

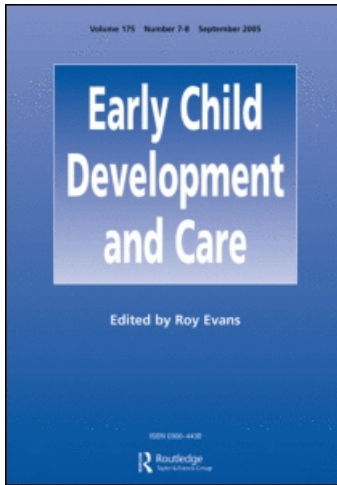
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Growing up and growing old: communities in counterpoint

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Growing up and growing old: communities in counterpoint

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Using a socio-cultural lens, this study explores two unique populations participating in an intergenerational music experience: seven infants/caregivers (ages 3–16 months) and eight retired women religious (ages 70–94). I was curious to examine how music-making across ages might facilitate new-found meaning for old people whilst simultaneously providing an opportunity for elders to contribute to the meaningfulness of musical experience for infants/caregivers. The researcher-music teacher functioned as participant/observer. Six 1-hour music sessions were offered at an independent Music Center in the USA. The videotaped sessions were reviewed and coded using peer/adult awareness as guideposts. In particular, gesture and non-verbal communication was noted, proving to be helpful in following the trail of interactions and the quality of engagement. Participant journals and notes of informal conversations with caregivers and Sisters before/after the sessions were compiled as important complementary data to the videotaped sessions. Additionally, caregivers and Sisters completed a brief questionnaire at the end of the session inquiring about their experience.

Keywords: intergenerational music; socio-cultural theory; infants; relationship

Introduction

‘[I feel] such gratitude for being part of this “Introduction to Life” in such a healthy, holy enjoyable way’, exclaims Sister Eileen.

The class just flies by and I leave all pumped up with renewed energy for whatever comes in the rest of the day ... The aging process is really difficult; it’s hard to grow old. But our music class with the babies has given me a new lease on life and a sense of hope; there’s still more of life to take in! It has influenced my mental attitude: everything is so pleasant, so enjoyable ... just beautiful; it’s marvelous! I would love to be able to follow these babies to see how they grow. I hope we can continue.

These words were written in Sister Eileen’s journal, a final reflection on the six-week intergenerational music class in which she was a participant. A Sister of St Joseph for 70 years, the former secondary music educator excitedly described the intense alertness of each infant as they looked in wonderment at their new surroundings. Dancing with delight to Tony Bennett’s rendition of *Swinging on a Star*, infant and caregiver playfully circled the 87-year-old’s chair as the retired nun swung her arms gently to-and-fro. She wrote in her journal: ‘I saw them growing before my eyes, ever so gracefully, supported so lovingly by their mothers’.

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'Initially I was nervous, but that left me once the class started; I'm surprised that I am so relaxed with [the babies]. I loved being with them ... Lily let me hold her; she sat on my lap as we played the bells together', wrote Sister Katherine, age 70 and the youngest nun among the eight Sister-participants. The former elementary reading specialist and administrator observed: 'I couldn't wait until the next class!'

In her 73rd year of religious life and a secondary education science/math teacher for 60 years, Sister Helen, now 94, is confined to a wheelchair. The initial anxiety she expressed in her first journal entry soon dissipated:

I did not know what to expect and I was fearful that I would not be good at dealing with a baby ... What surprised me was that the little one was so very friendly ... I was thrilled when she took my hand during the dance and we rocked back-and-forth; she was all smiles! I hope she remembers me next week ...

These brief self-reports offer a glimpse into a unique intergenerational music experience and provide a beautiful backdrop to the significance of social environment and the power of musical engagement. The social dimension of collective music-making has been explored in a variety of contexts ranging from playgrounds (Campbell, 1998; Marsh, 2008) to early childhood settings (e.g. Custodero, 2005); from culture-specific rituals (Blacking, 1995) to child-specific friendships (St John, 2003, 2005). Previous research (e.g. St John, 2004, 2006) has examined the importance of social context and peer-peer interactions in music-making environments, revealing how children facilitate growth and aid learning reciprocally. Novel to this study is the intergenerational dimension of shared musical experience, specifically between infants and seniors. I was curious to explore how young and old might mutually engage in musical experiences, where the offering and receiving of musical responses was reciprocal, and where participants could potentially mirror musical discovery for each other.

Background

Extensive research addresses intergenerational experiences and their potential associative benefits: to promote well-being, foster understandings, acknowledge and appreciate difference and diversity, and bridge generational gaps, to name a few. For example, an intergenerational study of historical consciousness (Wineburg, Mosborg, Porat, & Duncan, 2007) seeks to understand how the 'lived history' of one generation becomes the 'available history' of the next. The researchers question which stories are shared from generation to generation and how these selected stories shape adolescents' historical understanding. Bales, Eklund, and Siffin (2000) investigated second-through fifth-grade students' perceptions of elders before and after a school-based intergenerational programme designed to foster relationships and understanding between generations. Perceptions were more positive as a result of interaction with the older participants.

Intergenerational programmes have proven beneficial to preschoolers' interpersonal skills. Dellmann-Jenkins, Lambert, and Fruit (1991)¹ found preschoolers' contact with senior citizens in multi-faceted roles enhanced the children's pro-social behaviours towards the elderly. Rosebrook's (2001)² research revealed that children involved with intergenerational programmes outscored those without such interaction by almost six months in personal/social skills assessment.

Other studies look to specific facilities and underlying goals and philosophies: Chamberlain, Fetterman, and Maher (1994) examine innovations in elderly residential and child daycare needs provided in the same facility, offering the potential to enhance quality of life of both elders and children; Kaplan and Larkin (2004) compare two intergenerational programmes in early childhood settings, how they are established, and what the accompanying philosophical perspectives are which inform the elders' inclusion and participation.

Music's inherent socialising force seems to be an ideal vehicle to promote such intergenerational endeavours and accompanying benefits associated through musical engagement in particular (see Hays, Bright, & Minichiello, 2002). Additionally, music has come to be recognised as an important therapeutic tool (see Kneafsey, 1997), particularly with respect to older adults. Their use of music in everyday life offers important clues concerning possible relationships between musical activities and well-being (Laukka, 2007). Bowers (1998) explores the increase of positive attitudes between college students and senior citizens as complementary singers in an intergenerational choir. Similarly, scores improved positively in Darrow, Johnson, and Ollenberger's (1994) study of high school students' and older persons' cross-age attitudes after joint participation in an intergenerational choir.

New Horizons Bands initiative (Ernst & Emmons, 1992) began with the hope of encouraging people over 50 who always wanted to play an instrument as well as former musicians to 'band together'. Coffman (2002) explains how involvement in this venture not only fulfils musical aspirations, but also provides meaningful interpersonal relationships for the adult learners (ranging in age from 57 to 90), their families, the college-instructors and the director. His collaborative work (Coffman & Adamek, 1999, 2001) further addresses contributions related to quality of life and social support that participants gain through their collective music-making.

The studies discussed above involve diverse persons and places associated with intergenerational experiences as well as a variety of philosophical perspectives for goals and purposes. As someone whose world is co-constructed in multiple communities, I wondered what benefits might be gleaned from the counterpoint of infants' magical musical play and retired Sisters' wisdom and breadth of experience. As a researcher-practitioner living within a community of women religious, I have equal and passionate respect for the babies and for my Sisters; I wanted to bring these two communities together. Socio-cultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) emphasises the importance of social setting, people and interactions to find and make meaning in the world. How does music-making facilitate this? How might infants, through shared musical experience, bring new-found meaning to persons in old age? How do the elderly make musical experience more meaningful for infants and their caregivers?

Aim of the study

I aimed to explore two unique populations actively participating in an intergenerational music experience: infants/caregivers and retired women religious.³ I was particularly interested in bringing these two groups together since the Music Center, specialising in early childhood music, is housed in the Sisters' residence. As a sponsored work of the religious community of which the Sister-participants are members, the Center reflects a common mission and philosophy consistent with the Sisters' ministry. Two broad research questions shaped this inquiry:

- (1) *Where is the 'inter' in this intergenerational study?*
 - (i) What is the infants' influence on the Sisters?
 - (ii) How does the Sisters' presence influence the shared musical experience?
 - (iii) What is the caregiver's role?
- (2) *How does the experience change over time?*
 - (i) How do the infants' responses change from week to week?
 - (ii) How do the caregivers' interactions evolve?
 - (iii) How do the Sisters' responses change over six weeks?

Methodological procedures

Participants and setting

Ranging in age from 3 to 16 months, seven infants (median age 9.4 months) and their caregivers were enrolled in a summer music camp at an independent Music Center. Andrew, 13 months old, and Christopher, the oldest infant, had been enrolled in classes at the Center since they were six weeks and four months old, respectively. All others babies were new to the programme. Three caregivers knew each other through work-related connections. One caregiver is employed at the facility and has a great aunt who is a member of the religious community. At least once in the six-week period, each infant shared the musical experience with her/his grandmother participating as a guest with their mother.

Eight retired Sisters of St Joseph, ages from 70 to 94, brought a wealth of varied experiences to the learning community: a combined total of 300 years teaching, including pre-K to high school and adult education; diverse areas of expertise in elementary education, literacy, secondary education (math/science and social studies/history), Latin, music education (K-12), religious education and administration; and a celebrated heritage of 430 years in religious life. Initially, 11 Sisters were invited to an information/orientation meeting. These Sisters had expressed interest in the Music Center in casual conversations in the past, had engaged with the children and their families as they arrived for or departed from music classes and lessons or had been recommended by a Community Life Team intimately knowledgeable about individual Sisters' needs, concerns and interests. Subsequently, eight self-selected Sisters made a commitment to attend the six sessions and participate in the research project.

The Music Center, founded in 1992 and an established resource in the civic community, is housed in the Sisters' province headquarters, where administrative offices are located and approximately 200 retired nuns reside. I am the founder of the Music Center and serve as its executive director. As the music teacher in this study, I served in the dual capacity of participant/observer.

Data collection and analysis

Six hourly sessions were videotaped from 26 June 2007 through 31 July 2007. Time and day were determined by the Music Center's Summer Camp schedule. Having previous experience with other studies I have conducted, the videographer understood the nature of the work and was given simple instructions to follow interactions as they emerged, especially between infants and Sisters. In light of the experimental nature of this intergenerational experience and with consideration for both infant and senior needs, it was unclear if the videographer would be able to focus on small groups of participants for the duration of any given formal activity. Informed by previous

research (St John, 2004) where notable music exchanges were observed during transition times, I encouraged the videographer to include interactions between curricular activities as well.

Each videotaped session was then reviewed and coded. Focus on participants' awareness of others, particularly in dyadic relationships, and how interactions facilitate learning, has been useful in prior inquiries (St John, 2003, 2005). In this study, three questions guided the coding process for each activity: *What is the baby doing? What is the elder doing? What is the musical content?* In particular, gesture and non-verbal communication were noted, proving to be helpful in following the trail of interactions and the quality of engagement. Notes were made for further consideration of Sisters' participation.

Information form

Prior to the first session, participants were requested to complete an information form. Each Sister was asked to list favourite songs from her past and any descriptions she might provide relevant to her own childhood and family music-making experiences; caregivers were invited to share their baby's favourite songs or frequently played CDs and any active music-making that goes on in the home such as singing, dancing or playing a musical instrument.

Journals

Caregivers were asked to keep weekly journals documenting their baby's musical behaviours throughout each day. As a guide for their journal entries, Sisters were asked to reflect on their weekly sessions with the infants and caregivers: What they initially expected, what they observed and how they felt after each class.

Exit questionnaire

Additionally, at the end of the six weeks, caregivers and Sisters completed a brief questionnaire about their participation: What was most helpful or least helpful, would they re-enrol, would they recommend the class, and finally, anything else they would like to share regarding their experience.

Field notes

I kept notes of informal conversations with caregivers and Sisters before and after the sessions, telephone conversations and casual discussions over lunch with the Sisters. These were compiled as important complementary data to the participants' journals.

Sister interviews

Each Sister was interviewed individually as a follow-up to the summer session (Spring 2008). The limited scope of this paper precludes the inclusion of that data in this report.

Results

The initial hesitation of infants/caregivers and, to use the sentiment expressed in one Sister's self-report, 'anxiety', gently gave way to comfort and ease as young and old

discovered mutual needs and nourishments. Sharing bell rattles and rainbow drums, playing *peek-a-boo* and dancing to *Swinging on a Star*, a relationship began to evolve as these two unique communities dynamically wove together themes and counter themes, exchanging musical ideas in intergenerational counterpoint.

In light of the first research question, I was curious to read how Merriam-Webster (1977) defines 'inter': 'between, among, in the midst of; carried on between; shared by or derived from'. I address the first research question using these definitions as headings.

Inter: 'Carried on between ...'

Exchanging voices

By Week 3, infants initiated engagement with moms other than their own and the constructed counterpoint of 'inter' in intergeneration began to take shape: infants, moms and Sisters dynamically wove multiple layers of exchanges. Infants approached the elders with shakers and bells and, holding the instrument out to the senior participants, invited them to play. Testing new-found mobility, they tottered up to them and, on the musical clue found in the simple song/chant, deliberately pulled off the brightly coloured scarves used for *peek-a boo* play. Lily, crawling over to Sister Helen, used the wheelchair to hoist herself up: pulling against gravity and testing her balance, she found a willing dance partner in the 94-year-old nun and together they gently rocked and swayed to Louis Armstrong's rendition of *What a Wonderful World*. Discovering the 'horn' on Sister Jane's motorised cart, Christopher demonstrated an alternative musical contribution, delighting in his new-found 'instrument' and in 'being the cause' of an unexpected sound. Moms, infants and Sisters spontaneously formed group dances to *All You Need is Love*, one of Sister Katherine's favourite songs from her Beatle collection. Secure in his mom's arms, Carter grasped Sister Eileen's index fingers and the trio swayed side-to-side to the Beatle classic. Carter smiled and kicked his dangling legs in delight whilst Sister Eileen sang along, singing the words from a place of wisdom, 'all you need is love, la, la, la, la, la'. As infant and Sister fixed their gaze on each other, the two mirrored a sentiment that echoes across generations, resonating from the deepest recesses of the human heart.

Inter: 'Between, among and in the midst of ...'

Mirrored subjects

Of particular note from Week 1 to 6 was the difference in situated-ness: Sisters came closer to the circle; moms positioned themselves next to the same Sister each week like members of a congregation who claim a pew as their own, securing their place in a sacred space. Infant-to-infant interactions were observed as babies moved towards each other. Christopher walked over to Liam, the youngest participant and exclaimed, 'Baby'. Pointing to Liam's eyes, nose and mouth, Christopher identified each facial feature and then found the corresponding characteristic to his own face. Sister Katherine noted in her journal for Week 3: 'The children discovered each other and began to play side-by-side'. Finding themselves in each other, a community of music-makers was emerging. As they wove an amazing intergenerational counterpoint, each was mirroring musical discovery for the other. 'I wondered if Lily would recognise me. I think she did; she smiled and seemed happy to see me', mused Sister Helen in

a journal entry. In her response to Question 3 on the questionnaire – ‘What surprised you about the intergenerational aspect of this class?’ – Sister Jane D. responded: ‘With three different generations participating together, I felt we were all one. There were no divisions because of age, canes, wheelchairs, etc. We were one happy family’. A similar sentiment was shared by Sister Helen: ‘It appeared that age was not a factor; it made no difference to the babies’. To the same question, Carter’s mom wrote: ‘It surprised me that he interacted so much with the Sisters. Towards the end of the class he really was smiling and even giggling with the Sisters’.

Inter: ‘Shared by or derived from ...’

Episodic interplay

One aspect of the Sisters’ engagement was particularly noteworthy from the videotapes. I adapted the curriculum to provide opportunities for the elders to actively participate in the music-making throughout the session. I wanted them to be *part of* the experience, creating musical exchanges in-the-moment with the infants and their caregivers. Consistently throughout the coding process, I noted the Sisters’ desire and ability to find a way to *be with* and engage in the experience: joining in childhood songs such as *Lavender’s Blue* as moms caressed infants in tender massage; swaying from side-to-side from their chairs whilst child/caregiver gently rocked to Judy Garland’s classic rendition of *Somewhere Over the Rainbow*; tapping their laps as participants formally danced to *Kerry’s Ten Penny Jig*; creating dance-like movements from seated positions as moms danced with baby to *The Bear Dance*. Now Sisters were finding ways to respond to the infants’ musical invitations; they were not simply there to be entertained or to observe. Sharing in the experience, they discovered new-found meaning and an expanded sense of belonging. The counterpoint took on another layer.

I, too, found a new way to *be with* the Sisters. I was surprised to find my own place more clearly articulated. As a younger person in the religious community of which the women religious are members, I discovered a different sense of belonging through my own interactions with the retired Sisters. We shared cherished musical memories and created memorable musical experiences together; my own relationship with them intensified. Who and how we are together deepened as our knowledge of and appreciation for each other expanded. Reflecting on how much I got to know them, I felt deep joy as I realised that they got to know me better as well. Finding myself in the overlapping space of two intersecting circles, I was able to share my deep love for what I do with my Sisters whom I love deeply.

Contrapuntal comfort and confidence

The second research question addresses change over time. This question might be best answered with the words comfort and confidence. From Week 1 to 2, the Sisters’ journals reflected sentiments of astonishment at the infants’ growth, particularly as they became comfortable in the environment in just one week’s time: moving away from caregiver, finding another baby and reaching out to a Sister to be held or to sit on her lap. One of the most precious moments of Week 2 occurred when Christopher, seemingly content rocking in his mother’s lap, got up and ran clear across the room to Sister Jane D. Arriving with a broad smile, he reached out his arms; she picked him up and held him for several seconds as they gently rocked together!

Field notes reveal the Sisters' growth, too, in only one week as they reached out to the moms by initiating conversation: 'How did Joey sleep last night; last week you said he hasn't been sleeping well?', 'Any teeth for Carter yet?' At the end of the second class, I overheard one mom say to another: 'I like having the Sisters here!' In Week 4, Jill arrived late. She came into the room and immediately handed her baby to Sister Katherine whilst she got settled. The baby nestled into Sister Katherine's arms, resting his head on her shoulder. Three weeks ago, Sister Katherine told me how scared she was initially: 'I didn't know how [the class] was going to be and how I would be; I don't have any experience with babies'. Later she would describe how comfortable the babies made her feel!

Sisters revealed their growing knowledge of each child in journal entries. One Sister wrote:

Sophia is the first girl on her dad's side of the family in 35 years! Her mom says she is definitely 'daddy's little girl'. Carter made it through [the second week] without crying. His mom told me she began to give him solid food and that has helped.

The infants, too, quickly seemed secure in this environment. In Week 2, for example, Joey found his own beat whilst delighting in drum play during instrument exploration. Christopher observed this. When he saw that I had another drum, he deliberately walked across the circle to retrieve it whilst simultaneously taking note of Sister Jane D.'s interaction with Liam. When Christopher returned to his mom's lap, Joey made a complete 180 degree turn and the two boys began a drum duet. Later in the same session, the boys' awareness of each other continued as one imitated the other. During *Ride a Cock Horse*,⁴ sung unaccompanied and with children gently 'riding' on their respective mom's laps, Christopher reached out to Joey; Joey reciprocated. (Were they assisting each other, forming a carriage-team?) This charming exchange continued for almost six minutes.

Feeling comfortable with each other and in the setting resulted in increased confidence for all participants. Established rituals enabled babies to anticipate musical cues. Caregivers grew less self-conscious about singing and dancing together, entering more fully into the musical experience. Sisters became more at ease with the babies, joining in collective dances and adding their voice to the childhood chants. Sisters expressed astonishment over the babies' musical responses from week to week: exploring the drums in a variety of ways, shaking the rattles to the music, giggling as they circled around the room or swooped in close to a Sister whilst dancing. Caregivers were surprised by the infants' increased capabilities over the course of the six weeks: whole body responses to the beat, finding multiple ways to make sounds with the instruments, and deliberately pulling the scarf off of the caregivers' head on the musical cue, for example.

Discussion

Being with and *sharing in* formed the cornerstone of 'inter'. Relationship was at the heart of this intergenerational experience. Relationships gradually evolved as participants realised a sense of welcome, comfort and respect in the music classroom. Time was allotted at the beginning of each session for informal interaction and perhaps to engage in a community practice common among the women religious, sharing the 'state of the heart': how are you today, how is the baby, what new thing

have you discovered this week, what has been challenging for you as a new mom, any suggestions for teething? I emphasised the focal point of all of our interactions, the mother-infant relationship, and encouraged participants to be secure in that bond no matter how self-conscious they might feel to be singing and dancing with others. Easing into the music activities, everyone's contributions were acknowledged, honoured and integrated as a vital part of our little music community. Each member was encouraged to find an entry point of strength, to participate with an orientation towards capabilities, not limitations. All were challenged to find what they *could* do and to discover what each – Senior Sister, mom, infant and teacher – might bring to this collective musical experience.

Feeling secure in and comfortable with the environment, participants moved towards one another. Joey's mom expressed surprise at his willingness to interact with the Sisters; Sophia's mom was shocked that Sophia so willingly engaged with people she just met and with whom she was only beginning to become familiar. Sisters were surprised at their own comfort level. With an enabling foundation of acceptance, this was the gift each gave to the other: through collective music-making as simple as swaying to *Swinging on a Star*, playing *peek-a-boo*, or seeing oneself reflected in a mirror for the first time, each found a source of nourishment in the other and discovered shared joy across ages.

The importance of including music from the Sisters' past cannot be adequately underscored. Inclusion of the Sisters' musical selections created a musical bridge, making a connection between generations as participants found meaning in childhood chants and classic 'oldies'. Singing, dancing, swaying and grooving to the other's music brought young and old together as they found musical meaning and discovered musical content through each other's song.

The musical bridge also made connections that reverberated in the Sisters' Motherhouse. Sister-participants eagerly engaged in lively discussions during lunch or dinner conversations, over coffee or simply passing in the hallways: 'Wasn't that a marvellous class this morning!' They enthusiastically communicated their experiences with anyone who would lend a listening ear, sharing their delight in who and what they had come to know. The music-making with the infants and their caregivers had given the retired Sisters new-found intentionality in their senior years. Repeatedly they expressed feelings of renewed life, as in Sister Eileen's declaration at the beginning of this paper or in Sister Jane's exclamation: '[The class] energised me; it was life-giving! It gave me hope of what can be found and what *is* found right at the present moment if you look for it and participate or enter into it'. One day, as I passed a Sister in the hallway of the Music Center, she stopped and declared: 'I hope you know how much you have done for those Sisters in the infant music class; how much you have done for all of us because of it? You have brought us so much life!'

This study speaks to the profound power of collective music-making and reconfirms the extraordinary socialising force that music is to unite people. In this setting, communities in counterpoint, apparent disparate partners, facilitated musical discovery for each other as they realised mutual joy and appreciation in the other's musical expression.

The joy that permeated our mutual music learning community cannot be diminished. Yet, when undertaking such a study, there are inherent limitations and unavoidable obstacles which need to be acknowledged. Whilst the Sisters were attentive and focused during the music sessions, on more than one occasion someone

would forget to come to the class. Remembering what day it was or forgetting the time of day reflected memory issues associated with growing old. In an effort to ease this embarrassment, a buddy system was established whereby Sister-participants would stop by another's room and offer a gentle reminder. Forgetfulness did not seem to be an issue, however, with respect to the interpersonal dimension: The Sisters could accurately recall the names of each baby and their caregivers as well as reminisce about specific occurrences during their collective music-making with them. This finding is corroborated in other research where musical experiences and consequent social interactions facilitated unforgettable associative emotional responses (e.g. Brotons & Marti, 2003; Hays & Minichiello, 2005; Schulkind, Hennis, & Rubin, 1999).

Attendance was relatively consistent over the course of the six weekly sessions. Nonetheless, there were unavoidable set-backs that characterise elderly persons' lives: a doctor's appointment unknowingly scheduled concurrently with the music class or an unanticipated illness or reaction to medication, for example. A Sister called me one morning before a scheduled music class and, quite apologetically, asked if it was okay for her to miss class that day: she had experienced a series of mini-strokes over the weekend and thought she should rest for a few days! There were also set-backs that influenced the infants' participation from week to week such as teething, colic or inconsistent sleep patterns resulting in overly fatigued parents.

Two issues needing further consideration include hearing loss and situated-ness. One Sister painfully discussed her severe hearing loss indicating that, whilst she loved to sing, it was often too difficult for her to hear the words of a particular song. She could decipher the melody, but could not distinguish the exact words. (It should be noted that there were lyric charts for the songs displayed in the room; at times, these are more of a distraction, diverting attention away from the infants.)

With respect to situated-ness, caregivers and their babies sat on the floor. However, due to physical limitations, chairs for the Sisters were arranged so that they were part of the circle, not in the back of the room or situated off to the side. Whilst every effort was made to include the retired Sisters in the musical activities, those in wheelchairs or using canes were limited in their proximity to the circle of music-makers, particularly during movement activities. Care was taken to ensure safety and to keep the learning space unobstructed, particularly during free movement and dancing. Movement is an essential component of the curriculum; caregivers are encouraged to move freely about the room with their babies. I adapted these activities, inviting caregivers to 'find a senior partner', thereby including the Sisters with limited mobility. Still, one Sister, confined to a wheelchair, wrote in her journal that she felt 'isolated' at times because of lack of proximity to the babies.

Further inquiry is needed to meet these challenges that prohibit full and active participation from each member of this diverse music community. Intergenerational music sessions have continued in the fall (2007, 2008) and spring (2009) semesters at the Music Center. These semesters, consisting of eight to ten weekly sessions, are longer than the Summer Camp, which typically runs for five to six weeks. The unavoidable set-backs are not as apparent with the longer semesters. Additionally, now that the intergenerational programme is established at the Motherhouse, care is given to avoid conflicts in scheduling appointments. An exploration of common childhood chants and lullabies known to the retired Sisters is underway in an effort to find mutual songs that may be recalled from memory (Spring 2009). This might eliminate

the frustration associated with hearing loss and inability to read words at a distance. Consideration has been given to producing CDs with recorded songs for the Sisters since caregivers and babies receive a CD of recorded music as part of their home materials, included with tuition. However, this possibility poses additional considerations: available funds to reproduce the recorded music as well as individual Sisters' access to a CD player.

To address the issue of proximity, I experimented with a smaller number of retired Sister-Participants (ratio of 2:1 infants to Sisters) in the fall semester (2008), reducing the overall number of adults in the music setting. (This would also address a parent concern, noted on her exit questionnaire (Summer 2007), that the room seemed 'crowded' at times, particularly during movement activities.) There were two sections of intergenerational music classes: in one section, one of three Sisters suffered from Alzheimer's disease, which prohibited her full and active participation from week to week; in the other section, two of three Sisters were in wheelchairs, which limited mobility and engagement in movement activities.

Finally, the Sisters articulated a desire to hold the babies more frequently; they delighted in the warmth the baby brought, secure in their arms. Initially, this was a safety concern for everyone involved: caregivers and babies needed to feel comfortable with the Sisters; Sisters needed to feel confident in physical strength and stability required to hold the infants. Some of the musical experiences were more conducive to this kind of intimate interaction than others. Adapting the curriculum to facilitate such personal exchanges intensified the musical experience; following the infants' spontaneous responses increased everyone's learning.

Care must be given to address the many and complex variables that ultimately shape and influence any learning community. However, the joy reaped from such intergenerational counterpoint far outweighs limitations and obstacles.

Conclusions

As I reflect on the contributions each of these unique populations gave to the other, I am struck by shared mutual needs. The mirrored commonalities reflected in growing up and growing old crystallised into basic principles which may be useful in shaping practice and informing intergenerational experiences that include infants and elders:

- Older persons experience a loss of independence, particularly in decision-making; infants seek independence. *Invitations* offer each an opportunity to define their own means of engagement with the music material and with each other.
- The elderly lose a sense of control over many aspects of their lives; infants strive to gain control. *Choice* carries power. Offering choices which enable infants and seniors to determine *how* they might respond empowers young and old with a sense of control.
- Elders and infants may require more time to process information, to manifest cognitive capabilities. *Providing time and giving space* gifts participants with the opportunity to make a contribution, to find a way to be part of the musical experience.
- Seniors bring a long personal history that includes many accomplishments; infants accomplish far more than expected. Honouring *multiple interpretations*

of the presented task may lead to unimagined results far greater than anticipated ends. As participants find a way to engage, their many and varied contributions enrich the learning experience of all involved.

- The elderly are adults who need to be treated with respect; infants are persons who need to be respected. *Sincerity and authenticity* communicate respect. Acknowledging efforts with genuine praise in a voice appropriate for each population dignifies responses with authenticity.

The cycles of caring generated by this Intergenerational Music Programme continue to reverberate throughout the community, creating renewed life, hope and energy. Expanded ways of belonging were realised through collective music-making and reciprocal musical exchange. Each of us discovered common ground through shared musical experience. Participants formed bonds of affection; relationships have sustained on-going interest and enthusiasm. Growing together, a vibrant music learning community emerged, crafted by the dynamic interplay of communities in counterpoint.

Notes

1. Prosocial Behaviour in Young Children (PBYC) scale was used as the pre-post test assessment instrument. Experimental and control groups were involved in a university-based nursery/daycare.
2. The personal/social component of the Learning Accomplishment Profile (LAP) served as the evaluative tool. Research was conducted at the Macklin Intergenerational Institute in Findlay, OH.
3. US Roman Catholic Nuns, commonly called Women Religious, live an interdependent communal lifestyle through public profession of perpetual vows: poverty, chastity and obedience. They typically live in small groups of three to five members, sharing a life of prayer and ministry. The proper nouns, Nuns and Sisters, although commonly used interchangeably, are different. The distinction between Nuns and Sisters might best be explained through ministry. Nuns, usually cloistered, dedicate their lives to God through a contemplative lifestyle of prayer, reflection and fasting. Sisters live an apostolic life. Actively engaged in contemporary life, Sisters dedicate their lives to God by addressing the needs of the world through a variety of ministries. Whilst Women Religious do not 'retire' from their communal life, age, health and physical diminishment may necessitate retirement from active ministry. The factors that contribute to this retirement may prompt a move to the religious congregation's Motherhouse where assisted living and health care are provided. Retired Women Religious dedicate this time of 'retirement' to prayer and volunteer service, offering assistance in a variety of civic and religious capacities.
4. Based on a nursery rhyme connected with the English town of Banbury, this traditional folk song dates back to 1784. A 'Cock Horse' is an old carriage-driving term which refers to an extra harness horse, typically a large stallion, employed to assist pulling a cart or carriage up a hill. The term may also refer to a child's Hobby horse.

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