhood experiences, and local sources attempt to enhance the relevance of such findings for children growing up in the South African context (Jackson & Abosi, 2006:1-3).

Early childhood development should be considered holistically. The Children's Act (38 of 2005), Section 91(1), refers to early childhood development as "the process of emotional, cognitive, sensory, spiritual, moral, physical, social and communication development of children from birth to school-going age." Children who do not reach appropriate developmental milestones in any one of these areas are likely to struggle as they enter the school system (Schiller, 2009:3). As early childhood is understood to be a stage of intensive behavioural development (Leboeuf, Fantuzzo & Lopez, 2010:46), social competence is an area of special importance for the child about to make this transition, and represents the focus of the current study. McWayne, Cheung, Green Wright and Hahs-Vaughn (2012:862) assert that "because of the dynamic development characteristic of this period, the transition from preschool to formal school entry has been identified as a critical time for intervening with those considered at-risk..." Early intervention could enhance the child's capacity to master the changes and expectations related to school entry.

Children within the preschool phase negotiate many developmental challenges (McWayne et al., 2012:862). They are confronted with significant changes in their social environment and face increasing expectations regarding their role and behaviour within it. Preschool children begin to socialise with peers and adults other

than close family or intimate acquaintances, and have to adjust to the preschool classroom environment and apply themselves to the mastery of various new tasks and skills (McWayne et al., 2012:862). The child's psychological development is intimately related to social changes and expectations; as such, Erikson's theory of psychosocial development is helpful in understanding children's social development during the preschool stage. According to Erikson's theory, preschool children are in a phase of transition between two stages (Berk, 2013:16). They are nearing the end of one stage, in which they have gained an enhanced sense of initiative and agency in their social world, and are entering a new stage where they experience a great drive toward mastery in personal, social and scholastic spheres (Zembar & Blume, 2009:340-366; Charlesworth, 2008:508; Huston & Ripke, 2006a:10-13; Huston & Ripke, 2006b:413; Morris & Kalil, 2006:237; Ripke, Huston & Casey, 2006:261).

Studies (e.g. Hendrick & Weisman, 2010:224; Schiller, 2009:9; Knitzer, 2002:5) show that areas involving skills related to cognitive development, such as emergent literacy and numeracy, are not the only ones important to school entry; social and emotional competence are critical to children's ability to make this transition into formal school. Indeed, Rivers, Tominey, O'Bryon and Brackett (2013:954) record the belief of preschool teachers that a child's social and emotional skills are more important to school entry than the ability to read or hold a pencil. Nix, Bierman, Domitrovich and Gill (2013:1001) state that socio-emotional competence, such as the capacity for emotional awareness, prosocial behaviour and joint problem-solving, are directly linked to behavioural adaptation to the school set-up and are necessary for learning to occur. These authors refer to the concept of "learning engagement," which is intimately related to social competence and involves the child's capacity to listen, follow instructions and to show persistence when engaging with challenging tasks. These skills enable children to have the necessary positive relationships with their teachers and to be accepted by their peers.

Rivers et al. (2013:954) mention that there are various definitions for social and emotional skills. The model adopted for the current research is the one developed by Schiller (2009). According to Schiller (2009:20), a child needs competence in seven areas of socio-emotional functioning in order to successfully enter the school system, namely confidence, curiosity, intentionality, self-control, relatedness, capacity to communicate and cooperativeness. In the current study, the researcher attended

primarily to the social dimensions of these qualities, while recognising their interrelatedness with emotional dimensions. The purpose of this distinction was to limit the scope and narrow the focus of the study, as children's emotional functioning represents a field of study in its own right.

Following is a brief description of each of the seven areas of social competence as described by Schiller (2009:23, 33, 41, 49, 59, 71, 80) and as understood in the context of this study. *Confidence* is viewed as a child's basic trust in her¹ own abilities which allows her to approach tasks with self-determination and optimism and to persist in such a task until its completion. *Curiosity* in the context of this study refers to a child's eagerness to learn. This keenness stimulates her interest in her physical and social environment and her active participation in activities. The term *intentionality* describes the child's capacity for thoughtful and purposeful involvement in activities and relates to the quality of her engagement in terms of attention and drive. A child with *self-control* is one who can hold her impulses in check, thereby showing respect for the personal boundaries of others and the boundaries and rules underlying interpersonal interaction. A child's capacity for *relatedness* refers to the extent to which she interacts positively with others, is able to recognise and respond to social cues and thus negotiate social situations. Capacity for *communication* refers to the child's ability to use verbal and nonverbal means of expression to appropriately and effectively convey wishes, feelings and intentions, and to actively contribute to interpersonal interactions. Finally, a child who is *cooperative* is able to coordinate her behaviour with that of others by considering their perspectives and understanding the requirements of the social situation.

Ritblatt, Longstreth, Hokoda, Cannon and Weston (2013:258) note the potential of music participation to prepare children for successful school entry. They describe the capacity of music to enhance a child's learning experience by encouraging enthusiasm and active participation in the learning process. They continue by asserting that children find music and movement activities enjoyable, making music an age-appropriate medium for working with children. More specifically, music engagement has been shown to be an effective socialising agent (Campbell & Scott-

¹ Throughout this dissertation, the feminine pronouns are used to represent both genders and no discrimination is intended.

Kassner, 2006:21; Isbell & Raines, 2003:147). Active music participation has been recognised as being able to promote various areas of social competence including cooperation, group awareness, social reflection, social flexibility, emotional awareness, validation of individuals, inclusion, feelings of community, tolerance and conflict resolution (Nocker-Ribaupierre & Wolfl, 2010:156-157, 159). Group music activities offer a safe environment in which children can learn and practise many basic skills of positive social behaviour, affording opportunities for following, leading, imitating, taking turns, sharing and various forms of reciprocal and mutual interaction (Wigram, Pedersen & Bonde, 2002:171, 184-186). Moreover, this occurs in a context that is not only safe and nonthreatening, but also fun and natural, as such social behaviours are “built into” the fabric of the activities (Darrow, 2011:29).

Small groups provide a safe context in which children can learn and experiment with new adaptive behaviour (Oaklander, 2006:175). Socialisation groups are designed specifically for the purpose of enhancing interpersonal relationships and skills (Toseland & Rivas, 2012:26). This is accomplished through members’ active participation in group activities which facilitate positive social interaction without relying on verbal communication. The socialisation group is well-suited to work with children as such a group can be based on play activities. Play represents a child’s primary avenue of socialisation (Duncan & Tarulli, 2003:275-276) and such a group can allow the child to learn-through-doing, while learning is embedded in the context of meaningful relationships (Toseland & Rivas, 2012:26).

1.2 RATIONALE AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

While the importance of early childhood development is widely acknowledged, focus has been on enhancing children’s numeracy and literacy skills, while relatively little attention has been paid to promoting children’s social competence (Conroy & Brown, 2004:227). Knitzer (2002:5) refers to the importance of socio-emotional and behavioural competencies, and states that during early childhood years, these competencies are more closely connected to cognitive functioning, and therefore early learning, than was previously thought. However, large numbers of children may not have the opportunity to optimally develop these competencies.

“Not all children begin their schooling ready to learn” (Hester et al., 2004:5). While this statement refers to research based in the United States, the view is highly relevant to the situation in South Africa. The researchers further observe that “rapidly changing social and economic conditions have a negative effect on the learning and behaviour of many children” (Hester et al., 2004:5). While South Africa is undergoing social and economic transitions different to that of the United States, this statement applies to the extent that South African citizens experience social and economic instability. The physical and social environments in which South African children grow up are often precarious (Jackson & Abosi, 2006:154). Many South African children, under conditions of systematic repression and social deprivation (“...an extension of the political violence that existed during the years of apartheid”), live with a great deal of uncertainty and unpredictability (Pavlicevic², 1994:4). More recently, Jackson and Abosi (2006:154) discuss the detrimental effects that instability may have on a child’s development, and observe that it often “alters the physical, social-emotional and cognitive development of children in ways that are generally detrimental to their wellbeing.”

Jackson and Abosi (2006:38-45, 29-30, 54-55, 45-54) describe the various social influences that impact upon the development of South African children, paying special attention to the effects of social values and norms, parental beliefs and practices regarding child-rearing, and different types of family structure. They make an important observation related to the urbanisation of significant portions of the population: “A recent pattern in the care of preschool-age children involves placing them in a child-care centre while their mothers are at work in towns and cities” (Jackson & Abosi, 2006:58), and point out that the quality of such care varies considerably, with some children receiving little appropriate stimulation. The increasing utilisation of preschool care has advantages and disadvantages, and Knitzer (2002:9) states that as children spend more time in non-familial care, early childhood practitioners and policy-makers have increasing opportunities either to hinder or enhance the development of such children.

² The reader is assured that every effort has been made to identify and use the most recent sources available. Occasionally, older sources are used in the case of seminal works by researchers/authors who are distinguished in their field of expertise.

Early intervention and prevention are considered the strategies offering the most hope for ameliorating this social crisis and enhancing the resilience of children (Maulik & Darmstadt, 2009:531; Hester et al., 2004:5). Darrow (2011:28) defines early intervention as “the systematic effort to meet children’s developmental needs in the areas of physical, cognitive and social/emotional development, communication and general adaptation.” Early intervention poses a challenge for early childhood practitioners, and a multidimensional, collaborative plan of action is required. The researcher concurs with Knitzer (2002:9) who highlights that what remains to be done, is to develop children’s age-appropriate emotional, social and behavioural competencies.

This need was confirmed in practice by Steyn (2013), a social worker At Thando Westford Community Crèche. This crèche serves a community with socio-economic difficulties and has agreed to support the current research. The researcher has previously conducted music-related interventions in community settings, such as with physically and intellectually challenged children at the Sunshine Association Early Intervention Centre, and with disadvantaged children at the Epworth Children’s Village, a child and youth care centre. These were both non-government organisations (NGOs) and the interventions relied on a remarkably small budget. Maulik and Darmstadt (2009:531-532) note that should music as an intervention strategy prove successful, it would be an appropriate intervention for developing countries as it is a “low cost, low resource-intensive community practice” which is underutilised in community settings (Maulik & Darmstadt, 2009:531). Music as intervention strategy has the advantage of requiring minimal resources and in-service training for successful implementation, and can be integrated with more comprehensive community programmes (Maulik & Darmstadt, 2009:532, 538).

In short, music-based intervention could offer practitioners working with children in the early childhood years an effective, age-appropriate and low cost avenue for reaching children in non-familial care, enhancing their social functioning and reducing one barrier to successful school entry. The researcher aimed to explore the utilisation of music-based socialisation groups for this purpose. In light of the above, the following research question was formulated: “In what ways can music-based socialisation groups influence the social functioning of children in the early childhood years?”

1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was based on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of cognitive development and learning. Vygotsky was among the first theorists to suggest social and cultural foundations for human learning and development (Swartz, 2009:795). Vygotsky viewed the relationship between individual and social aspects of development as follows: "The development of mind is the interweaving of biological development of the human body and the appropriation of the cultural/ideal/material heritage which exists in the present to coordinate people with each other and the physical world" (Cole & Wertsch, cited in Swartz, 2009:795). Immediately evident is the emphasis upon the interdependence of physical, cognitive and social processes operating within a historically-informed physical and social environment.

Vygotsky believed social interaction to be the fundamental avenue through which all learning takes place. Learning through various types of social interaction became the basis of his theory regarding the development of advanced thought processes. He reasoned that "children gain knowledge and skills through 'shared experiences' between themselves and adults or older peers" (Essa, 2011:139). Learning is thus understood as dependent upon social processes. Stated the other way around, socialisation can be understood as, fundamentally, a learning process.

What makes Vygotsky's model well-suited to enhancing social behaviour within the early childhood years in a multicultural setting is his explicit acknowledgement that all psychological and cognitive abilities are context specific. They are not universal, but are situationally contained within a particular historical and cultural context. The teaching and learning of social skills is a culturally sensitive endeavour as the meaning of social behaviour cannot be separated from the larger social and cultural environment. The imparting and learning of social skills must occur organically; thus they must develop within the context in which they are to be relevant and useful.

There is evidence that group music sessions may be ideally suited to facilitating social learning processes characterised by Vygotsky's principles, namely learning within the child's zone of proximal development (ZPD), intersubjectivity, scaffolding, guided participation and cooperative learning. First, music sessions allow children to function and learn within their ZPD. Fundamental to this type of functioning is full participation and a sense of being both challenged and adequately supported. Greig

(1994:13) states that music activities enhance the opportunity for meaningful participation, allowing individuals to participate at their own levels while simultaneously encouraging collaboration to achieve the desired musical end.

Second, music activities can facilitate dynamic states of intersubjectivity. They create a space for communication (verbal and nonverbal) that facilitates the joint expression of individuals functioning upon different levels. Music activities actively encourage the joining, matching and creative imitation of the participants. For example, musical interaction therapy employs music activities to allow individuals to “tune into each other” and thus facilitates “a shared focus through the creation of a musical dialogue” (Wimpory & Nash, 1999:17).

Music sessions also scaffold the child’s learning experience. The music group is a supportive social setting within which children can practise and master various skills. They have the support of both the facilitator and their peers. In the beginning of a group music learning experience, participants usually require more guidance from the facilitator, whereas in later stages they may function optimally with less or no external input (Moore, 2005:65).

Music sessions can optimally facilitate guided participation, where the children learn not through active scaffolding, but through meaningful participation with others. Due to the highly experiential, process orientated nature of music activities, guided participation will account for a great deal of the social (and other) learning that occurs.

Finally, group music-making is particularly conducive to cooperative learning as it lends itself to a great variety of teamwork experiences. Frequently, participants find the group activities intrinsically motivating: the better they are able to work together, the better the resulting music sounds. The effective cooperation of each member is required for a successful outcome, as members are usually eager to play their own roles well and to assist their peers in order to achieve the desired musical result. Johnson (2011:247) suggests that in group music-making, the traditional hierarchical structure of the typical educational setting is ideally replaced with an “interactive participant structure” in which participants “...are given the opportunity to share and develop knowledge with their peers...” leading to “...a much more meaningful

learning environment.” The inherent characteristics of music thus provide a suitable platform for the practical implementation of Vygotsky’s principles of learning.

1.4 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of the research was to explore the influence of music-based socialisation groups on the social functioning of children in early childhood.

Specific objectives around which the study was organised were formulated as follows:

- To explore and describe in what ways a music-based socialisation group can influence the preschool child’s social functioning;
- To identify the strengths of music-based socialisation groups to promote the social functioning of young children;
- To identify the limitations of music-based socialisation groups to promote the social functioning of young children;
- To explore the extent to which music-based socialisation groups can be effectively utilised within the context of a community crèche.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach was best suited to exploring the effects of the music-based socialisation groups upon children’s social functioning. The researcher aimed to produce an in-depth, context-sensitive understanding of the quality of children’s social interaction, while acknowledging the social and cultural meanings and values inherent in such interactions (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:91; Terre Blanche, Kelly & Durrheim, 2006:274-275). The type of research was applied research, given the practical value of the music-based sessions and their potential for implementation should the research findings prove to be positive (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:94).

The research employed a case study design. This was fitting as the researcher wished to form a detailed, holistic and contextualised account of the dynamics underlying the group processes (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:322; Maree, 2010:75-76). The case study was descriptive in purpose, allowing for a rich, in-depth description of

the phenomenon (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:321). The research involved the use of data methods capable of producing rich, descriptive information originating from multiple, context-dependent sources. Finally, as more than one case was being considered (there were two groups of four participants each), a collective case study was utilised (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:322). This allowed for increased representation, greater breadth and comparison across cases (Rule & John, 2011:21).

Purposive sampling was used to select those participants with specific relevance to the study. All attendees of the Thando Westford Community Crèche represented the study population, while the study sample consisted of eight children selected according to certain criteria.

The methods of data collection employed were focused observation and semi-structured interviews. Field notes were collected throughout the research process, which proved helpful in recording details regarding the sessions which may not have been detected in the video recordings themselves (Strydom, 2011a:335). Regular and systematic field notes made over the course of the study provided valuable contextual information.

For the purposes of observation, each music-based session was video recorded, allowing for more in-depth analysis after the session had ended. This also allowed for description of the participants' social functioning across time. Focused observation was performed on these recordings. Focused observation is a qualitative form of observation used by the researcher when she has a good idea of the constructs she wishes to investigate (Kelly, 2006:310). The process of observation was guided by an observation schedule which outlined key points for reflection (Grinnell & Unrau, 2008 in Delpont & Roestenburg, 2011:182). Qualitative observation allowed the researcher to engage personally with the situation and to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' interactions in a contextualised manner (Delpont & Roestenburg, 2011:182; Kumar, 2011:142; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000:305-306). The co-analysis of this data by another, impartial researcher at the end of the study improved the trustworthiness of findings.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teacher who worked with the research participants on a day-to-day basis. She was interviewed before and after

completion of the study, providing valuable information with regard to the participants' social functioning outside of the sessions. An interview schedule ensured that important topics were dealt with while the interview remained flexible, open to adaptation based on the teacher's responses (Greeff, 2011:353).

The process of data analysis "transformed" the raw data into meaningful findings (Schurink, Fouché & De Vos, 2011:397). Themes were induced through an interpretative process involving "sorting, organising and reducing" the data into "more manageable pieces and then exploring ways to reassemble them" (Schurink et al., 2011:399). A "data analysis spiral" allowed themes and patterns to continuously emerge as the researcher circled between the data and its interpretation (Schurink et al., 2011:403). The analytical process was based upon video recordings of the sessions and audio recordings of the interviews. Field notes provided contextual data. The video-recordings of the sessions were analysed by an independent observer who explored the footage for themes and trends which were compared to those identified by the researcher.

1.6 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

Key concepts applicable to this study are defined below.

1.6.1 Early childhood

Early childhood refers to the developmental stage generally considered to be between two and seven years of age (Berk, 2013:6). In this study, the focus was specifically on children in the preschool years, thus between the ages of five and seven.

1.6.2 Social functioning

In this study, social functioning refers to a child's capacity for confidence, curiosity, intentionality, self-control, relatedness, capacity for communication and cooperativeness (Schiller, 2009:20).

1.6.3 Music-based socialisation group

This term refers to activity-based treatment groups aimed at enhancing social skills and interpersonal relationships (Toseland & Rivas, 2012:21-22), which utilise music as the primary method of intervention.

1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

An important limitation of the current research concerns the short duration of the research. A child's behaviour requires a substantial amount of time before significant change becomes evident. Eight weeks (ten sessions) may have been insufficient to adequately explore the potential of music-based socialisation groups to influence the social functioning of preschool children.

As the research took the form of a case study involving the collection of in-depth data regarding a limited number of participants, the results are not intended to be generalisable; they apply only to the specific sample involved. However, due to the trustworthiness of procedures followed, it is believed that the study findings may be transferable to preschool children in comparable settings.

The researcher spoke a different first language to that of the research participants. While she had been informed that the main languages spoken at the crèche were Sepedi and English, the young children with whom she worked were clearly still learning the basics of the English language. Especially the youngest of the children struggled to understand basic verbal instructions. Nevertheless, these difficulties were effectively managed as the music-based sessions relied primarily upon nonverbal forms of expression and communication.

Other limitations involved practical aspects of the research setting. The research was interrupted toward the end (session eight) with the alteration of the venue, which interfered with the flow of the music-based groups. Furthermore, the venues themselves were not ideally suited to the purpose of music sessions. The first venue would become very hot and uncomfortable and the second was extremely noisy. Both contained an array of extraneous materials and objects that were highly

distracting for the participants. This may have influenced the children's social functioning within the music-based sessions.

1.8 CONTENTS OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

The following represents the chapter outline for this mini-dissertation.

Chapter 1: General introduction

Chapter 1 provides background to the research, outlines the goals and objectives, states the research question, summarises the research approach, design and methods and explicates possible limitations and defines key concepts.

Chapter 2: Music-based groups for enhancing children's social functioning

Chapter 2 provides an in-depth literature review regarding the concepts of early childhood, social functioning in this stage of development, Vygotskian sociocultural theory and music participation in socialisation groups to enhance social functioning.

Chapter 3: Music programme for a music-based group for children in early childhood

Chapter 3 contains an outline of the music-based socialisation groups facilitated. These are described in terms of content (the music-based activities) and process (the social interactions facilitated) of the programme.

Chapter 4: Research methodology and research findings

Chapter 4 describes the research methodology, discusses ethical considerations relevant to the study and presents the research findings. The discussion of research findings is also provided in this chapter.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations

Chapter 5 provides a summary of the key research findings and conclusions, as well as recommendations for future research based on these findings. Recommendations for the practical implementation of findings are also provided.

CHAPTER 2

MUSIC-BASED GROUPS FOR ENHANCING CHILDREN'S SOCIAL FUNCTIONING

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is a critical stage in children's development. As children develop holistically across various domains, for example, physical, social and cognitive domains, less than optimal development in one area could affect their functioning in other areas. In the context of this study, a child with less than optimal social functioning may experience difficulties in other areas of development. This effect becomes especially evident upon school entry when lack of social competence prevents young learners from engaging optimally with their teachers and peers (Nix et al., 2013:1001). Music is an effective socialising agent and an age-appropriate form of intervention for young children. In addition, small groups provide a safe social environment within which children can develop their social competence. This study explored the use of music-based socialisation groups to enhance the social functioning of children in early childhood, and especially in the preschool year.

Chapter 2 introduces the theoretical underpinnings pertaining to the current study. First, the stage of early childhood is introduced as critical to the adaptive long-term development of the individual. Its recognition by Chapter 6 of the Children's Act (38 of 2005) is also noted. Next, there is a consideration of children's social development during this period according to the psychosocial theory of Erikson. This is followed by a discussion highlighting the implications of social functioning for children as they approach the school-going age. Toward the end of early childhood, children should have achieved the social competencies that will allow them to function effectively in a wider social environment, such as in school. The seven social skills fundamental to school readiness according to the model of Schiller (2009) are thus regarded as relevant to this study. These skills include confidence, curiosity, intentionality, self-control, relatedness, capacity to communicate and cooperativeness.

Following is a discussion concerning the capacity of active music participation to enhance children's social functioning, after which the socialisation group is described as an appropriate setting for such participation. Next, specific concepts of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of cognitive development are discussed with regard to important concepts and principles relevant to exploring the social benefits of music groups. This is followed by a Vygotskian description of play as a leading activity in children's social development, and then by a depiction of music as a dynamic form of play. Finally, the chapter ends with an integrative discussion bringing together the use of Vygotskian principles to enhance children's social functioning in the context of a music-based socialisation group.

2.2 THE PHASE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

Early childhood, the period between two and seven years of age (Berk, 2013:6; Louw & Louw, 2007:210), is a critical stage of development. It is the fastest period of development in all domains, including the physical, cognitive, emotional, social and moral domains. All these areas of development are interdependent, with a child's functioning in each area influencing growth in all of the others. Particularly significant to this study is the child's social development.

Early childhood represents the most rapid period of a child's development regarding attachment with significant others, the formation of peer relationships, "making sense" of their world and learning via social interaction (Nix et al., 2013:1001). This period forms the foundation of the child's future mental and emotional health and their personal and cultural identity (Schaefer, 2011:371). The influence of competencies and/or problems established at this time is pervasive and persistent in the life of the individual (Conroy & Brown, 2004:225; Knitzer, 2002:6-7). Prevention and early intervention during early childhood are critical as this stage provides an opportunity for the proactive avoidance of future emotional, social, developmental and educational difficulties (Mahoney & Wiggers, 2007:7; Conroy & Brown, 2004:225). A brief overview of the different areas of development is provided below, while the primary domain considered in the current study, namely social functioning, is discussed in greater detail thereafter.

2.2.1 Physical development

In early childhood, physical development is rapid and by the end of this stage, the body's proportions are the same as those of the young adult (Louw & Louw, 2007:149). Children's weight and height increase steadily and towards the end of early childhood, they have a leaner appearance (Santrock, 2009:211). In addition, motor skills improve rapidly during this stage (Louw & Louw, 2007:150). Toward the age of five years, the development of gross and fine motor skills allows the child to perform movements such as running and climbing, and to master coordination of the arms, hands and body with the eyes (Santrock, 2009:212). The development of children's perceptual skills such as vision and hearing helps them to obtain more information from their environment (Louw & Louw, 2007:149). Children's physical development enables them to take part in activities that enhance their cognitive and social development (Louw & Louw, 2007:151).

2.2.2 Cognitive development

According to Piaget's theory of cognitive development, children in early childhood function in the so-called pre-operational stage (Sigelman & Rider, 2009:194). During this stage children develop the ability to imitate the behaviours and actions of others and to engage in symbolic or pretend play, while they also make significant advances in the use of spoken language (Louw & Louw, 2007:159). At around six years of age, children have a remarkable vocabulary of between 10 000 and 13 000 words (Louw & Louw, 2007:169). Children learn to plan and pay attention and they are better able to focus on tasks, objects, events or aspects of the environment, an ability related to school readiness (Santrock, 2009:225). Memory span increases significantly during early childhood and memory strategies, such as rehearsal, serve to enhance this capacity (Santrock, 2009:226; Louw & Louw, 2007:166). During this stage the child develops skills for problem solving, advancing from earlier stimulus-driven actions to goal-directed problem solving toward the school-going years (Santrock, 2009:227).

2.2.3 Emotional development

During early childhood, children learn to understand, recognise and label emotions (Santrock, 2009:249). Their awareness of the basic emotions expands into the development of self-conscious emotions such as shame, guilt and pride. By the age of four to five years they show the ability to recognise the causes, consequences and nonverbal signs of emotions (Louw & Louw, 2007:174-175).

As the child's emotional vocabulary expands, she is increasingly able to explain and express emotions through language. Expanding emotional vocabulary and emotional awareness are crucial skills that allow young children to develop empathy and regulation over their emotions (Louw & Louw, 2007:180-181). Such regulation enhances the quality of children's interaction as emotionally positive children tend to be more popular with peers (Santrock, 2009:250).

2.2.4 Social development

While the family plays a critical role in the early childhood years, peers and other acquaintances become increasingly influential in the lives of preschool children (Louw & Louw, 2007:194). Friends become a salient source of social support and comfort, and also contribute significantly toward feelings of self-worth (Sigelman & Rider, 2009:425). Children's play becomes more socially-orientated, proceeding from solitary play to play involving interaction where cooperation, sharing, following and offering ideas are central (Sigelman & Rider, 2009:422; Louw & Louw, 2007:198).

The development of prosocial behaviour such as helpfulness and turn-taking begins in the preschool years and tends to continue into adulthood. In the early childhood years, parents play an important role in the socialisation of the child; instilling prosocial behaviour through moral awareness where children develop a sense of what is right and wrong (Louw & Louw, 2007:207-208).

Development of social skills is necessary for children to gain entry and acceptance into friendship groups (Sigelman & Rider, 2009:425). Toward the end of early childhood, thus the preschool years, social competence is also crucial for successful adaptation to the school system. In the school setting, it is essential that young

children engage effectively with their teachers and peers in order to function and learn (Nix et al., 2013:1001). Schiller (2009:20) believes that seven social skills are especially important as the child begins school, namely confidence, curiosity, intentionality, self-control, relatedness, capacity to communicate and cooperativeness.

2.2.5 Early childhood as recognised by the Children’s Act (38 of 2005)

The significance of early childhood development is recognised by the Children’s Act (38 of 2005), hereafter referred to as the Act, which has a designated chapter (Chapter 6) dealing with this issue. The Act evidences a holistic approach to early childhood development, recognising its multidimensional nature and acknowledging the various domains in which the child develops, including the emotional, cognitive, physical, spiritual, moral and social areas. In this regard, Section 91 of the Act states that children in this phase of development require experiences that (a) provide developmentally appropriate opportunities, (b) assist children to reach their full potential, (c) care and support them in a constructive manner, (d) ensure their “development of positive social behaviour,” (e) respect and nurture their “culture, spirit, dignity, individuality, language and development” and (f) enhance “their emotional, cognitive, sensory, spiritual, moral, physical, social and communication development” (Children’s Act 38 of 2005). As stated by the Department of Welfare in 1998 (cited by Schaefer, 2011:372), “no single model or program is capable of meeting the varied ECD needs of children and their families.” The focus of the study is represented by point (d) “ensuring development of positive social behaviour” (Section 91 of the Children’s Act 38 of 2005). This is a worthwhile objective as positive social behaviour is one of the key developmental tasks of early childhood.

2.3 EARLY CHILDHOOD AND SOCIAL FUNCTIONING

During early childhood, children’s social development is related to changes in their relationships and interaction with others, who begin to have an increasingly influential role in the child’s life (Louw & Louw, 2007:193). Towards the end of the early childhood years, thus in the preschool years, children need to have developed

the social skills that will allow them to function in school. As this study focuses on children in the later phase of early childhood, a brief description of psychosocial development toward the end of the early childhood stage is in order.

According to Erikson's psychosocial theory of development, preschool children are negotiating a transition between two stages, represented by the respective psychosocial crises of initiative versus guilt (three to six years) and industry versus inferiority (six to eleven years) (Berk, 2013:18; Santrock, 2009:33; Sigelman & Rider, 2009:312; Charlesworth, 2008:507; Louw & Louw, 2007:20, 174; Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 2003:200; Newman & Newman, 1999:251). Preschool children are approaching the end of the former stage, in which they develop an enhanced sense of personal agency, demonstrated as increased initiative (Newman & Newman, 1999:251). The capacity to act with initiative (and thus to choose whether or not to respect certain limits or boundaries) goes hand in hand with the capacity to experience guilt (Meyer et al., 2003:200). A successful outcome of this stage will lead to a healthy sense of agency and initiative tempered by a capacity for self-control and self-responsibility, allowing for self-initiated action within the limits advocated by society (Santrock, 2009:33; Charlesworth, 2008:508; Meyer et al., 2003:200). If this stage is not successfully negotiated, the child's natural enthusiasm may be inhibited by excessive self-judgment and a conscience that is overly strict or moralistic (Meyer et al., 2003:200; Newman & Newman, 1999:252).

The central process which facilitates negotiation through the stage of developing initiative is identification. Children at this stage naturally identify with significant others (especially their parents) and incorporate within their behaviour those traits which they admire (Newman & Newman, 1999:254). This helps them to learn and internalise the values and norms of their society, and to further develop self-control. The formation of moral awareness and of the conscience has its genesis here (Charlesworth, 2008:507; Meyer et al., 2003:200). Appropriate identification with others allows the child to develop a healthy sense of purpose (referred to as ego strength) (Meyer et al., 2003:200). A sense of purpose liberates the child's new-found sense of initiative, allowing her to tackle tasks and projects with enthusiasm (Sigelman & Rider, 2009:312; Meyer et al., 2003:200). This sets the stage for the child's drive toward achievement and productivity which characterises the following stage, namely the stage of industry.

In the stage of industry, a school-aged child faces the psychosocial crisis of industry versus inferiority (Berk, 2013:18; Zembar & Blume, 2009:230). She must develop a sense of competence in the face of the social, scholastic and personal challenges associated with middle childhood (Santrock, 2009:33-34; Sigelman & Rider, 2009:312; Charlesworth, 2008:508; Louw & Louw, 2007:20, 241; Meyer et al., 2003:200-201; Newman & Newman, 1999:291). She learns an array of social, cognitive and practical skills, preparing her to become a competent and productive member of society (Sigelman & Rider, 2009:312; Meyer et al., 2003:201). Children of this age are naturally enthusiastic and proficient learners who greatly enjoy mastering skills and participating in challenging activities (Santrock, 2009:34; Meyer et al., 2003:201; Newman & Newman, 1999: 291). When the school-age child experiences mastery and success, these internal drives are satisfied and the child experiences a sense of industry (Zembar & Blume, 2009:230). Should the child's drive toward mastery be frustrated for whatever reason, a sense of inferiority is likely to develop (Santrock, 2009:34; Louw & Louw, 2007:241; Meyer et al., 2003:201; Newman & Newman, 1999:291-292). This sense of inferiority may lead to feelings of learned helplessness which can contribute to a child's negative outlook toward future outcomes (Newman & Newman, 1999:293-294).

The central process facilitating progress toward a sense of industry is education (Newman & Newman, 1999:293). Erikson believed that teachers (and other significant adults) play an important role in children's development of industry (Santrock, 2009:34; Louw & Louw, 2007:241). They need to ensure effective teaching of skills and appropriate learning experiences to prevent feelings of failure or inadequacy. Appropriate education (the provision of successful and productive experiences) allows the child to develop the ego strength of competence (Meyer et al., 2003:210). This helps ensure that individuals have a healthy self-confidence and drive toward success in the future.

Preschool children are in a phase of transition between these two stages mentioned above. They are preparing to enter the formal education system, a significant event that dramatically alters their role in society (Huston & Ripke, 2006a:10-13). This transition swiftly expands their social worlds (with exposure to classroom, playground and extra-mural activities) and demands a rapidly increasing repertoire of skills, behaviours and social roles as they interact with peers, teachers and parents (Morris

& Kalil, 2006:237; Ripke et al., 2006:261; Kowaleski-Jones & Duncan, 1999:93). The peer group grows in salience and healthy peer interaction becomes critical (Zembar & Blume, 2009:340-366; Huston & Ripke, 2006b:413). Effective interpersonal skills form an important bridge toward school success.

2.4 SOCIAL COMPETENCE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Erikson's theory, as discussed above, points to the importance of young children's development of certain characteristics such as self-responsibility, self-control, the internalisation of values and norms, enthusiasm and the drive toward mastery. These characteristics of social competence are important in order for children to make a successful entry into the school system, as will be described in the following section. The social skills needed for school entry, as outlined by Schiller (2009), provide a benchmark for the social competencies that the child should ideally have acquired toward the end of early childhood.

2.4.1 The importance of social competence in early childhood

The impact of children not reaching the developmental milestones related to social competence in early childhood is often noticed when children enter school (Hester et al., 2004:5). Children may experience problems upon their entry into school, not necessarily due to cognitive milestones not being met, but due to impaired social functioning. Knitzer (2002:8) states that a significant proportion of children are held back in the first grade due to behavioural attributes (such as aggressive, disruptive, antisocial behaviour) and not academic problems. Concurring, Hendrick and Weissman (2010:224) state: "Teachers should know that children who succeed in elementary school tend to do so not because of previous academic training in subjects such as reading and writing, but rather primarily because of their social skills." Children's success in school (and in life more generally) depends upon their capacity for healthy social functioning (Schiller, 2009:10).

Knitzer (2002:5) mentions several skills and competencies vital to early school success: emotional awareness and expression, the ability to share with peers, to

trust adults and to engage fully in play. He advises that while most children learn these skills and make a successful transition into the school system, others present with difficulties early on. Schiller (2009:20) notes that while research provides evidence for the critical role of these skills, attention is still focused on enhancing the academic skills of preschool children. Knitzer (2002:3, 8) warns that in order to effectively promote school-readiness, early intervention efforts need to pay more systematic attention to children's early emotional, social and behavioural functioning, in addition to supporting their cognitive and physical well-being.

Schiller (2009:20) identifies seven areas of socio-emotional competence necessary for children to make the transition into school: confidence, curiosity, intentionality, self-control, relatedness, capacity to communicate and cooperativeness. The researcher recognises the interconnected nature of social and emotional functioning, and the combination of both in the above skills. Due to the scope of this research, the researcher will focus only on social functioning, while keeping in mind this interrelatedness. Furthermore, the primary method of data collection will be that of observation, and social functioning lends itself more readily to observation than do the related emotional aspects. In the following brief discussion, the researcher isolates from Schiller's model the observable, social components of each area of competence.

2.4.2 Schiller's seven social skills for school entry

In this study, the model of Schiller (2009) forms the basis for the discussion of social skills needed by children entering school. The observation schedule used for data collection (Appendix A) was based on Schiller's model of social skills, as discussed in this section. It will be noticed that there is some overlap between areas, as these are related areas of functioning not allowing for complete distinction.

2.4.2.1 Confidence

Confidence, as described by Schiller (2009:23), is necessary for the child to meet new challenges with a basic trust in her own ability. This trait is demonstrated by a

child's effective presentation of herself, her sense of personal-agency, persistence and determination, attentive listening, positive attitude, willingness to seek help when needed and capacity to recognise and solve problems.

A child's confidence takes time to nurture. It is based on her collective experiences of challenging situations and how she deals and has dealt with these experiences over time (Schiller, 2009:23). A child's level of confidence is closely related to experiences of mastery and a sense of self-efficacy (Schiller, 2009:25). Experiences of success are thus important and Schiller (2009:23) asserts that the more children successfully solve "child-size problems", the more they will trust in their own abilities and the less they will be bound by a fear of failure. Denham and Brown (2010:659) refer to the child's "perceived self-confidence" and note its important role in enhancing the value of her learning experiences. They state that a child who perceives herself as being competent is better able to engage with others in the learning environment, fully participate in activities, take risks and attempt challenging tasks.

The input and reactions of those facilitating children's learning are important to children's developing confidence in their abilities. The facilitator's influence is especially significant in the early childhood years as preschoolers are in the process of making significant strides in their development of self-concept and self-worth (Denham & Brown, 2010:656). Such facilitators, whether parents or teachers, should aim to acknowledge and validate the child's efforts, not only successful outcomes (Schiller, 2009:23). In addition, Bulotsky-Shearer, Dominguez and Bell (2012:422) advise that children must be provided with high-quality learning environments that are conducive to learning and social development. This implies that children's learning should be supported by well-organised routines, the consistency and predictability of which offer a safe and secure environment in which to learn and grow. Furthermore, they advise that the facilitator needs to offer high levels of emotional and learning support, which promote children's ability to engage with others and improves motivation to learn. Finally, the potential of positive affirmations to enhance self-concept and self-worth (Saltarelli, 2000:9-10) should not be overlooked in work with children. Closely linked to the skill of confidence is the skill of curiosity.

2.4.2.2 *Curiosity*

Curiosity is a significant driving force behind learning and development and is evidenced by the child's interest in her physical and social surroundings, her willingness to explore and to ask questions and a capacity to recognise and solve problems and to act with persistence and determination (Schiller, 2009:33).

Church (2006:36) explains that children, from the earliest years, use their bodies and senses, combined with a variety of developing skills, to explore the world around them. She adds that adult encouragement of such inquisitiveness is critical, as a child's natural curiosity is the greatest source of motivation for learning of all kinds. Joyful learning, she concludes, is facilitated by a child's "self-driven exploration" (Church, 2006:36). Similarly, Chak (2007:142) describes curiosity and exploration as the expression of a child's "eagerness to know" which, if nurtured, becomes an essential incentive for learning. In this way, curiosity enhances the child's willingness to participate in activities.

Tyre (2009:47) is in agreement with the above views, and states that curiosity is one of the most important prerequisites for many types of learning. She refers to the work of Kashdan when stating that "curiosity leads to mindfulness" and continues by explaining that "mindfulness is the engaged, satisfied state of being one feels when absorbed in a meaningful task" (Tyre, 2009:47).

Teachers are in a unique position to foster curiosity (Tyre, 2009:47; Chak, 2007:143). Chak (2007:142) advises that adults encourage children's curiosity "by supporting them to explore, experiment, discover and find out for themselves" and Church (2006:37) suggests incorporating plenty of open-ended play into children's routines. Church (2008:36) explains that a safe and secure learning environment, where children are not afraid of being "wrong" and where mistakes are accepted as part of learning, allow children the freedom to explore, learn and express themselves.

It is important to provide a diverse array of novel materials, introduced in stages, to inspire children's play, stimulate their inventiveness and motivate their learning (Church, 2006:41). However, it is not only the materials, or even the activities, that enhance children's desire to learn, but also the way in which these are implemented

and the attitude of the facilitator that promotes a child's desire to learn (Church, 2006:37). Thus, a learning environment that encourages creativity, exploration and collaboration encourages willingness to learn. Once an adequate level of curiosity is achieved, another quality, namely intentionality, becomes important.

2.4.2.3 Intentionality

Intentionality allows a child to formulate plans of action and successfully carry them out, and can be observed when a child demonstrates thought before action, finishes what she starts, demonstrates persistence and determination and acts with confidence (Schiller, 2009:41).

Kulikowich and Alexander (2010:724) describe intentionality as a fundamental aspect of being human; all activity arises from the "formation and enactment of intentions." They describe the individual and yet socially-mediated nature of intentionality. On the one hand, intentionality is a unique cognitive process internal to a specific individual. "However," they state, "intentions are formulated in relation and in reaction to the behaviors, goals, and plans of others and to the features of the immediate environment" (Kulikowich & Alexander, 2010:726). As such, the intentionality of a child must be considered in relation to her context and social environment.

In agreement, Tomasello, Carpenter, Call, Behne and Moll (2005:676) hold that intentionality involves a uniquely human capacity for collaboration toward collective goals and shared action plans that are socially negotiated. They refer to this concept as "shared intentionality" or "'we' intentionality" (Tomasello et al., 2005:680). They continue by stating that "interactions of this type require not only an understanding of the goals, intentions, and perceptions of other persons, but also, in addition, a motivation to share these things in interaction with others" (Tomasello et al., 2005:676). These authors further state that the skills and motivation needed to engage in such collective intentionality are inherent within the earliest stages of child development, making joint, purposeful interaction possible.

Kulikowich and Alexander (2010:726) link intentionality to perception. Because a child is, at any given moment, flooded by perceptions, incoming information needs to be limited and filtered. One way this is achieved is through the detection of patterns. Children detect patterns by surveying their physical and social environment for cues that will guide their thoughts and actions toward appropriate processes (Kulikowich & Alexander, 2010:727). As such, children need to be provided with appropriate stimuli in order to facilitate intentionality. Simultaneously, they need to develop self-control in order to resist reacting indiscriminately to all, including extraneous, stimuli.

2.4.2.4 Self-control

A child with self-control demonstrates healthy personal boundaries and is able to practise her initiative while respecting the boundaries of others (Schiller, 2009:49). This skill is evidenced through her capacity to control impulses, to delay gratification, to think before she acts, to express emotions appropriately, to follow rules and to show respect for the boundaries of others.

Son, Lee and Sung (2013:469) maintain that self-control is related to various executive functions of behavioural regulation including attention, working memory and inhibitory control. They continue by highlighting the significance of sustained attention, critical in the stage of early childhood, and describe its implication for both academic and social competence.

Schiller (2009:49) emphasises that the development of self-control takes practise. Children who tend to follow the lead of others, whether peers or adults, are deprived of opportunities to make their own choices and practise self-control. She indicates that it is critical for young children to understand the role of making appropriate choices to help them effectively regulate their behaviour (Schiller, 2009:50).

Children need to be provided with opportunities to practise self-control. Schiller (2009:55) recommends exposing children to situations where patience and waiting are required, which assists them to develop strategies for dealing with the possible discomfort. Tyre (2009:47) suggests incorporating activities aimed directly at

developing impulse control. These encourage children to exercise focus and may facilitate the development of strategies such as thinking aloud which, in turn, could assist the development of silent self-talk, an important strategy for self-regulation.

It is essential that appropriate conditions, conducive to the child's self-regulation, are provided for the child's practise of self-control. First, Schiller (2009:54-55) indicates that the facilitator must have expectations that are realistic, for example, in terms of a child's concentration span. She goes on to assert that the child must be allowed to function within clear, unambiguous boundaries created by a few, simple and mutually agreed-upon rules. Then, all such rules must be applied in a manner that is "firm, consistent and fair" (Schiller, 2009:58). Finally, the child's environment must be uncluttered, preventing over-stimulation, and the range of choices for potential alternative behaviours must be limited to facilitate the decision-making process (Schiller, 2009:58). As a child develops self-control with regard to her interaction with others, she advances her capacity for relatedness.

2.4.2.5 Relatedness

The capacity to relate to others is fundamental to all meaningful and effective interaction and for adaptive behaviour in any social setting (Schiller, 2009:59). A child exhibits this capacity through the ability to express emotions appropriately, read and respond to social cues, negotiate and resolve conflict, think before acting and to cooperate with others.

Denham and Brown (2010:657) explain that many skills are required in order for a child to be able to develop positive relationships. These skills include the ability and willingness to approach other children and initiate play interactions, begin and sustain communication, cooperate, listen, take turns and seek help. The authors also go on to describe "practicing friendship skills" which includes joining in with another child or group, negotiating social situations and acknowledging the efforts of peers and playmates. Finally, they emphasise that preschool children must learn to be assertive, diplomatic and able to resolve conflict in order to establish successful peer relations.

Skills for relating effectively with others are best learnt in “caring communities of learners” (Schiller, 2009:61-62). Such communities are characterised by warmth, support and security, which allow the members to experience a sense of belonging or identification with the group. In this safe and accepting environment, children are enabled to function collaboratively with a shared sense of responsibility and purpose. The result is a group of learners who are respectful and tolerant of one another’s differences and who stimulate shared motivation for joint exploration and discovery (Schiller, 2009:62).

Tyre (2009:47) is in agreement regarding the importance of positive group relations and emphasises the importance of trust between peers and facilitator. The facilitator models effective relatedness and earns the trust of the group by being consistent, trustworthy and committed. Trust of the facilitator makes learning more powerful. An atmosphere of trust liberates children to attend fully to the learning experience.

To help children develop the skills they need to relate to each other effectively, Schiller (2009:69) suggests implementing cooperative games and activities that require two or more children to play together. Such activities encourage participants to help each other in a joint process toward a shared goal. Schiller (2009:67) also recommends heightening children’s awareness of vocal and visual social cues, which aid them in understanding and appropriately responding to situations. For example, helping them to practise interpreting vocal tone, facial expression and body posture makes the social world less confusing for the young child. Furthermore, such awareness and understanding enhances the child’s capacity for communication.

2.4.2.6 Capacity to communicate

A child able to communicate effectively can express herself and make her needs, desires and intentions understood, engaging with others in “meaningful dialogue” (Schiller, 2009:71). A child demonstrates capacity for communication by effectively expressing herself, requesting assistance when needed, expressing her emotions appropriately, participating in group activities, reading and responding to social cues, using words to resolve conflict, answering questions addressed to her, volunteering

input during group discussions and greeting peers and adults appropriately (Schiller, 2009:71).

Meece, Rivers and Wingate (2009:2) assert that the social environment in which people interact is created by their communication with one another. Communication sets the socio-emotional tone of social settings. Firstly, these authors highlight the role that mutual greeting plays in making each child feel worthy and welcome. Each child should be greeted individually, by name, in a manner that ensures she is the recipient of full attention for a few moments. This sets the tone for effective communication as participants feel valued. The same authors explain that adults can promote effective expression by being fully engaged with the child, interacting with the child on her level. Schiller (2009:71-72, 75) highlights the importance of being “fully present”, attending completely to the child and listening to her with all of one’s senses.

The recognition and appropriate expression of emotions is an important component of communication. Tyre (2009:47) affirms the importance of a child being able to name feelings, understand them and express them in suitable ways. Schiller (2009:69-70) concurs, indicating the importance of a child’s basic emotional vocabulary to express her emotions. She also advises that children are taught the nonverbal social cues (for example, facial expressions and body posture) that can help in effectively conveying emotional states (Schiller, 2009:67). Furthermore, Schiller implies the two-way nature of emotional expression: children must be able to express their own emotions as well as able to recognise the emotions of others. She further comments that they should be able to accurately interpret nonverbal cues. Similarly, Denham and Brown (2010:656-657) describe the importance of children being able to use emotional cues to understand each other’s behaviour, as these signals contain essential interpersonal information to help guide interaction. Interaction informed by relevant interpersonal cues and signals has a better chance of being characterised by cooperativeness.

2.4.2.7 Cooperativeness

Cooperative children are able to work willingly and effectively with others toward shared objectives. They evidence this ability by sharing, taking-turns, joint problem-solving, relating to the perspectives, interests and intentions of others, reading and responding to social cues and joint conflict resolution (Schiller, 2009:80).

Children begin to play cooperatively during their third year of life; before this, they engage mostly in solitary and parallel play (Schiller, 2009:81). As they get older, children's play becomes increasingly coordinated and purposeful and peer interaction begins to require more complex negotiation. Denham and Brown (2010:657) emphasise the role of decision making in early childhood interactions:

Responsible decision making assumes importance as the everyday social interactions of preschoolers continue to increase in frequency and complexity. Young children must learn to solve social problems — to analyze social situations and identify problems, set prosocial goals, and determine effective ways to solve differences that arise between them and their peers.

It is important that children have the opportunity to practise this form of interaction with their peers, as they cannot learn to engage in cooperative behaviour sufficiently from interacting only with adults (Schiller, 2009:81). The imbalance of power and social experience in the adult-child relationship prevents the child from practicing on equal terms with a partner. Children require the moment-by-moment feedback provided during interactions with their equals to hone the skills of cooperation.

Schiller (2009:83-84) suggests facilitating games that require children's cooperative effort. These games place the children on the same team, where harmonious action will lead to a successful process and outcome. Finlinson, Berghout Austin and Pfister (2000:30) affirm that such games provide children with the opportunity to practise prosocial behaviour as they are based on acceptance and involvement in the group and explain that "since the goal structure of cooperative games is based on mutual interdependence, cooperative games give practice in encouraging and helping others." Church (2007:38) concurs, asserting that cooperative games remove the fear of failure or "losing" (as in more competitive games), and allow the participants to focus on practicing prosocial skills such as sharing, taking turns and listening. She

goes on to state that young children are in the process of developing such skills, and are not yet ready to engage competitively.

In support of the above, Zan and Hildebrandt (2010:407) found that cooperative games enhanced children's understanding of interpersonal processes and facilitated more developmentally advanced interaction, specifically with regard to increased reciprocity. These authors hypothesise that such games promote children's capacity for perspective taking, and thus enhance the quality of their shared experience and negotiations. Music activities have the potential to enhance many of the above-mentioned social skills, as will be discussed in the following section.

2.5 MUSIC TO ENHANCE SOCIAL FUNCTIONING

Participation in music activities has been widely noted for its potential to foster the emotional and social development of children, promoting the acquisition of both self-regulatory and communicative skills (Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 2006; Kalani, 2005; Stone, 2005; Kalani, 2004; Isbell & Raines, 2003; Thorsen, 2002; Pavlicevic, 2001; Hughes, 1999; Skeef, 1999; Young & Glover, 1998; Clark, 1997; Kalandyk, 1996; Greig, 1994). Music is widely accepted as an exceptionally effective socialising agent (Elefant, 2010:37; Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 2006:21-22; Isbell & Raines, 2003:147; Hughes, 1999:202-203; Tarnowski, 1999:28). This is highlighted by Campbell and Scott-Kassner (2006:21) who recommend music as the ideal means of introducing youngsters into the society and culture in which they are immersed. The profound connection between music and children's social development, both as individuals and as members of society, is recognised by Ritblatt et al. (2013:259). These authors remark upon the centrality of musical experiences within the infant's earliest interactions with her family and then in other interactions throughout her life. They explain that before infants learn to use the spoken word, they are more rhythmically responsive to music than to speech. They hypothesise that children may have deep rooted connections to music which may contribute to socialisation, over and above the role played by language.

Darrow (2011:29) states that music participation has great potential for building and supporting social competence of children in the early childhood years. She describes

music as able to promote adaptive social behaviour and social skills in a way that is natural and enjoyable. Nocker-Ribaupierre and Wolfi (2010:156-157, 159) emphasise the capacity of music activities to promote cooperation, social competence, self-regulation, emotional regulation, self-awareness, group awareness, social reflection, social flexibility, awareness of mental and affective states, validation of individuals, tolerance, conflict resolution, community feelings and integration (including cultural integration) of all participants in a group setting. Finally, Ruud (1998:31, 37) highlights the potential of active music participation to promote self-expression by metaphorically conveying aspects of the self and Oaklander (2006:27-28) affirms the value of musical “self-statements” to do the same.

Nocker-Ribaupierre and Wolfi (2010:155-156) emphasise the capacity of music to improve integration and reduce levels of social exclusion. This may, in part, be due to the inherent capacity of music activities to provide opportunities for meaningful participation, allowing each individual to participate at her own level and in a manner that is comfortable for her (Greig, 1994:13). Hughes (1999:202) refers to the belief of Hartley, Frank and Goldenson (1994) who state that the most significant social contribution of music concerns children who have been victims of social rejection or neglect. These authors value music-related activities for their capacity to help include such children (who are frequently either aggressive and disruptive or timid and anxious) into the peer group. This view is supported by Hirt-Mannheimer (1995:39) who also highlights that music participation is especially beneficial to special-needs learners and other children who experience difficulty interacting with others. She claims that music effectively provides such children with a bridge, a form of expression, breaking their isolation and connecting them with other children and important adults.

Music participation may be especially relevant when working with children in the early years of development (under the age of seven years), as suggested by studies in early childhood development (ECD). Music activities can be designed specifically according to the developmental level of children, making this a child-appropriate form of learning. Children in early childhood learn through experience (Berk, 2013:251) instead of verbal methods of teaching, and benefit from a variety of activities that promote exploration.

Darrow (2011:28) states that strategic music participation may be especially well-aligned with the principles and objectives of ECD, which include the building and supporting of social competence. Similarly, well-designed sessions of group music activities would inherently satisfy the recommendations for optimal ECD as outlined by Hester et al. (2004:7-8). They state that such intervention must, amongst other things, provide a positive environment conducive to learning, offer structure and predictability and facilitate positive behaviour, prosocial interactions and effective communication (Hester et al., 2004:7-8). The provision of group music-based sessions also has a good fit with the criteria for ECD suggested by Knitzer (2002:3) in that it actively promotes the socio-emotional adaptation of children, is developmentally appropriate, is relationship-based, can be culturally relevant and sensitive, can be integrated within an existing ECD service and can be geared toward clear learning outcomes relating to school-readiness (in the case of the current study, social competence).

Group music sessions represent a safe and supportive environment for children to develop social competencies. Such sessions have the potential to facilitate many social processes such as following, leading, imitating, taking turns, sharing and other forms of reciprocal interaction and intersubjectivity (Wigram et al., 2002:171, 184-186). Darrow (2011:29) emphasises that children learn socially appropriate behaviour in a manner that is spontaneous, enjoyable, and “built into” the actual activities and structure of the sessions. Socialisation groups, using music as primary medium, could fulfill this purpose.

2.6 MUSIC-BASED SOCIALISATION GROUPS

Erikson recommended the provision of appropriate experiences to support children’s development of social skills and competence (Meyer et al., 2003:210). The group setting provides an ideal context for children to engage in adaptive interactions and hone their social skills.

2.6.1 The value of group work

The group is described by Corey and Corey (2006, in Thompson & Henderson, 2007:510) as a “natural laboratory” that is capable of providing children with reality-based interaction and feedback from peers, and thus the opportunity to learn new relationship skills. As a microcosm of society, groups afford ideal settings to practise new behaviours and reality-test interactions with others (White & Flynt, 1999:338). The value of groups for the learning of social skills is supported by Oaklander (2006:288), who asserts that the group is “a place for the child to become aware of how he interacts with other children, to learn to take responsibility for what he does, and to experiment with new behaviours.” The aim of group work involves the child’s transferring the skills learned within the group to settings outside of the group, and the maintenance of such skills upon completion of a group work programme (Geldard & Geldard, 2001:11). The benefits of group music participation, especially with regard to social functioning, may be ideally harnessed within the setting of a socialisation group.

2.6.2 Types of groups

Socialisation groups are one type of treatment group according to the typology outlined by Toseland and Rivas (2012:21-22). According to this model, treatment groups are designed to be supportive, educational, growth-orientated, therapeutic, social or geared toward self-help, or, as is frequently the case, some combination of the above (Toseland & Rivas, 2012:20). Socialisation groups “feature a learning-through-doing approach in which members improve their interpersonal skills by participating in program activities” through which they “form meaningful relationships and learn social skills ... without the need for direct, verbal communication” (Toseland & Rivas, 2012:26). Socialisation groups encourage active participation based on activities and nonverbal interaction, which is the preferred means of working with young children. As such, music activities, facilitating nonverbal forms of interaction, fit well with the essential practice of the socialisation group.

2.6.3 Stages in the group work process

The group work facilitator needs to consider the different developmental stages of the group, which may be linear, cyclical or indistinct (Becker, 2005:41). Interactions between the group members change throughout the stages of the group (Thompson & Henderson, 2007:521), a factor which needs to be considered with regard to the planning of the group. As an example, Geldard and Geldard (2001:65) explain that the first session should include activities that target the joining process, while the last session should focus on issues of separation.

Group processes, such as group relationships and group dynamics, are influenced by the stage of development of the group. Tuckman (1995), as referenced by Zastrow (2012:19) and Geldard and Geldard (2001:105), indicates five stages for the development of a group, namely the forming, storming, norming, performing and termination (or mourning) stages. During the forming stage, members are often unsure about what to expect and do not feel secure within the group; thus, the primary goal would be to develop a sense of safety, trust and belonging, allowing members to feel comfortable in the group (Toseland & Rivas, 2012:198-199; Geldard & Geldard, 2001:106). The storming phase is considered to be the phase in which group members test boundaries and limits with regard to one another and the facilitator (Thompson & Henderson, 2007:522). The norming phase is characterised by a greater sense of group cohesion as members begin to settle into the group (Geldard & Geldard, 2001:108). This leads to an enhanced sense of belonging and “we-ness” (Becker, 2005:39). Group participants then enter the stage of performing, which, as part of the middle stage of the group process, is focused on working towards goals and objectives (Toseland & Rivas, 2012:267). Finally, the group must negotiate the termination stage. While this can be a challenging experience for both group members and facilitator, a well-managed process of termination could contribute to positive feelings regarding the termination process (Toseland & Rivas, 2012:412; Geldard & Geldard, 2001:109).

2.6.4 Structuring of the group and of group sessions

An activity-based music group, aimed at enhancing the social skills of preschool children, lends itself to a structured group, planned according to a specific programme. Due to the structured content, a closed-ended group where the group has a pre-determined number of sessions and where members join at the same time (Geldard & Geldard, 2001:23) would be most suitable. Because of their constant membership and specific timeframe, close-ended groups are seen to function more effectively (Zastrow, 2012:13).

A more structured or topic-specific group, such as the activity-based music group employed in the current research, tends to function more effectively if the group participants have similar needs and similar levels of skills and capabilities (Geldard & Geldard, 2001:24, 45). It is thus advisable that, for a structured group with the focus on peer socialisation of its members, each child should be on a developmental level appropriate for that goal (O'Connor, 1999:113). Furthermore, regarding groups for younger children, it is preferable that the age differences between group members should not exceed one or two years (Geldard & Geldard, 2001:45). With younger children, a small group size is preferable, in order to ensure individualised attention, closer interaction and enhanced group cohesion (Toseland & Rivas, 2012:177-178; Geldard & Geldard, 2001:55). As children around the ages of five and six years (the age group of participants in the current study) usually have a short attention span, the recommended group size is between three or four members (Thompson & Henderson, 2007:521).

A group work programme is necessarily planned in such a way that it takes into account the needs and developmental level of participants (Geldard & Geldard, 2001:45). Planned activities should be age appropriate and capable of providing participants with opportunities to practise the relevant behaviours (Toseland & Rivas, 2012:242). In socialisation groups, programme activities can provide opportunities for nonverbal interaction while affording the facilitator valuable opportunities for assessing the behaviour of participants (Toseland & Rivas, 2012:241).

Each session of group work should be planned and organised around clear goals and should include a variety of activities to maintain the children's interest (Geldard & Geldard, 2001:66). Overall, Gilbert (2003) in Thompson and Henderson

(2007:524) suggests a particular structure for group work sessions. An example may include an opening activity, an exercise related to the topic or purpose of the group work and a closing activity. Throughout the process, the group worker will facilitate the group work process through “giving directions and instructions, introducing and organising activities, facilitating discussion, giving support, teaching and giving advice, modelling and dealing with exits from the group” utilising counselling skills such as observation, active listening, giving feedback, use of questions and confrontation (Geldard & Geldard, 2001:118, 127). Depending on the programme activities and the developmental level of the group members, facilitation of socialisation groups can be either directive or non-directive in order to attain optimal participation by the group members (Toseland & Rivas, 2012:26). As the group can be regarded as a small, self-contained social setting in which learning can take place (Oaklander, 2006:175), the principles of the Vygotskian sociocultural theory of cognitive development and learning are seen as applicable within the setting of a music-based socialisation group.

2.7 VYGOTSKY’S PRINCIPLES AS RELATED TO LEARNING

Vygotsky’s ideas regarding cognitive development and learning have recently received growing recognition in the context of increasingly multicultural societies in many parts of the world (Essa, 2011:139). Due to his appreciation of the impact of historical, cultural and social factors upon children’s cognitive development and learning, his theories have gained recognition and application within the fields of multicultural child development and education.

Some of the theoretical tenets of Vygotsky’s theory were described in Chapter 1 as the theoretical framework for the study (point 1.3). The current study aimed to understand children’s social functioning in light of Vygotskian principles. Social behaviour is learned, and it is learned in a social context involving peers, teachers and other adults. As such, Vygotskian principles of cognitive development such as scaffolding, guided participation and collaboration are considered relevant to the music-based socialisation groups implemented as part of the study.

Before continuing, a brief discussion of the application of the following Vygotskian principles of cognitive development and learning is in order: the zone of proximal development (ZPD), intersubjectivity, scaffolding, guided participation and cooperative learning.

2.7.1 Zone of proximal development

Vygotskian theory holds that learning occurs within a child's zone of proximal development (ZPD). Most basically, facilitating a child's learning within her ZPD requires one to structure experiences so that an activity, which is slightly too difficult for a child to complete on her own, is within her reach given suitable guidance (Berk, 2013:268; Essa, 2011:139). However, it is important to note that the zone is not some pre-existing space that the teacher simply has to locate and then exploit. Rather, it is created, moment by moment, through special, collaborative interaction between the adult and child (Scrimsher & Tudge, 2003:300). Furthermore, the concept of the ZPD is not confined to mental development only; Vygotsky hinted that other aspects of a child's personality also develop within proximal zones which can be discovered through sensitive collaboration (Zaretskii, 2009:75, 77, 79, 92). In order for social interaction to support learning, it must be characterised by two qualities, namely intersubjectivity and scaffolding (Berk, 2013:268).

2.7.2 Intersubjectivity

Intersubjectivity describes a social process wherein a child and an adult or more competent peer begin at two different levels of functioning regarding the same phenomenon (Berk, 2013:268). Then, communication creates a common space within which the more advanced individual adapts her expression while the child strives to reach that level of functioning (Essa, 2011:139; Hendrick & Weissman, 2010:13). Ultimately, both arrive at a shared understanding. Development occurs when different minds meet and where a "... process of harmonization or coordination of the two intents of the interaction leads to a result that is interesting, unexpected, and notable from the point of view of each participant in the interaction" (Zuckerman, 2007:50).

2.7.3 Scaffolding

Scaffolding refers to the interactional support offered to a child as she gains mastery over new tasks. An educator, parent or more competent peer scaffolds the child's experience by providing support and then continuously adjusting the amount and kind of support offered (Essa, 2011:139-140; Hendrick & Weissman, 2010:13; Kearn, 2000:322). In the beginning stages of learning, more direct assistance is rendered. As appropriate, support is withdrawn so that the child takes increasing responsibility for completion and mastery of the activity (Berk, 2013:268; Essa, 2011:139-140). There is, in the metaphor of scaffolding, the danger that it is perceived as a one-sided process, in which the adult provides and controls the situation and supports/assists the passive child in her efforts (Scrimsher & Tudge, 2003:300-301). In this case, scaffolding may be reduced to methods quite opposed to Vygotsky's philosophy, such as when teachers simply encourage imitation or provide hints or leading questions rather than facilitating reflection (Zaretskii, 2009:89). However, intersubjectivity, as discussed above, is prerequisite for effective scaffolding and just as intersubjectivity is a two-way phenomenon, so is scaffolding, which requires reciprocal negotiation on the part of both child and adult (Kearn, 2000:322).

2.7.4 Guided participation

The term "guided participation" is based on Vygotskian theory and was introduced by Barbara Rogoff to broaden the concept of scaffolding (Berk, 2013:268). It is meant to account for the great deal of learning that occurs as children participate in numerous experiences where there is no explicit instruction (Berk, 2013:268).

2.7.5 Cooperative learning

The principle of cooperative learning builds upon the notion of peer collaboration, but emphasises the value of working toward a joint objective (Berk, 2013:271). Children are assisted to achieve intersubjectivity and engage in planning, problem solving and generally sharing the responsibility and ownership of activities and their outcomes (Berk, 2013:271; Essa, 2011:139). Berk (2013:271-272) explains that cooperative

learning expands the principle of the ZPD; rather than just one child collaborating with a more competent partner, one can facilitate "...multiple partners with diverse forms of expertise stimulating and encouraging one another."

All of the above principles are thus applicable to group learning. In the view of Vygotsky, play represents a significant method through which children learn, as will be discussed in the next section.

2.8 VYGOTSKY'S THEORY AND PLAY

Vygotsky's understanding of play represents a significant facet of his sociocultural theory, especially with regard to early childhood development and learning (Duncan & Tarulli, 2010:272). Vygotsky (1966:62) described play as "...the leading source of development in the preschool years." He considered it key to the formation of the ZPDs within which young children learn and established it as the leading activity of early development (Smith, 2008:217; Vygotsky, 1966:62).

Play is the avenue through which the child relates to her environment (Duncan & Tarulli, 2010:272-273). In his seminal work, *Play and its role in the mental development of the child*, Vygotsky identified two primary ways in which play serves as a leading activity: in the development of semiotic mediation and by actively assisting the child with the internalisation of social roles and rules (Duncan & Tarulli, 2010:271; Vygotsky, 1966:65, 69). The second of these is relevant to the current study and indicates that play activities provide an essential avenue for the learning of social skills. Play, as the leading activity in the early years, represents crucial preparation for school, which is the next leading activity (Duncan & Tarulli, 2010:273).

Socio-dramatic (pretend) play dominates a child's play behaviour from around the age of three until the late preschool and early school years, when games with rules gain prominence (Duncan & Tarulli, 2010:274-275; Vygotsky, 1966:65, 67). Preschool children, in the later years of early childhood, are in transition between the two types of play. Both the earlier and later forms of play are important for the child's active appropriation of social rules and roles and the organisation of society. While

outwardly the two forms of play may appear very different, both contain an element considered fundamental by Vygotsky: rules (Vygotsky, 1966:65). In the words of Vygotsky (1966:66):

Just as we were able to show ... that every imaginary situation contains rules in a concealed form, we have also succeeded in demonstrating the reverse – that every game with rules contains an imaginary situation in a concealed form. The development from an overt imaginary situation and covert rules to games with overt rules and a covert imaginary situation outlines the evolution of children’s play from one pole to the other.

Through play, the child willingly internalises the social rules that organise adaptive social behaviour, thus engaging in active appropriation of such roles and norms (Duncan & Tarulli, 2010:276). However, this is not merely a thoughtless imitation of social rules; in the words of Vygotsky (1966:66), rules found in play are “rules of self-restraint and self-determination.” In this way the child appropriates social behaviour, constructing for herself new understanding of the social world. Active participation in music is often experienced by children as play as they find it an enjoyable and natural activity (Schoeman, 1996:44).

2.9 MUSIC AS PLAY

Tarnowski (1999:27-28) offers a definition of music as play: “Musical play consists of activities that allow children to explore, improvise, and create with sound.” Bunt (1994:96) maintains that active music-making with children has much in common with play in the way that it influences and is influenced by their development. Play is essential to children’s social development as it represents the nonverbal medium through which they communicate most effectively (Blanco & Ray, 2011:235-236). Likewise, music is a dynamic and highly expressive form of nonverbal interaction (Swallow, 2002:44-45; Wigram et al., 2002:39, 169, 171-172, 183). It follows that the two mediums combined may offer the ideal setting for children to practise negotiating the intricacies of their social worlds.

Tarnowski (1999:28) confirms that amongst emotional, cognitive and physical benefits, musical play provides optimal opportunities to enhance a child’s social

competence. Hughes (1999:201) agrees that musical play is exceptionally conducive to positive participation and inclusion, adding that creative movement, often integral to such activities, enhances effective, sensitive communication and social integration (Hughes, 1999:203-205). Kalani (2004:9) used group drumming as a recreational form of music-making with the primary purpose of providing participants with fun, positive socialisation as well as personal discovery and expression. “Playing through music” he believed, promotes creativity and authenticity (Kalani, 2004:16-17) while enhancing social functioning by encouraging prosocial behaviour, problem solving, appreciation of diversity and reduction of stress (Kalani, 2005:5).

Musical play is versatile and can occur as exploratory, spontaneous “free play” (Smith, 2008:48) or can facilitate games and activities with varying degrees of structure and rules (Oaklander, 2006:211; Young & Glover, 1998:144; Schoeman, 1996:45). A further advantage of musical play is its potential to engage the child not only in solitary play, but also in interactive play with the facilitator and in group play with other children (Oaklander, 2006:219; Young & Glover, 1998:147, 162). Each type of play is significant and contributes to the child’s cognitive, affective and social development, enhancing self- and social understanding (Berk, 2013:599). Finally, in order to link the versatile nature of musical play with Vygotsky’s view of play, the following synopsis of the latter by Nicolopoulou, Barbosa de Sá, Ilgaz and Brockmeyer (2010:44) is fitting:

What is most illuminating about Vygotsky’s characterization of play is his focus on the way it necessarily fuses elements often treated as contradictory: imagination and spontaneity on the one hand, and rule-governed action on the other. Play is enjoyable, intrinsically voluntary, and at the same time an *essentially* rule-governed activity (Italics original).

It is thus proposed that music activities can be utilised to enhance young children’s learning according to Vygotskian principles.

2.10 MUSIC ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE SOCIAL FUNCTIONING ACCORDING TO VYGOTSKIAN PRINCIPLES

There is evidence that group music sessions may be ideally suited to facilitating social processes characterised by intersubjectivity and the Vygotskian processes of

scaffolding, guided participation, cooperative learning and interactive yet individualised learning within each child's ZPD. Essentially, music activities can facilitate dynamic states of intersubjectivity. Musical interaction therapy³, for example, employs music activities to allow individuals to "tune into each other" and thus facilitates "a shared focus through the creation of a musical dialogue" (Wimporly & Nash, 1999:17). These processes are akin to the shared experience and common understanding described Vygotsky's concept of intersubjectivity.

Music sessions also allow children to function and learn within their ZPD. Fundamental to this type of functioning is full participation and a sense of being both challenged and adequately supported. Greig (1994:13) states that music activities enhance the opportunity for meaningful participation, by allowing individuals to participate at their own levels. An experience of success and competence helps promote self-esteem, which, he asserts, is an element central to effective learning and to emotional and social wellbeing (Greig, 1994:7). Snow and D'Amico (2010:13-14) recommend the use of drumming and percussion, very accessible forms of music-making, which facilitate challenge without frustration and can enhance initiative, responsibility, feelings of success and self-efficacy. This is characteristic of children working within their ZPD. Similarly, Stevens and Burt (1997:175, 177) emphasise the accessible nature of drumming, which renders the activity inclusive of most people and promotes an experience of positive participation and success. As a final example, Johnson (2011:249) describes how ensemble music-making allows each participant to develop within her ZPD as competence effectively "spreads" throughout the group. While he is referring to musical skills, social skills could also "spread" in such a setting. The differing levels of competence (musical or social) that exist within a group situation make it a unique learning opportunity. In such situations, less competent or experienced participants are able to reach levels of functioning beyond what they would without the presence of more competent or experienced participants (Johnson, 2011:249).

Before participants can engage socially in the manner described above (within peer-constructed ZPDs), there must be a social structure allowing for peer collaboration and cooperative learning. Johnson (2011:247) suggests that in group music-making,

³The therapy is based on early mother-child interaction (CM and IDS) which facilitates the child's developing capacity for verbal and nonverbal communication (Wimporly & Nash, 1999:17).

the traditional hierarchical structure of the typical educational setting is ideally replaced with an “interactive participant structure” in which participants “...are given the opportunity to share and develop knowledge with their peers... [leading to] ...a much more meaningful learning environment.” This author describes how such a participant structure allows for active participation, enhanced collaboration and cooperation, increased capacity to listen and pay attention and increased responsibility for one’s own learning (Johnson, 2011:248).

Finally, there is the important role of scaffolding provided by the adult facilitator. In addition to active participation of the learners, Vygotsky emphasises the importance of assisted discovery (Berk, 2013:269). Moore (2005:65) proposes that group musical experiences provide numerous opportunities for the guided development of individual learners. She goes on to explain that in the beginning of a group music learning experience, participants usually require more guidance from the facilitator, whereas in later stages they may function optimally with less or no external input.

Children’s earliest efforts at interaction and communication (verbal and nonverbal) are commonly scaffolded by musical play activities, such as play routines, songs and rhymes with actions (Wimpory & Nash, 1999:19). Music interaction therapy utilises the principle of scaffolding to enhance children’s capacity for interaction (Wimpory & Nash, 1999:18). Scaffolding (through musical processes such as imitation and turn-taking) facilitates shared attention, which validates children’s social efforts, facilitates a sense of self and other and, ultimately, leads to improved reciprocity (Wimpory & Nash, 1999:20). In a group setting, scaffolding through music activities may provide an ideal means of promoting positive group interaction.

2.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented a review of literature relevant to the current study. Early childhood was discussed as a critical period in the overall development of the child and as recognised by Chapter 6 of the Children’s Act (38 of 2005). Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development highlights the achievement of the developmental tasks involving personal agency and mastery toward the later years of the early childhood stage of development. These are also the years in which children have to acquire the

social skills needed for successful entry into the formal school system. Schiller (2009) identified seven skills necessary for school entry which form the framework for identifying the social skills relevant to the current study.

Music participation is regarded as exceptionally effective for developing social competence, and the socialisation group provides an appropriate setting for such participation. Music-based socialisation groups present opportunities for facilitating a learning process based on principles of learning as identified in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of learning. This theory takes into account the social context of learning, making it relevant to the learning of social skills, which is by nature interactive. Music as play provides an age-appropriate way in which children can learn social skills.

The literature presented in Chapter 2 was considered in the compilation of a programme for the music-based socialisation groups that would be used in the study. The programme will be outlined in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3

MUSIC PROGRAMME FOR A MUSIC-BASED GROUP FOR CHILDREN IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the music programme that was developed for the purposes of this study. It outlines the music-based socialisation sessions which formed the core of the study. The ten music-based sessions and the respective activities in each are briefly described according to content (i.e. the concrete steps involved) and process (the underlying social interactions). First, however, there is a brief discussion regarding the theoretical underpinnings of the intervention. Links are drawn between the literature review and the group music-based sessions as this literature was consulted during the creation of the programme.

The group music sessions in this study were orientated toward socialisation as they employed the “learning-through-doing approach” mentioned in section 2.6 (Music based socialisation groups). The aim of the study was to enhance the children’s social skills through their participation in the programme activities. The music activities were deemed appropriate as they facilitated the formation of social relationships in which social competence could be exercised “without the need for direct, verbal communication” (Toseland & Rivas, 2012:26). Group music sessions suggested a relevant intervention with the purposes and processes of the socialisation group, as they encourage process-orientated, experiential learning based on activities and nonverbal interaction, which is optimal when working with young children (Toseland & Rivas, 2012:26). Furthermore, children typically experience music activities as a form of play, which is the primary avenue of socialisation in children (Duncan & Tarulli, 2010:275-276).

3.2 PLANNING OF THE SESSIONS

In the planning of the sessions, a number of guidelines were taken into account. These were based on Vygotsky's principles of learning, general principles for the learning of social skills and guidelines for social group work. A number of examples are discussed below.

Firstly, the music activities were planned according to Vygotskian principles for teaching and learning. Vygotsky identified play as one of the most important ways in which children develop social competence (Duncan & Tarulli, 2010:271; Vygotsky, 1966:62). The music-based sessions were compiled to be consistent with a Vygotskian view of play in which rules are essential, both in the younger child's imaginative play and in the later "games with rules." The music activities were designed to convey clear and simple rules which could guide the children's musical and social interaction. These rules were informed by the social roles inherent in various musical and social situations. For example, in situations requiring impulse control (a typical classroom role for a young child), the rule may be to play along when music plays and to stop immediately when the music stops.

Also in accordance with Vygotsky's theory, music activities were informed by the principle of scaffolding. Activities would provide opportunities for the facilitator to guide the participants to reach higher levels of social functioning and to adjust the guidance according to the needs of such participants (Berk, 2013:268; Essa, 2011:139-140). Further, numerous opportunities for guided participation could be presented through activities with no explicit instruction (Berk, 2013:268). Overall, a state of intersubjectivity could be facilitated by means of harmonisation of activities between the facilitator and the participants as well as the participants amongst themselves (Zuckerman, 2007:15).

Nicolopoulou et al. (2010:45) explain that for play to optimally facilitate learning and development, it must be meaningfully integrated into the learning experience, occurring within "rule-structured frameworks" that simultaneously facilitate the activity and promote development. The music activities would provide such frameworks within which play and learning could be facilitated.

Secondly, within the said framework, activities were developed in accordance with general principles for the teaching and learning of social skills. In accordance with the suggestion of Nicolopoulou et al. (2010:45) mentioned above, the activities included in the programme were planned to integrate play with a variety of learning opportunities, while offering facilitative, yet not overly restrictive, rules of engagement. Furthermore, the activities were designed to be fun and motivating, which, according to the above authors, is essential to the success of such activities. Similarly, Church (2006:36) recommends that play/learning activities be joyful experiences. Nicolopoulou et al. (2010:45) provide an apt summary of how play can best facilitate learning and development: “Ideally, such [play] practices should also be structured in ways that allow children to enter into the activity voluntarily and according to their own rhythm, inclination, and abilities.” The exceptionally motivating and inclusive nature of music activities, which allows each child to participate in a way most comfortable for her, supports this ideal.

Activities were designed to enhance the seven social skills included in the model of Schiller (2009). For example, such activities were planned to facilitate shared actions and plans (Tomasello et al., 2005:680), turn-taking and cooperation (Denham & Brown, 2010:657), waiting and patience (Schiller, 2009:55; Tyre, 2009:47), responding to vocal and social cues (Schiller, 2009:69) and greeting of facilitator and other participants (Meece et al., 2009:20). The sessions were designed to promote predictability, safety and support (Bulotsky-Shearer et al., 2012:422), aspects also essential for group work.

Thirdly, sessions were planned according to the stages of group work. For example, earlier sessions focused more on joining activities and less on cooperative activities, while the middle stages of the group work process focused more on interactive learning (Toseland & Rivas, 2012:267; Geldard & Geldard, 2001:65). Activities were structured and a small group size was opted for in line with the goal of the study and the ages of participants (Toseland & Rivas, 2012:177-178; Thompson & Henderson, 2007:521; Geldard & Geldard, 2001:24, 45). Accordingly, each session was planned to include a beginning, a middle/working and an end phase. Activities were age-appropriate and nonverbal in nature to allow for young children’s capacity and

preferred manner of learning (Toseland & Rivas, 2012:242; Geldard & Geldard, 2001:24, 45, 66).

To summarise, the programme was presented in ten weekly sessions, each session structured according to a particular sequence – an opening ritual, a number of activities focusing on key social skills and a closing ritual. Activities in earlier sessions focused on simple forms of cooperation such as sharing, waiting and taking turns, while later exercises required more active forms of collaboration among the participants. In addition, earlier activities were more structured by the facilitator, whereas later activities allowed the participants increased freedom to improvise musically and socially. The structured nature of the groups helped ensure that they would provide the necessary experiences in order for the objectives of the groups to be met (Geldard & Geldard, 2001:22). The use of group structure, or “planned, systematic, time-limited interventions and program activities” aided the provision of relevant content (Toseland & Rivas, 2012:271).

In the following paragraphs, the programme and activities are discussed. After the description of each activity, particular social skills to be developed, according to the model of Schiller (2009), are listed. While various other social skills may also be enhanced by an activity, only those which were specifically targeted are noted. Then, Vygotskian principles underlying the activity are listed (whether intersubjectivity, scaffolding, guided participation and/or cooperative learning; it is assumed that all activities were facilitated in such a way that they fell within the children’s ZPD). Only the most salient principles are noted, although several may be applicable to any given activity.

3.3 SESSION ONE

3.3.1 Ritual opening: Welcome!

Each session opens with a welcoming ritual. The same welcoming procedure as the one described here is used for this session and all sessions for the remainder of the

programme. First, there is a general greeting song (“The more we get together”⁴) which the group and facilitator sing to one another, accompanied by a recording of the song. Next, the group sings a short song to each member to welcome her individually. This song is personalised by including the name of the participant being sung to. Below is an example of how such a song may be sung:

Hel-lo, Than-do,
Hel-lo, Than-do,
Hel-lo, Than-do,
And how are you?

“Thando” then has the opportunity to tell the group how she is feeling, before the group moves on to welcome the next child.

Social skills: Relatedness; capacity to communicate; confidence.

Vygotskian principles: Intersubjectivity; guided participation.

3.3.2 The name game

The “name game” is intended for the children to introduce themselves and to gain a sense of ownership of and belonging to the group. The facilitator also learns the names of each child. The children each take a turn to say their names out loud and to explore the rhythmic patterns which result from the number of syllables and placement of accents therein. The group learns these rhythmic motives by clapping them several times. Finally, the emerging patterns are played in a looping fashion using maracas or shakers while the children rhythmically sing or chant each name.

Social skills: Relatedness; capacity to communicate; confidence.

Vygotskian principles: Intersubjectivity; guided participation.

⁴ The songs used in the music programme are popular children’s songs and are freely accessible in various compilations of children’s music.

3.3.3 “Rhythmasize”⁵ your name

In this activity, the each child’s name is incorporated into a short phrase in order to create more interesting and nuanced rhythms. These phrases are then sung and played as a chant. First, the group discusses how the way in which somebody’s name is said contains a lot of meaning and may express certain feelings. Depending on *how* one says a person’s name, one can tell whether that person is, for example, calling, looking for, angry with, cheering on, or glad or surprised to see someone. Phrases with typical rhythms and expressive vocal inflections are useful, such as the common “sing-song” expressions that often accompany children’s play, for example, “Come out, come out wherever you are!” Kalani (2005:36-37) suggests the following kinds of phrases:

“Ja...-bu..., where are... you? Ja...- bu..., where are... you?”

“Si-pho, come play! Si-pho, come play!”

“Me-ki, Ma-le-ba. Me-ki, Ma-le-ba.” (the use of name and surname)

“Lu-cy, oh Lu-cy! Lu-cy, oh Lu-cy!”

“Ti-ny, hey Tiny! Ti-ny, hey Tiny!”

“Go, Than-di go! Go, Than-di go!”

“No, no, Tse-pho! No, no, Tse-pho!”

“Hur-ray... for Ja-dy! Hur-ray... for Ja-dy!”

Next, the group is invited to think of a short sentence stating something positive about each member, which they then chant and play several times.

Social skills: Relatedness; capacity to communicate.

Vygotskian principles: Intersubjectivity; guided participation.

⁵ This word, used in the original text by Kalani (2005:36), refers to speaking in rhythm, so that words and phrases are rhythmically articulated in accordance with factors such as the number of syllables, strong and weak beats and tempo.

3.3.4 “Ring-a-ring-a-roses”

The children play this well-known singing game along with the soundtrack as a scaffold to the activity. While this game is European in origin, it has simple rules and melodic and harmonic characteristics making it suitable for young children.

Basically, the children walk hand-in-hand in a circle as they sing the song. In the backtrack used for the current programme, there is an instrumental interlude in between each sung verse. The children change direction during transitions between sections; this encourages collaboration as they have to concentrate upon moving together in the same direction. At the end of each vocal section, they “All fall down!” at the same time.

Social skills: Relatedness; cooperativeness.

Vygotskian principles: Intersubjectivity; cooperative learning; scaffolding.

3.3.5 Greeting song

To close each session, the members sing to one another the same greeting song as the one used to open the session (“The more we get together”). This enhances the group’s sense of social and temporal boundaries. The personalised “goodbye” song is also sung to each child, for example:

Good-bye, Than-do,

Good-bye, Than-do,

Good-bye, Than-do,

We all had fun!

Social skills: Relatedness; capacity to communicate.

Vygotskian principles: Intersubjectivity; guided participation.

3.4 SESSION TWO

3.4.1 Ritual opening: Welcome!

3.4.2 The name game (revision)

3.4.3 Have a ball

This activity is based on a game created by Kalani (2005:28-29). It encourages self-statements in a social and rhythmic setting. The children sit in a circle with their legs crossed, patting their knees to a steady beat. A ball is passed between them. When a child has possession of the ball, she has the chance to say something positive about herself. The statement will be made rhythmically and within the steady pulse provided by the rest of the group. Each child can have one or more turns.

Social skills: Relatedness; capacity to communicate; cooperativeness; confidence.

Vygotskian principles: Intersubjectivity; guided participation.

3.4.4 Meet the instruments

This activity introduces various musical instruments and different ways of playing them. A bag is filled with an assortment of small percussion instruments and each child gets a turn to close her eyes, put her hand into the bag and pull out an instrument. She is invited to play it for the group where after there is a discussion regarding the quality of the sound produced (for example, whether it is loud or soft, high or low pitched, or “tinkling” “banging” or “shaking”). When each child has an instrument, the group is guided in an exploration of dynamics, where they experience playing very softly and very loudly, with periods of silence in between. Finally, the group provides a rhythmic accompaniment for a few excerpts of recorded music. A signal, such as the facilitator calling out “share!” or “pass on!” indicates that each member must pass her instrument to the child on her left (or right). This gives each

child the chance to explore all of the different shapes, sounds and playing techniques available.

Social skill: Curiosity; cooperativeness.

Vygotskian principles: Intersubjectivity; cooperative learning.

3.4.5 Learning a song

As a final activity, the group is taught a song. It should be melodically and harmonically interesting, appropriately challenging, and yet within their capability of grasping a good deal of it within one practice session. They are taught the song through a simple process of scaffolding. First, they are taught line by line; the facilitator sings one line, they repeat it after her, she sings the next line, they repeat it, and so on throughout the song. Next, the facilitator sings only the first half of each line, which they complete. She may then provide only the first word of each line and guide them as they attempt to complete it. Eventually, she provides one line and invites them to respond with the second line, and so forth. In this way, her direct support is gradually removed as they gain independent mastery of the song.

Social skills: Intentionality; confidence; cooperativeness.

Vygotskian principles: Intersubjectivity; scaffolding.

3.4.6 Greeting song: Goodbye

3.5 SESSION THREE

3.5.1 Ritual opening: Welcome!

3.5.2 Move to music (with the theme of “transportation”)

This activity facilitates movement to music. The music structures and scaffolds the children’s movements while still allowing for creativity on their part. The movement occurs within pairs or groups, encouraging them to work cooperatively. Possible movements and actions are described below.

- “Row, row, row your boat”

The children form pairs, sit cross-legged – opposite to each other – and hold hands. They experiment with different “rowing” movements, such as swinging their arms side to side or leaning backwards and forwards.

- “Tchoo-tchoo”

This is a song for the children to make a “train” in the typical style of “follow-the-leader.” They may want to hold onto the elbows or shoulders of the child in front of them, or they could simply all make circular movements with their arms to indicate the levers of the wheels. Each child has a turn at being the leader.

- “The marching song”

The children can line up in single file and march behind one another. A strong, steady marching beat will guide them into the typical “left-right-left-right” marching step. Each child can have a turn to lead.

- “The airplane song”

Here the children explore “gliding,” “flying” or “flapping” movements, individually or holding hands in pairs or in a group.

Social skill: Relatedness; cooperativeness; curiosity.

Vygotskian principles: Intersubjectivity; cooperative learning.

3.5.3 Loud and soft, scaffolded by music

In this activity, the children are introduced to the music element of dynamics, or loud and soft playing. Excerpts of loud and soft music are played and the group is encouraged to match their playing with the volume of the music and with each other. In order for the resulting loud and soft music to be effective, all the children need to play together according to the same dynamic.

Social skill: Cooperativeness; intentionality; self-control.

Vygotskian principles: Intersubjectivity; scaffolding.

3.5.4 Review of the song learned in previous session

3.5.5 Greeting song: Goodbye

3.6 SESSION FOUR

3.6.1 Ritual opening: Welcome!

3.6.2 Listen up!

This game is similar in principle to the popular children's game "musical chairs" and is intended to enhance impulse control. The group plays along to a piece of pre-recorded music containing random periods of silence. When the music stops suddenly and unexpectedly, they promptly stop and wait for the music to continue before they resume playing. During the pauses, sustained attention is encouraged as the children anticipate the music's return. This activity enhances understanding of sound and silence, and the children all need to work together in order the desired effect of contrast. It is also intended to improve concentration, listening and impulse

control, skills which are fundamental to the children's ability to work together as a group.

For the first round, the group sits in a circle and proceeds as described above. For the second round, they are allowed to move around or dance, while playing their instruments, and must suddenly "Freeze!" whenever the music stops.

Social skill: Self-control; intentionality; cooperativeness.

Vygotskian principles: Intersubjectivity; guided participation.

3.6.3 Finding the group's heartbeat

- Step and clap

The children stand in a circle and step to a steady pulse. Once they have internalised the beat, they clap rhythmically as they continue to step in time. The group is allowed to fall in sync with each other, and to experience the feeling of being in rhythmic unison for a few moments. Claves are handed out, and the group continues to step, play and march simultaneously. A piece of recorded music with a clear beat may be provided to scaffold their joint rhythm.

- "Hickory dickory dock" with claves

Seated back in a circle, there is a short discussion of the clock; that device which keeps time, keeps people on time, and has a steady beat. The group then plays along to "Hickory dickory dock." The version used in the current research has the sound of a clock ticking loudly throughout, making it easy for the children to follow. The Afrikaans children's song "Wekker" can be used next in a similar way, and gives the children a quicker beat to accompany.

Social skill: Relatedness; intentionality; cooperativeness.

Vygotskian principles: Intersubjectivity; cooperative learning; scaffolding.

3.6.4 Music and movement (with the theme of “transportation”) (revision)

3.6.5 Greeting song: Goodbye

3.7 SESSION FIVE

3.7.1 Ritual opening: Welcome!

3.7.2 Loud and soft: Listen, move and play

In the current research, the songs used for this activity were “John Jacob Jingleheimer Schmidt” and “Rocka my soul”. These two songs have loud and soft sections, and the dynamics change with transitions between verses and choruses. However, any song containing a steady beat and alternating loud and soft sections can be used for this activity. During loud sections, the children are invited to make large, sweeping movements while playing their instruments loudly; during soft sections, they crouch down and play quietly. They need to listen attentively and move/play collectively in order to achieve the desired effect of contrast.

Social skill: Intentionality; self-control.

Vygotskian principles: Scaffolding; guided participation.

3.7.3 Circle dance: Up and down – listen and move

This activity begins with a brief discussion of the concepts “up” and “down”, “high” and “low” and “top” and “bottom”. The examples used to illustrate the concepts are playground equipment including the slide, swings and see-saw. With all the children seated in a circle, they are given a large fabric circle about 1.5 meters in diameter and made from a light, gauze-like fabric. The group practises making the large “up”

and “down” motions by lifting it up and waving it into the air, then lowering it in a large sweeping movement. Their movements should be as coordinated as possible.

Next, the pre-recorded song is introduced, which provides structure and guidance for the dance through its text, phrasing and form. In the current study, the song used was “The playground at the park.” (With slight adaptation, any song containing the “up and down” theme can be used, for example, “Eensy weensy spider”, “Jack and Jill” or “The grand old Duke of York”.) The chorus of “The playground at the park” is repeated three times and centres around the lines “up on the swing, and down on the swing”, “up on the slide, and down on the slide” and “up on the see-saw, and down on the see-saw”, which effectively support the group’s collaborative movements. Three verses separate the choruses; they possess distinct rhythmic and melodic characteristics, making the transitions easy to recognise. Movements for the verses change from the “up” and “down” gestures to sideways skipping around in a circle. The children continue to hold onto the fabric circle, waving it gently as they skip.

Social skill: Relatedness; cooperativeness; intentionality; curiosity.

Vygotskian principles: intersubjectivity; cooperative learning.

3.7.4 Finding the group’s heartbeat (revision)

3.7.5 Greeting: Goodbye

3.8 SESSION SIX

3.8.1 Opening ritual: Welcome!

3.8.2 Fast and slow: First move, then play, then scaffold with music

In this activity, the group first experiments with fast and slow movements. These may be connected to feeling states, such as feeling tired, lethargic, lazy, sick or sad; or awake, lively, healthy or excited. The facilitator encourages them to explore different forms of expressive movement centering around the themes “fast” and “slow”.

Next, the children choose instruments and combine fast and slow playing with the relevant movements. Finally, the group accompanies several tracks of fast and slow music by playing along at an appropriate tempo.

Social skill: Self-control; capacity to communicate; cooperativeness.

Vygotskian principles: Intersubjectivity; scaffolding.

3.8.3 Introduction to call and response

The well-known game of “Simon says” is ideal for introducing the concept of call and response to children. A simplified version is used, where the facilitator states “Simon says” each time she introduces an action (for example, “stamp your feet” or “clap your hands”), and the participants respond each time by imitating that action. A variety of movements, gestures and body percussion are used. Eventually, emphasis is placed on body percussion such as clapping, patting and stamping. Imitation, turn-taking, attention and memory are exercised as the facilitator gives one, two, three or four beats for the group to imitate (for example, she may clap one, two, three or four beats).

Social skill: Relatedness; capacity to communicate.

Vygotskian principles: Intersubjectivity; cooperative learning.

3.8.4 Circle dance: Up and down – listen and move (revision)

3.8.5 Greeting: Goodbye

3.9 SESSION SEVEN

3.9.1 Opening ritual: Welcome!

3.9.2 Call and response activities

- Bounce, roll, throw

This activity continues to develop the children's understanding of call-and-response interaction. It highlights the underlying social behaviours of turn-taking and imitation, while awareness, concentration and attentive listening are enhanced. These interpersonal processes are practised using ball play and rhythm. First, the children stand in a circle around the facilitator. The facilitator rolls, then bounces and then throws the ball to each child several times. The children need to return the ball to her in the same manner as they received it. For example, if she throws it to a child, the child must throw it back to her. Next, this pattern is transferred to body percussion. The facilitator faces one child at a time and provides a short, simple rhythm using clapping, patting and/or stamping. The child must then "return" the rhythm to the facilitator, imitating it as closely as possible.

Social skill: Relatedness; capacity to communicate; intentionality; cooperation.

Vygotskian principles: Intersubjectivity; guided participation.

3.9.3 Call and response song

The activities introducing call and response musical/social interaction culminate in teaching the group a traditional African call and response song. The song used in this session was *Che che koolay* (sometimes spelled Kye kye kule). This song is intended to facilitate dialogue between two musical groups (in this case, the facilitator and the children). The facilitator teaches the song by calling out each line and allowing the the group to respond by saying it back to her. Each phrase is articulated as rhythmically as possible, with appropriate variations in pitch.

Che che koolay

Facilitator: Che che koolay	Children echo: Che che koolay
Facilitator: Che che kofisa	Children echo: Che che kofisa
Facilitator: Kofisa langa	Children echo: Kofisa langa
Facilitator: Langa te lange	Children echo: Langa te lange
Facilitator: Kum ayede	Children echo: Kum ayede
Facilitator: Kum ayede Kum!	Children echo: Kum ayede Kum!

When participants are familiar with the words, they are invited to clap the rhythms while chanting the song. Finally, each child chooses an instrument and the group plays the rhythms while singing along.

Social skill: Relatedness; capacity to communicate.

Vygotskian principles: Intersubjectivity; guided participation.

3.9.4 Folk dance

This activity requires the children to form pairs. When each child has a partner, they link arms and skip first in one direction and then in the other direction (changing arms with each change in direction). A lively song with a clear beat (in this case, “The kangaroo hop”) written in regular four/four time is used. Participants are encouraged to exchange partners to enhance socialisation.

Social skill: Relatedness; cooperativeness.

Vygotskian principles: Intersubjectivity; collaboration; joint problem solving.

3.8.5 Greeting: Goodbye

3.10 SESSION EIGHT

3.10.1 Ritual opening: Welcome!

3.10.2 Movement to legato and stocatto sounds

Excerpts of legato music (with smooth, connected sounds) and stocatto music (with short, broken, detached sounds) are played. Each child has both a scarf or flag to wave around for the legato music and a set of claves to play along with the stocatto music. The children are allowed to get up and dance, matching their physical and musical expression to that of the music. The sound of all the claves “clicking” together in time or the sight and experience of all the flags being waved simultaneously usually motivates participants to act collectively.

Social skill: Intentionality; cooperativeness.

Vygotskian principles: Intersubjectivity.

3.10.3 Action song (part one: learning the song and actions)

This activity uses a well-known action song (in this case “Eensy weensy spider”) to encourage appropriate physical touch. In this session, the children just learn or review the words and actions of the song as follows on the next page:

“Eensy weensy spider”

Eensy weency spider, climbing up a spout.	Children make climbing movements with their fingers, from the ground into the air.
Down came the rain, and washed the spider out.	They make “pattering” finger movements, depicting rain falling from the sky.
Out came the sun, and dried up all the rain.	They make large sweeping movements with their arms, making an arc over their heads.
And Eensy weency spider, climbed up the spout again.	Repeat as for the first lines.

Social skill: Intentionality; self-control.

Vygotskian principles: Scaffolding; intersubjectivity.

3.10.4 Folk dance (revision)

3.10.5 Greeting: Goodbye

3.11 SESSION NINE

3.11.1 Ritual opening: Welcome!

3.11.2 Call and response (revision and development)

The group first revises what they learned the previous week, namely, the words and the rhythms of *Che che koolay*. When they are fluent in singing and playing the song with the facilitator, they are taught the movements in a similar manner. An example of a simple set of movements are as follows:

Che che koolay (echo) (shake your head)

Che che kofisa (echo) (roll your shoulders)

Kofisa langa (echo) (wave your arms in front of you)

Langa te lange (echo) (wiggle your hips)

Kum ayede (echo) (slide your feet from side to side)

Kum ayede Kum! (echo) (slide and then jump up into the air).

Social skill: Relatedness, capacity to communicate; intentionality; cooperativeness.

Vygotskian principles: Intersubjectivity; guided participation; scaffolding.

3.11.3 Emotional recognition and expression: Happy and sad

This activity begins by discussing the emotions “happy” and “sad” (“What things can make someone happy or sad?” “How does it feel to be happy or sad?”). The children are then encouraged to express these feelings using their faces, voices and bodies (“What does one do – smile, laugh or cry?” “What does your face look like – smiling or frowning?” and “How do you move – quickly or slowly?”). They then choose an instrument and incorporate music-making into their expressive endeavours.

Next, the facilitator shows the children two faces, one happy and one sad, depicted on two sheets of paper or paper plates. She allows the group to identify each feeling. She then plays various excerpts of music, some “sad” (slower and in a minor key)

and some “happy” (quicker and in a major key). Each time a new piece is played, the group must figure out which emotion is expressed. They then jointly decide upon and point to the relevant face before going on to express the emotion through any combination of music, dance, movement, gesture or facial or vocal expression.

Social skill: Capacity to communicate; relatedness.

Vygotskian principles: Intersubjectivity; guided participation; cooperative learning.

3.11.4 Emotional expression song: “If you’re happy and you know it”

This activity ties in with the previous one as it deals with emotional expression. The group sings along to a popular children’s song, “If you’re happy and you know it”, clapping their hands, stamping their feet and shouting “hooray” according to the words and rhythm of the song.

Social skill: Intentionality; relatedness; cooperativeness.

Vygotskian principles: Intersubjectivity; guided participation.

3.11.5 Action song (part two: revision and development)

First, the participants review the words and actions learned in the previous session, in this case, “Eensy weensy spider”. They then form pairs, with one child sitting with her back to the other child. They sing the song again, but this time performing the actions upon one another’s backs. The actions are largely the same: crawling movements up the back, finger pattering down the back, large sweeping circular motions with the palms of the hands and then crawling again up the back. After one or two rounds, participants change places and exchange roles, so that each child has the opportunity to be the giver and receiver of the physical contact.

Social skill: Relatedness; capacity to communicate; cooperativeness.

Vygotskian principles: Intersubjectivity; guided participation; cooperative learning.

3.11.6 Greeting: Goodbye

3.12 SESSION TEN

3.12.1 Opening ritual: Welcome!

3.12.2 Bubble dance: Free movement with music and bubbles

This activity encourages the children to engage in free, creative movement. Several pieces of music are played to facilitate the exercise: some lively and upbeat, others gentle and calm, some boisterous and energetic, others peaceful and relaxing. Different combinations of loud and soft, fast and slow and legato and staccato musical expression encourage the creative exploration of movement. In addition, bubbles, blown amidst the children by the facilitator, also serve to inspire different types of movement.

Social skill: Relatedness; curiosity.

Vygotskian principles: Intersubjectivity.

3.12.3 Goodbye party

Finally, the session, and the study as a whole, closes with a goodbye party. This gives the participants the opportunity just to have fun as a group and to say goodbye to the facilitator. They are invited to reflect upon the musical and social experiences they have had and to express their ideas and feelings. This provides the group with a sense of closure. The facilitator acknowledges and thanks all the children for their participation, ensuring that each one feels appreciated.

3.12.4 Greeting: Goodbye

3.13 CONCLUSION

This chapter described the music-based sessions for the socialisation groups in terms of content and process. The introduction discussed theoretical underpinnings of the sessions and highlighted links to the literature provided in Chapter 2. Then, each session was outlined and the activities included in each session explained. Immediately following each activity, a list presented the social skills potentially developed by that activity and Vygotskian principles underlying its facilitation.

In the following chapter, the research methodology, ethical considerations for the research and the research findings will be presented.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Literature indicates that music participation offers an effective and age-appropriate means of enhancing social functioning in early childhood. It further indicates that social competence during this stage of development plays an important role as the preschool child prepares for the challenges of beginning school. This chapter serves to describe the research methodology used to explore the influence of music-based socialisation groups upon the social functioning of children in early childhood. It also presents the ethical considerations relevant to the implementation of the research and the empirical findings gathered from the study.

The first section of this chapter deals with the research methodology. First, the goals and objectives of the study are reiterated. Then, the qualitative approach, the descriptive purpose and the applied nature of the research are described. Following is a description of case study research design in terms of motivation for its use within the current study. The research design is described in terms of being a descriptive and collective case study. The use of purposive sampling is then described and justified and the sampling criteria for the selection of research participants are provided. Next, the methods of data collection are explained and their suitability to the study is substantiated, where after the process of qualitative data analysis and interpretation is described. The use of a pilot study is then briefly described, followed by a detailed consideration of the practical steps taken with regard to the implementation of the research methods at the Thando Westford Community Crèche. Finally, ethical considerations pertinent to the research study are explicated, along with the steps taken to minimise the risk and enhance the benefits to research participants.

The second section of this chapter deals with the presentation and discussion of empirical research findings. The participants are first introduced and their process and way of being in the group is described. Rates of attendance are then outlined,

followed by the presentation of research findings. The findings presented first are those from the observations focused on the seven social skills (Schiller, 2009:20), which are important for children in the later phase of early childhood as they prepare for school entry. Following are findings from the semi-structured interviews with the participants' teacher. Next is a discussion of the findings, where findings from the focused observations and semi-structured interviews are compared and considered in light of contextual factors. Finally, the conclusion section summarises the chapter and overall findings.

4.2 RESEARCH GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of the research was to explore the influence of music-based socialisation groups on the social functioning of children in early childhood.

Specific objectives around which the study was organised were formulated as follows:

- To explore and describe the ways in which a music-based socialisation group can influence the preschool child's social functioning;
- To identify the strengths of music-based socialisation groups to promote the social functioning of young children;
- To identify the limitations of music-based socialisation groups to promote the social functioning of young children;
- To explore the extent to which music-based socialisation groups can be effectively utilised within the context of a community crèche.

4.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section describes the steps taken to achieve the research goals in a manner that is accurate and trustworthy.

4.3.1 Research approach and type of research

A qualitative approach was used to explore the influence of music-based socialisation groups upon children's social functioning. Terre Blanche et al. (2006:274-275) propose that a qualitative approach is appropriate when one aims to better understand the experiential, social world of people, and to do so in an empathetic, contextualised manner. The current study fitted well within this approach, as the primary focus was upon the children's social interaction within socialisation groups. The qualitative approach also fitted coherently with Vygotskian theory, which emphasises the dynamic connection between children's functioning and their social and cultural environment. The emphasis on social interaction and the acknowledgement of social/cultural meanings and values placed this research with a qualitative approach, as described by Fouché and De Vos (2011:91).

Practical aspects of the study also situated it within a qualitative approach. A small number of research participants within a specific setting were the subject of investigation (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:91). The researcher was highly involved in all aspects and phases of the research, as she facilitated the music-based socialisation groups, took extensive field notes, engaged in focused observation and semi-structured interviews, and performed the analysis and interpretation of the data thus gathered.

The purpose of the research was descriptive in nature. The researcher aimed to produce a rich, detailed description of young children's social functioning in a music-based socialisation group, with attention to the deeper meanings embedded within the phenomena (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:96). Furthermore, the focus was upon the "how" that is associated with descriptive research questions (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:95-96). To reiterate, the research question asked "In what ways can music-based socialisation groups influence the social functioning of children in the early childhood years?" *Why* such influence were achieved (or not achieved) could be the subject of future, explanatory research.

The type of research undertaken in this study was applied research. Both the research procedures and the research goal and objectives were tailored to be of practical value for children in the early childhood years (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:94). The aim of the research was to make a practical contribution toward enhancing

social functioning in early childhood, specifically within the Thando Westford Community Crèche (Durrheim, 2006:45). Enhancing specific social skills needed for school entry (Schiller, 2009) could have a positive influence on children's subsequent entry and social functioning in school. Should positive findings emerge, similar group music strategies could continue to be applied within this crèche and similar settings.

4.3.2 Research design

The nature of the research lent itself to a case study design (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:322). Case study research attempts to obtain a comprehensive understanding of participants' relations and interactions within a specific situation, as well as the meaning they create with regard to the phenomenon at hand (Maree, 2010:75). The current study, with its focus on children's social interactions within a music-based group, had a good fit with this design. In the words of Cohen et al. (2000:181), case studies examine examples of "real people in real situations." A case study allows a researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics underlying a social situation by considering all the various actors involved (Maree, 2010:75). Case study research is particularly relevant when the units of analysis are not so much social entities themselves, but rather the interactions that occur between such entities, or a "system of action" (Maree, 2010:75-76). When working with human systems, the holistic nature of the system and the dynamic impact of its context need to be carefully considered (Cohen et al., 2000:181).

Furthermore, a descriptive case study was employed in accordance with the thinking of Fouché and Schurink (2011:321) in order to "describe, analyse and interpret" the influence of group music activities upon the social functioning of children in early childhood. These authors indicate that a descriptive case study allows for an in-depth study of one or only a few cases, resulting in a rich and detailed account of each case. They explain that a descriptive case study is appropriate when research requires the in-depth exploration and description of a particular social system (in the current study, preschool children) over a certain period of time (in this case, ten weeks). These authors (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:321) go on to note that "the exploration and description of the case takes place through detailed, in-depth data-

collection methods, involving multiple sources of information that are rich in context.” In the current study, this was accomplished through performing focused observation and conducting semi-structured interviews, the findings from which were supported by field notes. Lindegger (2006:461) states that an advantage of case study research is that it facilitates the emergence of new ideas and understandings through “careful and detailed observation.” The current research served not only to provide accurate accounts of the phenomena at hand, but also to afford novel insight and understanding.

Finally, a collective case study was utilised as more than one case was the subject of investigation (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:322). Eight participants, divided into two groups each consisting of four children, were involved in research concerned with enhancing the social functioning of individual children and the interactive processes between them. Rule and John (2011:21) recommend the use of multiple cases in order to enhance representation of a type of case, to allow for more breadth as well as depth and to allow for comparison across cases.

4.3.3 Sampling

The study population, thus the group who would be relevant to the study (Strydom, 2011c:223-224) consisted of all children attending the Thando Westford Community Crèche, which means that they were all children in early childhood. The crèche was situated in a multicultural environment characterised by a predominantly lower social economic status (SES) (Steyn, 2013). Many attendees at the crèche lived in the informal settlement which surrounded its premises. As such, many of the children at the crèche had disadvantaged backgrounds.

Purposive sampling was used in order to select eight children most likely to possess the characteristics required by the study (Strydom & Delpont, 2011:392). The teacher of the preschool class selected those children whom she thought would most benefit from the music-based socialisation groups. These were children who had the most difficulty interacting with other children and fitting into the peer groups at the crèche. In line with the goal and objectives, the following criteria served to guide the selection of children who would participate in the music-based groups:

- The children selected had to be between the ages of 5 and 7;
- Boys and girls were to be included;
- Different ethnic and racial groups were to be represented;
- Selected children had to be regular attendees of the crèche;
- There needed to be reasonable certainty that selected children would not leave the crèche within the subsequent ten weeks;
- Children who struggle to fit into the peer group at the crèche were to be selected.

The sample consisted of eight children, who were divided into two groups of four participants each. The teacher assisted in the division of participants according to their ages and her knowledge of the children and their ways of interacting with each other.

Apart from the above sample, data was also collected from the teacher who was directly involved with the participants. As only one teacher worked with the preschool class that catered for children five to seven years of age, and was therefore available to be interviewed, sampling was not required for this research participant.

4.3.4 Data collection methods

Two forms of data collection were utilised in the study, namely focused observation and semi-structured interviews.

4.3.4.1 Focused observation

The use of focused observation represented the primary method of data collection employed. Kelly (2006:309-310) refers to three kinds of observational methods as belonging within a qualitative research approach: descriptive observation, focused observation and selective observation. The approach best suited to the current research was focused observation. Kelly explains that “focused observation involves

asking more particular or well-honed questions about general events and looking out for particular kinds of interaction” (Kelly, 2006:310). He recommends this kind of observation when a researcher has a good idea of what aspects of a phenomenon require the most focus. In the current study, the researcher wanted to focus on specific social skills necessary for children’s social functioning upon school entry, and her observations were guided accordingly. Focused observation also had a good fit with the descriptive purpose of the study as defined in Fouché and De Vos (2011:96). It was also compatible with the descriptive case study design as such observation could yield rich, detailed information regarding the subject of interest (Kelly, 2006:310). Finally, it was conducive to thematic analysis, as a kind of data analysis used within qualitative research.

Kumar (2011:140) ascertains that observation is the most appropriate method of data collection when the researcher wishes to study the interaction within a group. Observation can be structured or unstructured and the latter allows the researcher to qualitatively observe behaviours by “recording personal accounts of situations that they have observed” (Delport & Roestenburg, 2011:182). Creswell (2009:181) refers to qualitative observation and asserts that it allows for the study of activity and behaviour in an unstructured or semi-structured manner. The use of focused observation is a form of semi-structured observation, as it facilitates the observation of themes, rather than measuring specific behaviours.

Focused observation was performed using the video recordings of the ten music-based socialisation group sessions with each of the two groups. Each music session was video recorded, with the necessary consent, allowing for more in-depth analysis after the sessions had ended. This also allowed for in-depth description of the children’s social functioning across time. The focused observations were guided by an observation schedule (Appendix A). Observation schedules are relevant for observing people in their natural environment (Grinnell & Unrau, 2008 in Delport & Roestenburg, 2011:182). The observation schedule was developed in accordance with Schiller’s (2009) model of social skills required for school success. This author (Schiller, 2009:20) describes different aspects of social functioning required by children as they enter school. The seven overall skill sets, namely confidence, curiosity, intentionality, self-control, relatedness, communication and cooperativeness, were operationalised to form the indicators for the observation

schedule. Various indicators of the seven skill sets were identified by referring to the work of Schiller (2009).

Field notes provided valuable supportive data, especially with regard to the context within which the focused observations occurred. Field notes involve recording, in detail, that which the researcher witnesses during observation sessions. Observation of the children's behaviour was repeated regularly over the course of ten sessions and detailed, accurate and systematic field notes were made immediately following each session (Strydom, 2011a:335). The aim and objectives of the research (i.e. to explore the influence of music activities on the children's social functioning) were kept constantly in mind, to ensure that the researcher remained focused on that which was significant and relevant to the study.

4.3.4.2 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teacher of the preschool class, providing a further source of data. Two interviews were conducted, one before and another after completion of the research. These interviews provided valuable information with regard to the participant's social functioning outside of the sessions. An interview schedule (Appendix B) served as a guideline to ensure that the necessary information was obtained, while the interview remained flexible, meaning that the researcher could, to an appropriate extent, continuously adjust the interview according to the responses provided by the respondent (Greeff, 2011:353). Each interview was audio-recorded with the permission of the teacher, allowing for a full, detailed record of the dialogue and for the production of verbatim transcripts (Kelly, 2006:298).

4.3.5 Data analysis

Data analysis in this qualitative research was a continuous process, beginning during the stages of data collection and continuing throughout the process of interpretation and the writing up of the findings (Creswell, 2009:184). The "twofold approach" to qualitative data analysis was employed: analysis occurred both during and after the

stage of data collection (Schurink et al., 2011:405). Making field notes and recording preliminary reflections represented analysis while gathering data, while video-recordings allowed for analysis to continue once data collection had ended. Furthermore, analysis was not a linear process of moving from the data to its interpretation, but rather involved a circular process of moving continuously back and forth between the data and the analysis/interpretation thereof (Terre Blanche et al., 2006:322). This “data analysis spiral” allowed for the continuous emergence of themes and patterns (Schurink et al., 2011:403).

Two sources of data formed the basis for the analytical process: video-recordings of the sessions and semi-structured interviews conducted before and after the study. Information from these sources was prepared, organised, analysed, coded and interpreted according to processes outlined in the following paragraphs.

Data analysis began from the outset as the researcher planned for the recording of the data (Schurink et al., 2011:404). This pertained especially to the digital video-recording of the music-based sessions, the manual taking of field notes and the audio recording of interviews. Next, the researcher transcribed the interviews (Schurink et al., 2011:408) and systematically filed video and audio recordings in chronological order. The focused observation schedule was used to identify themes from the video recordings, and these observations formed the basis for the analysis of data. Field notes were recorded neatly in a journal and were clearly dated (Schurink et al., 2011:408).

With the data thus organised, the researcher engaged in the process of immersion where she thoroughly familiarised herself with the various forms of data (Schurink et al., 2011:409; Terre Blanche et al., 2006:322-323). As the researcher worked through the data, memos were continuously written. Such memos were used as the researcher explored for trends and themes (Schurink et al., 2011:410). Themes were induced as the researcher identified salient patterns which appeared to underlie and organise significant portions of the data (Terre Blanche et al., 2006:323). Coding was instrumental to this process, as pieces of data were labelled according to where they fitted within the overall scheme of the developing order (Terre Blanche et al., 2006:324). Systematic coding allowed the researcher to recognise, interpret and reinterpret emerging themes and patterns (Schurink et al., 2011:410, 415), as well as

to understand their significance in relation to other themes and patterns (Terre Blanche et al., 2006:326). Next, in the process of elaboration, themes were further explored and possible interpretations were revised (Terre Blanche et al., 2006:326).

Finally, the video-recordings of the sessions were analysed by an independent observer. The researcher followed the direction of Lindegger (2006:461) who states that “because of the importance of checking the original data from which the case study is drawn, contemporary case studies often use methods such as video or audio tapes, which provide data that can be re-analysed by other researchers.” Utilising the same observation schedule, the independent observer explored the video footage for themes and trends which, along with her findings and interpretations, were compared to those of the researcher.

The co-analysis of the video footage by another, impartial researcher at the end of the study enhanced trustworthiness of research findings. The researcher and the independent observer engaged in separate reflection of the footage and made their own notes, meeting afterwards to compare critically discuss their interpretations, as recommended by Maree (2010:80, 86). This process allowed for triangulation by observation, reflexivity through dialogue and peer debriefing, all of which enhanced the trustworthiness of the analysis (Schurink et al., 2011:422; Creswell, 2009:192; Lietz, Langer & Furman, 2006:451). Creswell (2009:191) refers to this aspect of trustworthiness as “intercoder agreement.” The consensus discussion between the researcher and independent observer revealed that they had identified similar main trends and themes. Where subtle differences were detected, open and critical dialogue allowed for the emergence of increasingly balanced and trustworthy interpretations.

The researcher’s observations continued over an extended period of time (there were ten weekly sessions which served as observation sessions and which were also analysed *post facto*), which also enhanced the richness and credibility of the data (Maree, 2010:87, Creswell, 2009:192). Furthermore, the use of multiple methods to collect data, in this case focused observation and semi-structured interviews, which were supported by field notes, enhanced credibility of the findings (Maree, 2010:80, Creswell, 2009:191). In addition, a record of decisions pertaining to the research was kept in the form of an audit trail, which allowed the researcher to

make and verify adaptations required during the research process (Lietz et al., 2006:450). This is in accordance with Creswell (2009:190) who advises that researchers undertaking case studies should carefully record the steps taken throughout the research process. Finally, given the dual role of researcher and facilitator, the researcher was exceptionally careful to maintain a reflexive stance in order to limit subjectivity and bias. Continuous and critical reflection upon her own experiences and interpretations was essential.

4.3.6 Pilot study

The researcher conducted a pilot study to determine whether the relevant data could be obtained for the research (Strydom & Delpont, 2011:294-295). Two music-based group sessions were conducted with four children within the same age group as the sample for the study. These participants attended a regular preschool. The sessions were video-recorded with the permission of the parents and children and the video recordings were used to determine whether the relevant themes in the observation schedule could be identified through observation. For the same reason, the semi-structured interview schedule was pilot-tested by means of an interview with one of the teachers at the crèche. The data obtained in the pilot study did not form part of the research findings.

The pilot study informed the main study in a number of ways. While the researcher had predicted, based on a survey of the literature, that a group of four children would be the ideal size for the purposes of the research, this was confirmed by the pilot study. Further, the researcher was able to experiment with the duration of sessions. She realised that a certain degree of flexibility would be necessary, as young children can occasionally remain attentive for a relatively long period (up to 35 minutes) and at other times would struggle to remain engaged for 20 or 25 minutes. She also became aware of potential challenges, such as realising which activities would need to be adjusted in terms of their difficulty or methods of facilitation.

4.3.7 The implementation of the music-based group sessions at the Westford Thando Community Crèche

The research took place at the Thando Westford Community Crèche. This crèche serves young children in a marginalised community in Pretoria West. Many of the children attending the crèche lived in an informal settlement that forms the immediate environment of the crèche. This multi-cultural and multi-ethnic community lacks many of the basic services such as electricity and water as well as health services.

The crèche serves children of various cultural groups and ethnic origins, although the primary languages spoken are Sepedi and English. Young children, from infants to preschool children, are cared for. There is one preschool class with one teacher. This teacher was asked to select eight children to participate in the study based on the sampling criteria described above and to divide them into the two groups.

The study was due to take place during the third school term of 2013. Due to unforeseen delays, the data collection phase of the research could not commence until the fourth term of that year. This was not ideal, as the fourth term is the shortest, and often the busiest, term of the school/academic year. In addition, the social workers asked that the study start only in the second week of the term, in order to give the children and staff the chance to settle in. As such, the researcher had only eight weeks in which to conduct a ten session music-based programme. In order to do this, it was necessary that two sessions were included in the first week (week one) and two sessions were included in the last week (week eight). The study commenced on Monday 7 October and continued until Wednesday 27 November. Sessions were conducted every Wednesday morning, except for the first and last week of the study, when sessions were conducted on both the Monday and Wednesday mornings. The two groups ran concurrently during the above timeframe.

The two sessions (one with each group) were scheduled to take place from 9:30 to 10:00 and from 10:15 to 10:45 during days of implementation. Occasionally there were slight variations in these times, as the actual length of a session depended upon the concentration of the children on a particular day. Sometimes these young children struggled to maintain focus for 20 minutes; at other times, they requested additional activities and the session would last for up to 35 minutes.

The sessions were conducted on the premises of the Thando Westford Community Crèche. Initially, the venue available for use was a Wendy house next to the main building. It was just large enough to accommodate the movement and singing games that would need to take place during the sessions. Normally, the Wendy house was used by a group of ladies who ran a sewing project. Toward the end of the study, this venue was no longer available for use as it was required by the teacher responsible for sewing the many costumes that would be needed for the Christmas concert. Arrangements were made so that the music sessions could be relocated to a classroom inside the main school building. This school building was a large hall divided into several learning areas using room dividers. These served to divide the space but not the noise made by each of classes.

A series of ten music-based socialisation group sessions were used to facilitate the participants' learning of social skills. The sessions and activities facilitated are described in Chapter 3. Music activities were used to facilitate positive social interactions amongst the participants. These interactions are understood according to principles of Vygotskian theory, such as the ZDP, intersubjectivity, scaffolding, guided participation, collaboration and joint problem-solving. Overall, earlier activities required more basic forms of cooperation such as sharing, taking turns, listening, waiting, keeping a steady beat with the group and matching one's playing with the rest of the participants. There was a gradual progression toward activities requiring more active collaboration and negotiation between members.

4.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher recognised the unique ethical considerations involved when working with young (and economically marginalised) children. First of all, according to the principle of *non-maleficence* (Wassenaar, 2006:67), the researcher ensured that the participants did not experience any harm (direct or indirect) as a result of the research. It has been the researcher's experience that children usually find such music sessions enjoyable and that there is little risk of discomfort. The researcher endeavoured always to be sensitive to the needs and feelings of each participant. If, for whatever reason, a participant should have experienced any harm or discomfort in connection with the sessions, she would have been referred to the social worker at

the crèche for the necessary support. This, however, was not necessary at any point. Furthermore, according to the principle of *beneficence* (Wassenaar, 2006:67), the researcher endeavoured to make the research process as beneficial as possible to the participants. While no immediate benefits were guaranteed to result from participation in this study, the sessions intended to enhance children's social functioning.

Permission was obtained from the Thando Westford Community Crèche for the conducting of the research (attached as Appendix C). As this is an independently operating centre, permission from the Department of Education was not necessary. Once the eight participants had been selected, letters of *informed consent* were sent to their parents or legal guardians to complete (Strydom, 2011b:116-117; Wassenaar, 2006:73) (Appendix D). These consent letters provided adequate information about the goals and nature of the research. In a separate section of the same letter, permission was also obtained to video record the sessions.

The *informed and voluntary assent* of each participant was obtained in the form of an assent form (due to the age of the children, this took the form of a picture or some other mark that indicated her willingness to participate) (Kelly, 2006:292; Wassenaar, 2006:72-73) (Appendix E). Information regarding the nature of the study, voluntary participation and freedom to withdraw at any stage was provided in a child-friendly manner and in language that was easily understandable to each participant (Strydom, 2011b:116-118; Wassenaar, 2006:72-73). Informed consent and assent to make use of video-recordings were also sought from both the parents or legal guardians and the participants themselves, respectively. Furthermore, the relevant teacher was given the opportunity to provide written consent for the conducting of interviews (Appendix F).

Strict *confidentiality* was maintained during each stage of the research. No one, with the exception of the researcher and her supervisor, was allowed access to any of the data (for example, video footage, field notes, and interview transcripts) obtained from the research study (Strydom, 2011b:119). The only exception was the independent observer who was allowed access to the video recordings, and this individual was also required to sign a letter confirming confidentiality. *Anonymity* could not be confirmed due to the face-to-face interaction between the researcher and

participants. Furthermore, within any reporting of the research (such as in the final dissertation), the participants' names and the name of the teacher who participated in the interviews were replaced with pseudonyms to ensure that they would not be identifiable, in order to protect the privacy of these individuals (Strydom, 2011b:119). All raw data will be stored securely for 15 years at the Department of Social Work and Criminology according to the stipulations of the University of Pretoria.

The researcher has experience in conducting music groups with children and her prior knowledge and experience assisted her in conducting the current research. She was thus sufficiently skilled to facilitate the music-based socialisation groups and the research in general (Strydom, 2011b:123).

Debriefing allowed participants to work through their experiences of the research and to clarify any misconceptions (Strydom, 2011b:122). The researcher provided an opportunity at the end of each group session for participants to express how they experienced the session. Similarly, such an opportunity was offered to the teacher after each interview conducted with her.

The findings of the research are *disseminated* in a mini-dissertation that will be available at the University of Pretoria. The research report honestly and accurately reflects the procedures and outcomes of the research and any limitations are explicitly recognised (Strydom, 2011b:126). Any incidence of plagiarism has been strictly avoided.

4.5 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

The following section contains the empirical research findings which resulted from the study. First, however, each participant is introduced. This is done in terms of age, the reason for referring the child to the group as well as the researcher's impression of the child's personal process and way of being within the group (Blom, 2006:51) during the initial sessions of the research. Background information is thus provided before specific observations are discussed. Thereafter, rates of attendance are outlined, as absenteeism would have influenced the progress of individual participants and the overall group.

Research findings are then described and discussed. First, findings from the focused observations are presented in terms of the seven themes which guided the study. Next, information obtained from the semi-structured interviews is outlined. Finally, the discussion of findings compares and contrasts findings from the focused observation with those from the semi-structured interviews. Contextual influences on the implementation of the group sessions are also discussed in this section.

4.5.1 The research participants

The following paragraphs contain a brief introduction to each research participant. They are ordered according to their placement within the two groups. Firstly, Table outlines the ages of participants' upon commencement of the study:

Table 1. Ages of participants

Group one Name of participant⁶	Age of participant upon commencement of the study
Gezi	Five years, three months
Princess	Five years, three months
Winnie	Five years, six months
David	Five years, nine months

Group two Name of participant	Age of participant upon commencement of the study
Tiny	Five years, two months
Faith	Five years, eleven months
Kagiso	Six year, two months
Grace	Six years, five months

The participants were all between the ages of five and six years. Group one consisted of slightly younger participants while group two catered for the slightly

⁶ Pseudonyms are used for reasons of privacy and confidentiality.

older ones. The exception was Tiny, the youngest of all participants, who was placed in the older group as suggested by the teacher.

Further, a brief description of each participant is provided according to the reason for inclusion in the group and how they presented themselves during the first two sessions. This description is intended to provide a background for the discussion of the focused observations of each participant's interaction within the group sessions.

4.5.1.1 Group one

Group one consisted mostly of the younger participants. Only Tiny, the youngest of all the participants, was included in group two.

Gezi

Gezi had been referred to the music group due to his generally disruptive behaviour and difficulty making friends. He struggled to pay attention during the initial sessions and had a tendency of looking around the room vaguely, being easily distracted by extraneous stimuli. He seldom made eye contact with his peers or the facilitator and evidenced very little awareness of or interest in his social surroundings. Generally, his contact functions seemed poor. His participation in the activities was superficial, and the facilitator sometimes needed to directly support his actions, both to enhance his participation and to prevent him from disrupting the group's activity. His social interaction sometimes showed poor personal boundaries and lack of awareness of and/or respect for the boundaries of others (evidenced, for example, by grabbing an instrument being used by another).

Princess

The reason for Princess's referral to the group involved her shyness and lack of confidence in a group setting. During the first sessions, she was friendly and playful, although very shy. Princess was intensely interested in her physical and social environment and attended keenly to her peers, the facilitator and activities. Her lively

curiosity could lead to her becoming distracted by stimuli other than the task at hand. Princess approached new activities with enthusiasm and continuously explored original and creative ways of making music and interacting with her peers. She was always eager to make her contribution to the group effort.

Winnie

Winnie's teacher had wanted to include Winnie in the music group because she was new in the school and, while Winnie was a friendly, sociable child, she thought that the groups would help her get to settle in further. In addition, the teacher stated that Winnie was stubborn, often unwilling to engage in prescribed classroom activities. During the initial sessions, Winnie was found to be a serious child, her facial expression often grave and pensive. She was also very conscientious, trying hard to do everything "right". From the outset, her attention and persistence in completing an activity were excellent and she approached new tasks with self-assuredness. However, her participation could appear rigid, lacking the spontaneity and playfulness displayed by some of her peers, especially Princess.

David

David was a gentle, docile boy. His teacher wanted him to participate in the groups because she was concerned that he was too quiet, seldom talking with his peers or making any other sound. During the first sessions, it seemed to the researcher that he possessed a quiet self-confidence. He was relaxed and easy-going in his interactions with his peers and had no need to be the centre of attention in any regard. His contact functions were good; he related well to his peers and was sensitive to their feelings and intentions. He was quiet and did not talk much, but he was not timid or withdrawn.

4.5.1.2 Group two

Group two consisted of the slightly older children. Only Tiny was significantly younger than the other participants.

Tiny

Tiny's teacher had wanted to include him in the music groups because he struggled to pay attention and to "sit still". Tiny was the youngest of all the participants and was also small for his age. However, he had a great deal of energy and his demeanour was lively and animated. In the group he evidenced excellent awareness of his social environment and functioned with a well-developed sense of self-determination and personal agency. He enjoyed seeing humour in situations and he was able to turn anything into a game. His concentration span was shorter than that of the others but he participated wholeheartedly with the rest of the group. His distractibility was largely due to his being interested in too many things at once.

Faith

Faith had been referred to the music groups as she was reluctant to participate in group activities and she seemed to lack the confidence required. From the earliest sessions it became apparent that she was a friendly and socially adept young girl. She was highly sensitive to the social cues of her peers and was remarkably attuned with the group. She had a kind, almost motherly manner when interacting with the others and she was well-liked for it. Like Winnie, Faith was very conscientious and tended to hold her natural playfulness in check. She enjoyed collaborative games and understood and followed instructions easily. During group activities she was frequently the guiding force behind a successful process. During paired activities she often supported her partner; the other children liked being partnered with her.

Kagiso

Kagiso was a gentle, quiet child. He was from another African country and spoke a language different to anyone else at the crèche. His teacher was unsure as to what his native language was. This was one of the reasons he was included in the group as his teacher thought that music would allow him to participate fully in activities, which was not always possible in the classroom situation. In addition, he was fairly new at the crèche and his participation in group activities could seem half-hearted. Despite this communication barrier, he was friendly to and liked by his peers. He was easy going and obliging, keen to fit in. He participated happily in all the activities, but had no desire to influence their flow or direction. He rather went along with the other children. If he was unsure of what to do, he would wait for the others to figure out how an activity worked and then simply follow them. His desire to experiment was limited. While he would emulate the creative moves of his peers, he seldom initiated such ideas himself.

Grace

Grace was unexpectedly absent for seven out of the ten sessions due to difficulties with her eyes and the resulting treatment. She had been referred to the music groups as her teacher believed that music would allow her to participate in a way that relied less upon her eyesight than many other activities. Grace attended the first two sessions, and despite on-going medical difficulties, she was a friendly, energetic and highly responsive child who added much liveliness and loudness to the activities. She was keenly aware of her social surroundings, proactive in efforts to be helpful and occasionally assumed a directive role with her peers. She could be excessively demanding of attention, often talking loudly and choosing the noisiest instruments, and occasionally even hitting the facilitator hard on the leg to get her attention. Her capacity for sustained attention was still in the process of development and she was prone to act without thinking. She could impinge on the boundaries of others, for example, by grabbing an instrument being used by one of her peers.

4.5.1.3 Rates of attendance

The participants' attendance of the music sessions was to a large degree dependent upon their presence at the crèche on the days that the music groups were facilitated. As the participants arrived at the crèche by arranged transport (usually a taxi), they had little control over whether they attended the music sessions or not. However, once present at the crèche, the participants did not miss any sessions, which were greatly anticipated and enjoyed. Moreover, once a participant had decided to attend a session, she would always remain for the full duration of the session. Participants' rates of attendance are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Participants' rates of attendance

Group one	Number of times absent	Sessions missed
Name of participant		
Gezi	0	n.a.
Princess	0	n.a.
Winnie	2	Sessions 2 and 7
David	3	Sessions 4, 6 and 9

Group two	Number of times absent	Sessions missed
Name of participant		
Tiny	0	n.a.
Faith	0	n.a.
Kagiso	1	Session 7
Grace	7	Sessions 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9

On the whole, attendance was remarkably good, with the exceptions of David and Grace who were absent for three and seven of the sessions, respectively. Winnie was absent twice. While the researcher had requested that only regular attendees were selected for participation, she was not able to ensure that this was actually the case. Much of the absenteeism was unpredictable.

4.5.2 Qualitative research findings

This section presents the findings which emerged from the focused observations and semi-structured interviews.

4.5.2.1 Empirical findings from focused observations

The following section discusses findings from the focused observations. The section is structured according to the seven social skills of confidence, curiosity, intentionality, self-control, relatedness, capacity for communication and cooperativeness (Schiller, 2009:20), which were used to construct the focused observation schedule.

Before each theme is discussed, there is summary of all the main indicators which were used to identify and examine each skill set. Then main overall findings in relation to each theme are described. Next, the specific indicators (according to the observation schedule) are discussed as subthemes. Only those indicators that were notably enhanced via the music-based sessions are considered; other skills sets which did not evidence significant improvement are not mentioned, although it is recognised that such negative findings may have significance in their own right. Examples representative of salient processes are provided in order to illustrate the ways in which music activities were able to facilitate different types of interaction and the learning of each social skill and the indicators thereof. These examples also illustrate how Vygotskian principles underlie such social processes. Finally, literature is integrated into each discussion in order to provide an adequate theoretical foundation for the learning processes involved. The researcher acknowledges the interconnectedness between the various skill sets and indicators, and some indicators discussed in a specific section may also be relevant in other sections. Furthermore, some indicators falling within individual skill sets are so interlinked that the researcher decided to combine them and to discuss them as one theme.

Theme 1: Confidence

The first theme investigated was that of confidence. The indicators used to observe this skill set included positive self-assertion, personal agency, persistence, attentive listening, positive attitude, willingness to seek help when needed, the capacity to recognise and solve problems, positive adjustment to new situations and restraint from drawing inappropriate attention to the self.

Some of the most remarkable changes were observed in this area of social functioning. There was an overall increase in the levels of confidence demonstrated by all the participants. Such improvement occurred regardless of the slight differences in age, and was thus evident in both groups. The most notable change occurred where children were unsure of themselves (such as Princess and initially, Faith), lacked confidence to make genuine, sustained contact with others (i.e. Gezi) or lacked a sense of agency and self-determination (i.e. Kagiso). Below is a discussion of the main indicators which suggest improvement in the participants' confidence. Advances were most evident in the areas of positive assertion and presentation of the self; personal agency; adjustment to new situations (apparent in smoother transitions between activities); and positive attitude.

- Subtheme 1.1: Positive assertion and presentation of the self

Several music activities afforded the participants the opportunity to assert themselves as individuals within the group. For example, the greeting activities, introduced in the first session, served partly to enhance this aspect of confidence. The participants all had the chance to introduce themselves by being invited to state their names and "how they were doing." This was an opportunity for them to make simple self-statements and assert themselves as individuals within the group. Their presence was also acknowledged by their peers, who sang the greeting songs for them. All participants in group two immediately embraced the activity, announcing their names confidently and singing to one another heartily. The participants in group one were too shy to say their names or sing to one another at the beginning of the first session. Winnie seemed amused by the activity but was not yet ready to join in. Gezi looked at the ground when it was his turn. Princess, though smiling, seemed

very shy and uncomfortable. David also appeared shy, but he was able to support Princess. When the facilitator asked her to say her name for the greeting song and for the “name game” (discussed below), David looked at her encouragingly and nodded, displaying a quiet self-confidence. Over time, this group found the greeting activities to be enjoyable and their participation became bolder and more sociable. Preschoolers undergo significant development in the area of self-concept and self-worth (Denham & Brown, 2010:656) and these activities validated the presence, individuality and significance of each child. Ruud (1998:31) explains that in active music participation, we are essentially “performing our sense of ourselves, our identities,” thus defining the self metaphorically.

The “name game” also in session one, encouraged all the participants to say their names with a clear rhythm and steady beat. This simple yet powerful self-statement, which was chanted and thus validated by the entire group, aimed at enhancing the participants’ sense of self and self-worth. This was greatly enjoyed by group two and it helped the younger participants in group one to relax and introduce themselves in a fun and safe manner. During the activity “have a ball” in session two, the simple self-statements made by the participants served a similar purpose. By simply stating their favourite colour or food, they practised positive assertion within the group. All the participants joined in well, although group one was still a little more guarded. Only Gezi needed a great deal of encouragement to make his statement. Oaklander (2006:27-28) describes music activities as effective for allowing children to make self-statements and thus enhance their sense of identity. In addition, Saltarelli (2000:9-10) describes the value of positive affirmations to enhance self-worth.

- Subtheme 1.2: Personal agency

Also notable was the way that participating within group music activities assisted the individual members to act with an increased sense of personal agency and self-determination. More reticent participants, such as Princess, who were initially too shy to sing, found their voices in the context of group singing and chanting and were soon contributing actively in singing games. Faith, who would not dance before the study started, became an enthusiastic, creative dancer. She went on to assume a supportive role in which she actually guided her peers in paired or group dances and

movement activities. These developments were related to an increased sense of self-efficacy as experiences of successful participation afforded the participants a sense of mastery. As suggested by Denham and Brown (2010:659), “children’s perceived self-competence provides them with the confidence they need to take more risks in the classroom.” They link this to increased ability to fully engage and participate in activities and to attempt challenges.

The structure and predictability of the sessions helped the participants to function with increased agency and self-determination. This was especially true for Kagiso, who was less inclined to act with initiative than some of his more outgoing peers. He tended to follow the lead of others rather than to act with autonomy. When he began to sense the consistency present in the sessions, he felt secure enough to initiate certain predictable activities, such as the greeting songs. As he became more familiar with certain songs and games, he also began to engage with greater autonomy and, eventually, inventiveness. Finally, the consistent and increasingly familiar setting of the music-based sessions allowed Tiny and Princess to participate with increased independence. While they were always enthusiastic participants, they gained a sense of autonomy and personal agency.

- Subtheme 1.3: Adjustment to new situations

Predictability of the sessions facilitated a smooth transition between activities. This was especially evident amongst the younger participants in the study, such as Tiny and Princess, who were increasingly able to adjust to new situations. As the participants became familiar with the structure of the sessions, they began to expect the opening rituals, the introduction of new activities, the revision of an older activity and the greeting (goodbye) song. Such anticipation eased moments of transition. Bulotsky-Shearer et al. (2012:422) explain that high-quality learning environments “with well-organised and predictable routines” support preschool children’s social development. Most participants evidenced enjoyment of the familiarity of certain routines and the ability to anticipate certain activities. Only Gezi continued struggled with moments of transition until much later in the research.

- Subtheme 1.4: Positive attitude

All of the participants, to varying degrees and in different ways, presented themselves with improved confidence and an increasingly positive attitude toward each other and toward the facilitator. This was evidenced by active, enthusiastic participation and friendliness. Especially remarkable was the progress of Gezi. To begin with, he made little eye-contact with anyone and seemed uninterested in anything going on around him. Although it took many weeks to observe significant progress (in session five, six and seven) and major improvement (in session nine), he eventually began to engage actively with his peers and to evidence enjoyment of the sessions. His attitude changed from quite indifferent to positive and he was able to participate constructively.

Kagiso also made significant progress, although the change appeared different on the surface. As he began to experience his own sense of agency, he began to assert himself and to make his presence known within the group. He seemed increasingly aware of the contribution he could make toward the group efforts. Gezi and Kagiso's improvements in attitude, engagement, participation and agency may be related to facilitator sensitivity and high levels of emotional and learning support provided within the sessions. Geldard and Geldard (2001:7) mention how a sense of group belonging may reduce feelings of exclusion/isolation and encourage positive engagement with the group toward joint goals. Bulotsky-Shearer et al. (2012:422) link these environmental traits to enhanced engagement and motivation to learn amongst preschoolers. They explain that experiencing "high-quality interactions" in the learning environment, with both facilitators and peers, is especially imperative for children with behavioural difficulties. Such children experience greater benefits than those considered less at-risk (Bulotsky-Shearer et al., 2012:422).

The overall increase in confidence that was observed in the participants could support the development of a further social skill, namely curiosity.

Theme 2: Curiosity

The construct curiosity was operationalised by using the following behavioural indicators: interest in physical and social surroundings, willingness to participate in

the group, to explore new activities/situations and to ask questions, and the capacity to recognise and solve problems.

The music activities were successful in improving the curiosity of participants, especially in terms of piquing their interest in their environment and encouraging explorative, inventive behaviour. Participants who were very conscientious to begin with (such as Winnie and Faith) benefitted greatly from this aspect of the music sessions. It also assisted participants who tended to follow and copy the behaviour of others, as opposed to “trying out” new ways of doing things or taking risks in the musical/social environment (such as Kagiso). Furthermore, the activities enhanced participants’ willingness to participate in the groups. Most notable was the improvement of Gezi, who initially showed little interest in the sessions, but who, toward the end of the study, greatly improved in his willingness to engage in the activities with his peers.

- Subtheme 2.1: Interest in the environment and willingness to explore

The novelty of the music sessions brought about much curiosity for most of the participants. They were naturally curious about all the different sounds that could be made on the various instruments, and every conceivable way of producing sound with them was thoroughly investigated. Initially, however, there were those participants who were very conscientious and wanted to do everything “right”. Such participants, such as Winnie from group one and Faith from group two, required some time before they were able to unleash their inquisitive and inventive tendencies. While Faith did ask many questions, such as “What is this?” and “What is that for?” she held her curiosity in check for the first few sessions. Gradually, she and Winnie learned that there was no one “right” way to participate in the music sessions and that there were also no negative consequences for trying out different ways of approaching an activity. They learned that the music-based groups offered a safe place to play and explore and gradually, their behaviour became less inhibited and more inventive, even adventurous, during the course of the research. This was observed in them being able to engage with the others in spontaneous and light-hearted play. This may have been related to the supportive, accepting environment which the music sessions provided, where the participants’ original ideas were

welcomed. Such an environment promotes exploration by freeing children from the fear of making a “mistake” (Church, 2007:36). A similar dynamic may have been at play in the behaviour of Kagiso who, for much of the study, followed his peers and simply went along with what they did. During the last sessions, Kagiso made significant strides in being able to engage in unique, inventive behaviour.

The ability to show interest and to explore was encouraged early in the study, in an activity aimed at introducing the instruments to the participants (the fourth activity in session two). It was interesting to note that none of the participants were able to keep their eyes closed as they placed their hands into the bag. Each participant had a look of wonder and delight as they pulled out an instrument and tried to play it. Some began to play the instruments very gingerly, while others as wildly and noisily as they could. Grace immediately began to play the rhythm of the greeting song with her instrument, singing along gleefully. This activity was in accordance with the advice of Chak (2007:142), who suggests that children be allowed to explore, experiment and make discoveries for themselves. Furthermore, Church (2006:37) highlights the value of open-ended play where materials can be used in a variety of ways to encourage creative learning. Music instruments can allow for free play that is original and explorative, not governed by rigid expectations.

The participants’ interest and eagerness to learn was certainly heightened by the introduction of new instruments and tools. Their immediate interest and inquisitiveness was evidenced when the facilitator in session five brought out a large circle of soft, shiny fabric for the third activity. The participants from both groups gazed in wonder as she unfolded it and gave each participant a point to hold. Their interest was instantly engaged and they learned the ensuing dance quickly and easily. In addition the participants discovered many other uses for the circle of fabric, such as taking turns to sit beneath while the others waved the soft fabric over their heads. It was evident that the musical stimuli enhanced their interest and willingness to engage in the learning process and to explore. The instruments and various other tools, as well as the music itself (whether pre-recorded or made by the group), provided dynamic stimulation and impetus which enhanced the participants’ active engagement. This supports Church’s (2006:41) view that an appropriate array of materials is necessary to inspire and stimulate children’s learning and play.

Interestingly, some of the greatest exploration was not stimulated by any of the planned activities. Session eight, with the change of venue, prompted intense inquisitiveness regarding the new environment. This was somewhat challenging, and the facilitator noticed that the participants went through a process similar to that of the first session, where they keenly explored the new environment. In group one, Princess and Winnie were intensely interested in all the toys and colourful posters that surrounded them. David was attracted to a large mirror, where he carefully watched all of his movements throughout much of the session. Once he discovered the camcorder, he also became intrigued at observing the world through its lens. Gezi, rather than appearing interested in his surroundings, seemed disorientated and unsettled. In group two, it was Tiny who thoroughly investigated the new room and Faith who became absorbed in watching her every movement in the large mirror. She seemed to study the way she looked in every pose and posture. Kagiso seemed largely unbothered by the changes and Grace was absent for this session. Church (2006:39) advises that a child's surroundings should be taken into consideration as they influence learning behaviour in various ways; they can stimulate curiosity, have a calming effect or be distracting. She goes on to warn against the excessive use of primary colours in the learning environment, as they tend to be distracting.

- Subtheme 2.2: Willingness to participate

All of the participants displayed exceptional willingness to participate in the music activities. They showed interest in the activities and engaged willingly with their peers and the facilitator. Even Kagiso, who tended to follow the lead of others rather than act with autonomy, was still always a willing participant. The only participant who showed a lack of interest in his physical and social surroundings and little inclination to participate was Gezi. In the earliest sessions he struggled to make any contact at all, although he enjoyed playing the instruments, albeit without direction or purpose. Even the activity "meet the instruments" that was especially designed to stimulate interest, was not as effective with Gezi as it was with the other participants. This points to the opinion of Church (2006:37) who holds that materials alone do not motivate play and learning.

Over time and through many interactive activities, Gezi seemed to become increasingly aware of the sounds produced by the instruments, and of the recorded music played on the MP3 player. Gradually, musical stimuli became the type of stimuli to which he was most responsive. In the third activity (“move to music”) in session three, he was at first unresponsive as the facilitator assisted him (physically and verbally) to engage in the appropriate movements with his partner. However, once the music started, he was able to engage more actively with the support of this external stimulus, a process in line with the Vygotskian principle of scaffolding (Hendrick & Weissman, 2010:13). His attention was still somewhat sporadic and fragmented. There was subtle improvement in the activity “finding the group’s heartbeat” in session five, where he was able to maintain the pulse with the group for fragmented but increasing periods of time. In session six, he responded remarkably well to the activity “fast and slow” where he attended to the music and moved in accord with the musical stimuli and with the group for significant, albeit fragmented, periods of time. Finally, in session nine, he expressed a remarkable readiness to learn and engage not only with the music, but also with the other participants. His active participation within the group was unprecedented during the call and response song *Che che koolay*. His engagement with his partners during “Eensy weensy spider” was sensitive and purposeful. He even undertook to exchange partners, negotiating the social interaction with care. Indeed, it is not merely the materials or instruments that inspire engagement, play and learning. Over time, musical and social collaboration with the group, together with the facilitator’s attitude of encouragement and acceptance, promoted this child’s willingness to participate positively with his peers (Church, 2006:37). Such collaboration facilitated the process referred to by Vygotsky as cooperative learning (Berk, 2013:271-272)

Other participants who evidenced increased willingness to participate were Princess and Faith who, over time, were keener to sing and dance, respectively, in the presence of their peers. As this was discussed under Theme 1: Confidence, it is just mentioned here that improved curiosity, or eagerness to learn, may have played a part in this development. Furthermore, while Winnie had always been a willing participant, her engagement with her peers became increasingly playful and spontaneous as the research progressed. Willingness to participate also increased as the group progressed through the group work process and developed a greater

sense of safety, trust, belonging and cohesion within the group (Becker, 2005:39; Toseland & Rivas, 2012:198-199, 267). The third skill set that was observed was that of intentionality.

Theme 3: Intentionality

The skill set of intentionality was explored by considering whether participants evidenced the capacity to think before acting, pay attention and remain involved, complete tasks, persist and show determination, present a positive mood, show interest in other participants and their play, be considerate and thoughtful toward others, assume a leadership role and engage eagerly in learning new tasks.

Music and rhythm-based activities are intrinsically motivating for children, as evidenced in the current study. The intentionality of all participants was improved, although two members, Kagiso and Gezi, displayed notable improvement only toward the end of the study. Even the younger participants, such as Tiny and Princess, were able to engage in tasks with greater concentration and persistence as time went on. Individual and group behaviour was supported by musical stimuli, which provided impetus or incentive to act, and to continue to act, until successful completion of an activity. The structure present within the music effectively supported the participants' activity, and scaffolded by each other and the music, they functioned with steadily increasing tenacity throughout the duration of the study. Improvement was most noticeable in the behaviour of Gezi, who lacked contact and purpose in his overall functioning and Kagiso, who had difficulty acting with initiative and self-direction. The paragraphs below indicate that the participants' advances in intentionality were demonstrated primarily through improved attention and capacity to think before acting; persistence and drive toward task completion; interest in the other participants and their play; and the ability to assume a leading role.

- Subtheme 3.1: Attention and thought before action

Careful attention and thoughtful action were encouraged by most of the music activities. An example can be found in session five, the second activity. In a previous, preparatory exercise (activity three of session three) the participants

needed to alternate between loud and soft playing, which was scaffolded by alternating loud and soft music. The participants had simply to match each other's playing and the dynamic of the recorded music. Once they reached a state of intersubjectivity, their music-making was scaffolded by the recorded music. The new version, activity two in session five, was more demanding as the loud and soft sections were less predictable, yet still organised according to the structure of verse and chorus. Participants therefore had to listen attentively and think before alternating their dynamic. A conscious decision was required before playing either loudly or softly. This was necessarily a group decision, as an effective end result required that joint action was taken. Winnie, David and Faith, in their respective groups, were the most attentive to the musical dynamics and functioned as the guiding force behind their groups' activity. Tiny, the youngest, was grouped with somewhat older children and in this context his capacity for concentration, persistence and purposeful activity improved noticeably.

Tomasello et al. (2005:676) maintain that young children possess the skills and motivation to engage in this kind of collective action, that they can understand one another's perceptions, intentions and aims. Furthermore, in the activity just discussed, the participants were provided with appropriate auditory stimulation which contained patterns designed to organise their perception and support intentional activity (Kulikowich & Alexander, 2010:726). The loud and soft sections of music, divided into patterns of verse and chorus, provided the participants with cues to help them organise their thoughts and guide behaviour. Despite such support, Kagiso was, at this stage, prone to watching how the others played and following their example. Gezi showed modest improvement during this activity. There were moments, albeit sporadic, when he appeared to be listening to the music and responding appropriately, suggesting better attention and purpose in his activity.

Activity two of session seven also encouraged attention and thought before action. It introduced call and response interaction in a playful manner using first ball play and then body percussion. First, when the ball was passed to them, the participants had to stop, think and adjust their reaction according to the way the ball had been passed to them. The same process was involved when they were to imitate the body percussion: stopping, thinking and then acting according to a purpose helped exercise their capacity for purposeful, intentional action. The requirement to pay

Careful attention to the facilitator's action increased participants' awareness of, interest in and active involvement with her and with the group. At times, the facilitator would need to repeat the simple body percussion pattern, if the child was unable to imitate it at the first attempt. The opportunity to try again helped develop their persistence and determination. David in group one and Faith in group two participated with great thoughtfulness and purpose. They watched and listened attentively and their responses were prompt and accurate. Princess, Winnie and Tiny, in their respective groups, required a bit more time to practise, but were also able to join in with increasing focus and deliberation. Furthermore, Gezi's participation evidenced remarkably thoughtful engagement (discussed below). The call and response patterns of interactions provided the participants with manageable, organised stimuli which helped facilitate intentional action. These socially-mediated cues helped guide the participants according to the appropriate process of reciprocal interaction (Kulikowich & Alexander, 2010:727).

- Subtheme 3.2: Persistence, determination and task completion

Persistence, determination and drive toward task completion were enhanced through the learning and performing of the dance in activity three of session five. The dance movements were structured by various elements of the music. As different types of movements were required for the verse and chorus of the song, the participants needed to listen carefully for these transitions. During the chorus, participants also had to listen for the words "up" and "down" and move accordingly. This required that the participants listen attentively and think before acting. Once the dance had been learned, follow-through was required for its performance. The song was almost four minutes long, with three verses divided by three choruses. The participants worked their way through this relatively long piece twice after having learned it. In fact, the dance was repeated at their request. This is remarkable when one considers that these same participants, a moment earlier, struggled to attend to a few moments of verbal explanation. These participants were behaving with shared intentionality. These participants had a joint goal (to learn and perform the dance) and were motivated to achieve it, clearly displaying Vygotskian principles of cooperative learning and intersubjectivity (Berk, 2013:268, 271). They understood the goals,

intentions and perceptions of the other participants and functioned collaboratively according to a mutual plan of action (engaging in movements and actions in accordance to the music) (Tomasello et al., 2005:676).

While participants such as Winnie, David and Faith adopted a leading or supporting role, Princess and Tiny demonstrated exceptional persistence and remained focused up until the end of the activity. In group one, the behaviour of Princess was scaffolded by the supportive role of Winnie and David. Gezi was interested in the fabric circle and was somewhat more attentive; while he seemed more absorbed by the activity than usual, his actions were not always related to those of his peers. In group two, Tiny's efforts were effectively supported by the older members of his group, especially Faith. Kagiso performed the dance by emulating the moves of the others, most notably, Faith. This may have been because the words of the English song held little meaning for him.

- Subtheme 3.3: Interest in other children and their play

The example that follows, involving Gezi, incorporates several indicators of social skills including attention, positive involvement, thoughtful action, interest in others and eagerness to learn new tasks. However, the researcher believes the overriding theme to be his new-found interest in his peers and their activity. Gezi struggled to engage in contactful, intentional behaviour for much of the earlier part of the research. His distractedness and apparent lack of interest prevented him from effective involvement with the rest of the group. The second activity in the fourth session dealt specifically with impulse control but also tapped into the construct of intentionality. At this stage, Gezi had difficulty engaging with the group; he seemed uninterested in the music that was playing and what the other participants were doing. He seemed uninvolved and there was little purpose in his playing.

Gradually, Gezi seemed to become more interested in engaging with David. His initial efforts were not that effective, and he succeeded mainly in distracting David rather than engaging him meaningfully. (David was fortunately not a highly distractible child and he was able to continue functioning effectively within the group). Very gradually, the quality of the interaction between the two boys improved.

David appeared to understand the friendly intent of Gezi and was open to the interactions. Toward the middle of the study there was evidence that Gezi was more willing to interact with David than before. However, he still showed little interest in the two girls, Princess and Winnie, who were becoming increasingly good playmates.

Gezi evidenced significant improvement in session seven, activity two (mentioned above). It took some time before he grasped the aim and underlying process of the activity, namely, turn-taking and imitation. At first, he seemed only vaguely aware of what was expected. Whenever the ball was rolled, bounced or thrown to him, he would respond by kicking it. Gradually, the one-on-one attention of the facilitator helped him grasp the flow of the activity. (When body percussion activities were used instead of ball play, his attention gradually improved). He became more aware of the facilitator's actions. Gradually, his responses gained direction and control. Although he needed more reminding and prompting than his peers, his interest and involvement in the activity improved significantly. By session nine, remarkable progress was evident. In the call and response song *Che che koolay*, he listened to and watched the facilitator and other participants and thoughtfully responded to each call. His participation was full – words and actions were performed with enthusiasm and remarkable accuracy and rhythm. He listened attentively to each call and his response was on cue. This was the greatest amount of awareness that Gezi had displayed in the research thus far. It seemed that increased awareness allowed for better contact with others and the music they made, which allowed for intentional, deliberate participation. This may have been due, in part, to the continuous facilitation of socially-mediated activities encouraging awareness of others as intentional beings, shared commitment to joint goals and collective, coordinated action toward their achievement (Tomasello et al., 2005:678). Activities involving imitation seemed to increase his awareness of others, their intentions and his ability to identify with such intentions, thereby allowing for purposeful participation.

- Subtheme 3.4: Assuming a leadership role

Kagiso displayed a greater-than-usual degree of intentionality during session nine. He had been absent when the call and response song *Che che koolay* was introduced in session seven, but was quickly able to learn the words and actions

when the activity was revisited in session nine. This he accomplished in his usual manner – by observing and following the lead of his peers. However, during the activity involving emotion recognition and expression, he made his intentions known with an unprecedented display of initiative and self-expression. Without waiting for anyone else to make the first move, he leaped up and danced around the room with a renewed sense of initiative and self-determination. Soon, the other members of the group were following his lead. Because of the expressive nature of this activity, this development is discussed further below under Theme 6: Capacity for Communication. Princess showed faster progress than Kagiso who only evidenced his greatest progress in session nine. Although initially shy and quiet, she assumed a role of leadership fairly early on in the study when she began requesting that the group play “Ring-a-ring-a-roses” at the end of most sessions.

Improvement in the skill of intentionality would allow children to take initiative and reach out to others. However, this skill needs to be balanced by the skill of self-control.

Theme 4: Self-control

Behavioural indicators used to investigate participants’ levels of self-control included their capacity for impulse control and delay of gratification, their capacity to think before acting, to express feelings and needs in a positive manner, to follow rules and instructions and to show respect for the boundaries of others.

Most group music activities, including those in the current research, could not be performed successfully without sufficient self-control on the part of each member. Self-control is a prerequisite for any meaningful music-making, just as it is required to regulate social interaction (Son et al., 2013:469). All participants evidenced improved self-control and impulse control as the sessions progressed. However, this was generally more evident among the younger participants who were less developed in this area. For example, it was particularly evident in the behaviour of Tiny and Princess, who were younger and tended to be more impulsive. Grace was an exception, being the oldest of the participants and possessing poor ability to control impulses and delay gratification. The self-control of Gezi and Kagiso was also

less developed and gradual improvement was noticed. These two participants were slightly older than the others but seemed to lack the sense of self-agency and purpose to sufficiently govern their actions⁷. Generally, improvement in self-control was evidenced primarily through enhanced capacity to follow rules and instructions, increased respect for the boundaries of others, and better impulse control.

- Subtheme 4.1: Capacity to follow rules and instructions

Adherence to instructions requires several aspects of self-control. Winnie, David and Faith had understood and followed instructions readily from the earliest stages of the study. Tiny, Princess and Grace were well aware of the instructions and rules underlying activities, although their impulsivity tended to prevent timely and accurate responses. Their excitability also at times, hindered their ability to think before acting, a prerequisite to being able to follow instructions. This could be related to their developing capacity for behavioural self-regulation, including the characteristics of attention, working memory and inhibitory control (Son et al., 2013:469).

Kagiso and Gezi also had difficulty following instructions, but the dynamics underlying their struggles were different. With regard to Gezi, it was sometimes difficult to tell whether he was even aware of such instructions and the processes underlying each activity. Kagiso, on the other hand, seemed to lack understanding and interest in rules and instructions and followed what the others were doing, which was likely related to the language barrier he experienced. The behaviour of these two boys could seem vague and directionless; Gezi lacked the focus and sense of agency needed to regulate his actions and follow instructions while Kagiso most likely lacked verbal comprehension. Son et al. (2013:469) emphasise the role of attention in the development of a child's capacity to self-regulate. They state that the preschool stage is a critical period in the development of sustained attention, a skill which predicts success in both scholastic and interpersonal spheres. All four participants steadily improved in their ability to follow instructions, assisted by the simple, clear rules which governed the music-based activities (Schiller, 2009:54).

⁷ As Gezi and Kagiso displayed a lack of personal agency and purpose, they are discussed as struggling with a lack of self-control as well as intentionality, the lack of which may contribute significantly to poor self-control.

In the second activity of session six, substantial improvement in the capacity to follow rules and instructions was evidenced by Tiny, Princess, Gezi and Kagiso. When the accompanying recorded music had a quick tempo, the participants ran and danced swiftly around the room while also playing an instrument. When the fast music was suddenly alternated with very slow music, the participants, including the above four, stopped promptly and began to step and play slowly and rhythmically, usually matching the beat of the music. It took only one or two rounds before even the most impulsive and unfocused participants were adjusting their movements and playing to the different tempos of the music. Moreover, their engagement was enthusiastic and accurate. Perhaps moving to, in addition to playing along with, the music enhanced the participants' attention and engagement with the activity. Moving to music seemed to help harness and regulate the energy of Tiny and Princess, while at the same time energising Gezi and Kagiso, stimulating their awareness, attention and active involvement. In part, it might have been the simplicity and clarity of the activity's rules that enhanced their effective practise of self-control (Schiller, 2009:54). In addition, the music itself provided a scaffold that supported the participants' actions (Wimpory & Nash, 1999:18, 20); the dynamic states within the music (i.e. loud and soft) facilitated their joint movement.

- Subtheme 4.2: Respect for the boundaries of others

Self-control involves respecting the boundaries of other people. Initially, Gezi and Grace displayed their poor self-control through lack of awareness of and/or disregard for the boundaries of others. Both participants displayed this primarily through grabbing instruments from their peers and occasionally from the facilitator. Grace was particularly demanding of the facilitator's attention, and would resort to hitting her leg to get it. In addition, Gezi did not seem adequately aware of the greater boundary represented by the music group itself. He would randomly get up and wander around the room, sometimes even heading for the door. Here, too, he displayed poor ability to regulate his behaviour. Gradually, the safety and support provided by the music group seemed to help contain his activity. By session nine, even in the large, open classroom, he was able to maintain a sense of togetherness, both physical and social, with the other participants. It appeared that the consistent

maintenance of a limited number of clear and simple physical and social boundaries enabled him to better regulate his own functioning (Schiller, 2009:54).

- Subtheme 4.3: Impulse control

Certain activities directly targeted the development of impulse control. Tyre (2009:47) suggests incorporating into children's learning experiences simple activities aimed deliberately at giving them the opportunity to practise impulse control. She states that such exercise can be effective in helping them to learn to focus. The third activity of session three was a rudimentary exercise directly targeting self-control (to an extent, all music activities support impulse control as their inherent rules and structure support such regulation). In the researcher's experience, children with insufficient impulse-control tend to find it easy to play loudly when the music is loud but struggle to play softly when the music becomes soft. The participants in group one who struggled the most with this were Princess and Gezi. In group two, Tiny and Kagiso had the most difficulty. Princess and Tiny were excitable and struggled to hold back the impulse to play loudly. It was different with Gezi and Kagiso, who seemed rather to lack the focus and determination needed to regulate their actions. Grace was absent for this session.

In the next session, session four, the activity "listen up!" also targeted impulse control. The same participants who struggled in the previous activity were also those to have difficulty in this one. However, Tiny and Princess found it easier to alternate between playing and not playing (sound and silence) than between playing loudly and playing softly. This was not the case with Gezi and Kagiso. Their lack of focus meant that they would carry on playing for several beats after the other participants had stopped. It seemed that they lacked awareness of and contact with the auditory stimuli, in addition to a lack of agency and self-determination. Furthermore, Tiny and Princess were highly attuned to their musical and social environment. Their peers would at times assist them by reminding them to "Shhhhhhhhhh" when the music stopped playing and they would respond promptly to this guidance, greatly enjoying the challenge provided in the activity. Tyre (2009:47) points out that activities directly focused upon impulse control are particularly helpful as they encourage children to think aloud, exactly as the group did here, which aids in the development of silent

self-talk to enhance self-control. Gezi was not nearly as responsive to external support. The facilitator would need, at times, to sit with him, take his hands in hers and physically support his playing. Kagiso was responsive to the support of his peers, but he appeared to be going along with them, almost depending on their guidance. This copying behaviour meant that he was usually a beat or two behind the others, making his responses slower. When his attention waned and he lost track of what the others were doing, he would fall further behind. Grace was absent for this session too.

The skill of self-control could allow children to relate better to others. In this way it could enhance children's capacity or relatedness.

Theme 5: Relatedness

The skill set of relatedness was observed by using the following indicators: capacity for general positive relationships, appropriate involvement and empathy, positive initiation of interaction, appropriate nonverbal interaction and communication, helpfulness and cooperation, fun and humour, the ability to read and respond to social cues, negotiate with others and solve conflict and to think before acting.

One of the social skills most noticeably enhanced by the music sessions was that of relatedness. Generally, the activities nurtured positive relationships and involvement amongst the participants. The games were collaborative by nature, as opposed to competitive, and induced a sense of camaraderie and team spirit amongst participants. The activities could thus promote progression through the stages of the group process (Toseland & Rivas, 2012:267). Furthermore, many of the activities, and the call and response activity in particular, enhanced the participants' capacity for appropriate nonverbal behaviour and the ability to read and respond to social cues. In addition, there was improvement in the participants' ability to positively initiate interaction with others. Overall, the clearest improvement was evident in the behaviour of Gezi, who had difficulty making contact and engaging in thoughtful interaction with his peers, and Kagiso, who tended to be an "on-looker" or observer, seldom initiating interaction.

- Subtheme 5.1: General positive relationships

The greeting activities at the beginning and end of each session promoted a sense of cohesion amongst group members. Cohesion helps ensure a sense of affiliation and “we-ness”, essential for children who are in need of positive relationships (Thompson & Henderson, 2007:79; Becker, 2005:39). In addition to providing social and temporal boundaries, the individualised greeting songs, containing the name of each participant and sung to each in turn, helped ensure that everyone felt included. The “name game” in session one encouraged each participant to say their names with a clear rhythm and steady beat. This simple yet powerful self-statement was then validated by the rest of the group who joined in with the rhythmic chanting of each name. This exercise served to promote a sense of acknowledgement and belonging. Schiller (2009:56-57) refers to the importance of a “caring community of learners,” where participants identify with the group and feel they belong to it. These activities helped nurture secure, warm and supportive relationships between participants and facilitator and fostered a sense of being a team that worked together for the good of all members (Schiller, 2009:61-62). Such relationships were evidenced among most of the participants early on in the research; only Gezi took longer to display a positive sense of connectedness and engagement. Gradually, about halfway through the study, Gezi became more willing to interact with David, who generally responded positively.

- Subtheme 5.2: Appropriate nonverbal interaction and reading and responding to nonverbal cues

An example of an activity facilitating reciprocal interaction was the call and response⁸ activity *Che che koolay*, introduced in the third activity of session seven. The facilitator provided the call and the group responded with the response. With these

⁸ Call and response songs are a traditional African form of music-making (Nzewi, Anyahuru & Ohiaurumunna, 2001:96-97). Central to the musical activity is a form of social interaction based on mutuality and give-and-take behaviour. One member, a subgroup or the leader of the group provides the other participants with a call. This is a musical and/or verbal expression to which the others respond with another musical and/or verbal expression. The response is typically an imitation of the call, an echo of the original motive. It can also be an embellished version or other variation of the call. The essence of the activity is the underlying pattern of turn-taking between two social entities.

young children, the facilitator aimed to create the overall structure while the participants assisted each other in providing the appropriate response accurately and on cue. The response provided by the group was a direct imitation of the facilitator's call, the most basic type of response. This allowed the participants to practise the fundamental skills of listening, imitating and turn-taking. Being able to listen, cooperate and take turns are essential skills for children to be able to build positive relationships (Denham & Brown, 2010:657). This activity was effective in helping the group members to "tune in" with one another, facilitating intersubjectivity, a shared focus and interactive dialogue (Wimpory & Nash, 1999:17).

The facilitator found that the group of slightly older participants managed this activity more easily than did their younger peers. They had a better developed sense of the "first me, now you" kind of interaction present. Of the older group, group two, Faith had the most intuitive understanding of the mutuality underlying the interaction. She waited and listened carefully as the facilitator gave the call, and then responded with perfect timing. She was highly sensitive and responsive to social cues, and in this activity she was able to use elements of phrasing, rhythm and vocal inflection to gauge when to enter with the response.

Kagiso was absent in session seven when the above activity was introduced, but was present for session nine when the activity was revised and then elaborated with actions. He watched and listened to the others and learned the song with remarkable speed. Generally, he lacked independence in his behaviour but had a very well developed capacity for turn-taking. His functioning in this call and response activity appeared to depend, in part, on his natural tendency to wait for his turn before responding. He also watched Faith and, as a result, his timing was very good. This activity clearly demonstrated the effectiveness of the scaffolding provided by a peer more advanced in this area of functioning, in this case Faith (Essa, 2011:139-140). Kagiso was highly observant and sensitive to actions of his peers, with the result that his responses were also exceptionally accurate. This is an example of how working within a children's ZPD allows children to function above the level at which they could function alone (Berk, 2013:268; Essa, 2011:139; Johnson, 2011:249). The competence of children more advanced in particular areas effectively "spreads" throughout the group, making it a valuable learning experience for all (Johnson, 2011:249).

Group one found this activity manageable, but not as easy, as did group two. Gezi and Princess took longer to internalise the new form of interaction, but it was eventually grasped by all. Their understanding of turn-taking, related to empathy and perspective-taking, was still developing. In addition, their capacity for deferred memory was not as advanced as their older peers. They thus tended to rely upon the immediate support of the facilitator, thus wanting to copy her words and actions simultaneously as she was doing them, rather than after she was finished (in their turn). Nevertheless, their grasp of the innate “rhythm” of this form of interaction was scaffolded by the rhythmic phrases of the lines of the song. The call of the facilitator guided their participation by providing participants with clear structure and regular points of entry, thus scaffolding their efforts (Essa, 2011:139-140). An exception was David. He attended carefully to the social and musical cues provided by the facilitator and his responses were attuned to her call. He needed a bit of time to practise the words and actions, but once these were learned, his responses were accurate and well timed. Schiller (2009:67-68) describes how children who are more adept at relating with their peers are those who are better able to recognise and respond to social signals such as visual and verbal cues, including being able to distinguish between different tones of voice and facial expressions. In addition to the song being structured around imitation and clear rhythms, this activity provided social cues to help guide participants. These included the movements and gestures of the facilitator, her eye-contact and facial expressions and melodic vocal inflections as she provided the call, all of which assisted the participants in participating optimally.

- Subtheme 5.3: Capacity to positively initiate interaction and appropriate involvement

Over time, the participants were increasingly able to initiate interactions with one another. This was particularly evident with certain participants, who initially struggled to make contact, such as Gezi, or who tended to be “observers” or “onlookers”, such as Kagiso. Gezi benefitted particularly from an activity involving appropriate physical contact in session nine. This was the activity where the participants chose partners and did the actions of “Eensy weensy spider” on each other’s backs. David, who had become an ally for Gezi, was absent on this day and Gezi interacted with the two

girls with exceptional sensitivity and gentleness (initially he had resisted interaction with them). He initiated interaction by wanting to partner with each in turn, as well as with the facilitator. He respected the personal boundaries of each partner by respectfully entering their personal space and performing the actions gently and considerately (he evidenced more thoughtful action than he had previously). By doing this he showed appropriate involvement with them, displaying empathy and care and a capacity for suitable, thoughtful nonverbal interaction. It seemed that giving and receiving this physical contact enhanced his capacity for social contact. Kagiso's participation in this activity also evidenced more meaningful involvement as his interactions were characterised by greater initiative and self-determination. In order to promote relatedness, Schiller (2009:69) recommends facilitating games that require two or more children to play together cooperatively. The above activities did just that, requiring that the participants form pairs and take turns in order to exchange the "giving" and the "receiving" roles.

Aspects of Princess and Faith's involvement also improved. While these two girls always joined in happily with activities, over the course of the research they became increasingly able to participate fully in singing and dancing exercises, respectively. The small group setting seemed to help them gain the confidence they needed to express themselves more easily and their participation was increasingly relaxed and light-hearted. Closely related to the skill of relatedness involves capacity for communication, which was the next skill considered in the study.

Theme 6: Capacity for communication

The construct regarding capacity for communication was operationalised through the following behavioural indicators: capacity for effective self-expression, willingness to request assistance when needed, appropriate expression of emotions, positive participation in group activities, ability to read and respond appropriately to social cues and the capacity to use appropriate verbal and/or nonverbal means to resolve conflict.

The music activities enhanced the verbal and especially nonverbal communication of all the participants in the two groups, though some (for example Gezi and Kagiso)

took longer to display improvement. While some activities, such as the greeting and call and response activities enhanced verbal communication, the main emphasis was upon nonverbal interaction. It was found that where participants were already effective communicators, the group music sessions offered ideal opportunities for nonverbal communication and expression. Participants less proficient in this area were assisted to express themselves through musical interaction and the nonverbal medium of play. Overall, growth in this area was evidenced predominantly by improved greeting of others, positive participation and reading and responding to social cues, appropriate expression of emotions and the volunteering of input, and “answering”/responding to musical “questions”/calls. Kagiso evidenced the most remarkable progress. For most of the study he seemed uninterested in conveying his own feelings, wishes or intentions; then in session nine, in an activity dealing with emotions, he made great strides in spontaneous self-expression. Winnie also demonstrated substantial progress during this activity.

- Subtheme 6.1: Appropriate greeting of others

The opening and closing activities of each session facilitated friendly greetings amongst the participants and the facilitator. Group one was shy to begin with, and the participants were not able to sing to one another in the first session. They gradually improved in their ability to make eye-contact and connect with one another during these activities and began to thoroughly enjoy the attention received. The slightly older group were immediately responsive to this activity. From the very beginning they sang to one another with eye-contact and smiles. During the line “And how are you?” they imitated the facilitator’s manner and leaned forward to the participant being greeted and patted her on the knee. Each time a participant was welcomed, “high-fives” would go around the group, indicating nonverbal acknowledgement of each member. Verbal and nonverbal means of communication were utilised. The facilitator, too, was welcomed with such enthusiasm. A great level of connectedness was demonstrated within this group, enhanced by the greeting activities. Meece et al. (2009:1) highlight the importance of greeting children, allowing them to feel special and wanted. They go on to advise that children should be greeted individually and by name, given full attention in the process. That this was

accomplished in the sessions was suggested by the delight the participants showed as they were sung to enthusiastically by their peers and facilitator. While the slightly younger group was a bit shy to begin with, they soon began to revel in the attention.

- Subtheme 6.2: Positive participation and reading and responding to nonverbal cues

The game “Ring-a-ring-a-roses”, introduced in the beginning of the study, seemed especially suitable for facilitating a heightened sense of connectedness and communication, especially among the younger group. In this early stage, it appeared that the greeting song (discussed above) placed excessive direct attention upon the younger participants, while the latter did not. For example, while Princess enjoyed the opening ritual and smiled throughout, she was unable to sustain eye-contact. When Gezi was greeted, he would look over the heads of his peers or down at the ground. When playing “Ring-a-ring-a-roses”, however, the group was more comfortable and more fully involved; they expressed themselves clearly and without inhibition. They looked directly at one another, smiled, held hands and directed one another to move in the right direction. In short, they made their intentions known while participating fully, using and responding to verbal and nonverbal cues to negotiate the simple social situation (only Gezi seemed less involved). This observation serves as an example of how play represents one of the best and most natural forms of expression and communication amongst children (Blanco & Ray, 2011:235-236). Music also provides children with a nonverbal medium for communication and is used to facilitate communication that is unhindered by the constraints of words (Swallow, 2002:44-45, 50-51; Wigram et al. 2002, 39, 169, 171-172, 183). Music and play activities combined may provide an ideal means of expression and communication for young children.

Over several sessions, Gezi gradually became better able to participate in the activities. He first allied with David, and then, in session nine during a variation of “Eensy weensy spider” (which required a fair grasp of nonverbal social cues), he participated exceptionally well with Winnie and Princess. As this is mentioned above in Subtheme 5.3 above, it will only be stated here that ability to participate improved suddenly and dramatically toward the end of the study.

- Subtheme 6.3: Appropriate expression of emotions

An activity focusing directly on emotional expression was placed toward the end of the study. It was positioned at a point of the group work process where strong group cohesion was established (Thompson & Henderson, 2007:521; Geldard & Geldard, 2001:65). Session nine, activity three, involved recognising and expressing happy and sad feelings. Several activities had served as preparation: playing and moving to loud and soft, fast and slow and legato and staccato music had laid the foundation for emotional expression. All of the participants responded very well to this activity using their physical, facial, vocal and musical expressions to full effect. Winnie showed a heightened ability for creative self-expression. While in previous sessions she had often appeared serious and guarded, she now demonstrated a remarkable capacity for spontaneous and animated expression and her depictions of the different emotions were care-free and convincing. Kagiso, too, displayed dramatic progress (discussed below under Subtheme 6.4). Tyre (2009:47), Denham and Brown (2010) and Schiller (2009:64-67) all highlight the importance of promoting children's recognition, understanding and expression of emotions. The music activities with "happy" and "sad" music allowed the participants to practise both emotional recognition and expression. The participants' remarkable ability to express emotion in relation to music might have been due, in part, to the fundamental connection between communication and musicality, rather than just verbalisation (Ritblatt et al., 2013:259). The participants were able to use musical and emotional cues, provided by the facilitator, one another and the music, to help them navigate their interaction (Denham & Brown, 2010:657).

- Subtheme 6.4: Volunteering of input

Kagiso was largely uncommunicative during most of the research. While he always appeared benign and contented, his active expression of emotions or intentions was minimal. He also did not seem intent to share his thoughts or ideas with the group. He was not an avid listener either; rather than attending to the communication of his peers and supervisor, he tended to follow their lead in activities. (This was likely because he spoke a different language to anyone in the group.) As mentioned, session nine witnessed a sudden and dramatic change in his capacity and

willingness for self-expression. First, he was keen to point out the face (happy or sad) matching the track of recorded music (also happy or sad). This he did accurately and with surprising autonomy. A significant change occurred in next part of the activity, where the participants were invited to express or “show” how they might feel when they are happy or sad, in accompaniment to the relevant piece of music. During the second “happy” piece, he suddenly jumped up, on his own initiative, and began to dance around the room. Then, for the following “sad” piece, he sat down and pretended to cry mournfully. He continued to act these two alternating roles with conviction and unprecedented dramatic effect. Each time he got up to dance his movements became more expressive and creative. Faith and Tiny soon began to emulate him in an unlikely reversal of roles.

From that moment forward, Kagiso’s behaviour and interactions took on a new spontaneity and expressiveness. Perhaps this was partly due to the universality of musical, nonverbal expression (Berger, 2002:130; Skeef, 1999:332; Hodges, 1996:29-61), as opposed to the limitations of his foreign tongue which he didn’t share with any other person at the crèche. One of the key advantages of music participation is its allowance for dynamic and effective nonverbal communication (Swallow, 2002:44-45, 50-51; Wigram et al. 2002, 39, 169, 171-172, 183), allowing children to express their feelings positively and in a way comfortable for them. This is supported by the words of Ritblatt et al. (2013:259): “Beginning in infancy, musicality exists at the core of family interactions and forms the basis for social and emotional communication throughout the life span.”

Princess also evidenced increasing capacity to volunteer input as she frequently requested that “Ring-a-ring-a-roses” was played at the end of sessions. This was significant as she was generally a shy child. It appeared that she felt safe enough in the group setting to make her wishes known.

- Subtheme 6.5: Reading and responding to social cues and “answering”/ responding to musical “questions”/calls

A final example involves the typical dialogue structure present within the call and response activity based on the song *Che che koolay*. It facilitated two-way

communication, where the facilitator called and the participants responded. This process is foundational to any communication, where one first needs to listen attentively and then respond in turn. Further, while imitation may be the simplest form of response, it is basic to all others: it precedes and prepares the young child for the question-answer format of dialogue that is common within the classroom setting. All of the participants did remarkably well with this activity, taking into account their ages (refer to Theme 5 Relatedness above where this activity is discussed in more detail). The participants' awareness of their peers and facilitator, and of the intentions of those individuals, increased significantly. Their responses became steadily more attuned to the facilitator and coordinated among one another, as evidenced by increasing promptness and sensitivity to subtle changes in pitch, rhythm and dynamics of the music. This is in accordance with the experience of Wigram et al. (2002:174), who explain that musical interaction can effectively facilitate musical and social dialogue between participants and thus foster their awareness and understanding of reciprocal communication. Reciprocal communication would be an essential skill in the development of cooperativeness, the social skill considered next.

Theme 7: Cooperativeness

The skill set of cooperativeness was examined by observing for behavioural indicators including the capacity for sharing, taking turns, joint problem solving with adults and peers, considering the perspectives and intentions of others, reading social cues and responding appropriately, engaging in joint conflict resolution and complementing or encouraging other children.

All of the participants interacted with increased cooperation as they progressed throughout the study. The most notable improvement occurred in the areas of sharing and turn-taking; joint problem solving and the capacity to encourage/support peers; relating to the perspectives, interests and intentions of others; and joint problem solving and reading and responding to social cues. The most impressive improvement was displayed by Princess and Gezi in group one and Tiny in group two. These were the youngest participants in the study. Princess and Tiny became gradually more proficient in the basics of sharing, waiting and taking turns; Gezi was

eventually able to engage in thoughtful, reciprocal interaction required by certain activities. While Grace displayed room for improvement concerning her capacity to cooperate, she did not attend the sessions regularly enough for noticeable progress to occur.

- Subtheme 7.1: Sharing and taking turns

In the fourth activity of session two, “Meet the instruments”, the participants were required to pass on their instrument to the child on their right each time the facilitator called “share”. This was early in the research and the participants still had difficulty sharing and taking turns with the instruments. In group one, Princess and Gezi tried to grab the instruments they wanted to play as opposed to the one being passed to them. David had an excellent sense of these basics of cooperation and helped the others to negotiate the activity. In group two, Tiny and Grace grabbed and squabbled over instruments, while Faith and Kagiso helped maintain the flow of the action. The way in which the more advanced participants supported the musical and social interactions of their peers evidenced the principle of scaffolding amongst group members (Essa, 2011:139-140; Hendrick & Weissman, 2010:13). Sharing and taking turns with the instruments gave the participants an appropriate opportunity to practise these skills of cooperation. Considerable improvement in sharing and turn-taking was evidenced throughout the course of the study, especially in the behaviour of Princess, Gezi and Tiny. The fact that Tiny was in a group of slightly older children seemed to help him master the basics of cooperation more quickly than would otherwise be expected.

- Subtheme 7.2: Joint problem solving and capacity to encourage/support peers

Several of the music activities presented age-appropriate opportunities for problem solving and mutual support of peers. In the second activity of session three, the move-to-music activities required the participants to work together in pairs toward a common goal. Most of the participants were progressively more able to negotiate the various social situations, and some showed remarkable capacity to avoid potential conflict and support their peers. Faith displayed mastery of the basics of sharing and

taking turns and enjoyed participating in ever more complex forms of collaboration. Gradually she became bolder and ventured to adjust certain rules to better suit a particular situation, evidencing her social aptitude and proficiency with this type of (rule-based) play.

An example of such a paired movement activity was “Row, row, row your boat” in session three. When the participants chose partners for this activity, the boys (Gezi and David) and the girls (Princess and Winnie) in group one formed partners. Gezi had difficulty playing along, and his movements went against rather than with those of David. Gezi was not yet ready to engage more meaningfully with David. David was remarkably patient and constantly attempted to guide Gezi and bring him back to the appropriate “rowing” motions. He was able to negotiate the potentially conflictual situation. Between the girls, Winnie supported Princess, guiding her movements. Princess responded keenly to the cues provided and together they succeeded in “rowing” cooperatively. Group two managed well. Grace was absent, so Tiny and Kagiso first paired with each other, where after Faith took turns to pair with each of them. In the first pair, Tiny provided a great deal of the impetus and energy while Kagiso helped regulate the rhythm and direction of the movement. Faith enjoyed partnering with both; she supported their movements, staying closely within the rhythm of the music.

The above paired movement activity evidenced the effectiveness of scaffolding amongst peers as described by Essa (2011:139-140) and Hendrick and Weissman (2010:13). The functioning of the less advanced child of the pair (for example, Princess in her partnership with Winnie) was raised to a higher level than she would be able to reach independently of support.

The circle dance learned and practised in sessions five and six also represented an exercise in joint problem solving. Most participants accomplished this exceptionally well, rapidly grasping the flow of the game and realising the importance of watching and attending to what the others did, timing their movements accordingly. The fabric circle had captured the attention of all the participants. In both groups, the members worked toward the joint goal of raising and lowering the material in accordance with the words of the song. This served as an example of cooperative learning (Berk, 2013:271; Essa, 2011:139). This dance would have been impossible to perform if all

the participants had not worked harmoniously. Both groups were motivated to make this activity a success. Most of them sang “up and down” along with the chorus, further guiding and supporting the group movements. David in group one and Faith in group two played clear leading roles in this activity. In session five (he was absent for session six) David’s quiet self-confidence was demonstrated as he listened with great attention to the words. His large, definite movements were assured and accurate, effectively serving as a foundation for the activity of the others. Faith took it upon herself to call out “up and down” loudly, also listening carefully to the music and actively supporting the others. The competence of these more advanced participants “spread” throughout the group, indicating that the group was functioning within their ZPD (Johnson, 2011:249).

- Subtheme 7.3: Relating to the perspectives, interests and intentions of others

The paired movement activities, as discussed above (such as “Row, row, row your boat”), encouraged the participants to relate to the perspectives, interests and intentions of their partners. Both partners were responsible for a successful outcome (i.e. coordinated movement in harmony with the music). With the exception of Gezi, all of the participants were able to engage fully in this activity. It seemed that Gezi struggled to relate to the intentions of his partner David and was unable to respond appropriately to his cues for action. Most partners made a reasonable contribution to the shared activity; more advanced partners contributed more in terms of support. Where a partner was unable to coordinate his intentions and behaviour with that of a peer (as in the case of Gezi), the activity became very difficult to perform and the other partner (in this case, David) had to invest a great deal of additional effort. The performance of such activities served as an example of cooperative learning as conceptualised by Berk (2013:271) and Essa (2011:139). The participants had to carefully coordinate their movements in order to work toward the same goal (performing the joint actions) (Berk, 2013:271; Essa, 2011:139).

Finally, it appeared that the rhythms and words of the song assisted most of the pairs to achieve a state of intersubjectivity (with the exception of David and Gezi). These musical aspects helped the partners to arrive at a common understanding of what the activity required and served to support their on-going interaction (Berk,

2013:268; Essa, 2011:139; Hendrick & Weissman, 2010:13). Such shared movement to music helped coordinate the intentions and behaviour of the pairs, resulting in meaningful interaction for the participants (Zuckerman, 2007:50).

Session nine was successful for all the participants, but it brought about particularly welcome improvement from Gezi. The fifth activity, “Eensy weensy spider”, was no exception. The words and actions of this song had been learned in session eight. In session nine, the activity was reviewed and elaborated upon. Now, instead of simply performing the actions as usual, the participants did the actions upon one another’s backs, encouraging cooperation as they needed to choose partners, relate to one another’s intentions, make appropriate physical contact and take turns. All the participants in both groups showed remarkable progress in this activity, evidenced by greater attention and responsiveness to each other’s actions. Kagiso engaged his partner proactively, with a new-found sense of self-direction.

However, it was Gezi who made the most remarkable improvement. The contact that he made with the other participants was remarkable, and it was sustained for the entire duration of the session. As this was discussed under relatedness above, it will just be emphasised here that he displayed exceptional capacity for joint negotiation and reciprocity. He took turns and shared roles willingly. Moreover, his interactions were attentive and contactful. They were truly collaborative, executed with agency and deliberation. This evidenced great contrast to the earlier activity, where Gezi struggled to cooperate in a far simpler activity, namely holding hands and making “rowing” motions in session three. Zan and Hildebrandt (2010:407) highlight the ability of cooperative games to promote “reciprocal negotiation strategies and shared experience,” adding that such activities offer a developmentally appropriate form of learning for young children. They explain that cooperative games nurture children’s capacity for reciprocal interaction and for social perspective taking (Zan & Hildebrandt, 2010:407). Finally, Finlinson et al. (2000:30) note that cooperative games are able to enhance positive physical contact amongst children. From a Vygotskian point of view, one can say that the children reached a state of intersubjectivity as the game facilitated a shared space for mutual understanding (Berk, 2013:268; Essa, 2011:139).

- Subtheme 7.4: Joint problem solving and reading and responding to social cues

Joint problem solving was discussed in Subtheme 7.2 together with the indicator of supporting and encouraging peers. Cooperativeness is a complex skill set requiring a combination of skills which function together to produce adaptive social behaviour. Excessive attempts to isolate indicators may lead to artificial categorisation, and for this reason, different indicators are grouped together and new functions emerge with new combinations. Activity three of session four, “Finding the group’s heartbeat” was well suited to enhancing cooperation as maintaining a common beat required joint purpose and unified action. Participants needed to identify with the collective intention of the group and respond accurately to social/musical cues in order to stay within the shared beat. All the participants, from both groups, displayed excellent rhythm and ability to maintain the pulse. Even the more impulsive behaviour of participants such as Princess and Tiny was regulated by the common beat. Only Gezi still struggled. While he was able to play a steady beat, he could not maintain it for any length of time. He would soon begin to move and play without beat or purpose. The facilitator assisted him by holding his hands and physically supporting him as he played. He was not averse to such direct assistance, and his rhythm improved significantly with this individual support. This indicates the value of adult scaffolding, or the provision of support which allows the child to function at a higher level than he could without assistance (Essa, 2011:139-140). With regard to the other participants, a remarkable sense of intersubjectivity and group cohesion were swiftly achieved. Marching and playing in time provided powerful cues to which the group responded and the result was effective and inherently motivating. All of the participants, each with a unique process, tempo and “rhythm”, were united in a common beat. This beat represented a dynamic shared understanding through the “... process of harmonization or coordination” of intentions and actions of the participants (Zuckerman, 2007:50).

The focused observations utilised in this research indicated that participants showed improvement in all seven social skills that were the focus of the observation. However, not all participants displayed equal progress. The progress of the individual participants is discussed next.

Discussion of individual participants: Progress and outcome

This section is included in order to provide an overview of the progress made by each participant over the course of the research.

- Gezi

Of all the participants, Gezi evidenced some of the most impressive improvement during the study. In the beginning, and for many sessions into the study, he evidenced little social awareness and poor contact with his peers and facilitator and needed a great deal of encouragement to participate. It took many weeks before he became more interested in the activities, positive in his participation, and able to approach another participant, David, as a potential playmate. Toward the end of the study he seemed confident enough to engage positively and constructively with the other participants, displaying great enjoyment in his new-found capacity to participate meaningfully. At this stage he showed enhanced awareness of the musical stimuli and his physical and social environment, and a heightened interest in the other participants and their play. His interaction had become far more purposeful and thoughtful as the quality of his attention, personal agency and self-control had improved. By session nine, he was able to interact gently and considerately with the two girls in his group, with whom he had previously resisted interaction. He engaged them with remarkable capacity for joint negotiation and reciprocity as he willingly collaborated by taking turns and sharing roles.

- Princess

The preschool teacher had said that Princess was shy, lacking confidence in the group setting. In the early stages of the study she was very shy and quiet, seemed uncomfortable with prolonged individual attention and was reluctant to sing with the other participants. But she quickly grew in confidence, perhaps due to the safety and support of the small group setting and the consistent structure of the sessions appeared to help her participate with rapidly increasing agency and autonomy. She was increasingly able to communicate her desires, such as by requesting that “Ring-

a-ring-a-roses” be played at the end of most sessions. Princess had always expressed a keen interest in her environment and was an eager playmate for the other participants. There was notable improvement in her ability to focus on an activity with persistence, and heightened impulse control showed in her ability to listen carefully and move/play to music, while regulating her activity according to its changing tempo or dynamics. Growing cooperativeness was evident as she was increasingly able to share, take turns and engage in paired activities requiring collaborative effort. Over time, she became highly proficient in her ability to read and respond to social cues and was a perceptive and attentive partner in such activities.

- Winnie

At first, Winnie presented as a serious, conscientious child who was preoccupied with doing everything “right”. Over time, she became increasingly explorative and creative, even adventurous, in her participation. Her interactions with the other participants were progressively more light-hearted, playful and spontaneous. From the start, Winnie had evidenced outstanding attention, persistence and determination. She followed instructions easily and helped maintain the flow and direction of activities, becoming more and more of a support for the other participants. Being a fairly reserved child to begin with, her capacity for communication and expressiveness improved, vividly evidenced in an activity dealing with emotional expression where she engaged with remarkable feeling and spontaneity. Finally, Winnie functioned with an advanced capacity for cooperativeness, frequently supporting and guiding her partner in paired activities.

- David

David had been referred to the group as his teacher perceived him as being too quiet. He was quiet and did not talk much throughout the study, but did not appear to the researcher as timid or withdrawn. He displayed a quiet confidence from the beginning, and in session one gently encouraged Princess when she was too shy to say her name for the group. He displayed interest in his environment and his involvement with the other participants was remarkably attentive, considerate and

purposeful. He readily understood and adhered to rules and instructions and increasingly assumed a leading and supporting role in paired or group activities. David was sociable and easy going. When Gezi began to show an interest in engaging David as his playmate, about halfway through the research, David was a willing friend. He was remarkably patient with Gezi, who at this point still often struggled to interact effectively. As the activities began to demand more active collaboration and advanced social skills, David's social competence proved adequate. He was able to attend to subtleties of the social cues of the other participants and researcher and responded appropriately. It appeared that from the start, David was a socially adept boy who had mastered the basic skills of cooperation. Nevertheless, the sessions afforded him the opportunity to engage in positive social interaction and to practise scaffolding the social behaviour of less advanced participants, a role he was increasingly comfortable in.

- Tiny

Tiny's teacher had wanted him to attend the study primarily because he struggled to "sit still" and concentrate. He was indeed lively and energetic, but appeared to be a friendly and sociable child. He made gains in the area of confidence, as he was able to function with increasing independence and agency as the research progressed. He was also better able to make transitions from one activity to the next. He was extremely curious about everything around him and his participation was keen and whole-hearted. Perhaps his most significant progress involved his much enhanced capacity for persistence and sustained attention when involved in an activity. He was also increasingly able to follow instructions and exercise impulse control. Furthermore, his behaviour became progressively more cooperative as he engaged in opportunities for sharing, turn-taking, waiting and listening. Such progress seemed to be enhanced by the presence of more advanced participants in his group. He was an enthusiastic, energetic partner in paired activities and responded well to social cues from his peers.

- Faith

Faith had been included in the music groups due to her lack of confidence in group participation in the classroom context. Like Princess, she rapidly grew in confidence, perhaps due to the security offered by the small group setting. A clear indicator of improved self-assurance and agency involved her burgeoning ability and willingness to dance with the others. She appeared to revel in this new-found capacity, creatively and expressively exploring many different ways of moving to the music. Through creative movement and music-making she evidenced less inclination to be overly conscientious. Her musical play became spontaneous, inventive and playful. Faith was attentive, determined and adept during group activities and enjoyed guiding and supporting the other participants. From the start, she had comprehended and followed instructions with ease. Her capacity to relate with her peers was outstanding, and she was intuitively able to engage in reciprocal, mutual interaction while attending carefully and accurately to social cues. She was proficient in the basic skills of cooperation and enjoyed greater challenges, displaying a growing enjoyment of more complex collaborative activities, as well as scaffolding the interaction of the other participants.

- Kagiso

Kagiso had always presented as a gentle, easy-going participant. He did not display much confidence, seeming to lack a sense of personal agency and self-determination. This may have had a great deal to do with the language barrier he experienced, speaking a different language to that of the other participants and the facilitator. To begin with, he showed little exploratory or inventive behaviour and was content to follow the lead of the other participants. His involvement could appear passive, lacking initiative. Nevertheless, it was notable that, despite lack of verbal understanding, he was always able to participate in all the activities. The rules and processes underlying each activity were inherent within the structure of the music, and the interaction of the other participants further supported his participation. Gradually, the predictability and structure of the sessions seemed to support his growing sense of initiative and personal agency. Slowly, he began to experiment in the musical and social setting, although it was only toward the end of the study that

he was really able to assert himself and make his intentions known. He had always been observant and responsive to the social cues of other participants, but the last sessions evidenced his capacity for proactive, purposeful engagement, in addition to unprecedented self-expression. Finally, his natural tendency toward cooperativeness gained an element of active and purposeful collaboration toward the end of the research.

- Grace

Unfortunately, Grace had been absent for seven out of ten sessions due to medical difficulties and it is therefore not possible to comment on her progress and outcome with regard to the research. What can be said is that she attended the first two sessions where her participation was full, whole-hearted and independent. She was gregarious and friendly, although at times not very cooperative, displaying difficulty sharing, taking turns and respecting the personal boundaries of the other participants and facilitator. Her capacity to delay gratification and control impulses also required development, but the two sessions were not sufficient to effect change. She attended the final session, which included the “good-bye” party, where she was energetic, happy and sociable. However, it is not possible to explore progress or change due to her very limited involvement with the study.

In summary, the participants showed improvement in all areas of social functioning considered, namely confidence, curiosity, intentionality, self-control, relatedness, communication and cooperativeness. Two of the participants, Gezi and Kagiso, displayed more dramatic progress than the others. Gezi made remarkable gains in the areas of positive attitude, willingness to participate constructively, thoughtful and purposeful action, interest in other participants and their play, active engagement with other participants, reciprocal interaction and relating to the perspectives, interests and intentions of others. Kagiso displayed exceptional progress in his capacity for personal agency, self-assertion, exploration of new behaviours, self-determination and the ability to take the lead, initiation of interactions, self-expression and the volunteering of input. The progress of these two participants was gradual, with the most notable improvement occurring toward the end of the study.

Some of the younger participants, such as Tiny and Princess, made significant progress in their capacity for adjustment to new situations (transitioning between activities), attention and persistence in task completion, impulse control, following rules and instructions, initiation of activities (Princess's requests to play "Ring-a-ring-a-roses") and sharing and taking turns.

Participants who were shy and unsure of themselves, such as Princess and Faith, became more confident, willing to act with agency and assert themselves through the musical media of song and dance. Participants who were overly conscientious, such as Faith and Winnie, made substantial progress in their capacity for inventive and explorative behaviour. Finally, David, who from the start displayed advanced social competence, was afforded many opportunities to further advance his social skills and to support, encourage and guide the other participants in the group.

4.5.2.2 Empirical findings from semi-structured interviews

The following paragraphs contain the information obtained from the semi-structured interviews conducted with the teacher of the preschool class, who was another participant in the research.

Teacher reflections upon the individual participants

In the first interview, conducted prior to the implementation of the music-based groups, the teacher was asked to describe the behaviour of each of the eight participants with regard to the seven themes of confidence, curiosity, intentionality, self-control, relatedness, capacity for communication and cooperativeness. The second interview, occurring after the implementation of the music-based socialisation group, examined any changes she had observed in the participants since their participation. Rather than discussing the participants' behaviour in terms of abstract concepts such as those listed in the observation schedule, the researcher chose to describe the constructs in terms of concrete behaviours. Everyday scenarios and situations were used in which the participants' behaviours and interactions could be discussed in concrete terms; a typical classroom situation, story-time, was one

prominent example in which the different types of behaviour were discussed. The follow-up interview also explored the teacher's general perceptions regarding the value and fit of the music-based sessions within the community crèche setting.

- Gezi

Gezi was described as often unsure of himself. The teacher stated that he was a “slow learner” needing individual attention and prompting in order to stimulate his learning and activity. She noted that he was often one of the last children to complete a task. However, the end result could be quite good, especially if it were a drawing. She also said that he would lose interest and want to wander around the room during story time, finding it difficult to concentrate. He apparently did not have many friends and he seldom spoke with his peers. His teacher said that on the whole he was a good child, generally trying to listen to her, although sometimes “forgetting” to. In the follow-up interview, she stated that Gezi always became excited when he realised that it was time for music. He would work faster when he saw the researcher enter the premises. She said that he seemed happier afterwards, more focused, and that he seemed to play more often with David, a fellow learner who was also a participant in the study.

- Princess

The preschool teacher said that Princess was a somewhat shy in new situations and with new people, but that she was very friendly and well-liked by all her peers. She was keen to learn new things and would begin a task with great enthusiasm. However, she could become distracted and lose interest and sometimes needed help to stay focused and finish the task. The teacher described her as a happy girl and a good child, although she could sometimes be very excited and energetic, not always remembering to do what she was supposed to. She said that after the music-based programme, Princess was better able to sing in front of the other children. She used to have a very soft voice, and now she could sing with more volume. The teacher noticed that while she had always been friendly with the other children, she now seemed better able to “speak her mind”. The researcher understood that

Princess could be more assertive with her peers. Princess seemed to have become a special friend for Winnie.

- Winnie

Winnie was new in the school when the research began and her teacher thought that the music sessions would help her to settle in and get to know her peers. Her teacher stated that she was not at all shy and that her self-assuredness had helped her make a good start in her new environment. She told the researcher that she had befriended most of the class on her first day. Being new at the crèche, Winnie was not well-known to her teacher, however, she thought Winnie was a “slow learner” and not that interested in her work. She thought Winnie was strong willed and stubborn, wanting to do only what pleased her. This was quite different to what the researcher as facilitator had noticed during the music sessions, where she was always very attentive and interested in the activities. After the music-based programme, the teacher described Winnie as being better able to listen. For example, she paid more attention during story time and was able to answer questions afterwards (indicating good comprehension). She had also become a good friend for Princess, another participant, and the two girls were great playmates.

- David

The teacher referred to David as a “clever boy” who was able to pay very good attention and work well on his own. She said that he was confident and learned things more easily than the other children. He was able to follow instructions and completed tasks without excessive prompting. Although he was a quiet child, he got on well with his peers. He was thoughtful and helpful toward them, and was very seldom involved in fights or quarrels. However, his teacher seemed to think that he was excessively quiet, saying that he needed to talk more and be more outgoing with the other children. In the second interview, the teacher stated that David looked forward to and enjoyed the music-based sessions and that he was often livelier afterwards. She said “he had more energy” and was livelier in his interactions with

his peers, although he was still very quiet. He played more often with Gezi, which was significant, as Gezi did not have many friends.

- Tiny

Tiny was described as being “like a mouse”, that he was quick and lively. His teacher said that he was very interested in everything going on around him and was always curious. He learned quickly but sometimes struggled to concentrate for extended periods of time. For example, during story time, he would listen well for intervals and then would suddenly jump up and run around. Generally, he was able to answer questions on the story told. His teacher said that he had many friends and that he was very playful. Sometimes he struggled to take turns and share toys, but was generally friendly, outgoing and popular with his peers. In the second interview, the teacher mentioned that Tiny was always very excited to attend the music groups and that he frequently came back to class practicing little songs or dances that he had learned. She was unable to think of general changes regarding his social behaviour; he was just as friendly and playful as he had always been.

- Faith

Faith was described as being a very good, obedient girl. She was a very fast learner and concentrated well. Her teacher said that during story time, she listened carefully and answered questions well. She was somewhat prone to distraction, especially when she was tired, but not as much as the other children. Apparently she took a long time to complete tasks, but her work was always good. She was popular with the other children, always friendly and kind, generally happy and exceptionally playful. Toward her teacher she was helpful; she could be trusted in small errands. The teacher described her as highly cooperative and able to work well with others as well as independently. Only in the larger group setting she tended to become reticent and withdrawn. In the second interview, the teacher stated that Faith had always been reluctant to dance with the others; she was too uncertain of herself. Now, she was an enthusiastic and creative dancer. The other teachers had commented on this

change as they helped prepare for the Christmas concert. Faith returned from the music sessions seeming “lighter” and more relaxed.

- Kagiso

The preschool teacher said that Kagiso had not been at the crèche for very long. She explained that he was from a different country and spoke a different language from the others, which made him very quiet. She mentioned how he watched the others more than he was willing to join in. He was a bit withdrawn. She explained that he struggled with his work and that it was extremely difficult to get him to finish a task with the others. He often appeared “lost in his mind” as though his thoughts were somewhere else. In group activities he could be cooperative, able to share and take turns, although his involvement in group activities sounded as though it was rather passive. In his quiet way he got on well with his peers, who had accepted him easily. In the second interview his teacher stated that he was much more outgoing; even without using words he initiated more interaction on the playground. However, she could not be sure whether this was because of the music sessions or because he was just settling down in his new environment. Regardless, he seemed very “awake” and happy after the sessions.

- Grace

During the first interview the teacher mentioned that Grace experienced problems with her eyes. Her eyesight was very poor and during drawing activities she would need to hold the paper right up to her eyes so she could see what she was doing. Her teacher wanted to include Grace in the sessions as she felt music would give her the chance to participate fully with her peers. What her teacher did not mention was that Grace was frequently absent as she was frequently admitted into hospital for operations and treatment and spent extensive periods of time at home recovering.

Grace was described as a highly gregarious girl, despite her difficulties with her eyesight. She was unreserved and appeared very sure of herself. According to the

teacher, Grace was apparently not interested in her work, which could have been related to her not being able to see properly. Grace was highly distractible and had difficulty sitting still during story time. Nevertheless, her teacher said that she engaged more actively with her peers during group games and fun activities, although she struggled to share or take turns. Although she was friendly and outgoing, she sounded impulsive and somewhat attention seeking. During the second interview her teacher expressed that she was disappointed that Grace had been absent so often that term. Grace had enjoyed the sessions that she did attend, and her teacher believed she would have benefited greatly from regular attendance.

To summarise, based on the teacher's responses in the first and second interviews, it seemed as though certain areas of social competence of the participants had improved in their functioning in the crèche, while other areas showed little or no evidence of change. This suggested that many of the improvements evident in the sessions had not transferred to the children's general classroom behaviour. The following paragraphs describe indicators which point to improvement in certain areas.

The teacher suggested that several participants evidenced improved mood directly after the sessions. Gezi appeared happier and more settled, David was livelier and more energetic, Tiny was always excited to attend the sessions and came back practicing bits of the songs and dances, Faith returned relaxed and "lighter" and Kagiso was described as happy and "awake" after sessions. "Improved mood" could indicate enhanced intentionality (through display of a generous and friendly disposition) or enhanced confidence (through display of a positive attitude). The researcher believes that the improved mood of participants involved a combination of both. However, because Kagiso tended to lack intentionality in the earlier sessions, the teacher's report of him being more "awake" suggested that this was an increase in the latter.

The confidence of several participants was enhanced, especially visible through an increased capacity for personal agency and self-assertion. Princess could sing in front of the other children as well as assert herself more often. Similarly, Faith had become a confident dancer. David was said to talk more in his interactions and Kagiso had become more outgoing. Winnie's improvement in attentive listening may

have signalled improved confidence, although her general ability to pay better attention suggests enhanced intentionality. Furthermore, it could also have signalled improved self-control, as listening would often have meant following an instruction.

Several participants were reported to be better able to relate to their peers, such as Kagiso, who was better able to initiate interactions. Some became better friends or playmates with peers attending the same group, as in the case with Gezi and David as well as with Princess and Winnie. Finally, enhanced communication was evident in the behaviour of Winnie, who was said to be better able to answer questions posed to her during story time.

Another focus of the interview with the teacher after completion of the group sessions was to gain her opinion regarding the fit of the music-based groups within the programme of the crèche.

Teacher reflections upon the fit between the music-based groups and the community crèche

During the second interview, the participants' teacher conveyed her belief that the music sessions fitted exceptionally well with the overall programme offered at the crèche. She stated that music was an important part of everyday life at the crèche, and that singing and dancing were familiar activities for the children. She emphasised that music is vital as it helps heal many of the internal stresses and ailments from which a person suffers. The music sessions fitted well within the scheduled routine of the crèche, the teacher stated, as they were well planned and punctually facilitated. The teacher had no doubt that the sessions were enjoyed tremendously by all the participants, and she expressed a wish that her whole class could have been included in the music-based programme. She believed that the music involvement had a relaxing and uplifting effect on the children.

The teacher indicated that the sessions were offered with appropriate regularity. More often and the children would have become tired and too busy; less often and they would lose interest and forget what they had learned. Finally, she said that she would recommend such music sessions as a permanent part of the crèche's programme, and that it be offered to all the children. She emphasised that children

need such opportunities, as there is less and less time and place for music participation in families and society in general today. While they do their best to incorporate music at the crèche, they did not have teachers that were specialised in this area, and neither did they have musical instruments at their disposal.

In conclusion, the music-based sessions were said to have an exceptionally good fit with the programme and culture of the community crèche. The teacher expressed that such sessions would be appropriate as an on-going endeavour in this setting.

In the following section, findings from the research, together with contextual influences, will be discussed.

4.5.2.3 Discussion of findings

This section provides a discussion of the main research findings which emerged from the study. It is structured according to *what* changes occurred in the children's behaviour and then *how* the music-based activities contributed to such changes. Contextual information is incorporated within the discussion in order to enhance the meaningfulness of findings.

The seven social skills according to the model of Schiller (2009)

All the participants showed improvement in each of the seven areas of social functioning included in the model of Schiller (namely, confidence, curiosity, intentionality, self-control, relatedness, communication and cooperativeness). However, not all indicators of all the constructs (as outlined in the observation schedule) showed improvement. Furthermore, progress varied in nature and extent among the individual participants.

- Confidence

The music activities enhanced the confidence levels of all the participants, regardless of slight differences in age. Positive behaviour change was most evident

in those participants who were shy and unsure of themselves, who struggled to make effective contact with other participants, facilitator or activities and/or who lacked the sense of personal agency to engage effectively with others.

Within the predictable structure and routine of the music-based sessions, the participants could function with greater initiative and self-determination. They could exercise their personal agency in this secure and predictable setting. As participants began to sense the consistency inherent within the sessions, they also managed periods of transition more easily. Finally, the music-based groups promoted a positive, constructive attitude among participants, who interacted with a heightened engagement and friendliness. They became better able to present themselves genially and participate with growing camaraderie.

Music activities appeared to enhance confidence in several ways. First, several activities allowed the participants to make simple self-statements. These statements were supported rhythmically and socially within the music-based group, encouraging a sense of validation among peers. Then, confidence was encouraged through the experience of successful participation within the music-based groups. The activities were age-appropriate and flexible, allowing each participant to participate fully in a way that was comfortable for her. Experiences of success promoted feelings of mastery and self-efficacy, contributing to improved confidence.

- Curiosity

The curiosity of all participants was enhanced, to varying extents, by the music activities. Improvement was most noticeable where participants were overly conscientious and concerned with “correctness” or where a child tended to follow the behavioural cues of others, seeming reluctant to experiment and take risks in the musical/social environment.

It became evident, especially in the case of one participant, Gezi, that the physical stimulation provided by materials was not sufficient to encourage meaningful participation. Consistent, on-going collaborative efforts in the context of accepting and supportive relationships were necessary to foster his capacity for genuine participation within the learning environment.

The music-based groups enhanced curiosity by providing an accepting environment where the participants could explore in the musical/social setting without the fear of “making a mistake.” Participants’ new ideas and original ways of playing, moving or dancing were encouraged and valued. They could experiment with different ways of being and of interacting with others in the safety of the group. Within the inherent structure and boundaries, most of the activities allowed the participants to engage in play that was, to varying extents, open ended and free from rigid expectations. Activities were facilitated in a manner that allowed the participants to experiment and make their own discoveries. Free to explore with different forms of music-making, moving and dancing, the participants engaged in a collaborative and creative learning process.

The music-based groups introduced various forms of stimulation. The new sounds, colours, shapes and textures piqued the participants’ interest in their physical and social environment and in the activities, enhancing their willingness to engage and learn. Materials could be used in a variety of ways, allowing for open-ended, creative play. Participants explored many interesting ways of using the various instruments and discovered new ways of using the large fabric circle (used for the circle dance), scarves or flags. The stimulation provided by the instruments, recorded music and other materials served as a powerful impetus that propelled participants toward active engagement.

- Intentionality

The music sessions assisted all the participants to function with increased intentionality. Improvement was particularly noticeable where participants had difficulty engaging in autonomous, self-determined behaviour or purposeful, thoughtful interaction. The music activities also increased participants’ interest in one another’s play and better contact enhanced identification with one another as intentional beings. Finally, more reticent participants were allowed to take the lead in activities which encouraged initiative, personal agency and self-expression.

The music groups enhanced the participants’ capacity for intentional behaviour by serving as a natural motivating force for their activity. Musical stimulation appeared

to engage their attention, enabling them to behave with determination and purpose, and motivating them to persist with activities for significant periods of time.

Music-based activities encouraged thoughtful participation. They required that the participants listen carefully, pay attention and make conscious decisions. Call and response activities are an example, as participants needed to listen carefully to the call and adjust their responses accordingly. Often, group decisions were necessary as the entire group needed to work toward a successful process and achievement of a joint goal. In such cases, activities fostered shared intentionality. Collective action among participants was promoted as they became increasingly aware of and attentive to each other's' perceptions and intentions.

The music's internal structure supported intentional activity. For example, patterns of loud and soft dynamics within excerpts of recorded music scaffolded the participants' playing as individuals and as a group. The patterns and structure present within the music helped organise the participants' sensory perceptions and supported intentional behaviour. The music used possessed clear patterns (for example, loud and soft sections) and structure (form, phrasing and text). The participants, as individuals and as a group, were able to listen to the music, and occasionally the words of a song, which effectively scaffolded their shared intentionality.

- Self-control

The self-control of all participants was enhanced as observed during the music sessions. Effects were more noticeable among the younger participants who were in the earlier stages of developing impulse control and delay of gratification. Significant improvement was also evident where there was a lack of intentionality, which the researcher believed contributed to a lack of self-control. In these instances, an increased tendency to think before acting contributed to enhanced self-control.

The music activities possessed a limited number of clear and simple rules which were consistently applied, encouraging participants to comprehend and adhere to instructions. In addition, accompanying music often scaffolded their participation and supported prompt and accurate responses. Combining music and movement was especially effective for enhancing self-control. Moving with music fully engaged their

attention while guiding their actions. Appropriate movement was facilitated by the dynamic states within the music, which harnessed and channelled the energy of some while energising the activity of others, leading to better regulated functioning.

The music-based groups enhanced participants' awareness of and appropriate respect for social boundaries within the group. The stable and consistent boundary provided by the music group itself appeared to contain participants' behaviour, enabling them to regulate their own behaviour and to maintain a sense of group cohesion.

Finally, several activities targeted impulse control by requiring that participants wait for a particular stimulus before responding in some way. An example was resisting the impulse to play loudly when they should play softly or to play when they should remain silent. These activities promoted attentive listening and thought before action, thus encouraging self-regulation. Participants often prompted one another during such activities, illustrating the potential for peer scaffolding.

- Relatedness

The music-based groups facilitated positive interaction among the participants, providing a safe environment where they could practise interpersonal skills such as turn-taking, leading, following, supporting and reciprocity. This benefitted all the participants, although improvement was most evident where participants had difficulty maintaining contact or initiating interaction with others.

The sessions were able to create something akin to Schiller's (2009:56-57) "caring community of learners," as supportive and trusting relationships between peers and facilitator helped ensure a sense of belonging and group cohesion. Certain activities, such as the greeting songs, were designed to foster this sense of inclusion. Activities encouraging participants to create musical/personal self-statements helped promote acknowledgement and validation among peers.

The call and response activities were highly effective in facilitating basic reciprocal interaction. These exercises encouraged thoughtful responses from participants, allowing them to practise attentive listening and observation, turn-taking and

imitation as they engaged in this musical/social form of mutual interaction. The facilitator's call contained social as well as musical cues as a combination of facial expression, body posture and vocal inflection were employed to create an effective call encouraging an appropriate response. Such activities encouraged participants to become attuned to the facilitator's verbal and nonverbal signals as they practised mutual, give-and-take interaction.

Finally, the social nature of activities encouraged participants to initiate positive interaction with one another. Cooperative games assisted them to approach their peers and engage them meaningfully. Such games fostered empathy, consideration and respect for one another's personal boundaries. Exercises involving appropriate physical touch were beneficial in allowing all the participants and Gezi in particular, to make improved contact with peers.

- Capacity to communicate

The music sessions offered excellent opportunities for nonverbal communication and expression. The most significant progress was noticed where participants (and in particular, Kagiso) were less able and/or willing to express their feelings, wishes or intentions with the group. The group provided a safe and accepting environment within which participants could convey aspects of themselves.

Firstly, the groups opened and closed with "hello" and "goodbye" songs, respectively, encouraging appropriate greeting of participants and the researcher. Participants learned to greet their peers attentively, amiably, individually and by name. This activity also facilitated eye-contact between participants, an important aspect of communication.

Music-based activities were exceptionally well-suited to facilitating play behaviour, the primary means of interaction and communication among children. Such music-based play developed the participants' capacity for verbal and especially nonverbal expression, such as eye-contact, smiling, holding hands and generally negotiating simple social situations. The participants were increasingly able to make their aims and intentions known.

Emotion recognition and expression were effectively promoted by certain exercises. The use of happy and sad music was well-suited to helping participants recognise the different feelings and to practise appropriate emotional expression. The dynamic states within the music (such as the music's tempo, volume and mode) facilitated their verbal, vocal, facial, physical and musical expressions.

Finally, call and response activities engaged participants in a dynamic form of musical and social dialogue. They practised this fundamental form of two-way communication by waiting for the facilitator's call and responding in turn. They thus practised the basic process of communication: listening attentively, waiting their turn, and returning a response that was adapted in relation to the content of the call.

- Cooperativeness

Cooperative behaviour was enhanced among all the participants, and especially among the youngest, who benefitted from practicing skills such as waiting, taking turns and sharing.

Certain activities were designed to encourage participants to share instruments and take turns playing them. These basic skills of cooperation were foundation to many activities. Participants capable of more advanced cooperative behaviour often supported their peers who were less adept in this regard.

Paired movement activities encouraged participants to coordinate their actions to achieve a shared goal. The music and words of the songs helped support the pair's movements by facilitating a state of intersubjectivity between the partners, helping them to become attuned with one another's expectations, intentions and movements. Once again, the more advanced participants tended to support the less cooperative partners in order to maintain a successful process.

Many activities required the whole group to work together toward shared goals and engage in joint problem solving. The successful process and outcome depended upon participants understanding each another's goals and intentions and successfully coordinating their actions. For example, engaging in group dances and maintaining a collective pulse encouraged unified thought and action.

Although there was evidence of an overall improvement in the in all seven skills discussed above, individual characteristics of the participants had an influence on the pace, nature and/or level of change.

Influence of individual characteristics of participants

Participants made progress at different rates. Some showed gradual yet steady progress, while others, notably Gezi and Kagiso, evidenced little progress until the end of the research, when they displayed remarkable improvement. Some displayed remarkable progress in areas in which they were previously lacking, while others, more socially adept from the start, made advances that were significant and yet more subtle. The most noticeable improvement was made in areas where participants showed the least advanced functioning at the outset of the study. For example, those participants who were the most shy made the most substantial advancement in the area of confidence.

The age of participants influenced aspects of their participation, including how they responded to the first session, and the nature of the progress made. Group one, the younger group, was very reserved in the first session. The participants were too shy to sing along with the researcher as she taught them the greeting songs. They were also too shy to sing the songs to one another, which was part of the opening activity. Instruments were gingerly chosen and carefully played. This reserved behaviour did not last long and by the second session the participants were chatting excitedly and squabbling over instruments. On the other hand, group two had settled quickly into a friendly and coherent group (even though Grace would be mostly absent from the third session onward). In the first session, the participants evidenced their appreciation of the greeting activities. They sang to each other enthusiastically, which was accompanied with smiles, eye contact and “high fives.” Each member was made to feel welcome. It seemed as though there was a greater degree of connectedness amongst these slightly older children, who also made sure to include Tiny.

Group two found the call and response activities easier than their younger counterparts and enjoyed responding to the social cues embedded in the activity.

The younger participants benefitted more in terms of capacity for impulse control, the ability to follow rules and instructions and capacity for smoother transition between activities. The older participants within each group (although not necessarily the oldest participants in the research), benefitted from the opportunity to support the efforts of their fellow participants (for example David in group one and Faith in group two). They became increasingly confident and comfortable in their guiding and supporting role.

The research findings thus indicated that there was an overall improvement in all seven social skills as the music-based sessions progressed. However, individual characteristics of the participants influenced the manner and rate of such progress. They further showed that skills evidenced during the group sessions did not automatically transfer to the general classroom situation.

Transfer of progress

Improvements displayed by the participants during the sessions did not all transfer to their classroom behaviour, as revealed in the semi-structured interviews with the participants' teacher. Nevertheless, the teacher was able to identify at least one area in which each participant displayed positive change, the most common of these being improved mood, increases in confidence and better relatedness. For example, Faith and Princess were better able to dance and sing, respectively, with the children in their class and in preparation for the annual school concert. Kagiso was reportedly more outgoing, which may have been linked to progress demonstrated toward the end of the study. Improved relationships between members of the same groups carried over to the classroom situation in the case of David and Gezi and Princess and Winnie.

Due to the limited scope of the study, it was not possible to follow up on the persistence of advances. While the aim of group work is to develop competencies that are transferable beyond the setting and duration of the group itself (Geldard & Geldard, 2001:11), wide-ranging transfer may not have occurred due to the relatively short duration of the study. Furthermore, the class teacher may have had different behavioural goals and styles of interacting with the participants than did the

researcher as facilitator of group process. As the teacher's classroom environment was a dominant influence in the children's lives, such differences may have lessened the possibility of transfer from the one setting to the other. Lack of transfer could also be ascribed to the young age of the participants, indicating that additional strategies might be necessary to assist them in transferring the skills learned in one context (the music-based socialisation group) to another (the classroom).

Further, the researcher observed that contextual factors had an influence on individual participants and the group as a whole.

Influence of contextual factors

Contextual factors significantly influenced the progress of individual participants as well as aspects of group process during the course of the research. The venue used for the first seven sessions was a medium-sized Wendy house just next to the main building of the crèche. While it was large enough to accommodate all of the activities, the room tended to become uncomfortably hot as the research took place in the middle of summer. There was no electricity for cooling the room and on very warm days, the participants would become extremely tired, lethargic and unable to concentrate, despite sessions being scheduled as early as possible in the mornings.

Another disadvantage of the Wendy house was that it was ordinarily used as a sewing room and contained sewing equipment and materials which distracted the participants, despite the facilitator's regular efforts to clear away as much as she could. The participants were also drawn to exploring the cupboards and drawers. This environment had a noticeable influence in the early sessions when everything was novel and throughout the study whenever the children's attention or energy began to wane.

On the eighth session, the music sessions had to be moved to a new venue, being one of the make-shift classrooms inside the primary facility. This area of the crèche was usually occupied by the group of three and four year old children and was filled with toys and play equipment, attractive posters and pictures, tables and chairs and a large mirror, which proved to be distracting contents. The change and unfamiliar venue were found to be extremely disruptive. The participants appeared to regress in

terms of group process and responded to this session in a similar way to the first session, exploring the new surroundings in an attempt to adjust to the change. The move to the new venue was entirely unexpected and the researcher had not had the chance to adapt it to better suit her purposes. For example, in the Wendy house, it had been easy to conceal the camcorder; the children knew it was there but largely ignored it. Upon the sudden relocation to the new venue, the facilitator had little time to consider its placement and it became a significant diversion.

Furthermore, the second venue lacked physical boundaries. Make-shift room dividers arranged the different classes and a large “gap” served as the entrance and exit. As there was no door, other staff and children were prone to walk in and out. The participants were faced away from the gap to prevent them from seeing the constant stream of people walking past, but this was not always successful. Finally, the noise level was disturbing due to the fact that the venue formed part of a larger space divided into different classrooms.

The unanticipated change was highly disruptive to individual participants and the group process, especially with regard to the younger group. The older group appeared less perturbed and was better able to cope with the change. Tiny, while being the youngest participant (although placed in this older group) managed remarkably well. While he was curious and was the first to investigate the room, the presence of the older participants appeared to contain and help regulate his responses.

A further contextual factor which might have initially influenced the groups’ response to the sessions involved the differences in the interactional style between the researcher and the participants’ teacher. The participants might not have been accustomed to the child-centred, collaborative style introduced by the researcher, which might have differed significantly to the didactic style and role of the teacher. This might have caused uncertainty as participants tried to negotiate an unfamiliar form of child-adult interaction. The cultural norms of the setting, for example teaching practice could influence children’s interaction within the group.

Existing schedules and routines formed part of the crèche’s context. One music session interfered with the participants’ tea-time, which negatively affected their behaviour. It was the first session of the study and the researcher inadvertently took

the second group out just before they had been served their morning tea. The group was happy and excitable, but also distractible and, toward the end, a bit irritable.

Overall, however, it was found that music-based activities possess certain inherent qualities which supported the participants' acquisition of various social skills.

Strengths of music-based socialisation groups

Music-based socialisation groups possessed certain characteristics which rendered them well-suited to working with young children. First, participants were afforded positive experiences of success, allowing them to develop a sense of mastery as they practised new skills in a safe environment. This led to increased capacity for self-assertion and personal agency. Another advantage involved the sensory nature of the music activities which prompted participants' interest and exploration in the environment. The different sounds and the various ways in which music could be made enhanced their curiosity. Furthermore, the music activities contained inherent rules and roles which helped organise participants' interaction. These rules and roles were often embedded in the structure of the music itself and thus supported appropriate social interaction. Music-based activities also encouraged engagement between participants and served as a motivating force for their collaboration. The process of group music-making promoted a sense of group cohesion and teamwork, enhancing a sense of belonging and validation among peers.

The music-based sessions provided a nonverbal means of expression, which allowed for effective communication between the participants and the researcher, despite her mother tongue differing from theirs. This was particularly beneficial for one participant, Kagiso, who spoke a language different to anyone else in the group and was still able to participate in the activities. Moreover, all the participants were able to interact in a way that was most natural and age-appropriate for them, without the barriers presented by spoken language. A specific advantage of music was its capacity to facilitate call and response interaction. This was valuable in helping participants to practise reciprocal interaction. Another benefit involved the way in which music allowed for self-expression and the appropriate expression of emotions.

The music-based socialisation groups also transcended the differences of age and developmental level which existed within groups. Activities were flexible and inclusive, allowing all members to participate fully in a way that was suitable for them. Group two was an example of this, as Tiny, significantly younger than the other participants, could join in fully with all the activities without falling behind or holding the others back. In fact, through the dynamic of scaffolding, his functioning was often elevated to match that of the older participants.

Music-based sessions were well suited to facilitating cooperative games requiring collaborative effort of all participants. The activities encouraged participants to take turns, share roles, reciprocate and negotiate in the process of joint problem solving. The activities further created a shared space within which members could practise perspective taking and responding to social cues.

Music-based activities afforded the facilitator insight into the personal processes and interactional styles of participants. Musical interaction vividly illustrated aspects of participants' ways of being within the group, and activities with the same purpose consistently highlighted certain aspects of the participants' functioning and process. However, certain limitations in the use of music-based sessions were also noted.

Limitations of music-based socialisation groups

Certain limitations regarding the use of music-based socialisation groups came to light during the study. First, the nature of the participants' progress was gradual, with some participants taking longer to show improvement in social skills than others. While this is to be expected with young children and is not a limitation in itself, it became evident that significant progress may not occur unless a relatively large number of sessions are facilitated.

The findings of the research indicated that music sessions require a suitable venue in order to allow for optimal group process. Lack of spatial boundaries lessened the group's sense of containment and noise interfered with the music-making process. Visual distractions added to an environment that was already of a highly sensory nature, which might have led to overstimulation. Change of venue interrupted the safe structure which the group aimed to provide and thus the evolution of group

process. These limitations are not unique to music-based groups as most forms of group work require a consistent, quiet, well-defined venue that is free from disruption. Nevertheless, their significance for music-based activities was highlighted in the current study.

Despite limitations such as those mentioned above, it was found that music-based socialisation groups fitted well within the setting of a community crèche.

The fit of music-based socialisation groups within the community crèche setting

Music-based socialisation groups evidenced an exceptionally good fit within the context of a community crèche. Music represented an important and familiar form of interaction for the participants. It was a significant part of daily life at the crèche and was recognised by the teacher as an important aspect of the children's life experience. The sessions could be fitted within the structure and schedule of the existing programme of the crèche. However, it was necessary to plan carefully in order to take the children's needs, for example their tea- and snack time, into account. It was found that when these aspects were not taken into account, it could affect the participants' level of engagement in the sessions. Finally, few resources were required and all the necessary equipment was brought by the researcher. It should be noted, however, that equipment need not be elaborate and could be acquired at a relatively minimal cost or could even be substituted, for example, by using sticks as percussion instruments.

With regard to the learning of new skills, music-based sessions as learning opportunities were found to fit well with principles of learning based on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory.

Music-based activities as conducive to Vygotskian principles

The music-based sessions presented an appropriate social context for the implementation of Vygotskian principles. Fundamentally, the activities allowed participants to function within their ZPD as the facilitator could adjust her interaction according to their rate of learning and the level of support needed. The nature of

activities was such that the facilitator could constantly collaborate with the participants, as individuals and as groups, as they engaged in activities that were challenging yet manageable within the context of such interaction. Furthermore, music activities helped participants to “tune in” with one another, creating a dynamic sense of intersubjectivity. Musical interaction allowed the participants to arrive a shared understanding of what was required and hence a harmonisation of their collective activity. Moving to the same music and maintaining a common pulse enabled participants to tune in with one another, while being simultaneously supported by the music. Scaffolding amongst peers occurred frequently as participants supported each other toward successful participation in each activity. The importance and effectiveness of child-adult interaction was also displayed as the facilitator was able to enhance the functioning of individual participants.

The music-based socialisation groups effectively allowed for a dynamic process of guided participation. The facilitator was able to guide and support the participants’ activity without resorting to direct instruction. Music activities were also well suited to the facilitation of cooperative learning. Various activities encouraged the participants to work collaboratively toward joint goals. Most participants were motivated to achieve a successful musical process and there was thus a sense of joint ownership regarding the activities.

4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter first introduced the research methodology employed in the research. The research goals and objectives were reiterated and the approach, purpose and type of research were described. The research design and sampling procedures were discussed, where after methods of data collection were explicated and justified. The process of data analysis was explained and ethical considerations relevant to the study were highlighted.

The second part of this chapter presented and discussed the empirical research findings. After introducing each participant, findings from the focused observations were discussed. Participants made progress in each of the seven social skills considered, although not all specific indicators of these skills showed improvement.

Individual characteristics such as age appeared to influence how participants responded to the sessions as each made progress in different areas and at different rates. Not all behavioural advances were transferred from the setting of the music group to that of the classroom, although the participants' teacher was able to identify at least one area of progress in each participant. The most prevalent of these changes included improved improvements in mood, confidence and relatedness.

Contextual factors had an impact on presentation and flow of the socialisation groups. Factors such as suitability and stability of venue proved influential, and it was important to plan the sessions around the existing routine at the crèche. Finally, differences in interactional style between the participants' teacher and the facilitator appeared to have an effect at the start of the research.

Interviews conducted with the participant's teacher revealed that the children looked forward to the sessions, enjoyed them and often evidenced a better mood afterwards. Certain children, who were shy or reticent, gained confidence; for example Princess and Faith became increasingly sure of themselves and were better able to sing and dance with the others. The sessions also appeared to have promoted friendships between children who participated in the same music group. Finally, the teacher participant asserted that there was an appropriate fit between the music-based groups and the overall programme at the crèche, and that such a music-based programme could potentially be offered on a permanent basis.

The research provided evidence for the suitability of applying Vygotskian principles in the facilitation of music-based groups. The music-based activities were able to encourage intersubjectivity among the participants while facilitating processes of scaffolding, guided participation and cooperative learning. The facilitator assisted participants to function within their ZPD by continuously adjusting her interaction according to their needs.

The final chapter of this research report, Chapter 5, will contain a summary of key findings of the study. Based on key findings, conclusions and recommendations will be presented.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The early childhood years represent a critical stage of a child's development in every area of functioning, including emotional, cognitive, sensory, physical and social domains. This study focused on the use of music-based socialisation groups to enhance the social functioning of children in early childhood. Schiller (2009:20) suggests that seven areas of socio-emotional functioning are of particular importance at this stage, namely, confidence, curiosity, intentionality, self-control, relatedness, capacity to communicate and cooperativeness. These constructs were used as guidelines to determine whether the music-based groups had an effect upon the children's social functioning.

This chapter provides a summary of the key findings emerging from the study and conclusions that can be drawn from them. Recommendations for future research and for the implementation of findings are presented next, followed by a description of how the research objectives were accomplished.

5.2 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of the research was to explore the influence of music-based socialisation groups on the social functioning of children in early childhood.

Specific objectives were formulated as follows:

- To explore and describe the ways in which a music-based socialisation group can influence the preschool child's social functioning;
- To identify the strengths of music-based socialisation groups to promote the social functioning of young children;
- To identify the limitations of music-based socialisation groups to promote the social functioning of young children;

- To explore the extent to which music-based socialisation groups can be effectively utilised within the context of a community crèche.

5.3 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

This section provides a summary of key findings arising from the study. First, findings relating to the seven social skills included in the model of Schiller (2009) are outlined, generally and according to each skill (namely, confidence, curiosity, intentionality, self-control, relatedness, communication and cooperativeness). Key findings which emerged with regard to each skill are isolated. This is followed by findings regarding the influence of individual characteristics of participants, the extent of progress transferred from the music group to the classroom setting and the effect of contextual factors upon participants' response to the study. Presented next are findings on the strengths and limitations identified with regard to the use of the music-based activity group. Further findings concern the fit of the music-based groups within the setting of a community crèche, the ways in which music activities can facilitate Vygotskian principles and the importance of considering group process.

Improvement was noticed with regard to all seven areas of social functioning examined in the study, as listed above. All of the participants progressed in each area of social functioning, although the nature and extent of such improvement varied among individuals. Key findings that were identified are outlined below.

- All participants improved in their capacity for confidence, especially with regard to their ability for positive assertion and presentation of the self; personal agency; adjustment to new situations (apparent in smoother transitions between activities); and positive attitude.
- Curiosity was improved amongst all of the participants, most notably in their increased interest in, and willingness to explore, their environment; and in their enhanced willingness to participate in the activities.
- Improved intentionality amongst all participants was evidenced through increased ability for attention and thought before action; to show persistence and determination toward task completion; to show interest in their peers and their play and to assume a leadership role.

- All participants evidenced improved self-control to varying extents, which was mostly demonstrated through enhanced capacity for following rules and instructions; to respect the boundaries of others; and to control impulses.
- Enhanced relatedness was evident among all the participants. Progress was evident primarily through increasingly positive relationships and involvement amongst participants; better capacity for nonverbal interaction and to read and respond to nonverbal social cues; and to initiate positive interaction.
- Participants displayed increasing capacity to communicate. This was displayed mostly by promoting their ability to greet one another and the facilitator; participate positively, read and respond to nonverbal cues; express emotions appropriately; volunteer input; and engage in reciprocal, question-and-answer interaction in the form of call and response activities.
- Cooperativeness was improved amongst all participants as they were increasingly able to share and take turns; engage in joint problem-solving; encourage and support one another; relate to one another's perspectives, interests and intentions; and read and respond to social cues.

Individual characteristics of participants had an effect upon how they responded to the music-based socialisation groups.

- Participants did not all learn at the same pace, and different areas of competence developed at different rates within and between individuals.
- Participants' ages had an influence upon the nature of their progress. The younger participants showed marked improvement in the areas of impulse control, following rules and instructions and making smoother transitions between activities. Older participants benefitted from the opportunity to support and guide their less advanced peers.

Advances evidenced by participants during the sessions were not all transferred to their general classroom behaviour. Although all participants displayed progress in at least one area of social functioning upon completion of the research, improvement that transferred included primarily improvements in mood, confidence and relatedness.

Contextual factors played a significant role in the progress of participants throughout the study.

- Aspects of the venues utilised, such as heat, presence of distracting objects, noise and lack of concrete boundaries, were disruptive to an optimal group process.
- The unexpected change of venue had a negative effect upon the progress of both the groups.
- The social norms of the setting, for example the interactional approach and teaching methods prevalent in the crèche, initially influenced participants' responses to the researcher and the activities presented in the groups.

Music activities evidenced several strengths as a medium for working with young children.

- Music activities afforded participants opportunities for positive participation in which they could experience success and develop a sense of mastery and self-efficacy; this enhanced their capacity for personal agency and self-assertion.
- The highly sensory nature of the music activities prompted participants' interest in and exploration of the environment.
- The intrinsic rules and roles for interaction contained within the music activities helped guide and support positive social behaviour.
- Music activities encouraged a positive sense of engagement between participants and motivated them to work together, leading to an increased sense of group cohesion and belonging.
- By providing a nonverbal means of communication, music-based activities enabled participants to interact in a way that was natural and age-appropriate for them.
- Music activities provided a form of interaction that was inclusive, transcending differences in age and developmental level.
- Self-expression and appropriate expression of emotions were effectively encouraged by the music activities.
- Cooperative games, collaborative activity and joint problem solving were successfully facilitated by a variety of music activities.

- The use of music activities provided a valuable means of observing the participants' behaviour and specifically the seven social skills emphasised in the study.

The use of music-based socialisation groups presented certain limitations.

- Improvements evidenced by the participants were of gradual nature and a relatively large number of sessions were necessary before certain participants showed substantial improvement.
- Music-based groups proved to require a suitable venue, most notably a quiet, contained and consistent location where individual and group process are allowed to develop optimally.

The music-based socialisation groups fitted exceptionally well within the context of a community crèche.

- The groups were cost-effective, requiring minimal instruments and equipment, all of which could be provided by the researcher.
- While music-based groups necessitated a structured and consistent venue, they didn't need an elaborate set-up in terms of facilities.
- As the music-based sessions were of a relatively short duration (about 45 minutes per session) and took place only once a week, they were not disruptive to the participant's involvement at the crèche.

The music-based group sessions were conducive to the implementation of Vygotskian principles.

- Music activities allowed participants to function within their ZPD as the facilitator could provide an optimal degree of challenge and support.
- Group music participation effectively promoted a sense of intersubjectivity.
- There were many opportunities for scaffolding amongst participants and between participants and facilitator.
- The activities allowed for guided participation as the facilitator could guide and support the participants' activity without the use direct instruction.
- Cooperative learning and joint problem solving was facilitated as participants worked collaboratively toward shared goals.

As the music-based activities were presented in a group setting, it was necessary to consider aspects of group process which played a role in the participants' participation throughout the research. For example, unplanned change of venue, absenteeism and phases of group development had an influence on the way participants responded at different points in time.

5.4 CONCLUSIONS

In light of the above findings, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Music-based socialisation groups may enhance the social functioning of children in early childhood in terms of the seven social skills included in the model of Schiller (2009), namely confidence, curiosity, intentionality, self-control, relatedness, capacity to communicate and cooperativeness.
- Music-based groups do not affect all children in the same way with regard to pace of learning and the areas in which improvement takes place. Individual factors such as age and existing social skills have an influence.
- While the aim of a music-based socialisation group is the learning of skills which will transfer to behaviour outside of the group, this may not occur if the duration of the study is insufficient or if behavioural progress is not followed up in the relevant setting.
- The steady improvement in the seven social skills, despite the short duration of the study, suggested that more substantial improvement may occur if the total programme is of a longer duration.
- Contextual factors, such as the nature of the immediate environment and the stability of the venue, can play a significant role in the implementation of the music-based socialisation groups. An environment which is uncomfortable, over stimulating, noisy or lacking in clear physical boundaries is not conducive to optimal implementation of the groups. However, elaborate or specialised facilities are not needed.
- A significant difference between the nature of interaction and facilitation in the music group and the nature of interaction and teaching in the primary setting (the classroom) may affect initial participation in the group.

- Music-based activities possess several strengths in relation to working with young children. Due to the cooperative nature of the activities, they promote positive participation and a sense of group cohesion. Nonverbal interaction is facilitated, contributing to the participants' capacity to transcend differences of age and developmental level. The highly sensory nature of such activities enhanced participants' motivation to engage with their peers and the activities.
- The small group setting of the music-based sessions provided a safe environment in which participants could freely engage and take risks that they would not otherwise have done in the larger group setting, such as the classroom.
- There are few limitations with regard to the use of music-based socialisation groups as a medium for working with young children. One limitation may involve the gradual nature of progress made, and the significant number of sessions that may be required for substantial improvement to take place.
- Music-based socialisation groups possess an exceptional fit within the context of a community crèche, requiring minimal material and human resources.
- Music-based activities provide a good platform for learning as they are conducive to the implementation of Vygotskian principles of learning.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made in light of the above conclusions:

5.5.1 Recommendations for further research

A similar study, but conducted over a longer period of time, is suggested to further explore the potential of music-based socialisation groups to enhance the social functioning of young children. A study that extends over a longer period could be better able to detect change in children's behaviour and to connect such change with the music-based groups.

Should a similar study be undertaken in the future, it would be informative for the researcher to conduct the sessions with children of different ages. It would be of particular interest to investigate differences in response between children two years before school entry, one year before school entry (preschool), in grade 1 and in grade 2. This would allow the researcher to investigate at which age children most benefit from certain activities.

It is suggested that the research is repeated within different contexts, for example, with children from different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. Effects resulting from different social norms, styles of interaction and approaches to facilitation/teaching could then be studied.

Further research is required to explore the effectiveness of music-based sessions with larger groups of children with the aid of volunteer assistants. This will allow for the accommodation of a greater number of children, for example, an entire classroom.

5.5.2 Recommendations for implementation of findings

Should music-based socialisation groups be implemented within an organisation, prior consultation between the facilitator and managers regarding the availability of suitable and consistent venues and time slots for the sessions may lead to optimal implementation.

When implementing such a music-based programme, facilitators of the music-based groups and administrators of the primary institution should take into account the individual differences between children and the potential influence of contextual factors, such as social and cultural norms.

In order to optimise the transfer of advances made in the socialisation groups to the general classroom setting, follow-up activities targeting the same objectives as the groups' could be integrated within the latter. This would require sufficient planning and time to collaborate with the primary teacher of the classroom or staff in the setting.

Curriculum planners and school educators could consider the inclusion of all children within the preschool and early school grades within music-based socialisation groups. Considering that preliminary results suggest that music-based socialisation groups can enhance the social functioning of children, it may be said that such groups provide an appropriate strengths-based preventive measure for enhancing social functioning. This recommendation will be especially relevant should other studies indicate similar positive results as those of the current study.

Ideally, volunteers could be recruited to assist facilitators with larger groups of children and in the process be trained to become independent facilitators.

5.6 ACHIEVEMENT OF RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In light of what has been discussed in this chapter, the research objectives, as outlined in section 5.2 above, have been achieved as outlined in the following paragraphs.

5.6.1 To explore and describe the ways in which a music-based socialisation group can influence the preschool child's social functioning

This objective was achieved as the study identified specific processes through which music activities presented in a group context were able to enhance seven areas of social functioning. It was found that music-based groups were able to heighten the participants' confidence through the creation of self-statements, the experience of successful participation, mastery and a stable structure and consistent routine. Curiosity was heightened through provision of an accepting environment where exploration and originality were valued, stimulation in the form of musical instruments and other materials, as well as on-going collaboration within supportive relationships. Intentionality was improved as the music activities engaged the participants' attention, stimulated active participation, prompted thoughtful and considerate interaction between peers and provided scaffolding for purposeful behaviour.

The music activities promoted self-control through provision of a limited number of clear and simple rules, the setting of clear and consistent boundaries and through

exercises promoting thought before action and impulse control. Movement combined with music further enhanced participants' capacity for well-regulated activity that was prompt and accurate. Relatedness was nurtured as music activities encouraged supportive and trusting relationships, a sense of belonging and group cohesion, validation among peers and the initiation of positive interaction. Call and response activities fostered attention to nonverbal social cues and facilitated mutual, reciprocal interaction. Capacity for communication was enhanced as the music group encouraged appropriate greeting among participants, nonverbal forms of expression including eye-contact and smiling, the negotiation of simple social situations in the context of play and the recognition and appropriate expression of basic emotions. Call and response activities facilitated a form of musical and social dialogue. Finally, the music-based socialisation groups encouraged cooperation as the participants engaged in sharing and taking turns with instruments, paired movement activities where they needed to choose partners and coordinate their actions, group activities where they worked toward a common goal and cooperative games providing the opportunity to practise various forms of prosocial behaviour.

5.6.2 To identify the strengths of music-based socialisation groups to promote the social functioning of young children

Achievement of this objective involved identifying the capacity of music activities to enhance seven social skills that were relevant to the study. The strengths of music-based groups involve their capacity to encourage active participation, provide sensory stimulation to promote interest and exploration, support positive participation through intrinsic rules and promote a sense of group belonging. They could also transcend the limitations of verbal language through forms of nonverbal communication, transcend the differences of age and developmental level, facilitate reciprocal interaction, encourage self- and emotional expression, facilitate cooperative games and joint problem-solving and allow the facilitator to effectively observe the process of participants.

Furthermore, it was found that music-based activities are conducive to implementing Vygotskian principles by facilitating states of intersubjectivity and processes of

scaffolding, guided participation and cooperative learning, all within the ZPD of participants.

5.6.3 To identify the limitations of music-based socialisation groups to promote the social functioning of young children

This objective was reached as the study found that the positive changes observed were gradual in nature and that a relatively large number of sessions were required before certain participants made significant advances. It was also found that lack of a suitable venue undermined group process and the progress of the groups.

5.6.4 To explore the extent to which music-based socialisation groups can be effectively utilised within the context of a community crèche.

Semi-structured interviews were instrumental to achieving this objective, revealing that the music-based groups fitted exceptionally well within the setting of the community crèche. They were enjoyed by all involved and would be suitable for on-going implementation with all the preschool children. Furthermore, minimal material and human resources were required for the implementation of sessions. Finally, one session per week was sufficient to produce gradual change, making it a feasible strategy to implement within the context.

Based on the achievement of objectives as discussed above, it can be stated that the goal of the study was achieved.

5.7 CONCLUDING STATEMENT

Children in early childhood are in the process of developing skills that are critically important to all areas of future growth. Successful progress through the school system has important implications for the life trajectory of an individual. Given the essential role of social competence in early school success, preschoolers should be afforded sufficient opportunity to develop such skills. Music-based socialisation groups are able to enhance areas of social competence necessary for children's

successful functioning in school, including confidence, curiosity, intentionality, self-control, relatedness, capacity to communicate and cooperativeness. As a developmentally appropriate form of working with children, and requiring minimal material and human resources to implement, such music-based groups may offer a valuable avenue for equipping children with some of the skills they need for a successful entry into the school system. The relevance and importance of social skills required by children to cope in the formal school system are often overlooked in school systems where there is a strong emphasis on the development of cognitive skills.

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¹ This author and drum circle facilitator refers to himself simply as Kalani. No other names are used and therefore no initials are provided.

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Appendix A

Focused observation schedule

A. Confidence

1. The child presents him- or herself with confidence; asserts him/herself positively (not aggressively)
2. He/she shows a sense of personal agency; approaches tasks with confidence and enthusiasm
3. He/she shows an ability to persist with tasks/activities
4. The child has the capacity to listen attentively
5. The child portrays a positive attitude
6. He/she shows a willingness to seek help when needed
7. He/she shows the capacity to recognize and solve problems
8. The child adjusts well to new situations
9. The child does not draw inappropriate attention to the self

B. Curiosity

1. The child shows an interest in his/her physical and social surroundings
2. He/she willingly participates in the group
3. He/she shows a willingness to explore new activities/situations
4. The child shows a willingness to ask questions
5. The child has a capacity to recognize and solve problems

C. Intentionality

1. The child shows the capacity to think before acting
2. He/she pays attention to and is involved in tasks or activities
3. He/she strives to complete tasks
4. The child persists with tasks and shows determination to complete tasks
5. The child presents with a positive mood evidenced by generosity and friendliness (versus bossy, controlling or self-absorbed behaviour)
6. The child shows interest in other children and their play
7. The child is considerate and thoughtful towards others in group
8. He/she assumes a leadership role
9. He/she is eager to learn new tasks

D. Self-control

1. The child has the capacity for impulse control (versus impulsive behaviour)
2. The child has the ability to delay gratification of needs
3. The child shows a capacity to think before acting
4. The child can express feelings, wishes and needs in a positive manner, without hurting/harming others/objects
5. The child has a capacity to follow rules and instructions
6. The child shows respect for the boundaries of others

E. Relatedness

1. The child shows general positive relationships with others in the group
2. The child shows appropriate involvement with others; shows empathy and a caring attitude and makes an effort to comfort other children
3. He/she can positively initiate interaction with others and approaches others in a positive manner
4. The child has the capacity for appropriate non-verbal interaction/communication with others
5. The child is helpful and cooperative
6. He/she shows a capacity for fun and humour
7. He/she can read and appropriately respond to social cues
8. The child can negotiate with others and solve conflict
9. The child shows a capacity to think before acting

F. Communication

1. The child has the capacity for effective self-expression
2. He/she shows a willingness to request assistance when needed; expresses wishes clearly
3. He/she can appropriately express emotions
4. The child can positively participate in group activities
5. The child can read and appropriately respond to social cues
6. The child has the capacity to use appropriate verbal and/or nonverbal means to resolve conflict
7. He/she answers questions addressed to him or her
8. He/she volunteers input during group discussions
9. The child appropriately greets peers and adults

F. Cooperation

1. The child shows a capacity for sharing
2. He/she has the capacity to take turns
3. He/she can engage with peers and adults to jointly solve problems
4. The child shows the capacity to consider the perspectives, interests and intentions of others; he/she is keen to play with others
5. The child can read social cues and reacts appropriately toward others
6. He/she can engage in joint conflict resolution; shows ability to negotiate/ compromise; shows an ability to tolerate rebuffs (is not overly intimidated)
7. He/she can complement or encourage other children

Behaviour evidencing a lack of social skills

- Overly controlling behaviours
- Impulsiveness
- Temper tantrums
- Demanding behaviours
- Poor impulse control
- Lacks empathy or lacks signs of conscience
- Destructive behaviours
- Aggressive towards other children
- Isolated; appears lonely; rejected by other children
- Easily distracted; apathetic

Appendix B

Semi-structured interview schedule

Semi-structured interview schedule

Pre-group phase

1. In your opinion, how do you observe the behaviour of each of the following children in your class that will attend the music group sessions with regards to the following themes: (please be as specific as possible with regard to the individual children)

Names of children attending:

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Themes:

His/her level of confidence

His/her eagerness to learn

His/her ability to persist in completing a task

His/her level of self-control or impulse control

His/her ability to relate appropriately to others

His/her ability to express him/herself and to communicate

His/her cooperation with others

Post-group phase:

1. In your opinion, how do you observe the behaviour of the following children in your class that will attend (pre-group) / after attending (post-group) the music group sessions with regards to the following themes: (please be as specific as possible with regard to the individual children)

Names of children attending:

.....
.....
.....
.....

Themes:

- His/her level of confidence
- His/her eagerness to learn
- His/her ability to persist in completing a task
- His/her level of self-control or impulse control
- His/her ability to relate appropriately to others
- His/her ability to express him/herself and to communicate
- His/her cooperation with others

2. Do you feel that the music-based growth groups fitted in with the general programme presented at the creché?
3. Do you feel that the music-based growth groups fitted in with the daily routine of the creché?
4. How in your opinion did the children experience the group music sessions?
5. Do you feel that the sessions should have been offered more or less frequently than was the case in this project, for example, twice a week or once every second week?
6. Do you believe that such music-based sessions could be incorporated as a permanent part of the creché programme?

Many thanks for your time and the valuable sharing of your thoughts and ideas.

Appendix C

Letter of permission

from the Thando Westford Community Crèche



NEA Foundation
Represented by:
Lelanie Steyn - 071 603 1915
Marlie van Vuuren - 082 777 9401
092-238-NPO
E-Mail: _____ Or _____

INITIAL LETTER OF PERMISSION

April 2013

RE: Music-Based Growth Groups 2013
TO: Whom it May Concern

I, LELANIE STEYN, filling the position of SOCIAL WORKER in the management of the Thando Westford Community Crèche, hereby, on behalf of the management of the aforementioned organisation, give consent for Kim Flores to facilitate music-based growth groups in partial fulfilment of the degree Master of Social Work (Specialisation in Play Therapy) at the University of Pretoria.

I further grant permission for the video recording of the music sessions and the audio recording of interviews with selected staff members, provided that the necessary informed assent and consent are obtained from all relevant parties.

I have been made aware of the following:

- The names of all participants (children and staff members) will be replaced with pseudonyms, and full privacy thereby maintained.
- All raw data and research findings will be treated confidentially.
- Video and audio recordings will be stored at the Department of Social Work and Criminology at the University of Pretoria for 15 years and access to them will be limited to Kim Flores and her supervisor.
- Research findings will be documented in a mini-dissertation which will be disseminated for academic purposes.

Name: LELANIE STEYN Date: 04/04/2013

Signed: [Signature]

Appendix D

Letter of informed consent

for parents of legal guardians



Researcher: Dr Kim Flores
University of Pretoria, Lynnwood Road, Pretoria
MSW (Play Therapy)

Contact details: 082 306 5857
Kim.soulbeat@gmail.com

INFORMED CONSENT: Parent/Guardian

Name of the participant:

1. Title of study:

Music-based groups to enhance the social functioning of children in early childhood.

2. Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to explore if music groups have an effect on the social functioning of children in early childhood.

3. Procedures

My child will be invited to take part in a music group at the Westford Thando Community Crèche. The groups will take place once a week over 10 weeks and each session will last approximately 45 minutes. The researcher will be responsible for the group, in which four children will participate. The group sessions will be video-recorded for the purpose of the research, but only the members of the research team will have access to the recordings. Taped interviews will also be conducted with my child's teacher about the possible influence of the music sessions on my child's social skills. The video and tape recordings and notes will all be handled with strict confidentiality and will be securely stored at the University of Pretoria for a period of 15 years after the research has been completed.

4. Possible discomfort

I as the parent/guardian understand that children usually find such music sessions very enjoyable and that there is little risk of discomfort. I trust the researcher to be sensitive to the needs and feelings of my child during the music sessions. If, for whatever reason, my child experiences any distress or discomfort in connection with the sessions, he/she will be referred to Ms Lelanie Steyn at the crèche for the necessary support.

5. **Benefits of the study**

I am aware that there are no direct benefits for me if my child participates in the music groups. However, the sessions are intended to enhance children's social functioning, and as such may benefit my child over the longer term. Furthermore, this study may lead to a better understanding of using music groups to enhance the social skills of young children.

6. **Rights of the participants**

Should my child at any stage and for whatever reason wish to stop attending the music groups, he or she will be allowed to do so immediately, without any negative consequences to me or my child.

7. **Financial compensation**

I am aware that agreeing to participate in the research will not lead to financial compensation.

8. **Confidentiality**

I am aware that, for the purpose of the study, each session will be video-recorded to get accurate information. All information from the video recordings will be treated confidentially and my identity or the identity of my child will not be made known to anyone except to the researcher. If my child wishes to withdraw, the information will not be used for the research project. The results of the research project will be published in a research report and in an academic journal. The only information to be used is that gathered about the group sessions and no identifying details about me or my child will be made known.

Should I have any questions or concerns, I can contact Dr. Flores at 082 306 5857 during business hours.

I understand my rights as parent/legal guardian of my child as a research participant, and I voluntarily provide consent for his/her participation in the study described. I am aware of the purposes and procedures of the research project.

I have received a copy of this form.

.....
Signed: Parent/Guardian

.....
Date

.....
Signed: Researcher

.....
Date

Appendix E

Letter of informed assent

for participants



Researcher: Kim Flores
Contact details: 082 306 5857

INFORMED ASSENT

Name of the participant:

Dear

I would like to invite you to our music groups here at your Crèche. We will be having the groups so that I can learn how children can play together by using music.

We will have 10 music groups together, one every Tuesday afternoon. I have asked your teacher and your parents to allow you to come to the groups. I will fetch you at your class. We plan to have a lot of fun.

You can choose if you want to join the group. You may also stop coming to the group if you want to and nobody will get angry if you do. I will make a video-recording of the music groups, but only I and my teacher will look at it. I hope this will be fine with you.

I'll do my best to make sure we have a wonderful time together! If you are willing to join our group, you can write your name or make a drawing at the end of this letter.

Kindly,

Kim Flores

I would like to join the music group.

It is fine with me that a video is made.

My name or my drawing:



.....

Signed: Kim Flores

.....

Date

Appendix F

Letter of permission

for teacher interviews



Researcher: Dr. Kim Flores
University of Pretoria, Lynnwood Road, Pretoria
MSW (Play Therapy)

Contact details: 082 306 5857
Kim.soulbeat@gmail.com

INFORMED CONSENT: **Teacher**

Name of the participant:

1. Title of study:

Music-based groups to enhance the social functioning of children in early childhood.

2. Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to explore if music groups have an effect on the social functioning of children in early childhood.

3. Procedures

A few children between the ages 5 to 7 years from the Crèche will be invited to attend a music group that will take place once a week over 10 weeks here at the Crèche. Permission to conduct the group sessions was obtained from Nea Foundation and from the parents/guardians of the children. The researcher will be responsible for the group, in which four children will participate.

In order to find out whether the music groups had an effect on the social functioning of the children, the researcher also plans to conduct interviews with the teachers of the children who attend the music groups. I, as one of the teachers, am invited to share my views on the children's behaviour. The researcher will conduct two interviews with me. One interview will take place before the music sessions start and the second one when all ten sessions have been completed. The interviews will be audio-recorded and then transcribed into text. The recordings and transcriptions will be handled with strict confidentiality and will be securely stored at the University of Pretoria for a period of 15 years after the research has been completed.

4. Possible discomfort

There is no discomfort foreseen for me to participate in the research. If, for any reason, I do experience any distress, I will have the opportunity to discuss this with Ms Lelanie Steyn, social worker.

5. Benefits of the study

I am aware that there are no direct benefits for me to participate in the research.

6. Rights of the participants

Should I for any reason wish to withdraw from the research, I can do so without any negative consequences. The information obtained from me, will then be destroyed.

7. Financial compensation

I am aware that agreeing to participate in the research will not lead to financial compensation for me.

8. Confidentiality

I am aware that, for the purpose of the study, each interview will be audio-recorded. All information from the recordings will be treated confidentially and my identity will not be made known to anyone except to the researcher. If I wish to withdraw, the information will not be used for the research project. The results of the research project will be published in a research report and in an academic journal; however no identifying details about me will be made known.

Should I have any questions or concerns, I can contact Dr. Flores at 082 306 5857 during business hours.

I understand my rights as a research participant, and I voluntarily provide consent to participate in the study described. I am aware of the purposes and procedures of the research project.

I have received a copy of this form.

.....

Signed: Teacher

.....

Date

.....

Signed: Researcher

.....

Date



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UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
RESEARCH PROPOSAL AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

Declaration for the storage of research data and/or documents

I/ We, the principal researcher(s) **Ms K Flores**

and supervisor(s) **Dr MP le Roux**

of the following study, titled **Music-based groups to enhance the social functioning of children in early childhood**

will be storing all the research data and/or documents referring to the above-mentioned study in the following department: **Social Work and Criminology**

We understand that the storage of the mentioned data and/or documents must be maintained for a minimum of 15 years from the commencement of this study.

Start date of study: February 2013

Anticipated end date of study: February 2014

Year until which data will be stored: 2029

Name of Principal Researcher(s)	Signature	Date
Ms K Flores		18/07/2013

Name of Supervisor(s)	Signature	Date
Dr MP le Roux		18/07/2013

Name of Head of Department	Signature	Date
Prof. A Lombard		19.07.13