

“I AM DOING THIS JUST FOR YOU!”: MUSICAL PARENTING AND PARENTS’  
EXPERIENCES IN AN EARLY CHILDHOOD MUSIC CLASS

By

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **“I AM DOING THIS JUST FOR YOU!”: MUSICAL PARENTING AND PARENTS’ EXPERIENCES IN AN EARLY CHILDHOOD MUSIC CLASS**

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With the intent of informing early childhood music educators in their work with parents and their young children, the purpose of this study is to explore how parents engage in musical parenting and how that parenting is shaped by participation in early childhood music classes. The “grand tour” question guiding this study was how does participation in early childhood music classes shape participants’ musical parenting? In addition to this overarching question, I address the following sub questions: (1) What do participants already know, believe, and do with music prior to their participation in music classes? (2) What kind of musical home environment do parents provide for their toddlers? (3) How do parents engage in musical activities during early childhood music classes? (4) What activities or ideas from early childhood music classes, if any, do parents value and enjoy? (5) What knowledge, skills, or information do parents gain from participating in early childhood music classes with their toddler that translate to changes in their musical parenting behaviors outside of class?

This instrumental case study examined the phenomenon of parent learning in early childhood music classes and how that learning shaped participants’ musical parenting. Three mothers who were attending an early childhood music class with their toddlers for the first time acted as participants. Participants enrolled in music classes through a partnership between the early childhood music program and an early intervention organization. As a participant observer, I employed ethnographic techniques for data collection through recording and writing fieldnotes during weekly music classes in which I acted as an assistant and through three visits to families’

homes. During home visits, I completed semi-structured interviews and both participated in and observed music-making with parents and children. Each parent wrote weekly journal entries in which they shared examples of musical interactions they had with their children.

Parents regularly engaged in music making and listening with their children prior to enrolling in music class. Families incorporated listening, singing, and movement into their play, daily routines, and traditions. For some, technology and media contributed significantly to their overall musical home environment. Participants' affiliation with the early intervention organization along with their beliefs about music participation and their personal music experiences motivated them to enroll in classes primarily with extramusical goals in mind. All of the mothers in this study focused almost entirely on their child's experiences in music class rather than their own. Parents were not motivated to participate in music classes to enhance their own musical parenting, and they struggled to articulate goals for their own participation in class. Their engagement in classes suggested that they thought of their role as one of encouraging their child's participation and facilitating children's enjoyment.

After participating in music class, parents easily identified shifts in their child's musical behaviors at home and felt that they accomplished some or all of the goals established for their class experience. Although parents sometimes were hesitant to identify things that they learned or changes in their own behavior, parent learning and growth in music class contributed to changes in their musical parenting. Some of these shifts in parental musical engagement with their children were acknowledged by participants, while other changes were unconscious and seemed to be the result of informal learning that took place during music class. From these findings, I share implications for early childhood music teaching settings as well as recommendations for future research.

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To Lucy.  
I did this just for you.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

*I entered my first year of undergraduate study as a music education major. Having had numerous affirming experiences in choral singing, I was sure that I would make choral teaching my career. During my sophomore year, I casually decided to observe an early childhood music class in a university-run early childhood program to fulfill a methods course requirement. This small decision sparked a change in my perception that ultimately resulted in a dramatic shift in my career plans. From the moment I sat in on the floor and watched parents and children joyfully sing and play together, I was hooked. I left and immediately figured out how to get involved in the program. Soon after, I enrolled in an elective early childhood music methods course offered.*

*In that class, my professor discussed her views on the purpose of music classes for parents and young children. She explained, “My goal is to put myself out of a job.” My professor viewed early childhood music classes as a service for parents to provide them with tools and resources to make music with their children at home and throughout their daily lives. This idea resonated with me as a young preservice teacher and has framed my own goals as an early childhood music educator ever since.*

### Parenting

Human development does not occur in isolation. When children are born, they enter into a complex, socially constructed world. Parenting, or “what parents do with their children” (Morin, Glickman & Brooks-Gunn, 2016, p. 15), and the home environment are important intersecting parts of children’s worlds that have a strong influence on them and their development and socialization. In the past, scholars have viewed socialization as a one-way process in which parents or primary caregivers impart knowledge to children, guiding them

through predictable stages of development until they reach adulthood (Boocock & Scott, 2005; Conkling, 2017; Young, 2016). More recent trends in developmental psychology and sociology suggest that children are agentive in their own development (Corsaro, 2005; Lerner, Rothbaum, Boulos, & Casellino, 2002) and that development occurs as a result of a complex web of bi-directional interactions between the developing person and other people, objects, symbols, and environments (Bronfenbrenner, 2001; Lerner et al., 2002). Therefore, some researchers have begun to consider parents as one of many influences that drive children's development (Lerner et al., 2002).

Many factors influence parents' behaviors and beliefs, which are known as parenting practices. "Parenting practices is a very broad term that includes the totality of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors that parents bring to settings in which they interact with their child or children" (Alwin, 2004, p. 142). "Parenting is socially constructed" (Harkness & Super, 2002, p. 253), and parenting practices are shaped by demographic, cultural, structural, economic, environmental, and ecological variables (Alwin, 2004). Belsky (1984) developed a model to explain determinants of parenting and reported that parental functioning is influenced by the psychological well-being of the parent, contextual sources of stress and support, and personal characteristics of the child. Research on parenting practices suggests that generally accepted parenting practices within societies have shifted over time (Alwin, 2004; Lareau, 2011), causing some researchers to conclude that there is not one correct way to parent children (Harkness & Super, 2002). Parents draw from their own experiences and contexts, consciously or unconsciously, when developing goals and practices for raising their children (Bronfenbrenner, 1992).



Regardless of the numerous factors that influence parenting, it is widely accepted that “the early years of a child’s development are the most important, laying the groundwork for later experiences, and that effective parenting is an important component of those critical experiences” (Alwin, 2004, p. 147). During early childhood, in particular before a child enters formal schooling, parents and the home environment have an especially significant impact on children’s development, because very young children tend to spend a great deal of time at home surrounded by parents and other family members. “Home is the most important school young children will ever know and children’s parents are the most important teachers they will ever have” (Gordon, 2013, p. 3).

Bronfenbrenner (2001) identified the importance of something he identified as proximal processes. He explains:

Over the life course, human development takes place through processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving biopsychosocial human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate external environment.

To be effective the interaction must occur on a fairly regular basis over extended periods of time. Such enduring forms of interaction in the immediate environment are referred to as *proximal processes*. (Bronfenbrenner, 2001, p. 6, italics in original)

These interactions ideally occur with a parent or primary caregiver, because their bond, combined with regular co-participation in activities, prompts children to explore, imagine, and learn, all of which promote development. Consequently, Bronfenbrenner identified these proximal processes as “the engines of development” (p. 6). Therefore, researchers with an interest in parents’ influence on their children’s development should consider exploring and

better understanding the regular interactions and activities that occur between parents and their children.

### **Musical Parenting**

The period in a child's life from birth through age five is a period of rapid development, both musically and overall, and early experiences with music are especially impactful on children's later engagement with music (Gordon, 2003; Levinowitz, 1993). Much like parenting overall, musical parenting does not occur in a vacuum. Parents' decisions about how to create a musical environment and engage musically with their children are shaped by a number of influences, including parental characteristics and experiences as well as environmental or contextual factors. Ilari, Moura, and Bourscheidt (2011) offer a definition of musical parenting, stating that "musical parenting can be understood as the set of beliefs, values, and behaviors that parents have/engage in with their children concerning music" (p. 52). Koops (2019) developed a framework for thinking about how parents incorporate music into their parenting in which she made a distinction between musical parenting, which she defined as, "directly supporting children's musical development through activities at home, at school, and in the community" and parenting musically, which she defined as, "using music to accomplish nonmusical goals, e.g., to support social, cognitive, or kinesthetic development" (p. 2). Interest in musical parenting has become more prominent in music education over the last 30 years. Researchers have highlighted the central role parents play in guiding their children's musical development (e.g., Ilari 2009, 2017; Koops, 2012a; McPherson, 2009), and many scholars view parents as their child's first music teacher (Ilari, 2017; Levinowitz, 1993; Scott-Kassner, 1999; Valerio, Reynolds, Bolton, Taggart, Gordon, 1998; Zdzinski, 1996). Despite this, musical parenting and the personal, environmental, and societal influences on parents' musical choices often are not emphasized in

music teacher education programs (Ilari, 2017), and there are still many “wide and serious gaps” (Young & Ilari, 2012) in the literature about early childhood music education and musical parenting.

Researchers have explored musical parenting during early childhood from several perspectives, employing a variety of designs including ethnographic and observational examinations of musical parenting behaviors in the home (Addessi, 2009; Custodero, 2006, 2009; Gibson, 2009; Ilari, 2009; Ilari & Young, 2016; Kelly & Sutton-Smith, 1987; Young & Gillen, 2010). Other researchers have focused on musical parenting behaviors in early childhood music classes, as well as parents’ perceptions of these experiences and what benefits they may have for families (Barrett, 2009; Berger & Cooper, 2003; Cardany, 2004; Cooper & Cardany, 2011; de Grätzer, 1999; Gudmundsdottir & Gudmundsdottir, 2010; Koops, 2011a, 2011b, 2012a, 2012b; Levinowitz, 1993; Savage, 2015; Vlismas & Bowes, 1999; Youm, 2013). While some studies of musical parenting include observational techniques, researchers have relied heavily on parental self-reports, via surveys and interviews, in order to gauge how parents interact with their children musically and what type of musical environment they provide for their children in the early years of their lives (Custodero, Britto, & Brooks-Gunn, 2003; Custodero & Johnson-Green, 2003; de Vries, 2007, 2009; Ilari, 2005; Ilari et al., 2011; Mehr, 2014; Young, 2008).

There are numerous variables that contribute to musical parenting beliefs and behaviors. Researchers have found that musical parenting is shaped by parent gender (Custodero et al., 2003; Gibson, 2009; Ilari, 2009; Ilari et al., 2011; Trehub, Unyk, Kamenetsky, Hill, Trainor, Henderson, & Saraza, 1997), mental state (Custodero et al., 2003; Ilari, 2009; Malloch & Trevarthen, 2014), social class (Adachi & Trehub, 2012; Conkling, 2017; Ilari, 2013, 2017; Savage, 2015; Young, Street, & Davies, 2007), music knowledge and experiences (Barrett, 2009;

Cardany, 2004; Custodero, 2006, 2009; Custodero & Johnson-Green, 2003; de Vries, 2007, 2009; Gibson, 2009; Gordon, 2013; Ilari, 2005; Kelly & Sutton-Smith, 1987; Leu, 2008; Mehr, 2014; Rodriguez, 2018; Valerio, Reynolds, Grego, Yap, & McNair, 2011; Youm, 2013), or access to and influence of technology and modern media (Ilari et al., 2011; Young, 2008; Young & Gillen, 2010). Some have cautioned that parenting and family life is not static, and so, investigations into musical parenting may be representative only of a specific time and place, making results difficult to generalize (Ilari, 2017). Other researchers have put forth the idea that the use of music as a parenting tool is universal and intuitive (M. Papoušek, 1996) and that early singing and the musical characteristics of Infant-Directed Speech (ID Speech) may be an important form of early interaction between parents and children termed communicative musicality (Malloch, 1999).

### **Musical Home Environment**

The home is an intimate space that is rich with rituals and routines unique to each family and place. While the home has value as a research site for providing insight and deeper understanding of peoples' lives, its private nature presents unique challenges and ethical considerations for researchers. When considering the home as a research site, many ethical and practical issues must be addressed. Researchers often discuss issues of access, consent, confidentiality, and the intrusiveness of different data collections techniques or the researcher in a private space. Fieldwork in family homes requires a great deal of reflexivity and also is enhanced through a researcher's establishment of relationships or rapport with participants. These issues have kept the private world of the family largely hidden. While these considerations supersede discipline, understanding of the home is especially lacking in educational research. Plowman and Stevenson (2013) explain:

The home is a neglected site for research compared to educational settings such as schools and preschools, a situation that has arisen as a result of practical and logistical considerations including gaining access, involving children as active research participants and negotiating consents. Perhaps equally intimidating, the kinds of challenges faced when doing fieldwork in the home are unknowable in advance, requiring a high level of flexibility. (p. 330)

Despite these challenges, scholars and educators have urged that an understanding of both musical home environment and musical parenting has important implications for music educators (Cardany, 2004; Ilari, 2017; Koops, 2011b).

Parents have acted as participants in many investigations of home environment. Parents are interviewed regularly when researchers explore home environment or the daily lives of children. Often these interviews gather information about daily life and routines as well as reflections on parents' own childhoods, experiences, or beliefs (Barret, 2009; Cardany, 2004; Custodero, 2006, 2009; Davidson & Borthwick, 2002; Dean, 2015; Gibson, 2009; Gingras, 2013; Ilari, 2009; Ilari & Young, 2016; Kelley and Sutton-Smith, 1987; Koops, 2012a; Koops, 2014; Lareau, 2011; Plowman & Stevenson, 2013; Tudge, 2008). Some researchers have cautioned that there may be a difference between what people *say* they do and what they *actually* do (Young, Street, & Davies, 2007) and, therefore, relying solely on parent reports may limit an understanding of how parents engage in musical experiences with their children.

Music is used by parents for a multitude of reasons and serves many purposes in families' daily lives at home. Singing is among the most frequently reported activity that parents engage in with their children at home (Custodero & Johnson-Green, 2003; Ilari, 2005; Rodriguez, 2018). Researchers have found that parents sing, listen or dance to music, or play instruments for and

with their children to transmit and teach about culture or religious beliefs (Custodero, 2006; Gibson, 2009; Ilari, 2009; Koutsoupidou, 2016; Young & Gillen, 2010), to regulate mood (Gibson, 2009; Ilari, 2009; Ilari et al., 2011; Young & Gillen, 2010), or as a parenting tool to distract or educate children while parents are busy completing another task (Custodero, 2006; de Vries, 2009; Gibson, 2009; Ilari, 2011; Young & Gillen, 2010).

Parents and children engage with music during play (Custodero, 2006; Young & Gillen, 2010), as part of daily routines (Custodero, 2006; Gingras, 2013), and for enjoyment or entertainment (Ilari, 2013; Koops, 2011b). Although some researchers have cautioned that readily accessible and ever evolving technology might cause live musical interactions in families to decline (de Vries, 2009; Papoušek, 1996), several studies have found that technology and media use is woven into live musical engagement in families' homes (Gingras, 2013; Young, 2008; Young et al., 2007; Young & Gillen, 2010). Parents also use music to facilitate and strengthen their bonds with their children (Ilari, 2009; Ilari et al., 2011; Young & Gillen, 2010). Several studies have found that parents choose to incorporate music into their home environments because of beliefs about the cognitive, social, emotional, or other extramusical benefits of music (Cardany, 2004; Ilari et al., 2011; Mehr, 2014; Rodriguez, 2019; Savage, 2015) or because their own musical experiences give them a desire to provide similar musical experiences for their own children (Cardany, 2004; Custodero, 2009; Gibson, 2009; Koutsoupidou, 2016; Mehr, 2014; Rodriguez, 2019; Youm, 2013).

Sometimes parents are not aware of the amount of music making they do with their children until they are asked to reflect upon their musical interactions at home. Upon reflection, parents have reported that music plays a larger role in their parenting than they previously thought (Custodero, 2006, Gingras, 2013, Koops, 2014). Although most parents report that they

believe music is important and enjoyable for their young children, some feel unsure about their role in their children's music learning (Cardany, 2004) or do not have the confidence or skills to interact musically with their children (Leu, 2008). Parents who feel that they lack musical skills or confidence report that they rely on digital and commercial products like DVDs or toys at home to provide their child with musical experiences (de Vries, 2009). Others use these musical resources to distract or occupy children in order to "take a break" from parenting (Young, 2008; Young & Gillen, 2010). Still other parents have reported that, while they find musical experiences valuable for their children, they believe teachers should be responsible for providing music experiences and education to children (de Vries, 2009; Youm, 2013).

While parents have acted as participants in many home environment studies, the focus of these studies often is on children's lives or family interactions. In music, few studies have focused primarily on musical parenting practices and behaviors. Much of the research that has been done has been quantitative in nature. Data in these studies are collected via surveys, structured observation protocols aimed at tallying or analyzing specific behaviors, or interviews outside of the home. There is far less qualitative research that includes observation of parents at home with their children.

### **Early Childhood Music Classes**

Early childhood music classes in which parents and young children participate in instruction together represent a unique form of music education that occurs outside of the home. Aside from some Suzuki classes and instrumental lessons, these classes are one of the few music education offerings that place parents and children together as co-participants. These classes, offered in many forms throughout the world, vary in structure, content, and goals and are a potential source of information for parents who are seeking information on musical parenting.

Some early childhood music programs are independent and do not use a commercial curriculum or materials, some can be found in community music schools or may be based out of university music programs, while others are run under the banner of a larger franchise such as *Kindermusik*, *Music Together*, or *Musikgarten*.

A multitude of things may influence why parents choose to enroll in an early childhood music class, ranging from personal beliefs about music and musical experiences (Ilari, 2017) to beliefs about optimal child-rearing related trends tied to social class (Lareau, 2011). It is possible, although it has not been explicitly examined, that parents' motivations and goals related to their music class participation with their child may alter how that experience impacts their musical parenting and musical home environment.

Yet, Adachi & Trehub (2012) make a striking claim about the benefits of these music programs by stating:

To date, there is no 'definitive' evidence that the musical interventions designed for expectant parents, fetuses, caregivers, or normally developing infants accomplish their stated objectives. Similarly, there is no conclusive evidence that the musical programs confer nonmusical benefits on fetuses, infants, expectant parents, or caregivers. That is not to claim that there are no such benefits. Only that the benefits are yet open to question. (p. 244)

The authors also voice concern that musical interventions, especially for typically developing infants, may feed middle-class parents' anxieties about their parenting skills and their children's future achievement. However, parents in many studies have discussed multiple benefits of participation in such programs.



Researchers have gathered information on parents' perceptions of their role in music classes (Koops, 2011b), parents' attitudes toward early childhood music instruction (Ilari, 2013), parents' perceptions of the benefits of early childhood music classes for children (Koops, 2011b; Mehr, 2014; Rodriguez, 2019; Savage, 2015), and for themselves (Barret, 2009; de Grätzer, 1999; Gudmundssdottir & Gudmundssdottir, 2010; Levinowitz, 1993; Rodriguez, 2019; Taggart, Alvarez, & Schubert, 2011; Vlismas & Bowes, 1999). Researchers have examined parent goals, knowledge, practices, and needs regarding early childhood music participation (Rodriguez, 2019; Youm, 2013) and how adults' actions influence children's musical play during music classes (Berger & Cooper, 2003). Further, parents have contributed their thoughts to program evaluations of early childhood music programs (de Grätzer, 1999; Cooper & Cardany, 2011).

Parents believe that music class participation has several benefits for their children, including enjoyment (Koops, 2011b; Rodriguez, 2019), increased musical development and appreciation (Ilari, 2013; Koops, 2011b; Rodriguez, 2019), enhanced communication between parents and children (de Grätzer, 1999), and increased opportunities for socialization (Koops, 2011b; Mehr, 2014; Pitt & Hargraves, 2017; Rodriguez, 2019). Parents in some studies have reported that they use activities or songs learned in music classes in their homes (Barret, 2009; Ilari et al., 2011; Koops, 2014; Pitt & Hargraves, 2017; Vlismas & Bowes, 1999; Young, Street, & Davies, 2007). Despite this growing body of research, there is still much we do not know about parents' experiences in early childhood music classes and, specifically, how participation in this environment impacts musical parenting.

### **Need for the Study**

As interest in family music making and musical parenting has increased in recent years, researchers have begun to paint a picture of how and why parents make music for and with their

children. This research provides a glimpse into family music making at home, parental characteristics that may influence their musical choices regarding their children, and parents' perceptions of early childhood music education. However, once families leave the early childhood music classroom, we know little about what parents may learn or find valuable enough to use in their daily life with their children.

When teaching early childhood classes, teachers have goals in mind for the families they serve. Although researchers have reported that parents believe they have benefitted from participation in early childhood music programs (Barret, 2009; Koops, 2011b; Levinowitz, 1993; Rodriguez, 2019) and some indicate that they use songs from classes at home or elsewhere (Barret, 2009; Ilari et al., 2011; Koops, 2014; Pitt & Hargraves, 2017; Vlismas & Bowes, 1999; Young, Street, & Davies, 2007), the influence music classes have on family music making in the home is unclear. This is likely due, in part, to the unique nature of individual families and their personal experiences, motivations, and perspectives that frame their experiences in music classes, as well as the challenges associated with conducting research in private family spaces. These challenges have resulted in researchers relying primarily on parental self-report when trying to ascertain what families gain from music class participation. In order to gain a better understanding of how early childhood music classes impact musical parenting, more research is needed.

While investigators have examined musical parenting in families' homes, via parental report on surveys or interviews, and in the context of early childhood music classes, few have examined how early childhood music classes shape musical parenting and vice versa. Lamont (2008) noted, "...there has been very little systematic enquiry into early musical experiences that take place outside either the home or preschool educational settings, and no systematic

comparison of home and preschool environments” (p. 249). Researchers regularly call for further investigation into musical parenting. Some specifically have urged that future research should employ the use of ethnographic or observational data collection methods that takes place in family homes or other naturalistic settings (Custodero, Britto, & Brooks-Gunn, 2003; Gibson, 2009; Ilari et al., 2011; Young & Gillen, 2010; Young & Ilari, 2012). Others have noted that early childhood music researchers have not used parental observations and documentation as much as other fields (Valerio, Reynolds, Grego, Yap, & McNair, 2011).

Further inquiries into the impact of early childhood music programs on musical parenting may serve to inform early childhood music educators so they may better serve the needs and desires of parents (Levinowitz, 1993). Cardany (2004) suggested that, “hearing parents’ musical stories may help educators become more cognizant of the importance of what is being taught through music and may help to reconcile parent and music educator aims for preschool children” (p. iii). Koops (2011b, 2014) noted that hearing from parents about their experiences in and outside of music classes informed her teaching and interactions with parents, leading her to conclude that, “A clearer picture of at-home parental involvement in music helps music educators improve their instruction in class settings” (Koops, 2012b, p. 16). Researchers also have recommended that teachers attempt to foster a stronger link between home and classes by encouraging a “two-way flow of culture” (Pitt & Hargraves, 2017, p. 305) between the two settings (Gingras, 2013).

Many studies have suggested that attending early childhood music classes may encourage increased music making at home (de Vries, 2007; Fox, 2000; Ilari, 2002, 2009; Leu, 2008; Levinowitz, 1993, Wu, 2005, Youm, 2013). These researchers urge that, “parents should be considered a target group for music learning” (Fox, 2000, p. 25) and that early childhood music

educators have an opportunity to enhance the natural or intuitive musical parenting that already occurs with young children (Ilari, 2009). While these reports are encouraging, other researchers have found that parents are not choosing to use class materials at home with their children (Mehr, 2014; Rodriguez, 2018). Also, others caution that parents may overestimate how often they engage in music making with their children in order to present themselves and their parenting in a positive light (Young, 2008). Lastly, among the researchers who have examined parental goals related to their own participation in early childhood music programs (Koops, 2011b; Rodriguez, 2019; Youm 2013), none have found that parents primarily enrolled in music classes to improve their musical parenting. Therefore, simply asking parents if they do music activities they learned in classes may not provide a complete picture of how music class attendance impacts musical parenting. It may be that parent learning in such classes is not straightforward or universal, making the impact of such classes unclear.

In thinking about what I hope to gain by conducting this study, I was reminded of a familiar, almost cliché Chinese proverb: “Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach a man to fish and he will eat for a lifetime.” I have spent a great deal of time over the years thinking about what parents may or may not be gaining from attending early childhood music classes. It is my hope that these classes give parents an opportunity to “learn to fish”; in this case, helping them become more skilled and knowledgeable musical parents. I think it is possible, however, that we are simply giving parents a few “fish” (i.e., momentary musical experiences) over the course of several weeks, months, and years, and that these experiences have little impact on their musical parenting. It is entirely possible that variations of these two outcomes occur within each group of families for a plethora of reasons. Perhaps the impact of these classes on musical parenting is contextual and dependent on the teacher and the course structure. Perhaps it

is dependent on what musical ‘baggage’ parents bring with them to class or what their musical goals and aspirations are for themselves and for their children. The extant literature provides some clues; however, there is still more to learn about musical parenting and how it may be shaped by early childhood music class participation.

### **Purpose Statement and Research Questions**

With the intent of informing early childhood music educators in their work with parents and their young children, the purpose of this study was to explore how parents engage in musical parenting and how that parenting is shaped by enrolling in early childhood music classes. The “grand tour” question guiding this study was, how does participation in early childhood music classes shape participants’ musical parenting? In addition to this overarching question, I address the following sub questions:

1. What do participants already know, believe, and do with music prior to their participation in music classes?
2. What kind of musical home environment do parents provide for their toddlers?
3. How do parents engage in musical activities during early childhood music classes?
4. What activities or ideas from early childhood music classes, if any, do parents value and enjoy?
5. What knowledge, skills, or information do parents gain from participating in early childhood music classes with their toddler that translate to changes in their musical parenting behaviors outside of class?

## **CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

In this review, I discuss the literature on musical parenting, the musical home environment parents create for their young children, and parents' experiences with early childhood music class participation. Based on this research, as well as the larger body of research on parenting and family life, researchers have developed theories about human and musical development and have explicated the role that parents play in shaping development. In this study, I explore how participation in early childhood music classes may shape parents understanding of music development and their uses of music with their young children at home. Therefore, in this review of literature I illuminate what gaps or inconsistencies exist in the current literature and what the literature and my critical review of it suggests about how musical parenting, both at home and in music classes, might be examined most meaningfully.

### **Musical Parenting**

Some evidence suggests that parents begin to influence children's musical development before birth. By the third trimester of pregnancy, fetal hearing begins to function. Children recall and attend to musical stimuli heard regularly while in the womb after they are born (Hepper, 1991), and newborns prefer their mother's voice over other female voices (DeCasper & Fifer, 1980). Gordon (2013) emphasized that parents and other caretakers have the biggest influence on their children's musical development during early childhood, especially the first few years. He stated:

What children learn during the first five years of life forms foundations for subsequent educational development, which traditionally begins when they enter kindergarten or first grade and receive formal instruction. The younger children are when parents and teachers

begin unstructured and structured informal guidance to develop foundations of learning, the more children will benefit from future instruction. (Gordon, 2013, p. 1)

Some scholars have posited that parents, especially mothers, naturally incorporate music into their parenting but that most parents do not deliberately teach music to their young children (Young & Ilari, 2012).

In the 1980s and 1990s, several researchers conducted laboratory-based studies to explore the musical characteristics of parents' infant-directed speech (ID speech), commonly referred to 'motherese' or 'parentese'. ID speech is characterized by elevated pitch, expanded pitch range, slow speed, and use of repetition. Use of ID speech is thought to be universal and has been documented in many cultures and languages (Trehub et al., 1997). Hanus and Mechthild Papoušek conducted several studies to analyze parent's speech and singing to their infants. Their examinations of parents' seemingly natural use of ID speech and the stylized ways in which they sing to infants, sometimes referred to as infant-directed singing (ID singing), led them to suggest musical parenting is intuitive (H. Papoušek, 1996; M. Papoušek, 1996).

M. Papoušek asserted, that because ID speech appears to be universal nature, its origins are biological rather behavioral (1996, p. 92). Although M. Papoušek (1996) stated that early musical interaction between parents and preverbal infants is a natural behavior, even suggesting that early interventions from music professionals may not be advisable, H. Papoušek (1996) cautioned that singing and dancing within families with infants was decreasing dramatically due in part to advancement in music listening technologies. However, more recent research has found that singing and music-making in families is not in rapid decline as H. Papoušek posited (Custodero & Johnson-Green, 2003; Gibson, 2009; Gingras, 2013; Young, 2008) and that

technology may enhance and increase the frequency of musical interactions between parents and young children (Gingras, 2013; Young, 2008; Young & Gillen, 2010).

Other researchers have explored early parent-infant vocal interactions, bolstering support for the idea that ID speech may be an important form of musical communication (e.g., Malloch, 1999). Malloch and Trevarthen (2009) coined the term communicative musicality, after conducting their own laboratory-based research. They asserted that elements of early musical communication between parents and infants establish an important foundation for human relationships. Trehub has conducted numerous studies to explore parents' use of singing to infants. Trehub et al. (1997) conducted a study to determine if the presence of an infant altered mothers and fathers singing. When an infant was present, parents' singing was significantly higher and slower than singing without an infant present, suggesting that ID singing is distinct from other forms of singing, and is similar to ID speech. The researchers also identified this behavior as intuitive.

These researchers provide robust evidence to suggest that the ID speech and ID singing have distinct features and appear to occur across cultures and languages. This type of communication may be the earliest and most natural form of music education and may also have an important role in early bonding and relationships. However, music engagement takes many forms, even with infants. Also, parenting, including musical parenting, is influenced by experience, context, time, and individual characteristics (Bronfenbrenner, 2001). Therefore, even if ID speech and singing have biological origins, overall musical parenting is not straightforward.

### **The Role of Parents in Children's Musical Development: McPherson's Model**

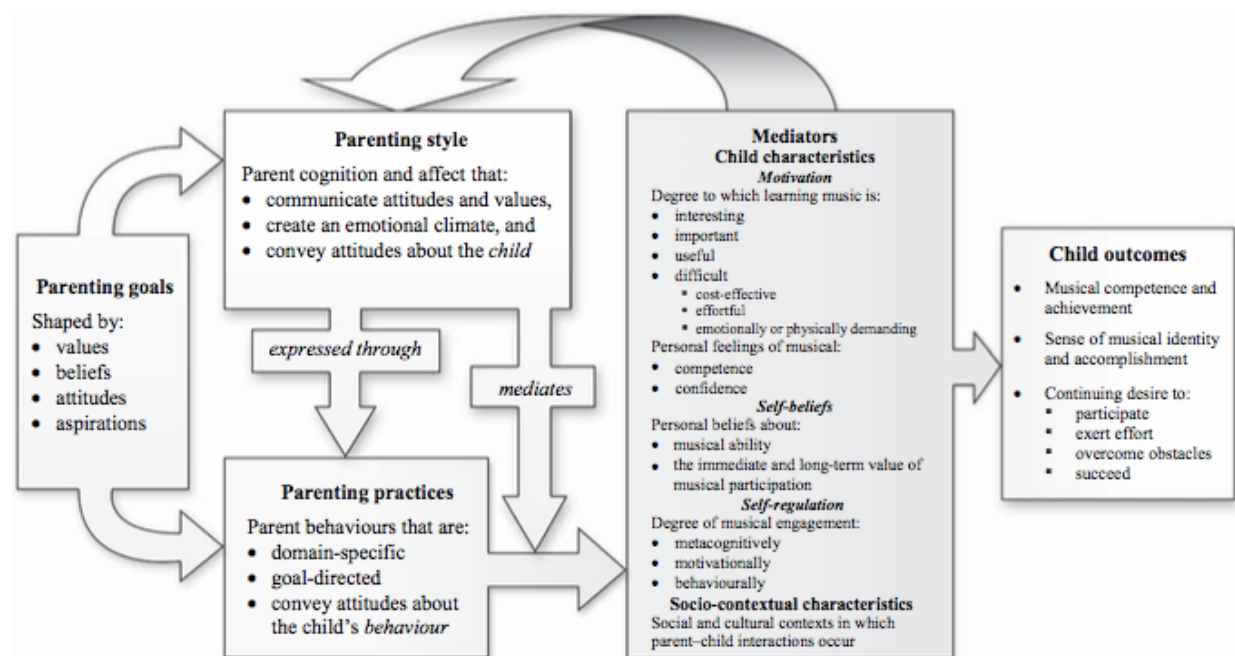
McPherson (2009) synthesized research findings and theories from education, developmental psychology, and music to conceptualize a framework that is intended to



illuminate how interactions between parents and children may ultimately influence children's musical learning (p. 92).

**Figure 1**

*Parent-Child Interactions in Children's Musical Learning (McPherson, 2009)*



McPherson's (2009) model first introduces the importance of parental goals—which are shaped by values, beliefs, attitudes, and aspirations—and how these goals influence their parenting practices as well as their parenting style. While McPherson (2009) explains how parental goals may be shaped by their attitudes regarding the value of musical skill, or their perceptions of their child's potential abilities in music, he does not include anything in the model regarding parents' personal characteristics, such as their own musical experiences, skills, environmental or contextual influences, or biological and psychological characteristics, and how these may influence parental goals.

Parental practices including behaviors and strategies that help socialize children also are important in the model. McPherson believes that parent behaviors, such as providing structure,

providing support, and focusing on children's effort rather than 'fixed ability,' may be important in facilitating children's music learning and helping them develop a sense of competence (McPherson, p. 97). McPherson (2009) also includes several mediators in his model, such as children's motivation, self-beliefs, and self-regulation, as well as socio-contextual characteristics. McPherson (2009) calls for further investigation into socio-cultural factors stating, "socio-cultural factors are an essential component of any understanding of the types of processes that lead to children's musical outcomes. These factors deserve more research attention across many areas of education, and particularly music" (p. 104).

McPherson (2009) emphasizes that the relationship between parenting and mediators, including child and socio-contextual characteristics, is bi-directional, meaning that they influence one another. Parental goals, behaviors, and personal characteristics do not have a one-way influence on children or context. Context, children, and parents all influence one another, which ultimately contributes to various child outcomes.

### **Parental Characteristics**

McPherson (2009) determined that many factors influence parenting practices. Researchers have explored how specific personal characteristics, including gender, mental state, social class, and music experience, influence musical parenting. Some studies demonstrate that mothers report singing to their children more frequently than fathers. In a telephone survey of over 2000 families with children under the age of 3, Custodero et al. (2003) found that mothers were more likely to sing or play music for their children than fathers. Trehub et al. (1997) asked 67 families to document instances of singing to their infant throughout the day. The researchers found that 74% of songs were sung by mothers and only 14% by fathers. When parents estimated

how often they typically sing to their infants, 72% of the mothers stated they sang often to their babies, while only 26% of fathers reported regularly singing to their children.

In addition to frequency of interaction, differences among mothers and fathers in musical parenting of young children have been reported with regard to song choice, genre, and mode of transmission. Trehub et al. (1997) observed parents singing a song of their choice to their infants. They found that mothers tended to sing songs that were stereotypical (i.e. children's music such as lullabies or playsongs) and simple, whereas fathers sang more popular and folk songs that often were more complex. Ilari (2009) interviewed and observed mothers in their homes with their infants. In one family, the father and mother approached music differently with their son. While the dad often played 'pop music' for his baby, the mother preferred to sing Lebanese music as a way to connect her parenting with her culture and language (Ilari, 2009). Similar findings were reported by Gibson (2009), who also found that fathers were more likely to perform popular songs with their children than mothers, who more often chose to perform traditional children's music. Gibson (2009) also found that fathers played or sang live music for their children more than mothers in her ethnographic study of musical parenting in a university housing community.

Ilari et al. (2011) interviewed mothers of infants and toddlers in Brazil. The vast majority of the mothers (90%) reported that they sang to their children, but only 50% of the participants reported that fathers, siblings, other family members or caregivers did the same. In alignment with other research, mothers in this study most frequently explained that they sang lullabies and playsongs, while fathers were more likely to sing rock, pop, and music from television shows. However, in both Ilari (2009) and Ilari et al. (2011), only mothers acted as primary participants, so the information collected about fathers' uses of music was not obtained directly from them.

Another key consideration when reviewing musical parenting literature is that, although some research involves fathers as primary participants, the vast majority of research on musical parenting involves only mothers (Ilari, 2017).

Other parental characteristics also have been shown to influence musical parenting, including mental state. Custodero et al. (2003) found that parental report of depressive symptoms was associated with less frequent musical engagement for latter-born children. The same was not true for first-born children. Ilari (2009) provided insight into how one mother used music as a means of bonding with her child while experiencing with post-partum depression. Malloch & Trevarthen (2014) suggest that post-partum depression may influence the quality of their ID speech, which can hinder the communicative and relationship-building power of early interactions between mothers and their children. Mental state, and its implications for music engagement, is studied more thoroughly in the field of music therapy and may be beyond the scope of many music education investigations into musical parenting.

Social class, particularly trends among middle-class parents, is discussed frequently in the literature. Just as the majority of research on musical parenting involves mothers as primary participants, nearly all of participants in this body of research have been drawn from middle-class populations. This may be due to the fact that participants are regularly recruited from early childhood music programs, which most often cost money and, therefore, tend to attract middle- to upper-class families (Young, Street, & Davies, 2007). Adachi and Trehub (2012) stated:

To put it simply, affluent, highly educated parents are more likely to provide music lessons for their children than are less educated and affluent parents. Similarly, parents with advantages in education and income are more likely to participate in early music programs for infants and toddlers than their less advantaged peers. (p. 245)

Music education researchers have considered how families' involvement in music activities, such as early childhood music classes, may be related to Lareau's (2011) concept of concerted cultivation (Conkling, 2017; Ilari, 2017; Savage, 2015), which describes behaviors and beliefs associated with middle-class parents. Some middle-class parents view their parenting role "as helping their child to develop or cultivate their talents" (Lareau, 2011, p. 1). Consequently, these parents enroll their children in a wide variety of organized activities that are controlled by parents and other adults, leaving children in these families with little unstructured time. Middle-class parents are more likely to accept guidelines and practices suggested by professionals about how to raise children. Lareau (2011) explains that a small number of professionals, including teachers, establish a "dominant set of cultural repertoires" for how children should be raised, which ultimately shapes the behavior of a large number of parents (p. 4).

In contrast, Lareau (2011) explained that children from working class families spent a great deal more time with immediate and extended family and had longer periods of unstructured time in which they were able to exert more control of their leisure activities. Unlike their middle-class counterparts, eliciting their children's opinions and thoughts is not viewed as essential by working-class parents, who tend toward giving directives and establishing clear boundaries between children and adults. These behaviors and beliefs were identified by Lareau (2011) as *accomplishment of natural growth* (p. 3).

Lareau (2011) posited that middle-class childrearing practices of *concerted cultivation* promotes a sense of entitlement in children, which enhances children's comfort level and success in institutional settings including schools. Children who come from middle-class backgrounds learn to question adults and are more comfortable advocating for their needs. Children from working-class or poor families were less likely to question authority figures or shape interactions

to suit their needs or preferences (p. 6). Lareau (2011) is careful to acknowledge that, while these patterns emerged in her work and social class does seem to shape children's experiences, there are many other factors of family life that were not examined in as much detail.

Ilari (2013) interviewed parents from several countries about their beliefs and attitudes toward children's musical activities and found that some, but not all, families enrolled their children in early childhood music programs to help them "get ahead" (p. 189). Contrastingly, Koutsoupidou (2016) reported that music experiences in families often take place when families demonstrate a strong appreciation for music, regardless of whether they can afford extra expenses of instruments or activities outside the home. The researcher did acknowledge that finances presented a challenge to families when it came to providing formal music experiences such as lessons or attendance at musical events. It is likely that social class plays a role in parents' provision of structured or formal music experiences for their children outside the home. However, social class may not be as influential on musical parenting that occurs within the family and in the home environment. Conclusions about how social class influences musical parenting behaviors are difficult to make because so much of the research that has been done only includes middle class families.

One of the most common parental characteristics reported to influence musical parenting decisions is parents' previous or current music participation, musical knowledge, or skill. Musical parenting often is linked to parents' own childhood experiences. In an investigation into the everyday musical engagement of a young child, Barrett (2009) reported that both parents recalled lots of music making with their families when they were children. Similar findings were reported by Custodero (2006, 2009), who argued that connection to past experience was important for all participants. Custodero (2006) explained that a number of parents expressed

that they engaged in music with their children in order to carry on familial traditions of music making or that they recalled being sung to by a parent. One mother in Custodero's (2006) study explained that she used similar processes and repertoire as her own mother in order to feel a connection to her family who lived far away from her. These findings are congruent with two other studies, which found that people's musical parenting choices and the ways they engaged musically with their children paralleled, or were inspired by, their own experiences with music as children (Gibson, 2009; Rodriguez, 2019). Like Custodero (2006), Gibson (2009) found that parents drew from an existing body of songs in their musical parenting, and that they knew many of those songs from their own childhoods.

A number of researchers have concluded that parents who are active musically or have participated in music in the past are more likely to engage in music making with their children (Rodriguez, 2018; Valerio et al., 2011; Youm, 2013) than those with less musical experience. Rodriguez (2018) found that increased parent value of music ( $\beta = .29, t = 3.15, p < .002$ ) as well as adult music participation ( $\beta = .18, t = 2.04, p < .044$ ) significantly predicted an increase in musical home environment composite scores among families with preschool children. Parents' attitudes toward music often are shaped by their own musical interests and experiences and may be a primary source of motivation for involving their child in music activities (Cardany, 2004), including enrolling in early childhood music programs. Rodriguez (2019) found that some parents enrolled in early childhood music classes because they wished to provide positive musical experiences for their child that paralleled their own experiences with music as children.

In one of the only longitudinal investigations into musical parenting and musical home environment, Kelly and Sutton-Smith (1987) observed and interviewed three families for two years, all of whom had a female, first-born child. The three families represented different levels

of parental music experience. In the first case, the parents were both professional musicians, and in the second case, the parents were “musically-oriented” but did not have music-related careers (Kelly & Sutton-Smith, 1987, p. 41). The third case involved parents who were identified as “non-musically-oriented” (p. 48). The parents in cases I and II made music a more regular part of their everyday activities and family gatherings than those in case III. The children in both of the musically-oriented families also exhibited more musical behaviors at a younger age than the child in case III. The researchers concluded that the differences between the cases in this study “suggest a strong relationship between home stimulation and speed of development” (Kelly & Sutton-Smith, 1987, p. 51). They also asserted that parental valuing of music led to more frequent and earlier musical behavior for the children involved in the study.

Ilari (2005) found a relationship between parental music experiences and the type of music listening mothers did with their babies. Mothers who had more music ensemble experience were more likely to listen to classical music with their children. Mehr (2014) surveyed parents of 4-year-old children who had participated in early childhood music classes ( $N = 78$ ) and found that parents’ recollections of being sung to as a child were significantly related to the frequency with which they sang to their own children ( $r = .40, p < .0001$ ). Custodero and Johnson-Green (2003), who surveyed 2250 parents of children aged 4 to 6 months, found that musically experienced parents were significantly more likely to play and sing music for their infants ( $p < .01$ ). The strongest association found was between singing to an infant and being sung to by a parent, but participation in ensembles as well as in private lessons also were associated with more parental singing.

A number of researchers argue that lack of confidence or perceived lack of musical skill may leave parents unsure about how to parent musically. When parents reported that they were



“not musical” or that they lacked confidence in their musical abilities, they often explained that they were unsure of what kinds of musical activities they should provide for their child (de Vries, 2007, 2009; Leu, 2008; Youm, 2013). In a focus group discussion, de Vries (2009) found that parents sometimes felt that music instruction and learning was the responsibility of educators, such as preschool staff, and that at home they would rely on musical products including DVDs and CDs to provide their child with musical experiences.

Some researchers have found that parents who do not have extensive personal musical experience also create musical rich home environments for their children (Gingras, 2013). In her recent book *Parenting Musically*, Koops (2019) details a year-long project in which she explored parenting musically in eight families representing different races, family structures, cultural backgrounds, and levels of musical experience. When introducing the project, she asserted, “parents are capable of being children’s first music teachers—of providing a rich musical environment, motivation to learn, and expectation to be musical, regardless of musical backgrounds, activities, cultural background, socio-economic privilege, or cultural capital” (Koops, 2019, p. 2). However, the literature overall suggests that parental musical experiences within the family and in formal settings may increase the likelihood that parents will interact musically with their children and that parental music experience matters.

### **Contextual Influences on Musical Parenting**

Beyond parental music experience and other individual characteristics, contextual influences, including technological advancements, religious beliefs, and cultural affiliation, also shape musical parenting. Conkling (2017) explains that socialization varies by race, ethnicity, and culture. She argues that the way music is used in families represents community and cultural

values. Ilari (2009) found that mothers' musical choices were "meaningful representations of important features related to the personal, cultural, and social identities of each woman" (p. 33).

Custodero (2006) was interested in learning more about the singing practices of ten families. Participants were drawn from a previous national telephone survey study, and all lived in the New York City area. Participants represented a range of parental ages and income levels, as well as Western and Eastern European, African-American, and Hispanic ethnicities. All of the families had at least one child who turned 3 during the time of the study; seven were girls and three were boys. The participants in this study were among the most diverse with regard to SES, ethnicity, and parent gender (both fathers and mothers were included) in the literature. Data were collected through two home visits in which one researcher conducted a parent interview while another involved themselves in musical play with the participating child or took fieldnotes. Parent also kept journals detailing instances of music-making that occurred in the home over a period of several days.

Cultural and familial traditions also were important to parents in Custodero's (2006, 2009) study. She found that parents' used music to honor previously established traditions and, for some families, create new traditions. Parents shared music that they recalled as being important during their own childhoods with their own children. For parents who had few memories of music being important in their own childhoods, and for parents who had negative memories of their previous musical experiences, music was used to form new traditions within their family that often were linked to music in popular culture or media.

Custodero (2009) used the same data to explore further the meaning music held for six of the families involved in her 2006 study. In this study, Custodero (2009) employed a cultural niche framework (Super & Harkness, 2002) as a lens to explore how culture influenced family

music making. Custodero (2009) described uses of music in each family through creation of portraits. Families used music to maintain homeland connections, establish community, create intimacy, impart knowledge, negotiate identity, and provide coping strategies. She concluded that “musical practices may look and sound different in families socialized in diverse ways” (Custodero, 2009, p. 78) and that personal histories, local circumstances, and the contributions of each individual family member shape musical engagement in families.

Cultural affiliation or identity can be explored through music (MacDonald, Hargraves, & Miell, 2002) and thus can be shared with children through repertoire selection, singing, and listening. In a study of the musical home environment of families with 7-year-old girls around the world, Koutsoupidou (2016) found that both cultural and religious beliefs influence parents’ beliefs about music and their musical hopes for their children. Another cross-cultural study of music making in families’ homes explained that parents’ songs and vocalizations are culturally specific and are typically in their native language and representative of the dominant musical culture of the area or country (Young & Gillen, 2010).

Religious beliefs and affiliation also may be important to parents’ choices about music. Parents with religious beliefs often incorporate religious music into their musical parenting practices. In a survey of parents living in one university housing community, Gibson (2009) found that 40% report singing at least one religious song with their children. Some parents explained that they choose to expose their children to religious music to affirm and express their faith. Other investigators also found that religious music can be used as a teaching tool (Gingras, 2013). The Ramirez family in Gingras’s ethnographic study on the musical home environments of five 6-year-old girls and their families explained that they sang and listened to contemporary Christian music to reinforce their faith and help their children learn Spanish concurrently.

Parents also may involve their children in music at church for socialization and peer interaction (Custodero, 2006).

Several sociologists and educators have explored the ways that societal norms influence individual parents' decisions about child-rearing. Ilari et al. (2011) concluded that the mothers they interviewed often presented as anxious, and that societal views of what constitutes "good parenting" may have influenced their musical choices. Some mothers in this study explained that they began changing their musical habits when they were pregnant. One mother of a 12-month-old explained, "As I worked on my computer, I listened to lots of classical music although I never liked it before being pregnant. I still don't like it, but it is supposed to be good for young children, so I do the 'sacrifice' (Ilari et al., 2011, p. 56). The notion that music, especially classical music, may have cognitive or other benefits is a commonly held belief among parents in contemporary societies (Ilari, 2011).

Many scholars trace the pervasive belief that, 'music makes you smarter' back to Campbell's *The Mozart Effect* (1997). This work is based on findings of one study conducted with college students in which one group of students listened to a Mozart sonata for several minutes before completing a spatial reasoning task and other groups of students listened to either highly repetitive music or silence. The group that listened to Mozart did modestly better on the task. These unremarkable results were transformed by the media into the idea that listening to classical music is linked with intelligence (Adachi & Trehub, 2012).

The Mozart effect, as well as the subsequent boom in musical products marketed to parents of young children such as *Baby Einstein*, has changed parenting culture (Ilari, 2011). This trend has been referred to by some as 'commodified babyhood' or 'edutainment' (Ilari, 2011; Young, 2008) and promotes the idea that use of products such as CDs, DVDs, and

electronic musical toys make learning ‘fun’ and enhance early childhood development, while also encouraging consumerism. While parents in one study dismissed the idea that music increases intelligence (e.g., Koops, 2011b), more explain that they use musical products such as the ones described above or attend early childhood music class because of a belief that music exposure will enhance their child’s overall cognitive functioning (e.g., Ilari et al., 2011, Mehr, 2014; Savage, 2015). Overall, the studies above confirm that culture, technology, and trends in parenting advice inform how people engage in musical parenting.

### **Functions and Purposes of Musical Parenting**

Parents incorporate music into family life in many ways and use music for multiple purposes. The most well documented and understood mode of music making by parents and children is singing. Singing has been reported as the most frequent musical behavior among families with young children (Custodero & Johnson-Green, 2003; Ilari, 2005; Rodriguez, 2018). The majority of parents in some studies reportedly sing to their children on a daily basis (Custodero & Johnson-Green, 2003; Ilari, 2005; Ilari et al., 2011; Mehr, 2014; Rodriguez, 2018; Young, 2008).

Custodero (2006) found that parents incorporate singing into daily routines to “make special the everyday” (Custodero, 2006, p. 52) and that adding song to daily tasks is the most common way for parents to incorporate music in their daily lives with their children. Singing often accompanies daily routines, such as meals, naps, or baths (Custodero, 2006; Gingras, 2013; Young et al., 2007). For some families, music engagement itself was a routine. Four of the families in Custodero’s (2006) study purposefully set aside time to make music with their children. Also, spontaneous, invented song was identified as common among families. Custodero

(2006) reported that parents and children often would make up songs spontaneously about what they were doing at the time.

At times, parents improvise songs to accompany routines or play. Spontaneous songs sometimes are used to ‘narrate’ what is occurring in the environment, such as routines or play (Custodero, 2006; Gibson, 2009). Made-up songs can become important in individual families. Gibson (2009) explains,

Family songs were common in family repertoire, which are described as songs that were not only passed down through the family, but were cherished, protected, and perceived as ‘owned’ specifically by one family. The parents identified strongly with these songs that were viewed as special and unique to the family. (Gibson, 2009, p. 175).

Some parents’ songs are entirely original and, at other times, parents create alternate lyrics to composed melodies (Custodero, 2006; Gingras, 2013). Children also engage in spontaneous or improvised songs. Custodero (2006) found that parents and children would change the words of songs, sing parts of songs, or add sound effects during musical play. Finally, all families reported that children often would invent songs, usually without adult involvement, while engaged in play. It seems that created or spontaneous song serves many functions in families.

Many scholars report that music is used as a ‘parenting tool.’ Young and Gillen (2010) used ethnographic and video data collection techniques to explore everyday music experiences of young girls in several countries as part of a larger project. Researchers filmed each child who participated in this study for one entire day and later interviewed parents after they watched a compilation of video footage of their child. The researchers found that parents in this study used music as a parenting tool, at times to entertain and play with their child, and at other times to soothe them or regulate their mood. Parents in this study made use of live musical engagement,

such as singing and dancing, as well as recorded music and, at times, combined the two mediums by singing along with favorite songs or dancing to music on the television (Young & Gillen, 2010).

Ilari (2009) reported some similar themes and uses of music to those of Custodero (2006, 2009) and Young and Gillen (2010) in a narrative case study with three women and their infants. She collected data through observation and writing of fieldnotes, semi-structured interviews, and music listening diaries written by mothers. Mothers in this study used music to communicate emotions, regulate mood or state, entertain or calm children, model musical behaviors, carry on traditions, aid in learning, make connections with cultural knowledge, and facilitate a sense of belonging in the family (Ilari, 2009).

Overall, results from studies of musical parenting and the musical home environment of young children support that families use music in routines, to regulate emotional states, to play, to teach, to instill and reinforce cultural values and traditions, and to provide a means of connection among family members. This research spans several countries, regions, and cultures including the United States (Custodero, 2006; 2009; Young & Gillen, 2010), Canada (Ilari, 2009; Young & Gillen, 2010), Peru, The UK, Italy, Turkey, and Thailand (Young & Gillen, 2010), and uses for music were common across studies and cultures.

Koops (2019) developed two theoretical frameworks that guided her study, *Parenting Musically* based on her experience and prior research related to family music making. One of these frameworks I explained at the start of Chapter One, in which she makes a distinction between parenting musically and musical parenting. The difference between these two relates to the goals or intention of parents' use of music. When parenting musically, parents use music to accomplish an extramusical goal, whereas musical parenting focuses on accomplishing a musical

goal. The other framework Koops (2019) devised for the study is practical musicking and relational musicking (Koops, 2019). Drawing from the Small's (1998) concept of musicking as an active process rather than music as a product, she explained that practical musicking "refers to musicking that has a goal: calming a child, passing the time while in a traffic jam, or acquiring skills on a piano sufficient to pass the percussion entry test in fifth grade" (Koops, 2019, p. 10). Relational musicking involves music making that serves to foster or deepen relationships. Both of these frameworks are envisioned as continuums meaning that a single activity or musical event might not squarely fit into one category or the other. When examining the findings above, one can see how parents' different uses of music fit into these different categories and sometimes fall somewhere in between the two ends of the continuum between relational and practical musicking or parenting musically and musically parenting. For example, a parent might sing lullabies for a child both to encourage their singing development and because it is part of a bedtime routine.

The reasons people use music in their parenting are numerous. Although some trends and commonalities can be found in the musical parenting literature, the music and resources parents gravitate toward and the frequency with which they interact musically with their children are distinctive and vary from family to family. Researchers intent on exploring the influences on musical parenting should consider a variety of factors from personal characteristics to cultural norms in order to gain a better sense of why parents make the choices that they do. Musical parenting researchers also should continue to seek out participants from diverse populations with regard to parent gender, social class, race, ethnicity, and cultures, since these sites of identity may uniquely influence parenting decisions.



## **Musical Parenting in Early Childhood Music Settings**

Musical parenting does not just occur in the home. The research discussed above suggests that musical parenting is influenced by a multitude of factors. Some educators and researchers have advocated for early childhood music classes that include both parents and children as a way of improving parents' understanding of how to musically engage with their children. Gudmundsdottir & Gudmundsdottir (2010) describe the aims of such a program in this way:

Parent infant music courses are best described as a support to parents' intuitive use of musical behaviour in communicating with their infants. In such courses, parents are likely to learn a repertoire of songs, rhymes and games which positively affect their infant's musical and overall development. Any active musical behaviour by a parent in a parent child interaction can be regarded as 'musical parenting'. By this definition, the purpose of parent infant music courses is to strengthen and encourage the participants in musical parenting. (p. 299).

Through research, parents have shared their perceptions of the benefits of different music classes and their motivations to enroll or continue attending music programs with their young children. This collection of studies reveals that, while there is some indication that these classes facilitate musical parenting and encourage family music making, the purposes of early childhood programs are varied and what parents ultimately take away from classes is not universal.

### ***Program Evaluations***

Cooper and Cardany (2011) surveyed parents who participated in an early childhood program to determine if classes were aligned with the basic goals set by the program. Goals for the program included parent-related objectives such as "reaching families," "meeting children's

and parents' musical needs," and "encouraging and facilitating at-home music making" (p. 97). Twenty-six parents completed the survey that included Likert-type items and open-ended questions.

Overall support for the program was high ( $M = 4.8/5.0$ ), indicating that parents enjoyed classes and felt the instructor was knowledgeable and supportive. Open-ended responses also largely were positive, and parents indicated that the class was professional, affordable, and enjoyable. Questions also elicited information related to materials provided as part of the class, including "song starters" and "resource pages" designed to encourage at-home music-making (Cooper & Cardany, 2011, p. 103). Parents enjoyed receiving song starters, especially small music instruments. Participants rated resource pages slightly less positively ( $M = 3.4/5$  for classes with older children and  $M = 3.72/5$  for younger children). Also, many parents shared information about increased music-making at home as a result of class in open response questions. Cooper and Cardany (2011) suggested that programs should provide opportunities for musical free-play, as several parents noted they enjoyed unstructured time with their child, because it allowed them to interact. They also strongly urged that early childhood music teachers should not focus solely on children's musical growth, but also must continually foster musical interactions between children and parents.

Another program evaluation study, completed by de Grätzer (1999), demonstrated that early childhood music classes may enhance parent-child communication. De Grätzer (1999) described a music program for parents and 3-year-old children in Argentina that aimed to provide families with an opportunity to share musical experiences together. Through an examination of the program she asserted:

Although the initial intention was just to offer a musical experience for parents to share with their children once a week during school terms, in the course of time the real benefit of this activity showed up, revealing, that through this programme parents began to relate to their children in a dimension far beyond music. Communication became one of the most important – although underlying aims – of this programme. (p. 51)

De Gräzer (1999) also found that parents felt insecure or nervous at the start of the class but, over time, gained confidence and became more participatory as they saw their child develop musically. This finding suggests that early childhood music classes may improve parents' feelings of self-efficacy. Furthermore, parents reported they felt they had learned more about music, communication, and parenting through participation in the class.

### ***Parents' Perceptions of Music Classes: Benefits, Goals, Motivation for Enrollment***

Some researchers have explored if participation in early childhood music classes changes the nature or frequency of family music making or if attendance at these classes results in parent learning. Vlismas and Bowes (1999) surveyed a group of mothers who received music instruction with their infants for 5 weeks and another group who served as a control and found that mothers who participated in a music class reported increased movement to music and use of music for relaxation with their infant when compared with mothers who did not attend a music class. There were no significant changes in the intervention group for frequency of singing or listening to music.

Levinowitz (1993) designed early childhood music classes to act as a model for parent education. Parents received weekly written materials about musical development and the role of the parent in music education, as well as a professional recording of class materials. Parents also participated in weekly discussions of the written material in class and attended a parent education

evening. Parents reported that their knowledge of music development increased, and they felt better equipped to provide musical experiences for their children at home as a result of participating in the class. Many participants also reported that, after attending music class, they more regularly made music a part of their daily lives.

Parent learning and increased knowledge has been reported as a benefit of early childhood music classes. In a recent study (Rodriguez, 2019), I explored parents' motivations for enrolling in early childhood music classes with their toddler, and what parents perceived as the benefits of their participation in music classes, both for themselves and their children. Parents' personal musical experiences and knowledge, musical hopes and goals for their children, and a desire to provide socialization opportunities were the primary motivators for parents when deciding to enroll in a music class with their children. The goals parents identified almost entirely focused on what they hoped their child would gain from classes rather than what they hoped to gain themselves. Enjoyment was a primary benefit and also motivation for participants. Parents enjoyed learning more about their children and their interests, as well as seeing their children develop musically. Despite a lack of self-focused goals, participants felt that they had personally benefitted from music classes by learning new activities, learning about their child, and learning about music development. Furthermore, parents reported that their children benefitted because of increased opportunities for socialization and opportunities to connect with them, as well as other members of the class. Some parents noted also that their child felt safe in the music class environment (Rodriguez, 2019).

In a study with similar aims, Youm (2013) interviewed mothers who attended different music classes with their preschool children in Korea to determine what their goals, knowledge, musical practices, and needs were related to their children's music education. Participants had

several goals for their families' music class attendance, including to facilitate their children's development, enrichment, to prepare them for learning, and to provide them with opportunities for play through music (Youm, 2013). Frequency of musical interactions between parents and children was dependent upon "mother's willingness, her music skills, children's ages, presence of siblings, and whether or not she worked outside of the home" (p. 292). Parents engaged in singing, listening to music, playing instruments, and dancing with their children. As in other research findings, singing was the most common music activity enjoyed by parents and children.

Unlike Rodriguez (2019), Youm (2013) found that mothers desired to further develop skills to facilitate playing instruments, singing, listening, and moving to music with their children. Some of the participants explained that they wanted to interact musically with their children, but they did not have the knowledge or musical skills they felt they needed to do so. Of the 22 participants, 19 wanted to learn more about how to musically interact with their children and many mothers said that they would like to attend parent education programs related to music (Youm, 2013). Based on these desires, Youm (2013) urges that music educators should purposefully facilitate parent education in early childhood music classes and that "music educators should teach child-parent musical interaction" (p. 295).

Ilari (2013) drew from a larger study in which researchers explored music-making in the homes of 7-year-old girls across the world. Ilari (2013) analyzed interviews with the parents of the children to explore their beliefs and attitudes toward their children's structured and unstructured musical activities. Ilari (2013) reported:

The rationale for enrolling children in music programs so early was not always made evident in the interviews. It is possible that some parents enrolled their babies and toddlers in early childhood music programs to get them "Ahead", following the rationale

of concerted cultivation. Alternatively, it could be that parents were simply searching for things to do with their children during the busy years of babyhood, when adults (especially mothers), may feel confined to the home. (p. 189)

All parents interviewed by Ilari (2013) and other members of the research team believed that music was important. Furthermore, they felt that music classes would provide their children with opportunities to develop musical skills and would nurture their children's talent (p. 186). Parents also believed that music was enjoyable for their children and, in some cases, it was the child who initially expressed a desire to participate in music classes. Finally, some parents were not given an opportunity to participate in music classes as a young child, so they hoped to provide their children with special opportunities that had not been available to them as children (Ilari, 2013).

Savage (2015) also examined Australian mothers' perspectives on their participation in early childhood music classes with their children through a narrative case study. She gathered information about mothers' reasoning for choosing music classes and what they felt were the long-term benefits of music participation. In congruence with Ilari (2013) and Rodriguez (2019), Savage (2015) found that some mothers chose to attend classes because of a desire to provide their children with similar musical experiences as their own. Nearly all of the participants in both studies had, at one time, played a musical instrument. Mothers hoped music classes would help their children develop confidence, establish positive relationships with peers, and develop an appreciation for music. Some participants stressed that they did not wish to pressure their child into studying music but hoped that early exposure would lead to interest later in life. Mothers in this study conveyed that involvement in music might provide their children with societal or career advantages later in life. They also explained that extra-curricular activities, such as music classes, may help children gain entrance into private schools. Although participants described

both musical and non-musical motivations for attending music classes, mothers in this study were focused primarily on the extramusical benefits of music classes.

While parents in several studies focused their discussion of goals and benefits related to music classes on their children, Barrett (2009) found that parents also may benefit from involvement in early childhood music programs. Barrett (2009) observed families in the context of early childhood music classes and collected video diaries of musical interactions filmed by parents in their homes with their children. Barrett (2009) focused on data collected from one family over a 3-year period. This family included a child, William who was 18-months-old when the study began and 4-years-old when it concluded. For William's mother, participation in *Kindermusik* had a profound impact on her parenting. She explained that she learned a great deal about how to parent musically and overall from attending classes with William as well as her other two children. In an interview she said, "I don't think I would have survived without *Kindermusik*" (Barrett, 2009, p.123) after battling post-partum depression, leaving her career to stay at home with her children, and feeling pressure to be a perfect parent. Barret (2009) concluded that *Kindermusik* functioned not only as music education for this family, but also as parenting education overall and a vital source of support.

Pitt and Hargraves (2017) gathered information from parents ( $n = 4$ ) and practitioners, center managers, health professionals, and social workers ( $n=16$ ) at a UK-based children's center that offers music groups for parents and children from birth to 3-years-old free of charge. The researchers interviewed participants to determine why music was offered at the center and what they felt were the benefits of music groups. Parents and practitioners discussed many different extramusical purposes of music classes for families. Practitioners identified benefits of music instruction, including improved communication, language skills, and cognitive development.

Parents primarily reported social and emotional gains and learning as the purposes of classes. Pitt and Hargraves (2017) reported that neither group, including music group practitioners, discussed the purpose of the class as being primarily music related.

When asked about the benefits of music class participation, parents noted that they enjoyed being in an observer role. They enjoyed watching their children during the class and appreciated not having to be ‘in charge’ during music class. They viewed the teacher as the expert, so they simply were able to act as co-participants and observers with their children. Furthermore, both parents and practitioners reported that participating in music class resulted in increased music-making at home. It was unclear from this article how practitioners, especially those who did not facilitate these music groups directly, would know what impact the music class had on family music making outside of class. Despite this, practitioners felt that parents would be “more attentive to their children at home because of music group sessions” (Pitt & Hargraves, 2017, p. 304). The researchers concluded that two-way flow of musical culture might benefit families further. They stated:

If the music from the group finds a way to link to home it would perhaps be an interesting and valuable development for musical practices in the home environment to be made explicit and shared in the group sessions. This two-way flow of *culture* would allow for continuity for children and the raising in value of cultural practices of the home environment that could potentially remain hidden and/or suppressed. (p. 305)

This suggestion points toward the reciprocal relationship that may exist, and could potentially be enhanced, between music class and home settings, although the researchers do not suggest specific ways to elicit increased sharing of home musical culture.



Because parents in some studies have attributed benefits to early childhood music participation and because of the unique nature of parents and children acting attending class together, Koops (2011b) sought to understand how parents felt about their role in music class and how their perception of several class variables informed their involvement in their children's musical development. Koops (2011b) interviewed five mothers from an early childhood class that she taught. Overall, the participants were satisfied with their music classes and did not wish to be more involved in teaching, planning, or executing activities in music class. Instead, they enjoyed modeling for their children, interacting with and observing other classmates, and exploring different roles with their child through music class. As with parents interviewed by Pitt and Hargraves (2017), some participants explained that they enjoyed having an opportunity to act not as leader or "mom", but, instead, as musical "co-learner" during music classes (Koops, 2011b, p. 10). Although mothers were satisfied with their role, they did express a desire to learn more about musical development and curriculum. This finding is similar to findings from Rodriguez (2019) and Youm (2013), who both found that parents wanted to learn more about musical development.

From these studies, it seems that parents generally are satisfied with their early childhood music class experiences and that they choose to enroll in classes for many different reasons, some of which may be tied to parents' personal musical experiences or social class. Although some studies have suggested that music class may increase family music making in the home, many of these findings are based solely on parent report and not observation. Also, although parents felt that their music class involvement was beneficial, participants in several studies expressed a desire to learn more about musical development and the curricular content of classes. Many scholars have suggested that early childhood music classes for parents and children may

serve as a means to educate parents about musical development and musical parenting (e.g., de Vries, 2009; Fox, 2000; Ilari, 2009; Wu, 2005; Youm, 2013). Further research may illuminate *how* educators may provide the information and resources that parents want and what resources and information may shape musical parenting.

### ***Enhancing Musical Parenting***

Koops (2011a, 2012a, 2012b, 2014) completed several studies related to musical parenting. She recruited participants from early childhood music classes to explore how involving parents and caregivers in documentation of family music making, reflecting on musical experiences and learning, and sharing of this documentation and reflection with a “community of learners” (Koops, 2011a, p. 184) or music instructors may affect family music making, parent and teacher knowledge, and children’s musical development. Koops (2011a) asserts, “Finding ways to communicate with parents is central to the task of educating and engaging parents musically” (p. 182). In two studies, Koops (2011a, 2012a), acting both as researcher and teacher, used a social networking site to facilitate conversations among parents participating in an early childhood music class and herself. Parents attended once-weekly early childhood music classes that were video recorded and analyzed later, wrote weekly blog posts, interacted with one another and Koops on the networking site, and participated in an exit interview at the conclusion of the class. Parents recognized benefits of participating in social networking related to their music class, including increased parental education, awareness, and reflection on experiences; however, they also felt that participation took too much time (Koops, 2011a). Some parents in this study noted that reflecting and documenting their children’s musical behaviors made them more aware of their children’s musical behaviors in class and at home while participating in the study, because they were thinking about what they would write in their

blog post. Parents also noted that they enjoyed learning about musical development through the weekly blog posts. Two parents reflected that being a part of the social networking site was akin to taking a class, which they appreciated. The social networking site also helped facilitate communication between the parents and the teacher (Koops, 2012a) and helped Koops better understand what was occurring musically in families' homes.

In another study, Koops (2012b) again acted in a dual role as researcher and teacher to explore how children's musical play in classes and in the homes of participants was influenced by adult behaviors and other environmental factors. Interpretations in this study were based on categories of adult behaviors identified by Berger and Cooper (2003) as play enhancing or play inhibiting for children during music activities. Parents acted as participants in Koops's (2012b) study and filmed several musical interactions between themselves and their children at home. Koops collected data through interviews, observations of music classes, and video recording of all class meetings. Videos filmed in families' homes captured many musical interactions, and children often demonstrated different musical behaviors at home than they did in class. Koops (2012b) found that adult prompts, corrections, over-involvement in an activity, and sometimes attention inhibited children's musical play. Non-verbal acknowledgement, encouraging feedback at the conclusion of an activity, and interactions in which children were given agency or control enhanced musical play.

Several of the participants from Koops's previous studies participated in an additional study that explored family music-making in the car and how activities from early childhood music classes might transfer to the family vehicle (Koops, 2014). Koops (2014) did not use a social-networking site for this study. Instead, she collected handwritten parent journals that detailed family musical activities in the car and at home, videos filmed by parents of children's

music-making, videos of music classes, parent exit interviews at the conclusion of the music class session, and researcher fieldnotes. In this study, Koops (2014) gave parents assignments each week, which included an activity from class to try at home or in the car and film. She chose to give assignments, “because participants were part of an ongoing class, and one of [her] research questions addressed the possible transfer of activities from class to car. Koops (2014) found that children often sing “known songs” in the car from music class or other sources. She concluded that the car is ideal for musical engagement, because it provides a confined space and lack of distractions for children.

As in previous studies, parents reported that they were more aware of music making that occurred in the car than they were before participating in the study. Parents felt that their increased awareness was a benefit of participating in the study. Increased awareness of musical behaviors as a result of participation in studies in which parents are asked to document or reflection on children’s musical behaviors has been reported by other researchers as well (Custodero, 2006; Gingras, 2013). It seems possible that asking parents to document or track their children’s musical behaviors has benefits for both parents and teachers and may result increased family musical engagement.

Others also have examined how early childhood music class participation may change home music-making through research with parents and practitioners. Young et al. (2007) sought to apply the theory of communicative musicality to practice in music classes designed for infants and their caregivers. “Communicative musicality, it is proposed, supports sensitive, responsive interaction which in turn is believed to have a major impact on social, emotional and cognitive development” (Young et al., 2007, p. 256). Because interactions between adults and infants often include musical features, developing activities in music classes that include developmentally

appropriate music and play-based learning may foster positive, reciprocal interactions between caregivers and infants. Young et al. (2007) completed the Music One-to-One Project in three phases. During stage one, they interviewed both parents and early childhood music teachers about their current music practices with children under the age of two. Stage two involved designing a method of teaching music to infants and parents that would be both developmentally appropriate for infants and also be viewed as relevant to caregivers. Finally, the researchers provided materials and training to organizations and individuals based on the findings of the previous phases.

As a part of this study, Young et al. (2007) interviewed 15 experienced early childhood music teachers in England. The majority of the participants had degrees either in music, education, or both. Even though all of the teachers had experience teaching children under two, only one of the participants had completed coursework that specifically prepared them to work with infants and toddlers. In interviews, participants often commented that they perceived low levels of engagement from parents, although many felt that the purpose of their classes was to support the relationship between parents and children. When the researchers observed the teachers, however, they noted a discrepancy between teachers' reported goal of fostering communication and their actual practice. The difference between intent and practice bolstered support for the need to develop new teaching strategies and methods for practitioners.

Young et al. (2007) also interviewed 88 mothers of children between the ages of one and 24 months. From prior observations, the researchers noted that early childhood music classes:

...tend to be attractive to certain groups of parents, those who are already confident at accessing and participating in group activities...Participation quite often requires a public

display of stylized playful behaviours on the part of adults which only certain groups of mainly white, middle-class, often older mothers are most comfortable with. (p. 257)

Findings from the data gathered via interviews with mothers are similar to many other studies of musical parenting. Mothers reported engaging in a wide variety of musical activities with their young children including singing, and listening to music, as well as use of technology and musical toys.

When Young et al. (2007) developed and implemented new strategies for music classes to facilitate musical communication between parents and their children, they found that establishing positive relationships between parents and practitioners is key. When a practitioner showed interest in families and their needs, classes flourished. The classes they designed also included extended time for talking and resource sharing between parents and teachers. This allowed parents to learn more about musical development and understanding infants' responses to music. Young et al. (2007) found that a loosely-structured playful approach was more successful than a strictly planned class. Relaxed and playful classes allowed practitioners to follow families' lead and better meet their needs. Lastly, the researchers also emphasized learning from mothers about the songs, chants, and other music activities their child enjoyed at home. This approach has been suggested by others as a way to strengthen the link between class and home (Pitt & Hargraves, 2017). After the conclusion of the class, mothers provided detailed accounts of ways they used music from classes in their homes and routines with their children. The researchers were cautious to confirm a direct link between class and parenting practice though, noting that:

“this was but a small intervention and so realistically its potential to change parenting behaviors was limited. For another, evidence of a causal link between an intervention and

changes in behavior is notoriously difficult to tease out from a host of factors.” (Young et al., 2007, p. 265)

The results of this study suggest that the structure of classes, and the education and skills of practitioners, play an important role in what families ultimately gain from their participation in early childhood music programs.

Overall, early childhood music classes appear to be a valuable experience for both parents and children. Parents generally feel positively about their experiences and have described many benefits of participation. In many cases, parents felt that they gained tools and knowledge through their participation. Although this body of literature is fairly small, together it suggests that early childhood music classes may influence musical parenting. In light of these findings, it is all the more unclear why Adachi & Trehub (2012) argue there is no evidence early childhood music interventions benefit children and parents. As an early childhood music educator, I remain hopeful and even confident that early childhood music programs provide families with an opportunity to explore fun and meaningful activities together and that early childhood music classes have a positive impact on musical parenting and on children’s musical lives.

### **Conclusions**

From the literature above, it is clear that music plays an important role in families. Parents use music for many reasons and in many ways when raising their children. It is also evident that early childhood music practitioners who teach classes involving parents and children together are in a unique position to shape the musical environment and development of young children. They may do so through interaction with children directly, or through providing parents with skills, understandings, and models for developmentally appropriate musical engagement with children. While a number of researchers have concluded that there is a link between music

class and home music-making, the findings upon which that conclusion is based are nearly all drawn from single parent interviews or surveys. Some researchers (e.g., Barrett, 2009; Koops, 2011a, 2012a, 2012bb, 2014; Valerio et al., 2011) have recruited parents to collect data in their homes and reflect on their experiences in and outside of music classes and early childhood music researchers have called for more observational or ethnographic research into home music making. Koops (2011a) asserts, “Understanding what is happening in the home is crucial to developing ways to educate parents to be musically supportive of their young children” (p. 182).

Researchers have conducted ethnographic and case study investigations into musical parenting and the musical home environment of young children (e.g., Custodero, 2006, 2009; Kelly-Sutton & Smith, 1987; Gibson, 2009) and others have used similar techniques and designs to explore parents’ experiences in early childhood music classes (e.g., Berger & Cooper, 2003; Koops 2011a, 2012a, 2012b; Rodriguez, 2019). However, I could find no studies in which a researcher has explored the bi-directional relationship that is occurring *between* home and music class through direct observation in both settings. Much of what we know about how parents use knowledge or material from music classes comes from a single interview question or questionnaire item. In-depth exploration of how music classes shape musical parenting are lacking, especially examinations in which the researcher spends a prolonged time in the field.

The majority of studies that explore music in the home or in early childhood classes in which parents act as primary participants are focused primarily on children. Studies have gathered information on what parents think about, hope for, and do with their children. There is less information available on what *parents* are learning, doing, and gaining from music classes. Furthermore, while researchers have reported that parents sometimes use music from music class at home, there is little information about *why* they chose to use that music at home, what



activities they used and why did they select those, and what, if anything, parents learned from music classes beyond songs or activities.

By gaining access into people's homes, watching parents and children interact in multiple settings, and interviewing and observing parents over time, I hope to gain a deeper understanding of what understandings and skills parents take away from early childhood music classes.

Understanding what children experience and learn from attending music classes and what children do in their homes is important. But, when children are very young, parents have a lot of control over their children's experiences and understanding of the world. If early childhood music educators truly want to enhance children's musical development, they should think of parents as partners or co-teachers. It is my hope that this investigation will provide insight for music educators on how to develop stronger relationships with parents to better meet their needs and potentially strengthen their musical parenting.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### **Purpose Statement and Research Questions**

With the intent of informing early childhood music educators in their work with parents and their young children, the purpose of this study was to explore how parents engage in musical parenting and how that parenting is shaped by enrolling in early childhood music classes. The “grand tour” question guiding this study was, how does participation in early childhood music classes shape participants’ musical parenting? In addition to this overarching question, I address the following sub questions:

1. What do participants already know, believe, and do with music prior to their participation in music classes?
2. What kind of musical home environment do parents provide for their toddlers?
3. How do parents engage in musical activities during early childhood music classes?
4. What activities or ideas from early childhood music classes, if any, do parents value and enjoy?
5. What knowledge, skills, or information do parents gain from participating in early childhood music classes with their toddler that translate to changes in their musical parenting behaviors outside of class?

### **Design**

This study followed an instrumental multiple case study design in which I employed ethnographic techniques for data collection. Creswell (2007) states:

Case study is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a *case*) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving *multiple sources of information* (e.g., observations, interviews,

audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case *description* and case-based themes (p. 73, emphasis in original).

He asserts that case study is both a methodology or type of design as well as a product of inquiry. Merriam (1998) also discusses that case study can be viewed as either a procedure or approach as well as a product, but concludes that, “the single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the object of study, the case” (p. 27). A case must be a single thing or unit with clear boundaries and should be bounded by time, number of participants, or specific phenomenon. Following criteria outlined above by Merriam (1998) and Creswell (2007), the cases in the current study were bounded by time, setting, and phenomenon. Data collection occurred over a period of four months in the fall of 2018 during a 10-week session of early childhood music classes that participants attended at a community music school. Participants were drawn from a toddler class in one early childhood music program. The phenomenon being explored was parent learning in early childhood music classes and how that learning shaped their musical parenting.

Case study is well suited to explorations in which a researcher aims to concentrate on a phenomenon or case in order to “uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon” (Merriam, 1998, p. 29). The phenomenon being explored in this study was the ways in which early childhood music class participation shapes participants’ musical parenting. Merriam explains that case study is ideal when it is difficult to separate a phenomenon’s variables from context. When determining if it is appropriate to use a case study design, Merriam (1998) suggests examining the questions being posed by the researcher. Case study may be useful for “how” or “why” questions or studies that focus on processes. This design often aids researchers in obtaining rich information about participants through direct observation in natural

settings. Also, case studies are useful in gathering data on a wide variety of variables when compared with survey or experimental research, which tend to have a narrow focus (Merriam, 1998). The current study involved direct observation in naturalistic settings, including family homes, and explored a number of variables, including parental music experiences, beliefs, and parenting practices. Context was important in this study, because it was focused on how different contexts, home and early childhood music class, influenced one another.

In an instrumental case study, “the researcher focuses on an issue or concern, and then selects one bounded case to illustrate this issue” (Creswell, 2007, p. 74). In a multiple case study, sometimes referred to as a collective case study, the researcher focuses on a single issue, but selects multiple cases to elucidate that issue (Creswell, 2007). In the current study, the focus of my research was on parent learning in the context of early childhood music classes and how that learning may have transferred to parents’ use of music at home. I explored this issue within three families, whom I consider to be three distinct cases. Although the three families attended the same music class, each family was unique and maintained their own experiences, structure, and individual characteristics when they entered the common setting of music class. Also, in addition to observing and collecting data in music classes, I collected data in families’ homes, which made the overall research setting for each case distinct.

## **Setting**

### **Early Childhood Music Program**

Participants were enrolled in an early childhood music program held at a community music school that is affiliated with a large, public, research university in the Midwestern United States. The early childhood program is considered a lab program, meaning research is sometimes

conducted about or through the program. Also, undergraduates in music education and other disciplines regularly observe and assist in classes as part of their required coursework.

The early childhood music program partnered with an early intervention organization (*EIO*). *EIOs* provide health, social, and educational services for children from birth through age three who have been identified as having developmental delays or have diagnosed health conditions that place them at higher risk for delays in development and their families. Families that are referred to *EIOs* receive evaluations and services through an individualized family service plan. As part of the partnership between the early childhood music program and *EIO*, several spots in some of the toddler-level music classes are reserved for families who enroll in music classes through *EIOs*.

Children are purposefully selected by *EIO* staff and therapists based on who they feel might most benefit from music class participation. Families that enroll in music classes through *EIOs* do not pay tuition fees, as they are paid by *EIO* through grant funding. After the semester is completed, families can choose to continue participating in the program on their own if desired at a reduced rate. As part of the partnership between the early childhood music program and *EIO*, one or two *EIO* staff members, most often speech-language pathologists or speech therapists, attend music classes that include parents and children enrolled through their *EIO*. These therapists act as an assistant in class. They discuss strategies and support the teacher in the music class for how to be inclusive of students with specific learning needs and offer to speak with parents about services offered at the *EIO*. Although I did not purposefully seek out participants affiliated with *EIOs*, all three families who chose to participate in this study were enrolled in music class through an *EIO*.

Infant, toddler, and preschool classes are offered through the early childhood music program. In this study, I recruited participants from a toddler class, designed for families with children ages 18 to 36 months. A parent or other adult attends and participates in classes along with the children. Classes in the program are guided by music learning theory, a framework developed by Edwin Gordon for understanding how people learn music (see Gordon, 2013). This theory is based on the idea that music is learned in a manner similar to the way language is learned. The program philosophy, found on the program's website, states:

“Children need to hear extensive amounts of language and experiment with language before they actually learn to speak and eventually read and write language. In the same way, children need to hear a wide variety of music and experiment with music before they can sing, move to, and eventually read and create music that resembles music as adults know it.” (Early Childhood Music Program, n.d., p. 1)

The musical content of the classes includes songs and chants in a wide variety of tonalities and meters, many of which are performed without words. Activities in the classes include singing, chanting, using small percussion instruments, such as egg shakers, and other manipulatives, such as scarves, sticks, or pom-poms, rhythmic and tonal pattern instruction, and many opportunities for developmentally appropriate movement (Early Childhood Music Program, n.d.). The environment in classes is relaxed and unstructured, allowing children and adults to explore and make music in a way that is comfortable for them.

Music classes at this site are based on playful engagement with music. Teachers in the program focus on exploration rather than correctness and do not expect or encourage specific responses or behaviors from children before they are ready. Parents in the classes are encouraged to participate in class activities by modeling musical behavior for their children, mimicking the

teacher's behaviors and movements, and through singing songs once they become familiar. The information sheet found on the program's website also encourages parents to listen to recordings of class or songs from class provided by teachers and to sing or perform chants for their children at home if they are comfortable. This helps to enable parents to, "create as rich a musical environment as possible for [their] child at home" (Early Childhood Music Program, n.d., p. 1)

### **Music Class**

I recruited participants who were enrolled in one toddler level class that met for 45-minutes every Friday morning for ten weeks from September 14 until November 16, 2018. Beyond the information on the class roster, which includes the names of the children, caregivers, and ages of children enrolled in the class, I did not gather demographic information for families who did not directly participate in the study. Eight families attended music class, including the three families that participated in this study. The youngest child in the class was 18-months old at the start of the semester, and the oldest was 3-years-old. Three of the children presented as boys, and 5 presented as girls. All of the children and caregivers in the music class presented as White except for one child, Liam, who was the son of one of the participants in this study. (All names used throughout this study are pseudonyms.) Six of the children were accompanied in class by their mothers. One child attended with her grandmother, and one sometimes came with her mother and other times both of her parents. At least two of the families had direct connections with the university music program affiliated with the community music school.

Music class was taught by Nora, a senior music education major at the university. Nora enrolled in an early childhood music methods course at the university taught by the early childhood program director and music education professor in the fall of 2016. As part of this

class, she acted as an assistant in the program. She continued in her role as an assistant in the spring semester of 2017 and began as a lead teacher in the program in the summer of 2017.

Three undergraduate music education students enrolled in the early childhood methods course at the university acted as assistants in the class. Two of these assistants were White women and the other, Jacob, was a Black man. Assistants in class engage in class activities, interact musically with families, and help distribute and collect materials. After the first few weeks of class, each assistant had the opportunity to lead several activities.

I also acted as an assistant in the class in order to observe families in an unobtrusive way. I interacted with families and engaged in class activities. Beyond acting as a substitute teacher for one class, I did not lead any activities in my role as an assistant. Finally, two different therapists affiliated with an *EIO* acted as assistants in class on alternate weeks. Both *EIO* staff members were women and were speech therapists. They interacted with families and participated in activities but did not lead any portions of class. In addition to collecting data in music class, I also visited families' homes. Information about these settings is presented along with the descriptions of participants below and in each individual case chapter.

### **Participant Selection**

Participants in this study were three parents enrolled in an early childhood music class with their toddlers. I employed a combination of convenience and criterion sampling procedures when selecting participants. A convenience sample is one that “represents sites or individuals from which the researcher can access or easily collect data” (Creswell, 2007, p. 126). The sample for this study was, in part, a convenience sample, because I taught in the same program during the data collection period and had a professional relationship with the program director.



Therefore, I had easy access to and was knowledgeable about the program, the approach, and philosophy of the classes, teachers, and environment.

Several criteria were used to select participants. Because I was interested in parent learning in the context of music classes, I recruited participants who were participating in the early childhood music program for the first time. In order to gather participants who have had a common experience in their early childhood class, as well as limit the number of classes that I would observe, I recruited all participants for this study from a single class taught by the same instructor. Also, because I was specifically interested in parent learning, I prioritized selecting participants who were parents and lived in the home with the child they bring to music class, rather than grandparents, child care providers, or other adults who attended music class with a child.

To recruit participants, I contacted the registrar of the community music school to obtain a list of possible participants who registered for toddler level classes within the early childhood music program for the fall 2018 session that fit the inclusion criteria described above. I first contacted potential participants from one toddler level class taught by Dr. Finley via an email in which I described the study, the inclusion criteria for participants, and a summary of what participation entailed. Dr. Finley is a professor of music education at the university who is also the creator and director of the early childhood music program at the community music school. Because there were only two families that fit the inclusion criteria in Dr. Finley's class, as the majority of the families had enrolled in previous semesters, I expanded my search to other toddler level classes within the program. Prior to the start of class one parent, Kate, expressed interest in participating. I attended the first meeting for the class in which Kate was enrolled and introduced myself and the study and asked that other interested families speak with me after

class. At the conclusion of the first class, two other mothers, Vanessa and Christy, expressed interest in participating. I followed up with the three families via email to confirm their interest in participating in the study and set up an initial home visit. All participants signed a consent form during my first visit to their home (See Appendix A).

Some researchers (i.e., Lareau, 2011) have compensated families financially for their considerable time and effort in participating in studies of home environment. While I did not have funds at my disposal to provide to families, I did think it was important to acknowledge the time, effort, and trust families provided when they agreed to be a part of this project. Therefore, at the conclusion of the study, families that participated received a voucher covering the cost of one future semester of music classes. I planned to request research enhancement funds from the university to cover the cost of the vouchers; however, the community music program volunteered to donate the vouchers.

### **Participant Descriptions**

#### **Kate**

Joyful, straight-forward, and sincere, Kate, who was 30-years-old at the time of data collection, was the mother of two children living in a mid-sized capital city in the Midwestern United States. Kate enrolled in music class with her 26-month-old daughter, Layla. She lived with Layla, her 11-year-old son, Matt, and her long-term partner James, who she had been with for 13 years. Kate self-identified as White and told me that Layla's "daddy is mixed so [Layla] has just a little bit of Black in her." Kate and her family lived in a cozy, ground floor, two-bedroom apartment on a quiet street approximately three miles from a mid-sized capital city center. Kate had lived in the same neighborhood since childhood, and her mom, dad, and brother all lived in the same building or on the same street. James was a cook at a nearby state

university, and Kate, who attended some college, “[stayed] home with Layla” who did not attend daycare. With an annual household income of approximately \$25,000, Kate and her family lived just under the poverty level for a family of four in the United States (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018).

### **Christy**

Christy attended music class with her two-and-a-half-year-old daughter, Alyssa. A mother of two, Christy was 37-years-old at the start of data collection. Christy lived with Alyssa, her seven-year-old son Jacob, and her husband, Bill in a mid-sized, two-story home in a suburban neighborhood approximately eight miles from the city center. Christy had an associate’s degree and previously worked in retail management but at the time of the study was a “stay-at-home mom.” Alyssa attended a daycare once a week and accompanied Christy when she volunteered at Jacob’s school. Christy identified herself and her other family members as White. She reported their approximate annual household income as \$75,000, which was approximately \$10,000 above the median income for the town in which she lived in 2018 (United States Census Bureau, 2018).

### **Vanessa**

Vanessa was a 36-year-old woman who lived in a small lakeside community approximately 11 miles outside of the city with her husband of nine years, Paul, and son Liam, who was 19-months-old at the start of data collection. Vanessa and her family lived in a bright, cheery, two-story home with a small deck in the back overlooking a lake. Vanessa had a bachelor’s degree and worked as a realtor, which was “super flexible” and allowed her to spend most days with Liam who attended daycare “one day a week but sometimes more or less depending on [Vanessa’s] schedule.” Paul worked in sales. Vanessa identified her own and

Paul's race as White and Liam's race as Black. Vanessa elected not to disclose her approximate annual income, but, from visiting her home and seeing the area in which they lived, I assumed they were a middle-income family.

### **Role of the Researcher**

My role in this study was that of a participant observer. This allowed me to build rapport and familiarity with participants, while not placing myself in the role of the teacher or asking participants to evaluate or reflect on my teaching. Acting as an assistant also allowed me to attend more fully to observing participants rather than splitting my focus with concerns about making instructional decisions. I visited family homes three times throughout the data collection period to further develop positive relationships with participants and observe participants' musical interactions in a naturalistic setting.

The participant observer approach to data collection typically is associated with ethnography. I observed and, at times, directly interacted and engaged with participants and their children in their music classes and their homes. Following the guidelines of Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2011), I took a "participating in order to write" (p. 23) approach to observations. This process involved observing and making mental notes about participants while also writing down short descriptions and details about events in the form of jottings, which were later expanded into full fieldnotes. Emerson et al. (2011) caution that writing can sometimes intrude or impact relationships with participants, so I wrote sparingly during observations, especially at the start of the study, and monitored participants' comfort level regarding the intrusiveness of writing during observations.

Acting as a distant observer in participants' homes likely would have been viewed as strange and would have made family members uncomfortable. Because of this I generally opted

to engage with families' routines and activities during observations to build relationships with parents and children and make home visits feel less artificial. Being a participant observer during home visits made it difficult to take notes outside of the interview portion of visits. Therefore, during home visits I often chose to audio record portions of the visits rather than write extensive notes. Following each music class and home visit, I reserved time to write fieldnotes (Emerson et al., 2011; Lum, 2008).

When building relationships with participants, researchers must have a clear sense of their role in the field. My role was to observe, learn, and try to understand the environment and participants' actions. It was not to judge, change, or advise participants. Hammersley and Attkinson (1995) cautioned that researchers are sometimes viewed as experts, and participants may seek their advice on problems when they are in the field. It is also possible that participants may view a researcher as a critic who is in an evaluative role (Gregory & Ruby, 2011). The balance between wanting to establish rapport while avoiding being placed in a role that is inappropriate can be difficult. Plowman & Stevenson (2013) explain, "Sometimes the researchers were seen as experts or confidants by participants who sometimes sought advice or reassurance during home visits. The researchers were encouraged by the level of comfort participants had but were careful not to offer advice" (p. 334).

In order to avoid these misconceptions, I communicated with participants prior to the start of data collection and periodically throughout the data collection period about my role, as well as their rights and responsibilities as participants in the study. I explained to participants that I was not judging their behaviors or hoping for a specific outcome. I made an effort to convey to participants that I simply wanted to know more about what they did with music, why they did those things, and whether participation in music classes shaped their musical parenting choices

and beliefs. I do not believe that there is a “right way” to musically parent, or that all parents should be learning the same things in music classes, and I assured participants of this when appropriate. Participants occasionally did ask my opinion about musical things or about what I observed about their child in music class. When it was appropriate, I shared information about musical development or the purpose of class activities when it was relevant to our discussions. Although parents may have viewed me as an expert, they did not solicit my advice in any substantive way that would have caused a strain in our relationship or crossed an ethical line.

One of the most frequently discussed considerations about the researcher’s role in ethnographic studies is the importance of reflexivity. The concept of reflexivity is an outgrowth of the work of feminist writers in the 1970s and 1980s (Emond, 2005) and has since become influential in several fields. Personal reflexivity is a researcher’s awareness and scrutiny of how their own values and approaches influence their interpretation or interactions in their research (Barker & Weller, 2003; Davidson & Borthwick, 2002). Emond (2005) explains that the role of reflexivity in ethnographic work is to acknowledge that researchers’ views and personal feelings are not removed from the research process or analysis. “Reflexive practice stresses the point that social researchers are not ‘other’ from those they research” (Emond, 2005, p. 126). Emond (2005) asserts that reflexivity is especially important when working with children. She believes that, often, considerations of the impact that research has on children and the relationships formed between researcher and child are lacking in the literature.

In preparing to conduct this study involving fieldwork and observations of families in both public and private settings, I was aware that my presence might have had an impact not only on the results of the study, but on the field and people I was studying. The means of data collection I used for this study required me to be reflexive and to consistently monitor how I may

have been impacting participants' lives. While these issues are important to consider in any fieldwork situation, it was especially important when working with families that have young children and when entering a private setting, such as the family home. Because of this, I took time to build rapport with parents and children and, to the best of my ability, remained flexible in my role as the researcher. As a researcher, I strove to be patient, adaptable, and genuine in my interactions with families. When interacting with parents, I allowed them to take the lead and share the aspects of their lives, homes, and music-making with me that they were comfortable sharing. This flexibility resulted in my forming different relationships with each parent and child and influenced the nature of the music making I observed when I visited each families' home.

## **Data Collection**

### **Music Class Observations**

During each week of the fall semester of 2018 I observed the three participants and their children during music classes. My observations were focused on parents' behaviors, interactions with their children, engagement in musical activities, general demeanor, perceived level of comfort in the class, and any interactions they had with other class members or the teacher. I also made note of adult-directed talk from Nora that may have contributed to parent learning. I participated in class activities while occasionally jotting short notes using a small notebook. Because there were three families participating in the study in a single class, and because I had to split my attention somewhat because of my role as assistant, I video recorded each class session to use as a reference when completing full fieldnotes. After writing my fieldnotes based on my perception of what occurred in class, I watched the video of class three times, each time focusing on one family, to add richness to my notes. All class members, regardless of their participation in the study, were informed of the purpose of the video documentation of classes. Following

guidelines from Emerson et al. (2011), I reserved several hours following each class session to write full fieldnotes and, during this process, I referred to the video recording as needed. Due to my own error, I mistakenly did not record the third class meeting on September 28, 2018. Upon realizing my error, I devoted extra time to writing fieldnotes directly after class to account for what occurred in class with as much detail as possible.

### **Home Visits**

I visited participants' homes three times throughout the data collection period. In order to gain a sense of how each parents' musical parenting was shaped by attendance at music classes, I completed home visits at the start of the semester between the first and second music class, at the midpoint between classes five and six, and after the conclusion of the 10-week music class period. In order to observe musical interactions between participants and their children, I scheduled visits when participants' children were likely to be awake for at least a portion of the visit. Visits lasted between one and three hours.

During my visits to families' homes, I gathered data via observation, note taking, examination of musical materials in the home, and semi-structured interviews with participants. I audio recorded all interviews and later transcribed them for analysis shortly following each home visit. I also audio recorded while I observed musical interactions between parents and their children to aid in writing fieldnotes. I used jottings to catalogue musical materials found in each home. As with class observations, I reserved several hours after home visits to write fieldnotes, transcribe interviews, and write corresponding memos and complete an entry in a reflexive researcher journal following similar procedures as Lum (2008). Below is a summary of the data that were collected during home visits.



**Table 1***Home Visit Data Collection Plan*

Visit Number	Type of Data Collected	Purpose
One	Semi-structured interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Background information about participant(s)' past and current musical experiences.</li> <li>- Motivation for enrolling in music class.</li> <li>- Musical hopes/goals for participants and their children.</li> <li>- Information about musical home environment (i.e., types and frequency of musical engagement that occurs at home, musical activities and events attended by family members).</li> </ul>
	Home tour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Examination of musical materials (i.e., music listening devices, musical instruments, musical toys etc.) in the home.</li> </ul>
	Observation of musical interaction between parent(s) and child.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participant(s) shared a favorite and/or regularly used musical activity that they do with their child.</li> </ul>
Two	Semi-structured interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Perceptions of music classes (satisfaction level, most/least enjoyable types of activities, anything surprising/confusing about the class, participants' role in music class, child's behaviors in class).</li> <li>- Information about any changes in musical behaviors from participant or child in music class and at home since class began.</li> </ul>
	Observation of musical interaction between parent(s) and child.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participant shared a favorite musical activity that they do with their child (this may be the same as the activity seen in home visit one or something different).</li> <li>- Participant shared at least one activity based on music class activities that they enjoy.</li> <li>- Observation of unstructured musical play or regular household routine (i.e., bedtime, mealtime, etc.) that features music.</li> </ul>
Three	Semi-structured interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reflection on music class experience (i.e., perception of benefits for participant and/or child, changes in child/participant (behavior/comfort/participation level over the course of the class, changes in thinking about musical parenting/musical development/their child as a musical person/participants' musical goals and hopes for child).</li> <li>- Reflection on changes or increased awareness of musical parenting behaviors, beliefs, type/frequency of musical interactions outside of music class.</li> </ul>
	Home tour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Exploration of any new or changed musical materials or use of materials in the home, if any.</li> </ul>
	Observation of musical interaction between parent(s) and child.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Observation or participation in musical play session with child and participant. Participants and/or child selected the type of musical activity.</li> </ul>

## **Participant Journals**

Parents were asked to journal weekly about musical interactions and activities that they engaged in with their child, as well as their child's musical behaviors each week. I used participant journals to guide me in tailoring specific questions to each participant during semi-structured interviews. Participants submitted journal entries to me in whatever format they preferred, including audio, video, written or a combination. I created a MS Word document file for each participant in which I compiled their journal entries. When participants submitted video for journals, I watched the video several times and wrote a detailed description of the video in their file along with corresponding in-process memos.

Kate submitted a combination of short written descriptions and video journal entries, although she sometimes forgot to complete journal entries, submitting a total of seven entries during the data collection period. Christy chose primarily to provide written entries via email. Two of her ten journal entries were video submissions accompanied by a brief description. Vanessa elected to submit exclusively video for her journal entries. She sent eleven videos in total over a ten-week period via text message. Vanessa's video entries were accompanied by a short description or comment.

## **Researcher Journal**

A reflexive approach to research implies that findings are "situated, subjective, and context-specific" (Konstantoni & Kustatuscher, 2016, p. 230). Researchers must examine their own perceptions and how they came to form them. Reflexivity pervades throughout the research process, and some feel that it is a means of establishing trustworthiness or validity of results (Konstantoni & Kustatuscher, 2016). Researchers use several reflexive techniques, such as keeping a reflexive diary to record thoughts, feelings, and notes on how the researcher's presence

may be impacting the environment, asking for participants' interpretations, or stepping back from the field during data collection, to consider on how time spent in the field has effected the researcher and vice versa (Konstantoni & Kustatuscher, 2016).

I employed the use of a reflexive researcher journal throughout data collection to monitor how my presence in families' lives may have impacted them and how my role as a participant observer shaped my interpretation of data and the findings of this study. After each music class and home visit, I made an entry in this journal reflecting on how I engaged with participants, my comfort level, and my perceptions about participants' feelings and reactions to class or my visits and presence in their home. In addition to these reflections, I used this journal to write initial and in-process memos about my impressions of observations and related data.

### **Theoretical Lens**

A paradigm is the worldview that guides a researcher (Tudge, 2008). It is not a theory per se, but it is a larger category into which some theories fall. Contextualism is a paradigm that has been influential in developmental psychology and sociology and aligns with post-modernist thought. It is centered in the notion that there are multiple realities and not a universal way of viewing the world. In a contextualist paradigm, there is no attempt to remove the influence of the researcher from work, but instead information is "co-constructed" by researcher and participant (Tudge, 2008, p. 61). Researchers whose worldview aligns with this paradigm are interested in what is happening currently in participants lives—they aim to capture a 'real' picture of people's experiences. Contextualists believe that development occurs as a result of numerous bidirectional interactions between a developing individual and their social world (Tudge, 2008). Development is not driven solely by context, but, rather, it is influenced by a number of factors including culture, other individuals, and the developing individual themselves.

Urie Bronfenbrenner, a developmental psychologist, dedicated much of his professional life to establishing theories of human development that fall within the contextualist paradigm. In 1979, Bronfenbrenner published *The Ecology of Human Development*, influenced in part by the work of other psychologists including Kurt Lewin and Lev Vygotsky, which was largely focused on how context, both immediate and distal, influences a developing person (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979). Bronfenbrenner (1979) defines the study of ecology of human development as:

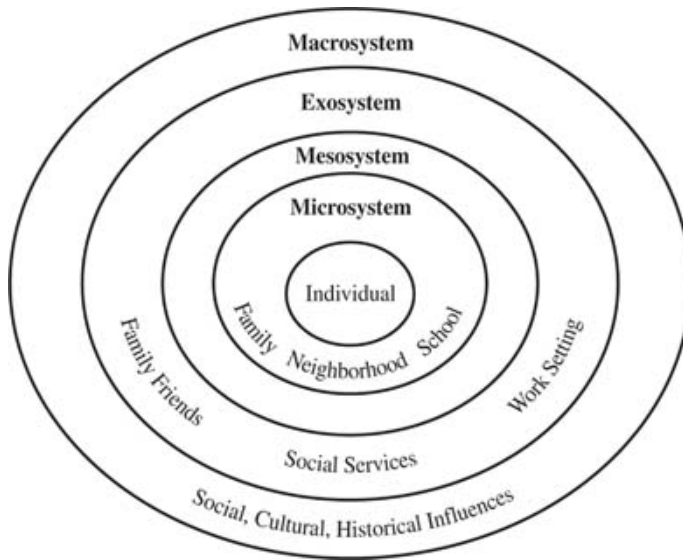
The ecology of human development involves the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected by relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded. (p. 21)

Bronfenbrenner divided the ecological environment into four systems, and conceptualized them as concentric circles with the individual at the center. The systems closest to the individual were thought to have the greatest impact on development (see Figure 2).

In Bronfenbrenner's model of the ecological system, the nearest, and thus most impactful, system is the microsystem, defined as "a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 22). This system includes the immediate setting, including the home and the people who live there and most frequently interact with the developing person, such as parents, siblings, and other family members. The next most influential system is the mesosystem, which is comprised of the interrelations of two or more settings in which the developing person participates, such as school, neighborhood, or extended family microsystems relate to one another (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). It is in this system that

**Figure 2**

*Ecological Systems Theory Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1989)*



relations between home and school, or, in the case of this study, early childhood music classes occur. Next is the exosystem, which is comprised of settings or influences in which the developing person does not necessarily interact, but that still influence their development. Examples include a parent's place of work, family members' peer groups or social circles, or mass media (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Finally, the most distal system in the model is the macrosystem, which includes "any belief systems, or ideology" that underlies the culture of the developing person (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 26).

It was Bronfenbrenner's assertion that these systems together influenced development and that, in order to understand development, consideration should be given to all systems. He states, 'In ecological research, the properties of the person and of the environment, the structure of environmental settings, and the processes taking place within and between them must be viewed as interdependent and analyzed in systems terms' (p. 41). Bronfenbrenner and his colleagues have made substantial changes and refinements to the earliest iteration of the theory,

which is described above. The initial theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979) focused almost solely on context. By Bronfenbrenner's own admission, it did not fully account for how the individual characteristics and actions of the developing person, and the people who surround them influence and shape development (Bronfenbrenner, 1992).

Despite many alterations and additions to Bronfenbrenner's ecological theories since they were initially introduced until his death in 2005, the most recent version of the theory, called the bioecological theory of human development, is not always acknowledged by researchers (Rosa & Tudge, 2008). Rosa and Tudge (2013) mapped the major changes in Bronfenbrenner's work since the 1970s into three major phases. The first phase is described above.

During the second phase, Bronfenbrenner acknowledged that the original theory did not account for the influence of the developing individual nor the influence of other individuals in their environment. He also began to focus more on the processes that occur between individuals in various systems that shape development (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). He further asserted that, "The particular strength of person-context designs lies in their capacity to identify what I call *ecological niches*. These are particular *regions on the environment that are especially favorable or unfavorable to the development of individuals with particular personal characteristics*" (Bronfenbrenner, 1992, p. 111, italics in original).

Bronfenbrenner's work in this stage led to the addition of new information regarding the individual to both the microsystem and macrosystem definitions. Specifically, the microsystem definition was altered to reflect that it is a system "containing other persons with distinctive characteristics of temperament, personality, and systems of beliefs" (Bronfenbrenner, 1992, p. 148). While both the mesosystem and exosystem did not change substantially during this phase,

the greatest change was made to the macrosystem. Bronfenbrenner altered the definition of the macrosystem to state (alterations from the original definition in italics):

The macrosystem consists of the overarching pattern of micro-, meso-, and exosystems characteristics of a given culture, subculture, or other broader social context *with particular reference to the developmentally instigative belief systems, resources, hazards, lifestyles, opportunity structures, life course options, and patterns of social interchange that are embedded in each of these systems*. The macrosystem may be thought of as a societal blueprint for a particular culture, subculture, or other broader social context (Bronfenbrenner, 1992, pp. 149-150).

He explains that cultural repertoires of beliefs (a concept also discussed by Lareau, 2011 and McPherson, 2009) that are housed in the macrosystem are “not merely structural but also developmentally instigative” (p. 149). I interpret this to mean that, while Bronfenbrenner initially thought of culture as being the most distal and, thus, least influential system on an individual’s development, a focus on the individuals and processes within the system caused him to place greater emphasis on cultural structures as more direct influencers on the development of the individual.

In the final phase of Bronfenbrenner’s theoretical development, the theory was renamed the bioecological theory of human development. Rosa and Tudge (2013) succinctly describe the final iteration by stating:

Bioecological theory in its current or mature form specifies that researchers should study the settings in which a developing individual spends time and the relations with others in the same settings, the personal characteristics of the individual (and those with whom he or she typically interacts), both development over time and the historical time in which

these individuals live, and the mechanisms that drive development (proximal processes).  
(p. 244).

To aid researchers in applying this theory, Bronfenbrenner developed a model to test it called the Process-Person-Context-Time model or PPCT (Bronfenbrenner, 2001; Rosa & Tudge, 2013).

The most important component of final version of Bronfenbrenner's theory is process. This component is focused on proximal processes, identified as the basis, or "engine" of development (2001, pg. 6). Bronfenbrenner (2001) explains:

Over the life course, human development takes place through processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving biopsychosocial human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate external environment.

To be effective, the interaction must occur on a fairly regular basis over extended periods of time. Such enduring forms of interaction in the immediate environment are referred to as *proximal processes* (p. 6, italics in original).

The "form power, content, and direction of the proximal processes producing development vary" depending upon the characteristics of the developing person (the second component of the PPCT model), the environment (the Context component of the PPCT model), as well as how changes in the environment occur over *time* (The final component of the PPCT the model) (Bronfenbrenner, 2001, pp. 6-7).

It is through examination of proximal processes that researchers can understand more fully the importance of parents in children's development. In order for proximal processes to impact development, they need to occur regularly and with a person that the child, "develops a strong, mutual emotional attachment and who are committed to the child's well-being and



development, preferable for life” (Bronfenbrenner, 2001, p. 9). Rosa and Tudge (2013) further assert:

Although Bronfenbrenner described it as a theory of human development, from the start the developing individual was consistently viewed as influencing, and being influenced by, the environment. The family thus plays a key role: it does so as a microsystem context in which development occurs; it does so in terms of the personal characteristics of all individuals in the family; and most important, it does so in terms of the interactions among family members as part of proximal processes” (p. 243).

The Person component of the PPCT model accounts for the personal characteristics of the developing individual that are divided into three types. Force characteristics include those related to one’s personality and motivations. These characteristics can be generative, such as curiosity, or initiative, which contribute to development. Force characteristics can also be disruptive such as insecurity, apathy, or impulsiveness, which impede proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Resource characteristics include a person’s abilities, experiences, knowledge or skill. The third type of characteristic are demand characteristics which, “invite or discourage reactions from the social environment” (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, p. 995). These characteristics are those that are generally considered to be observable traits such as age, gender, skin color or, age.

Time, an element that was partially introduced in previous phases as the chronosystem, is given a more prominent place in this phase. Time in the PPCT model is divided into levels including microtime, “continuity verse discontinuity within ongoing episodes of proximal processes,” mesotime, “the periodicity of these episodes across broader time intervals, such as days and weeks,” and macrotime, which “focuses on the changing expectations and events in the

larger society, both within and across generations, as they affect and are affected by, processes and outcomes of human development over the life course” (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, p. 995). The extensive changes that occurred from the origins of Bronfenbrenner’s theory to its final form make it clear why Rosa and Tudge (2013) call for researchers to be explicit about what iteration of Bronfenbrenner’s work they are using and why. They also caution that, “supporting or attacking a reduced, old, or simply incorrect version of the theory is neither helpful nor appropriate” (Rosa & Tudge, 2013, pp. 244-245).

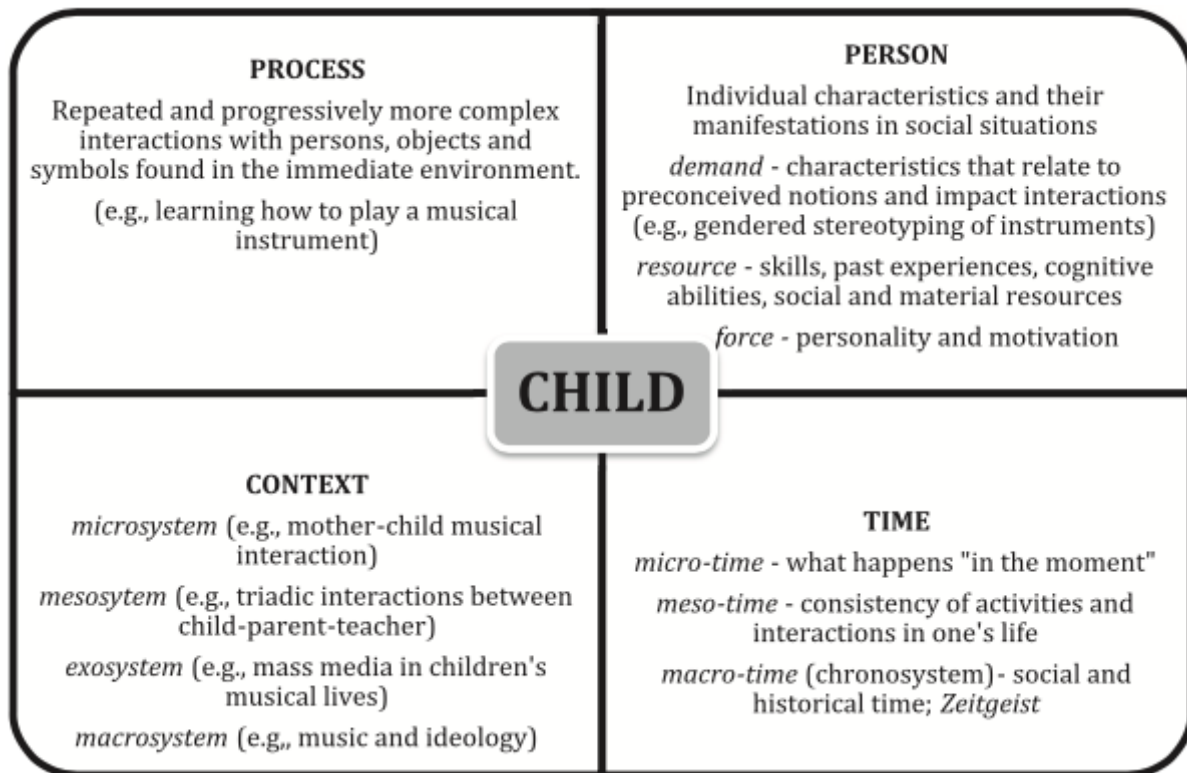
Bronfenbrenner’s theories have been widely impactful in developmental psychology and also have been influential in other disciplines including education and sociology. Music education scholars have cited Bronfenbrenner’s work in examinations of young children’s musical engagement (Lamont, 2008), early childhood music education in Taiwan (Leu, 2008) and interactions between parents, teachers, and students (Creech & Hallam, 2003). However, all of these scholars refer to the original theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) rather than the final iteration, even though, at the time of their writing, the final version was complete. Some music education researchers also have critiqued Bronfenbrenner’s original theory without acknowledging the existence of the final iteration of the theory and the PPCT model (Young, 2016).

Ilari (2017) is one of the only music education scholars to use Bronfenbrenner’s latest work, the PPCT model (Bronfenbrenner, 2001), as a lens. In a recent review of musical parenting literature, Ilari (2017) used the PPCT model to “situate and interpret musical parenting research” (p. 3). She discussed how processes, contexts, personal characteristics, and time may impact children’s musical development and musical parenting decisions, behaviors, and beliefs. She also provided an example of how the PPCT model could be envisioned for use in music education

(see Figure 3). Ilari's (2017) use of the theory is centered around the same topic as the current study, which suggests that the theory may be useful in interpreting and guiding research about musical parenting and musical development.

**Figure 3**

*Musical Interpretation of the PPCT Model (Ilari, 2017)*



A strength of this theoretical framework is that it provides a guide to explain and explore variation in parenting behaviors. The PPCT model highlights many factors that may influence why people do what they do and how they came to be who they are. Parental musical experience, self-efficacy, generation, culture, demographic characteristics, family composition, and multitude of other factors all are encompassed in this model and can, therefore, be considered when reflecting on the attitudes and behaviors that are observed in someone's musical parenting. To view the influence of a music class as unidirectional is shortsighted. Although it is possible

for music class participation to shape parents, children, and their home environments, the PPCT framework highlights that the relationships between each context and all of the components of PPCT model are bi-directional and should be viewed as such by researchers. Just as we acknowledge that children do not enter the world as “blank slates,” families do not enter the music class as empty vessels eager to be filled.

In order to explore how each individual family interacted with the music class setting, gathering information about their histories, experiences, and the setting itself was important. Gaining a sense of the how each family functioned, and the many contributors to the family makeup, helped make it possible to use Bronfenbrenner’s theory to interpret what parents ultimately took away from their music class experience. The use of this framework guided my interpretation of each family, as a unique case served to reveal not only what parents gain from enrolling in music class, but *why* they find certain things valuable or not. Viewing families through a contextualist lens helped to highlight and explain variations in each participants’ musical parenting.

### **Data Analysis**

I completed data analysis concurrently with data collection, as suggested by Merriam (1998). Because I used information gathered early in the data collection period to guide and refine the data collection process, I transcribed interviews and wrote fieldnotes directly after each home visits and weekly music class. Throughout the data collection process, I wrote write in-process researcher memos while compiling fieldnotes, interview transcriptions, participant journal entries or transcriptions, and my reflexive journal to record initial impressions, thoughts, and possible emergent areas of interest or connections within the data that called for further exploration (Emerson et al., 2011). I compiled data including interview transcripts, fieldnotes

from home visits, music class fieldnotes, participants' journal entries, and my researcher journal in Word documents and wrote memos and initial codes using the comments feature in Word. As I continually collected data, I constantly compared new data with data that had been collected, as recommended by Merriam (1998).

To analyze fieldnotes from music classes, I followed strategies suggested by Emerson et al. (2011) and Saldaña (2016). During data collection, I wrote regular in-process memos in the margins of my fieldnotes and in my researcher journal. These memos included my initial impressions of parent engagement in classes and musings about potential codes. As data collection continued, I reread fieldnotes from previous classes as I continued to memo for comparison. Once data collection was complete, I read the entire set of fieldnotes about each participant in the order that they were written, as recommended by Emerson et al. (2011). Reading fieldnotes in their entirety and in the order in which they were written allows the researcher to gain an understanding of changes in the field over time and is also a way to better understand your own impact on the field. Furthermore, Emerson et al. (2011) urge researchers to approach reading their own fieldnotes "as if they had been written by a stranger" (p. 174). Therefore, I read the entire set of fieldnotes along with my researcher journal and in-process memos before beginning full rounds of coding.

I coded fieldnotes from music class and home visits as well as participants journal entries in three cycles. Saldaña (2016) and Emerson et al. (2011) both suggest beginning with an open coding process when doing case study or ethnographic work that is exploratory in nature. During initial or open coding, researchers should not be concerned with placing data into categories or searching for commonalities or relationships within the data. During open coding the researcher, "reads fieldnotes line-by-line to identify and formulate any and all ideas, themes, issues they

suggest, no matter how varied and disparate” (Emerson et al., 2011, p. 172). I completed the first round of coding fieldnotes and journals using the comments feature in Word. I also continually wrote code memos about the relationships and patterns that I noticed emerging across the data.

After the first round of open coding, I completed a second round of coding using the following questions from Emerson et al. (2011) as a guide to begin to refine my codes.

1. What are people doing? What are they trying to accomplish?
  2. How, exactly, do they do this? What specific means and/or strategies do they use?
  3. What do I see going on here? What did I learn from these notes? Why did I include them?
  4. How is what is going on here similar to, or different from, other incidents or events recorded elsewhere in the fieldnotes?
  5. What is the broader import or significance of this incident or event? What is it a case of?
- (p. 175)

During the third and final round of coding I continued to refine my coding using different approaches to focus codes toward developing emergent themes. I used a combination of descriptive, process, and in-vivo coding approaches when coding fieldnotes (Saldaña, 2016). Descriptive coding aids the researcher in establishing what is happening during an observation. This type of coding often involves short phrases that include mostly nouns. Saldaña (2016) writes that descriptive coding can be thought of as “hashtag coding” (p. 102). Process codes are useful when examining data that includes participants actions or emotional reactions. “Process coding uses gerunds (‘ing’ words) exclusively to connote action in the data” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 111). Saldaña (2016) explains that this type of coding is useful when researchers are interested in routines and rituals of daily life. Therefore, when examining fieldnotes written based on observation of families participating in music classes, I used process codes to develop a better

understanding of any trends related to their actions. In vivo coding involves directly using words spoken by participants as codes. This type of coding is helpful when researchers wish to capture the voice and stories of participants and is often used in combination with other coding processes (Saldaña, 2016). I used in vivo coding to capture participants musical behaviors and any talking they did to their child or others during music class. During this final round of coding, I created a table in a separate word document to begin to organize and group codes into emergent themes.

To analyze interview data, I completed an initial round of coding using an open coding method, coding memos after each interview. I used these initial open coding rounds, the researcher journal, and memos to constantly compare data throughout the data collection process (Merriam, 1998). This allowed me to tailor the second and third interviews to each individual participant and gather richer, more meaningful data. Once all three interviews were completed with each participant, I completed an additional round of open coding on all three interviews together before refining the coding process further. Just as with fieldnotes and journal entries, I completed coding using the comments function in word.

After completing a round of open coding of the data, I reviewed interview data and the associated codes using Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory of human development as a lens to further understand how participants' personal characteristics, processes in which they engaged, contexts that they lived in and interacted with, and the time in which they lived and raised their children shaped and were shaped by their experiences in music classes. I used the four components of the PPCT model, process, person, context and time, to guide my analysis as I considered parents' experiences and behaviors prior to music class, during music class, and after attending class. I organized codes and data according to the component of the PPCT model to which they related to in order to develop a personalized model for each participant representing

how each components of the model contributed to how participants used music in their parenting. These graphic representations were modeled after what Ilari (2017) created as an example in her literature review but centered the parent as the developing person rather than the child.

The processes upon which I focused in my analysis were parent's musical interactions with their children. Because I sought to explore how parents' behaviors changed as a result of attending music class, I gathered information on the musical interactions in which parents were engaging prior to enrolling in music class and then compared those interactions with interactions I observed and discussed with parents to determine if music class participation prompted parents to engage in different musical interactions with their child.

Context was an important component of my study. I focused primarily on the micro- and mesosystem levels to explore both home environment, music class, and an early intervention program with which all the participants in this study were affiliated (microsystems) and the interrelations between the settings (mesosystem). By focusing on context, I was able to see what parents gained from engaging in each setting and how their experiences in one context influenced others. I also examined how contexts in which parents did not directly interact influenced their musical parenting, including media and technological advances at the exosystem level and broader cultural beliefs and trends at the macrosystem level.

I further examined how parents' personal characteristics contributed to how they engaged in musical parenting. I focused on characteristics that were in some way connected to parents' experiences, skills, knowledge and attitudes about music. The force characteristics I considered in this study were parents' attitudes and motivations related to their music participation. I also highlighted their resource characteristics, specifically participants' musical background, musical



experiences, knowledge, or skills. Finally, I assessed how participants' demand characteristics including their race, age and gender shaped their parenting and experiences in music class.

I incorporated the last component of the PPCT model, time, into my analysis primarily by considering macrotime, which “focuses on the changing expectations and events in the larger society, both within and across generations” (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006, p. 796). To account for this component, I explored how each participants’ musical parenting may have been influenced by contemporary parenting or societal trends specific to the time period in which they lived.

As I completed the second and third rounds of coding the interview data through the theoretical lens, I incorporated in vivo and value coding (Saldaña, 2016). Because much of my interviews gathered information to understand more fully participants’ past musical experiences, perceptions of their music class experiences, what they valued about that experience, as well as their beliefs about musical parenting, value coding served to highlight what was important to parents. “Value coding is the application of codes to qualitative data that reflect a participants’ values, attitudes, and beliefs, representing his or her perspectives or worldview” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 131). Saldaña (2016) asserted that value coding is appropriate for most qualitative studies but “especially for those that explore cultural values and beliefs systems, identity, intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and actions” (p. 132).

In the third round of coding interview data, I followed a similar process as other data and created a table to begin grouping codes, using my researcher journal, the theoretical lens, and my code memos as a guide, to reveal emergent themes for each case. After three rounds of coding, emergent themes developed related to each individual case. I then compared the themes that

emerged in each case and completed a final round of analysis in which I examined what continuities and discontinuities that existed across cases.

### **Trustworthiness**

I established trustworthiness through triangulation of data, extensive time in the field, rigorous data collection procedures and design, peer review, and member checks. Creswell (2007) explains that, “prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field include building trust with participants, learning the culture, and checking for misinformation that stems from distortions introduced by the researcher or informants” (p. 207). He goes on to explain that prolonged observation and fieldwork is one of the primary ways ethnographic work is validated. Because I observed participants weekly in early childhood music classes for an entire semester and also observed them in their homes three times over the course of a period of four months, I gained a greater understanding of their daily lives, behaviors, and beliefs than I would have by simply interviewing participants or relying solely on parental report. I was able to develop rapport with participants, which was vital for my work as it contributed to parents feeling more comfortable speaking and sharing musically with me over time.

By collecting several forms of data including interviews, observation/fieldnotes, and participant journals, I was able to corroborate evidence gathered from multiple sources to further enhance the trustworthiness of the results of the study. Triangulation involves “using multiple investigators, multiple sources of data, or multiple methods to confirm emerging findings” (Merriam, 1998, p. 204). I further ensured the accuracy of the results of this study through member checking. Participants had the opportunity to read all interview transcripts and fieldnotes to ensure they were accurate reflections of their thoughts and actions. Participants had the opportunity to eliminate, change, or add elements to the dataset so that they reflected their

perception of what was said and what occurred. Participants also received a draft of their individual case chapter to review.

Finally, I completed a peer review to establish trustworthiness of the data. Peer review is a process through which experts in the field oversee and confirm the truthfulness of the analysis process. During my analysis process, I shared my coding scheme and themes with my dissertation chairperson for critical examination. Furthermore, an early childhood music researcher who was also a parent and had extensive experience teaching early childhood music classes examined my coding scheme and themes along with excerpts of my data for each case as well as the cross-case analysis. All of these steps contributed to the trustworthiness of the data.

### **Limitations**

Because this study, as is typical of qualitative studies, included a small number of participants, the aim of this study was not to produce generalizable knowledge. When studying families and parenting, generalizable information is difficult to gather, because every parent influences and is influenced by numerous factors, which makes their decisions, behaviors, and beliefs unique to them and their context. Therefore, I must assume that participating in early childhood music classes will impact musical parenting uniquely in each case. However, the findings of this study may be transferrable to similar settings especially early childhood music programs and may be useful in reflecting on teaching practices and policies.

It also is important to acknowledge that simply asking parents to be part of a study about musical parenting and participation in early childhood music classes may have changed their behavior. This would have been likely even if I did not enter participants' homes. This phenomenon, known as the Hawthorne Effect, may cause parents to act differently in classes or at home than they would if they were not being studied (Adair, 1984). Other researchers have

noted that parents made realizations about their use of music by engaging in research that they otherwise would not have noticed (Custodero, 2006; Gingras, 2013; Koops 2011a; Koops, 2014). My influence on the environment does not mean that this type of research is not useful or relevant, but this effect should be acknowledged.

Because of the nature of how and from where participants were recruited (i.e., from one university-affiliated, fee-based early childhood music program), participants shared similar demographic characteristics. As discussed in my review of literature, the vast majority of musical parenting research includes only mothers as primary participants (e.g. Ilari, 2005; Koops, 2011b; Youm, 2013). I had hoped to be able to recruit fathers to participate in this study but was not able to do so. Much of the previous research that involves parents drawn from early childhood music programs (Koops, 2011a, 2011b, 2012a, 2012b, 2014; Rodriguez, 2019) have samples that are mostly well-educated mothers from middle-class, two-parent, heteronormative families. Although I was able to recruit participants who varied with regard to their level of education and socioeconomic status, all participants were White women in two-parent heteronormative families, which limited the breadth of the study.

### **Researcher's Lens**

I approached this work as a person who was raised in a musically rich environment, who is an early childhood music teacher and researcher, and who began my own musical parenting journey while completing this study. My interest in musical parenting began long before I became a researcher or even a music educator. Both of my parents hold degrees in music education. Although my dad never pursued a career as a music educator, my mother taught elementary general music for over 20 years. When I was growing up, many of my teachers, peers, and family members assumed my musical interests and “talent” were a result of my

mother's influence. In reflecting back on my childhood experiences as an adult, I believe that is largely, though not entirely, true. I had experiences, such as singing in a community choir, taking private music lessons, and attending numerous and varied musical events throughout my childhood, because my mother thought they were valuable. Furthermore, my daily life and home were filled with music. Because of these experiences, I grew to love and appreciate music and chose to pursue it as a career. Because of my musical childhood, I developed a somewhat skewed view of music's role in parenting and family life. My own childhood and parenting journey made me curious about what parents who do not have similar experiences do with music.

My 11 years of early childhood music teaching experience in four different university and community music programs informed my approach to this study. I taught in the program from which I drew participants prior to the start of data collection and continued to teach in the program while collecting data. I also have received training in early childhood music instruction through the Gordon Institute of Music Learning as well as other organizations and university coursework. I had professional relationships with the staff and teachers at the community music school, including with the teacher whose class I observed. In addition, I have conducted previous studies in which I explored musical parenting and parents' perceptions of music classes. My rich understanding of the music class setting, my experience teaching both young children and parents, and my prior work as a researcher who studies music and families allowed me to understand and interpret participants' behaviors and aided me in accurately and sensitively telling the stories of the families with whom I worked.

In the vignette that opened chapter one, I described a professor that I had who framed early childhood music instruction as an opportunity to educate parents to engage with musically with their children. That framing still colors my thinking about my own early childhood teaching

over 10 years later. As an educator, I believe that early childhood music programs should not only serve to enhance and influence children's musical development by providing children with musical experiences in the moment. I feel music classes are more impactful when parents are considered equal learners and potential music teachers for their own children. These beliefs are at the forefront when I teach. In the context of this study, my own beliefs about the potential benefits of early childhood music classes may have colored my interpretations of participants' actions and feelings about class, so it was important for me to remain reflexive and honor the voices and thoughts of participants over my own.

Lastly, in the final weeks of writing my proposal for this study I found out I was pregnant with my first child. My pregnancy coincided with the data collection period for this study and, as I completed this project, my daughter is nearing the age of the children involved in the study. All of my participants were aware of my pregnancy, and it was a regular topic of casual conversation during my visits to their homes. In some ways, this helped me to establish rapport with participants and get to know them better as they shared stories of their own journeys in becoming parents. Analyzing and interpreting data centered around parenting, becoming a parent myself, taking my own child to our first early childhood music class, and navigating my own musical parenting development helped me to empathize and understand my participants' experiences more deeply.

## CHAPTER FOUR: “SHAKE IT BABY!”: KATE’S EXPERIENCE

I arrived at Kate’s apartment on a rainy weekday morning a few days after the first music class of the semester and parked my car on the quiet street. Kate, wearing a Rolling Stones T-Shirt and her hair in a ponytail, answered the door quickly and invited me in. A short entry hallway opened up into the living/dining room area with a small kitchen tucked in the corner. The dining room table sat in front of a large window that brightened the room. The apartment was comfortably furnished and cozy. It was obvious that children lived there, as there were lots of toys around and *Daniel Tiger* was playing on the television.

At first, I only saw Kate but quickly heard the sound of another television from another room. I asked if Layla was home, and Kate said that she was in the bedroom watching “Ariel” (*The Little Mermaid*). I shared that I watched that movie daily for at least a year when I was very young. She agreed that it had “been on a loop” lately. We sat down opposite one another on couches and talked casually for a few minutes as I set up to record our interview. (Fieldnote, Home Visit One)

In this chapter, I share Kate’s story. I begin by introducing Kate and describing her as a mother and person. I then address research question one, which pertained to what parents knew, believed, and did with music before the start of the study by sharing Kate’s experiences with music prior to enrolling in a music class with her 26-month-old daughter Layla. I also provide information on Kate’s beliefs surrounding music, her musical aspirations for her daughter, and her motivations for enrollment in music class. Next, I describe the musical home environment Kate provides for Layla, which addresses the second research question. In the remainder of the chapter, I give details about Kate and Layla’s experience over the course of the semester in their

music class. I first describe how they engaged in class activities (research question three) and then share what Kate most valued and enjoyed about attending class (research question four). Finally, I discuss how attending class influenced Kate and Layla's musical home environment to answer the final research question.

### **Getting to Know Kate**

Kate is short with glasses and medium length brown hair mostly worn in a ponytail or messy bun. She usually dressed casually in leggings with a t-shirt or sweatshirt. From the very first time I talked with Kate, she struck me as an honest, down-to-earth person. From the beginning, Kate was relaxed and open. Our conversations were comfortable, and Kate's answers were straightforward. Kate did not shy away from showing her silly side. For example, during our first interview, when I asked Kate about songs that she makes up to sing to Layla, she explained they are, "usually about food, or farting" (Interview One). I never met Layla's dad, James, but Kate shared that, "he can turn anything into a poop song" (Interview One). She had lived with James for 13 years. James is the father of both Kate's children, and they both grew up near where they currently lived.

Kate was a stay-at-home mom of an 11-year-old son Matt and 26-month-old Layla, who did not attend daycare. Layla, who seemed tall for her age, had curly brown hair that was usually tied back in a ponytail or pigtails to keep it out of her face. She often was smiling and had a very expressive face. Curious and always moving around, she tended to entertain herself independently during my visits to her home.

Due to some health issues and developmental concerns, Layla had seen numerous doctors and therapists from a very early age. In our first conversation, Kate shared that Layla does not like unfamiliar adults and typically is "really standoffish with adults because of all the doctor's



she's been to and everything" (Interview One). During my first visit to Kate's apartment, Layla was wary of my presence and mostly stayed in the nearby bedroom watching *The Little Mermaid*. She came out for a few brief moments to get a snack but quickly retreated back to the bedroom while Kate and I talked. Kate calmly and lightheartedly reassured Layla that everything was okay saying, "She is nice! She isn't going to poke at you" (Interview One). I was friendly but gave Layla space to feel comfortable in her own home. As I observed Kate and Layla, I noted that Kate was keenly aware of Layla's mood and reactions to different experiences. During the course of the study, she often would anticipate how Layla might feel or what she needed both in class and at home.

At 30-years-old, Kate was the youngest participant in the study. She became a mother at age 19 and that, combined with her age, contributed to her feeling different from other mothers at in music class. This finding aligns with Young et al. (2007), who reported White, middle-class, and older mothers tend to be most comfortable in early childhood music classes.

Adrienne: Do you feel like you made any connections with the teachers or other adults as part of class?

Kate: Uhhh I talked to them. I talked to other adults. I felt like they were more "adultier" than me (laughs).

Adrienne: Oh really?

Kate: (nods) Yeah. I always feel like the young one out. I don't know. I don't usually converse with moms but I did! I tried.

Adrienne: You don't strike me as being super different from other parents in class but I know it might feel different for you.

Kate: I know. I try to remember that I am 30 now. I *am the adult* . . . I feel like I don't look like it or act like it. And I *definitely* don't have the mentality of a 30-year-old.

(Interview 3)

Though Kate is sometimes self-conscious about how she compares to other parents, she is a strong advocate for Layla and is diligent about ensuring that Layla has the services and opportunities she needs to be successful and happy. Throughout the months that I got to know Kate, she was working to have Layla evaluated to determine whether she had Autism Spectrum Disorder. In interview three, she opened up about her own frustrations with therapists and medical personnel as she navigated Layla's possible autism diagnosis.

Kate: Well her doctors were just like, "Get a psychologist to make this diagnosis." Like okay? We are on like 5 or 6 different waiting lists for the surrounding area. And then I just was telling her dad like, "This is ridiculous." And every time we would go to one of her therapists they would ask "Did you get in yet?" [said in a mock judgmental tone] Like I should feel bad for not trying harder.

Adrienne: But you are obviously doing something proactive about it!

Kate: I guess I was supposed to call them. All five different places every day to see if they had a *cancellation*. Five places. Everyday. It was *so* insane. And so, he picked up a phone and called [nearby large city] and we got in within a week. So that made me feel even worse. And the doctors were like, "You could have done that a while ago you didn't *have* to stay around here . . . They are just kind of jerks. (Interview Three)

Kate seemed to feel that the therapist had judged her and come to the conclusion that she was not doing everything she could for Layla. However, Kate felt that she was trying her best. She actively sought out services for Layla, including music class. All of our conversations

indicated that Kate saw music class as being a positive experience for both Layla and herself. So, it is possible that music class was exception to Kate's general feelings of frustration surrounding experts or intervention.

### **“It Just Never Clicked”: Early Music Experiences**

Kate had some formal and informal musical experiences during childhood but does not consider herself to be a particularly musical person. She played violin and saxophone in school and also briefly took saxophone lessons, but she quit because she struggled with reading music notation. Kate's focus on reading musical notation as being important to music making came up several times in our first interview.

Adrienne: Tell me a little bit about your own experiences with music throughout your life. Did you ever do music in school?

Kate: I tried to...in sixth grade, or fifth grade, I tried the violin. I never caught on to reading music. And then I went to a different school, and they had brass instruments, so I tried the saxophone. I was *really* gonna try to read that music but it just never clicked.

Adrienne: That was the barrier for you?

Kate: Yeah. (Interview One)

Kate later spoke about her son's similar experience with music in school saying, “My son tried to play the clarinet but he...he can't read music. He just couldn't get it. I made him try, but he is more of a math and science kind of guy” (Interview One). I asked Kate if she wished she could have done more with music as a young person, and she expressed that, after her attempts at playing violin and saxophone and struggling with reading music, she lost interest.

When I asked Kate about whether she recalled her family singing or making music at home, she talked about her mom singing impromptu songs, her grandma playing piano, and her

brother playing trumpet. “My mom would always sing little silly songs, like make up things, songs about what she was doing stuff, but nothing ever ‘professionally’. My grandma played piano, but you know, just made up silly songs. That's about it” (Interview One). Kate’s description of her mom’s silly songs is not dissimilar to her reports of her own music making with Layla. She mentions creating “silly songs as we're doing stuff” (Interview One). Several researchers have stressed that parents tend to engage with music with their own children in similar ways as their parents (Custodero, 2006, 2009; Gordon, 2013; Mehr, 2014). In particular, recollections of being sung to by a parent have been found to be a significant predictor of the frequency with which a parent will sing to their own child (Custodero & Johnson-Green, 2003; Mehr, 2014).

### **Current Engagement with Music**

At the time of the study, Kate was not involved in formal music activities. She “[had not] been to a concert in years” (Interview One), and her home did not have any of what Kate refers to as “legit” musical instruments, such as a piano or guitar. However, Kate was an avid music listener, and her family listened to music daily. “After having Layla, we always have some kind of music on. I’m trying to think. She likes *Super Simple Songs* [YouTube channel], like nursery rhymes and stuff, we always have that on” (Interview One). While Kate preferred to listen to rock music, including her favorite band The Rolling Stones, and her partner and older son enjoyed techno music, she more often played children’s music at home. “Yeah, like I’ll have older rock music playing in the car. But if we’re at home or anything, I just let her listen to her music” (Interview One). Rather than focusing on herself and her music interests, Kate’s music listening and engagement with music overall was focused on Layla’s enjoyment and entertainment. This finding supports the findings of Ilari (2013) who found that parents

sometimes change their music listening habits when they have children because of a belief that certain music is more appropriate or beneficial for children.

### **Beliefs and Aspirations**

I spoke with Kate about her beliefs surrounding music, any hopes she had for Layla related to music, and why she decided to enroll in an early childhood music class. Kate discussed both musical and extramusical motivations for enrolling in music class, including improved communication, socialization, enjoyment, and encouragement of Layla's interest in music.

### **Communication**

Encouraging Layla to use more words was Kate's primary motivation for attending music class. Layla received services through *EIO*, including speech therapy. At the time of the study she had not begun to use words to communicate, but she was able to produce vocal sounds. When I asked Kate about whether Layla sang at home she replied, "Oh...she's not talking yet, and so sometimes she'll make high-pitched noises" (Interview One). Kate enrolled in music class after Layla's speech therapist at *EIO* suggested it.

She goes [to music class] through *EIO*. She has been working with her speech and stuff and they [*EIO* Therapists] noticed she likes music, and is turning everything into an instrument, and so her therapist put us on the list for [music class]. (Interview One)

When I asked Kate if she had any goals for herself, she again focused on communication.

Adrienne: What about for yourself? Do you have anything you're hoping to get out of the class as a parent?

Kate: Um...Finding techniques to get her to at least communicate what she needs . . . every time she wants something, she just *screams*, and then I have to figure it out. So, I'm

hoping with the doing the intonations and things, to at least differentiate the screams, so I can figure out what it is. (Interview One)

Kate mentioned “intonations” during our first interview and brought it up again in later conversations, as well when discussing connections between speech and music. Kate had been told by Layla’s speech therapist that music class might help Layla use intonation better, in this case meaning the rise and fall of the voice when speaking to express meaning. So, Kate began her music class experience with the idea that there is a connection between music and expressive aspects of speech and hoped that Layla might learn to better communicate her needs as a result of attending music class.

### **Socialization**

Kate went into her music class experience hoping that Layla could work on having positive interactions with children and adults. Parents in other studies (Rodriguez, 2019; Savage, 2015) have enrolled their children in early childhood music classes for similar reasons, especially if they, like Kate, have a child who does not attend daycare. After the first class, she was pleasantly surprised by Layla’s reaction to new people in class, in particular the teacher, Nora.

Kate: Well I went in [to music class] hoping that [Layla] would be outgoing. Because usually she's pretty standoffish, and that first class we went in there, she just *loved* everyone. That was the *weirdest* thing, I'd never seen it before . . . She *kissed* [Nora] when we left! She went in to give her a hug, like I thought she was just gonna give her a hug-

Adrienne: I saw that on the video. And I saw you. You seemed surprised.

Kate: Yeah. (laughs) It was the weirdest thing ever! And she had so much fun, it was great! (Interview One)

After a positive experience in the first music class, Kate was less focused on social goals for Layla in music class. When I asked her if she was hoping that music class would help Layla with being around new children or adults she said, “That *was* but now I don’t think it’s a problem. I went in there with it, but yeah, now it’s just the talking” (Interview One). Despite the first class reassuring Kate about the social benefits of class for Layla, Kate continued to express excitement about Layla’s prosocial behaviors for the remainder of the study.

### **Musical Hopes for Layla**

When I talked with Kate about how she hoped Layla would continue to engage with music, she expressed a desire to encourage Layla’s enjoyment of and interest in music.

Adrienne: So, do you have any musical hopes for Layla? I know you said she loves music, do you hope that eventually she might be involved in music in some way?

Kate: Yeah! That would be great because I really think she's really interested, and it can get her to help with studying and all kinds of stuff. So, I don't know. I hope I can find what she loves soon, so I can help her go with it. (Interview One)

Kate’s response suggested that she believed music involvement might benefit Layla with learning in addition to being something she enjoys. She never really elaborates on this idea or brings it up in future conversations, but this might relate to the idea of music helping Layla with speech and language skills. While some researchers have found that parents enroll their child in music classes to give them an advantage in later life (Ilari, 2013), such as gaining admittance into private school (Savage, 2015), Kate aimed to find something that might help Layla feel successful and happy rather than trying to help her get ahead. Overall, Kate hoped that music class would be an enjoyable experience for Layla that would serve to improve her language and communication skills.

## **Musical Home Environment**

During my first visit to Kate's home, we discussed how she included music in her life at home with Layla. Despite not having entirely positive experiences with school music and not engaging in personal music activities as an adult, Kate's daily routine and home were filled with music.

### **Music as Part of Daily Routines**

Music accompanied many daily routines in Kate's home, including meals, bath time, and bed time. Kate created "silly songs in the bathroom or while taking a bath" (Interview One) to communicate with Layla about she was doing. She spontaneously created these songs in the moment rather than singing the same song every time she and Layla engaged in a certain routine. Other researchers have reported that parents spontaneously create music to narrate routines (Custodero, 2006; Gibson, 2009). Kate's songs most often featured familiar tunes from songs to which she and Layla were listening and original lyrics.

Kate also sang for Layla at bedtime. While her older son preferred to be read to before bed, Layla enjoyed when Kate would sing her favorite songs including, "The Wheels on the Bus." Meal time was another daily routine in Kate's house that was accompanied by music. Layla regularly listened to music with her dad while he cooked.

We cook to music. Whenever we're in the kitchen we usually have some kind of music on. James will listen to his type of music. He likes techno and stuff. My son likes that too.

So, they'll have little dance parties. (Interview One)

While Layla more often listened to popular music, in this case techno, with her dad, she typically listened to or sang children's music, such as nursery rhymes, with Kate. Gibson (2009), Trehub et al. (1997), and Ilari (2009) all similarly found that fathers were more likely to perform or play



popular music for their children while mothers more often played or sang children's music at home.

### **Technology and Media Use**

Use of technology was important in Kate's family. Each time I visited, there was music or at least one television on in the background. Kate most frequently engaged with music at home through listening, which was facilitated through several different internet-connected devices. Kate usually played music from a YouTube playlist of children's music on the television, smartphone, or tablet.

Adrienne: Where do you get [your children's] music? Do you get them from CDs, or do you listen to it on the internet?

Kate: With my son we got CDs, because the internet was pretty new then. But now it's all on the phone, or Pandora.

Adrienne: So, as far as listening devices, you use your TV sometimes, do you have a tablet that the kids use?

Kate: Oh yeah, a tablet. My son has a phone, we all have phones. She [Layla] has a phone that doesn't have service, like a car phone. (Interview One)

Technology facilitated Layla's music listening, which she often did independently throughout the day. Layla frequently listened to music at home through watching YouTube playlists of children's music, watching movies, or watching children's television. During my first two visits to Kate's home, Layla mostly watched movies or YouTube children's music Playlists in the bedroom. Midway through the study, Layla's dad, "put the Xbox in the bedroom so we could play YouTube for [Layla] in her bedroom. So, it [was] on all day, every day" (Interview Two).

Kate found that listening to music helped to keep Layla calm and happy. Kate played music for Layla during meals as a way to help her stay calm and focused.

If we don't have music on the TV when she's eating, she'll just fidget and fidget, and try to get out of her seat and stuff, so we turn on, we have like a mix of music that we put on TV for her, and she eats, and she likes that.

Adrienne: Like a YouTube playlist or something?

Kate: Yeah. Or we have a *Disney* movie on or *Daniel Tiger*. There's always some kind of music on. (Interview One)

### ***Media as a Source for Live Engagement with Music***

In addition to listening to music, Kate also regularly sang for Layla. The primary source for Kate's songs was the music to which the family listened or that had been playing in the background throughout the day. Kate never mentioned learning or singing songs from other sources, such as *EIO* services or from her own childhood. Throughout the study, Layla had a series of favorite songs that she knew through her favorite YouTube channel *Super Simple Songs*. One of these was "Wheels on the Bus." Kate mentioned that this song was a favorite of Layla's before bed and that she entertained Layla in the car or while running errands by singing it as well. Kate often mentions singing songs that Layla enjoys from YouTube in her journal entries.

Layla has really been interested in "If You're Happy and You Know It" the *Super Simple Songs* version. We sing it all day everyday especially when she gets angry, it calms her down quickly. We've also been practicing our patty cake and wheels on the bus movements with the songs. (Journal Entry, 10/11/18)

During my second visit with Kate and Layla, I asked Kate to show me some musical things she would typically do with Layla. Media and these songs again were featured in Kate and Layla's play.

Kate puts on a YouTube video from the channel *Super Simple Songs*, one of Layla's favorites. When it comes on Kate exclaims, "Ooh! Is this your song?" The song is "If You're Happy and You Know It." The singing is accompanied by synthesized instruments. Kate sings along with the video in a really animated and engaging way with lots of expression. Layla laughs a lot and makes noises and watches Kate and the TV. We listen to and sing four songs. Kate chooses some of Layla's favorites including "Itsy Bitsy Spider," "Bingo," and Layla's favorite, "Wheels on the Bus." (Fieldnote, Home Visit Two)

From Kate's singing and song creation, to inclusion of music into daily routines, to daily music listening for entertainment, the music engagement that occurred in Kate's home was almost always facilitated through use of technology. Kate and Layla's listening and live music interactions mostly were geared toward children's music. The family consumed media aimed at children on a daily basis, primarily through YouTube, which was used as Kate's primary resource for both music listening and live music making, especially singing.

### **Kate and Layla's Class Engagement**

Kate holds a pink scarf in front of Layla's face. At the end of the "Peekaboo" song she drops it and says, "boo!" and kisses Layla's cheek. Layla holds scarves up and throws them making a high "mmmmmmm" sound as she does. Layla then crawls a few feet away and so Kate puts scarves over her face and sings the song. At the end of the song, Kate blows her scarf off her face toward Layla.

Kate places the scarf over Layla's face a few times and asks, "Where did Layla go?" in a speaking voice. Layla pulls the scarf down and giggles. They play this game independently of the class a few times. Layla lays on her back in front of Kate and Kate holds a scarf between them and says, "Boo!" at the end of each repetition of the song, giving Layla little tickles in between. Next, Kate does the motions and chants along with "Rocketship" enthusiastically while making eye contact with Layla. After the first time through, Kate smiles and says, "That is so much fun!" (Fieldnote, Class Six)

Over the ten weeks of music class, I learned a great deal about Kate and Layla. Layla was joyful and fun to watch in music class. Kate mostly participated in class activities in some way but remained focused mostly on Layla and what she was doing. Her role during classes was one of managing, helping, guiding, and encouraging Layla's participation.

### **Snapshot of Layla: The Happy Wanderer**

From the first week, Layla was interested in moving independently around the classroom, watching the activities, and exploring the space in the room. The relaxed and unstructured nature of the class meant that this was appropriate. She spent at least half of every class wandering instead of sitting on Kate's lap or in the circle. However, as she wandered, she was actively engaged and interested in what was going on in music class. Layla loved to watch Nora and often would stare at her for long periods while she was singing or modeling. Layla also was very vocal during classes, calling out on an "ah" or "oo" or babbling, which was often acknowledged by Nora, who would imitate Layla's sounds or turn them into a short rhythmic or tonal pattern.

Layla appeared happiest in class when using props and manipulatives, especially the shakers. Kate confirmed this in our interviews noting that, "[Layla] likes the things" (Interview Two). Layla also seemed to enjoy the scarves used in class and often would play peek-a-boo

with Kate using the scarves. Layla always looked happy and excited during dancing and movement activities as well, especially when Kate would carry her. She would giggle and squeal often during these moments. She always was engaged during the “Hello Song” and often would sing or move her arms along with the V to I cadential pattern sung frequently throughout the song—raising her arms on V and lowering them on I to mimic the motions of Nora. Layla clearly was learning, remembering, and engaging in some of the routines, songs, and activities from class.

Of the three children in the study, Layla seemed the most excited and happy during class. She exuded delight and joy throughout every class. During the entire ten-week period, I never wrote anything in fieldnotes about Layla being upset, angry, or having a difficult time. In interviews, Kate sometimes mentioned being careful to avoid Layla having a meltdown in class.

Adrienne: . . . you just are a really nice model for her. You let her kind of have that really good balance of being two and doing her own thing, letting her explore. But then drawing her into the activity when she's near you.

Kate: There would be a meltdown if I tried to stop her. (Interview Two)

Yet, despite this, and Kate’s discussions of learning to navigate situations in which Layla becomes really upset, Layla never exhibited any hint of this behavior in music class.

### **Snapshot of Kate: The Loving Playmate**

Kate’s silly and lighthearted nature was evident during class. She sometimes made jokes or funny comments that would make other parents and adults laugh.

We are placing beanbags on various body parts to give them a “ride” as we sing. For the last repetition, Nora asks if we think we can put the beanbag on our belly. Kate laughs and immediately says, “Nope!” This breaks the tension in the room a bit and a few

parents laugh. Kate chuckles and then tries her best to place the beanbag on her stomach.

(Fieldnote, Class One)

When Layla would wander the classroom, Kate often made dramatic silly faces at Layla to get her attention and engage her in joint play.

Kate is really animated when she is able to catch Layla's attention. Similar to last week, their relationship strikes me as silly and fun. Kate will often make silly faces and sounds when Layla makes eye contact with her. She seems to do this to encourage Layla to join her in the circle. (Fieldnote, Class Three)

Kate also would engage Layla regularly in short sessions of play between repetitions of songs or while materials were passed out.

As puppets are placed in front of Kate and Layla, Kate picks one up and tickles Layla with it. She says something but I can't hear it. The tickling makes Layla smile, laugh, and squirm. (Fieldnote, Class Five)

Layla sits on Kate's lap facing her. As the drums are being taken out Kate laughs and says, "I have a drum right here!" She taps on Layla's stomach and laughs. (Fieldnote, Class Seven)

Some of the most joyous moments and ones in which their loving bond was most evident were when Kate and Layla would dance together. Kate often held Layla and moved with her during locomotor activities. Kate moved with tremendous energy and enthusiasm, often adding her own dramatic dance movements to class activities. Layla regularly reacted with giggles and gleeful squealing and often would move towards Kate and reach for her in anticipation at the start of movement activities. In these moments, both Kate and Layla seemed very focused on one

another and on having fun. They were a dyad and did not concern themselves with people around them.

Kate gets up to move along with the “Walk When the Drum Says Walk” chant. Layla reaches out indicating she wants to be carried. Kate swings her up into her arms and begins to walk around the room to the beat of the chant. Layla and Kate both laugh a lot during this activity. Kate’s motions are dramatic. She will “dip” Layla or swing her around making her laugh more and adding her own flare to the movements modeled by Nora. Layla *loves* this. I would say Kate moves with more energy and drama than just about any other adult in the room. Kate also seems at her most carefree during these times. The two make regular deep eye contact. I always sense a bond and joyful interaction between them when they dance. (Fieldnote, Class Two)

#### **“Come Here to Me”: Kate as Manager**

During class, I often noticed that Kate seemed uncomfortable or anxious when Layla would wander. At the start of the semester, Kate regularly would entice Layla, through gesture, eye contact, physical touch, or verbal request, to return and sit near her when she would wander away for too long. This happened several times a class.

Kate tries to make eye contact with Layla to get her to come back to her lap. Layla looks but continues to wander. When Layla gets close, Kate extend her arms out twice in a greeting in attempt to get Layla to sit with her. The second time, she reaches out slightly and gently pulls Layla back onto her lap and whispers, “Come here to me.” (Fieldnote, Class Two)

Kate often invited Layla to come back to sit with her in the circle and rejoin an activity by offering a hug or cuddle. Kate and Layla have a close bond and brief cuddle sessions or a quick kiss was one way that Kate would reconnect with Layla during class.

As Layla runs across the room she vocalizes, “ahh-ahh-ahh-ahh,” which punctuates the sound as her feet hit the ground. Kate reaches out her arms and opens her eyes wide as Layla approaches and brings her in for a bear hug. She swings her in the hug from side to side, which makes Layla smile and giggle. Kate wipes Layla’s face (to get rid of crumbs from the pretzel she just finished) and gives her a kiss as Layla settles in her lap for class to begin. (Fieldnote, Class Two)

In addition to using physical touch as a means of encouraging Layla to sit with her and participate in activities, Kate provided reassurance to Layla through loving touch during class. “Layla moves closer to Kate. Kate reaches out and guides Layla onto her lap by taking her by the arm . . . as Layla settles into her lap Kate nods, smiles, and kisses Layla’s cheek” (Fieldnote, Class Six).

Though Kate continued to want Layla to be near her throughout the semester, her approach to managing Layla’s wandering during class evolved. She began to use more playful engagement to get Layla’s attention. For example, “Kate [encouraged] Layla to rejoin her in the circle by playing with her finger puppet” (Fieldnote, Class Five) or “[tried] to get Layla’s attention by rolling a shaker toward her” (Fieldnote, Class Six).

As Kate became more comfortable and familiar with class activities, she began to use musical modeling to get Layla’s attention. Kate would participate in activities, even when Layla would wander, but her engagement was noticeably more enthusiastic when Layla was close by or watching her.



Kate is making a strong effort to get Layla's attention through eye contact and gestures. She does not disrupt class, but you can tell she is getting a little frustrated with Layla roaming so much. She uses the motions from the songs to try and entice Layla to come back to her. (Fieldnote, Class Five)

In addition to overseeing Layla's wandering, Kate also regularly managed Layla's participation in class by moving her limbs. Kate often would gently take Layla's arms and move them during activities to mimic Nora's motions.

Kate moves Layla's arms in a flow movement while the class sings, "Goodbye." She also moves Layla's arms to wave to each individual as their name is sung. When the class sings goodbye to Layla, Kate moves Layla's arms to pat her belly. (Fieldnote, Class Five)

Kate's moving Layla's arms seemed to be Kate's way of prompting her to engage in activities when Layla would choose to sit on Kate's lap. Layla never seemed to mind this. She did not get upset or try to pull away from Kate. In fact, she often smiled or giggled as Kate would gently move her body to correspond with the activities.

Kate moves Layla's arms in flow. She leans in close to Layla as she sings. Layla smiles a lot and laughs. She looks so happy. Kate continues moving Layla's arms for her. Layla does not seem to mind this at all in fact, she appears to enjoy it. (Fieldnote, Class Seven)

Though Layla was not bothered by Kate's managing of her movements, I noted on several occasions that Layla did not engage vocally when Kate was moving her limbs. She would vocalize more often when she was wandering around or when she had more agency and could move on her own accord.

Kate invites Layla onto her lap for the, "Hello Song." She begins to move Layla's arms in flow. After a few names are sung, Kate lets go of Layla's arms and but continues to move

in flow herself as she sings. A few moments later, Layla lifts both of her hands and says, “ahh!” with a big smile. Nora imitates the sound and movement, which makes Layla’s smile broaden. Kate says, “Yeah!” and then resumes moving Layla’s arms for her. Layla does not make any other sounds for the remainder of the activity. (Fieldnote, Week 9)

Koops (2012b) found that children’s musical play often was inhibited when adults attempted to take control of an activity or were overly involved. She found that when children had more agency, they engaged in longer and more frequent musical play. It is possible that this was occurring with Kate’s manipulation of Layla.

When I spoke with Kate about her understanding of her role in class, she explained that she grew more comfortable with what to do over time. From watching others and “feeling out the vibe” (Interview Two), Kate learned that it was okay to let Layla have some freedom and that she did not need to force her to participate in a specific way.

Researcher: What about you in class? Do you feel like you know what you're supposed to be doing?

Kate: Yeah [not confident tone]. The first class I wasn't too sure. I was kind of scared when [Layla] would snatch things from people, but I noticed that everyone was cool with that. It made me nervous at first. I've got it now [more confident tone]. I know to just go with the flow and not try to be so anal like, “You do this right now!” (Interview Two)

Kate’s learning from watching others interact with their own children and with Layla parallels findings from Taggart et al. (2011), who found that parents in early childhood music classes learned how to interact with their own child from watching interactions between, parents, the teacher, and other children. Despite learning from watching others and relaxing about controlling

Layla's participation, Kate continued to manage Layla's behaviors both through moving her body during activities and encouraging her to stay close by throughout the semester.

### **“Shake it Baby!”: Encouragement Through Praise**

Kate was keenly aware of Layla's behaviors and progress during class and found several ways to support Layla's learning and enjoyment. One of Kate's most common forms of encouragement was verbal praise. When Layla would vocalize or otherwise engage in class activities, Kate often would praise her enthusiastically. These interactions were brief but frequent and occurred throughout the semester.

Layla stands, raises her arms and lets out a loud, purposeful, “Ahh.” It is just as the class is singing “he-” of hello. She seems to be connecting to this part of the song and trying to sing along. Kate leans in close to her and smiles. Nora responds to Layla by copying her sound, repeating the V-I cadential pattern on “ahh” and then sings, “I love your singing” on the same pitches. At the end of the song Kate kisses Layla on the cheek and says, “good job!” and Layla smiles. (Fieldnote, Class Eight)

Kate often employed verbal praise when Layla would imitate a motion or behavior that Kate modeled.

Kate slides forward to reach the drum. She taps on the drum to model for Layla. She then places Layla's hand on the drum and watches to see if she will play. Eventually Layla begins to experiment with the drum, tapping it with one or two hands. Kate says, “Get it, girl!” (Fieldnote, Class Seven)

Kate also encouraged Layla's use of manipulatives through verbal praise.

As shakers are being passed out Layla returns to Kate's lap. Kate says, “See the shakers? Wait here and you will get a shaker too.” Layla is given two shakers. She picks them up

and begins to roam with them in her hands, shaking vigorously. Kate encourages this saying, “Shake it baby! Yeah! Shake it!” (Fieldnote, Class One)

### **“See Layla? Like This!”: Encouragement Through Modeling**

Kate regularly would model engagement with different manipulatives to show Layla how to use them and encourage her participation.

Kate stands and moves closer to Layla, taking a hoop along with her. She moves along with the song, modeling how to “drive” using the hoop as a steering wheel. On the “beep beep” part of the song, she reaches out and taps Layla as she sings. Layla watches and walks around with a hoop. Kate stays close to her, encouraging Layla to move like the class by making eye contact and modeling the motions. . . . Kate uses verbal cues a few times, “See Layla? Like this!” as she models dropping her hoop. When Layla copies the motion, Kate claps and says, “Yay!” (Fieldnote, Class Eight)

As Kate became more comfortable in class and grew increasingly familiar with the activities and routines through exposure, she modeled more.

Kate: I am also more open to singing new songs I didn’t know. And not feeling embarrassed for...doing the steps and stuff.

Adrienne: Did you feel more comfortable with that as the class went on?

Kate: *Definitely*

Adrienne: Did you feel like you got to a place where you were totally comfortable or still a little bit like, “I feel weird”?

Kate: No, it felt good. I got it by the end. (Interview Three)

In the early classes, Kate initially was unsure of what to do when Nora sang or chanted short rhythmic or tonal patterns, a segment of class called pattern instruction.

When Nora breaks the song to sing a few tonal patterns, Kate looks unsure of what to do. She momentarily stops moving Layla's arms in flow and just watches. She has this face like, "What is going on right now?" She eventually picks up on the flow motion again but does not repeat any patterns. (Fieldnote, Class Two)

When I asked Kate how she felt when Nora asked parents to echo patterns, she revealed that she was not initially comfortable, saying, "The first couple classes I was like, 'Okay. *I'm* not doing that.' But yeah, I'm more comfortable to speak up now" (Interview Two). This finding aligns with those of De Gräzer (1999) who found that parents gained confidence and became more participatory in classes over time. Over the course of the semester, Kate engaged more with patterns. Eventually, Kate began reinforcing and modeling singing the resting tone or singing short patterns on her own in response to Layla's movements or behaviors.

Kate puts a beanbag on her foot like the class and models, singing the resting tone as she drops it. Layla begins picking up and throwing her beanbag down on the ground. She does this several times in a row. Kate responds by singing the resting tone on "bum" each time Layla's beanbag hits the ground, independent of the class. This is most I have seen Kate sing the resting tone. I can even hear it on the video a few times. Kate drops her beanbag and is dramatic about it making eye contact with Layla. Layla watches her and copies it. (Fieldnote, Class Nine)

The purpose of including resting tone and pattern activities into class is so that children will eventually sing and copy these sounds, building their musical vocabulary, singing ability, and understanding of music. The teachers in the early childhood music program are taught to associate common movements children might do with a manipulative, such as a beanbag, with a musical sound, in this case, singing the resting tone when dropping a beanbag to the ground.

Nora had modeled singing the resting tone as she dropped her beanbag in class for many weeks prior to this occurrence to encourage children to drop their beanbag and eventually sing the resting tone. Through exposure to this activity over time, Kate also learned to associate singing the resting tone with the beanbag being dropped to the ground. So, when she saw Layla drop her beanbag, she modeled singing the resting tone after Nora's example, which prompted Layla to mimic her and, thus, achieve the objective of the activity.

### **“She So Looks Forward to Her Friday Mornings”: Feelings about Music Class**

This section addresses research question four, which pertains to aspects of early childhood music classes that Kate valued and enjoyed. Kate was satisfied with her experience and expressed how much Layla enjoyed and looked forward to each week. Kate made a few minor suggestions for changes to class regarding the song content, but was excited to continue enrolling in future semesters. Across all of our talks about class, I found that Kate readily identified positive aspects of Layla's experience and was less focused on her own involvement.

### **“I am Doing This Just for You”: Kate's Focus on Layla's Experience**

Kate nearly always focused on Layla and what she was doing in class. She adjusted her participation and engagement with activities based on Layla's actions. Kate's focus during class was on facilitating and encouraging Layla's active participation in activities to ensure Layla was benefiting. My final conversation with Kate confirmed that she modeled and participated in activities because she felt she was supposed to in order to maximize benefits of class for Layla.

Adrienne: When she wanders in class or she is not near you, does that ever make you feel uncomfortable? Are you ever tempted to be like, “*please* come back here!”

Kate: Mmmhmm. Yeah. Because I know I am supposed to still be doing the stuff. It is like “don’t make eye contact!” [she is referring to other adults looking at her and uses her hands to kind of cover her face].

Adrienne: [laughs] So when she is not near you, you feel less comfortable doing the activities?

Kate: Yeah.

Adrienne: But you know you are supposed to be doing them so you keep doing it?

Kate: [nods and smiles] Yep. And I just try to look at her and do it. Yes, it’s like, “I am doing this just for you.” [rolls her eyes and mimics a tapping motion on her lap as if she is modeling a movement in class] (Interview Three)

This moment was funny because of Kate’s self-deprecating way of speaking about her experience, but it was also poignant. It clarified for me that Kate was attending class for Layla. She was not engaging in class activities to gain something for herself, and, in fact, she sometimes felt uncomfortable and exposed doing the class activities. But, she persisted for Layla’s benefit.

When I asked Kate about her thoughts on music class, her responses often centered around Layla’s experience. Kate’s focus on Layla began before the start of class with what motivated her to enroll in class. Kate’s motivations and goals for enrolling in class were all focused on Layla, including encouraging Layla to continue to develop her use of language, providing opportunities for positive social experiences, and providing an outlet for Layla to explore her interest in music. Only after I specifically asked her if she had any goals for herself did she hesitantly share, “Um...finding techniques to get her to at least communicate what she needs” (Interview One).

When I asked Kate whether her initial goals for class were met, she expressed excitement and surprise about how Layla behaved socially in class.

Adrienne: Last time I was here we talked about some of your goals or things you were hoping to get out of class as far as helping her with her language development and the social stuff. Do you feel like class is working towards that in some way?

Kate: Definitely. Yeah, she is really nice to everyone. That is huge. (Interview Two)

Adrienne: So, talk to me about [your] goals and whether the class met your expectations, exceeded them, or didn't meet them.

Kate: Yeah. She was a lot more social than I expected her to be. Which is crazy because she still hasn't been that nice to an adult since then. (Interview Three)

When I asked Kate about her goal of learning about tools to help Layla communicate, she was again more hesitant in her response.

Adrienne: During our first visit, you spoke about your desire to learn some techniques about how to communicate better with [Layla] so you could meet her needs and things like that. Do you feel like class helped you with that at all?

Kate: Hmmm...yes? [uncertain tone]

Adrienne: No is also a fine answer. [laughs]

Kate: Well I will say getting her into the car. That was a horrible, horrible experience.

But now I can sing her a little song and she knows. Like I can start singing it before I turn the car on. And my singing to her will calm her down or if she is freaking out I can bear hug her. (Interview Three)

It seemed that Kate easily could identify whether the class met her expectations for Layla, but she had not considered whether the class had helped her achieve her own personal goals.



My questions regarding Kate's feelings about class were met with responses focused on Layla.

Adrienne: How do you feel about class so far? What is something that you have really enjoyed about class?

Kate: I like how *open* and *nice* [Layla] is. She's really happy to go and happy to be there. I know she doesn't interact with everything, but I know she's paying attention and she's not freaking out when things don't go her way. It's amazing! She is really, really liking it.

(Interview Two)

While discussing enjoyable aspects of class, Kate spoke about how she appreciated the environment of the class being, "free flowing and cool" (Interview two). Kate liked that the environment allowed Layla to feel, "relaxed and happy in the class. Because everyone's doing the same thing and it's not her all the attention on her and *making* her do something" (Interview Two). Kate also spoke about Layla's excitement surrounding attending class each week.

I knew she liked music. She is usually stuck, or usually sticks to a pretty strict routine.

But she started knowing like in the morning if we are rushing we must be going to class.

And she would get excited when were there or even halfway there. We took the same route every time. So, I felt like she was comfortable. (Interview Three)

Kate also focused on Layla's excitement and willingness to go to class when I asked her if there was anything difficult or confusing about class.

Kate: Nothing! At all. Even when it's time to go, she'll put her shoes on and her coat on and she'll go... Not even getting into the car. (Interview Two)

Kate and Layla's experience in class made Kate excited to continue to attend music class in the future.

Adrienne: Tomorrow is our sixth class already.

Kate: And it is a 12-week thing?

Adrienne: It's ten.

Kate: Oh no! (Sad tone).

Adrienne.: So, we have five more. I know! But, we'll have another one in the spring, so that is good.

Kate: I can't wait that long! She so looks forward to her Friday mornings. (Interview Two)

Overall, Kate's enjoyment of class stemmed from watching Layla learn, socialize, and have fun. She did not readily identify aspects of class that she enjoyed personally.

### **“Thank God for That CD”: Class Recordings**

An aspect of class that was highly valued by Kate was the CD provided to class members. Nora recorded herself performing the songs and chants that would be used throughout the semester and provided CDs or digital audio files to enrolled families after the second class. Kate opted to take a CD of class recordings and quickly began playing the CD in the car with Layla. Reference to the families' use of the CD began to appear in Kate's journal entries days after they were distributed in class; “Layla and I have been listening to the CD Miss Nora gave us on Friday everyday while we are in the car. Layla gets really excited when the ‘Hello Song’ comes on” (Journal Entry, 9/27/18).

Kate expressed that, among the things she valued about class, the recordings were the aspect of the class that Kate found most beneficial.

Kate: I want to buy back up CDs. (Both laugh). Like if that one breaks I don't know *what* I'll do.

Adrienne: Well if you ever lose it or anything I have the links to the recordings. Like the MP3's so you can just shoot me an email.

Kate: You should send them to me. She [gestures toward Layla] is getting a tablet for Christmas.

Adrienne: Oh yeah, because then you could just have them right on the tablet.

Kate: Oh, that would be amazing! That's all I would have to get her for Christmas.

(Interview Three)

During our second interview Kate explained that they were listening to the recordings in the car, "All the time, every day." This was still the case when we spoke after classes had ended when Kate explained that car rides still featured the CD "*Every. Time. All the time.*" I haven't listened to the radio in months! [Laughs] That is it! All the time" (Interview Three). Over time, listening to the CD in the car had become an important part of the family's daily routine.

### **Parent Desires**

Although Kate was satisfied with her class experience and eager to continue in the program, she suggested a few ways that her experience could be enhanced. When I asked Kate if there was anything should would have changed about class, she expressed that she would have liked if there were "some nursery rhymes that [I had] heard before." (Interview Three). When class began she "thought there'd be more nursery rhythms that [she] knew" (Interview Two). In our final conversation, Kate and I discussed the reasoning for the songs and chants that are chosen for class after she noted that her mother, who joined Kate and Layla for the final class, also was surprised by the songs and chants used.

Adrienne: Did grandma like coming to the last class? She seemed to be having a good time.

Kate: She did! She said, “The songs are weird!” It’s like I told her, “Mom they are not regular nursery rhymes!” But I didn’t tell her until we got there.

Adrienne: (laughs) I love that. “The songs are weird” (both laugh). Do you have a sense of the purpose of why we do the “weird songs” instead of the typical or more familiar stuff?

Kate: Oh yeah, now I do.

Adrienne: I think we could always think about striking more of a balance between familiar and unfamiliar like you were saying. But you know, the more variety of the kinds of music and sounds that children hear when they are really young and their brain is developing, the more capacity they will have to learn music when they get older.

Kate: And it works! It works for sure. (Interview Three)

So, while Kate did suggest including some familiar children’s songs and nursery rhymes, she acknowledged the benefits of the music selections for class. Yet, inclusion of songs that Kate and Layla recognized in class might have made Kate more comfortable initially and could have led to her engaging in class activities more readily.

In order to include songs that were familiar to families, Kate expressed interest in attending a meeting or orientation prior to the start of class, during which parents would have an opportunity to share their families’ favorite songs for possible inclusion in class.

Adrienne: If you could change anything about class, what do you think it might be?

Kate: ...maybe put some nursery rhymes that they have heard before in there?

Adrienne: Yeah. So, do you think that would help you feel more comfortable initially in order to participate?

Kate: Yeah. Like maybe first song, first class. (Interview Three)

Overall, Kate was satisfied with her music class experience, in large part because she enjoyed seeing Layla enjoy class and engage in positive social behaviors. Aside from enjoying seeing Layla grow and have fun in class, she most valued the class recordings from class that became an important part of the families' routine.

### **New Insights and Behaviors**

In this section I address the fifth research question by discussing what knowledge, skills, and information Kate gained through her class participation that resulted in changes in her musical parenting. Kate shared that Layla was exhibiting more communicative behaviors as well as musical behaviors, including increased movement to music and use of everyday objects in musical play. Through their daily listening to the class recordings in the car, Layla began singing and engaging with musical patterns more often. Kate reported that she began more frequently using music as a tool to soothe Layla during daily transitions or to get her attention. Kate sometimes struggled to articulate things she learned or how she directly benefitted from class. By looking across interviews, journal entries, and fieldnotes from class and home visits, I identified additional changes that Kate did not discuss explicitly, including increased active music making in the home and Kate's transition from praise to imitation of Layla's musical behaviors.

### **Goal Attainment: Music as a Tool for Communication**

Kate was satisfied that increased language development and communication for Layla, one of the primary goals that motivated her to enroll in music class, was met. Enhanced communication has been noted as an important aim of early childhood music programs by researchers including de Grätzer (1999), who found that parents and children learned to relate to one another through music through attending classes together. Kate expressed that, over the course of the several months they participated in the class, Layla had begun exhibiting

communicative behaviors during and through musical activities. After the second interview, during which she noted that Layla was “more vocal with her songs,” Kate discussed that Layla had been working in therapy on maintaining eye contact. She noticed that Layla was intently watching people during music classes. She explained, “the eye contact thing, we’ve been working on that and sitting and listening for a minute. She is doing that in class. I mean not for long periods of time but more than she would normally” (Interview Two). Kate also noticed this same behavior happening at home when she and Layla were interacting musically. For example, she sang “Rocketship” from music class, during bath time.

Kate: She doesn't sing along or anything, but definitely she watches me do it the whole time. Gives me eye contact the whole time, which is huge for her.

Adrienne: Right, that's something you're working on.

Kate: And then she'll hand me the duck back. Like, "Keep doing it."

Layla’s ability to attend and maintain eye contact in class and then eventually at home supports the findings of Taggart, Alvarez, & Schubert (2011), who examined the role that early childhood music classes play in language development for language and speech delayed toddlers. Taggart et al. (2011) found that speech delayed children exhibited greater and more sustained attention during class than they did in other settings, noting that focused attention is vitally important for language development.

Kate also found that Layla was more expressive with her voice when trying to communicate.

Kate: ...She has been more vocal around what she wants I guess. Yeah it was good. I think the [communication] goals were met.

Adrienne: Do you think she started to...to talk a little bit more or try to communicate, do you see that being associated with coming to class? I mean it might be hard to say exactly...

Kate: She, um, she'll get high pitched when she is happy. And when someone comes in the door, like her dad, she will greet them with a very high pitch like, "da da da da da!" So yeah.

Layla's increased vocalization again parallels the findings of Taggart et al. (2011), who noted that children's vocal exploration during classes led to them vocalizing with a greater variety of sounds over the course of the semester. When I arrived at Kate's apartment for our final interview, I noticed that Layla was babbling and talking during her play. Kate acknowledged this as well and praised her. She attributed this increase in talking to hearing the "intonations" on the CD from class.

[when the recording starts, Layla is "talking" and pointing to a toy on the coffee table. She seems to be trying to communicate specific words]

Kate: Good job, Layla!

Adrienne: I was just going to say! I don't think I have ever heard her talk that much.

Kate: Yeah! She is really getting the...intonations on that CD. (Interview 3)

### **"She Has Been Boogying More": Movement to Music**

In our final interview Kate brought up Layla's movement to music several times. Kate spoke about the frequency of Layla's movement saying, "she has been boogying more" (Interview Three). Kate also noticed changes in the nature of Layla's movement.

Adrienne: How has your music making with her or listening changed since being part of class? Are you listening to music more or doing things differently?

Kate: We generally listen to music all day, every day. But we dance more.

Adrienne: Oh okay. She seems to love dancing in class. I have noticed that. She always has the biggest smile on her face.

Kate: She is getting more into it though. She is like jumping and twirling and she will let me like...She is a little looser with it. Because before like I could go like that to her [mimics moving Layla's arms and body for her] but now she let me [mimics dancing with more free flowing, tension-free movement]. (Interview Three)

Kate referenced dancing one more time during this interview when I asked her about how Layla had benefitted from music class. She stated that Layla had learned, "different ways to dance to songs" (Interview Three). Though Layla was dancing more and was moving in new ways, Kate indicated that she was still guiding Layla's movement, as she had done often in class. It was unclear if Layla was choosing to move to music independently more often or if Kate and Layla usually danced together with Kate guiding the movement.

### **Use of Everyday Objects in Musical Play**

After attending music classes, Layla began to include objects around the house into her musical play by tapping things together or dancing while holding onto a toy. Kate had not noticed Layla engaging in this behavior before attending class.

Kate: Using objects and dancing too. I have seen her do that more often.

Adrienne: After you get home?

Kate: mmhmm [affirmative]

Adrienne: So, she will pick up things and move with them to music and stuff like that?

And that is something you noticed more of since you have been in class?



Kate: Yeah. She didn't do that at all before. Now I will give her something and she will start moving her hands [does a fluid motion with both hands to demonstrate].

Kate discovered that Layla had begun keeping a beat with objects around the house. She mentioned this briefly in our second interview saying, that during dinner while listening to music Layla had, "been keeping the beat with different things like her fists, hands, or objects." By our final interview, Layla was exploring the sounds of materials in her environment as well.

Adrienne: Is there anything else you want to share about making music at home or your overall experience of doing the class?

Kate: [Layla] has been taking sticks and beating them on various surfaces. She is getting pretty good at that.

Adrienne: Just sticks you have around the house? Turning things into an instrument?

Kate: Yup. Yup exactly. Like the floor or a stack of Chex cereal to make a crunching noise.

Adrienne: Like found sounds? And this happens more often than before?

Kate: Mmhmm, yeah. (Interview Three)

Kate also mentioned her own use of everyday objects during musical play in her journal entries. She noted that she began using toy ducks in the bathtub to enhance her musical play; "We recently started doing the 'Rocket ship' song in the bath tub while holding [Layla's] ducks and making them splash when the rocket ship takes off at the end!" (Journal Entry 10/18/18)

### **"She Hears Ms. Nora's Voice, She's Cool": Changes Related to Class Recordings**

Through regular listening in the car, Kate noticed that Layla was singing and vocalizing in response to music more regularly than she had before enrolling in class, often mimicking the sounds she heard on the CD. Shortly after receiving the CD from Miss Nora, Kate noted in a

journal entry that, “every so often I [would] hear [Layla] trying to sing along” (Journal Entry, 9/28/18) while listening to the CD in the car. In a subsequent journal entry, Kate noted Layla’s vocal engagement with the CD again, explaining that Layla had, “started to copy the ‘ch-ch-ch’ noise for the train song” (Journal Entry, 10/4/18). She confirmed this same behavior during our second interview.

Adrienne: When you listen to the CD or do the songs, does she ever vocalize at all? Not necessarily sing along, but try to make some sounds along with? Or does she just listen?

Kate: Most of the time it's just intently listening. But she'll scream. She'll go, “Ah!”

[makes a descending siren sound with her voice] With the...I can't even remember the song now. The, “ch-ch-ch” song?

Adrienne: The train one?

Kate: Yeah, the train one. She'll try to do the, “ch-ch.” She'll do it after the song, she'll keep going, “ch-ch-ch-ch.” (Interview Two)

In our final interview, Kate shared that Layla had continued to engage vocally when listening to the CD, including mimicking the sound of a drum during the “Walk When the Drum Says Walk” chant. She explained, “On the one with the drum [Layla] gets really excited and goes “ts ts ts” like really quietly” (Interview Three). Kate felt that Layla recognized and remembered the songs from their frequent listening, saying that, “She knows what songs they are” and that she would “get low or high with [the recording]” while they listened (Interview Three). It seemed that Layla knew that the songs they listened to in the car were associated with music class activities. For example, she began doing the arm motion associated with the “hello” part of the “Hello Song” while listening in the car. Kate noted, “She has been doing this [lifts both of

her arms in the same way we do in class on a V-I cadential pattern] in the car for the hello [song]” (Interview Three).

***“We Have All Embraced It”: Inclusion of the Whole Family***

Listening to class recordings became such an important part of the daily routine for the family that Kate’s partner and son became familiar with the songs from class. Kate’s partner would play the CD for Layla when driving her somewhere. Kate even went so far as to find a way to play the CD when driving with Layla’s grandpa who did not have a CD player in his car.

Adrienne: Does Layla listen [to the CD] when her dad drives her somewhere too?

Kate: Oh yeah. I will take the CD out. Like when we drove to [nearby city]. My dad took us because he had to do something down there. And we took it and he didn’t have a CD player. So, we dug out an old Walkman and a cassette thing and made it work. (Interview Three)

Kate shared with me that her son would sing songs from the recordings with Layla at home and also would make specific requests when listening in the car.

Adrienne: Any other songs or activities from class that you have been doing at home?

Kate: [Layla’s brother] will do the “ch-ch-ch” with Layla and get that going.

Adrienne: The train one?

Kate. Yeah. And we do “Popcorn.”

Adrienne: So, your son has been kind of indoctrinated into the songs because of listening in the car?

Kate: Yes because of the car. He’s like, “Put on number 17!”

Adrienne: I love that!

Kate: We have all embraced it. (Interview Three)

***“Because Then There Isn’t Screaming”: Music Making as a Tool to Soothe and Aid in Transitions***

Use of music as a parenting tool to sooth or regulate a child’s mood is a common finding in the literature (Gibson, 2009; Ilari, 2009; Ilari et al., 2011; Young & Gillen, 2010). One reason that the class recordings became such a vital part of Kate’s routine was they seemed to soothe Layla during car trips, which were previously stressful. Kate spoke many times during our conversations about how getting in and out of the car used to be challenging. However, when Kate began to play the CD during car trips, Layla would be calm and happy.

Layla *freaks* out every time she gets into the car. I don't know why. She goes in there willingly, gets up in her chair willingly, but then she just freaks out. But as soon as I turn that music on, she hears Miss Nora's voice, she's cool. (Interview Two)

Kate also would sing or play some of Layla’s favorite songs that she learned through YouTube to soothe her. She explained, “Music calms her down. If she's going crazy, I'll start singing “The Wheels on the Bus” and she'll calm down. Always music (Interview Two). The soothing nature of the class recordings seemed to be what made them particularly valuable to Kate. She explained that listening to the CD became an important part of her routine “because then there isn’t screaming” (Interview Three). Kate’s realization that the recordings had such a profound calming effect on Layla led her to use music to soothe Layla during other transitions.

Adrienne: What about any other uses of music. We talked around about getting into the car to make transitions easier. Any other examples?

Kate: [Layla] thinks she is grown and can walk through a store so I will “sing” her into the basket of the cart. Yeah, music is pretty much used more for transitions. (Interview Three)

Therefore, Kate not only found the CD to be useful tool to aid in transitions but, as a result of the CD, she also realized that she could use music as a calming tool in other settings, even when the CD was not accessible.

### **Informal Learning**

Kate seemed unsure when I asked her questions about her own learning or thinking in the class. She appeared more comfortable and was more expansive with her answers when speaking about Layla's experiences and learning.

Adrienne: So, in what ways do you feel you have benefitted from being part of the program or the class? Like you personally.

Kate: ... (thinking, long pause)

Adrienne: Like did you learn anything or musically benefit or something like that?

Kate: ...I learned how to get two kids up in the morning and get them out the door by 8 (laughs).

Adrienne: Ha! I am sure that is a challenge to be there by 9:00.

Kate: And have yourself looking halfway decent, yeah! I am also more open to singing new songs I didn't know. And not feeling embarrassed for...doing the steps and stuff.

(Interview Three)

Despite Kate's lack of focus on herself and her own learning, I observed changes in her behaviors and approach to musical interactions with Layla over the course of the semester through watching her in classes, reading her journals, and visiting the families' home. While these changes were not identified explicitly by Kate, they appeared to have taken place through informal learning or exposure during music classes.

### ***Increased Active Music Making at Home***

Kate's early journal entries contain lots of examples of listening to music or watching musical content on television or YouTube as the primary musical activities occurring at home. For example, in her first entry she wrote, "We still watch *Daniel Tiger* every morning with breakfast and listen to nursery rhymes at dinner time" (Journal Entry, 9/27/18). As the weeks continued, Kate still referenced listening and use of technology, but her descriptions contained more examples of active music engagement for both her and Layla. In a later entry, Kate references meal times as she did earlier. However, she notes that she and Layla were interacting and moving along with the music instead of just listening. "Her favorite songs at dinner are 'Wheels on the Bus,' 'Itsy Bitsy Spider,' and 'If You're Happy and You Know It.' We sing and do the hand gestures to these songs and have a lot of fun (Journal Entry, 10/18/18). Kate's final journal entry was entirely descriptions of active music engagement for Layla, Kate, or both.

Last week Layla took a liking to "Ring Around the Rosie." We can only do it three or four times in a row, because I get really dizzy. But if Layla could, she would do it a million times. She even let her bestie join in and actually hold her hand! This week she's really been into the song, "Johnny, Johnny." I don't know if you know this song but they say, "ha, ha, ha" at the end and Layla is right on que every time to sign that part out. She also has joined in a few times while singing patty cake. (Journal Entry, 11/20/18)

These entries point to a change in Kate's approach to routines that were previously focused on just listening to music. While listening to music and using technology as a source for songs and musical activities in the home remained consistent, Kate began engaging Layla in musical interaction during daily routines like meals and play through singing, hand motions, and dancing.

***“I Copy It Right Away”: Move from Praise Toward Imitation of Musical Behavior***

Kate often was quick to encourage Layla through verbal praise. This was evident in class and during my visits to Kate’s apartment. However, over the course of the semester, I found that Kate began to recognize and imitate Layla’s musical behaviors rather than just acknowledging them through praise. This is something Kate saw modeled in class throughout the semester. Rather than praise children’s musical behaviors, Nora and class assistants would mimic and extend children’s vocal utterances and movements. The teacher might copy a child’s sound and then turn it into a longer musical phrase or add some of their own musical sounds in an attempt to engage the child into a musical conversation. This approach emphasized musical interaction and dialogue as a means of acknowledging children’s musical behaviors in addition to or in lieu of praise. Though this approach never was discussed explicitly in class, it is something to which Kate was exposed regularly and, therefore, may have influenced her musical engagement with Layla outside of class.

In our first interview when I asked Kate about Layla’s musical behavior at home, she indicated that she mostly encouraged Layla by telling her to continue what she was doing.

Adrienne: Do you notice that Layla will spontaneously sing during playing or something like that on her own?

Kate: I don't know if she's singing. I'll say she's singing, but I don't know if she's in distress, or angry. But if she just keeps going, I just tell her to sing it out, and she'll sing.

Adrienne: Yeah, that's a lot of how we kind of structure our music classes that you're going to. We do a lot of ... it's the same thing that we do with language development, like when a child is learning to speak, and they say, "Bah," and you say, "Oh, bah? Did you

mean bottle? Let's have a bottle." We do that same thing with singing. If they go, "Bah," in my class, I'm like, "Oh, bah bah bah, you're doing a pattern."

Kate: Yeah exactly that's what I told her. (Interview One)

Later, in our final interview, I asked Kate again how she responded when Layla did something musical at home. This time her response was strikingly different.

Adrienne: So, when she does something musical at home like starting a song, how do you generally respond to it?

Kate: I copy it. Right away.

Adrienne: And when you copy what she does, does she recognize what you are doing? Does she acknowledge that in some way?

Kate: Yeah. Like "Wheels on the Bus." She will start it and then I keep going and she will go, "yayyy!" and clap for me. (Interview Three)

In this same conversation, Kate discusses this imitative or interactive musical behavior again when she is talking about Layla's increased exploration of objects that make sound. Here, she noted not only a change in Layla's behavior but also a change in her reaction.

I feel like she goes and searches for [sound producing objects] more like "hey, this makes noise. You do it now." I guess before I might have just been like, "Yeah, you hit that."

but now I am more like, "Oh nice, now try this one!" (Interview Three)

These reflections suggested to me that Kate was not only noticing more musical behaviors from Layla but had begun to respond to her musical behaviors in a different way as a result of attending class. This change also mirrors Nora's approach in class. Nora consistently copied children's musical or random vocal and movement responses. This behavior suggests to the child that the sounds they are making are valued and encourages them to continue. Though



she was positive and affirming, Nora rarely gave verbal praise. Kate's change in behavior seems to be directly related to the behavior that Nora modeled in class. However, Kate did not mention this change in her thinking or actions when I asked her about what she learned from attending music class.

### **Summary**

For Kate, music classes were all about Layla. From her motivations to enroll, to her way of engaging in class activities, to her thoughts on her experiences in class, Kate focused her energy on Layla's experience and ensuring that Layla benefitted from her participation. One of the most important benefits was the CD recording of class songs, which became a meaningful part of her families' daily lives, the impact of which would continue beyond the ten-week class. Although Kate did note that Layla had begun exhibiting new and increased musical behaviors as a result of attending class, she did not overtly recognize changes in herself including, a tendency to musically respond and interact with Layla in addition to using praise and engaging in more active music making with her daughter. Despite her focus on Layla, both Kate and Layla learned in music class through informal means. Through exposure to playful and interactive engagement with music in class, Kate began thinking of and using music in new ways at home, despite not overtly setting a goal to do so.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: “IF I WROTE DOWN EVERYTHING MUSICAL SHE DID, IT WOULD BE A REALLY LONG EMAIL”: CHRISTY’S EXPERIENCES**

I arrived at Christy’s house on a crisp and clear weekday afternoon. I parked my car on the quiet residential street. The neighborhood seemed typically suburban, where lots of families with children might live. Christy’s house is mid-sized, and the yard is neat and well-kept. I made my way to the front door and was about to ring the bell when Alyssa opened it to greet me, with Christy close behind. Christy invited me in and told me to make myself comfortable. I walked through the entry hallway into the bright kitchen. Christy’s husband, Bill was in the kitchen on his cell phone. He smiled warmly and said hello but did not introduce himself.

I settled in a chair at the dining room table facing the sliding door that looked out onto the fenced-in, tree covered back yard. Along the wall in the dining room were shelves with children’s toys, including a ukulele and small play piano lined up on the floor. The television, which was on when I arrived, played animated children’s shows behind my chair in the living room throughout the visit. After a few moments, Christy joined me at the table to talk. (Fieldnote, Home Visit One)

In this chapter, I will detail the experiences of Christy, who enrolled in music class with her daughter Alyssa. I begin by sharing details about Christy’s musical background as well as her beliefs about music, including what motivated her to enroll her child in an early childhood music class. I then describe the musical environment of Christy’s home, providing details about how Christy and Alyssa engaged with music prior to and during the study. Next, I explain Christy and Alyssa’s engagement in music class. Finally, I share details about Christy’s feelings and thoughts on her music class experiences and what she ultimately gained from her participation.

### **Getting to Know Christy**

Christy was average height with a fair complexion and light brown, curly hair that fell midway down her back. She typically dressed comfortably in leggings and jewel-toned t-shirts. Christy was warm, attentive, patient, and present in her interactions with Alyssa. During our interviews, she always took the time to engage with Alyssa when she was close by, pausing the interview often to ask Alyssa a question, compliment her, or involve her in our conversation.

Christy was a “stay-at-home mom” (Interview One) to two-and-a-half-year-old Alyssa and seven-year-old Jacob. Prior to having children, she worked as a retail manager. Christy’s husband Bill worked in web security. The family had been living in their home for the last several years after moving from a city a few hours away. Christy seemed well established in her neighborhood and mentioned a network of friends and neighbors during our conversations. She and Alyssa “stayed really active” (Interview One), filling their days with volunteering at Jacob’s school selling popcorn, visits with friends, and weekly *EIO* playgroups. Alyssa also went to a daycare once a week.

### **“I Do Not Come from a Musical Family at All”: Musical Background**

When I asked Christy about her early music experiences, she shared that she was always interested in music, but “never had the opportunity” to participate in musical activities like private lessons or school ensembles. She took part in one year of elementary school choir but did not learn to play an instrument or continue with music in school beyond her elementary years. She wished that she had been able to do more with music. Christy expressed, “Piano lessons. I always wanted to do piano lesson or guitar lessons. I even had a guitar. One of my cousins had a guitar and she passed it down to me. But I never learned how to use it” (Interview One).

Christy did not recall much music making in her home when she was growing up.

Adrienne: Do you remember doing anything musical at home? With your family or your parents?

Christy: No... Nope.

Adrienne: What about other members of your family like siblings? Is anyone into music?

Christy: No. [laughs] I do not come from a musical family at all. (Interview One)

Christy also had no memory of her parents singing to her. When I asked her if she ever sang songs to Alyssa that she learned from her parents, she replied, “No I don’t really remember anything. I definitely don’t remember my mom making up songs.” (Interview One).

As an adult, Christy enjoyed listening to music but was not involved in formal music activities or musical hobbies, and she did not attend musical events or concerts. She did not identify a favorite genre of music, but expressed she would mostly “have the radio on in the car” (Interview One). When Christy became a parent, her personal music listening shifted from casual listening to the radio to listening to music geared toward children.

Adrienne: When you made the transition to being a parent, did you change anything about your musical habits? Did you start listening to different types of music or do anything differently?

Christy: Kid’s music mostly. I mean everything became kid’s music.

Adrienne: . . .So, when you listened to music it shifted from the radio or whatever you wanted to listen to and became more children’s music?

Christy: Yeah. Just when [Jacob] was born. (Interview One)

While Christy previously enjoyed listening to music on the radio in the car, “[Alyssa] is so talkative that I always end up turning the radio off” (Interview One). It seemed that, since having children, personal music listening had become less of a priority for Christy. Christy’s tendency to

focus on her children's musical experiences in lieu of her own also was evident when I spoke to her about her desires to engage in music as an adult. I asked Christy if she considered becoming more involved with music as an adult, since she wished that she had more opportunities to participate in music as a young person. "I don't know," Christy responded, "Now [Alyssa] is really interested in [music] so I would rather have her doing it" (Interview One).

### **Musical Beliefs and Aspirations for Alyssa**

Christy viewed music as an enjoyable form of entertainment for Alyssa, who "from very early on always responded really well to music" (Interview One). She noted that Alyssa was "more musical" than her son, Jacob, who was more involved and interested in visual art. She had tried attending a music class with Jacob in a nearby city when he was very young but he "wanted nothing to do with it" (Interview One). Prior to enrolling in class, Christy encouraged Alyssa's interest in music through purchasing musical toys including a ukulele, small piano, and a drum, as well as singing and listening to music. When I asked if she had any musical hopes for Alyssa, she responded, "Yeah! If she wants to...you know, she can do it if she wants to" (Interview One). Christy appeared open to Alyssa being involved with music in the future but did not seem eager to push her into anything.

Christy enrolled in music class through *EIO*. After the *EIO* staff member who led Christy and Alyssa's playgroup suggested that they enroll in music class, Christy asked her *EIO* coordinator if they could sign up. (The playgroup leader at *EIO* was familiar with the music classes through her participation as an *EIO* assistant in the classes in previous semesters.) Christy also had a friend and neighbor who was a long-time teacher in the early childhood music program. So, although she had never participated in music classes prior to the Fall of 2018, Christy was familiar with the program prior to enrolling.

Alyssa received services through *EIO* to help her with a sensory processing disorder. When I spoke with Christy about what she hoped the potential benefits of enrolling in music class might be, she expressed her belief that music was calming for Alyssa.

I think it just helps to calm her. And it helps [her] re-center. She has a sensory processing disorder. So, anything to help her calm her body or anything like that. And music seems to be really helpful with that. (Interview One)

Christy also enrolled in music class to support Alyssa's interest in and enjoyment of music. Similarly, Cardany (2004) found that parents' perceptions of their child's enjoyment of and interest in music served as their primary motivation to provide musical opportunities for their preschool children. Christy hoped that music class would give Alyssa an opportunity to explore her interest in music. She said, "I kind of...I want to see how she really does. Like if [music] is something she really enjoys" (Interview One). Ilari (2013) found that parents sometimes choose to involve their children with musical activities when they themselves did not have such opportunities as children. It is possible that Christy was partially motivated to provide Alyssa with musical experiences, in part, to give her opportunities that she, herself was not given as a child. Christy did not share any personal goals or hopes she had for herself related to music class.

### **At Home with Christy and Alyssa: Musical Home Environment**

Both prior to enrolling in music class, and throughout the study, Christy and Alyssa frequently incorporated music into their daily activities at home. Christy's journal entries were filled with a wide variety of musical activities. During one of my visits, Alyssa interjected herself into our conversation with a boisterous song about colors. Christy jokingly remarked, "You see? If I wrote down *everything* musical she did, it would be a really long email." Each week, she wrote at least one musical thing that occurred for each day of the week. Her entries

included a wide variety of music making behaviors, including singing, moving to music, music listening, playing with musical toys, playing with musical games, creating songs, and exploring found sounds. Alyssa often initiated and led musical play when interacting with Christy. Christy also sang for and with Alyssa daily as part of play and routine tasks. In Christy's home, music engagement often was facilitated by technology and media. The families' use of media served multiple purposes and contributed significantly to the overall musical environment of Christy's home.

### **“She Usually Starts It”: Child-Led Musical Engagement**

Alyssa often directed her musical play with Christy. Christy would act in a supporting role, joining in on Alyssa's music-making and allowing her to take the lead during musical games or activities. When I asked her who most often initiated musical activities at home she replied, “I think she usually starts it” (Interview Two).

There were numerous examples of Alyssa initiating musical interactions in Christy's journal entries. Alyssa would create musical games and provide Christy with a role to play. Examples of this also were included in journal entries such as, “[Alyssa] wanted us to take turns singing, “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star,” and, when it was my turn to sing, she would dance,” (Journal Entry, 11/16/18) and, “She sang, ‘(some) color, (some) color, where are you?’ And I had to find something that color and sing, “Here I am, Here I am, how do you do?”” (Journal entry, 10/26/18).

A similar dynamic was evident during my visits. During musical play including Alyssa, Christy, and myself, Alyssa often would come up with an idea for a game or activity and ask Christy and me to join her:

Alyssa made up a melody as her small plastic people toys “jump” from one bracelet to another. I copied her motions and added my own singing. We went back and forth a few times. She asked Christy to do it, “mama’s turn!” Christy made up a melody as well. Alyssa did it next and copied the same melodic contour as Christy . . . Alyssa made up a few rhythm patterns while playing her drum and we went back and forth a few times. Alyssa asked Christy to make up a song saying, “mamas turn.” Christy responded, “What do you want me to do?” and Alyssa replied, “lala!” Christy improvised a song and I made up a song as well. As we took our turns, Alyssa gave us her drum sticks to use as microphones. (Fieldnote, Home Visit Two)

Christy’s willingness to let Alyssa take the lead to join in at Alyssa’s request often served to extend their musical play. Alyssa would come up with an idea, give Christy a role or a task, and then Christy would join in and the musical play would morph and continue. This finding supports that of Koops (2012b) who reported that, “adult-interaction prompted play-enhancing behaviors most frequently when it was at the invitation of the child” (p. 23).

Although Christy usually would find a way to join Alyssa in her musical play, Christy shared that Alyssa sometimes would ask her not to sing along with her:

Adrienne: Do you and Alyssa like to sing together?

Christy: Yes. Well actually sometimes she wants me to sing with her and then other times I go to sing with her and she says, “No, Mama! No sing!” And I am like, “Okay, no problem.” (Interview One)

Alyssa’s request that Christy not sing came up in journal entries, “Today I sang a song about going to her playgroup. She told me to stop! So, I started humming it and she was okay with



that” (Journal Entry, 9/28/18). Whether she joined Alyssa in music making or honored Alyssa’s request not to, Christy consistently took cues from Alyssa.

### **“She is Always Singing!”: Singing at Home**

In our first interview, Christy shared with me that Alyssa’s favorite musical activity was singing and that she did so often. “Oh, she is always singing [laughs]! She will keep herself up at night singing. She has been skipping naps lately because I hear her through her the baby monitor singing!” (Interview One). Alyssa frequently burst into spontaneous song during my visits to their home. She often sang to herself during her play or sang along to songs on television or movies.

Christy, too, was a singer. She sang “a lot of songs, you know, like nursery rhyme songs” and explained that she was “always singing throughout the day” (Interview One). Christy often would write about singing in her journal entries, noting that, “every day I sing little songs about everyday things” (Journal Entry, 9/28/18). Christy also created songs to sing for Alyssa. In our first interview, she mentioned sometimes “making up songs” in the car instead of listening to music. Christy also created a special song for Alyssa that she sang for her every day at bedtime. Both Jacob and Alyssa had their own unique song that Christy composed for them when they were infants. This finding supports those of Gibson (2009), who likewise found that “family songs” (p. 175) were an important part of families’ lives. Alyssa’s “night-night” song was sung to the tune of, “If You’re Happy and You Know It” and had three verses. Parents in previous studies also have created alternate lyrics to familiar songs (Custodero, 2006; Gingras, 2013). Christy sang the song for me during my first visit to her home. Her singing voice was clear and accurate, and she performed with musical nuance, slowing down during the penultimate phrase for dramatic effect. Though Christy was nervous singing for me at first, she became more

comfortable singing in front of me over time. Creating these special songs for each of her children contrasted with Christy's own childhood experiences, during which she did not recall her parents singing or creating songs. This finding also is in contrast to literature on musical parenting, which suggests that musical experience, especially recollections of being sung to by a parent, predicts the frequency with which parents sing to their children (Custodero & Johnson-Green, 2003; Ilari et al., 2011; Mehr, 2014).

### **“YouTube is Her Babysitter”: Use of Technology and Media**

Christy and Alyssa used technology and media for entertainment, distraction, and as a resource for active musical engagement. I could sense at times that Christy was worried that I would judge her use of technology. I do not think that she ‘sugar-coated’ or was untruthful in her responses, but I got the sense that she felt her ways of using technology were not the best way to parent. Christy's home had multiple Echo Dot's, including one in the living room and one in Alyssa's bedroom, which the family used to stream music. Christy and Alyssa also listened to music on smartphones and tablets, including a tablet that was specifically intended for Jacob and Alyssa. Alyssa also watched movies and shows that featured music on the television in the living room.

### ***Media to Entertain or Distract***

Christy used technology to entertain or distract Alyssa so that she could accomplish tasks while at home. She explained, “Yeah, YouTube is her babysitter when I need to get a shower. Like, ‘Here. Go ahead and have my phone. Watch your videos’” (Interview One). This finding supports those of Ilari et al. (2011) and Young and Gillen (2010), who found that parents report similar use of music and technology in their homes. Alyssa primarily watched music videos on YouTube when Christy gave her the opportunity to use technology independently. Christy

explained that Alyssa would, “just scroll down and keep going until she [found] something that [was] entertaining enough” (Interview One). Alyssa was captivated by song videos. I asked Christy if Alyssa sang along or danced while watching YouTube videos, and she replied, “She usually just sits and watches it. Like she stares. But you know, they make those videos so bright and colorful. It just draws her in” (Interview One).

### ***Media as a Resource***

I asked Christy about where she learned the nursery rhymes and songs that she sang to Alyssa. She explained, “A lot of them come from YouTube videos.” (Interview One). She added, “that sounds horrible probably,” indicating she felt self-conscious about using YouTube as a resource. Christy also learned songs from television shows, including *Daniel Tiger*. She jokingly stated that the show was “very educational,” again indicating that she felt uneasy about her or Alyssa’s media consumption. Christy often used streaming services such as Spotify or Amazon Music to play children’s music. She learned songs from listening to some of Alyssa and Jacob’s favorite artists.

Both of the kids really like songs from Raffi or Parry Grip. They’re both really into those kid’s songs. So, it’s like, we’ll tell [Alexa] to play, “Spaghetti Cat” or “Yum Yum Breakfast Burrito” and they go crazy. Oh, and there’s the, “Pickle Song” too. (Interview Two)

Christy did not indicate that she sang songs for Alyssa that she learned during her own childhood or from other sources, such as the *EIO* playgroup.

Alyssa also learned songs from watching television, movies, and streaming sites such as YouTube. Christy was surprised sometimes how quickly Alyssa would learn a song from watching a YouTube video.

Adrienne: So, she will find a video she really likes and listen to it over and over?

Christy: Yep. And then the next thing you know she is singing it. I actually recorded a video on Saturday. She and her brother were singing that “Johnny, Johnny” song and they were taking turns. They were doing the different roles! And I was like, “You are only two years old! How do you know that already? Like how often do you watch that?”

(Interview One)

Christy also expressed surprise about Alyssa’s song learning in a journal entry saying, “[Thursday] she was singing a song from a TV show. I was surprised she had it memorized” (Journal Entry, 10/13/18). Examples of Alyssa’s song learning from media sources continued throughout the study. Christy shared in a journal entry about Halloween that Alyssa sang, ““Happy Halloween, who are you?” when people answered their doors. She [knew this] from a YouTube video” (Journal Entry, 11/2/18).

Songs from sources like YouTube had a life outside of passively watching videos for Christy’s family. Though technology was sometimes used as a distraction, it was also used as an important resource for activities, games, and songs that the family enjoyed recreating on their own. Songs that Christy or Alyssa heard through YouTube or television were sung regularly, danced to, or used in their musical play. Alyssa often sang or danced to songs with Jacob that they both learned from media sources. For example, “[Jacob] will tell the echo “play this song” or “play that song” and the echo will play and [he and Alyssa] will both dance around the living room” (Interview One). Christy frequently mentioned the song “Johnny, Johnny,” which at the time of this writing had over 3.4 billion views on YouTube, as a family favorite in journal entries and interviews. Alyssa often sang the song at home with her brother, dad, or Christy. She also performed it for me during my third visit while strumming along on her toy ukulele.

Christy often sang songs she learned through media sources as part of her daily routines. In one of her early journal entries, she gave some examples. “[We sing songs] like Raffi’s, ‘Brush Your Teeth’ and goodnight songs. We also sing along with the Echo every day” (Journal Entry, 9/28/18). One song Christy and Alyssa learned from a YouTube video that Christy and Alyssa used in their play was “Finger Family.”

[Alyssa] would sing, “mama/dada/brother/sister/baby) finger, where are you?” And I would have to answer, “here I am, here I am, how do you do” in the voice she had asked for. So, for dada finger, I would have to answer in a low voice, and so on. (Journal Entry, 10/26/18).

It seemed that technology and media sources served to increase the frequency of musical interactions between Christy, Alyssa, and other family members. This finding aligns with those of Gingras (2013) and Young (2008).

### **Engagement in Class Activities**

#### **The Ham: Alyssa in Music Class**

Nora leads the class through a set of rhythm patterns between repetitions of the chant, “Popcorn” on the word, “pop.” At the end of a set of patterns, Alyssa stands in the center of the circle holding her sticks. She confidently chants her own pattern in the silence, “Pop pop pop!” Several adults including Christy, other parents, and Nora echo her. She repeats the pattern three more times with the class echoing each time, matching Alyssa’s enthusiasm. Suddenly, she lets out a drawn-out wolf howl and everyone laughs. Alyssa giggles and then repeats her howl and this time some people echo her. She is happy to continue leading the class and smiles, waving her sticks by her sides excitedly and

alternating between howls and rhythm patterns. Alyssa seems to really enjoy being the center of attention during this moment. (Fieldnote, Class Nine)

Alyssa was the second oldest child in music class and was more participatory than many other children. She seemed to have limitless energy. Most weeks, she came running into the room and would spend the time before class running back and forth between the cabinets along the wall and Christy's lap, a game that Christy referred to as "Crash." She seemed to thrive on being the center of attention during class and reacted positively to individual attention from Nora and the class assistants. Alyssa was highly verbal and frequently contributed ideas to class, such as offering a location for where to tap during a song or how to move scarves during "Rocket Ship" when Nora asked for input.

Alyssa grew musically throughout the semester. Throughout the 10-week session, Alyssa was most engaged when manipulatives were used. In the first class, she was hesitant and upset at the start of class. She kept going over to the door of the classroom as if she wanted to leave. But, as soon as the first prop was included in an activity, her participation changed immediately.

An assistant hands a beanbag to Alyssa and she picks it up. This was the start of her engagement in class. Alyssa gets up and begins to throw her beanbag and suddenly comes to life. She begins to watch Nora and mimics her movement, placing her beanbag on her head. (Fieldnote, Class One)

As she became more familiar with activities, she regularly moved her body in correspondence with musical activities. Alyssa engaged more vocally in the latter half of the semester. In the final weeks of class, she began singing short fragments of songs in class. By the seventh week of class, Alyssa began regularly responding to tonal and rhythmic pattern instruction and occasionally created her own patterns.

Alyssa spent a significant amount of time away from Christy during class. She sometimes participated in class activities and, at other times, she would be in her own world engaging in imaginative play. My fieldnotes are rich with examples of Alyssa play acting as a pirate, a butterfly, a bird, or a wolf. When she was not near Christy, Alyssa had lots of interactions with other class members. She loved to play peek-a-boo with Jacob, one of the male college student assistants in class. They had a playful relationship, and she often sought out brief interactions with him during class. Christy brought this up in our final interview noting, “In class when [Alyssa] learned Jacob’s name she was kind of drawn to him and became friends with him because he has the same name as her brother” (Interview Three).

Although she was mostly happy in class, Alyssa was prone to brief bouts of upset and frustration. Alyssa easily expressed her emotions, which at times shifted rapidly between delight, frustration, and sadness. A few things seemed to trigger Alyssa and make her upset during class, including certain scarf activities such as the “Nap Song.” She also sometimes disliked when other children would get too close to her, especially when she was playing with a manipulative. Alyssa’s unhappiness in class generally dissipated as quickly as it began, and the adults in class, including Christy, never made a fuss about her getting upset.

### **A Balancing Act: Christy in Music Class**

During class, Christy balanced engaging with Alyssa when she chose to participate and allowing her lots of freedom to explore. Christy sometimes encouraged Alyssa’s participation through praise or modeling musical behaviors. Christy and Alyssa also interacted musically with one another, which resulted in mutual increased engagement. Much of the time though, Alyssa preferred to wander the room, interact with others, or engage in class independently. Christy never forced Alyssa to be near her or restricted her movement during class. She regularly chose

to not insert herself in Alyssa's interactions with other adults or teachers in class. Christy's shifting between guiding Alyssa's participation through modeling, interacting with her musically, and allowing her to be independent contributed to Alyssa's enjoyment and musical behaviors in class.

### ***Encouraging Engagement Through Praise, Musical Modeling, and Mutual Interaction***

Christy smiled much of the time she was in class, especially when making eye contact with Alyssa. She was positive and often encouraged and affirmed Alyssa through praise. She most often praised Alyssa's engagement in movement, use of manipulatives, or contributions of an idea for what to do during an activity. Christy's verbal praise was succinct and often general such as, "good job." Sometimes, Christy would specifically identify what Alyssa had done to affirm her choices.

Nora asks, "where else can we tap?" Alyssa responds, "toes" placing her hand on her toes. Christy repeats her response, "Yes, toes!" Nora begins the song again and models tapping on her toes as she sings. Christy smiles and then looks at Alyssa and says, "Very good job" and then joins in on the movement. (Fieldnote, Class Two)

In all of our conversations, Christy shared that she made a point to compliment Alyssa's musical behaviors as a way to encourage her. "I make sure to always tell her how *beautiful* [her singing is] and that she did a good job" (Interview One). Alyssa reacted positively to Christy's acknowledgement of her musical behaviors and sometimes sought out Christy's praise. "Alyssa moves to the middle of the circle and begins to dance. She calls out, 'Mama, I dance!' Christy smiles and confirms, 'Yes, you dance!'" (Fieldnote, Class Three).

In addition to praise, Christy's encouragement of Alyssa came in the form of her own enthusiastic participation and musical modeling. When Alyssa noticed Christy excitedly



participating in an activity, she would become more participatory or would return to Christy's lap.

At first, Christy seems less engaged in the "peek-a-boo" activity with the scarves. She does not interact with Alyssa much or hide under her scarf as Nora models until the last time. On the final repetition, she starts to sing the song and puts a scarf over her head. Alyssa then immediately becomes more engaged and comes over to sit on Christy's lap. She pulls the scarf from Christy's face, laughs, and says, "boo!" (Fieldnote, Class One)

Christy often chose to model for Alyssa to redirect her attention to what the class was doing if Alyssa was upset or wanted to do something else.

Alyssa returns to Christy and reaches out her arms indicating she wants to be carried. Christy does not pick her up but instead holds Alyssa's hand and animatedly models the motion the class is doing by tiptoeing. Alyssa sees this and copies the motion. They move together throughout the room hand in hand. Alyssa continues to participate, doing a flying motion with Christy. She remains engaged throughout the rest of the activity and makes frequent eye contact with Christy. (Fieldnote, Class Five)

In many ways, Christy and Alyssa seemed to feed off of one another's energy with regard to participation. In certain instances, it would be Christy who prompted Alyssa's participation and at other times, the roles would be reversed. Alyssa sometimes requested that Christy perform a certain action or activity, leading to musical interaction. These interactions were similar to the pair's interactions outside of class when Christy would join in on Alyssa's play at her request.

Alyssa throws her shaker a few times before heading back over toward Christy. Christy models the motion of the activity for Alyssa by dropping her shaker to the ground at the end of the song. Alyssa see this and drops her shaker to the ground. She looks at Christy

and says, “Now, Mama!” She appears to want Christy to sing the V-I pattern on “and drop” in the song. Christy complies, singing the V-I pattern as Alyssa drops her shaker several times. They continue to interact and repeat this activity several times between repetitions of the song. (Fieldnote, Class Eight)

In these moments, Christy’s willingness to engage in play and follow Alyssa’s lead led to Alyssa’s continued interest in participating in an activity. This finding supports those of Koops (2012b), who found that being given agency and control in their interactions with adults can enhance children’s musical play.

Both Christy and Alyssa seemed to participate more enthusiastically in class when they interacted with one another. Christy sometimes prompted Alyssa’s participation through modeling or affirmed her through praise, and at other times Alyssa’s participation would elicit more enthusiastic engagement from Christy. This reciprocal relationship between Christy and Alyssa played an important role in both Christy and Alyssa’s involvement in class activities.

### ***Do Not Disturb: Allowing for Child Independence***

Although Christy and Alyssa interacted and engaged in class activities together, Alyssa routinely spent long portions of class away from Christy. Christy seemed comfortable with Alyssa being independent and confirmed this in our final interview. When Alyssa wandered the room, or chose to do something different than the rest of the class, Christy would watch her while continuing to participate in activities without interrupting her.

Alyssa is walking around the room and throwing her shakers. Christy watches her but never tries to get her to come back or asks her not to throw her shakers. Christy calmly shakes her shaker to the beat of the song and sometimes joins in on singing the parent part (a resting tone drone sung on “bum”). (Fieldnote, Class Two)

Christy also tended not to intervene when Alyssa interacted with other adults or children in class. Instead, she watched these interactions while continuing to participate with the class.

Alyssa goes around the circle taking off people's scarves and laughing. Christy watches and laughs as well. She doesn't try to get Alyssa to return to her spot or to engage her in the activity, she just observes. While Alyssa continues to wander and pulls scarves off others' heads, Christy hides under a scarf and makes a "ch" sound on the microbeat along with the song that Nora asks the adults to do. (Fieldnote, Class Eight)

Christy regularly would remain unobtrusive when Alyssa would sing or engage musically with Nora or the assistants. She always watched and smiled, but usually chose not to mimic Alyssa's sounds.

In between repetitions of "Popcorn," Nora asks for all of the adults to stay silent as she chants rhythm patterns to give children an opportunity to respond. Alyssa echoes one of the rhythm patterns. Christy smiles and nods toward Nora who echoes the pattern back to Alyssa. Alyssa gets up and jumps while creating several rhythm patterns on "pop."

Christy smiles and watches as Nora and some of the other parents echo Alyssa's patterns. (Fieldnote, Week Seven)

If Alyssa became upset or a conflict arose during class, Christy did not meet Alyssa's strong reactions with a similar energy, but instead, stayed calm and relaxed. She often gently redirected Alyssa toward engaging in class activities:

When Nora starts the recorded music for free movement, Christy stands holding two scarves in her hands and gently waves them. Alyssa runs toward Nora and forcefully says, "No!" Alyssa then runs back over to Christy and pushes her with both hands. Christy gently moves her hands away and says, "Let's dance." Alyssa says, "No!"

Alyssa pouts and begins to wander. Christy calmly resumes her movement with her scarves and smiles at Alyssa. Alyssa approaches Christy again and takes her scarves away. Christy picks up more scarves and Alyssa takes them again. This becomes a kind of game and it makes Alyssa smile. (Fieldnote, Class Four)

At other times, Christy would simply observe and wait for Alyssa's upset to pass.

Alyssa lays down with a scarf over her. Nora notices this and says, "Oh I think Alyssa is taking a nap. Let's all take a nap." As Nora begins the song, Alyssa gets upset. She stands and starts to yell as she runs around the inside of the circle. Some parents laugh. Christy sits calmly and watches. She smiles and does not try to stop Alyssa or change her behavior. As Alyssa attempts to get Nora to end the activity by shaking her leg and saying, "Wake up! Wake up!" Christy continues to watch calmly and briefly stops participating. She never gets up or reprimands Alyssa in any way. (Fieldnote, Class Five)

When a conflict involved another child, Christy sometimes would calmly interject in a matter-of-fact manner.

Another child hands Christy a beanbag. Christy smiles and hands the beanbag back.

Alyssa tries to stop her and take the beanbag. Christy says, "I am going to give this to [the child]. He gave me one and I am giving it back to him." Alyssa begins to cry. Christy pulls her onto her lap and picks up a different beanbag to continue the activity. Alyssa stops crying after about 30 seconds and goes back to playing. (Fieldnote, Class Nine)

In sum, Christy's demeanor and handling of Alyssa's behaviors in class was not dissimilar to her approach to musical play at home. She allowed Alyssa to take the lead, letting her explore the environment in class without forcing her to engage in activities or to be compliant while being available to interact or provide a model. This allowed Alyssa to choose

when and how to participate in activities, giving her agency. It also provided space for Alyssa to have regular positive interactions with other adults and children. Lastly, Christy's ability to stay calm and not over-react to Alyssa's moments of upset often resulted in Alyssa quickly moving on and enjoying class. The balance that Christy struck between interaction and allowing independence contributed to Alyssa being one of the most participatory children in music class.

### **“It was Just Nice to Watch Her Learn and Interact with Other Kids”: Feelings about Music Class**

Christy had a positive experience in music class and gleaned enjoyment from watching the children in class, engaging in a variety of activities, and using manipulatives. Although she was satisfied with her experience in class, she had hoped that there would be a wider variety of instruments used in class and was looking forward to having Alyssa participate in a class with older children with whom she could have more interaction. Although Christy did articulate some aspects of class that she, herself, enjoyed, the majority of her responses to my questions about class were focused on Alyssa's experience rather than her own.

### **Adult Enjoyment**

After the conclusion of the music class, Christy expressed that she was “very satisfied” with her experience, and she looked forward to re-enrolling in class in the future (Interview Three). When I asked what she found most satisfying or enjoyable about class, she responded, “Watching all of the kids have fun and watching them learn things.” Christy's enjoyment in class seemed to stem primarily from seeing others' enjoyment and learning rather than her own participation. Pitt and Hargraves (2017) and Koops (2011b) also found that parents enjoyed watching their child and other children during music classes.

In addition to watching the children have fun, Christy expressed appreciation for the variety of activities included in each class, as well as the variety of manipulatives.

I like how many different things there are to do. When I heard it was only a 45-minute class I was kind of worried. I was like, “How much are we going to be able to do in 45 minutes?” But they squeeze a lot in. (Interview Two)

Nora’s pacing during class allowed her to include many activities in each session, and she often spent less than five minutes on any one activity. This model is something that the teachers in the program purposefully followed to keep very young children engaged and interested in activities.

One of the first things about class that Christy identified as enjoyable was the manipulatives that were incorporated into activities. “I like all of the different materials that come out [during class]. Having something to hold onto is nice” (Interview Two).

She specifically mentioned scarves and sticks as being some of her favorites. Because she and Alyssa tended to be more participatory during activities that used manipulatives, especially in the early weeks of class, Christy’s enjoyment of manipulatives could have been related to their level of engagement as a result of those manipulatives.

### **Comfort in Class**

Christy seemed to be comfortable during music class. She came across as relaxed, and she usually had a smile on her face. At first, Christy expressed that she was not confused or surprised about class and that she, “knew what to expect,” sharing that she had sat in to observe a class previously, which gave her an idea of what the class would entail (Interview Two).

However, later in the same conversation Christy revealed she initially was somewhat unsure of her role during class.

Adrienne: Do you feel like you have a good sense of what you're supposed to be doing during class?

Christy: Yes? [questioning tone. Not confident]

Adrienne: How did you get a sense of that or figure it out?

Christy: I just...followed what everyone else was doing. I almost felt like a lot of parents had done the class before. That's the feeling I got, so-

Adrienne: I'd say in that class it is about half [new families] and half [families that have taken a class previously].

Christy: ...Is it? Okay, all right. I kind of felt like a newbie to it. Everybody always just seemed to know what to do right off the bat. I just started following their lead.

Adrienne: So, you learned by watching other people?

Christy: Yeah. (Interview Two)

After her initial uncertainty, Christy grew more comfortable with her role in music class and, by the time we reached the mid-point of the semester, she felt confident about what she should be doing. She never indicated that she was uncomfortable engaging in musical activities during music classes, nor did she share any personal feelings of discomfort beyond her initial sense that she was more of a “newbie” than other class members.

### **“I was Just Expecting More Instruments”: Expectations and Desires**

Partway through the semester, Christy expressed that she had hoped that there would be more instruments included in music classes. She explained, “I was just expecting more instruments. I don’t know, like a tambourine or something . . . things that make sound. I am not looking for every kid to have a guitar” (Interview Two). In the latter half of the semester, Nora incorporated large gathering drums, maracas, and a few other small percussion instruments into

class activities. Alyssa seemed to really enjoy these activities, and Christy did not discuss this same desire when asked about the classes in our final interview.

Throughout all of our conversations, Christy asserted that Alyssa preferred the company of older children noting, “[Alyssa does] better with older kids. Maybe because she has an older brother and she is used to him and his friends” (Interview One). At the end of the semester, she spoke with Nora about the possibility of moving Alyssa up to the next age level when they re-enrolled in class. The topic of children’s ages in the class came up when I asked her if she would have changed anything about class.

I do kind of wish there had been more older kids [in music class]. Because I feel like when we would leave things “hanging” for them to finish and do the resting tone, most of the time no one would do anything. So, I wonder how that would go in a class with older kids and if [Alyssa] would have picked up on it if other kids were doing it. (Interview Three)

Nora, Christy, and I were all in agreement that Alyssa would benefit from moving up to the preschool level class because of the readiness she exhibited in her musical and social behaviors and also because she would be turning three one month after the new session began in the spring semester.

### **Focus on Alyssa’s Experiences**

Christy reflections on class often were focused on Alyssa rather than herself. She easily identified ways in which Alyssa benefited from class, including her gaining social skills. Christy “liked that [Alyssa] got to be social” (Interview Three). She noted that Alyssa was, “a little more patient” (Interview Three) and that she, “[became] more personable with other people” through attending class. (Interview Two). When I asked Christy about her own experiences, she



frequently began with responding about her own feelings and then shifted to talking about Alyssa.

Adrienne: How satisfied were you with your overall music class experience and why?

Christy: I was *very* satisfied. I think she came a long way and she sure had fun. She was excited every time we pulled into the parking lot . . . She was very anxious to get there every week. (Interview Three)

Even when I would specifically gear my questions back toward Christy's experience, the same shift would happen in her response.

Adrienne: What about you? Do you have a favorite part of class?

Christy: The scarves and sticks are fun. I think [Alyssa] likes the sticks. She likes the drum actually. We got a drum out for her so she has been playing with that since we got home. She definitely likes drumming stuff and hitting stuff. (Interview Two)

Christy remained focused on Alyssa when discussing the benefits of classes. She again identified a benefit for herself at first, but ended by speaking about Alyssa's learning saying, "I learned some new songs . . . It was just nice to watch her learn and interact with other kids" (Interview Three).

In following up with Christy about her goals for her music class attendance, her responses again pointed to her attention being geared toward Alyssa's experience. Christy was motivated to enroll in music class to help Alyssa explore an interest in music and to see if music was a calming tool for Alyssa's sensory issue. When we spoke about whether her class experience met her goals, she noted that her goals for Alyssa were partially met.

Adrienne: Talk to me about whether class met your initial goals.

Christy: Well it definitely met one. She definitely had a lot of fun but I don't know if it ended up calming her at all. Because she was just so wound up during class and even by the end of class she was still wound up.

Adrienne: So, not so much calming but enjoyable nonetheless?

Christy: Yeah. (Interview Three)

Since Christy had not identified any goals for herself at the start of the class, I asked if she personally gained anything from the class that she did not anticipate she would when she enrolled. She reiterated that she did not consider what she might gain from class saying, "I don't know. I don't think there was anything that I was really expecting though. So, I can't think of anything" (Interview Three).

These conversations confirmed that Christy's motivations and thinking about the benefits of classes were centered around Alyssa and not herself as a parent. Her reflections on her class experiences were aligned with her motivations for class enrollment. She attended class with Alyssa so that Alyssa could explore her interest in music, and she did not have expectations for her own learning. As a result, her feelings about the class, logically, were centered around Alyssa's experience.

### **"I am Definitely More Aware of it Now": New Understandings and Behaviors**

Attending classes brought about changes in Christy and Alyssa's musical lives, and Christy was able to identify many of these changes in our conversations. She noticed that Alyssa engaged in new or more frequent musical behaviors since participating in classes, including using everyday objects as instruments or props during musical play and singing more frequently, especially along with Christy. Christy also identified changes in her own thinking and behaviors, including identifying an increased awareness of her and Alyssa's musical behaviors, increased

strategies for incorporating music into the everyday, and finding new ways to join in on Alyssa's music making. My conversations with Christy, observations of her and Alyssa in class, and examination of her journals revealed additional differences in Christy and Alyssa's musical behaviors at home. I noticed that Christy learned about and incorporated pattern instruction into her musical interactions with Alyssa at home. Furthermore, I noted an increase in song creation and improvisatory music making evidenced in Christy's journal entries, especially from Alyssa and during Christy and Alyssa's musical play.

### **“I Think She Should Ask Santa for an Actual Drum Set”: Recognizing Changes in Alyssa**

At first, Christy did not immediately identify changes in Alyssa's musical behaviors after attending the first several music classes.

Adrienne: Have you noticed Alyssa doing anything new musically that you did not see her do before coming to music class?

Christy: Hmm...I don't think so? I think that she is pretty adaptable so she will usually just jump right into something. (Interview Two)

However, later in the same conversation, Christy told me Alyssa had shown increased interest in using objects around the house to keep a steady beat.

Adrienne: In your journals, it seems like you are doing a ton of different musical things. Have you noticed anything you or she have done differently since coming to class when you write down [things you do at] home?

Christy: Actually yes! I have noticed that she's really been more interested now in using things as instruments. She will take random objects or toys and [taps a beat on the table with her hands as an example].

Adrienne: Right, I noticed that in your journals. She is keeping a beat?

Christy: Yeah, she will get her own beat going. (Interview Two)

Since Alyssa often was highly engaged in class during activities that included manipulatives, it is possible that she learned more about how to incorporate objects into her musical play at home through her class participation. In our third interview, Christy mentions this same behavior again, noting that Alyssa sought acknowledgement when she would keep a beat. “Now even if she is just tapping a beat on something, she will be like, ‘Mama! Look!’ She wants me to notice” (Interview Three). Alyssa sometimes drew Christy’s attention to her musical behavior in class as well.

There were numerous instances of Alyssa using toys or objects in her musical play in Christy’s journal. Alyssa, “used measure cups as instruments to create a beat” (Journal Entry, 10/5/18), “pretended her toys were singing or making sound effects” (Journal Entry, 10/19/18), and “made anything she could get away with into a drum” (Journal Entry, 11/16/18). Alyssa’s new interest prompted Christy to consider purchasing a children’s drum set for Alyssa for Christmas. “For as much as she would use stuff as drum sticks, I think she should ask Santa for an actual drum set” (Interview Three).

Christy identified singing as one of Alyssa’s favorite musical activities before attending music classes. Despite this, Christy noted that she sang more often after attending music class, sharing, “I have noticed that she is more open to singing” and, “She definitely sings all the time now” (Interview Three). Similarly, I noted that Alyssa, who sang often during all of my visits, sang substantially more in my final visit. She even put on a “concert” for Christy and me in which she sang several complete songs including several renditions of “The Itsy-Bitsy Spider” and “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star.”

In addition to singing more on her own, Alyssa went through a period of time both before and during music classes during which she regularly would tell Christy not to sing along with her. We talked about this trend in all of our conversations and shared that it was still happening frequently when we met for our second interview. In our final conversation though, Christy reported that Alyssa was doing this less. “She doesn’t tell me not to sing as much as she used to” (Interview Three). When I asked if this had resulted in Christy and Alyssa singing together more often, she indicated that it had.

### **“I Learned that You Can Almost Make a Song Out of Anything:” Changes in Christy**

By participating in this study and writing about her musical activities on a regular basis, Christy came to realize just how much music making was occurring in her home.

Adrienne: I loved reading your journal because they were always so varied. Every day there was a different kind of activity. I wonder if the experience of writing things down might have surprised you or drawn your attention to what you did with music.

Christy: *Yes!* Yeah and I had to narrow it down. Because when I thought about it we did *a lot* of musical things. Even if it was just singing this song or that song. And we would do all of this stuff in just one day. So, I could have written a book about the whole week. (Interview Three)

Christy’s increased awareness of musical activities occurring in her home as a result of writing them down parallels other studies on musical home environment (Custodero, 2006; Gingras, 2013; Koops 2011a; Koops, 2014). I asked Christy if she felt she was doing more musically at home since participating in class or if she was just more aware of the musical things she was already doing because she was being asked to write about them. She responded, “A combination probably. I am definitely more aware of it now” (Interview Three). I asked Christy later in that

same interview if she felt that she was doing a wider variety of music activities at home than she did before enrolling in class, and she said, “I think so, yes.” I gleaned from Christy’s responses that she was both more likely to recognize behaviors as musical and also was incorporating a greater amount of musical activities into her life with Alyssa. It is possible that these changes were a result of not only Christy’s class enrollment but also stemmed from her participation in this study.

Christy identified areas of growth and learning for herself that came out of her class participation. One such area was learning about how to incorporate music into her everyday tasks. “I learned that you can almost make a song out of anything [laughs]. Like when I am telling her to clean up her toys or something, you know” (Interview Three)? Examples of Christy creating songs to accompany everyday occurrences were evident in her journal entries. She and Alyssa “sang a song about doing laundry” (Journal Entry, 10/5/18), “went apple picking and sang a song about apples that [they] could march to” (Journal Entry, 10/13/18), and “sang the song, ‘Johnny, Johnny’ about things we were eating at dinner” (Journal Entry, 11/2/18).

Christy also found new ways to include herself in Alyssa’s spontaneous music making. Through coming to class, Christy learned new strategies for joining in when Alyssa requested she not sing along. “If she starts singing now, I can add a beat to it,” Christy explained (Interview Three). Christy saw this as a form of encouragement when Alyssa was exhibiting musical behavior.

One thing I took away is just to always encourage her. You know if she starts singing to join in. And if she tells me, “no singing” then I can at least [taps a beat on the table] do something. (Interview Three)

I saw an example of Christy joining in with Alyssa’s singing during a visit.

Alyssa says, “Okay. 1, 2, 3 and begins to sing the song, “Itsy-Bitsy Spider” while performing some of the motions. Christy starts to tap a beat on the table as Alyssa sings. As soon as Christy begins to tap, Alyssa’s steady beat and pitch become much more accurate. Alyssa finishes the song and Christy exclaims, “Wow! Good job!” (Fieldnote, Home Visit Three)

By attending class and seeing many examples of active music making and different types of interactions, Christy was able to find new ways to support Alyssa’s singing, even when she did not wish to have someone sing along.

### **“I Haven’t Really Thought About It”: Informal Learning**

Christy sometimes provided me with conflicting information about her own learning. At times, she would indicate that she had not noticed changes in her thinking or behaviors, and at other times she would share examples of her learning, such as those described above. In our second conversation, Christy did not identify any changes in musical thinking or actions after attending class. Christy also noticed few changes related to doing class activities at home.

Adrienne: Have you used any of the activities here at home that you learned in class? Or are you doing different musical things?

Christy: I don’t think so. Not really. . . Nothing out of the ordinary. Sometimes she wants to do “Rocket Ship.” She likes that now. (Interview Two)

When she did identify new behaviors and ideas in our final conversation, she would often hesitate before responding.

Adrienne: If you had to share one big take away from the whole 10 weeks of class, what would it be?

Christy: mmm...I don't know! I haven't really thought about it. One thing I would take away from it...hmmm... (Interview Three)

Christy's hesitation when answering questions about herself possibly stemmed from her focus on Alyssa's experience in class. Because Christy did not enroll in music class seeking benefits for herself, she might have been less likely to notice changes in her musical behaviors or her own learning. At times, I would talk with Christy about things I noticed, such as Christy and Alyssa's tendency to create their own songs during play or Christy's use of vocabulary from class. When I did this Christy would acknowledge the changes I observed, but it was as if she had not considered them before I pointed them out. The following changes seemed to be a result of informal learning that had occurred during music classes.

### ***Use of New Vocabulary and Resting Tone Activities***

In music class, Nora incorporated musical patterns into many activities. She sometimes sang or chanted short patterns between repetitions of songs, giving parents and children an opportunity to respond. She included a V-I cadential pattern into several songs by singing the fifth scale degree, raising her hands into the air and then gently touching the ground as she sang the first scale degree. This pattern was sung multiple times in every class. In Music Learning Theory, on which the early childhood music class in this study is based, the V-I cadential pattern is one of the first patterns that Gordon (2013) believed children should understand and audiate because it provides context for the "I" in the pattern also known as the resting tone, tonic, home, or the first note in a scale. Nora occasionally would label the resting tone when she would sing patterns or when a child would copy her singing. Although Nora used the term resting tone, and emphasized the resting tone many times in every class through her singing, she never talked about what it was or why she incorporated it regularly into activities.



Toward the end of the semester, Christy began referencing the resting tone in her journal entries. There were several different instances in which she described doing resting tone activities with Alyssa. For example, “I tried to get [Alyssa] to do resting tones but she just wanted to do one continuous one while she beat the drum” (Journal Entry 11/2/18). She makes similar mentions in her final journal entry saying, “We continued doing resting tones after class,” and “We made more sound effects and sang resting tones while playing” (Journal Entry, 11/16/18). Furthermore, Christy spoke about resting tone activities in our final interview when she expressed her desire to have Alyssa in a class with older children so that they would give more responses during musical pattern instruction.

I talked with Christy about her use of the term resting tone to confirm whether it was something she learned in class.

Adrienne: You mentioned today and in your last journal entry or two that you started using the term resting tone. Is that something you learned from class?

Christy: Oh, yep. (Interview Three)

I also asked Christy if she learned anything about music development or how children learn music, and she replied, “Not that I remember” (Interview Three). She expressed that it would be “kind of nice” to learn more about the purpose of different activities and that she “knew that Nora did that occasionally,” and she did not remember gaining any insights about children’s music learning (Interview Three). Despite using new vocabulary when discussing class and beginning to incorporate resting tone into her musical play with Alyssa at home, Christy did not identify resting tone or musical patterning as a new activity that she did at home during our conversations and did not address these behaviors as something she learned about in class until I addressed it with her. She did not think of resting tone or pattern instruction

activities as something she learned in relation to how children learn music, even though these were activities that were new to her and had been modeled regularly in class.

### ***Increase in Song Creation and Improvised Musical Play***

Prior to enrolling in class, Christy told me that Alyssa did not make up or create her own songs.

Adrienne: Does Alyssa ever create her own songs?

Christy: I don't think so.

Adrienne: She just sings songs she has heard from different places?

Christy: Yeah. It is mostly just songs she knows already. I don't think she has ever made anything up yet. (Interview One)

Likewise, Christy shared that she sometimes made up songs to sing for Alyssa, but that she mostly sang nursery rhymes or songs she learned through different media sources. However, my examination of Christy's journals revealed that Alyssa began creating songs regularly and using improvised music in her play after enrolling in class. Beginning in Christy's third journal entry, she began to describe Alyssa engaging in song creation, "[Alyssa sang], 'Johnny, Johnny' about 300 times. She is starting to create her own versions of the song" (Journal Entry, 10/5/18). From that point, Alyssa's song creation became a regular feature of Christy's journal. Christy shared the following week that the family, "went to a waterpark. I noticed [Alyssa] was singing. After a while, I noticed she was singing about how much she loves water. She was making up her own song!" (Journal Entry, 10/13/18). Examples of Alyssa's musical creation continued throughout Christy's entries until the final week; "Alyssa was making her own theme song when she walked singing, 'bum bum bum bum ba ba ba bum'" (Journal Entry, 11/16/18). Christy's journal also included numerous examples of her improvising with Alyssa, especially in later journal entries.

Christy's improvisation most often occurred during interactions with Alyssa and were sometimes in relation to Christy's new way of joining in with Alyssa when she would make music. For example, she wrote, "I read [Alyssa] a story and saw that she was dancing as I read, so I started singing it" (Journal Entry, 10/26/18) and, "I made 'ba ba ba' sounds as [Alyssa] clicked her tongue. We were jamming! She had a lot of fun with that" (Journal Entry, 11/2/18). Later she shared, "[Alyssa] did more singing in the car, and I joined in, but did it slightly differently while tapping the steering wheel" (Journal Entry, 11/11/18).

Even though Christy wrote the journal entries, it seemed she did not realize the change in the amount of improvising and creating that was occurring in her home. Christy did acknowledge that Alyssa had been making up her own songs during my second visit, but only after prompting from me.

Adrienne: So, I remember in the first interview we were talking and you had mentioned Alyssa was not really making up her own songs yet. But then in your journals you've mentioned a few times she's been making up her own songs. So, is that something that's been happening more lately?

Christy: Yeah! She is starting to make up her own songs. (Interview Two)

Though Christy did acknowledge that she had learned to find new ways to make music along with Alyssa, it seemed she was not conscious of the increasingly improvisatory nature of both her and Alyssa's musical play.

### **"I Didn't Really Notice That": Researcher Verses Parent Awareness of Alyssa's Musical Behaviors in Class**

Christy recognized some of Alyssa's new musical behaviors at home, including singing more often and increased use of everyday objects in her musical play. However, she did not

acknowledge or discuss Alyssa's musical behavior in class during our conversations about class. As I discussed previously in this chapter, Alyssa was participatory in classes throughout the ten-weeks and, in the latter half of the semester, she began responding to tonal and rhythm pattern instruction, at times creating her own patterns. She also frequently engaged in activities by using manipulatives and through movement. It seemed as if Christy was not aware of Alyssa's musical growth in class, particularly related to her vocal engagement.

At the midpoint of the semester, I asked Christy about whether she was aware of Alyssa doing anything musically in class that she had not done before enrolling in music class. She replied, "Hmm...I don't think so?" It could be that Christy may not have been thinking about looking for Alyssa's new musical behaviors. It is also possible that, because Alyssa was already singing and moving to music at home, her behaviors at the midpoint in the semester, before she started to engage regularly in musical patterning, were familiar to Christy.

There were a few occasions when I asked Christy if she noticed Alyssa's musical behaviors that I identified during my observations. In one such instance, Christy shared with me that, after singing a song at home, Alyssa began singing short sections of the song after only hearing it once.

Christy: . . .She really does pick up on [songs] fast.

Adrienne: I noticed something like that in class. . . Alyssa is *really* vocal. She seems to learn songs pretty quickly and she will sing little parts of the songs in class. Sometimes we will move on to the next song and she will still be responding and singing the song from the previous activity which is cool. She is trying to figure it out.

Christy: Oh yeah? That is cool! (Interview Two)

This response indicated to me that I was noticing Alyssa vocally engaging in class in ways that Christy was not.

In our final conversation, I found there was a similar trend in our conversations about Alyssa's class participation.

Adrienne: Have you noticed any changes in Alyssa's reactions to class? New musical or other behaviors across the semester?

Christy: Yeah, I think so. She is a little more patient now.

Adrienne: What about musically? Anything you noticed?

Christy: She doesn't tell me not to sing as much as she used to. (Interview Three)

Here Christy identified a behavior that was music-related but it was not a musical action, such as increased singing or response to patterns, both of which I saw evidence of in the latter half of the semester.

Later in this conversation, I followed up by sharing my observations of Alyssa's musical behavior in class. Christy again expressed that she had not seen the same behaviors that I had.

Adrienne: I have noticed Alyssa's vocal responses in class and ideas have gotten more purposeful. At the beginning, she was in her own little world. As [the semester] went on some of her responses were direct reactions to class. Like when she started creating her own rhythms during "Popcorn." Did you notice anything like that?

Christy: No, I didn't really notice that. (Interview Three)

Lastly, I wrote previously in this chapter that Christy would have liked to be in class with older children in part because when Nora would sing patterns, no one would respond. She felt that if there were more older children in class, "[Alyssa] would have picked up on it" (Interview Three). This comment was interesting to me because, of all the children in class, Alyssa was the

most responsive during this exact activity. Perhaps Christy felt that Alyssa would have been more participatory if she heard other children responding. However, Christy's response suggested to me that she did not notice Alyssa responding during patterning instruction. Christy never brought up Alyssa creating her own patterns or her other vocal behaviors exhibited in class in our second and third interviews.

## **Summary**

Christy and Alyssa's home was filled with music, even before enrolling in music class. Christy often would follow Alyssa's musical lead and regularly used technology and media as a resource when engaging with music at home. Christy enrolled Alyssa in music class hoping that it would be both calming and a fun way for Alyssa to explore musical interests. During this class, Christy balanced engaging with Alyssa through musical modeling and musical interaction and allowing Alyssa to explore and engage with activities in her own way. Both Christy and Alyssa had a positive class experience, and Christy most enjoyed watching Alyssa learn new things and interact with other members of the class.

Christy and Alyssa's class experiences were reflected in their musical behaviors at home. Alyssa exhibited more musical behaviors than she had prior to attending class, including rhythmic play with everyday objects, increased singing, and more regular song creation and improvisatory musical play. Christy came to realize that she did a greater amount of music than she previously thought. She also learned new ways to engage musically with Alyssa by joining in on her spontaneous music making and incorporating music into everyday tasks. Because Christy was focused largely on Alyssa's experiences in music class, she sometimes did not recognize changes in herself, including things she learned informally from attending class. After attending music classes, Christy learned new musical vocabulary and began incorporating musical patterns

into her play with Alyssa. She also more frequently created music and used improvisation to enhance her play with Alyssa. Finally, though Alyssa grew musically during music class, Christy did not always notice her musical behaviors, in particular her vocal engagement during pattern instruction, during music class.

## **CHAPTER SIX: “WE’RE NOT MUSICAL PEOPLE BUT WE’RE SINGING AND DANCING ALL THE TIME”: VANESSA’S EXPERIENCES**

Vanessa lived in her two-story home in a lakeside neighborhood, away from main roads and traffic, with boat slips and docks lining the shore. There was a small park within walking distance from the house with a baseball field and children’s play equipment. On my first visit, Vanessa asked that I text her when I arrived rather than knocking, because her dog, a small goldendoodle, tended to bark and would wake Liam, who was napping. She met me at the front door, struggling a bit with keeping the dog calm, while inviting me in because she was on crutches as a result of recent knee surgery. Her mother was there, too, but left shortly after I arrived. Vanessa’s house was cozy and nicely decorated in white and sea blue hues. It was neat and had lots of natural light. She led me through the kitchen and living room and onto the back deck, which overlooked the small backyard and the lake. We settled into some Adirondack chairs as the dog roamed around on an outside lead. (Fieldnote, Home Visit One)

This chapter is centered around Vanessa who attended music class with her son, Liam. I begin the chapter by providing information about Vanessa’s musical background, her beliefs surrounding music, and her reasons for enrolling in music class. Next, I give details about Vanessa and Liam’s musical home environment. The chapter continues with a depiction of how Vanessa and Liam engaged in music class, followed by Vanessa’s reflections on her class experiences and how their enrolling in class shaped Vanessa’s thinking and behaviors surrounding music. Finally, I share insights on different interpretations that Vanessa and I had about Liam’s behavior in music class.



### **Getting to Know Vanessa**

Vanessa was tall and fit with long, wavy light brown hair with hints of blond. She was soft-spoken, had a gentle nature, and consistently was warm and open in our conversations. Vanessa was a realtor but mostly worked in the evenings and one or two days a week when Liam attended a Montessori preschool. Vanessa's husband, Paul, worked full time in sales.

Vanessa had knee surgery shortly before the start of the study. She moved around on crutches for the first several weeks of music class. Her mother, who lived a few minutes away, helped her with daily tasks, including driving her and Liam to complete errands and to attend music class, and Vanessa expressed that she felt "really lucky" to have family close by. Over the semester, she continued to recover and eventually did not require the use of crutches, though she continued to be limited in her movements.

Liam, who was 19-months-old at the start of the study, was the only living child of Vanessa and Paul. Vanessa shared in our first interview that she had two children before Liam, who both passed away. Despite Vanessa's past hardships and losses, she spoke fondly about her pregnancy experiences and the time that she was able to spend with her children. She seemed happy and thankful to be Liam's mother.

### **Musical Background**

Vanessa enjoyed music but did not have extensive school or formal music experiences as a young person. She briefly played trumpet and trombone in middle school but did not continue her participation because "it wasn't really a priority" (Interview One). Vanessa did recall some informal musical experiences with her family, in particular her mother, when she was a child.

My mom would do nursery rhymes. I remember her singing to me. I'd always sing to music in the car and stuff as a kid. Actually, my sister *hated* it. I would sing all the time

and she hated it when I'd sing. But my mom would say, "She's happy. Let her sing!"

(Interview One)

Vanessa made some off-hand comments about her singing voice during our conversations, claiming, "I have a horrible voice" (Interview One), which was untrue. Vanessa sang with a clear and light tone and solid intonation.

As an adult, Vanessa enjoyed listening to a wide variety of music. She "liked a little bit of everything" except for country music (Interview One) and listened to music daily in the car or at home. She loved going to concerts and musical events with her husband and occasionally attended events with Liam that included music, such as local festivals. Vanessa's husband had a close friend who "graduated from the Berklee School of Music" and often would "come over and play his guitar" (Interview One). One of Vanessa's journal entries was a video of this friend showing his guitar to Liam and letting him explore how it made sound.

Although Vanessa did not continue participating in ensembles during childhood, she was interested in learning an instrument or taking singing lessons as an adult.

I think it would be cool if I learned to play the piano or something. Anyone that plays the piano, or the guitar, or the drums I don't know, I look at that as [something that is] cool [and] fun! You know? That they can just walk into a restaurant or bar and start playing a song or something. . . I'd love to, even later in life, I thought about maybe taking singing lessons or something just for fun. . . Just so that when I'm belting out a song I'm not like, "Oh my God, that is horrible!" (Interview One)

Vanessa seemed to have some regret about not continuing to play an instrument as a child. Yet now she was more interested in musical instruments that she could play in a social setting rather than in an ensemble.

## **Musical Aspirations for Liam and Goals for Class Participation**

Vanessa's desire to learn to play an instrument as an adult related to her hopes for Liam's future music participation. Vanessa hoped that Liam "would take piano or guitar lessons" in the future (Interview One). Other than providing the possibility of private lessons, Vanessa planned to support Liam's interests and let him decide how involved he wanted to be involved in music. She never presented as someone who would insist on her child's participation in an activity.

Vanessa expressed that, even as a young toddler, Liam loved music and had already demonstrated musical behaviors, such as copying short rhythmic patterns.

[Liam] *loves* music. He loves it but also, he is actually very—I don't know what you'd call it—he has rhythm. [My husband and I] do [taps short rhythm pattern on her lap] that little beat and he copies it! He goes around goes [repeats the same rhythm pattern]. I did another beat and he copied that too. He goes to the beat. (Interview One).

Liam also spontaneously sang fragments of songs such as "E-I-E-I-O" from "Old Macdonald" or clapped and danced along with musical recordings.

Liam's interest in music was one factor that motivated Vanessa to enroll in music classes, but her primary motivation was to support Liam's language development. "Right now, I feel it's *super* important for his language. That is the biggest reason. That, and the fact that he loves music is why we got him involved [in music class]" (Interview One). Vanessa learned about classes through Liam's therapist from *EIO*. "She said [Liam's] language was a little behind and we [could] either have a speech therapist, or we could go to [the university] which has this music class that would be really good for him" (Interview One). Before enrolling in class, Vanessa sang nursery rhymes and play songs for Liam to encourage him to use more words as he learned to

talk, suggesting that Vanessa believed music and singing would help Liam with language development before Liam's therapist suggested they enroll in music class.

Vanessa did not indicate that she had any musical or learning goals for herself that motivated her to sign up for early childhood music classes. She did hope to, "make it to every single class," and explained that, because she was not driving due to her injury, her goal was simply to attend class and be on time (Interview One).

### **"We Sing All Day Long": At Home with Vanessa and Liam**

Vanessa incorporated music into her daily routine with Liam in several ways. Liam and Vanessa listened and danced to music frequently and enjoyed musical books and toys. Singing was important in Vanessa's family and regularly was featured as part of routines and included in family rituals, such as bedtime. Vanessa created several songs for Liam that became associated with specific tasks or events and also sang nursery rhymes and traditional play songs. Vanessa's husband, Paul, was an equal contributor to the musical home environment and regularly engaged in musical play and interaction with Liam.

Vanessa's home did not have any instruments, such as a piano, keyboard, or guitar. However, Liam had several musical toys. The most common were battery-powered toys that played short melodies, such as a toy house that played what Vanessa described as "techno music." Liam also had a toy piano that played both single pitches and short songs and several other smaller battery-powered toys. Liam also had a few small percussion instruments designed for use by children, including a rattle, some shakers, and a harmonica. Vanessa and Liam occasionally would use everyday items, such as an empty Pringles can as a drum. Aside from toys, Vanessa had some books that had musical elements, including "Every Little Thing" by Cedella Marley and an "Itsy-Bitsy Spider" book.

### **“Sometimes I Think We Should Make Our Own CD”: Singing and Song Creation**

Singing was the most common musical activity in Vanessa’s home, paralleling many other researchers’ findings in studies on musical home environment (Custodero & Johnson-Green, 2003; Ilari, 2005; Ilari et al., 2011; Mehr, 2014; Rodriguez, 2018; Young, 2008). Vanessa and Paul sang to Liam throughout the day to the extent that she continually recalled more examples of her singing throughout our first conversation. “We sing to him *all* the time. Really, we sing all day long” (Interview One). Vanessa often sang what she called, “typical kids songs,” such as “The ABC Song” and “Old MacDonald.” The songs Vanessa sang to Liam were mostly ones she recalled from her childhood, which parallels the findings of researchers including Gibson (2009) that parents use songs they recall from childhood in their musical parenting. She also learned some songs by attending an *EIO* playgroup with Liam. Vanessa did not discuss singing songs that she learned from media sources, such as television or streaming services.

In addition to traditional children’s songs, Vanessa created several songs to sing for Liam. “Sometimes I think we should make our own CD because of all the songs we’ve made up” (Interview One). Some of these songs were sung occasionally, such as a song about making pancakes, while others were sung multiple times a day as part of the families’ routines. Vanessa created “The Diaper Song,” sung to the tune of “I’m a Little Teapot” and “The Nap-Nap Song,” sung to the tune of “Goodnight, Ladies,” and both she and Paul sang these songs during each diaper change, nap, and bedtime. Vanessa sang both songs for me during my first visit.

These songs had become intimately intertwined with the families’ routines, establishing meaningful family traditions. This was particularly true for the “Nap-Nap Song.” The lyrics of the “Nap-Nap Song” were tailored specifically to Liam’s family and included verses for mom, dad, the dog, and the lake with the final line, “Night, Night tree as far as we can see.” During the

latter half of the data collection period, Vanessa shared an audio clip with me as a journal entry in which Liam sang a portion of the “Nap-Nap Song.”

Liam starts by singing about Dad. He sings, “Baby daddy. Daddy daddy. Daddy daddy. Daddy duh duh doo.” He then starts singing about mommy “Mommy...” but stops. After a few seconds, you can hear Paul begin to sing. Liam sang with good phrasing, pausing after each short phrase mimicking Vanessa’s and Paul’s performance. He also sings the approximate contour of the song using a head voice. It was obvious he was really familiar with the song. (Researcher Description of Video Journal Entry, 11/4/18)

The use of song to create family traditions has been discussed by other researchers (Custodero, 2006, 2009; Gibson, 2009). Gibson (2009) noted that parents often cherish and claim ownership over these unique “family songs” (p. 175). Vanessa’s created songs generally were songs that she made up and then sang regularly rather than songs spontaneously created in the moment to narrate what was happening in the environment.

### **“We Don’t Turn on the TV”: Music Listening and Use of Technology**

“We have music on all the time,” Vanessa explained when I first asked her about her music listening habits (Interview One). In our conversations, Vanessa explained, “We don’t turn the TV on all during the day for Liam and instead we play music” (Interview One). Vanessa noted that Liam enjoyed listening to music and never expressed interest in television the handful of times she introduced him to it. Vanessa typically used an Amazon Echo device to play music, which was linked to the families’ streaming services including Apple Music, Amazon Prime Music, and Spotify and was located in the living room (Interview One). Vanessa did not indicate that Liam used technology independently to listen to music as a distraction or to entertain himself as she completed other tasks.

Liam and Vanessa listened to music from many genres and styles, as Vanessa did not change her music listening habits when Liam was born. She explained that “[Liam] listens to everything we listen to.” Though Vanessa regularly would sing children’s songs, she did not typically play children’s music for Liam.

Vanessa played music throughout the day but specifically included music listening into her and Liam’s “morning routine” and Liam’s naps. Vanessa’s morning routine with Liam consisted of listening to a playlist of upbeat songs as she and Liam started their day. Liam and Vanessa danced along with the playlist to give themselves a boost of energy and start the day on a positive note. The playlist had a range of genres and artists from, “Happy” by Pharrell Williams, to a symphonic piece that Vanessa described as a “Walt Disney kind of song,” and a Tom Waits track (Interview Two). Vanessa also played music for Liam in the background while he took naps to filter out household noise. Vanessa never expanded on the type of music she played during his naps, but, from what I heard during visits, it seemed to be relaxing instrumental music. In sum, music listening in Vanessa’s home was pervasive and included different types of music based on Vanessa’s and Paul’s preferences. The family sometimes played music in the background or incorporated into their morning routine, and music listening was preferred by Vanessa and Liam over other forms of entertainment, such as television.

#### **“He Sings and Dances Just as Much as I Do”: Parents as Equal Contributors**

Vanessa’s husband, Paul, regularly engaged with Liam in musical activities. When Vanessa spoke about the different musical things that occurred in her home, she consistently included Paul in her descriptions. Vanessa confirmed that Paul was equally involved in music making with Liam.

Adrienne: I noticed you said we sing to him at night and we sing to him all the time. Does your husband sing to Liam a lot as well?

Vanessa: . . . Yeah. He sings and dances just as much as I do. (Interview One)

This finding contradicts the findings of Custodero et al. (2003), Ilari et al. (2011), and Trehub et al. (1997), who reported that mothers sing to their young children more frequently than fathers.

Paul appeared in five of Vanessa's total of 11 journal entries, all of which were videos.

Vanessa's journal included video of Paul engaged in singing, dancing, and music listening with Liam, including singing while playing with bubbles, singing an improvised song for Liam via an Animoji text message, singing "Baby Shark" with Liam joining in, singing the "Nap Nap Song," and listening to music during breakfast while Liam danced.

When I spoke with Vanessa about whether Paul had noticed anything different or asked about class since Liam and Vanessa began attending, she explained that Paul heard her singing songs from class and was curious about them. He also complimented Vanessa on her singing, suggesting he noticed her singing had improved since the start of class. "He was like, 'Whoa, you can sing! Where did you hear that song?'" (Interview Three). In the future semesters, Paul and Vanessa planned to find a class time that they could both attend music class with Liam, because Paul wanted to be involved.

Before enrolling in music class, Vanessa, Paul, and Liam engaged in lots of music making at home. Music making and listening was an important part of Vanessa's parenting and was a source of enjoyment for her family. Despite this, Vanessa did not consider herself or Paul musical. "Even though we're not *musical* people we're singing and dancing all the time. All throughout the day" (Interview One). It seemed that Vanessa viewed being a musical person and



musical parenting as two different things and that she viewed both herself and her husband as musical parents but not musical people.

### **Calm and Cuddly: Music Class with Vanessa and Liam**

Liam seems to feed off of Vanessa's energy. She is somewhat quiet and reserved and he is the same. They are in tune with one another and participatory, but neither is particularly outgoing or dramatic with their movement or participation. (Fieldnote, Class One)

Liam could almost always be found on Vanessa's lap during class. Vanessa and Liam's close connection was evident as they participated in activities together. Liam spent much of the early weeks of class observing but grew more confident as the semester unfolded, eventually becoming more physically and vocally engaged in class and interactive with class members. Vanessa also engaged in music making more as the semester unfolded and as she became more comfortable with the routines and content of class. Vanessa was a keen observer of Liam during class and provided gentle encouragement through modeling without forcing or prompting his participation. When Liam chose to engage in activities, she made sure to provide brief positive acknowledgement through praise and physical touch.

### **From Absorption to Response: Liam in Music Class**

Liam preferred to be either in Vanessa's lap or at least close enough to easily reach her rather than wandering around class or exploring the room. Liam did not vocalize musically or speak much at the beginning of class. He sometimes would grunt or say "ahh" with extended hands when he wanted to be picked up, but otherwise he mostly was quiet and spent a lot of his time silently watching the goings on of class.

Liam is looking all around at the other people in the circle. Nora sings his name in the “Hello Song” and he turns right to her and stares. Liam sits completely still on Vanessa’s lap. His hands hang loose in front of him. He also looks wide-eyed at other children, sometimes putting one finger in his mouth. (Fieldnote, Week Four)

Liam’s behavior in the early weeks of class, and to some extent throughout the semester, struck me as being representative of the absorption stage of preparatory audiation (Gordon, 2013). In this stage of musical development children, “hear and aurally collect sounds of music in the environment” (Gordon, 2013, p. 32). Though Liam was exposed to lots of singing and music listening at home, he seemed to need to process the novel environment and sounds of class before responding through movement, vocalization, or even exploration of the space. However, Liam was interested in what was happening in class. He intently watched others, taking in the sounds that were happening around him. He often would stare wide eyed at Nora for long periods as she sang, which is a tell-tale sign of absorption.

As weeks passed, Liam appeared to gain confidence. By the fourth class, he started to spend short periods of time on the floor near Vanessa instead of on her lap. This was especially true during activities involving manipulatives. Liam often became excited about materials and began to venture away from Vanessa for short periods of time to go and get them.

Vanessa and Liam both watch as the fabric leaves are placed around the room on the floor. This is a new manipulative for this class. Vanessa puts Liam down so he can go get leaves. He picks up a leaf and goes directly back to Vanessa. Liam stays near her but does not try to get back on her lap. He watches Nora in fascination as she blows a leaf off her hand while singing a V-I cadential pattern. Liam goes back and forth bringing

Vanessa more leaves before approaching Nora. He takes the leaf off of Nora's knee at the end of the song and smiles as he drops it to the ground. (Fieldnote, Class Four)

As the semester progressed, Liam more regularly ventured away from Vanessa to get materials or move around the room during locomotor activities. He also grew more comfortable interacting with other adults.

In between repetitions of the "Peek-A-Boo" song, Liam plays peek-a-boo with the *EIO* therapist assisting the class. When Nora begins singing, Liam watches her and plays with his scarf in his hands. After the song ends he goes back to playing peek-a-boo with the *EIO* therapist. He is near Vanessa but seems happy and relaxed as he plays. (Fieldnote, Class Six)

As Liam's confidence grew, he also began to exhibit more musical and speech behaviors. By the third class he started saying, "Mama" during class instead of just reaching for Vanessa. I mentioned this to Vanessa after class, and she noted that Liam had an "explosion of language" in the days leading up to that class. He continued to use words occasionally in class including, "Mama" "up" and "whoa." and frequently babbled, mostly on "da" or "ba" in the latter half of class. Liam's increased vocabulary and vocalizations exhibited in class support Taggart et al.'s (2011) finding that vocal exploration during music classes may contribute to language delayed toddlers producing a wider variety of sounds.

Liam began responding musically to activities first through movement and eventually vocally. Liam often would observe during activities while others were singing or moving and then respond in between repetitions. This indicated that Liam was working through the absorption stage and beginning to purposefully respond to music. He took in what was happening when others performed and then reacted during the quieter moments of class. The

most obvious examples of this behavior occurred during the chant “Rocket Ship.” At the end of this chant there is a countdown from five to one, followed by tossing a scarf into the air while performing a vocal siren on “Whoo!” Liam became familiar with this activity and regularly copied the motion at the end of the chant a few moments after the class.

Liam sits still holding his scarf in front of him as he watches Nora chant, “Rocket Ship.”

A few seconds after everyone throws their scarf, Liam follows suit. This happens each time the chant is performed for the remainder of the activity. (Fieldnote, Class Four)

This delayed engagement happened during other activities as well, especially those with manipulatives. “Liam does not move his shakers during the song. He watches others closely. When the song ends he begins moving his shakers by tapping them together or just shaking them” (Fieldnote, Class Seven).

In the last weeks of class, Liam had a burst of vocal responses to class activities. In the ninth class, Liam clearly gave a purposeful response to a resting tone activity with shakers.

The class sings a V-I cadential pattern on “Ah-bum” as they drop their shakers to the ground. After the class does this, Liam sings “bum!” a seemingly purposeful response to the activity. Nora looks and copies his sound. This is the first time Nora ever imitated Liam. About 30 seconds later, he throws a shaker and sings, “bum” again . . . At the very end of the activity Liam again tries to sing the resting tone on “ahh,” scrunching up his whole face as he does. (Fieldnote, Class Nine)

Overall, Liam showed signs of development musically and linguistically. He also grew in confidence over the 10-weeks of music class.

### **Vanessa's Participation and Comfort in Music Class**

Because of Vanessa's knee injury, she spent the semester seated in a chair during class rather than sitting on the floor with the rest of the families and teachers. She spent the first few classes on crutches, eventually moving to a brace, but was not able to sit on the floor. This limited her participation in certain activities like the "Nap Song," in which people would lay on the floor and pretend to sleep or locomotor activities. Though her injury somewhat limited her mobility and put her at distance from the rest of the class, Vanessa found ways to adjust her participation so that she could remain engaged in activities as best she could. Vanessa noted that, while there were activities she could not do because of sitting in the chair, she was grateful for being able to participate.

I wish that I could get up and down because it would be more fun. Because I couldn't do some of the stuff. Like the sleeping one you know? I obviously couldn't do that one. And some of the other ones I had to figure out. . . I probably stuck out a little bit but I think people got used to me being in the chair. I mean it is what it is. I couldn't do anything about it. I was just thankful for the chair. (Interview Three)

Aside from the adjustments she made due to her injury, Vanessa regularly participated in class activities. At the start of class, she most often engaged in activities through movement. In the early classes, she sang very little. It took Vanessa time to become comfortable with singing or chanting more regularly, because the material was unfamiliar.

The first one or two sessions I didn't know any of the songs. I felt like I couldn't sing along because I didn't know the songs. Then, by the end I could sing along easily because I knew all of the songs. (Interview Three)

Vanessa also felt more comfortable singing as other adults began to sing more frequently. “I think it helps if more people sing. Then I feel like I’m not ‘out there’” (Interview Two). She specifically appreciated the assistants being in class, because their singing provided cover for her own singing. “I think it was good to have the students there. Especially in the beginning since we didn’t know the songs so it wasn’t just [Nora] singing” (Interview Three).

Vanessa engaged more fully with songs or chants that had words. This was a trend I noticed throughout the semester but was especially true early on. From as early as the second class, Vanessa appeared comfortable participating vocally during certain activities that had lyrics, especially “Rocket Ship.” “Vanessa does the motions and chants all the words from the first repetition. She seems comfortable with this activity” (Fieldnote, Week Two). Toward the end of the ten weeks, she began singing or chanting on activities without words but usually only after several repetitions.

Shaker Activity with a Mixolydian Song with No Words: Vanessa does the motions, including shaking her shakers on different body parts, but does not sing. After several repetitions of the song, she begins to sing along with small portions of the song. By the final repetition, she sings the majority of the song as she continues to engage in movement. (Fieldnote, Class Seven)

Inclusion of songs and chants without words is an important element of class, as it allows children to focus on the musical elements of activities without becoming preoccupied with language. However, it seemed that lyrics provided a scaffold for Vanessa to engage with and remember songs and chants.

## **The Subtle Cheerleader: Vanessa's Engagement with Liam**

Vanessa approached her participation in music class in a manner that matched her soft-spoken and calm nature. Vanessa was patient and warm in her interactions with Liam, keeping a watchful eye on him and his actions, providing comfort and reassurance when she sensed he was hesitant, and giving him brief positive praise, a smile, or pat on the back when he engaged in social or musical behaviors.

### ***Encouragement Without Forcing***

Vanessa used subtle and non-disruptive means to encourage Liam's participation gently. Vanessa did want Liam to participate in class, especially during movement activities. Early on, when Liam was still primarily interested in staying on Vanessa's lap, she hoped he would become more participatory.

It seems like whenever we get up and move around I want him to go and have fun.

Because he *does* at home. He'll dance and stuff and run around. But he doesn't in class.

He just clings to me and wants to be held. I have a hard time holding him and walking around so then I just end up like, you know [sways from side to side in her seat to show a restricted dancing motion]. (Interview Two)

Though Vanessa had a desire for Liam to engage in activities and show some level of independence, she never pushed him to engage.

Vanessa's primary means of encouraging Liam to participate was through modeling. She felt that modeling might encourage Liam to participate during class. "I find that if I sing more [in class], like if he can see me or hear me singing then he is more likely [to sing]" (Interview Two). Vanessa routinely made eye contact when she was engaging in activities and demonstrated movements or use of manipulatives in clear view of Liam.

Vanessa gets sticks from an assistant and bends over to tap the floor next to Liam. When Liam gets sticks, he looks at Vanessa and copies her movement. Nora notices this and says, “Liam is already rocking out!” Liam continues to tap his sticks for the majority of this activity. Vanessa watches him and continues to move along with the class, sometimes gently encouraging Liam by briefly tapping his shoulders or leaning toward him. (Fieldnote, Class Seven)

Vanessa rarely prompted Liam verbally to participate, restricted his movement, or moved his limbs during activities. When she did occasionally prompt Liam to participate through touch, it was brief and then she would stop to see if Liam would continue.

During the “Popcorn” chant, the class is moving different body parts rhythmically as they chant. Nora says, “Let’s move our elbows!” Vanessa briefly touches Liam’s elbow to direct his attention to what the class will move next. When the chant starts, she moves her own elbows and looks at Liam, who, after a few moments, taps his own elbow several times. (Fieldnote, Class Ten)

Overall, Vanessa’s approach was one of letting Liam choose whether and how to engage in class. She allowed Liam the time to observe and become comfortable in class while providing him with a model for how to participate when he was ready. Vanessa’s approach to encouraging Liam was similar to the approach teachers in the program typically take, opting to model without the expectation of participation or correctness from children.

### ***A Pat on the Back: Acknowledgement of Liam’s Musical and Social Behaviors***

As Liam grew more confident and participatory in class, Vanessa acknowledged his participation with verbal praise or physical touch. She also acknowledged Liam’s musical behaviors through interaction or, occasionally, by extending or mimicking his musical behaviors.



Vanessa's praise and physical touch after Liam engaged in an activity was consistent and brief. It typically consisted of some combination of a smile, short verbal praise, and an affirming physical touch.

Liam gets down on the floor and taps the maraca on the large gathering drum. Vanessa gives him a big smile and hug. She seems really happy to see him engaging. I see Liam shaking his maraca and I copy his motion and smile at him. He shakes his maraca vigorously and smiles in response. Vanessa makes eye contact with him and shakes her head and smiles. After Liam returns his maraca to the basket and returns to Vanessa, she says, "Yeah!" and rubs his back. (Fieldnote, Class Seven)

Vanessa would offer similar acknowledgement of Liam's social behaviors when he demonstrated independence during class.

Liam walks all the way across the room to return his hoop to Jacob. This is the furthest away I have ever seen him from Vanessa. After returning his hoop, he waits for Nora to hand him two shakers before returning to where Vanessa is sitting. When he returns to Vanessa, she nods, smiles, and pats his back. (Fieldnote, Class Nine)

When Liam's musical behaviors were spontaneous or not directly related to class activities, Vanessa sometimes responded through playful interaction. In these moments, she would incorporate ideas from class into their play.

Liam begins to shake his poms in a rhythmic pattern, repeating the same four-beat pattern several times. Vanessa recognizes the pattern and begins to do it with him. They repeat the pattern together a few times. After a few times through the pattern, Liam wanders off . . . Liam uses his pom to play peek-a-boo with Vanessa. She laughs and hides behind her own pom a few times. As the pom pons are being put away, Liam begins to drop his pom

onto the floor multiple times. Vanessa sings a V-I cadential pattern, aligning her singing with Liam's movement. (Fieldnote, Class Four)

Vanessa's engagement in class activities served to support Liam's learning and participation. Her way of engaging with Liam align with several behaviors that Koops (2012b) identified as play-enhancing adult involvement. Koops (2012b) examined what factors influenced preschool children's musical play at home and in music classes and found that child agency and control contributed to more extended play. Vanessa's brief and subtle acknowledgement of Liam's musical behaviors, lack of prompting for Liam to participate, and interactions with Liam after he initiated play are similar to behaviors Koop's (2012b) identified as play enhancing. Vanessa's gentle encouragement and brief positive acknowledgement behaviors in class supported Liam in moving from being an observer to a more confident and participatory learner over the 10-week class.

#### **“I Thought it was Really Fun and Good for Him”: Feelings About Music Class**

Vanessa enjoyed many aspects of music class, including seeing Liam progress in terms of language development, interaction with his peers, and having fun. Class met Vanessa's expectations in terms of the goals she set at the start of the semester, and she planned to continue attending classes in future semesters. She appreciated the emphasis on active music making in class and was glad to get more ideas for songs and activities she could do with Liam at home. Though her experience was positive, Vanessa made several suggestions about how her experience could have been enhanced, the most salient of which was finding ways to foster more meaningful connections among parents in classes.

### **“It was Fun and Worth It”: Enjoyable and Valuable Aspects of Class**

Vanessa’s enjoyment in class stemmed from watching Liam discover new things and have fun. She often responded to my questions about enjoyment, the benefits of class, and learning with insights about Liam rather than herself.

Adrienne: How do you feel about class so far? What have you been enjoying?

Vanessa: I like all the stuff he gets to play with. The little things. Because he seems to really like those. I also like that he can play with other kids, or be around other kids.

Those are two good things...And he likes the songs, too. (Interview Two)

Because Vanessa’s motivations for attending class were focused on Liam, it is unsurprising that her enjoyment in class came from watching Liam’s experiences.

As I discussed earlier in the chapter, Vanessa primarily enrolled in music classes to support Liam’s language learning. Vanessa was excited about Liam’s language development over the course of the semester and attributed it, in part, to attending music class.

Adrienne: Going back to your initial expectations or what motivated you to do the class, do you feel like the class met those expectations?

Vanessa: Well, the whole purpose was related to *EIO* recommending it. [Liam’s therapist said], “We can either have a speech therapist come out or we can do this music class.”

So, we decided on music class. Because he really wasn’t using any words or just a handful of words. And since it has just totally [taken] off. So, it seems that [music class] would have had a part in that. (Interview Three)

Vanessa also felt that Liam’s “vocabulary definitely increased” throughout the semester. She further noted that his comprehension of language had increased in the months since attending class. This growth was one of the most positive outcomes of class for Vanessa.

Because Liam only went to daycare one morning a week, Vanessa enjoyed the socialization opportunities that Liam had in music class. By the end of data collection, Liam had begun to struggle with separation anxiety, so Vanessa began seeking more opportunities for Liam to socialize. Having the opportunity to be around other children while still having the security of mom being close by was something that Vanessa enjoyed about attending class.

Another thing that Vanessa enjoyed about class was seeing Liam's excitement about the manipulatives. "He really likes the sticks. And those shaky balls" (Interview Two). She mentioned Liam's use of materials several times when discussing enjoyable aspects of class and noted that she "should get him some sticks because he really liked those." (Interview Three) Liam was always most engaged in class during activities that included props. Consequently, Vanessa's enjoyment could have stemmed from watching Liam engage in class through use of manipulatives.

Vanessa appreciated learning new songs from class, since she noted that all of the class content was unfamiliar to her prior to enrolling. "It is always good to get new songs. Especially songs that [Liam] recognizes and likes" (Interview Three). Vanessa enjoyed seeing what songs and chants Liam gravitated toward in class and later would incorporate those into play with Liam at home. In our first conversation, Vanessa shared that she previously had learned new songs in her *EIO* playgroup that she later used at home with Liam. So, it seemed that Vanessa viewed classes as a valuable resource for her to gain new song and activities ideas.

A final element of class that Vanessa found valuable was the emphasis on active music making as opposed to information sharing. When I asked Vanessa if she would have liked to learn more about the purpose of things we did in class, she expressed that she was more interested in doing music than learning about the purpose of activities.

Adrienne: Would you like for teachers to include explanations about why things are done in class?

Vanessa: Maybe like a *brief* moment. You know, I would get annoyed. For example, I take yoga. And I have had about 20 different instructors some who might say one sentence like, “This really deepens your stretch.” But I have had other instructors where the *entire* class feels like an annoying lecture. You know what I mean? You are supposed to be doing it and I just can’t stand taking a class where I am supposed to be in the moment doing this thing. I don’t want to hear every single thing, you know? So, I think that could be an element but keep it simple. (Interview Three)

For Vanessa, having very little teacher talk in class was ideal. It was not that Vanessa was uninterested in learning more about music or specifically Liam’s music development, but she was glad that information did not take away from making music during class time.

In sum, Vanessa was happy that she decided to attend music class with Liam. She felt that Liam had enjoyed attending and was glad he had an outlet to sing, dance, and explore his love of music. Attending music class with Liam gave Vanessa the opportunity to learn some new songs, make music with others, and see Liam grow, socialize, and enjoy himself. Vanessa summed up her experience succinctly saying, “It was fun and worth it” (Interview Three).

### **“We Know All the Kids but We Don’t Know the Parents”: Desires for Music Class**

Vanessa suggested several things that that might have enhanced her class experience. She was satisfied; however, there were a few elements of class she expected or hoped would be different, including the amount of information she received on how Liam compared to same-age peers and the musical content. Among Vanessa’s wishes for class, the most prominent was her desire for more avenues for adult socialization and connection.

### ***“Maybe Just Introducing Each Other”: Wanting to Make Connections***

Though Vanessa never identified a goal for herself in our first conversation, I gathered in our subsequent talks that she hoped attending class would give her an opportunity to make connections with other mothers. This never happened, as Vanessa did not feel she made any genuine connections with other adults as a result of attending class.

Adrienne: Did you ever get the chance to make any new connections with people in class?

Vanessa: Mmm, no. It would have been nice to maybe make—I mean it is always nice to make new friends . . . I didn’t really have any of those connections . . . Because you kind of say, “cute shoes” or something. But it is surface level stuff. (Interview Three)

Vanessa gave suggestions for how to foster more meaningful connections among parents in class during our second and third interviews. First, she suggested that parents might introduce themselves at the start of the semester.

Maybe just introducing each other. Because we know all the kids but we don't know the parents. Sometimes we'll talk. A little chit-chat here and there. But maybe [we could] get to know each other better since we are spending ten weeks together. . . Even just [giving your] name and then one fact or some kind of ice breaker that doesn't make people nervous. Like, “I’m Vanessa and I live on [the] lake.” Some random thing about you to put a connection to the face. (Interview Two)

Parent names were not included in the introductory part of class. Though children’s names were sung as part of the welcome song each week, there was never an opportunity for parents to introduce themselves unless they chose to socialize in the few minutes before or after class. Though Vanessa wanted opportunities to socialize with other parents, she typically did not talk

casually with others as she was waiting for class to begin or at the conclusion of a session. It is possible she would have felt more comfortable if socialization opportunities were more purposefully included into class through ice breakers as she suggested.

In our final conversation, Vanessa and I spoke about the possibility of organizing an orientation and culminating celebration to give parents an additional opportunity to socialize and get to know one another.

Vanessa: How about a meet and greet orientation where we have a few toys that the kids can play with?

Adrienne: Yeah or we could have a caregiver to hang out with the kids so they could be in the same room but with someone watching them.

Vanessa: In the same room but playing. Yeah, I think that would be good. That, and an end of class one but I know that is more work for you guys. You know what might be good? Set aside an hour after class to have a party. Almost like an end of the semester party. Just keep it light and have cookies. And parents could mingle and the teacher could be there just to have ten minute sessions. (Interview Three)

When Vanessa talked about the sessions with the teacher, she was referring to the optional conference discussion that Nora and all of the music teachers in the program offered after the conclusion of the semester. Conferences typically were held one week after the conclusion of class. Parents could choose to come and talk with the teacher about what the teacher noticed about their child's development and musical progress and would receive a written progress sheet. If a parent elected not to attend, they were mailed the progress sheet. Vanessa suggestion was to keep this element but pair it with an end of semester celebration or social opportunity directly after the final class so that people would not have to return the following week.

***“As a Mom, I think, ‘How is He Doing?’”: Wanting More Information about Child Development***

Vanessa appreciated receiving a progress report about Liam’s participation in music class at the end of the semester. However, she expressed that she would have liked to know more about how Liam compared to other children his age.

As a mom I think, “How is he doing?” You always want to know if [your child] is at a similar level as other kids [their] age. Things like that. I don’t think there was a question on [the progress report] but maybe it could be added. Something about how he developmentally compares to other kids his age. You know, because—18-months to three—that is quite a difference when you are that young. (Interview Three)

Vanessa and I discussed that each child’s development is unique, and I also noted that Liam was one of the youngest children in the class, so his behaviors would be different than Alyssa’s, for example, who was a full year older.

This same curiosity came up again when I asked Vanessa if she had any questions about class. She asked, “Where do you think [Liam] is compared to other kids in the class?” (Interview Three). She was curious both about his musical development and in my perception of his development overall. Because Vanessa enrolled in class with the intent to improve Liam’s language skills, desiring more information about development was not surprising. It is possible that Liam’s involvement with *EIO* predisposed Vanessa to be curious, or even anxious, about Liam’s development. It seemed as though Vanessa wanted reassurance that Liam did not present as being developmentally delayed.



***“Maybe Some More Fun Music”: Wanting Different Musical Content***

During my second visit, Vanessa expressed that the songs and chants in class were not what she had anticipated. She had some difficulty articulating what she thought of the musical content at the start of class.

Adrienne: Is there anything that you wish was different about class?

Vanessa: Maybe some different kinds of music. . . Maybe some more *fun* music. When I first started I was like, “Oh no...”—I go to church and at the beginning I thought, “This is kind of like church music.” That was my first thought. I don’t know... (Interview Two)

I asked Vanessa if she was referring to the recorded music played in class or the songs that we sang, and she just restated that it was her overall impression of the music. I was not able to identify exactly what gave her that impression or what she was expecting instead. She eventually suggested, “maybe a little jazz or blues. I don’t know” (Interview Two).

Part of what made Vanessa’s desire unclear was that she seemed to have difficulty describing the music and her impressions of it. It is possible she did not have the musical background or vocabulary to describe what she did not enjoy about the music or what she wanted to hear instead. Also, Vanessa repeatedly backed off of her opinions during this conversation, making comments such as, “this [music] could be [used because of] all your research that you have done” and, “again, you guys may have done the research about what is best for the kids” (Interview Two). This prompted me to give Vanessa some more information about the choices behind the musical content of class including presenting children with a wide variety of tonalities and meters, and the purpose of using songs without words.

As the class continued, Vanessa’s feelings toward the music used in class seemed to shift somewhat. She did not bring up her desire for different music in our final conversation, at which

point she was more familiar with the songs from class and began incorporating several of them into her music making at home. During this conversation, she commented on one of the mixolydian songs without words that was sung during shaker egg activities saying, “Yeah, that song...I don’t know why but it’s a good one. It’s different you know? Because it’s not mainstream” (Interview Three). So, it seemed that, by the end of the class, Vanessa grew to appreciate to novelty of the music selected for classes.

### **From Class to Home: New Understandings and Behaviors**

Enrolling in music class contributed to shifts in both Vanessa and Liam’s musical behaviors at home. Toward the end of the semester, Vanessa began to notice Liam singing more at home, especially longer fragments of songs. Vanessa’s class experience also shaped her musical parenting by providing her with new song and activity ideas and giving her a new tool to soothe and manage Liam’s behavior. Though Vanessa noticed some new behaviors in herself and in Liam, I observed additional shifts in Vanessa’s musical parenting that she appeared to learn unconsciously through informal exposure in music class.

### **“He is Definitely Doing More Singing and Stuff”: Increased Singing at Home**

In mid-October during our second visit, Vanessa had not noticed much of a change in Liam’s musical behaviors at home. “[His singing is] the same as it was. He sings *all* the time. Especially if there is music going he will sing. He just sings all the time” (Interview Two). A few weeks after this conversation, Vanessa’s journal entries began to include more examples of Liam singing song fragments independently. One example was from Vanessa’s video journal entry that she sent along with the text, “Saturday dance party...played this song for him for the first time and he was already singing the words to it!”

Paul is off camera singing a verse of “Baby Shark.” Liam is walking toward him from behind the recliner. When Paul stops singing, there is a brief moment of silence and then Liam continues the song. He sings “Mommy shark do do do...Mommy shark do do...Mommy duh be duh doo...Mommy” in a higher key than Paul, and up an octave. He sings in head voice that is clearly distinguished from his speaking voice following the approximate contour of the song. (Researcher Description of Video Journal Entry, 10/27/18)

In subsequent journal entries Liam appears in videos singing portions of the “Nap Nap Song” (Journal Entry, 11/4/18) and the “ABCs” (Journal Entry, 11/18/18).

In our final interview, Vanessa expressed that she had noticed a difference in Liam’s singing in the latter half of the semester.

Adrienne: Have you found that he is starting to sing more full songs or parts of songs lately?

Vanessa: Yeah! Like the ABC’s. And he loves the “Baby Shark” song.

Adrienne: So, would you say he has started to do more parts of whole songs lately than he used to?

Vanessa: Yes, he definitely is doing more singing and stuff. (Interview Three)

By the end of the semester, Vanessa also noticed Liam began to engage in vocal behaviors at home that she connected with class activities.

Adrienne: Have you noticed any new behaviors or any new musical things from class that he didn't do before?

Vanessa: Well, he says “all done” [said in a sing-song way from high to low] when he's done with his drink. Which kind of reminds me of a part of one of the songs that we sing.

Adrienne: Kind of like the ba-bada bah bah...bum [Sung on a dominant to tonic like the V-I cadential pattern sung frequently in class]

Vanessa: Yes, right. (Interview Three)

While Liam always enjoyed singing, Liam's singing increased as the semester of music class unfolded. Furthermore, at least some of that singing, such as in the example above, seemed to have been connected directly to class activities.

### **“I Sing that One to Him a Lot”: Using Songs and Chants from Music Class at Home**

Vanessa learned new songs through attending music class and began to include them in music making with Liam at home. “I do the beginning song. You know, ‘Hello everybody’ [sung]. I sing that one to him a lot. And he’ll kind of sing along” (Interview Three). Vanessa often sang Liam the “Hello Song” in the morning on days when they would come to class to prepare Liam for class. Vanessa also began to use “Popcorn” from class to reinforce Liam’s knowledge of body parts, encouraging him to choose which body part to include in the chant.

One of the activities from class that Vanessa mentioned multiple times was “Rocket Ship.” Vanessa began to incorporate “Rocket Ship” into reading with Liam, and he would show signs of recognizing the activity.

We do “Rocket Ship.” Especially if I am reading a book and there is a picture of a rocket, I go, “Rocket ship, rocket ship, to the moon. Rocket ship...” [chanted in rhythm] And he will go like this [moves her arms side to side as if she was moving a scarf]. (Interview Three)

Vanessa periodically mentioned other songs and activities from class that she used at home including “Peek a Boo” and the “Row” resting tone ostinato, which parents sang to accompany the “Sailor Song.” Vanessa added the ostinato to the beginning of “Row, Row, Row Your Boat”

noting that she never really learned to sing the “Sailor Song,” because Nora usually sang it alone while parents performed the ostinato. Vanessa’s descriptions of her use of class activities suggest that she incorporated music from class into her home to serve specific purposes, such as reinforcement of learning, vocabulary, or as a way to communicate with Liam about daily activities.

**“If He is in One of Those Moods, I Will Put Him on my Lap and We Will Start Singing”:**

**Using Music to Soothe and Manage Behavior**

After enrolling in class, Vanessa began using music as a parenting tool to soothe or distract Liam. Vanessa first discussed this shift in her parenting when I asked her about what she found satisfying about class.

Adrienne: What did you find satisfying about class besides enjoyment?

Vanessa: Well you know it is funny because, lately he has been having more, I don’t know if I would call them temper tantrums. It’s more that he will get irritated or upset with something. . . And if he is in one of those moods, I will actually put him on my lap and we will start singing. And he is better. That is a new thing that I have just been doing the past few weeks. (Interview Three)

When trying to soothe Liam, Vanessa would sing familiar songs, such as “Old MacDonald” and would also perform chants from class such as “Popcorn” or “Rocket Ship.” Vanessa found that, when she sang, Liam would begin to participate, singing along with her or doing movements associated with the activities, which ultimately calmed him. She mentioned using music in this way again later in the same conversation, explaining that attending class made her think about music in a different way, because she began to use it as a “deterrent for bad behavior” (Interview Three).

Vanessa also used music, in some cases music from class, as a distraction. Vanessa described a moment when she needed to complete a task and she sang the “Peek-a-Boo” song from class to keep Liam occupied.

Earlier today I was trying to keep him entertained while I was washing my face and putting on makeup and stuff and I had to keep him out of the room. I started singing, “peek a boo, where are you?” [sung] since I could see him through the crack in the door.  
(Interview Three)

Vanessa appreciated learning songs and chants from music class that Liam enjoyed and recognized. After becoming more familiar with activities from class, she found new ways to include music into her daily interactions with Liam. After enrolling in class, Vanessa used these new activities, as well as familiar music, to serve purposes beyond just musical enjoyment, including as a tool to manage behavior, or to soothe, distract, or reinforce learning.

### **“I Just Go Along with It”: Informal Learning**

When I specifically asked Vanessa to reflect on her own experience in class, she often was hesitant or unsure in her response. For example, when I asked Vanessa how she personally had benefitted from attending class she replied, “mmm [long pause] Sometimes I sing the songs from class because they get stuck in my head” (Interview Three). She also did not readily identify things she learned about musical development or how children learn music.

Adrienne: How has class influenced your thinking about music development or music behaviors?

Vanessa: Like what? Can you give me an example?

Adrienne: Just if you learned anything about how kids learn music or how they process it? Or have you learned more ways to be musical?

Vanessa: Mmm...I do more musically with him probably. (Interview Three)

Again, Vanessa was not focused on herself and her learning when she enrolled in music classes and did not set out to learn more about musical development. Therefore, it did not come as a surprise that she did not think deeply about her own learning. Vanessa confirmed this when I asked her about whether she had a sense of what the purpose of the different activities were in class. “I haven’t really thought about the why behind [the activities]. I just go along with it” (Interview Two). Though she did not prioritize her own learning or explicitly hope to gain new musical parenting skills, I noticed changes in Vanessa’s behaviors that suggested class had shaped her musical behaviors. After attending class, Vanessa began incorporating musical patterning into her music making with Liam. Additionally, her journal entries included more evidence of interactive music making with Liam over the course of the semester.

### ***“He Would Sing Just Like Me”: Musical Patterning***

Some of Vanessa’s journal entries featured Liam and Vanessa engaged in some form of musical pattern exchange. Vanessa submitted the first of these entries as a video with the text, “Singing together today after class” (Journal Entry, 10/5/18)

Liam and Vanessa are sitting together on the couch. Liam says, “Bah!” Vanessa then responded by singing “bah” and holding out the pitch as she looked toward Liam. After a few moments, Liam joined in, “Ah-bah” eventually finding and matching Vanessa’s pitch and holding it out. They both stop singing and Liam smiles. Vanessa sings again on a lower pitch, holding it out and Liam responds by saying, “bah bah bahbah” rhythmically as if he is chanting a rhythm pattern. (Researcher Description of Video Journal Entry, 10/5/18).

I followed up with Vanessa about this video during my second visit.

Adrienne: About the video you sent me last week where you were singing and he was copying you. Was that something that you would normally do or is that something you picked up from what we do in class?

Vanessa: From class. (Interview Two)

Similarly, Vanessa submitted another video in November accompanied by the text, “I tried to catch him doing it but he would sing just like me” (Journal Entry, 11/15/18). In this video, Vanessa is off camera but can be heard singing several V-I cadential patterns and leaving silence for Liam to respond. Liam responds with very similar patterns, often raising his hands in the air and lowering them as he moves from 5 to 1, which is a movement often associated with this pattern in class. Again, Vanessa later confirmed that this exchange was something she learned to do from attending class.

Though Vanessa included these exchanges in her journal and confirmed that these interactions were modeled after class activities, she only identified this behavior as a new thing that she learned when I prompted her. She never identified pattern singing as an activity she learned in class without me specifically asking about the journal entries. It is possible that Vanessa did not think about musical patterning as an activity, since it occurs in the context of a song or chant rather than as a stand-alone activity. Also, although musical pattern instruction was an important component of every class and happened frequently, it was never discussed beyond being briefly mentioned on the FAQ sheet provided to members of the class (see Appendix B). So, pattern singing was something that Vanessa incorporated into her musical parenting after being informally exposed to it in music class.



### ***From Performing for to Singing With: Increased Musical Interaction***

In our first interview, Vanessa shared several examples of how she provided a musical home environment for Liam. She talked about Liam's enjoyment of music and that he liked to sing and dance, but when she talked about making music, she nearly always described herself and Paul performing for Liam rather than singing with him or having musical exchanges saying things such as, "We sing to him all day long" or "We play music every day" (Interview One). Vanessa's early journal entries also feature either Vanessa, Paul, or Liam engaged in musical behavior but do not include any evidence of musical interactions between a parent and Liam. In fact, Vanessa does not appear in her video journal submissions until her fourth entry, a month after the start of the class.

Over time, I saw more evidence of Vanessa interacting musically with Liam. She also began doing activities that elicited a musical response from Liam. Several of Vanessa's later journal entries feature musical exchanges and interactions between her and Liam. In addition to the two journal entries featuring musical pattern exchanges described above, Vanessa also sang short melodies in response to Liam's playing on his toy piano, prompting him to echo her (Journal Entry, 10/18/18), and took turns singing the "ABC's" with Liam as Liam tapped a beat on his lap (Journal Entry, 11/18/18). When Vanessa discussed making music at home in our final interview, she more often described singing and chanting with Liam rather than for him saying things like, "We sing the 'Popcorn' song," "He will say, 'elbows' and we will sing about our elbows," or "We do 'Rocket Ship'" (Interview Three).

Vanessa and Liam's increased musical interaction at home paralleled the trend of their interaction in music class. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Vanessa modeled for Liam throughout the semester, but their musical interactions in class increased over time. It is possible

that this increased interaction both at home and in class was partially a result of Liam's increased musical behavior. However, it is also possible that Vanessa unconsciously learned more about musical interaction and eliciting Liam's musical responses from attending music class, which ultimately translated into more interaction at home.

### **“I Noticed You Catch a Lot More than I Would Just Sitting with Him”: Recognizing and Interpreting Liam's Behaviors in Class**

As I discussed earlier in the chapter, Liam grew a great deal musically over the 10-weeks of music class. He began the semester being largely observant but steadily became more independent and responsive as time went on. Through our conversations, I came to realize that Vanessa and I had different interpretations of Liam's behavior in music classes. I also discovered that, while Vanessa was attentive toward Liam and watched him closely in class, she did not recognize many of his behaviors as musical behaviors.

### **“At Home He is Not Shy at All”: Shyness or Absorption**

When I asked Vanessa what she learned about Liam through attending music class she responded, “How shy he is. Because at home he is not shy *at all*” (Interview Three). She explained that Liam was different in music class than he was in other public settings.

When I take him out in public shopping he waves to people and says, ‘hi’ and stuff. We went to the *EIO* playgroups and, you know, he just played with toys. I have never seen him so shy. In class, he was very shy. (Interview Three)

Though Liam did exhibit some shy behaviors in class, including a tendency to want to be close to Vanessa, and occasionally disengaging when he was given direct attention, I believe that much of Liam's behavior that Vanessa labeled as shyness was Liam learning through observation. His tendency to stare at others as they sang and eventually respond musically in the silence between

activities led me to believe that he was actively engaged in class through absorption, which accounted for his largely quiet and seemingly non-participatory behavior, especially in the early weeks of class.

I shared some of my interpretation of Liam's behavior with Vanessa during our final interview. She seemed both interested in hearing about my interpretation and relieved when I assured her that his behavior was developmentally appropriate as well as common.

Adrienne: I noticed that when I was watching [Liam] that he started out being a little more observant.

Vanessa: Yeah. Now I was curious if that was his age or personality?

Adrienne: I see a lot of that from kids that are right around [Liam's] age. Parents will say things like, "Oh he doesn't do anything in class but as soon as we leave he will sing all the songs" or "They don't sing in class but they sing all the time at home." It is very possible that he was processing what was going on. That he was absorbing during class.

Vanessa: So, soaking it all up?

Adrienne: Exactly. Children are like sponges, right? . . . Every kid is different and all of those behaviors are developmentally appropriate.

Vanessa: Okay, yeah that makes sense. (Interview Three)

As we talked, Vanessa made a connection to Liam's behavior in other learning environments. She explained Liam's teachers at daycare said similar things about his behavior, which further suggested to me that Liam learned through observation.

Vanessa: Well you know what? We had conferences for day care last week. And [his teacher] said he doesn't talk the whole time he is there at all and he is very shy. And I

think she said something about that. That he is very observant and even if he is not participating, she can tell he is listening.

Adrienne: So that might just be the way he learns. Because that would make sense in comparison to being at the grocery store like you mentioned. [The store] is not necessarily a learning environment so his brain is free to be like, “Oh hello!”

Vanessa: Mmmhmm, right! It must be. Because there is so much stimulus going on [during class] you know? (Interview Three)

Through this discussion, I was able to share with Vanessa an alternative viewpoint from which to interpret Liam’s behavior in class. I did not get the impression that Vanessa had thought about Liam’s behavior in this way before or that Nora had shared similar insights with Vanessa via Liam’s progress report or conversation, though the FAQ sheet for class did explain that children observing during class was normal and appropriate behavior.

### **“Oh, he does?”: Recognizing Liam’s Musical Behaviors**

Liam’s musical progress in music class included his purposeful vocal and movement responses to musical activities. When I talked with Vanessa about Liam’s behavior in class, she sometimes indicated that she had not noticed the same behaviors as I had.

Adrienne: I have noticed that he always engages during “Rocket Ship” when we throw the scarves at the end. He will hold [a scarf], waiting the whole time and then after everyone is done he... [mimics throwing a scarf in the air]

Vanessa: Oh, he does? (laughs) I haven’t noticed that. That’s cool! I notice you catch a lot more than I would just sitting with him. (Interview Two)

Later, in our final conversation, Vanessa shared she had noticed some of Liam’s musical behaviors in class, but only after I shared my own observations.

Adrienne: I saw Liam do more vocalizing in class since we last spoke. Especially when we dropped something like [sang a V-I cadential pattern]. Did you notice that?

Vanessa: I did notice that he did some stuff, yeah. He especially understood that he took that little beanbag and dropped it at the end of the song or whatever. You know what I mean? He was starting to get some of that.

Adrienne: Yeah right. And often movement will precede vocal responses. But moving tells me that [a child] is thinking about what is happening musically.

Vanessa: Yeah even if they are not saying it, they are probably singing it in their head.

(Interview Three)

So, in the second half of the semester Vanessa did notice more of Liam's musical behaviors. However, while acknowledging his movement responses to music, especially dropping props in correspondence with the V-I cadential pattern, she did not confirm that she was aware of his vocal engagement in class. This finding supports that of Reese (2013):

Adults, regardless of professional expertise, seem to agree beat-related movements demonstrated by infants in play-based early childhood settings are music behaviors.

Without specialized pedagogical expertise in early childhood music, adults in this study seldom agreed vocalizations demonstrated by infants in play-based early childhood settings were music. (p. 63)

It seemed as though Vanessa was not fully aware of the amount of musical progress that Liam made over the course of the semester in class, especially vocally. However, it was not surprising given my pedagogical expertise in early childhood music, that I would notice more of Liam's musical behaviors than a parent without similar experiences.

## Summary

Before the start of this study, Vanessa enjoyed and engaged with music informally through listening, singing, and dancing with her child. Though she did not have a great deal of formal musical experience, she provided a rich musical home environment for Liam and regularly used music in her parenting. Vanessa enrolled in music class in order to support Liam's language learning via his interest in music. In class, she provided subtle and gentle encouragement and acknowledged Liam's efforts, which contributed to his musical, social, and language development over the semester. Vanessa enjoyed her music class experience, especially seeing Liam learn and have fun. Though she was satisfied with her experience, she had hoped to make stronger connections with other parents. After attending class, Liam began singing more often at home and Vanessa started to use music as a means to manage Liam's behavior, soothe, or distract him. She also learned new songs and chants in class that she used at home. While she did not readily identify ways in which she personally benefitted or learned in music class, Vanessa's journal entries suggested she informally learned about and incorporated musical patterning into her musical parenting and seemed to interact more musically with Liam, whereas before attending class, she more often performed music for him. Lastly, Vanessa and I had different interpretations of Liam's behaviors in class, and I noticed more musical behaviors from Liam in class than did Vanessa.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: MUSICAL PARENTING EXAMINED THROUGH BRONFENBRENNER'S BIOECOLOGICAL THEORY OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

In this chapter, I discuss how each participant's musical parenting is shaped by contextual and personal factors using Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory of human development as a lens. I begin by reviewing the central tenets of the theory and providing an explanation of how the theory was applied to the data of this study. I then discuss how each of the components of the Process-Person-Context-Time or PPCT model, around which the theory is built, serve to shape each participants' musical parenting choices and behaviors. When presenting each participants' case through the lens, I will draw attention to the ways in which parents' personal characteristics, environment, experiences, and music class enrollment interact with and shape their musical parenting.

### **Application of the Bioecological Theory of Human Development**

The bioecological theory of human development is the final iteration of Bronfenbrenner's theoretical work that he first introduced as the ecology of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The most current theory is centered around the PPCT model and the "dynamic, interactive relationships among them" (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, p. 994). For this study, I used this theory to shed light on how each participant's continuing development as a musical parent was shaped by the four components of the PPCT model. Specifically, I considered how each participants' musical interactions with their child (Process) were influenced by their personal characteristics and musical background (Person), immediate and distal environments including music class (Context), and the time periods in which they occur (Time).

Of the four components of the theory, Process and what Bronfenbrenner identifies as proximal processes are most central. Proximal processes are "progressively more complex

reciprocal interaction between an active evolving biopsychological human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate environment” (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998).

In this study, the processes of interest were the participants’ musical interactions. Through interviews, examination of participants journals, and visiting their homes, I gathered information on participants’ recollections of familial musical interactions during childhood, the musical interactions they had with their children prior to enrolling in music class, and any changes that occurred in their musical interactions with their children after participating in music class.

The Person component of the PPCT model includes personal characteristics of three types. Force characteristics include those related to one’s personality and motivations. Resource characteristics include a person’s abilities, experiences, knowledge or skill. Lastly, demand characteristics are those that impact how people interact with you in social settings. In this study, I will examine how each of these types of personal characteristics shape participants’ musical parenting and experiences in music class, with a focus on attitudes and motivations about music participation (force characteristics), musical background and experiences (resource characteristics), and perceived race, gender, age, and socioeconomic status (demand characteristics).

The Context component of the PPCT is divided into four systems presented as concentric circles representing the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems, with the individual at the center (see figure 2). For this study, I focused on the microsystem, which is the inner most system and includes the settings in which a person directly interacts. I will discuss music class, *EIO*, and the home environment as microsystems. Connections between different microsystems form the mesosystem. At this level of context, I explore the ways *EIO*, music class, and the home, influence and shape one another. The exosystem consists of contexts with which the developing



person does not directly interact but that still influence their development. Here, I consider the influence of media and consumer trends that shaped families' musical home environment. Finally, the macrosystem includes belief systems that are part of the culture of the developing person (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Here I address participants' beliefs about music that may be influenced by larger cultural ideas.

The last component of the PPCT model, time, is further divided into micro-, meso-, and macrotime. Microtime addresses what interactions or proximal processes are happening in the moment, mesotime relates to the consistency of interactions over time, and macrotime is social or historical time (Bronfenbrenner, 2001). For this component, I primarily address macrotime to discuss how generational trends related to parenting, media, and technology may influence participants' musical parenting.

When using this theory as a lens, I centered the parent as the developing person rather than the child. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) defined human development as “the phenomenon of continuity and change in the biopsychological characteristics of human beings, both as individuals and as groups. The phenomenon extends over the life course, across successive generations, and through historical time, both past and future” (p. 793). Human beings continually develop from birth until death. Parents are continually developing and adjusting their parenting practices because of experiences and interactions. Therefore, adults, and in this case parents, can be viewed as a developing person capable of change and growth.

### **Kate's Musical Parenting PPCT Model**

Kate's musical parenting was shaped by her personal music experiences, her involvement with *EIO*, cultural and societal trends (especially those related to technological advances), and her music class experience. A chart representing salient factors that shaped Kate's musical

parenting modeled after a musical interpretation of the PPCT model conceived by Ilari (2017) is below (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4**

*PPCT Model (Bronfenbrenner, 2001) Representing the Personal and Contextual Factors that Shape Kate's Musical Parenting*

<u>Process</u>	<u>Person</u>
<p><b>Musical Interactions during Childhood</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recalled being sung to by parent</li> <li>Parent created songs</li> </ul> <p><b>Musical Interactions with Child Prior to Study</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Music listening: Children's music</li> <li>Use of technology and media (YouTube, Television, Movies)</li> <li>Improvised songs to accompany routines</li> </ul> <p><b>New or More Frequent Musical Interactions After Attending Class</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Listening to and singing with class recordings</li> <li>Music used to soothe and aid in transitions</li> <li>Increased active music making</li> <li>Movement from praise to imitation of musical behaviors</li> </ul>	<p><b>Resource Characteristics: Musical Background</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Little involvement in school music or music making during childhood</li> <li>Perceived lack of ability (unable to read music)</li> <li>No formal involvement with music as an adult.</li> <li>Enjoys music listening (Older Rock Music)</li> </ul> <p><b>Demand Characteristics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>White</li> <li>Woman</li> <li>Age: 30</li> <li>Mother/Stay-at-home Parent</li> <li>SES – Some College, Poverty</li> </ul> <p><b>Force Characteristics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Motivated to engage in music to help with parent-child communication</li> <li>Strong advocate and protector of child</li> <li>Self-conscious</li> </ul>
<u>Context</u>	<u>Time</u>
<p><b>Microsystem:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Musical Home Environment: Kate and Layla (James and Matt)</li> <li>Involvement with <i>EIO</i> (services for Layla, experiences with ASD diagnosis)</li> <li>Kate and Layla's music class engagement and interactions with other class members</li> </ul> <p><b>Mesosystem:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Home and Music Class (goals, Benefits, valuable aspects of class, changes at home)</li> <li><i>EIO</i> and Home (Motivation to enroll in class)</li> </ul> <p><b>Exosystem:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Technological Advances</li> <li>Media</li> </ul> <p><b>Macrosystem:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beliefs: Extramusical benefits of music (language/ "intonations", academic/learning)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Microtime:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parent and child class engagement</li> <li>Parent and child musical behaviors at home</li> </ul> <p><b>Mesotime:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased music interactions in the home over time</li> <li>Music class became part of the weekly routine</li> <li>Music class recordings became part of daily routine</li> </ul> <p><b>Macrotime:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marketing of musical products and media content geared toward children</li> <li>Parenting trends: Accomplishment of Natural Growth (Lareau, 2011)</li> </ul>

## **Kate's Musical Background, Motivations, and Demographic Characteristics: The Person Component of the PPCT Model**

Personal characteristics including a person's skills, knowledge, and motivations are influential to development, because they shape a developing person's interactions with others as well as how they navigate different environments. Kate's personal characteristics, especially her musical background and her motivations for engaging with music at home and enrolling in class, shaped her music class experience and overall musical parenting in a number of ways. A person's resource characteristics include their "ability, experience, knowledge, and skill required for the effective functioning of proximal processes at a given stage of development" (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, p. 995). Kate's early musical experiences and the musical skills and knowledge she subsequently acquired from those experiences shaped her future musical interactions or proximal processes with Layla. First, Kate's recollections of her mother singing to her may have shaped how she used music in her own parenting. Kate recalled being sung to by her parent and noted that her mother used to "always sing little silly songs, like make up things about what she was doing and stuff" (Interview One).

Kate's own engagement with Layla at home were similar to the musical interactions she had with her own mother. Kate shared that she sang to Layla often and regularly would "make up silly songs as [Layla and she were] doing stuff" (Interview One). This demonstrates the interplay between proximal processes and personal characteristics. Interactions that happen regularly between a developing person and someone to whom they are close, in this case Kate's mother singing to her and creating silly songs, become a resource for that developing person that later influences their interactions with others.

Kate's musical background may have contributed to her having extramusical rather than musical goals for her class participation and no explicit hopes for Layla's musical future. It also may have contributed to her initial discomfort in music class. In addition to her familial music experiences as a child, Kate's resource characteristics were comprised of her limited formal musical background and somewhat negative school music experiences. Her involvement in school music made her feel as if she was not able to engage successfully in playing an instrument because of her inability to read music notation and led Kate not to participate in formal musical activities as an adult. Kate's goals for her class participation were extramusical, including supporting Layla's language development and socialization. She made no mention of a desire to support Layla's musical development, aside from an off-handed comment that "maybe [Layla] could learn to read music" (Kate, Interview One). While positive experiences with music might lead a parent to enroll their child in music classes in order to cultivate their talent or musical skills, as parents in previous research have noted (Ilari, 2013; Rodriguez, 2019; Youm, 2013), parents with more limited musical experiences or negative experiences may enroll in music classes for other reasons.

When I spoke with Kate about her hopes for Layla's engagement with music in the future, she expressed a desire to help Layla explore her musical interests, saying that she hoped to "find what she loves soon, so [she] could help her go with it," but did not wish to force her music participation (Interview One). Again, it seemed that Kate's past musical experiences did not motivate her to pursue Layla's musical involvement actively.

Finally, Kate's sense that she lacked musical ability also could have contributed to her initial discomfort engaging in class activities. Kate reflected in our second interview on her initial reaction to class activities saying, "the first couple of classes were like, *okay* I'm not doing

that” (Interview Two). Overall Kate’s limited personal musical background did not lead her to total disengagement from music, but it seemed to draw her focus away from music specific goals and caused her some discomfort in music class.

Although Kate outwardly had similar traits as other adults in music class with regard to her race, parental status, age, and gender, she felt that she was different from other parents in class, which contributed to her self-conscious feelings in class and may have influenced how she managed Layla’s behavior. Demand characteristics are “easily noted qualities of a developing person that can invite or discourage reactions from the social environment” (Rosa & Tudge, 2013, p. 253). Kate, like the majority of other caregivers who accompanied their children in music class, was a White woman in her 30s. She also was a stay-at-home mother, as were several other adults who brought their children to music class. Despite these similarities, Kate spoke about feeling self-conscious around other parents because of her age, and explained that she felt the other parent in class “were more adultier” than she was (Interview Three). Kate connected this to feelings of insecurity related to her becoming a mother at the age of 19. She further explained that she felt insecure about her general appearance in class, saying that “people come in to class] looking all nice with makeup on an everything” (Interview Three). It is also possible that Kate’s socioeconomic status contributed to these feelings. Kate’s perception of other adults in class as being different from her influenced her minimal attempts to socialize with other parents. She did not feel motivated to make connections with other parents in class: as she put it, “I got my circle” (Kate, Interview Three).

Out of all of the parents in the study, Kate was the most hesitant to let Layla freely move around the room. Kate’s feeling that she was “less adult” and “the young one out” in music class also may have contributed to her anxious feelings when Layla would wander the room or take

manipulatives from people (Interview Three). She also revealed that she felt self-conscious engaging in activities when Layla was not close by, saying that she hoped that other people did not make eye contact with her while she was modeling for Layla. Although Kate's uncertainty might have impacted her experience in class because it shaped her behavior, I did not get the impression that she was treated differently by other parents or staff.

Lastly, while Kate identified as White, she identified her partner James and Layla as being African American/Caucasian. Beyond sharing that Layla and her dad were a different race than she was, she never discussed if or how race played a role in her parenting, in music class, or her family. Therefore, it was unclear how Layla or Kate's race might have shaped their music class experience or experiences in other contexts.

### **Interrelations Between Kate's Settings: Context Component**

The microsystems, or contexts and the settings with which Kate and Layla interacted including the *EIO*, home, and music class were important contributors to Kate's musical parenting behaviors and choices. If Layla had not been receiving services through *EIO*, which partnered with the early childhood music program to offer music classes to children identified as having developmental delays, it is unlikely that Kate would have chosen to enroll in a music class, as she was unaware of the early childhood music program prior to hearing about it through *EIO*.

Adrienne: Tell me about how you found out about the early childhood music classes and how you came to be a part of them.

Kate: [Layla] goes through *EIO* because she has been working on her speech and stuff.

Adrienne: Had you heard of the music classes before?

Kate: Nope. We are brand new. (Interview One)

Layla's interest in music had been observed by therapists at *EIO*, who then helped enroll Kate and Layla in music class in order to support Layla's language learning. Kate's primary motivation for attending music class was to encourage Layla's language development and communication skills.

By examining Kate's experiences at the mesosystem level, or interrelations between her immediate contexts including home, the *EIO*, and music class, I was able to see more clearly how Kate's focus on supporting Layla's language development was shaped, in part, by her experience with *EIO*, and, consequently, how that focus shaped Kate's goals for and perceptions in her music class. Kate believed that music class would benefit Layla's speech, in part, because Layla's *EIO* therapist felt music class would help Layla, "because of the intonations" (Interview One). This belief is what led Kate to enroll in music class with the primary goal of supporting Layla's language development.

Kate's focus on Layla's language development as a result of her interactions with *EIO* also influenced what she ultimately valued about music class, what she viewed as the benefits of her and Layla's participation, and what she incorporated into her musical parenting at home. After the conclusion of class, Kate noted that Layla would change the pitch of her voice when trying to communicate and that she "was really getting the intonations [from class recordings]" (Interview Three). Kate also was excited about Layla's increased focus and eye contact in music class, which prompted Kate to use songs and chants from music class at home, such as when she chanted "Rocket Ship" during Layla's baths and Layla would "give [Kate] eye contact the whole time which was huge for her" (Interview Two). It is possible that Kate's focus on Layla's language skills also contributed to Kate's desire for there to be more familiar children's songs used in class so that Layla would be motivated to participate vocally. In our second interview,

after suggesting that class include more nursery rhymes or “well-known” songs, she added, “You know like the common songs with hand motions? [Layla] has been doing those a lot at home. That’s the reason I [suggested it].” (Interview Two). Kate’s desire to support Layla’s language development through music is an example of how mesosystem level interrelation between contexts, in this case home, music class, and *EIO* shaped Kate’s goals for music class, her perception of Layla’s behaviors in that class, and what Kate valued about her music class experience.

It is unlikely Kate would have enrolled in music classes without financial assistance. Kate’s home environment, specifically her socioeconomic status as well as her affiliation with *EIO*, played a role in her enrollment in this study, as well as in music class. Kate’s reported annual income of \$25,000 placed her family under the poverty level. Because Kate was able to attend music class through *EIO*, the cost of the class was greatly reduced. All participants also were given an additional semester of music classes at no cost because of their participation in this study. Kate expressed excitement about being able to enroll in music class at a discounted rate or no cost at one point jokingly asking, “Can I just keep enrolling in studies so we can come to music class for free?” (Interview Three). The early childhood music program did offer financial assistance to those in need, and I provided Kate with information on how to apply in the future. In this case, it seemed that the financial assistance provided by *EIO* as well as the incentives from this study contributed to Kate’s ability to enroll in music class for this semester and in the future.

Kate’s experiences with *EIO* as well as with medical contexts, including interactions with doctors and therapists as she navigated Layla’s developmental challenges, shaped Kate’s parenting and her behaviors in music class as well. Kate noted that Layla was, “standoffish with



adults because of all the doctors she's been to" (Interview One). Kate also shared her own feelings of frustration and, to some extent, inadequacy surrounding her experience in diagnosing Layla with autism spectrum disorder. She expressed that the process left her feeling like she, "should feel bad for not trying harder" and that some of the doctors, "[were] just kind of jerks" (Interview Three). Though she did appreciate the services she received from *EIO*, she still felt that she needed more support to help Layla. "They are more like idea people. They can tell me ideas until they are blue in the face, but if she doesn't want to do it then it's like, 'well, I tried!'" (Interview Three).

Kate's experiences in other settings cause her to bring feelings of fear surrounding intervention, Layla's developmental challenges, and experts into the music class setting. At first, she was nervous about Layla's behavior in class, noting that she was "scared when [Layla] would take things from people," and she felt the need to manage her behavior (Interview Two). Over time, as she saw that "everyone was cool" about children being free to wander and play with materials, and she learned to "go with the flow," though Kate continued to manage Layla's behavior and prompt her to stay close by throughout the semester (Interview Two). Kate also expressed surprise and delight about Layla's social behavior in class, especially her interactions with adults saying, "She loves Ms. Nora" (Interview Two). Unlike some of her other experiences with interventions or ways that she tried to help Layla in other settings Kate noted that, "[Layla] seemed to open up with music" (Interview Three) and that, "she was really happy to go and happy to be there" (Interview Two). Layla's positive social behaviors were a welcome surprise for Kate, and she attributed them in part to the music class being different from other settings such as therapy or doctor's visits, where "all the attention is on [Layla] and *making* her do something" (Interview Two).

Kate's musical background and use of music at home colored her experience in music class. At home Kate primarily listened to and sang "simple nursery rhymes" with Layla (Interview One). She noted that children's music, most of which Kate played from popular children's music YouTube channels, was Layla's favorite type of music. She came into music class with the expectation that class would feature similar music that both she and Layla would recognize. In our conversations, she expressed that she had expected music class to include more "normal" or "well-known" nursery rhymes (Interview Two). She explained that the unfamiliar musical content in class cause her to be less participatory in the early weeks of class saying "*I'm not doing that.*" She grew more comfortable over time in class and eventually felt confident to engage in most activities saying, "I got it by the end," though she continued to suggest the inclusion of songs and activities with which she was familiar (Interview Three). She also thought it would be helpful to have a meeting at the start of the semester to share songs that children enjoy so they might be incorporated into class. This might have strengthened the connection between Kate's home and music class by helping Kate bring what she enjoyed doing at home into the music class experience.

Just as Kate's experiences at home shaped her music class experiences, her participation in music classes also shaped her musical interactions with Layla outside of class. After enrolling in class, Kate developed new musical parenting tools, including using music as a tool to ease transitions. Kate began to sing and play class recordings, which were among the most valuable aspects of class for Kate, when driving. She also moved from more passive music listening to active engagement in at-home, musical interactions with Layla, such as singing and moving along with their favorite songs including class recordings. Finally, she began to notice and imitate Layla's musical behaviors at home in addition to just acknowledging them verbally. Prior

to class Kate explained that, when Layla would sing, she would encourage her to “sing it out” (Interview One) but, after attending class she noted that, when Layla sang, she “copied it right away” (Interview Three). This is perhaps the strongest evidence in Kate’s case for how context influences proximal processes and, ultimately, development. By exploring how different contexts shaped Kate’s music class experience at the mesosystem level, it became clearer how each of the microsystems in which Kate interacted including her home, *EIO*, and music class were interconnected and together shaped Kate’s musical parenting.

Exosystem factors, including technological advances and media, played a significant role in Kate’s musical parenting. While Kate primarily had used CDs to listen to music when she had her first child, Kate made regular use of modern technology including smartphones, internet connected televisions, and an Xbox to listen to music, which was the primary way she engaged with music at home. Kate repeatedly confirmed that she, “[had] music on all day on the TV” (Interview Three). Most of the music to which Kate listened and that she later performed for and with Layla was accessed through “YouTube. It’s all about YouTube” (Interview Two). Whether it was television, movies, or music, Kate and Layla’s media consumption was focused largely on children’s music, or what Kate identified as “[Layla’s] music” (Interview One), especially music found on YouTube channels including “Dave and Anna,” “Super Simple Songs,” and “Cocomelon” (Interview Two).

### **Zeitgeist: Influence for Kate of the Macrosystem and Macrotime**

Macrotime “focuses on the changing expectations and events in the larger society, both within and across generations” (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006, p. 796), while the macrosystem accounts for how overarching cultural beliefs and ideologies may influence a developing person (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Koops (2019) asserts that, “parenting is culturally situated because

parents take their cues from their own families of origin, other families with similar aged children in their social circles, and many forms of media including television, movies, books, magazines, websites and social media” (p. 3). As part of her recent investigation into the musical lives of families, Koops (2019) completed an ethnographic content analysis of “media messaging surrounding parents and music as represented in 15 popular press parenting books and five parenting websites” (p. 11). Among her six themes from this analysis was a theme centered around the benefits of music involvement for children. Koops (2019) noted that popular parenting websites often highlighted extramusical benefits of music.

Across the five websites I analyzed, connections to music and brain development were most frequent among the BabyCenter articles, with references to how the study of music assists memory, reading literacy, and math skills; brain wiring; decreased anxiety and increased maturity; emotional development; and memorization of facts such as the times table. The lists of benefits of music often emphasized extramusical uses of music (Koops, 2019, p. 112).

Koops’ (2019) analysis suggests that parents in the United States are being presented with this information regularly by mass media and that these beliefs are a part of modern culture. As discussed previously, this trend often is traced back to the Mozart effect and is associated with a boom in media and products designed to help children learn and grow academically through music, which been identified as commodified babyhood or edutainment by music researchers (Ilari, 2011; Young, 2008).

Cultural beliefs related to parenting and music, including those described above, may have impacted Kate’s thinking about music as well as her parenting behaviors. Kate’s belief that music participation would help Layla with language development as well as “studying and all

kinds of stuff” aligned with the cultural belief that music instruction and participation has extramusical benefits associated with learning and academic achievement (Interview One). This belief and the associated boom in marketing of media and products specifically geared toward parents of young children also may have influenced Kate’s tendency to predominantly play children’s music for Layla at home.

Parenting practices and approaches in Western societies have changed significantly over time (Alwin, 2004), so using Bronfenbrenner’s conception of macrotime helps to highlight what contemporary parenting practices may shape participants’ musical parenting choices. Some of Kate’s musical parenting behaviors seemed to align with what Lareau (2011) identified as accomplishment of natural growth. In an ethnographic study that examined parenting practices among working- and middle-class families, Lareau (2011) found that working-class parents often provided their children with long periods of unstructured time rather than enrolling their children in a series of extracurricular activities. Although Kate did enroll Layla in music class, she did so because of the suggestion of the *EIO* and otherwise would have been unlikely to enroll. Layla did not attend daycare, and Kate did not mention any other organized activities in which they engaged aside from services offered by *EIO*. When I visited Kate’s home, Layla seemed comfortable and capable of occupying herself, suggesting she was accustomed to having unstructured downtime. One of the ways that Layla entertained herself was by watching her favorite children’s music YouTube channels.

### **Christy’s Musical Parenting PPCT Model**

Christy musical parenting also was shaped by her own musical experiences and personal characteristics, Alyssa’s personal characteristics including her interest in music, both her immediate environments and influences of larger contexts especially media, as well as her music

class experiences. Figure 5 is a graphic representing important influences on Christy's musical parenting. Christy's lack of opportunities to participate in music activities as a child partially

**Figure 5**

*PPCT Model (Bronfenbrenner, 2001) Representing the Personal and Contextual Factors that Shape Christy's Musical Parenting*

<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Process</u></b></p> <p><b>Musical Interactions during Childhood</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No recollection of family music making</li> </ul> <p><b>Musical Interactions with Child Prior to Study</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of technology and media (YouTube, Television, Movies)</li> <li>Singing</li> <li>Created music for routines (Bedtime)</li> <li>Child-led musical play</li> </ul> <p><b>New or More Frequent Musical Interactions After Attending Class</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased creation and improvisation during musical play</li> <li>Understanding of and use of musical patterns</li> <li>New ways to join in on child's music making</li> <li>Increased inclusion of music into everyday tasks</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Person</u></b></p> <p><b>Resource Characteristics: Musical Background</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of involvement in school music or music making during childhood</li> <li>No formal involvement with music as an adult.</li> <li>Music listening centered around children's music</li> </ul> <p><b>Demand Characteristics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>White</li> <li>Woman</li> <li>Age: 37</li> <li>Stay-At-Home Mother</li> <li>SES – Middle Income, Associates Degree</li> </ul> <p><b>Force Characteristics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Motivated by child's interest in music</li> <li>Patient</li> <li>Calm</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Context</u></b></p> <p><b>Microsystem:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Musical Home Environment: Christy and Alyssa (Bill and Jacob)</li> <li>Involvement with <i>EIO</i> (services for Alyssa's sensory processing issues, <i>EIO</i> playgroup)</li> <li>Music Class: Interactions between Christy, Alyssa, and others</li> </ul> <p><b>Mesosystem:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Home and Music Class (goals, benefits, valuable aspects of class, changes at home)</li> <li><i>EIO</i> and Home (Suggestion to enroll in class)</li> </ul> <p><b>Exosystem:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Technological Advances</li> <li>Media</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Time</u></b></p> <p><b>Microtime:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parent and child class engagement</li> <li>Parent and child musical behaviors at home</li> </ul> <p><b>Mesotime:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More variety in music making at home over time</li> <li>Music class became part of the weekly routine</li> </ul> <p><b>Macrotime:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marketing of musical and media content toward children</li> <li>Middle class parenting trends: Concerted Cultivation (Lareau, 2011)</li> </ul>

motivated her to provide Alyssa with a chance to explore her musical interests. She wanted Alyssa to have opportunities that she did not have as a child. This ultimately contributed to what she noticed about Alyssa's musical development in class. Though she enrolled in music class at the suggestion of *EIO* staff, her motivations for music involvement were not primarily related to Alyssa's overall development and instead were focused partly on exploration of Alyssa's musical interest and enjoyment. Christy's focus on Alyssa's musical enjoyment influenced their musical play at home and in class, with Christy often allowing Alyssa to take the lead and explore her own musical interests. Though Christy's focus primarily was on Alyssa and her experience, Christy's involvement in music class shaped her musical interactions with Alyssa at home by providing her with new ideas for how to musically interact with Alyssa and incorporate music into everyday tasks. Christy's musical parenting was shaped further by cultural trends surrounding how media and technology are marketed toward parents of young children. Finally, Christy exhibited behaviors associated with contemporary Western middle-class parenting beliefs or concerted cultivation including a tendency to keep Alyssa busy and provide her with opportunities to socialize (Lareau, 2011).

### **Christy's Person Component**

Christy's musical background, or resource characteristics, contributed to her musical parenting by informing her decisions on what musical opportunities to provide for Alyssa. It seemed that Christy's lack of musical experiences was, in part, what motivated her to provide more musical opportunities for Alyssa. Christy also did not recall being sung to by her parents as a child or engaging with music making at home. Christy was interested in music as a child but "never had the opportunity" to learn an instrument or take private lessons (Interview One), so she wanted to be sure that Alyssa has the opportunities that she had missed as a child. Christy's

desire to provide these opportunities for Alyssa superseded fulfilling her own musical needs. Rather than seeking out opportunities for herself or focusing on her own music enjoyment as an adult, Christy's focus shifted to Alyssa's interest in music and providing her musical opportunities. Christy noted that, instead of learning an instrument as an adult, she would, "rather have [Alyssa] do it" (Interview One). Wanting to provide Alyssa with an opportunity to explore her musical interests and to "see if [music class was] something that [Alyssa] really enjoys" was one of Christy's primary motivations for enrolling in music class.

Christy's musical parenting and the musical home environment she cultivated were shaped not only by her personal background and characteristics, but also by Alyssa's personal characteristics, including her interest in music. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) assert that personal characteristics of people within microsystems, such as the family home, including "parents, relatives, close friends, teachers, mentors, co-workers, spouses, or others who participate in the life of the developing person on a fairly regular basis over extended periods of time" also shape development (p. 995). Force characteristics are the type of personal characteristics that Bronfenbrenner believed had the greatest potential to influence development, because they could set proximal processes into motion (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). It seemed that one of Alyssa's force characteristics was her natural affinity for music. Christy expressed that Alyssa had "always responded really well to music" (Interview One), that she loved singing and dancing, and that "she usually [started]" their musical interactions and play" (Interview Two). This aspect of Alyssa's personality shaped Christy's musical parenting. It seemed that, rather than modeling her musical parenting after her own experiences as a child, Christy chose to include music into her parenting to support Alyssa's natural interest in and enjoyment of music. Overall, it seemed that Christy's musical parenting was shaped by her



desire to provide Alyssa with opportunities that she did not have herself, but also by Alyssa's personal characteristics, in this case her interest in music. Together, both Christy's resource characteristics and Alyssa's force characteristics prompted Christy to create a rich musical home environment, despite Christy's not having had similar musical experiences during childhood.

Although Alyssa was highly participatory in music class and demonstrated musical growth over the course of the semester, Christy seemed unaware of Alyssa's musical development in class. It is possible that Christy's personal experiences, including her musical resource characteristics, such as her limited experiences with and knowledge about music as well as her force characteristics, such as her motivations for enrolling in class, may have prevented her from recognizing Alyssa's music responses and development in class. Christy's goals for her and Alyssa's music class participation were focused on exploration/enjoyment of music and helping to calm and re-center Alyssa rather than a hope that music class would help Alyssa develop musically. Christy never indicated that she hoped that music class would serve to cultivate Alyssa's musical growth. Also, because Christy did not have an extensive musical background, she may have misinterpreted Alyssa's musical responses in class as something else, such as speech. In line with her goals and experience, after participating in music classes Christy reflected that "[Alyssa] sure had fun" but she "didn't notice" some of her vocal musical behaviors that I observed during classes (Interview Three).

Throughout our conversations, Christy always indicated that she felt comfortable in class and that her experience and interactions with others in class were positive. She always expressed ease about engaging in class activities. Through our conversations, I gathered that Christy regularly spent time around other parents of young children through volunteering at her son's school, so being around parents of young children in the context of music class was likely a

context in which Christy felt comfortable. As a White, middle-class woman and stay-at-home mother in her thirties, Christy's demand characteristics placed her into similar demographic categories as other parents who attended music class, especially since the class that participants attended was held on a weekday afternoon in a city that was 74.9% White (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). Although she never explicitly discussed commonalities she had with other class members as contributing to her comfort, it is possible that Christy's demand characteristics, including her gender, age, parental status, and race, contributed to her comfort in music class.

### **Interplay Between Christy's Contexts**

By looking at the mesosystem, Bronfenbrenner (1977) proposed that researchers can examine how a person's immediate settings, known as their microsystems, interact and consequently shape development. Christy's decision to enroll in music class, as well as her hope that music class would be calming for Alyssa, were linked with her involvement with *EIO*. Prior to enrolling in class, Alyssa received services through *EIO* for her sensory processing disorder. Christy enrolled in music class because of the suggestion of a therapist at *EIO* who led the weekly playgroup that Alyssa and Christy attended. Without this recommendation, it is unlikely that Christy would have enrolled in music class. Christy was aware of the early childhood music program prior to enrolling, because one of her neighbors was a teacher in the program. However, she did not consider joining until it was suggested by *EIO* staff as something that might benefit Alyssa in navigating her sensory processing disorder. Christy believed that music had the potential to be calming for Alyssa, which was a belief that seemed to stem in part from her own experiences with Alyssa and also because *EIO* recommended they attend music class. This belief informed Christy's hope that music class might help "calm and re-center [Alyssa]" (Interview

One). Christy's involvement in one context, in this case *EIO*, shaped her experience in music class.

Christy's musical home environment and music class mutually shaped one another. Christy's willingness to allow Alyssa to guide and initiate musical interactions at home translated to her engagement with music activities and Alyssa during music class. In class, Christy balanced letting Alyssa explore musically and interacting with her, at times after Alyssa's specific request. Their dynamic at home was reflected in how they engaged and participated with one another in class.

Christy and Alyssa's participation in music class shaped their home environment, because Christy gained new skills and understandings that resulted in her musically interacting with Alyssa at home in new ways. After enrolling in class, Christy reflected that her involvement in music class prompted her to add music to everyday tasks that she engaged in with Alyssa. "I learned that you can make a song out of almost anything" (Interview Three). She also discovered more ways to "encourage [Alyssa] if she started singing" by joining in through tapping a beat or adding to the music making in some way (Interview Three). She expressed that this discovery resulted in more musical interaction between them outside of class. This is important, because Bronfenbrenner stressed that proximal processes, or interactions between persons or objects that "occur on a fairly regularly basis over extended periods of time," are the primary forces that drive development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, p. 996). Therefore, participation in music class prompted Christy to engage in new types of musical interactions with Alyssa, which had the potential to become important to both Christy's development as a musical parent and Alyssa's musical development. Although Christy did not readily identify some shifts in her and Alyssa's home environment, I noticed that she learned about and began incorporating musical

patterns into her musical play with Alyssa. I also noted that both her and Alyssa's play engaged in more improvisatory music making over the course of the semester.

Contexts in which a developing person does not directly interact but still influence development, including mass media and technology, comprise the exosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). At this level of context, readily available technology, including smartphones, smart speakers, and television, and easily accessible media geared toward children, including YouTube channels, contributed significantly to the Christy's musical home environment. Christy and Alyssa used technology to access music that they used in a variety of ways on a daily basis.

### **The Influence of Generational Cultural Shifts on Christy's Musical Parenting: Macrotime**

The marketing of media geared toward young children in the past 20 years has contributed to a cultural shift that has had a profound impact on parenting. Beginning in the early 2000s there was an "explosion in the electronic media marketed directly at the very youngest children in our society" (Rideout, Vandewater, & Wartella, 2003, p. 2). This trend has showed no signs of slowing according to a statement from the American Association of Pediatrics (AAP) Council on Communications and Media (2016):

Technologic innovation has transformed media and its role in the lives of infants and young children. More children, even in economically challenged households, are using newer digital technologies, such as interactive and mobile media on a daily basis and continue to be the target of intense marketing. (p. 1)

These technological advances and marketing strategies have shifted how parents engage with music in their homes with their very young children (Ilari, 2011; Young 2008; Young et al., 2011).

Influence of this cultural shift was evident in Christy's home and her musical parenting approach. Christy used media, especially music, television, and movies geared toward children, to distract and entertain Alyssa while Christy completed other tasks, a trend that is identified in previous research (Young & Gillen, 2010). Media, including music accessed through streaming services such as YouTube and Amazon Music, also served as the families' primary resource for songs and music that they later recreated and used in their play.

Because "parenting is culturally constructed" (Harkness & Super, 2002, p. 253), it is bound to change because of cultural and societal shifts that occur over time. Generational shifts in parenting trends are accounted for by macrotime in the PPCT model. Parents' approach to child rearing is influenced by advice and guidance from professionals, especially among middle class families. "Professionals' advice regarding the best way to raise children has changed regularly over the last two centuries" (Lareau, 2011, p. 4). Musical parenting, much like parenting overall, is affected by shifts in generally accepted parenting practices. Some aspects of Christy's parenting suggested that she was engaged in the process of concerted cultivation that is associated with contemporary middle-class parenting (Lareau, 2011). Parents who engage in concerted cultivation typically enroll their children in structured activities through which they interact with figures of authority and have relatively little unstructured time. Christy noted on multiple occasions that "[Alyssa] definitely stays busy. She stays really active" (Interview One). She attended *EIO* playgroup, preschool, accompanied Christy when she volunteered at Jacob's school, and often socialized with other children in addition to attending weekly music classes. It is possible that engagement in concerted cultivation, specifically a desire to involve Alyssa in extracurricular activities, also contributed to Christy's interest in enrolling in music class although Christy did not explicitly identify this as one of her motivations for enrolling in class.

### **Vanessa's Musical Parenting as Seen Through the PPCT Model**

Vanessa's development as a musical parent was shaped by her own musical background and interest in music, her desire to support Liam's language development, societal beliefs surrounding music and child rearing, and her experiences in music class. A graphic representation of Vanessa's musical parenting in relation to the PPCT model is below (See Figure 6). Vanessa's and Paul's enjoyment of music contributed to the rich musical environment in their home, and Vanessa's interests in music were reflected in her musical hopes for her Liam. Vanessa's limited formal musical knowledge as well as her goals for her music class participation shaped what she noticed about Liam's musical growth in class. Her involvement with *EIO* to support Liam's language development as well as societal beliefs about the extramusical benefits of music prompted her to enroll in music class and shaped her perceptions of the benefits of music participation. Her music class experience ultimately resulted in shifts in Vanessa's musical interactions with Liam outside of class. Lastly, Vanessa's parenting practices including her thoughts about music, technology, and socialization are in some ways reflective of middle class parenting or concerted cultivation.

#### **Vanessa's Person Component**

Musical background, knowledge, and skills are personal resource characteristics that can serve to shape someone's continuing development as a musical parent. Vanessa and her husband Paul enjoyed listening to a wide variety of music, and they shared this interest with Liam through listening to music as a family as one of their primary forms of entertainment. Vanessa's musical interactions with her parents as a child informed her own musical parenting. She noted that, "[her] mom would do nursery rhymes" and sang to her and, subsequently, many of the songs she sang to Liam were ones she learned as a child (Interview One). Her musical background was

**Figure 6**

*PPCT Model (Bronfenbrenner, 2001) Representing the Personal and Contextual Factors that Shape Vanessa's Musical Parenting*

<u>Process</u>	<u>Person</u>
<p><b>Musical Interactions during Childhood</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recollection of being sung to by parents</li> </ul> <p><b>Musical Interactions with Child Prior to Study</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Music listening</li> <li>• Singing and song creation</li> <li>• Music as part of daily routines</li> <li>• Triadic interactions: Vanessa-Paul-Liam</li> </ul> <p><b>New or More Frequent Musical Interactions After Attending Class</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Musical patterning at home</li> <li>• Increased musical interaction with Liam instead of performance for him</li> <li>• Incorporation of activities from class at home</li> </ul>	<p><b>Resource Characteristics: Musical Background</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little involvement in school music or music making during childhood</li> <li>• No formal involvement with music as an adult.</li> <li>• Informal music enjoyment: concert attendance, frequent music listening</li> </ul> <p><b>Demand Characteristics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• White <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Child is Black</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Temporary limited mobility due to knee injury</li> <li>• Woman</li> <li>• Age: 36</li> <li>• Working mother</li> <li>• SES – Middle Income, Bachelor's Degree</li> </ul> <p><b>Force Characteristics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivated to support child's language development through music</li> <li>• Patient</li> </ul>
<u>Context</u>	<u>Time</u>
<p><b>Microsystem:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Musical Home Environment: Vanessa, Liam, Paul</li> <li>• Involvement with <i>EIO</i> (services to support Liam's language development)</li> <li>• Music Class: Interactions between Vanessa, Liam, and others</li> </ul> <p><b>Mesosystem:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home and Music Class (goals, benefits, valuable aspects of class, changes at home)</li> <li>• <i>EIO</i> and Home (primary motivation to enroll in class)</li> </ul> <p><b>Exosystem:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technological advances</li> <li>• Media</li> </ul> <p><b>Macrosystem:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beliefs: Extramusical benefits of music (language development)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Microtime:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent and child class engagement</li> <li>• Parent and child musical behaviors at home</li> </ul> <p><b>Mesotime:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More frequent interaction at home</li> <li>• Music class became part of the weekly routine</li> </ul> <p><b>Macrotime:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Middle class parenting trends: Concerted Cultivation (Lareau, 2011)</li> </ul>

shaped by the proximal processes that she engaged in with her own mother, and those proximal processes in turn shaped her musical interactions with Liam. This is one example of the interrelations between the process and person components of PPCT model occurring over time.

Vanessa's musical knowledge and background or resource characteristics colored what she hoped to gain by enrolling in music class. Vanessa enjoyed music, listened to music regularly, and attended musical events. However, she engaged in little formal music participation as a child or as an adult outside of her musical interactions with Liam. This lack of formal music participation, coupled with her enjoyment of music, was in line with one of her motivations to enroll in music class. Vanessa elected to attend music class with Liam, in part, because both Vanessa and Liam enjoyed music. "The fact that he loves music is what we got him involved in [music class]" (Interview One). Much like Kate and Christy, Vanessa did not express that she hoped to help Liam develop musically by attending class. So, her musical motivations for class enrollment were related to enjoyment rather than a hope that Liam would develop musically. This is in contrast to parents with extensive musical experiences who have expressed that they chose to enroll their child in an early childhood music program because of a desire to help their child develop musical skills (e.g., Rodriguez, 2019)

In some respects, Vanessa's demand characteristics were similar to those of other parents in class, which may have contributed to her comfort in the group setting. Like Kate and Christy and many of the parents who attended music class, Vanessa was a mother in her 30s. These demand characteristics placed her into similar demographic categories of many of the adults who attended music class. Although Vanessa never explicitly discussed factors such as her age or parental status, being in a group of similar people may have contributed to her consistently expressing that she felt comfortable in class. Vanessa identified as White, while she identified



Liam as Black. Although race is a demand characteristic that can impact social interactions in many contexts, including educational settings, Vanessa never discussed how her and Liam's different races influenced her parenting or her experiences in music class. Therefore, it was unclear whether race impacted Vanessa's musical parenting or music class experiences. Lastly, Vanessa's knee injury placed her at somewhat of a distance from other class members, because she sat in a chair rather than on the floor. Vanessa felt that she, "stuck out a little bit" but that "people got used to [her being] in the chair." This demand characteristic, though temporary, also may have influenced her social interactions in class.

### **The Influence of Context for Vanessa**

*EIO*, one of the microsystems in which Vanessa directly interacted, played an important role in Vanessa's experiences in other contexts, including music class. As with Christy and Kate, Vanessa's participation in music class was instigated by her involvement with *EIO*. When she found that Liam's language was slightly delayed, she was given the choice by *EIO* to "either have a speech therapist or go to this music class" (Interview One). The interrelations between *EIO* and music class at the mesosystem level served to shape Vanessa's musical parenting. It is unlikely that Vanessa would have chosen to enroll Liam in music class without the suggestion from *EIO* staff, because she was unaware of the music program prior to being enrolled through *EIO*.

Interrelations between *EIO* and music class contexts also shaped Vanessa's primary goal for her class participation and, in turn, colored Vanessa's focus during class. Supporting Liam's language development was directly related to Vanessa's *EIO* involvement and was "the biggest reason" that Vanessa enrolled with Liam in music class. This goal likely influenced what she focused on during class, which may have contributed to her lack of awareness of some of Liam's

musical behaviors. I noted that Liam purposefully moved to music and began vocally responding to music in the final weeks of class. Although Vanessa acknowledged that Liam was “doing more singing” at home, she indicated that she did not always notice his musical growth in the music class setting (Interview Three).

Vanessa’s experiences in the context of music class shaped her musical interactions with Liam at home by providing her with additional resources and ideas for how to make music with Liam. After attending music class, Vanessa found that she began using musical interactions to manage Liam’s behavior. She explained she would, “put [Liam] on [her] lap and [they] would start singing” when he was frustrated or upset and that “he [would be] better” (Interview Three). Vanessa also began incorporating activities and songs that “Liam recognized” from class into their musical interactions at home (Interview Three). Lastly, Vanessa’s journal entries suggested that she began incorporating musical patterning into her musical parenting and that she made a shift from mostly singing to Liam to singing and making music with him after participating in music class.

At the exosystem level, Vanessa used modern technology, including a smart speaker, to listen to music with Liam. Music listening was important to Vanessa’s family, and they listened to music daily. However, Vanessa did not indicate that she used media as a resource for her live musical interactions with Liam (proximal processes). Vanessa purchased and used musical toys and materials for Liam, but these played a relatively minor role in her overall musical home environment. It seemed that media and technology had some, but not an extensive, influence on Vanessa’s overall development as a musical parent.

### **Zooming Out: Macrosystem and Macrotime Factors for Vanessa**

Vanessa's idea that music participation would benefit Liam's language development may have stemmed partially from cultural beliefs about the extramusical benefits of music, accounted for at the Macrosystem level of Context in the PPCT model. Prior to *EIO* suggesting she and Liam enroll in music class, Vanessa sang a lot of nursery rhymes to Liam "because he was learning to talk" (Interview One). So, it seemed that, even before enrolling in music class, Vanessa used music as a tool to support Liam's learning. Vanessa continued to use music engagement as a learning tool after enrolling in music class. For example, she used the chant, "Popcorn" from music class to reinforce Liam's knowledge of body parts and chanted "Rocket Ship" from music class when reading (Interview Three). Parents in earlier studies noted that they used music to support children's learning (Custodero, 2006, 2009; de Vries, 2007). Again, the cultural belief that "music makes you smarter" often is associated the media's promotion of musical products promised to help children learn. However, Vanessa did not use musical products or play musical videos or recordings with Liam to support his language development. Instead, she chose to use live musical engagement by singing him songs. So, while it is possible that Vanessa's use of music as a learning tool was influenced by cultural beliefs, she could have had other reasons for using music in this way as well.

As the most highly educated and presumably affluent participant in this study, Vanessa seemed to engage in concerted cultivation, a set of middle class contemporary parenting beliefs predominantly associated with Western societies. Parents who engage in concerted cultivation tend to respond and incorporate shifting recommendations from professionals into their parenting practices (Lareau, 2011). Following this trend, Vanessa seemed to align her parenting with expert advice. One of the most notable examples of this was Vanessa's decision to not play

television shows for Liam. The AAP Council on Communications and Media (2016) discouraged the use of any screen media until children are 18-24 months of age and asserted that, “infants and toddlers cannot learn from traditional digital media as they do from interactions from caregivers” (p. 1). This policy statement also cites research that shows that watching television excessively during early childhood is associated with cognitive and language delay. Vanessa mentioned her choice to not have Liam watch television with me several times throughout our conversations and that she chose instead to play music for Liam. It seemed that Vanessa was engaging in concerted cultivation by staying informed and choosing to follow expert advice on Liam’s media consumption.

Vanessa indicated that she regarded both me and the teachers at the early childhood music program as music experts, and she often deferred to me or others when discussing her desires for her music class participation saying things like, “. . . but you guys have done the research about what is best for the kids” (Interview Two). From our conversations, I gleaned that Vanessa had read and took seriously the FAQ sheet provided to parents about music classes. On one occasion, she expressed that she had initially expected there to be more instruments in class but that, “she read in the curriculum guide that children don’t really respond well to them so it explained why you don’t do that” (Interview Two). Overall, Vanessa trusted expert advice and took the time to seek it out both in relation to music class and other aspects of child-rearing.

Lastly, parents who engage in concerted cultivation often enroll their children in structured activities, in part, to foster their social skills (Lareau, 2011). Vanessa was curious about Liam’s reserved or shy nature during music classes, and she expressed that she sometimes wished he “would go have fun” in music class (Interview Two). She also expressed that she appreciated that music class gave Liam an opportunity to “be around other kids” (Interview

Two). In our final conversation, Vanessa shared that she decided to send Liam to his preschool two days a week rather than one so he could, “interact with the other kids and learn how to socialize” (Interview Three). Vanessa’s decisions to provide Liam with structured opportunities to socialize, and that she valued his socialization opportunities in music class, further suggests that she was engaged in concerted cultivation.

### **Final Thoughts**

The bioecological theory of human development serves to demonstrate that development is complex and is shaped by a multitude of factors. One of the major assets of using the bioecological theory of human development as a lens for this study was that it pushed me to consider not just what parents gained from their class participation, but also what information, beliefs, practices, and experiences they brought with them when they entered the early childhood music class. Using this lens confirmed for me that parents enter music class settings with unique and multifaceted experiences, knowledge, and motivations that shape how they engage in classes and what they value about their experience. Envisioning each participants’ musical parenting development as a non-static, evolving process through the PPCT model helped me see not just *what* parents took away from their music class experience but *why* they learned what they did. Considering the interplay between each component of the model and that each component shapes, and is shaped by each of the other components, highlighted for me that music class was only a single piece of a complex and unique puzzle that together formed each parents’ use of music with their child.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT: CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS**

In this chapter, I discuss common themes between the participants with regard to their music class experiences and their overall approach to musical parenting. I also connect my findings to extant literature and discuss points of departure from previous research on musical parenting and parenting involvement in early childhood music classes. Although presenting each participant's unique experience was an important part of this study, examining similarities in participants' backgrounds, goals, and learning points to how contextual and personal factors shape parents' music class experiences.

### **Why Music Class?: Musical Background and Beliefs**

The first research question addressed participants' musical backgrounds, current music participation, and beliefs about music. Participants' backgrounds and beliefs informed their decision to enroll in music classes, their goals for that participation, and their musical parenting choices overall. The parents in this study had few formal music experiences and did not participate in music making as adults. However, they believed that engagement with music could provide extramusical benefits for their child. Beyond that, they valued music as a form of entertainment for themselves and their children. Participants, especially Vanessa and Kate, hoped that their participation in class, an activity that both they and their children enjoyed, would support their child's overall development through music. Each family's affiliation with *EIO* prompted their enrollment in classes, which further contributed to parents' focus on their extramusical goals related to music classes. Finally, participants' goals for their class participation were focused almost entirely on their children, rather than themselves or for the dyad.

## **Musical Backgrounds**

“I don’t really have much professional or school musical background,” Vanessa responded when I asked her to tell me about how she had been involved in music throughout her life (Vanessa, Interview One). I heard similar things from Kate and Christy as we got to know one another. Each participant had different reasons for discontinuing music participation in school. For Vanessa, continuing in band was not a priority, while for Kate, difficulty reading musical notation created a barrier to her continued participation. Christy wanted to play an instrument, such as the piano or guitar, but was not given an opportunity to do so. Kate, Christy, and Vanessa did not participate much or at all in formal music making, such as ensembles or private lessons, and none of the participants continued participating in school music beyond middle school. Similarly, while Kate and Vanessa both recalled their mother singing to them, none of the participants indicated that music making was an important part of their family lives as children.

I initially was surprised to learn that all three parents did not participate in music much as children or adults and that they did not describe their childhood homes as being musically rich. My experience as an early childhood music teacher and as someone who had spoken to many parents enrolled in music classes with their young children led me to believe that most parents involved in such programs were involved actively in music making or at least that music had been influential in their lives in some significant way. One of the potential reasons that participants in this study differed from parents in previous studies with regard to their backgrounds was because they enrolled in music classes through *EIO* and thus did not come to the class through a traditional enrollment process as parents in previous studies likely did.

Researchers have suggested that parents' musical experience matters and that those with more musical experiences engage in more musical interactions with their children than parents with less musical experience (Rodriguez, 2018; Valerio et al., 2011; Youm, 2013). Kelly and Sutton-Smith (1987) also reported that children who are raised in "musically-oriented families" (p. 41) exhibited musical behaviors earlier than children in non-musically-oriented families (Kelly & Sutton-Smith, 1987). However, as I came to know Vanessa, Kate, and Christy, I realized that, while they might not have thought of themselves as musicians and though they did not have extensive musical experiences, they were all musical parents and music played a meaningful role in their familial lives. Koops (2019) similarly found that "parents in [her] study demonstrated the ability to effectively parent musically and musically parent regardless of their musical backgrounds" (p. 30).

At the time of this study, participants all enjoyed listening to music and made music with their children, but none engaged in personal music making or considered themselves "musical people." Vanessa attended concerts and regularly listened to a wide variety of music. She also expressed an interest in learning to play piano or guitar as an adult. Neither Kate nor Christy attended musical events and, while they both expressed that they enjoyed listening to popular music, they began listening primarily to children's music after having children. Kate noted that whenever the family was at home, she let Layla listen to "her music" (Kate, Interview One) and Christy explained that after having children, "everything became kid's music" (Christy, Interview One). These findings align with those of Ilari et al. (2011), who found that several mothers shifted their music listening habits after having children, opting to play children's or classical music for their child, because they believed that it was the most appropriate choice and not because they enjoyed it themselves. It seemed that for Christy and Kate, their music listening



and involvement as adults were focused almost entirely on providing musical experiences for their children rather than for their own personal enjoyment, whereas Vanessa maintained her music listening habits and involved Liam in listening to “whatever [her and her husband] listened to” (Vanessa, Interview One).

### **Beliefs About Music and Goals for Class Participation**

All of the parents in this study valued music and used it in their parenting prior to enrolling in class, in part because their child enjoyed it. This finding supports those of Cardany (2004) who found that children’s interest and enjoyment of music was one of the primary reasons that parents chose to use music in their parenting and provide their children with musical opportunities. Vanessa frequently expressed how much Liam “[loved] music and [loved] to sing and dance” (Vanessa, Interview One), Kate noted that Layla “really liked simple songs like nursery rhymes” and that she and *EIO* staff noticed “[Layla] really [liked] music and turned everything into an instrument” in her *EIO* playgroup (Kate, Interview One), and Christy laughingly said that Alyssa loved singing so much she would “hear her through the baby monitor singing” rather than taking a nap (Christy, Interview One). As part of the partnership between *EIO* and the early childhood music program, *EIO* staff recommend children for enrollment in music class who demonstrate an interest in music and can benefit the most from it. So, the children that are part of this study likely were selected to join music class, in part, because they were musically responsive.

Each child’s enjoyment of music guided participants’ hopes for their children’s musical futures. None of the parents expressed that they would pressure or expect their child to engage in music as they grew older. Instead, they planned to continue to support their child’s musical interests if their child demonstrated a desire to be involved, and they would let their child decide

about their own musical involvement. Kate expressed that she hoped to “find what [Layla] loved so she could help her go with it” (Kate, Interview One), and Christy explained she would be happy for Alyssa to be involved in music “if she [wanted] to” (Christy, Interview One). Vanessa shared that she hoped Liam would take piano or guitar lessons, but a moment later she said she would support “whatever he [was] interested in” (Vanessa, Interview One). These findings are in alignment with Koops (2011b) and Ilari (2013), who found that parents desired to support their child’s musical interests but did not wish to force their participation in music in the future, but are in contrast to findings from Rodriguez (2019). In my previous study, parents, all of whom had extensive musical backgrounds, explained that their own positive experiences with music prompted them to strongly encourage and shape their children’s musical participation.

Participants’ musical hopes for their children further demonstrate that these parents were guided by their children’s interests rather than their own musical experiences when making musical parenting decisions.

Parents’ perception of their children’s musical interests partially shaped their goals for their music class participation. Each parent was motivated to enroll in class in part because they felt it would be an enjoyable experience for their child, a finding in alignment with Ilari’s (2013) results. Christy’s principal motivation was to allow Alyssa to explore her musical interests so she could “see if [music] was something that [Alyssa] really enjoyed” (Christy, Interview One). Although enjoyment was not a primary motivation for Kate or Vanessa, both parents shared that they were excited to participate in class, because they believed their child would have fun in class. Koops (2011b) also found enjoyment of music was a reason parents initially enrolled in an early childhood music class.

In addition to enjoyment, parents believed that music involvement could provide extramusical benefits to their child. Vanessa and Kate felt that music participation would help their children with language development. Kate attributed this belief to information she learned from Layla's speech therapist about the connection between speech intonation and music. Vanessa seemed to hold this belief prior to enrolling in a music class, in addition to having it reinforced through *EIO*, because she discussed that she sang songs with Liam to aid in his learning to talk. Perhaps she was influenced by another source of information about the link between music and language learning, such as mass media reports connecting music to intelligence. Christy noticed that music seemed to help calm Alyssa, which was helpful in navigating Alyssa's sensory processing disorder.

Parents' belief that music participation could provide their child with extramusical benefits shaped their music class goals. Both Kate and Vanessa primarily enrolled in class to support their child's language development. *EIO* suggested to both Kate and Vanessa that they enroll in music class in place of or in addition to receiving other support services for language delay. Parents had other secondary goals related to extramusical benefits of music, including Christy's hope that music class could help "calm and re-center" Alyssa, and Kate's goal of providing opportunities for Layla to socialize. Language development and socialization were also identified as goals for families in a previous study but these goals were secondary to families' musical goals (Rodriguez, 2019). The interplay between *EIO*, music class, and these individual families seemed to influence parents' goals related to extramusical benefits. Because each family enrolled in music classes through *EIO*, they may have been more focused on achieving non-musical goals, as identified by *EIO*, through music class than families who

enrolled in classes independent of *EIO* and for parents whose children did not show signs of developmental delay.

The characteristics and behaviors of individuals in a microsystem, such as a family home, can influence the behaviors and beliefs of other individuals who interact together within a setting (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). It seemed that, for all of the parents in this study, their child's characteristics, including their interest in music, enjoyment of musical activities, as well as their language delay in the case of Liam and Layla, and sensory processing disorder for Alyssa contributed to their beliefs about music and motivated their use of music in their parenting. These findings support those of other researchers who reported that parents associated numerous benefits with music participation including emotional (Cardany, 2004; Ilari et al. 2011; Pitt & Hargraves, 2017), social (Cardany, 2004; Ilari et al., 2011; Mehr, 2014; Pitt & Hargraves, 2017; Rodriguez, 2019), and cognitive and learning benefits (Ilari et al., 2011; Mehr, 2014; Rodriguez, 2019).

In speaking to each parent, I found that, beyond exploring their child's musical interests and enjoyment of music, they did not discuss musical goals for their class participation. This was in contrast to some previous research in which participants were motivated to enroll in early childhood music classes because of a desire to help their child develop musical skills and cultivate their musical talent (Ilari, 2013; Rodriguez, 2019; Youm, 2013), or to provide them with a musical advantage by getting them involved with music at an early age (Rodriguez, 2019). Researchers also have found that parents' past participation and positive experiences with music prompted them to want to provide similar experiences for their own children by enrolling them in early childhood music classes (Cardany, 2004; Rodriguez, 2019; Savage, 2015). Because all of the parents in this study had relatively little music experience, it was not surprising that they

focused more on musical enjoyment and extramusical goals than on musical development when making the decision to participate in music class.

The parents in this study had different musical backgrounds and experiences than other parents enrolled in the same program who acted as participants in my previous study (Rodriguez, 2019), all of whom had extensive musical experiences and consequently, had specific musical goals for their participation in addition to secondary goals of wanting to provide their child with socialization opportunities or develop their language skills. In all likelihood, this is because they came to enrolling in the program through *EIO* rather than specifically seeking out a music program for their child entirely on their own. As a result, these participants are not typical of most of the parents in this early childhood music program.

In congruence with past research, none of the parents in this study seemed to be motivated to enroll in class because of a desire to improve their own musical parenting skills (Koops, 2011b; Rodriguez, 2019). Parents struggled to identify goals for themselves when I asked what they hoped to gain for themselves from participating in class. After some thought, Kate expressed that she hoped to be better able to communicate with Layla after attending class, but neither Vanessa or Christy identified any specific knowledge or skill they hoped to gain from their music class experience. Contrastingly, Youm (2013) found that parents enrolled in early childhood music classes with their children desired to learn more about music development and hoped to gain musical skills, and that 19 out of 22 mothers interviewed wanted to learn more about how to interact musically with their child. However, none of the mothers in this study identified their personal goals as being a main motivation for enrolling in music class. Parents in this study may have been especially focused on their child's goals because of their enrollment in

music classes through *EIO*. Parents reasons for enrolling in music classes in this study, and in past studies, are focused on their children rather themselves.

McPherson (2009) asserted that parenting goals are shaped by values, beliefs, attitudes, and aspirations. He posited that parents' goals, as well as their perceptions of their child's interests and musical skills, among other child characteristics, influence parents' practices and behaviors. In this study, it seems that parents' beliefs about music including its extramusical benefits, and their feelings that their child enjoyed and was interested in music, all contributed to their decision to enroll their child in music classes thus supporting these aspects of McPherson's (2009) model of parent-child interactions in children's music learning.

### **Summary**

Parental experiences, beliefs, and goals were important considerations in this study, because they shaped both parents' musical engagement with their child and their experiences in classes. Christy, Vanessa, and Kate did not have formal music education backgrounds; however, they valued music because it was something that their child enjoyed and because they believed music had the potential to provide their child with benefits such as improved language capabilities or increased calm. Rather than being motivated to enroll in music class because of a desire to provide their child with music experiences similar to their own, parents hoped to give their child an opportunity to develop, learn, and have fun through music. These goals were shaped in part by participants' relationship with *EIO*. Lastly, all of the parents in this study entered music class with child-focused goals in mind and did not think of themselves as learners in the context of music class.

### **At Home with Families: Musical Home Environment Prior to Class Enrollment**

The second research question, which related to the musical home environment that parents provided for their children, established how parents used music with their children prior to enrolling in class. All of the participants provided rich musical home environments for their children and used music daily in their parenting, despite not having extensive personal music experience. Technology and media were an important part of the musical home environments of Christy and Kate and were used at times as entertainment or distraction and at other times as a resource that facilitated live engagement with music, while it played a far less prominent role in Vanessa's home. Though each family was unique, all three families sang, listened to, and moved to music, and each incorporated music into their routines.

### **Connections to Past Experiences**

Researchers consistently have reported that childhood musical experiences with one's family are indicative of a person's future musical parenting practices, especially recollections of being sung to as a child and singing to your own child (Custodero & Johnson-Green, 2003; Ilari et al., 2011; Mehr, 2014). "Parents tend to teach their children the way they were taught, and, thus, share with successors what they as adults like and allegedly understand" (Gordon, 2013, p. 10). There were some parallels between Kate and Vanessa's childhoods and their musical parenting practices. Kate and Vanessa recalled some music making occurring in their families. Both recalled being sung to by a parent. Vanessa sang nursery rhymes for Liam that she learned as a child, and Kate made up silly songs for Layla as her mother had done for her, though neither spoke about a desire to model their musical parenting after how they were parented or discussed specific musical aspects of their childhood that were meaningful to them. This finding was in contrast to Custodero (2006, 2009), who reported that past musical experiences were important

to all the parents she interviewed and that many parents intentionally carried on musical traditions from their own childhood into their parenting.

Christy's musical parenting seemed to be in stark contrast to her own childhood experience. She did not recall being sung to by her parents or any music making occurring in her home. In direct opposition to her recollections of her own childhood, Christy sang daily with and for Alyssa and, among all of the participants, engaged in the widest variety of musical activities in her home over the course of the study. Custodero (2006) found that parents who did not experience a musically rich childhood would sometimes create new musical traditions, often linked to popular culture or media. This finding most closely aligns with Christy's creating and singing each of her children a special "Night-Night" song, a seemingly new musical tradition.

### **Listen, Dance, Sing, and Play: Uses of Music at Home**

Music listening occurred in all families' homes daily. All of the families used multiple internet connected devices, including smartphones, smart speakers, or televisions, to listen to music. This finding aligns with a nationally representative survey study that revealed that children under eight-years-old spend an average of 20 minutes listening to music daily (Rideout, 2013), as well as a study by Koops (2019), who found that music listening was the most common musical activity in the homes of the eight families in her study. Parents sometimes listened to music passively, and Kate and Vanessa both expressed that music was on in the background for most of the day. Listening to music also prompted active music engagement from family members, such as dancing to music. Kate explained that her family often had dance parties to techno music while preparing food, and Kate often performed motions that corresponded with Layla's favorite songs during meals. Vanessa and Liam's morning routine included moving to an energetic playlist of music. Christy included many examples of Alyssa dancing to music in her



journals and explained that Alyssa and her brother Jacob often would play music on the family's Amazon Echo so that they could dance around the living room to the music.

Singing also was prevalent in all families' homes. Singing served several purposes for families, including enjoyment, learning, enlivening ordinary tasks and routines, and establishing family traditions. Singing has been reported as a common daily activity in families with young children by many researchers (Custodero & Johnson-Green, 2003; Ilari, 2005; Ilari et al., 2011; Mehr, 2014; Rodriguez, 2018; Young, 2008). Vanessa, Christy, and Kate sang children's play songs and nursery rhymes for their children. These songs were sung to entertain their children, help them learn new things, such as vocabulary especially in Vanessa's case, or were incorporated into play. All of the families had a variety of toy instruments, such as shakers and maracas, a harmonica, a xylophone, or toy ukulele. Each family also owned several battery-powered musical toys like toy keyboards or toys that played short melodies. This aspect of families' musical home environments was in line with previous research about musical home environments (Rodriguez, 2018; Young, 2008; Young et al., 2007). None of the families in this study had instruments such as a piano, guitar, etc. in their homes at the time of the study. This finding contrasted Rodriguez's (2018) finding that 88.1% of families enrolled in early childhood music classes owned at least one musical instrument.

Family routines, such as meals and bath time for Kate, diapering and bed time for Vanessa, and bed time for Christy, were accompanied by created or improvised songs, bolstering support for Custodero's (2006) finding that adding song to daily tasks was among the most common musical activity parents engaged in with their young children. All parents created piggy-back songs, a song that uses a familiar melody with alternate lyrics. Participants' piggy back songs featured melodies from traditional children's songs or those from popular media, and

personal lyrics, which is in congruence with the findings of Custodero (2006) and Gingras (2013). While Kate often created songs spontaneously to correspond with her actions, Vanessa and Christy created songs that were repeated and became part of family traditions. Both Vanessa and Christy created songs for bed time that were specific for their children and were personal to their families. Gibson (2009) also found this type of song creation was important to families. The establishment of traditions through music making between parents and children also relates to what Koops (2019) identifies as “relational musicking,” which she defines as “musicking marked by creating or deepening relationships with family, peers, or oneself” (p. 20). For these families, songs that accompanied routines served multiple purposes, including making an everyday task more enjoyable and facilitating a deeper connection between family members.

### **Musical Parenting in an Increasingly Digital World: Uses of Technology and Media**

Technology is pervasive in modern homes and “for many families, media use has become a part of the fabric of everyday life” (Rideout & Hammel, 2006, p. 4). This was the case for families in this study, especially for Christy and Kate. Christy and Kate both used media, especially YouTube, as their primary source for music to play for and sing with their child. Both Layla and Alyssa watched videos and listened to music through YouTube independently. These mothers explained that music accessed through YouTube proved useful as an entertaining distraction. Kate found that YouTube videos helped Layla feel calm and happy during dinner or while running errands, and Christy noted that she let Alyssa watch YouTube while she completed other tasks like showering or doing things around the house. Other researchers also have reported that parents use media including video and music to provide children with a safe activity to do while they complete chores or are otherwise occupied at home (Ilari et al., 2011; Rideout & Hammel, 2006; Young & Gillen, 2010).

Discussions of technology use in the literature on musical home environment highlight the speed with which advances in technology change how parents engage with music in their homes. Most of the research on musical home environment in the past 15 years that addresses technology and media (Custodero, 2006, 2009; de Vries, 2007, 2009; Gibson, 2009; Gingras, 2013; Ilari 2005, 2011; Ilari et al., 2011; Young, 2008; Young & Gillen, 2010) highlights the use of CDs and DVDs, whereas the families in this study primarily used streaming services including Amazon Music, Apple Music, Spotify, Pandora, and YouTube to access music. In a more recent study, Koops (2019) also noted how technological advances have changed listening habits.

Rapidly developing technology changed the way families were listening. Some had old mix tapes or CDs they missed hearing but no longer had the equipment to play. Others had subscriptions to monthly services such as Google Play or iTunes that provided unlimited access to many genres of music. A few relied on YouTube for music listening.

(p. 32)

In another recent study about media that was not specifically related to music, Smith, Toor, and Kessel (2018) reported that 81% of parents with children younger than 11 let their child watch videos on YouTube and that 34% reported doing so frequently. This is an example of how macrotime, or societal shifts, in this case technological advances, shape the musical home environment of young children and their families (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

Researchers and music educators have expressed concern that advances in music listening technology have prompted a decline in live musical engagement (Papoušek, 1996; de Vries, 2009), and reports from media outlets claim that millennial parents are no longer singing lullabies to their children (Turner, 2018). While the results of this study are specific to just three families and cannot be generalized, they do not support these concerns. All of these families,

despite their lack of music experience and significant use of technology, regularly engaged in live musical interaction. In fact, parents, especially Kate and Christy, used media as a resource for live music engagement. These findings support those of other researchers who found that, rather than replacing live interaction, media and technology have been incorporated into family music making (Gingras, 2013; Young, 2008; Young et al., 2007; Young & Gillen, 2010).

Findings also contradict those of researchers who found that parents who did not think of themselves as musical relied on media and digital products to provide their child with musical experiences (de Vries, 2009) and that parents without a great deal of musical experience lacked confidence and were unsure of how to provide musical experiences for their child (de Vries, 2007, 2009; Leu, 2008; Youm, 2013). None of the participants in this study indicated that they were unsure of how to engage in music making with their children, and they all engaged in live, active music making by singing and dancing for and with their children with and without media and digital technologies.

Lastly, there were differences among the participants' feelings about their technology and media use that seemed to be connected to whether they were impacted by parenting trends and expert advice. Koops (2019) acknowledges that 21<sup>st</sup> century parents are inundated with advice from pediatricians, teachers, and media about parenting and their use of music. She describes the current culture surrounding parenting as "guilt inducing" and "pressure filled" (Koops, 2019, p. 4). Lareau (2011) found that middle-class parents tend to shift their behavior to reflect expert advice, whereas working class parents are less quick to model their behavior after the latest parenting trends. In this study, Vanessa, who was the most affluent and highly educated participant, was the mother who seemed to follow guidelines and expert advice most readily. She chose not to let Liam watch television and opted for him to have more time away from screens as

advised by the AAP (2016). Contrastingly, Kate, who was a lower-income participant, allowed Layla to watch television daily and provided her with ample opportunities for screen time. She never indicated that she felt guilt or pressure not to do so. Christy fell somewhere between these two approaches, and her socioeconomic status placed her between Kate and Vanessa with regard to education and income level. While she allowed screen time and used media as a resource regularly, she indicated in interviews that she felt guilty about some of her choices regarding technology and media, suggesting she felt some of pressure Koops (2019) identified as being common among parents in today's society. In sum, parents in this study and the musical home environment they provided for their children seemed to be shaped by societal and cultural norms surrounding technology.

Overall, all of the parents in this study infused music into their homes and daily lives with their children despite not having rich musical backgrounds. These findings support those of Gingras (2013), who found that parents without extensive musical backgrounds provided rich musical home environments for their children. All of the parents engaged in active music making regularly, including singing, moving to music, and music listening. Media played an important role as a resource and facilitator of live musical engagement for Christy and Kate. Finally, parenting and technological trends shaped each participants' musical parenting and musical home environment in different ways.

Participants' uses of music at home as well as their goals for their class participation suggested they mostly were *parenting musically* defined by Koops (2019) as, "using music to accomplish non-musical goals, e.g., to support social, cognitive, or kinesthetic development" (p. 2) rather than *musical parenting*, through which, "parents guide children's musical development through direct interactions as well as facilitating musical experiences outside of the home" (p. 7).

Koops (2019) envisioned *parenting musically* and *musically parenting* to be two ends of a continuum with parenting goals on one end associated with *parenting musically* and musical goals on the other. Rather than being a binary, Koops (2019) asserted that activities and parent goals can be a blend of both *parenting musically* and *musical parenting*, falling somewhere in between the two ends of the continuum. Although all of these parents did provide their children with an opportunity to engage in musical experiences through music class, they were focused, both at home and in class, on achieving extramusical goals through music. At home, parents used music to make tasks and routines more fun or to entertain or distract children rather than engaging their children in music activities to further their musical development. In class, parents hoped to achieve goals related to language, regulation of emotional state, and to facilitate enjoyment.

### **Making Music Together: Families in Music Class**

The third research question pertained to how parents engaged in musical activities during music classes. In the 10-weeks of music classes, parents sang, played, moved, and chanted for and with their children. Parents adjusted their participation and behaviors in class to meet their child's needs, ensuring that they were having fun and benefitting from class. Each parent provided their child with support and encouragement to engage in class activities. Parental encouragement most often took the form of praise or modeling. Although parents participated in most activities, songs and chants with lyrics and activities with props elicited the highest level of parental engagement. Finally, parents expressed that they grew more comfortable in class over time, that they learned what to do by watching others, and that they felt more confident in engaging in the musical activities in class as they became more familiar.

## **Encouragement**

Because parents enrolled in class with the intent of providing their child with an opportunity to grow and develop through music, they were tuned in to their child's participation in class activities. All three mothers primarily focused their energy in class on encouraging their child to participate. Christy and Vanessa engaged in what I identified as encouragement without forcing by allowing their children to engage in class when and how they were ready, while Kate more regularly managed Layla's behaviors and prompted her participation through requests or physical touch. Although each participant approached encouragement in different ways, all parents frequently encouraged their child's participation through modeling and praise.

### ***Providing Freedom Versus Managing Participation***

Liam and Alyssa reacted to class in starkly different ways. Liam spent the majority of the early weeks of class observing on Vanessa's lap before slowly growing more confident and participatory as the semester unfolded, whereas Alyssa preferred to roam the classroom, interact with other children and adults, contribute her own ideas to class, and participate in activities periodically. Although Liam and Alyssa had distinctive approaches to their class engagement, Vanessa and Christy took on similar roles by encouraging their children's participation without forcing. They patiently provided their children with the space and time to engage in class in their own way. Neither parent regularly verbally prompted their child to participate. Vanessa allowed Liam to stay close by and provided him with reassurance through cuddles and smiles while engaging in activities herself. Christy allowed Alyssa's movement around the classroom and often chose not to intervene or involve herself in Alyssa's interactions with others. When each child did engage in an activity, both parents acknowledged and often joined their child in the activity. In exploring parental roles in music classes, Koops (2011b) similarly found that parents

preferred to take on the role of “modeling without forcing” during an early childhood music class. Parents expressed that they felt their role was to “find ways of doing the activities that work for one’s child, and to provide emotional space for one’s child to join in activities without forcing” (Koops, 2011b, p.9).

Like Alyssa, Layla enjoyed exploring the space and often wandered during class. She also spent a great deal of time carefully watching others as Liam did. Kate expressed that she felt anxious or self-conscious about Layla’s wandering, which led her to more closely manage Layla’s movement around the room. She often did this through gesture, verbal request, or occasionally by standing and gently guiding Layla back to a spot in the circle. Kate also routinely moved Layla’s arms during activities to mimic Nora’s movements or encouraged her participation through verbal prompting, such as excitedly telling Layla to shake her shakers or pull the scarf off of her face during a game of peek-a-boo. Although I would not characterize Kate’s actions as forcing Layla to participate, she did exert more control over Layla’s engagement in classes than the other two mothers.

### ***Encouragement Through Modeling***

After introductions were complete in the first class, Nora gave one of very few verbal directions to caregivers.

We are going to get started. If your child wanders, feel free to allow them to do that. The more they see you participating in what we are doing here, the more they will want to do the same. So, here we go.” (Fieldnote, Class One).

Throughout the semester, all of the parents regularly modeled for their children. Early on, parents most often modeled movement or use of manipulatives and gradually, as the semester progressed, modeled more vocal behaviors, including singing or chanting along with activities



and echoing Nora's tonal and rhythm patterns. Participants often would enthusiastically engage in a class activity while watching their children to entice them to join in. In each case, parents' modeling resulted in their children engaging in activities at many points throughout the semester. Parental modeling also sometimes led to interaction or musical play between the dyad, especially between Christy and Alyssa. Interaction also was occasionally initiated by children. Parents sometimes would imitate or respond to children's spontaneous music-making, which also led to parent-child interaction.

Although parents mostly modeled to encourage their child's participation, they also used modeling for other purposes. Kate sometimes modeled to get Layla's attention when she wandered, and Christy used modeling to redirect Alyssa when she became upset. Vanessa occasionally modeled the proper use of manipulatives to gently discourage Liam's tendency to throw things like shakers or sticks.

### ***Encouragement Through Praise***

All of the parents in this study consistently praised their child's musical participation as well as prosocial behaviors in classes. Each participant acknowledged their child's efforts through both verbal and non-verbal praise, such as head nodding, smiling, or physical affection like a high five or hug. Parental praise mostly was brief and non-disruptive. Praise sometimes was acknowledged by children and seemed to encourage continued participation and at other times seemed to have little impact on children's behavior. Berger and Cooper (2003) found that adult comments that demonstrated the adult valued a child's musical behaviors extended children's musical play. Using Berger and Cooper's (2003) findings as a guide, Koops 2012b found that adult's non-verbal acknowledgement or brief verbal feedback at the conclusion of children's musical explorations enhanced play. Overall, parents found several ways to

acknowledge their children's musical engagement actively and that acknowledgement sometimes resulted in children's continued engagement.

### **The Importance of Words and Props: Parental Engagement During Specific Activities**

My observations of parental engagement revealed these mothers were more likely to engage vocally when a song or chant had lyrics. When a song or chant was performed on a neutral syllable, participants more often chose to perform movements but not vocalize. This was especially true during the early weeks of class, but the trend persisted throughout the semester. None of the participants discussed this during interviews. In fact, they never talked about songs and chants not having lyrics at all, suggesting that their varying participation was not something of which they were aware. It is possible that parents did enjoy or use songs and chants without words at home but did not know how to talk about the songs during our conversations, because there was no clear name attached to the song. However, when I talked with them about their favorite activities or inquired about activities that they recreated at home, all parents exclusively mentioned activities with words. Specifically, "Rocket Ship" and "Popcorn" were identified as activities all of the participants performed at home, both of which are chants with lyrics.

Higher levels of parental engagement during activities that included words suggests adults may have found it easier to sing or chant when lyrics were included. Lyrics could have made certain activities easier to remember, or the inclusion of words might have provided parents with a clearer idea of how to participate. It is also possible that parents simply enjoyed activities that had lyrics more than activities sung on a neutral syllable. Levinowitz (1989) found that preschool children who performed a song without words were more tonally accurate than children who sang a similar song with words. However, I found no research that addressed

parents' perceptions of or engagement in activities with and without words with which to compare these findings.

I further noticed that parents engaged more fully during activities that included a prop, such as egg shakers, scarves, or rhythm sticks. In this case, it seemed that their increased participation was in response to their children's interest in using props. All of the parents noted that various manipulatives were among their child's favorite part of class. As Kate put it, "[Layla] liked the things" (Kate, Interview Two). I also observed that children responded more vocally during activities with manipulatives than activities that did not include them. Furthermore, parent modeling of play with a prop was something that led to parent-child interaction, which may have contributed to parents' increased participation during these activities. Both Hornbach (2005) and Taggart et al. (2011) have noted that use of manipulatives in early childhood music classes prompts children's musical responses, a finding that is supported by this study. However, I found no literature that considers the use of manipulatives in eliciting engagement from parents.

### **From Uncertainty to Confidence: Comfort in Music Class**

Attending music class was new for all of the families in this study, and each mother spoke about becoming more comfortable over time. Through watching others, Christy and Kate learned more about their role in music class. Kate and Vanessa spoke about becoming more comfortable as they slowly became familiar with the musical content of classes. Increased comfort and familiarity both with the routines of class and the musical content in class led each participant to steadily become more participatory over time.

The adults who attended music class along with the participants of this study, including other parents and grandparents, were quick to engage in class activities. By the end of the "Hello

Song” in class one, most parents were singing parts of the song and moving their bodies in a flow like motion. Adult participation may have been facilitated by the three music education student assistants, one *EIO* staff member, and myself readily engaging in class activities. There also were several families in the class who had participated in class in previous semesters, so they were familiar with the class structure and some of the activities.

As newcomers to music class, Kate and Christy revealed that they initially were unsure of their role in class, but that they learned what to do from observing others. Kate mentioned that she figured out what to do by “feeling out the vibe” and that she became more comfortable in class when other adults did not react negatively to Layla taking certain manipulatives (Kate, Interview Two). Kate confirmed that, by the end of class, she “definitely” felt more comfortable and that she “felt good” in her role (Kate, Interview Three), though she still admitted to feeling self-conscious about modeling for Layla when she wandered. Neither Vanessa or Christy indicated they felt this way. Young et al. (2007) who noted that White, middle-class, and older mothers tended to be most comfortable in music class settings with their children in which they were expected to engage in stylized play. Christy and Vanessa were both older and more affluent than Kate, which could have contributed to the difference in their comfort levels surrounding modeling. Christy noted that she spent the first few classes “following what everyone else was doing” (Christy, Interview Two) but that she initially felt like a “newbie” compared to other parents in class. Among the participants, Vanessa presented as the least uncertain of her role in class. She never indicated that she was unsure of what to do in class and felt it was her role to “just sort of participate” (Vanessa, Interview Two).

All of the parents explained that the songs and chants in class were new to them. Vanessa reflected that it took her some time to learn the songs and chants in class. At the

midpoint of the semester, she shared that she “didn’t know the words to some [songs]” but that she “tried to just sing the ones [she did] know or just hum” (Vanessa, Interview Two). She also felt more comfortable singing in class after more people, including class assistants, sang consistently. By the end of the semester Vanessa became more participatory, noting that she “could sing along easily because [she] knew all the songs” (Vanessa, Interview Three).

Relatedly, Kate was unsure of how to participate in activities at first because of the unfamiliar content, but that over time she gained confidence to be able to “sing along even if [she] didn’t know the words” (Interview Three). Vanessa and Kate also felt that listening to the recordings from class helped them better learn the songs and chants used in class. Christy never expressed that she had difficulty learning the material from class or that she felt uncomfortable singing or participating in activities. She also never listened to the class recordings.

### **Accolades and a Few Suggestions: Feelings about Music Class**

The fourth research question pertained to what participants enjoyed and found valuable about their class experiences. In line with their intended goals for class enrollment, parents’ enjoyment and positive reflections primarily were focused on their children’s experiences in class. Parents felt that socialization, enjoyment, use of manipulatives, and language development were among the ways in which their children benefitted from attending class. Each participant identified aspects of class that they found valuable, including learning new songs and activities, the inclusion of assistants in the class, the relaxed environment, and class recordings. Overall, participants were satisfied and felt that class met their expectations. However, all shared ideas for ways in which their experience could have been enhanced.

## **Child-Focused Responses**

Parents' favorite aspects of classes were those that brought their child joy or benefitted them in some way. When I asked parents to share with me what their personal favorite aspects of class were or how they had benefitted, they either were hesitant in their responses or their answers would shift focus back to their child. Because all three parents initially enrolled in music class with almost entirely child-focused goals in mind, their focus on their children's enjoyment was not altogether surprising. This trend further confirmed that the parents in this study did not focus on themselves as learners and that they did not spend time thinking about what they personally enjoyed and how they benefitted from class.

Each of the parents spoke about their child's enjoyment as one of their favorite aspects of class. Kate noted that the thing she most enjoyed about class was how "happy [Layla] was to go and happy [she was] to be there" (Kate, Interview Two). Christy expressed that her favorite part of class was "watching all of the kids have fun and watching them learn things" (Christy, Interview Three). Vanessa's enjoyment stemmed from seeing what Liam liked about class including manipulatives and the certain songs. This finding supports those of Koops (2011b) and Rodriguez (2019), who both found that parental enjoyment stemming from music participation was identified as a benefit of class as well as a primary reason that parents opted to enroll in music classes and continue their participation.

Kate was the only participant who identified socialization as a goal at the start of the study, but all of the parents appreciated the opportunities their child had to socialize and be around other children. Vanessa "liked that [Liam could] play with other kids and be around other kids" (Vanessa, Interview Two). Christy "liked that Alyssa got to be social" and noticed that she had grown more patient and personable with others during the semester (Christy, Interview

Three). Because socialization was one of Kate's initial goals for class, and also because Layla's prosocial behaviors came as a surprise to her, the social benefits of class were particularly important to Kate. Kate reflected that Layla was "A lot more social than [she] expected her to be" and that "[she liked how open and nice [Layla] was" in class (Kate, Interview Two). Socialization has been identified as a benefit of early childhood music classes by other researchers as well (Koops, 2011b; Mehr, 2014; Pitt & Hargraves, 2017; Rodriguez, 2019).

Another common finding across each case was that parents identified using manipulatives as their child's favorite activity. Kate shared that Layla, "liked when she could grab things like the [sticks]" (Kate, Interview Three), Christy noted that Alyssa loved the sticks and the large gathering drums used in class, and Vanessa mentioned numerous times that Liam "loved the sticks" and other small instruments used in class (Vanessa, Interview Three). Christy also shared that she personally enjoyed using manipulatives in class because "having something to hold onto was nice" (Christy, Interview Two). It seems plausible that parents' enjoyment in watching their child engage with manipulatives is what caused them to be more highly engaged during moments in class that incorporated props as discussed earlier in this chapter.

### **Goal Attainment**

Each parent felt that they accomplished some or all the goals that they set at the start of class. Kate was especially satisfied with Layla's prosocial behaviors, including her positive affect and interactions with others and especially Nora. She also felt that Layla had made progress in her language development, noting that she "was more vocal around what she wanted," making more eye contact, listening, and maintaining focus during class activities, and "really getting the intonations [from the class recordings]" (Kate, Interview Three). Vanessa was excited about the substantial progress Liam made in terms of language development during the

semester and that “it seemed like music [class was] a part of that” (Interview Three). Christy, who initially enrolled with the hope that music class could provide Alyssa with an opportunity to explore her musical interests as well as gain a sense of calm, felt that class partially met her goals. “[Music class] definitely met [one goal]. [Alyssa] definitely had a lot of fun but I don’t know if it ended up calming her at all” (Interview Three).

### **Valued Aspects of Class**

There were a few things that parents valued about class that were common across cases. Kate and Vanessa both appreciated learning new songs and getting activities ideas that they could include in their music making at home. Both Christy and Vanessa appreciated the assistants being in class. Christy enjoyed seeing Alyssa have positive interactions with Jacob, one of the college students who assisted with class, and Vanessa liked that the assistants singing in class made her feel more comfortable to sing along without feeling exposed. Other aspects of class that parents valued were unique to each individual. Christy noted that she was glad that class included a wide variety of activities and Nora was able to “squeeze a lot in” to each 45-minute class” (Christy, Interview Two). Kate noted that she appreciated the “free-flowing and cool” environment of class and that it made Layla feel more comfortable (Kate, Interview Two). Finally, Vanessa appreciated that class was focused on active music making rather than information sharing.

One of the things that Kate most valued about her class experience was receiving the CD of class recordings, which became an important part of her families’ routine and elicited musical behaviors from both Kate and Layla. The class recordings did not hold the same value for Vanessa or Christy. Neither Vanessa and Christy reported receiving an email with the recordings at the start of class. After I realized this at the midpoint of the semester, I sent both of them the



recordings via email. Vanessa did listen to them occasionally but Christy never accessed the recordings.

### **Desires and Suggestions**

There were some aspects of classes that were different from what parents expected, including the nature of the musical content and the use of instruments. Kate and Vanessa both suggested that class might feature different types of music. Kate thought that including more common children's songs and nursery rhymes would have helped her feel more comfortable in the early weeks of class and might have elicited more responses from Layla. Vanessa felt class might be improved by including more "fun music" (Vanessa, Interview Two), although she had difficulty expressing exactly what type of music she might have liked better. Vanessa and Christy both shared at the mid-point of the semester that they hoped class would include more instruments. Christy said that she would have liked if there were more opportunities for children to explore different sounds through playing instruments, and Vanessa said she had initially expected there to be more instruments but, after reading the FAQ page, she learned that many instruments were not developmentally appropriate for toddlers. As the semester continued, Nora incorporated additional instruments, including large gathering drums and maracas, and neither Christy or Vanessa reiterated this desire after the conclusion of class. Additionally, both Vanessa and Kate suggested that they would have appreciated an orientation meeting prior to the start of class but for different reasons. Kate thought it would be helpful if parents could share some their families' favorite songs with the teacher so they might be incorporated into class. Vanessa's reasons for wanting to meet prior to class were related to her desire to make connections with other adults.

Vanessa made additional suggestions for class including incorporating more opportunities for parents to get to know one another during class and to provide more information on child development and how each child compared to same age peers in the progress report provided at the conclusion of the semester. Vanessa's desire to learn more about child development seemed connected to her primary goal of support Liam's language development and her involvement with *EIO*.

Overall, the parents in this study had positive feelings about music class, felt that it served a purpose, and planned to enroll in future semesters. Parents largely focused on their child's experiences when speaking about class, which aligned with their child-focused goals for their participation. This further confirmed that parents thought of music class as an activity for their child rather than thinking of the experience as something from which they and their child could benefit. Parents in this study did not indicate that they thought of themselves as a co-learner along with their child or that they enjoyed being on an equal playing field with their child rather than acting in a leadership role as have parents in other studies (Koops, 2011b; Pitt & Hargraves, 2017). Parents limited musical background could have contributed to their not feeling like a co-learner along with their child. Finally, none of the parents in this study spoke about a desire to learn more about musical development, the purpose of the activities in class, or the curriculum used in class. This finding was different from previous studies in which participants expressed a desire to learn more in these areas (Koops, 2011b; Rodriguez, 2019; Youm, 2013). Again, this is likely related to parents' motivations being focused primarily on non-musical goals and enjoyment rather than a desire for their child to grow musically and also could be related to participants limited musical background.

### **After the Final Song: Takeaways from Music Class**

The final research question aimed to shed light on what knowledge, skills, and information parents gained from their class participation that resulted in changes in their behavior and thinking outside of class. Parents noticed that their children exhibited new musical behaviors at home and that they learned new things about their child through their participation. Some of these insights shaped parents' musical interactions with their children. Parent learning and growth also took place in music class, and parent's new skills and learning shaped their musical parenting at home. Some changes in their own behavior and thinking were obvious to participants, while other changes seemed to go unnoticed by parents and instead were the result of informal or implicit learning that took place during class.

#### **Changes in Children's Musical Behaviors at Home**

Christy, Vanessa, and Kate all noticed that their children sang more often after attending music class. Christy noted that Alyssa was "more open to singing" at the conclusion of the semester (Christy, Interview Three) and that she did not prevent Christy from singing along with her as frequently, which resulted in Christy and Alyssa singing together more often. Prior to the semester, Kate explained that Layla would sometimes make high-pitched noises and she "didn't know if she was singing" (Kate, Interview One). However, by the end of the semester, she found that Layla would initiate singing her favorite songs, like "Wheels on the Bus" and that she often would try to sing along with the CD from class in the car. Vanessa recognized that Liam began singing longer fragments of familiar songs, including the "Night Night" song that Vanessa and Paul sang to him at bedtime, and that he was joining in on singing songs more quickly, such as when he began to sing along with "Baby Shark" after hearing it only a few times.

Christy and Kate both noticed that their children began using everyday objects in their musical play at home. Kate noted that Layla was “taking sticks and beating them on various surfaces” around the house and that she was “using objects to make sound” more often than she did before enrolling in class (Kate, Interview Three). One of the first things that Christy noticed about changes that occurred in her home was that Alyssa was “more interested in using things as instruments [and would] take random instruments or toys and [tap them rhythmically]. Christy regularly provided examples of this behavior in her weekly journal entries and indicated that she often joined in on this type of play. Both Alyssa and Layla demonstrated increased interest in keeping a steady beat, which may be related. Layla began “keeping a beat with different things like her fists, hands, or objects” (Kate, Interview Two) at the midpoint in the semester, and Christy found that Alyssa would more regularly “get her own beat going” (Christy, Interview Two) after attending class.

Lastly, Kate noticed that Layla moved more expressively and frequently to music than she did prior to class. She found that Layla was “boogying more,” that her movement was more relaxed, and that she had learned “different ways to dance to songs.” (Kate, Interview Three) This change resulted in Kate and Layla “dancing more” together at home. Both Christy and Vanessa mentioned dancing and movement to music frequently in journal entries but did not notice a change in their child’s dancing as a result of attending class.

### **Conscious Changes in Parent Behavior and Thinking**

Each participant noted that they began using musical activities from class at home. This finding supports those of several researchers who report that parents use activities from music classes at home with their children (Barret, 2009; Ilari et al., 2011; Koops, 2014; Pitt & Hargraves, 2017; Rodriguez, 2018, 2019; Vlismas & Bowes, 1999; Young, Street, & Davies,

2007). Vanessa talked about this most often, noting that “it [was] always good to get new songs” and that she used songs from class for fun, as a distraction when she was getting ready for the day, and to reinforce learning (Vanessa, Interview Three). Vanessa tended to use songs from classes or her own experience more often than Christy or Kate, who regularly used media as a resource for music-making with their child. So, it was unsurprising that Vanessa used more music from class at home, as she and Liam rarely engaged with media. Kate began including “Rocket Ship” into her bath time routine with Layla, but the most important resource she gained from class were the class recordings. Kate and Layla listened to the CD from class daily in the car, and this new routine got the whole family involved musically, including Layla’s brother, who would sing along with the CD and perform the songs from class at home, even though he never attended music class. Christy incorporated some activities from class into her music-making at home, including “Rocket Ship,” “Popcorn,” and “Slowly Slowly,” but she brought class activities into her home less than the other participants.

Kate and Vanessa both spoke about learning to use music to manage their child’s behavior. Kate used the CD of class recordings and live singing to assist with transitions, such as getting in and out of the car or when running errands. She was thankful to have a new parenting tool to soothe Layla noting, “Thank God for that CD though. For real. It calms her down.” (Kate, Interview Two). Vanessa found that, when Liam would get upset, she could use singing, including songs from music class, to distract him and that when he would join in, he felt better. She noted that this was something new she began to do in the last few weeks of class and that it contributed to her satisfaction with class. Several researchers have found that parents use music to soothe or modulate their child’s mood (Gibson, 2009; Ilari, 2009; Ilari et al., 2011; Young &

Gillen, 2010), but no studies have shown that parents have learned about this through attending a music class.

In addition to the changes in parent behaviors and thinking that were common across cases, Christy explained that she learned more about how to join in on Alyssa's music-making. Christy found that she learned more about how to encourage Alyssa's spontaneous music making by tapping along with her singing or otherwise adding to Alyssa's performances. As the oldest child in the study and also as the child who most often initiated musical interactions, Alyssa often led more of the musical play in her home. This was not the case in Vanessa or Kate's families, in which musical activities generally were introduced by the adult. Christy also noted that class taught her that she could "make a song out anything" and that she was able to include singing into more everyday tasks like telling Alyssa to clean up her toys (Christy, Interview Three).

### **Unconscious Changes in Musical Parenting: Informal Learning in Music Class**

Although each parent in this study identified some ways that their musical parenting and musical home environment had been shaped by their music class experience, I noticed additional changes in parents' behavior and musical parenting that they did not identify on their own. Throughout the study, parents often were hesitant or unable to identify changes in their own learning, behaviors, or ways in which they benefitted from attending class. When I asked parents to reflect on their own learning or changes in behavior, they struggled to respond or replied that they "hadn't really thought about it" (Christy, Interview Three). However, they readily identified how music class prompted changes in or benefitted their child, particularly in relation to the clear goals that they had for their child's participation. It is possible that, because parent's consistent focus was on their children's music class experience and behaviors at home, they may

not have noticed changes in their own behavior. Parents seemingly were unaware of some of the changes I observed and, therefore, it seemed that some of the skills and knowledge parents gained from class were learned unconsciously through informal exposure to new ideas and approaches during music class. This informal learning further shaped parents' musical interactions with their children.

### **Musical Patterning**

Over the course of the semester, both Vanessa and Christy began including examples of musical pattern instruction into their journals. Vanessa submitted two videos of her exchanging long tones and short tonal patterns with Liam, and Christy referred to adding resting tones and trying to engage Alyssa in singing different tones at home in several journal entries. In both cases, the parents confirmed that these exchanges were based on the musical patterning we did in class when I pointed out these activities in their journal submissions. However, when I asked parents to share what they learned from class or what they learned about musical development or children learning music, neither discussed anything related to musical patterns.

Nora included pattern instruction in every music class over the course of the semester. Nora sometimes would sing a series of short tonal patterns or chant several rhythm patterns in between repetitions of a song without any discussion. She occasionally would ask the parents to copy her patterns, and at other times she would ask that parents stay silent to see if children would respond. Nora also regularly would hear a child make a sound and spontaneously incorporate that sound into a pattern. Although she occasionally referred to singing the resting tone, a term that Christy later used to describe things she did with Alyssa in her journal, at no point did Nora discuss why she was singing and chanting patterns, nor did she give very much

explicit information to parents about what she was doing. It was simply part of the routine of class.

During pattern instruction, Nora was not intending to teach parents how to use pattern instruction at home and the parents also were not aiming to learn how to provide pattern instruction to their children. They were just making music in class or, as Vanessa put it, “going along with it” (Vanessa, Interview Two). And yet, both Vanessa and Christy began incorporating pattern instruction into their musical interactions with their children, suggesting that they unintentionally learned about, and subsequently incorporated, musical patterns into their musical interactions with their children.

### **Increased Interaction**

Both Vanessa and Kate described having rich musical home environments prior to enrolling in class. They each incorporated a lot of music listening into their daily routines and also sang regularly for their children. After participating in music class, I noticed a shift in both parents’ journal entries that suggested they began incorporating more interactive music making into their musical parenting. Kate’s initial descriptions of her musical parenting and home environment included a lot of passive music engagement, including listening to music or playing it in the background during meals or in the car. Her early journal entries also featured similar musical engagement. Over the course of the semester, her entries steadily included more active engagement from both her and Layla. For example, instead of just listening to music during dinner, Kate began to include examples of singing along with recordings and performing the hand movements that corresponded with Layla’s favorite nursery rhymes. In our final interview, Kate noted that they still listened to music regularly and watched YouTube videos but also mentioned many more interactive music making examples, such as dancing together, singing



along with the CD of class recordings, and taking turns using everyday objects to keep a steady beat.

Vanessa regularly engaged in live music making prior to enrolling in class. Most of her descriptions of musical engagement at the start of the semester were examples of her performing for Liam. She noted that she sang to him every day, played music for him in the car, and read him musical books. Vanessa's early journal entries, all of which were videos, featured either Liam, Paul, or Vanessa, doing something musical but included little or no musical interaction. After several weeks, there was a notable shift, and Vanessa's journal entries began featuring much more interaction, including her and Liam taking turns singing patterns, a parent beginning a song and Liam finishing it, or singing together. In Vanessa's final interview, she discussed singing with Liam several times rather than for him.

Neither Kate or Vanessa ever noted that they were interacting more with their child musically in our conversations. I did not get the sense that they recognized this change in their behavior or in their descriptions of their engagement with music at home. Music classes were a highly interactive environment. Children and parents were provided with numerous models of how to interact and respond to one another through music during class. Nora often would model interaction with children through pattern instruction and by mimicking and expanding on children's musical responses. She also incorporated interaction into class activities, such as "Peek-a-Boo" and "The Sailor Song," in which parents and children held onto a small hoop and rocked back and forth as they sang. It seems possible that Vanessa and Kate both unconsciously began finding more ways to actively interact with their child through music after observing and engaging in lots of interaction and musical exchanges in class.

In addition to the examples of informal learning that were common across cases described above, I noticed that Christy and Alyssa incorporated more improvisatory and created songs into their musical play over the course of the semester. Also, I found that Kate made a shift from acknowledging Layla's musical behaviors at home through praise to imitating them. This too was directly related to behaviors Nora modeled in class.

Parents' informal learning in classes resulted in meaningful changes in their behavior and interactions with their children at home. Without intending to change their own behavior, parents learned new vocabulary and engaged in more live, creative, and interactive music making with their children after attending class. Although it is possible that these changes in parents' behaviors were not directly a result of parents' attendance in music class, I found it striking that their new musical behaviors closely paralleled Nora's actions and approach in class. It seemed that by coming to music class with the hope that their child would have fun and achieve extramusical goals, parents unconsciously gained new ideas, tools, and skills that would serve to support their children's musical development.

### **(Un)awareness of Children's Musical Behaviors in Class**

Each child that was a part of this study demonstrated musical growth over the 10 weeks of music class. Although all of the participants shared changes they noticed in their children's musical behaviors at home, Vanessa and Kate seemed to be unaware of some of their child's musical behaviors in class, especially their vocal responses. On multiple occasions when I would point out examples of musical growth I had observed in Liam or Layla, both Christy and Vanessa admitted that they had not recognized the same things I had.

During the semester, Liam went from being largely observant during class to eventually accurately singing the resting tone in response to a musical activity by the end of the semester.

When I mentioned my observations to Vanessa, she said she noticed some of his musical behaviors but emphasized the movement responses that Liam gave rather than confirming her awareness of his vocal behaviors. Alyssa was more vocal than the majority of the children in music class. In the final weeks of class, she regularly imitated and created tonal and rhythmic patterns. But, Christy did not notice this development or acknowledge it in our conversations.

There are two potential reasons why there was a discrepancy between my evaluation of Liam and Alyssa's musical progress and what their mothers noticed. The first is related to our musical and pedagogical backgrounds. As an early childhood music educator with significant experience observing and learning about young children's musical development, I am predisposed to recognize children's vocal utterances as musical. Because Christy and Vanessa are not professional musicians or educators and had no expertise in early childhood music, they likely did not have the background knowledge to identify musical behaviors in their children. These findings are supported by those of Reese (2013), who found that early childhood music teachers were more likely than professional musicians and child development teachers to identify infants' vocalizations as musical.

Vanessa and Christy's motivations for class enrollment also could have contributed to them not noticing their children's musical behaviors in class. Because of my experience as a music teacher in this setting, when I watched children in class, I focused on their musical behaviors and looked for signs that they were responding to the music content in class. However, neither parent enrolled in class with the intention of helping their child develop musical skills. Their focus on extramusical goals might have pulled their attention away from recognizing their child's behaviors as musical. This may have been especially true for Vanessa. Because Vanessa

enrolled in class with a hope that Liam would begin to use more words and speak more often, Vanessa easily could have interpreted Liam's vocal utterances as speech.

## **CHAPTER NINE: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS**

This study explores how three mothers engaged in musical parenting and details their experiences in an early childhood music class with their toddlers. Through this study I examined both what parents brought to their experience in the early childhood music class and what they ultimately gained from their participation. In this chapter, I present a summary of the study and discussion of the findings. I then provide implications for early childhood music educators and program directors as well as suggestions for future research.

### **Summary of the Study**

With the intent of informing early childhood music educators in their work with parents and their young children, the purpose of this study was to explore how parents engage in musical parenting and how that parenting is shaped by enrolling in early childhood music classes. The “grand tour” question guiding this study was, how does participation in early childhood music classes shape participants’ musical parenting? In addition to this overarching question, I address the following sub questions:

1. What do participants already know, believe, and do with music prior to their participation in music classes?
2. What kind of musical home environment do parents provide for their toddlers?
3. How do parents engage in musical activities during early childhood music classes?
4. What activities or ideas from early childhood music classes, if any, do parents value and enjoy?
5. What knowledge, skills, or information do parents gain from participating in early childhood music classes with their toddler that translate to changes in their musical parenting behaviors outside of class?

## Method

This study followed an instrumental case study design (Creswell, 2007) examining the phenomenon of parent learning in early childhood music classes and how that learning shaped their musical parenting. I selected three participants from a 10-week toddler music class at a university-affiliated community music school using a combination of convenience and criterion sampling procedures (Creswell, 2007). Three mothers who were attending music class for the first time along with their children acted as participants.

As a participant observer, I employed ethnographic techniques for data collection. I observed families in weekly music classes while acting as an assistant in the class. All music classes were video recorded. I also visited each family's home three times at the start, midpoint, and after the conclusion of the semester of music class during the fall of 2018. During home visits, I collected information about musical materials in participants' homes, completed semi-structured interviews, and both participated in and observed music-making with parents and children. Each parent was asked to submit weekly journal entries while attending music classes in which they shared examples of musical interactions they had with their children. Parents submitted video and written entries. Data for this study included fieldnotes taken during observations in music class and home visits, video recordings of music classes, interview transcripts, participant journals, and my reflexive researcher journal that I used throughout data collection to record in process memos, thoughts, and impressions. Data were transcribed and coded for themes using Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory of Human Development (Bronfenbrenner, 2001) as a theoretical lens.

## Findings

Parents enrolled in music class through a partnership between the early childhood music program and *EIO*, an early intervention program that provided services for children identified as having developmental delays. Although all of the participants in this study enjoyed music, none had rich musical backgrounds or extensive experiences in music. Participants' affiliation with *EIO* along with their beliefs about music participation and their personal experiences with music motivated them to enroll in classes primarily with extramusical goals in mind. Parents musical goals for their class participation focused on their child's enjoyment and interest in music rather than their musical development.

Parents regularly engaged in music making and listening with their children prior to enrolling in music class despite having limited personal musical experiences. Families incorporated listening, singing, and movement into their play, daily routines, and traditions. For some, technology and media contributed significantly to their overall musical home environment and was used to both as a form of distraction and entertainment as well as a resource for live musical engagement. Parents' uses of technology and media seemed, in part, to be influenced by contemporary parenting trends and practices. Overall, parents use of music in their homes were focused on enjoyment and enhancing daily tasks and routines rather than facilitating musical development.

All of the mothers in this study focused almost entirely on their child's experiences in music class rather than their own. In congruence with previous research, parents were not motivated to participate in music classes to enhance their own musical parenting (Koops, 2011b; Rodriguez, 2019), and they struggled to articulate goals for their own participation in class. Unlike parents in previous research (Koops, 2011b; Pitt & Hargraves, 2017) parents did not

indicate that they thought of themselves as a co-learner along with their child in music class. Instead, their engagement in classes suggested that they thought of their role in music class as one of encouraging their child's participation and facilitating children's enjoyment. Parents all grew more comfortable in class over time as they became familiar with the material and class and became more confident in their role. Although all of the parents regularly engaged in class activities to provide a model for their child, they were most engaged during activities that included props and songs or chants with words. Parents' favorite aspects of class were those that they felt their child benefitted from or enjoyed.

After participating in music class, parents easily identified shifts in their child's musical behaviors at home. They felt that they accomplished some or all of the goals established for their class experience, and that they learned new things about their child during the semester. Although parents sometimes were hesitant to identify things they learned or changes in their own behavior, parent learning and growth in music class contributed to changes in their musical parenting and overall music home environment. Some of these shifts in parental musical engagement with their children was acknowledged by participants while other changes were unconscious and seemed to be the result of informal learning that took place during music class.

### **Discussion**

Parents use music for a multitude of purposes in their daily lives with their children. Musical parenting is dynamic and shifts over time to meet the needs of both parent and child. When a parent enters the early childhood music classroom, they are accompanied by much more than their child. They bring along their musical knowledge skills, and experiences, beliefs and feelings about music, themselves, and their child and motivations for participation. These factors



color parents' engagement, their perceptions of their experiences in class, and what they take with them when they leave.

### **Parental Musical Backgrounds**

For the parents in this study, music was an enjoyable and useful tool that they regularly used in their parenting. Music making was not, however, something that played a significant role in their personal lives. Past research about music parenting suggests that parental music experiences matter because parents who recall engaging in music making with their family as children (Custodero, 2006, 2009; Custodero & Johnson-Green, 2003; Mehr, 2014; Rodriguez, 2018) and parents with extensive musical experiences (Custodero & Johnson-Green, 2003; Kelly & Sutton-Smith, 1987; Rodriguez, 2018; Valerio et al., 2011; Youm, 2013) provide more musically rich environments for their children than those without those experiences. Researchers have further reported that parents without extensive musical backgrounds may not have the confidence or skills to interact musically with their children (Leu, 2008) or that they more often rely on digital or media products to provide their children with musical experiences rather than engaging in active music making (de Vries, 2009) or music educators to provide their children with musical experiences (de Vries, 2007; Youm, 2013). Finally, Researchers have suggested that parents are often motivated to enroll their children in early childhood music classes because of their own positive musical experiences (Cardany, 2004; Koops, 2011b; Rodriguez, 2019; Savage, 2015).

In several ways, the musical parenting behaviors of the mothers in this study are in contrast to this common thread in the literature. Parents actively engaged in music making with their children on a daily basis through singing and movement as part of their routines, traditions, and play. Also, none of the parents in this study indicated in any way that they lacked the

confidence to musically engage with their child or that they were unsure how to do so. This finding suggests that parents without extensive musical backgrounds are capable of fostering musically rich environments for their children in congruence with Koops (2019) and Gingras (2013). Furthermore, parents in this study did not decide to enroll in music classes to provide their children with similar musical experiences as their own and instead focused on extramusical goals and enjoyment.

### **Modern Musical Parenting: The Influence of Technology and Media**

For two of the parents in this study, technology and media were important contributors to their overall musical home environment. “For many families, media use has become part of the fabric of everyday life” (Rideout & Hammel, 2006, p. 4) and for Kate and Christy, media shaped what kind of music they used in their interactions with their children. Both parents almost exclusively played children’s music for their child, which was readily accessible through platforms including YouTube. Although some researchers have expressed concern about media consumption replacing live musical interaction (Papoušek, 1996; de Vries, 2009), media use often prompted or accompanied live musical engagement in Kate and Christy’s homes and served as a musical resource for these parents, who had few personal musical experiences from which to draw from. These findings support those of other researchers who have examined the musical home environment of children in contemporary Western societies (Gingras, 2013; Young, 2008; Young et al., 2007; Young & Gillen, 2010).

### ***EIO* Involvement and Extramusical Goals**

Although I did not specifically set out to recruit participants who enrolled in class through *EIO* or parents who specifically had a child with a developmental delay, I gained insight into how parents’ involvement with *EIO* shaped their goals for their participation and their

perception of their class experience. If it were not for the collaboration between *EIO* and the early childhood music program, it is unlikely that any of these families would have enrolled in music class. Because parents enrolled in music class through the *EIO*, each parent identified extramusical goals for their class participation related to supporting their child's developmental needs. This was especially true for Kate and Vanessa who both identified their primary goal from music class was to support their child's language development. Although other researchers have reported that parents enroll in music classes with extramusical goals in mind (Koops, 2011b; Rodriguez, 2019; Youm, 2013), parents in previous studies also had specific musical goals related to helping their child to grow and development musically which were not addressed by the participants of this study. This finding suggests that some parents, especially those who enroll in music class through a partnership with an organization such as *EIO*, may enroll in music classes for primarily non-musical reasons.

### **All About the Kids: Focusing on the Child's Experience**

For parents in this study, their motivations for enrollment, participation in, and perceptions of in music class were entirely focused on their children. Parents did not enroll in music class with hopes to develop their own musical skills or to gain ideas for how to enhance their musical parenting, which supports the findings of previous research (Koops, 2011b; Rodriguez, 2019). Their engagement in music classes was focused on supporting and encouraging their child's participation in class rather than thinking of themselves as a co-learner along with their child. As Kate put it, "I am doing this just for you!" Parents continually reflected on their child's enjoyment and growth when I talked with them about their perceptions of music class or asked about changes that were occurring at home. Parents indicated that their satisfaction with their music class experience was tied to their children's enjoyment and growth.

## **The Conscious: Takeaways from Music Class**

In alignment with their goals and focus on their child's experiences, parents readily identified ways in which child's musical and non-musical behaviors had changed as a result of attending music class. Kate and Vanessa noticed positive changes in their children's language development and all of the parents noted that their child had benefitted socially from attending music class. Parents expressed that their child had shown increased interest and ability in singing since attending class and some participants noticed that their child began incorporated everyday objects and beat keeping into their musical play or that they moved in new ways when listening to music. Parents also learned new things about their child's interests through attending class such as their enjoyment of manipulatives.

Although parents in this study did not have extensive musical backgrounds, enrolled in music class primarily with extramusical goals, and focused on their children's experiences in music class, parent learning did occur in classes which translated to engagement in new or increased musical interactions in their homes. Some of these changes were conscious and were acknowledged by participants. For example, all of the participants in this study learned new songs and chants from attending class and incorporated some of them into their musical interactions with their children at home. This finding supports those of many other researchers (Barret, 2009; Ilari et al., 2011; Koops, 2014; Pitt & Hargraves, 2017; Rodriguez, 2018, 2019; Vlismas & Bowes, 1999; Young, Street, & Davies, 2007). Most often, the songs or chants from class that parents used at home had lyrics. Furthermore, Kate and Vanessa both explained that they learned to use music as a tool to soothe their child or manage their behavior as a result of attending music classes. Christy noted that through attending class she learned how to join in on Alyssa's music making and was able to find more ways to incorporate songs into daily tasks.

## **The Unconscious: Informal Learning and Unawareness of Children's Musical Behaviors in Class**

By collecting multiple forms of data including parent journals and visiting parents' homes, I found that musical parenting may be shaped by music classes in ways that are not obvious to the parent. Parents' unconscious learning appeared to occur through being informally exposed to different forms of musical engagement in music classes and resulted in meaningful changes in parents' musical interactions with their children. After attending class, I noted that parents incorporated musical patterning into their interactions with their children, and that some parents interacted with their children musically interacted with their children more over time. Kate moved from acknowledging Layla's musical behaviors mostly through praise to engaging in imitation. Finally, Christy and Alyssa included more improvisatory musical play and created songs into their music making over the course of the semester. Parents lack of awareness of these changes could have been the result of their consistent focus on their children rather than themselves both in class and at home.

Finally, parents, in particular Vanessa and Christy, were sometimes unaware of their children's musical behaviors and growth in music classes. While I observed many instances of Liam and Alyssa engaging vocally in class, neither Vanessa or Christy indicated that they had noticed the same behaviors that I had. Parents focus on extramusical goals and enjoyment rather than their child's musical development could have drawn their attention away from children's musical growth and vocal responses. It is also likely that my background as an early childhood music teacher and researcher caused me to be more attuned to children's musical behaviors and development in class when compared to parents without similar pedagogical and musical knowledge, which supports the findings of Reese (2013).

### **Implications for Practice**

The findings of this study are particular to each family and one early childhood music class and, therefore, are not widely generalizable. However, it is my hope that the findings of this study may inform music teaching in similar settings and may provide insight on how to connect with and serve both parents and children who enroll in early childhood music classes.

#### **Emphasizing the Positives: What Parents Enjoyed and Valued**

There were many things that participants enjoyed and valued about their music class experiences that early childhood music educators might consider emphasizing in their teaching. Enjoyment, both their own and especially their child's, was among the biggest contributors to parents' satisfaction with class. Parents liked that their children had fun and that the environment was positive. Koops (2011b) similarly found that enjoyment was "central to the families' experience in the early childhood music class" (p. 18) and suggested that teachers find ways to foster joy in music class through modeling and attending to what aspects of class foster joy among families. I echo these sentiments and below offer suggestions based on what parents in this study valued and enjoyed.

All parents in this study enjoyed activities that featured manipulatives, noting that these were among their children's favorite aspects of class. I also observed that activities with manipulatives fostered higher levels of engagement from parents. Other researchers also have noted that, beyond being enjoyable, manipulatives elicited musical responses from children (Hornbach, 2005; Taggart et al., 2011). Teachers should incorporate a variety of age-appropriate, simple manipulatives into classes and should pay attention to which manipulatives families seem to particularly enjoy.

Kate appreciated the informal and unrestrictive environment of class because it allowed Layla to feel “relaxed and happy in the class. Because everyone’s doing the same thing and it’s not all the attention on her and *making* her do something.” Nora created an environment in class that allowed children to engage in whatever way they chose, which encouraged Kate to “go with the flow.” Both Layla and Alyssa explored the room regularly, and Liam spent a lot of time observing. Nora acknowledged and regularly incorporated children’s musical responses and ideas into class but never forced children’s participation, expected them to give specific responses, or indicated that children should behave in a certain manner. In many ways, parents in this study followed Nora’s model and allowed their children to engage in class in their own way. This sometimes resulted in extending children’s play rather than extinguishing it as other researchers have noted (Berger & Cooper, 2003).

Teachers should cultivate a similarly relaxed and open environment in classes to allow children and parents to engage in classes in ways that are comfortable and enjoyable for them. Teachers should assure parents explicitly that it is appropriate and okay for their child to wander the room, to just watch, or to actively participate. Teachers also can reassure parents by modeling positive and relaxed interactions with children and through acknowledging and responding to children’s musical behavior without forcing. This might help parents to feel relaxed and encourage them to give their children more freedom. During activities that included manipulatives, Nora was sure to include lots of extra materials and allowed children to choose their own so that they could find something that they enjoyed, which put all of the parents, but especially Kate, at ease.

In class, Christy allowed Alyssa to have a great deal of freedom. She regularly encouraged Alyssa by joining in on her music making. Alyssa also sometimes initiated musical

play with the class, such as when she created her own patterns and then led the class in a series of wolf howls. Both Christy and Nora's acknowledgement of Alyssa's musical behavior and the classes willingness to allow her to take the lead contributed to Alyssa's engagement and enjoyment of class. Other researchers have noted that unstructured time during classes in which children are able to explore the environment or initiate musical play without adults leading activities can enhance children's musical play (Berger & Cooper, 2003; Koops, 2012b). Teachers might consider incorporating a brief period of time or occasional silence during which children can explore the environment or different manipulatives either between activities or between repetitions of an activity. By providing children with opportunities to take the lead and by modeling what it looks like to acknowledge and encourage children's musical play in class, teachers may further encourage children's musical play and also provide parents with an example to follow in order to recreate a similar dynamic at home.

Recordings of class activities were valued highly by Kate and contributed positively to her musical home environment and interactions with Layla. Even if only one parent in a given class finds this resource valuable as Kate did, providing this resource would be worthwhile. Having recordings of activities was likely more useful to Kate than written handouts or notation of songs since, she would not have been able to read musical notation and frequently listened to music with Layla. Having a CD allowed her to engage with the class material in way that she was used to at home, helping to build connections between the class and home environments. Teachers might consider finding ways to share musical recordings with families of class activities through multiple means as Nora did by offering CDs and digital mp3 files.



## **The Value of Community Partnership**

The partnership between the early childhood music program and *EIO* was mutually beneficial. The early childhood music program benefitted by enrolling families that likely would have not elected to participate if it were not for the partnership between the two organizations. Early childhood music classes most often are populated by highly educated, middle class, or affluent families (Adachi & Trehub, 2012; Young, et al., 2007), and parents in a previous research study that drew participants from the same early childhood music program included parents who all had extensive musical experiences (Rodriguez, 2019). The parents in this study represent a range of educational and socio-economic backgrounds, and none of the parents considered themselves “musical people.” Because of the partnership with *EIO*, the early childhood music program was able to reach different families than they otherwise would have reached. *EIO* was able to offer the families who enrolled in their program an enjoyable and beneficial service to the families they served, and the families in this study were able to learn, have fun, and develop in new ways through music.

Early childhood music program directors and music educators should seek out and develop partnerships with other organizations and programs in their area that serve a wide range of families. Partnerships such as the one established between the *EIO* and the early childhood program highlighted in this study take considerable time and consideration to cultivate, and the needs of all parties should be continually revisited and addressed. Koops (2018) encouraged early childhood music practitioners to consider how they might partner with local organizations to better serve their communities. She provided some useful tips for those considering developing community partnerships and urges educators to “start small and consider sustainability” and to “get to know the organization, its mission, and its needs. Look for where

your passions align with those needs.” (Koops, 2018, p. 37). I likewise encourage teachers and programs to explore ways to expand their reach beyond the typical families that enroll in fee-based early childhood music programs. Working with community partners to provide grant funding, scholarship, or financial assistance to families to engage in early childhood music programs could encourage a wider variety of families to enroll in early childhood music programs.

### **Honoring What Families Bring to the Classroom**

The findings of this study suggest that parents’ goals for class participation and musical parenting practices at home shaped their experience in music classes. Researchers have called for early childhood music teachers to learn about families’ music practices at home and favorite songs (Gingras, 2013; Koops, 2011b, 2012b; Pitt & Hargraves, 2017; Young et al., 2007) in order to create a “two-way flow of culture” (Pitt & Hargraves, 2017, p. 305) between home and class. In this study, Kate expressed a desire to share Layla’s favorite songs with teachers and suggested that including more familiar songs in class would have helped her and possibly Layla be more engaged in class, especially at the start of the semester. Early in the study, Vanessa also expressed a desire to engage with different types of music in class.

Incorporating even a small percentage of songs or activities suggested by parents into classes could help validate parents’ musical practices and interests. Participants felt unsure of how to engage during the early weeks, in part because they were not familiar with the material. Inclusion of familiar material might also help parents, especially those without extensive musical experiences, such as the participants in this study, feel more comfortable and confident, especially at the start of the semester. This also may increase both child and parent engagement in class activities. Lastly, incorporating families’ musical interests into class may help to foster

connections between class members who discover they enjoy the same songs as other class members.

Christy reflected that, through participating in this study and keeping a journal in which she documented her musical engagement with Alyssa at home, she became more aware of both her and Alyssa's musical behaviors. This finding is similar to several other studies in which parents were asked to share information with researchers about their musical practices (Custodero, 2006; Gingras, 2013; Koops, 2011, 2014, 2019). Through learning about their children's musical behaviors at home, teachers might help other parents to recognize the variety of musical moments that occur throughout their daily lives. Teachers might encourage parents to share things they notice about their children's musical behaviors in casual conversation before or after classes or could have a brief sharing moment in the 5 minutes before the end of class once every few weeks during which parents could share any recent changes in their child's music making or a new song or activity their family had been enjoying. Teachers could also provide a space in the classroom for parents to write down questions or comments to leave for the teacher or have a place to submit similar information through their program's website.

In addition to learning about families' music making at home, teachers should consider gathering additional information about parents' motivations for attending music class. In this study parents' goals were shaped by their involvement with *EIO* and were focused on their child's developmental needs. After the conclusion of class, Vanessa was curious about how Liam's development compared with his peers in class. She suggested that teachers provide their observations about children's development on the progress report given to parents at the conclusion of the semester. It may be valuable to provide parents with an opportunity to share with their music teacher additional information to aid the teaching in finding ways to best

support families' needs and desires. This could help guide teachers' observations of children in class as well as help them provide tailored feedback to parents based on parents' goals.

Koops (2012b) expressed that "a clearer picture of at-home involvement in music helps music educators improve their instruction in class settings" (p. 16). Teachers might be able to gain insight into the families who enroll in their classes by asking three questions at the start of the semester: (1) What are you hoping to gain from attending music class? (2) What are your favorite ways to enjoy music with your child? List a few of you or your child's favorite songs or musical activities, and (3) Is there anything you would like to share with me about you or your child to help me provide you with the best possible experience in class? Parents could share this information via a simple online or written form, or, as Kate suggested, during an orientation meeting so that parents could share the specific version of the song their child enjoys. Teachers could then use this information to personalize families' music class experiences and foster stronger connections with the families in their classroom.

### **Acknowledging the Role of Technology and Media in Families' Musical Lives**

Researchers have acknowledged that digital technologies and associated media is increasingly present in family homes (Ilari, 2011; Rideout & Hammel, 2006; Young, 2008). Two of the parents in this study expressed that their children engaged with digital musical media, most often YouTube videos, on a regular basis. In both of these homes, media serve multiple functions, but an important finding for early childhood music educators is that media often facilitated active music making in families' homes. Early childhood music educators might consider giving parents suggestions for how to engage actively with their young children while watching music videos or listening to music. Educators also could share musical resources that can be accessed through popular streaming platforms, such as Spotify or YouTube, that might be

useful for parents, perhaps even recording videos of class activities to share with parents in lieu of or in addition to providing recordings of songs and chants used in class. Rather than ignoring the role that digital media plays in the lives of families, acknowledging and providing suggestions for how to blend active music making with technology and media consumption might positively shape parents' uses of the content with which they are already engaged.

### **Dipping a Toe in Formal Waters: Parent Education**

Researchers and early childhood music educators consistently have expressed that one of the aims of early childhood music classes should be parent education (Gudmundsdottir & Gudmundsdottir, 2010; Koops, 2011a; Levinowitz, 1993; Young et al., 2007; Youm, 2013), but few studies have focused on specifically what parents learned in the context of early childhood music classes that translated into changes in their musical parenting beyond learning new songs or activities. For all of the parents in this study, some of their learning occurred unconsciously by being exposed to new ideas in class through informal learning. The music class that participants attended aimed to expose children to a wide variety of music through informal guidance. "A distinguishing characteristic of both structured and unstructured informal guidance is neither imposes information or skills. Rather, children are exposed to their culture and encouraged to absorb it" (Gordon, 2013, p. 3). This informal musical guidance and lack of focus on labeling or correctness fostered children's musical growth and also prompted meaningful changes in parents' behaviors outside of class, some which were unconscious or not acknowledged by parents. In other words, in these classes, parents and children learned in similar ways in class. However, as adults, parents are more ready for, and may benefit from, being provided with more explicit information about music development and the purpose of class activities. Teachers should find ways to provide parents occasionally with additional information about the purposes

of class activities or ideas about how to make connections between what happens in class and what they do musically at home. If teachers found ways to include some explicit information for parents in addition to what they already learned implicitly, it might help to make parent learning even more meaningful without taking away from active music making.

Parents in this study sometimes did not notice their child's musical behaviors during class as often as I did. Early childhood music educators also should share their musical and pedagogical expertise with parents. Teachers might consider occasionally pointing out children's musical responses in classes to draw parents' attention to them. This might help parents become more aware of what to look for in their children's behavior. Explicitly identifying musical behaviors would not just benefit the parent of the child but also the other parents in the class, who may learn from watching others. Parents also might benefit from teachers sending a quick note or having a brief conversation with individual parents after class about the musical behaviors they noticed a child exhibiting in class.

Two out of three participants in this study could not identify anything they learned about music development or how children learn music as a result of attending music class. Teachers should find ways to provide basic information to parents about music development. This could be done in a weekly email or blog post on the program's website, through an information board outside of the classroom, a class orientation meeting, or even a podcast episode or series. Teachers might also consider facilitating discussion with parents via an online discussion board through which parents could ask questions privately or publically. By making this information readily available, parents who wish to learn more could easily do so. This also would avoid teachers spending too much time in class talking rather than engaging in music making, something that Vanessa expressed would be frustrating to her as a parent. In addition to

providing information on development, teachers also might provide suggestions about ways to engage with music at home with young children. Something as simple as saying, “you could do the movement activity we just did at home with whatever music you and your family love to listen to” might provide parents with concrete ways to bring what they learn in music class into their homes.

Both Kate and Vanessa expressed interest in attending a class orientation meeting at the start of the semester. Also, Kate and Christy expressed that they were unsure of their role in music class at first but learned more over time through watching others. Teachers may want to consider having an orientation night for new families prior to the start of class. This meeting could be an opportunity to incorporate several of the suggestions recommended above, such as having parents share background information with teachers through written forms or conversation and presenting some basic information about children’s musical development. This could provide teachers with an opportunity to share information about the parent’s role in class and how they might best support their children’s musical experiences. Parents could also have some time to socialize with one another and the teachers to develop rapport among class members, as Vanessa suggested. An orientation meeting such as this might help parents feel more confident in their role when class begins.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

Researchers have examined parents’ perceptions of the benefits of early childhood music instruction for children (Koops, 2011b; Mehr, 2014; Rodriguez, 2019; Savage, 2015), and for themselves (Barret, 2009; de Grätzer, 1999; Gudmundssdottir & Gudmundssdottir, 2010; Levinowitz, 1993; Rodriguez, 2019; Taggart, Alvarez, & Schubert, 2011; Vlismas & Bowes, 1999) as well as parent goals, knowledge, practices, and needs regarding early childhood music

participation (Rodriguez, 2019; Youm, 2013) and how adults' actions influence children's musical play during music classes (Berger & Cooper, 2003; Koops, 2012b). Many researchers and educators have urged that parents should be a target group for learning and have suggested that participating in early childhood music classes might increase parents' music making with their children at home (de Vries, 2007; Fox, 2000; Ilari, 2002, 2009; Leu, 2008; Levinowitz, 1993, Wu, 2005, Youm, 2013). However, there is little research that focuses on parent learning in the context of music classes or how that learning shapes their musical parenting. Furthermore, much of the research on parents' experiences or thoughts about early childhood music classes occur through single interviews, surveys, or other forms of parental self-report, which may limit what researchers are able to learn about what really happening in families' homes. By collecting multiple forms of data in naturalistic settings, including participant journals and visiting families' homes multiple times, I was able to identify unconscious shifts in parental behavior that otherwise would not have been evident. Future investigations into parents' experiences in music classes that use qualitative and ethnographic means to collect data may provide new and valuable insight into what parents gain from attending music classes.

This study provided insight into how parents engage in class activities, including a finding that parents were most engaged during activities that included lyrics or props. While some research has examined how adult involvement inhibits or extends children's musical play (Berger & Cooper, 2003; Koops, 2012b) and parents' perceptions of their role in music classes (Koops, 2011b), there is little research into what parental engagement in music classes looks like, and what aspects of early childhood music classes might elicit different forms of engagement from parents. Further investigations might continue to shed light on this under-examined aspect of parents' music class experiences. Furthermore, while the goal of this study



was not to examine pedagogical strategies for encouraging parent learning or engagement, future research might explore the usefulness of different approaches for fostering parent engagement and learning in classes to illuminate what will best serve parents needs in the context of early childhood music classes.

The participants in this study were all mothers, which also is true of the majority of previous research involving parents and early childhood music classes. Researchers who examine musical parenting, both in the context of early childhood classes and overall, should continue to strive to include fathers as well as other currently underrepresented voices in musical parenting literature. Studies also should include parents representing a wider variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds or sexual orientations. Participants' involvement with *EIO* and their experiences with having a child with a developmental delay shaped the results of this study and also represents another under explored area of musical parenting research. Further investigations might continue to examine community partnerships between early childhood music programs and early intervention organizations, as well as musical parenting and music class experiences among parents who have children identified as having a developmental delay.

### **Final Thoughts**

Parents play a pivotal role in their child's musical development. In an early childhood music class in which parents and children come together to enjoy and make music, teachers have the opportunity to provide parents with tools to give them the confidence, knowledge, and motivation to engage in music making with their children that they might not otherwise have. Parents are much like any other student who enters the classroom. They bring with them a wide variety of experiences, preconceived notions, and even "musical baggage." It is my hope that music educators will continue to find ways to get to know parents, meet them where they are,

and think of them as musical learners and that, together, parents and teachers can provide rich musical environments for children both in the classroom and in families' homes.

By sharing knowledge and expertise with parents through music classes, music teachers may be able to provide parents with more tools to enhance their musical parenting. Although parents in this study did not set out to build their own musical or parenting skillset, they did hope to help support their child's enjoyment and development. By communicating with parents, valuing what parents already do musically with their children, sharing their own expertise and knowledge, teachers may be able to help parents better reach their music class goals for their children. Koops (2011b) pointed out, "parents have varying musical backgrounds, experiences, and skills, but are universally experts in knowing understanding, and working with their children" (p. 19). Through combining teachers' musical and pedagogical knowledge, and parents' expertise about their own child, children's musical and overall development might be further enhanced, thus achieving the goals set out by both the early childhood music program and parents of this study.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A:

### RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

## **Research Participant Information and Consent Form**

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Researchers are required to provide a consent form to inform you about the research study, to convey that participation is voluntary, to explain risks and benefits of participation, and to empower you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researchers any questions you may have.

Study Title: The Impact of Early Childhood Music Class Attendance on Musical Parenting

### **1. PURPOSE OF RESEARCH**

The purpose of this research study is to explore how parents engage in musical parenting and how that parenting changes as a result of enrolling in early childhood music classes.

### **2. WHAT YOU WILL DO**

Your participation in this research includes early childhood music class participation with your child for 10 weeks, three individual interviews and home visits, and weekly journal entries related to musical interactions with your child. Be

1. The researcher will observe you and your child during the 10-weekly toddler music class in which you are enrolled. All classes will be video-recorded for research purposes.
2. During the 10-week music class period, the researcher will visit your home three times. One visit will occur during the beginning of the 10-week session, one in the middle, and one after the music classes have ended. During home visits, you will participate in an interview with the researcher that will last between 30 and 60 minutes. You may skip or decline to answer any questions that you wish. The researcher also will ask to see any musical materials, toys, or instruments that are present in your home. Finally, you will be asked to share or perform a favorite musical activity or a few activities (i.e. songs, rhymes, movement) that you typically engage in with your child. Your child will be present for this portion of the home visit. Musical activities and interviews will be audio-recorded for transcription and analysis. You may decline to participate in any aspect of home visits at any time.
3. As part of this research, you will be asked to complete weekly journal entries. In your journal entries, you will describe any musical interactions and activities that occur in your home and/or with your child throughout that week as well as reflections on your music class experiences. This journal can be in whatever form you wish including written, audio, or video. You may complete as many journal entries as you would like, but you should submit at least one journal entry per week to the researcher during the 10-week music class session.

### **3. POTENTIAL BENEFITS**

An examination of how participation in an early childhood music program impacts the ways you use or think about music-making with your child may help clarify or illuminate personal and community strengths or insights you had not previously considered. Reflecting on how you make music with your child might enhance your music class experience and could help you learn more about yourself and your child as musical individuals.

You may not benefit personally from being in this study. However, we hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study because findings from this study may help early childhood music teachers better serve the needs of the families that attend music classes. The voices of parents are an important source of information for educators. Your participation in this study could help improve the way that music teachers communicate with and teach parents and children.

#### **4. POTENTIAL RISKS**

Interview questions will pertain to participants current and past musical experiences, early childhood music class experiences, and behaviors and beliefs related to musical parenting, so the risk of serious psychological harm is extremely small. There is no physical risk involved in participation. Although video and voice recorded data will be collected, data will remain confidential through the use of pseudonyms and general descriptors of locations where you live, work, and attend music classes. Participants home and work address or location will not be shared; therefore, no social, legal, or economic risk is involved. Video and audio collected in the study may be shared at academic conferences or presentations. This will only occur with your knowledge and permission.

#### **5. PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

Your confidentiality will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. Your private data will not be used in any publications or reports obtained from this research; your confidentiality as a participant in this research study will remain secure. Any personal identification will be omitted so that you and your child will not be identifiable in the written analysis. Pseudonyms will be used for participants. Generic geographical designations will mask the specific location where you live/work/attend class. Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies, which protect the confidentiality of individuals and institutions. The data collected for this research study will be protected on a password-protected computer or in a locked file cabinet on the campus of Michigan State University for a minimum of three years after the close of the project. Only the researchers, and the Institutional Review Board will have access to interview, journal, and home visit data. The instructor of the music class in which you will participate will have access to music class video for presentation at academic and education conferences with your permission. All recordings will be destroyed no later than December 2021.

#### **6. YOUR RIGHTS TO PARTICIPATE, SAY NO, OR WITHDRAW**

Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You have the right to say no. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw. You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time. Whether you choose to participate or not will have no effect on your relationship between you and the researcher(s). Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

## 7. COSTS AND COMPENSATION FOR BEING IN THE STUDY

As a participant in this study you will receive an additional session of early childhood music classes at the Michigan State Community Music School free of charge. This free session can be redeemed in Spring 2019 or Summer 2019 and is valid for one child and caregiver(s) in any infant, toddler, or preschool music class. This music class session cannot be exchanged for any dollar amount or other services at the community music school.

## 8. CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have concerns or questions about this study, please contact Adrienne Rodriguez, by phone at (973) 600-5208, email at [rodri695@msu.edu](mailto:rodri695@msu.edu), or regular mail at 345 West Circle Drive, Room 221 MPB, East Lansing, MI 48824. You may also contact Cynthia Taggart, Principal Investigator, at (517) 432-9678 or [taggartc@msu.edu](mailto:taggartc@msu.edu).

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail [irb@msu.edu](mailto:irb@msu.edu) or regular mail at 4000 Collins Rd, Suite 136, Lansing, MI 48910.

## 9. DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT.

Your signature below means that you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

***A signature is a required element of consent – if not included, a waiver of documentation must be applied for.***

## 10. CONSENT FOR AUDIO/VIDEO RECORDING AND USE

**Audio recording:** All interviews need to be audio recorded in order for the researcher to obtain accurate transcriptions of all conversations. Therefore, audio recording of interviews and music interactions during home visits is a required part of the research process. Please indicate below whether audio recording of interviews is acceptable:

I agree to allow audiotaping of the interviews and musical interactions between myself and my child in my home.

Yes ☐ No ☐ Initials \_\_\_\_\_

**Video Recording:** All music classes need to be video recorded in order for the researcher to write notes and describe musical interactions that occur during classes. Therefore, video recording of music classes is a required part of the research process. Please indicate below whether video recording of music classes is acceptable:

I agree to allow videotaping myself and my child during music classes.

Yes ☐ No ☐ Initials\_\_\_\_\_

**Use of Video Recording for Presentation:** The researchers or the music teacher of the music class in which you enroll during this study may wish to use video clips of classes for presentation at academic conferences or music education courses. This is not a required part of the research process. All participants and class members who do not consent will be blurred or omitted from video clips. Video will not be shared on the internet and will not be associated with any identifying information. Please indicate below whether sharing of music class video in academic conference or educational settings is acceptable:

I agree to allow researchers and educators to use video of myself and/or my child for academic presentation or educational purposes.

Yes ☐ No ☐ Initials\_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX B:

### EARLY CHILDHOOD MUSIC CLASSES FAQ SHEET AND PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

## EARLY CHILDHOOD MUSIC CLASSES

### Program Philosophy:

Music is learned in much the same way that a language is learned. Children need to hear extensive amounts of language and experiment with language before they actually learn to speak and eventually read and write language. In the same way, children need to hear a wide variety of music and experiment with music before they can sing, move to, and eventually read and create music that resembles music as adults know it.

Early childhood classes offered through the Community Music Program are designed to create a rich music environment for the child to interact with in whatever way she or he feels most comfortable. Some children will be active participants, while others will prefer to watch and absorb. Although the classes will differ according to the age level and readiness of the children, all classes will include singing and chanting for the children in a wide variety of tonalities and meters. Many of the songs that we perform in class will be without words, because children tend to focus on words rather than upon musical content. We will also provide lots of opportunity for age-appropriate movement, with a focus on guiding children to move in a sustained, continuous, relaxed way. Children will be exposed to a vocabulary of tonal and rhythm patterns, which they may or may not perform in class or later at home. In addition, there will also be a limited amount of exploration of simple percussion instruments. "Correct" responses will not be required of children; rather, children will be given the opportunity to explore their musical environment in the same way that they were given the opportunity to explore their language environment.

### Parent's Role:

Parents should participate in class. Sit with your child in the circle and serve as a good example for your child. If the teacher moves to a song in a certain way, imitate their movement. As you get to know some of the songs, feel free to sing along. It's important not to force your child to participate or do what the teacher does. There will be some children who wander around during class. You can gently encourage your child to join the group, but please do not force them. Wandering is fine. The teacher will not intervene unless the child is harming others or is interfering in learning.

Food, drink, or personal toys are not allowed in class as this tends to distract the other children. You may keep these items in a bag for use outside of the room before or after class.

The teacher will make a tape for you so that you may play the tapes during the week. In this way, the children will have an opportunity to experience the environment that we create in class in a limited way at home. Your child will learn more as a result. If you can sing the songs or perform the chants that we do during class, please do so during the week. Create as rich a musical environment as possible for your child at home.

*Over, please*

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Why do you do so many songs and chants without words?**

When songs or chants are presented with text, the children tend to focus on the text rather than on the musical content of the song or chant. Children need words in order to survive easily in their environment and get what they want. The rewards for musical production are much less tangible. Therefore, words tend to be compelling, especially when children are in the midst of the most potent part of the language-learning process. The texts, in such a case, inhibit music learning.

### **The songs and chants that you perform seem so difficult. I have trouble learning them. Aren't they too difficult for a young child?**

The songs that we teach are difficult for adults because they are in unusual tonalities and meters. We, as adults, have spent much of our lives listening to major tonality and duple meter; as a result, we have lots of major, duple baggage that we carry with us wherever we go. That baggage makes it difficult for us to learn songs that are not major, duple. Children, on the other hand, do not have the same baggage that we do. They will find the songs and chants in unusual meters and tonalities as easy as many of the songs and chants in major duple. Learning songs in unusual tonalities and meters will eventually help them understand the more frequently-used tonalities and meters better and in greater depth.

### **Why don't you use more instruments?**

At this point in a child's music education, extensive use of instruments is not appropriate. Children have not developed the fine motor coordination to play many of the instruments accurately. Also, children seem to respond to the elements of music more quickly when they are presented by the human voice. We include some playing of instruments because young children need an opportunity to explore timbre. We also include them occasionally because exploring the instruments is fun.

### **I am really worried that my child is not participating in class. What should I do?**

Relax!!! Your child will participate when he or she is ready. In the meantime, know that there are some children who learn best from watching and silently absorbing what we do in class. Observing rather than participating is perfectly normal and is not indicative of a child's interest or talent. We do not judge children on the basis of how they perform for us in class. Some of the students who quietly sit or even wander around the room seeming to not pay attention, will wind up achieving at very high levels. Forcing a child to participate will do more harm than good, because the child will grow to resent music rather than enjoy it.

### **Why don't the children sing with you?**

They are not developmentally ready. Until children are musically ready, they will not be able to coordinate their singing with that of an adult. We sing for the children and then hope that they will experiment with what they have heard at their own pace and in their own time. As the children mature musically, they will perform with us, but this does not typically happen until about age five.

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