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Situational Interest of Fourth Grade Children in Music at School

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Abstract

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The role of interest in educational settings has been seen as a significant factor in nurturing an appreciation for learning and influencing the extent to which that learning occurs. Interest can be divided into two sub-categories, individual interest and situational interest. Individual interest is personal rather than global, slow to develop, and relatively stable over time. Situational interest, on the other hand, is often temporary, emerging out of the specific characteristics of the immediate environment, and is common across most individuals.

The purpose of this study was to explore the nature of situational interest in one fourth grade music class. An ethnographic approach was employed, focusing on the 24 children from one intact class in the Pacific Northwest. Over a four-month period of engagement, data were gathered through interviews, free-write experiences, one-item surveys in which the children rated their interest on a Likert-type scale, videotaped observations of class periods, and examination of material culture.

Four main themes emerged from the fieldwork. (1) The fourth grade students' situational interest was enhanced when they engaged in novel activities or experiences, as well as those that included elements of surprise or humor; (2) Interest was heightened when the young students held feelings of self-efficacy towards particular activities, as well as those experiences that offered challenging but attainable goals; (3) Situational interest was higher for the fourth graders if educational enterprises provided opportunities to employ kinesthetic or visual modalities; and (4) The children's interest was elicited by learning experiences that incorporated aspects of creativity.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Our whole policy of compulsory education rises or falls with our ability to make school life an interesting and absorbing experience to the child. In one sense there is no such thing as compulsory education. We can have compulsory physical attendance at school; but education comes only through willing attention to and participation in school activities. It follows that the teacher must select these activities with reference to the child's interests, powers, and capacities. In no other way can she guarantee that the child will be present.

Suzzallo, in Dewey (1913), p. ix

Introduction

Children who are interested in music and their learning encounters with music manifest a motivation that often compels them towards more plentiful and successful experiences in the discipline (Renwick & McPherson, 2002). Durik and Harackiewicz (2007) noted that “if students are motivated during instruction, then they may enjoy the learning experience, value their educational endeavors, and perhaps even seek out similar educational experiences in the future” (p. 597). Conversely, students with low levels of motivation will be less likely to put forth significant amounts of effort, negatively impacting learning. In early elementary school, most students are motivated to enthusiastically engage in school, music class, and music class activities, but positive attitudes towards school and school musical experiences decline with increasing age and grade level (Beck, 1977; Eccles, Wigfield, Harold, & Blumenfeld, 1993; Gottfried, Fleming, & Gottfried, 2001; Haladyna & Thomas, 1979).

A variety of theories have been proposed to explain the reasons behind children's motivation in academic settings, including self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), social cognitive theory (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996), task value theory (Eccles et al., 1993), self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977), and achievement goal theory (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). These theories rely primarily on a cognitive framework to explain motivation, with affect as an outcome of the cognitive process (Hidi, 2006). For example, self-efficacy theory posits that students will be motivated when they believe that they will be successful in a domain or in a specific task required of them (e.g. Bandura, 1977; Zimmerman, 2000). Positive feelings usually accompany this interaction, but they are a result of the anticipation of success.

Interest theory differs from other motivational theories in that it includes both an affective component, generally describing positive emotions that occur when engaging in an interesting task, and a cognitive component, which involve perceptual and representational activities related to the activity (Hidi & Renninger, 2006). Interest is often conceived as primarily affective in its initial stages, as interest is sparked in the immediate context of a situation, but it grows to increasingly emphasize the cognitive component, becoming more durable as it incorporates greater knowledge and value. It emerges from the interaction between a person and the environment (Hidi, 2000), and can be either short-lived or long lasting. It can refer to specific activities, specific topics, specific domains, or the whole range of an educational program (Krapp, 2005). Hidi and Renninger (2006) define interest as "the psychological state of engaging or the predisposition to reengage with particular classes of objects, events, or ideas over time" (p. 112). It is

generally conceived to have two major subcategories. Individual interest (also referred to as personal interest) is specific to the person, is activated internally, is slow to develop and difficult to alter. Situational interest, on the other hand, emerges out of the specific characteristics of the environment, is evoked spontaneously, and is common across most individuals. Individual interest can be thought of as a “trait,” while situational interest can be thought of as a “state” (Silvia, 2006).

Most literature on motivation addresses its role in the context of subject domains such as reading, science, and math. With its attention to affect as well as cognition, interest theory may be particularly appropriate for music education. Austin, Renwick, and McPherson (2006) noted, “In contrast to disciplines that are primarily knowledge-based or cognition-intense, music also places demands on students to develop skills and express emotions” (p. 230). Affective aspects are an important part of one’s interactions with musical endeavors, and a motivational structure that incorporates affect into its explanatory framework provides a powerful means by which to understand the person-music interplay.

Laypersons have long suggested that higher levels of interest in subject matter and specific activities leads to increased academic success (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996), and professional educators believe that interest powerfully influences their students’ learning (Schraw, Flowerday, & Lehman, 2001; Zahorik, 1996). During the last thirty years, empirical research has emerged to indicate that interest plays a major role in motivation and learning (e.g. Harvey, 2010; Hidi, 1990; Krapp, 2005; Tsai, Kunter, Lüdtke, & Trautwein, 2008; Schraw et al., 2001). For

example, increased interest has been found to correlate with focused attention (Ainley, Hidi, & Berndorff, 2002), the depth with which students process information (Schiefele, 1991), and the amount of information students retain (Schraw & Lehman, 2001). Further, high levels of interest lead to a likelihood that students will continue to pursue content in the domain under study (Harackiewicz, Barron, Tauer, & Elliott, 2002). If higher levels of student interest positively influence learning outcomes and increase the chances that students will participate in the subject domain beyond the classroom, it is in the interest of music educators to identify experiences likely to enhance interest in the classroom.

The upper elementary and middle school years constitute a turning point in terms of student interest in school music participation. In the United States, music classes in the elementary school grades are typically mandatory for all students. Once students move into middle school, musical study often becomes optional, as they can choose whether or not to participate in band, choir, orchestra, or other offerings. High levels of interest have been found to correspond with the likelihood of continuing in a discipline (Harackiewicz et al., 2002), so it is likely that high levels of interest in the elementary music classroom could lead to increased participation at the middle school level. Attitudes towards music class and the activities of class decline as students progress through elementary school years (Denissen, Zarrett, & Eccles, 2007; Eccles et al., 1993; Gottfried et al., 2001; Haladyna & Thomas, 1979; Nolin, 1973), which then logically depresses enrollment in musical study in middle school. If educators can identify the qualities of activities that students in the upper elementary grades find interesting and then incorporate them into their curriculum

and lessons, it is conceivable that musical outcomes would improve and participation in elective music ensembles would increase from that period of their lives and into secondary school.

Literature Review: Interest

Focus on the role of student interest goes as far back as Dewey (1913), who believed that interest led to deeper learning. Dewey maintained that student effort affected learning, but that interest was more important than effort. If work was interesting to students, Dewey posited, they would feel more motivated to engage in academic tasks, be more likely to use prior knowledge in pursuing new knowledge, and more readily integrate their in-school learning with out-of-school activities. He emphasized that interest is likely to be enhanced if educational opportunities offer students challenge and autonomy.

There was a lull in the study of construct of interest for some fifty years. In part, this was due to an emphasis on behaviorism (Hidi, 2006), “which typically was adverse to unobservable psychological constructs such as interest,” causing educators to “simply...ignore the topic” (Schraw & Lehman, 2001, p. 25). Interest was seen as a phenomenon that researchers found to be difficult to observe and operationalize. Although occasional references to interest can be found scattered throughout the literature of the mid-20th century (see Schraw & Lehman, 2001, for a review), it was not until the 1980s that theories surrounding interest as an important concept in education were renewed in earnest. Most studies in the 1980s and early 1990s looked to the ways in which students’ processing of texts in reading contexts was impacted by feelings of interest. Some of these early studies found

that interest influenced cognitive performance by, for example, enhancing recall in text processing (Hidi, Baird, & Hildyard, 1982), and improving the integration of new information with prior knowledge (Kintsch, 1980). (See Schraw, Flowerday, & Lehman, 2001, for further review.) More recent research has broadened the educational domains of interest research, looking to the causes and impacts of interest with relation to the educational realms of science (e.g. Dohn, 2011), math (e.g. Frenzel, Pekrun, Dicke, & Goetz, 2012), writing (e.g. Nolen, 2007), and physical education (e.g. Harvey, 2010). One study, detailed later, explored the concept of interest within the context of music education (Renwick & McPherson, 2002).

Defining Interest

As a construct vital to learning across a variety of disciplines, interest contains both affective and cognitive components (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000; Hidi, Renninger, & Krapp, 2004; Hidi & Renninger, 2006; Krapp, 2002; Renninger & Hidi, 2011). Early stages of interest are characterized by high degrees of affect, generally in the form of positive feelings towards content. As interest grows and stabilizes, the affective dimension persists, but a cognitive aspect develops as well, becoming an increasingly important part of the construct of interest as it develops (Hidi & Renninger, 2006). Interest is the result of an interaction between a person and a particular content (Hidi & Berndorff, 1998; Hidi & Renninger, 2006; Krapp, Hidi, & Renninger, 1992; Renninger & Wozniak, 1985; Schiefele, 1991). Thus, a student may be generally motivated to learn, but will likely be more motivated in specific content areas, such as math or music, and less motivated in other areas, such as writing or physical education (Hidi & Renninger, 2006; Renninger et al., 2002). This

content can refer to the broad domain (e.g. music), specific topics within that domain (e.g. playing instruments), or specific activities within that topic (e.g. figuring out a song “by ear” on a xylophone) (Krapp, 2005). Further, it has been proposed that some students will hold interest for learning in general (Ainley, 1998; Ainley, Hidi, & Berndorff, 2002), although it is not usually seen as a general motivational orientation (Schiefele, 1991). Interest is also context-specific (Bergin, 1999; Hidi & Renninger, 2006; Sansone & Thoman, 2005; Tsai et al., 2008); the potential for interest resides in each person, but it is the interaction with specific context that determines interest level. In addition, interest has a neurological basis, as brain activity has been seen to be change when people are interested in a situation (Hidi, 2006; Renninger & Hidi, 2011). For students, specific educational activities or styles of teacher-student interaction will impact the interest experience of an individual at a particular moment in time.

Interest theorists have identified two main aspects of interest, situational interest and individual interest (Hidi & Renninger, 2006; Krapp, Hidi, & Renninger, 1992; Schraw & Lehman, 2001). In the next section, these aspects of interest will be described, specific influences on each type of interest will be noted, and a summary of pertinent research describing the impact of each on educational outcomes will be provided.

Individual Interest

Defining individual interest.

Individual interest is person-centered, a relatively enduring preference for certain topics, subject areas, or activities (Ainley, Hidi, & Berndorff, 2002; Durik &

Harackiewicz, 2007; Schiefele, 1991, 1998). Occasionally referred to as personal interest (e.g. Schiefele, 1991), it is slow to develop (Hidi, 2001), remains relatively stable over time and, once established, is difficult to alter (Hidi, 2001; Hidi & Anderson, 1992; Hidi & Renninger, 2006; Schiefele, 1998). Individual interest is activated internally, and is topic-specific (Schraw & Lehman, 2001). It is accompanied by positive feelings about content (Schiefele, 1991), and it incorporates knowledge and cognition (Hidi & Renninger, 2006). Often, it will grow as students develop knowledge of a domain and come to value it (Linnenbrink-Garcia et al., 2010; Renninger, 2000). Learners typically have many different individual interests, some of which will be related to school subjects (e.g. math or music), others of which will be topics not regularly studied during the school day (e.g. friends or soccer) (Ainley, Hidi, and Berndorff, 2002; Renninger & Hidi, 2002). In addition, students may hold individual interest for learning in general (Ainley, 1998), in which case they hold “a desire to acquire new information, find out about new objects, events and ideas not restricted to any narrow domain” (Ainley, Hidi, and Berndorff, 2002, p. 546). Individual interest is often associated with intrinsic motivation, although intrinsic motivation is generally seen as a broader motivational construct, whereas individual interest has a more limited topical focus (Hidi & Berndorff, 1998; Renninger, 2000; Renninger & Hidi, 2002). Individual interests are narrowly focused and specific to the individual, which make them difficult (though not impossible) to alter, at least in the short term (Chen, Darst, & Pangrazi, 2001; Hidi & Anderson, 1992).

Influences on individual interest.

Individual interest evolves from both biological dispositions and experience (Tsai et al., 2008). Individual interests are influenced by gender (Föllings-Albers & Hartinger, 1998; Gardner, 1998) and age (Hannover, 1998), or at least the socialization factors that surround being members of specific age-related or gender-related groups (Bergin, 1999; Fivush, 1998; Gardner, 1998; Renninger & Hidi, 2002). For example, the individual interests of girls and boys often diverge in high school, with girls having increasingly low rates of interest in mathematics as compared to boys (Gisbert, 1998). Membership in other groups can impact individual interests, as people become interested in domains that are culturally valued (Ainley & Ainley, 2011a; Bergin, 1999; Renninger & Hidi, 2002). These groups can be defined in a variety of ways, such as cultural or ethnic group, family membership, religious identification, or peer group. For example, a boy who comes from a family in which all family members participated in select choirs through high school and currently sing in church choirs would be more likely to develop higher levels of individual interest for singing than another boy whose family has not participated in such choral activity.

Experiential factors also affect the development of individual interest. Previous knowledge about and prior experiences in a discipline can increase the level of individual interest (Alexander, Jetton, & Kulikowich, 1995; Bergin, 1999; Tsai et al., 2008), in part because these experiences may lead one to develop a sense of competence. If a student feels that he is likely to be successful, he is more likely to hold higher degrees of individual interest (Bergin, 1999; Deci, 1992; Marsh, Trautwein, Lüdtke, Köller, & Baumert, 2005). Finally, there is the grey area of

general biological predispositions. For reasons that are not fully known, genetics also appear to influence individual interests (Renninger & Hidi, 2002; Silvia, 2006; Tsai et al., 2008), in that people appear to be born with the predisposition to develop individual interests towards particular domains.

Benefits of individual interest.

Students with a well-developed individual interest in a subject matter are generally willing to work towards specific activities within that discipline (Ainley, Hidi, & Berndorff, 2002; Ainley, Hillman, & Hidi, 2002). For example, a student with high individual interest in music would be more likely to be willing to learn music notation than a student with lower individual interest. Further, students with higher individual interests are likely to persist in unfavorable learning conditions, such as tasks perceived to be boring (Ainley, Hidi, & Berndorff, 2002; Ainley, Hillman, and Hidi, 2002; Renninger & Hidi, 2002; Silvia, 2006) by, for example, engaging in strategies to enhance their immediate interest (Sansone, Weir, Harpster, & Morgan, 1992). Individual interest has been found to positively impact attention, recognition and recall of elementary students in reading (Renninger & Wozniak, 1985), and has been associated with increased memory (Ainley, Hillman, & Hidi, 2002; Renninger & Wozniak, 1985), deeper critical thinking (Renninger & Hidi, 2002), increased ability to focus (Renninger & Hidi, 2002), and higher overall levels of learning (Renninger & Hidi, 2002; Schiefele, 1998). Higher levels of individual interest have also been correlated with higher grades and achievement test scores (Alexander et al., 1995; Renninger & Hidi, 2002; Schiefele, 1998), and a greater degree of enjoyment in learning activities (Ainley, 1998). In physical education

classes, individual interest has also been correlated with more advanced development of physical skills (Chen & Darst, 2002; Shen, Chen, & Guan, 2007). For college students, individual interest in specific content matter impacted their academic performance and choices over the course of their college career (Harackiewicz et al., 2002).

For teachers, individual interest is not something over which they have much immediate control. Students enter classrooms with well-developed individual interests, and while those interests will evolve, such change occurs slowly and over long periods of time. In the short term, individual interest is difficult to change. Attempting to incorporate the individual interests of all the students in a class would be very difficult, both in terms of the time and effort involved, for all children will have their own individual interests which will not necessarily align with each other (Hidi & Anderson, 1992).

Situational Interest

Defining situational interest.

Situational interest is determined by the specific characteristics of the immediate environment or situation. It is evoked spontaneously by aspects of the environment, and is therefore often of temporary duration (Hidi, 2001; Hidi & Anderson, 1992; Schiefele, 1998). It is generally the function of the surface level of learning activities, such as the content of the activity, the task itself, or the instructional style (Ainley, Hillman, & Hidi, 2002; Hidi, 2001; Schiefele, 1998). Situational interests are less personal and more global in scope, in that some tasks or learning environments are situationally interesting to most students (Hidi &

Renninger, 2006; Zahorik, 1996). Situational interest differs from individual interest in that it is more influenced by affect than cognition, although situations that are interesting do not always have positive feelings associated with them (Iran-Nejad, 1987; Hidi & Renninger, 2002). For example, when listening to a piece of music that is mostly at a low dynamic level, and which then suddenly becomes very loud, an individual could perceive listening to the music as an interesting but not enjoyable experience. However, most experiences perceived to be situationally interesting are also accompanied by positive feelings (Hidi & Renninger, 2006).

Influences on situational interest.

Much effort has been made to identify different features of learning environments that contribute to situational interest. These aspects can be divided into three categories: the content of the learning activities, the qualities of the learning tasks, and instructional conditions.

Early studies on situational interest focused on identifying interesting characteristics of texts in reading situations. A variety of textual qualities that are interesting to most students have been identified, such as surprise (Hidi, 1990; Iran-Nejad, 1987; Wade, Buxton, & Kelly, 1999), humor (Wade et al., 1999), suspense (Jose & Brewer, 1984; Wade et al., 1999), character identification (Anderson, Shirey, Wilson, & Fielding, 1987; Jose & Brewer, 1984), novelty (Anderson et al., 1987; Hidi, 1990; Wade et al., 1999), textual vividness (Garner, Brown, Sanders, & Menke, 1992; Schraw & Lehman, 2001), and a high level of activity within the text (Hidi & Baird, 1986). Certain themes that carry emotional appeal such as death, sex, danger, and violence have also been found to be universally interesting (Kintsch, 1980).

Specific types of learning tasks have also been found to be interesting across most students. For instance, students have been found to be more interested in activities in which they are actively engaged by, for example, participating in hand-on activities (Dohn, 2011; Mitchell, 1993; Palmer, 2004; Swarat, Ortony, & Revelle, 2012) and those that have higher levels of physicality (Palmer, 2009). Group work and other forms of social interaction have also been seen as interesting for students (Bergin, 1999; Dohn, Madsen, & Malte, 2009; Isaac, Sansone, & Smith, 1999; Harvey, 2010; Mitchell, 1993; Palmer, 2004, 2009). Novel or surprising activities (as opposed to the novel or surprising content mentioned in the previous section) are often interesting (Chen et al., 2001; Dohn, 2011; Dohn et al., 2009; Hidi, 1990; Palmer, 2004, 2009; Sun, Chen, Ennis, Martin, & Shen, 2008), as are activities involving humor (Bergin, 1999), games and puzzles (Bergin, 1999; Mitchell, 1993; Morgan, 2010), and computers and other forms of technology (Mitchell, 1993; Bergin, 1999; Swarat et al., 2012). In physical education classes, it has been found that increased cognitive demand heightens situational interest (Chen & Darst, 2001). Finally, if learning activities are found to be relevant or meaningful in that students value their real-life applications, they are likely to be seen as more situationally interesting (Mitchell, 1993; Palmer, 2004, 2009; Schraw & Denison, 1994; Shirey, 1992).

Teachers also believe that situational interest is important in enhancing the motivation of their students (Schraw et al., 2001). Zahorik (1996) interviewed teachers, asking them to identify the actions that they took in order to make lessons interesting. Many of the responses aligned with the studies that explored children's

perspectives on interest. For example, teachers used hands-on activities, group work, and tasks that were practical and relevant. They also reported personalizing content by, for example, tying learning to prior knowledge or known interests, and choosing content they believed students would like. Other traits that teachers mentioned as being effective instigators of interest, which were not found in studies of children's perspectives, include developing student trust, teaching with enthusiasm, and using a variety of activities and materials (e.g. field trips and guest speakers).

Specific instructional conditions in terms of teacher attitudes and actions have been found to elicit higher or lower levels of situational interest. If teachers provide students with meaningful choices, they are likely to find the class activities more situationally interesting (Cordova & Lepper, 1996; Deci, 1992; McPhail, Pierson, Freeman, Goodman, & Ayappa, 2000; Reber, Hetland, Chen, Norman, & Kobbeltvedt, 2009; Renwick & McPherson, 2002). This may be important because students can choose to study what they are curious about, or may choose tasks at which they believe they will succeed (Schraw et al., 2001). A teacher's level of autonomy support can influence situational interest, as well (Deci, 1992; Tsai et al., 2008). Autonomy supportive behavior includes actions such as asking questions about students' desires, providing students with opportunities to work on their own, and acknowledging students' perspectives (Tsai et al., 2008). Finally, teachers' use of humor (Dohn et al., 2009) and anecdotes (Palmer, 2004) has been found to enhance situational interest.

Benefits of situational interest.

A variety of positive benefits for learning experiences high in situational interest have been determined. For example, higher levels of situational interest help students focus attention (Anderson et al., 1987; Hidi, 1995; McDaniel, Waddill, Finstad, & Bourg, 2000), and increase task persistence (Ainley, Hidi, & Berndorff, 2002). Learning experiences high in situational interest have been found to lead to improved recall (Anderson et al., 1987; Hidi & Baird, 1986, 1988; Schraw, Bruning, & Svoboda, 1995), higher levels of cognitive performance (Hidi, 1990), improved quality of essay-writing (Flowerday, Schraw, & Stevens, 2004), increased integration of new information and prior knowledge (Kintsch, 1980), and higher overall levels of learning (Mitchell, 1993; Schraw et al., 1995; Schraw & Denison, 1994). Also, learning environments high in situational interest have been found to be particularly beneficial for students with low individual interest in the specific subject matter (Durik & Harackiewicz, 2007; Flowerday et al., 2004) or low ability (Berninger & Hidi, 2006). In addition, some studies have found that students involved in learning experiences that hold high degrees of situational interest have correspondingly high engagement (Flowerday, Schraw, & Stevens, 2004; Shen & Chen, 2006; Shen, Chen, Scrabis, & Tolley, 2003; Sun & Rueda, 2012), although others have cautioned that this is not necessarily the case, due to other characteristics involved in the learning activity (Shen et al., 2007). This engagement is important: In order for situational interest to have the positive effect on academic accomplishment, it is necessary that achievement-related behaviors occur as well (Ainley, Hidi & Berndorff, 2002; Rotgans & Schmidt, 2011).

Researchers and theorists also believe that repeated experiences of high situational interest may lead to increased individual interest. The list of theorists who posit this to be the case is quite long (Alexander et al., 1995; Bergin, 1999; Chen & Darst, 2002; Hidi, 1990, 2000, 2001; Hidi & Berndorff, 1998; Hidi & Renninger, 2006; Hoffman, 2002; Krapp, 2002; Mitchell, 1993; Palmer, 2009; Pressick-Kilborn & Walker, 2002; Schiefele, 1991), particularly compared to the number of studies that have examined the claim empirically (Shen & Chen, 2006; Mitchell & Gilson, 1997; Linnenbrink-Garcia et al., 2010). Mitchell and Gilson's (1997) study examined the individual and situational interest of students in 36 mathematics classes over the course of a year, and found that students in classes that were regularly high in ratings of situational interest had higher individual interest ratings at the end of the year. Linnenbrink-Garcia et al. (2010) also investigated math classes in middle and high school, and emerged with the same findings. The reason for the lack of studies (or, for that matter, that the Mitchell and Gilson (1997) study never advanced from a paper presentation at a national conference to a peer-reviewed article) is unclear. Nonetheless, most interest theorists consistently posit that repeated experiences of situational interest will lead to increased individual interest. Additionally, Palmer (2004) found that a series of science classes for preservice teachers that were high in situational interest led to more positive attitudes towards science.

In some circumstances, high levels of situational interest can also inhibit learning. For example, "seductive details," which can be interesting aspects of texts but are unrelated to the main content, can serve to distract students from the main points of a reading selection, leading to decreased success in recall (Garner et al.,

1992; Harp & Mayer, 1998). Also, Zahorik (1996), in his study of K-12 teachers' efforts to create learning experiences for their students that were high in situational interest, found that the strategies chosen by teachers may have been high in situational interest but did not always relate directly to the learning goals.

Interest in Authentic Learning Experiences

While situational and individual interest are typically treated separately in the literature, they work together to create the psychological state of interest (Hidi, 2001). Factors of interest are not always either completely situational or individual, and the two types of interest influence each other. As Hidi and Baird (1986) noted, "interest occurs only in the interaction of stimulus and person so that one can never stipulate the origin in one to the exclusion of the other" (p. 184). That is, students bring their individual interests with them into the context of the classroom, where they interact with situational factors to produce the overall interest experience (Swarat et al., 2012). The psychological state of interest has also been referred to as the actualized state of individual interest (Schiefele, 1991) and the interest experience (Tsai et al., 2008).

Regardless of overlap and relationship between the two types of interest, situational interest, with its emphasis on environmental stimuli, is of more immediate concern to educators. Teachers have little direct control over individual interest, at least in the short term. In addition, it would be impractical for teachers to attempt to appeal to the individual of all students in the classroom, due to the wide variation in individual interest. Situational interest, on the other hand, is more global in nature, appealing to all (or most) of the students in a given classroom. It

can be immediately affected by curricular choices and teacher behaviors, more easily impacting the immediate learning experience of a whole class of students. Specific activities that are found to be high in interest would also presumably lead to higher levels of interest for the skill being addressed. Thus, for the teacher, changing the way a student participates in tasks may increase situational interest (Deci, 1992; Schraw & Lehman, 2001), ultimately leading to improved performance outcomes.

The Construct of Interest Pertinent to Music Education

Terminology: Interest, attitude, liking, and preference.

The studies referenced in the preceding section explored the role of interest theoretically, and its application in the academic domains of reading, writing, science, math, and physical education. The vast majority of studies of motivation in music education that have examined the questions relevant to interest have used terms such as attitude (e.g. Nolin, 1973; Pognowski, 1985; Hedden, 2007), preference (e.g. Baker, 1980; LeBlanc, 1982), and liking (e.g. Hargreaves, 1984) to describe students' interest-related approaches to music, music classes, and the specific activities of music courses and ensembles. In these studies, preference and liking appear to be synonymous, assessing what songs, activities, and other experiences students like the best. For example, LeBlanc, Sims, Malin, and Sherrill (1992) investigated subjects' "preference" by using a 7-point Likert-type scale, "with the poles at each end anchored by 'I like' and 'I dislike'" (p. 273). The term "attitude" has sometimes been used in the same fashion, to examine students' feelings toward particular activities or musical material, but it has also been employed to assess

more global attitudes towards domain content (Bowman, 1988). For example, Pognowski (1985) used the word “attitude” when asking students to rate on a four-point scale how much they “looked forward” to coming to music class.

The terms attitude, liking, and preference all refer to an affective state of the musical experience. In the conceptualization of the interest experience (e.g. Hidi & Renninger, 2006; Krapp, 2002; Schraw & Lehman, 2001), this affective component is combined with a cognitive component to create interest. Individual interest places more value on the cognitive aspects of a person’s experience, whereas the experience of situational interest more strongly emphasizes the affective component (Hidi & Renninger, 2006). Situational interest has been further broken down into an initial phase referred to as “catch” or “triggered situational interest,” which is almost completely affective in nature, and a phase of “hold” or “maintained situational interest” (e.g. Hidi & Renninger, 2006; Mitchell, 1993) in which the affective component remains strong but is incorporated with more cognitive features. Studies in music education, with their generally exclusive attention to the affective component, are best seen under the triggered situational interest aspect of framework. Further, recent studies of interest have found that young learners may understand the term “interest” to mean “liking” (Dohn, 2011; Morgan, 2010). Dohn (2011), for example, explored the nature of situational interest of high school students in a visit to an aquarium, and observed, “interview transcripts suggested that students often equated ‘interesting’ with ‘fun’ or ‘liking.’” At a minimum, the affective response was an essential factor in the teenagers’ understanding of interest.

It should be noted that while situational interest has occasionally been seen as synonymous with liking, many researchers acknowledge that the affective aspect of situational interest may not necessarily be positive (e.g. Iran-Nejad, 1987). Nonetheless, when students “like” a learning experience, they usually feel situational interest towards the activity, so these studies can still be viewed as a form of situational interest.

Attitude, liking, and preference: Findings.

Studies that have examined characteristics of student-preferred music appear to parallel the interest literature that has explored the qualities of text-based forms of situational interest; both have looked at the surface level of the material being addressed. This qualifies as a form of situational interest. The research on listening preferences is extensive, with positive preference for musical characteristics such as faster tempi (e.g. LeBlanc, Colman, Sherrill, & Malin, 1988; LeBlanc et al., 2000/2001), song traits such as humor (LeBlanc, Sims, Malin, & Sherrill, 1992, and performance characteristics such as low levels of vibrato (LeBlanc & Sherrill, 1986). In addition, familiarity with a musical excerpt has also been found to correlate with preference (deVries, 2011; Shehan, 1985; Siebenaler, 1999).

Researchers have explored the relationship between attitude towards music class and a variety of factors. Boys have been found to hold less positive attitudes towards music class than girls do (Eccles et al., 1993; Haladyna & Thomas, 1979; Nolin, 1973; Phillips & Aitchison, 1998). Also, increased age has been found to negatively correlate with positive attitude towards elementary music class

(Haladyna & Thomas, 1979; Vander Ark, Nolin, & Newman, 1980); that is, the older students get, the more negative their attitude becomes. In addition, positive attitudes towards music class have been found to be moderately predictive of music achievement (Hedden, 1982). All of these studies explored attitudes towards children's music class, rather than an examination of the domain of music more broadly. These studies, then, are most appropriate to consider as forms of situational interest.

Within the general music class, students prefer some activities to others. "Playing instruments" is the activity that has been most consistently found to be the among the students' favorites (Bowles, 1998; Killian & Basinger, 2004; Nolin, 1973; Murphy & Brown, 1986; Temmerman, 1995). Other activities preferred by elementary students include engaging in performance activities (Nolin, 1973), and improvising (Murphy & Brown, 1986). In an extensive survey of elementary students in Minnesota and Texas, Bowles (1998) found that other activities garnering positive ratings from over 80% of fifth grade respondents included attending concerts, having performers come to class, engaging in group work, and playing musical games. Some research has indicated that students like singing in general music class (e.g. Bowman, 1988; Mizener, 1993; Vander Ark et al., 1980), while others have indicated that this is a less-preferred activity (e.g. Phillips & Aitchison, 1998, 1999). Music-reading activities have been seen as among the least popular activities of the elementary music class (Bowles, 1998; Murphy & Brown, 1986; Nolin, 1973; Vander Ark et al., 1980), and children in upper elementary were found to dislike performing solos in concerts (Bowles, 1998) or in front of their

peers (Bowman, 1988). Similar to global attitudes towards music class, attitude towards most common music class activities has been found to decline as children age (Bowles, 1998). No studies reported the reasons given by students for their preferences. Since these refer to specific activities, they would also be forms of situational interest.

Few studies have explored the role of a teacher's instructional style on attitudes or preferences in the music class (Temmerman, 2000). Droe (2008) determined that a teacher's positive comments toward pieces of music during a middle school choir class could influence students' attitude toward that music in a positive direction. When exploring the attitudes of upper elementary students towards the general music class, Pognowski (1985) found that a "process-oriented music curriculum" helped stem the decline in attitude among upper elementary students. The content of the curriculum was not detailed.

Interest and music education.

When the term "interest" has been used in music education studies, it has usually been used synonymously with attitude, liking, or preference (e.g. Denac, 2008; Temmerman, 2000). For example, Denac (2008) explored the interest level of children in the musical activities in the preschool class, but the study did not incorporate interest theory into the approach. Rather, the term interest was used synonymously with preference. She noted, "When speaking of musical interests we actually mean the individual's prioritizing specific activities and content in the field of music" (p. 439). Mizener (1993), in a study on the attitudes of children towards singing and choir participation, included questionnaire items that addressed

“singing interest,” which “were designed to elicit responses regarding attitude toward singing in general and singing under specific circumstances” (p. 234). In one study that incorporated interest theory into its framework, Renwick and McPherson (2002) conducted a case study on a beginning clarinet player, in which they videotaped and interviewed a girl in upper elementary school over the course of three years. They found that “Clarissa” spent more time and utilized more effective rehearsal strategies when practicing a piece of music that she had chosen, rather than one selected by the teacher. The authors noted that the ability to play the self-selected musical piece led to increased situational interest.

These studies provide teachers and educators with lists of activities to consider scheduling in their lessons in an effort to boost attitude, but the broader ideas behind the preferences have not been elicited from children. One can make connections with the literature on situational interest. For example, activities that are hands-on or physical in other ways have been found to enhance situational interest (Palmer, 2004, 2009), and activities such as playing instruments and playing musical games (found to be viewed positively by students: Bowles, 1998) require more active engagement. Engaging in performance activities (Nolin, 1973) can be seen as a task that could be seen as relevant to students (Schraw & Denison, 1994). Attending concerts and having performers come to class (Bowles, 1998) would likely not be consistent, regular activities, so these could be seen as representing the situationally interesting “catch” factor of novelty (Chen et al., 2001; Hidi, 1990; Dohn, 2011; Palmer, 2004). It is important to note that these are inferences suggested, but no research has made these connections to date.

Purpose

Some children enter music classes with high levels of individual interest in the discipline, and are therefore likely to participate actively in class and to persist in musical endeavors beyond their years in elementary school. Other children have lower levels of individual interest in music, which may result in more apathetic and disengaged behavior in the classroom and a greater probability of stopping the study of music as it becomes an elective activity in the middle school grades. Increased levels of student interest have been found to correlate with higher levels of learning and a greater likelihood of continuing in a discipline. Further, the upper elementary school years, especially ages 9-12, are marked by a decline in overall attitude towards school as well as towards music class and many of its specific activities, thus prompting the vital need for this study. For teachers, identifying sources of situational interest in the learning environment and including the particularities of these interests into lesson plans can help create opportunities for students to cultivate increased knowledge and greater musical skills, as well as develop higher levels of individual interest towards the discipline. Thus, it is in the interest of music teachers to understand the situational interests of children in the upper elementary grades towards music class, and incorporate these interests into their curricular design.

The purpose of this study was to explore the nature of situational interest of nine- and ten-year old children in one fourth grade music classroom. One major question guided the research: What are the sources of situational interest for children in one upper elementary music class? In addition, what components of the

contents of lessons induce interest and inspire learning? What activity qualities draw or deter children's intrigue and involvement?

Overview of the Dissertation

Seven chapters comprise the dissertation. The first chapter reviewed the literature pertinent to situational interest, and provided the purpose and major question(s) of the study. The second chapter will address the method and context, with specific description of the group of students under study and the means by which the nature of situational interest was explored. Chapters three through six will describe the four main themes that emerged from data collection: novelty (chapter three), self-efficacy and challenge (chapter four), kinesthetic and visual modalities (chapter five), and creativity (chapter 6). The final chapter will offer conclusions and discuss the implications of the study for music education research and practice.

Chapter 2: Method and Context

This chapter will describe the methodological approach that was employed for this study of situational interest in one fourth grade music class. After an explanation of the ethnographic approach and a rationale for it, the particulars of the fieldwork undertaken will be conveyed. The specific context in which the study occurred will be described, beginning with the school, and then followed by the fourth grade class that was selected for study. The chapter will close with a depiction of the school music program's aims, approach, and encounters, and a portrayal of one class period will serve as means of focusing on details of the program.

Method

This qualitative study featured procedures and techniques befitting an ethnographic method, in order to explore the culture of children in one fourth grade class with regard to the nature of their situational interest in the school music program. Twenty-four children in one fourth grade comprised the members of the classroom culture, and they were studied for a period of four months. My roles in the work were as teacher and researcher. This section will describe ethnographic approaches in music education broadly before looking specifically to the manner in which this method was applied to the current study.

Ethnography in Music Education and Interest Research

Creswell (2005) noted that ethnographic designs are “qualitative research procedures for describing, analyzing, and interpreting a culture-sharing group’s

shared patterns of behavior, beliefs, and language that develop over time” (p. 436). In recent years, music educators have found ethnographic approaches to be an effective means by which to highlight certain issues related to children’s musical development, both in out-of-school and in-school settings. Campbell’s (2010) seminal work explored children’s informal musicking practices in settings that included playgrounds, school cafeterias, and the school bus, while also talking with children about the role of music in their lives. Lum (2007) also explored the musical behaviors of elementary-aged schoolchildren in Singapore on the school playground, at home, and at school, arguing that music educators should take these experiences into account when designing lessons and curricula. Lum and Campbell (2007) worked together to examine the musicking behaviors of elementary children at one school in an urban setting the West Coast of the United States, documenting and interpreting the “whats” and “hows” of children’s musical experiences at a variety of sites within the school grounds during the school day. In addition, Marsh (2008) traveled to five different countries to document and analyze children’s singing games, looking to practices of transmission, preservation, and transformation. Also, Griffin (2009), in an ethnographic study of second and third grade children, noted a strong disconnect between children’s out-of-school music experiences and those that occurred in school. These studies have viewed ethnography as an effective approach with which to explore the issues that emerge in children’s natural contexts, and apply the findings to the realm of more formal music education.

Researchers have also used ethnographic approaches to explore the nature of children's musical experiences of children in the context of elementary general music classes. Klinger (1996), for example, explored the impact of a multicultural education unit that incorporated the inclusion of culture-bearers into the classroom. She wrote reflexively of the classrooms she visited, with attention to the interaction of culture-bearers, teachers, and children. Some studies that ethnographically examined product and process of music classes have involved teacher-researchers studying their own students. In the elementary setting, Wiggins (1992), for example, described the nature of musical learning in one of her fifth grade music classes. Feay-Shaw (2001) explored the experience of her fifth grade group of students during the events leading up to the performance of a school musical. Also, Beegle (2006) looked to her own students to describe the process and products of children's musical improvisations, including the strategies employed by students and the communication styles of individuals and groups. Once again, an ethnographic approach was found to be a successful means by which to allow musical meanings of children to unfold over time in the context of their classes.

The majority of studies investigating issues of interest in learning situations have used quantitative approaches, typically using surveys and questionnaires to identify various aspects of the interest experience (e.g. Chen et al., 2001; Tsai et al., 2008). Mixed methods approaches can be found, as well (e.g. Dohn, Madsen, & Malte, 2009; Palmer, 2009). For example, in high school science classes, Palmer (2009) used an experimental design in which students rated their level of situational interest for different aspects of a lesson on a scale of 1-5, and explained

the reasons for their interest levels in small-group interviews. Qualitative approaches can be found in the literature, although they are fewer in number (Dohn, 2011; Morgan, 2010; Nolen, 2007; Pressick-Kilborn & Walker, 2002). For example, Pressick-Kilborn and Walker (2002) explored the nature of interest in science and technology classes in a fifth grade classroom over a sixth month period. An ethnographic approach was utilized in order “to capture the richness, complexity, and constantly changing system of the classroom as a process of becoming, not as a static phenomenon” (p. 171). The authors believed that interest can and does change, due to “the interpsychological and intrapsychological canalization processes of students’ interest” (p. 172). In a similar study, Nolen (2007) explored the role of literature communities in the development of second and third graders’ interest in writing. She concluded that the learning context interacts with characteristics of the individual student to influence the interest level. Renninger and Hidi (2002) used a case study approach to identify the interest of one seventh grade boy, exploring the ways in which situational and individual interest interacted with each other, and both explained and impacted his actions and achievement. Focusing on one middle school student allowed the researchers to explore the ways in which the subject’s interests overlapped and worked together to influence outcomes.

Fieldwork

In ethnographic studies, fieldwork refers to “extensive work in the field...gathering information through observations, interviews, and materials helpful in developing a portrait and establishing ‘cultural rules’ of the culture-sharing group” (Creswell, 1998, p. 60). In the current study, the classroom was the site of

the fieldwork, specifically the music classroom, in which one fourth grade class of young nine- and ten-year-old students engaged in various music-educational experiences. This culture-sharing group of 24 students spent approximately six hours together in daily instruction from September through June, studying standard classroom subjects of language arts, math, and social studies, as well as special subject areas such as art, physical education, and music. Because of the need for access to instruments, high quality audio equipment, and space for movement experiences, the music classroom was the space to which the fourth grade class traveled for their twice-weekly lessons. Thus, the music classroom was the primary field and site of this concentrated ethnographic research. The fieldwork in the current study entailed five components: interviews, observations, free-write opportunities, one-item surveys, and examination of material culture. The following section will describe each aspect of the fieldwork.

Interviews.

Interviews with children comprised a major portion of the fieldwork. When working to understand the experiences of children, interviews are seen as a crucial means to give voice to their ideas and understandings (James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998; Wyness, 2006). As Graue and Walsh (1998) noted, “in doing research with children, one never becomes a child. One remains a very definite and readily identifiable ‘other’” (p. xiv), by virtue of the scholars adulthood. Interviews allow children to put their meanings into their own words.

The focus of the interviews was not only to identify the specific activities the students found interesting, but also to clarify the interesting qualities of class

experiences. Thus, a semi-structured interview format was deemed most appropriate (Fontana & Frey, 2005). All 24 children in the fourth grade class were interviewed. In addition, nine of the children served as “children of focus,” and were interviewed between three and five times over the course of the project. In total, I made 33 interviews with children. In the first set of six introductory interviews, I met with all children for 10 minutes. The second set of 27 interviews took between 25 and 40 minutes, with most exchanges lasting approximately 30 minutes. All interviews were videotaped, and then transcribed at a later date, usually within two days. The transcriptions totaled 211 single-spaced pages of text. See Table 1 for an overview of the interviews.

Initial interviews. In the first six interviews, all students in the class were interviewed in groups of four, each lasting approximately 10 minutes. The purpose of these open-ended interviews was twofold. First, the open-ended questioning with two basic questions (What is interesting to you about music class? What is not interesting to you about music class?) was intended to create initial themes that would serve to provide lines of inquiry. Secondly, the four-person interviews were meant to identify specific children that were particularly “verbal,” willing and able to express their thoughts clearly. Nine of these children were selected as the “children of focus,” and were interviewed more often than the others over the course of the study. The 10-minute interview time period and the four-person interview grouping allowed me to interview all children over the space of two weeks, identify the children of focus, and move into the second step of the interview process, which was intended to provide for more in-depth understandings.

Table 1

Overview of Interviews

<u>Number</u>	<u>Children</u>	<u>Interview topics</u>
II.1 ^a	Grace, Bryan, Lucy, Isaiah	Overview
II.2	Xui Li, Anna, Charity, Max	Overview
II.3	Conor, Sam, Joe, Nathan	Overview
II.4	Audrey, Sarah, Sophie, Leah	Overview
II.5	Daniel M, Luke, Matthew, Jaden	Overview
II.6	Parker, Maya, Brandon, Daniel J.	Overview
I.1	Anna, Grace	Overview
I.2	Bryan, Lucy	Overview
I.3	Sarah, Leah	Overview
I.4	Maya, Parker	Overview; Song evaluation
I.5	Sam, Joe	Overview; Song evaluation
I.6	Xui Li, Charity	Overview; Song evaluation
I.7	Max, Daniel J.	Overview; Song evaluation
I.8	Sophie, Audrey	Overview; Activity evaluation
I.9	Daniel M., Isaiah	Overview; Video 1
I.10	Grace (2), Anna (2)	Card sorting: Activities
I.11	Jaden, Brandon	Overview; Card sorting: Activities
I.12	Bryan (2), Lucy (2)	Card sorting: Activities; Video 1
I.13	Luke, Nathan	Overview; Card sorting: Activities Video 1
I.14	Leah (2), Parker (2)	Card sorting: Activities
I.15	Lucy (3), Joe (2)	Card sorting: Songs; Video 2
I.16	Conor, Daniel J. (2)	Card sorting: Songs; Video 2
I.17	Sam (2), Anna (3)	Card sorting: Songs; Video 2
I.18	Grace (3), Xui Li (2)	Card sorting: Songs; Video 2
I.19	Leah (3), Bryan (3)	Card sorting: Songs; Video 2
I.20	Anna (4), Daniel M. (2)	Card sorting: Study activities; Video 3
I.21	Parker (3), Xui Li (3)	Card sorting: Study activities; Video 3
I.22	Grace (4), Bryan (4)	Card sorting: Study activities; Video 3
I.23	Leah (4), Max (2)	Member checking, Video 3
I.24	Nathan (2), Maya (2)	Video 3
I.25	Anna (5), Xui Li (4)	Card sorting: Study activities; Member checking

Table 1, Continued

I.26	Charity (2), Sarah (2)	Video 3
I.27	Sam (3), Joe (3)	Card sorting: study activities; Video 3; Member checking
<u>I.28</u>	<u>Mr. Linton</u>	<u>Discussion of students</u>

Note. The number in parentheses refers to the amount of times each child had been interviewed, to that date. Initial interviews do not apply to these totals.

^a II refers to an initial 10-minute interview; I refers to a 30-minute interview

Children of focus. Nine students in the class were identified as “children of focus.” These fourth graders were interviewed more often than the remainder of the class. All children of focus were seen as willing to participate in discussion groups freely (Campbell, 2010). In addition, these students represented a range of ethnicities and a balance of boys and girls.

Main interviews. In the two-person interviews, one young student was interviewed five times, four were interviewed four times, four were interviewed three times, seven were interviewed two times, and seven were interviewed one time. In addition, one student (Matthew) decided that he never wanted to be interviewed beyond the initial four-person, ten-minute interview. The initial intent was that all 24 students would be interviewed one time in addition to the opening small-group interview, with nine of those children being “children of focus,” interviewed four additional times over the course of the project. Equity issues emerged, as some students who were not selected as focus children stated an interest in being interviewed more often. For example, one child told me that “it wasn’t fair that Anna gets to be interviewed all these times, and I only get to do it once.” Due to this request, I altered my plan, and interviewed children who

indicated an interest in the process, while also attempting to give more opportunities to children that I deemed would be more consistently expressive. In addition, students were occasionally absent on the days of planned interviews, and one child (Lucy) who was identified as a child of focus elected not to participate in the last interview. Effort was still made to gather more interviews from nine of the children, but the collection process was not as consistent as initially planned.

The 27 main interviews with children took place using a variety of approaches. All interviews consisted at least partly of questions relating to levels of interest of the most recent class. In addition, interviews contained one or more than one of the following activities: general discussion about the range of children's interests and their views of their classmates' interests; instant video revisiting; index card sorting; verbal song and activity evaluation; and member checking. The range of interview experiences was intended to provide different access points for the children to comment on their interests. Each interview activity is described below.

The first seven interviews were wide-ranging, open-ended interviews in which the children discussed aspects of the class that were more and less interesting to them. Structure of the interviews was minimal.

Fifteen of the interviews incorporated a variation of the "instant video revisiting" process (Forman, 1999). In this approach, a class is video recorded, and soon thereafter individual students are shown the video and asked to comment upon it. This approach has been seen as an effective means by which to encourage metacognition (Hong & Broderick, 2003; Makin & Whiteman, 2006; Whiteman &

Campbell, 2012). Although initially conceived as a tool for working with preschool children, it has also been successfully employed with children in upper elementary school (e.g. Marsh, 2008). In the current study, the children watched videos of activities that had transpired in recent classes. iMovie software was used to create the video clips, by taking recordings of the full 30-minute class, then editing each segment of the class into passages ranging from 45 to 90 seconds. After the children watched each short clip, I stopped the video, and engaged the children in discussion about their interest level concerning the segment. Three different edited videos were created, with each video containing six to eight lesson excerpts.

Fourteen interviews included index card sorting activities. The children were provided with 3X5 index cards, on which were written specific songs or activities that the students had performed in class. They were given general instructions to sort them on their interestingness. Some children chose piles of interesting/not interesting, others created three piles (“interesting; so-so; not interesting,” according to Nathan), while other children placed the cards along a continuum. For some interviews, the pair of children shared the cards, having to work together to decide how to organize them based on their interest level. For other interviews, the two children were provided with an identical set of cards. They individually sorted the cards, then engaged in discussion with each other as they compared the similarities and differences in their ranking. The topic for five of the interviews was song titles (such as *When I First Came to This Land* or *Sagidi Sapopo*), five interviews addressed specific class activities (such as playing drums or

learning new rhythms), and five addressed activities of the study (such as having interviews with a partner or writing on iPads).

Song and activity evaluation occurred during five interviews. In this simpler version of the index card sorting activities, I verbally provided names of songs or activities to the children being interviewed, and they commented on the amount and type of interest these experiences elicited.

Three interviews towards the end of the project included member checking, in which I told children the results of my initial open coding. They commented on the themes, providing examples to agree or disagree. See Table 2 for summary of interview activities.

Table 2

Number of Children Engaged in Each Interview Activity

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Number of children</u>
Card sorting: Songs	10
Card sorting: Activities	10
Card sorting: Study activities	10
Song and Activity evaluation	10
Video 1	6
Video 2	10
Video 3	14
Member checking	6

When adults interview children, there can be a power dynamic at play, in which children want to “please” the adult (Hood, Kelly, & Mayall, 1996). Attempts to mitigate this phenomenon were made in a number of ways. Children were

interviewed in groups of two or four, rather than alone, an approach that has been found to help balance the power inequity (Marsh, 2008; Wyness, 2006). Most interviews did not take place in the music room, but in a smaller room that abutted one of the kindergarten classrooms. The room had less adult regulation, which can serve to “downplay the adulthood of the researcher and provide a less inhibiting context for the research” (Wyness, 2006, p. 193). Both the children and I were seated during the interviews, to attempt to background the size discrepancy between adults and children that can represent the power imbalance (Holmes, 1998). The room had adult-sized chairs as well as smaller chairs intended for young children. In order to further address the issue of power I made myself smaller by sitting in a child-sized chair, while they sat in the adult-sized chairs. Further, most interviews transpired on days that I did not usually work at the school. On those days I dressed more informally (e.g. blue jeans and a sweatshirt), instead of wearing the more typical teacher attire for the school (e.g. khaki pants and a button-down shirt), in an effort to temporarily re-cast myself as a non-teacher. Finally, the children were repeatedly informed that it was their opinions and feelings that were the most important aspect of this project, and that I will be advocating for teachers to incorporate their interests into the music classroom (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Two times during the project, tapes of the interviews were shown to other researchers, in an attempt to identify any inhibiting behaviors on my part.

In addition to the 33 interviews with children, one interview was made with the classroom teacher. This hour-long discussion covered topics such as a broad description of the class as a whole and the learning styles of specific students. He

also provided commentary on the themes that were emerging from the data. This interview was also transcribed.

Observations.

The class was videotaped during their twice-weekly class meetings. As the students' regular music teacher, I acted as a participant-observer (Creswell, 2005). After each class period, I made reflective fieldnotes based upon the experiences of the class. Each class was videotaped, with the camera fixed on the students. Initially, I planned to have the camera be operated by others (e.g. an administrator, a former student teacher, or an older child enrolled in an elective video class), in order to focus the lens on the children as much as possible. In practice, the roving videographer appeared to distract the students, and occasionally impact their behavior. For example, during a class period early in the study, a former student teacher was videotaping the class as they worked in small groups. As she came up to a group of students, one child nudged his neighbor, they sat up straight and talk ceased, suggesting that they had been not fully engaged in the class activities. When the recording device was placed on top of a file cabinet, the students appeared to disregard the recording, conceivably leading to a more accurate recording of a traditional class. Therefore, the remainder of the class periods was recorded using the static camera.

The videos were viewed for additional data concerning each of the focus children under study, as well as the class overall. I watched and fieldnoted the videotapes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Especially noteworthy were specific observable behaviors found to be indicative of high levels of interest: a relatively

still head (Reeve, 1993), greater eye contact for the item of interest (Reeve & Nix, 1997), a quicker rate of speech and wider range of frequency (Johnstone & Scherer, 2000), posture (i.e. an decrease in slouching), and sonic production. It should be cautioned that while perceived student engagement has often served as a proxy for interest in classroom observations, some research has indicated that children may appear to be off-task but are in fact be mentally engaged in the activity (Swarat et al., 2012). Thus, the presence or absence of the factors served to provide possible fodder for my inquiries during interviews and in the free writing opportunities, as well as to reinforce statements made by the students.

In addition to the observations made in the music classroom, I made four observations of the class in other venues. One observation each took place in their general all-subjects classroom, as well as in art class, physical education class, and during an all-school mass, a periodic church service that the children attend as part of their education in a Catholic school. In these classes, I made field notes while observing the children, and did not videotape the class (Emerson et al., 1995).

Surveys and 'free-writes.'

In order to quickly obtain a sense of class-wide levels of situational interest, brief procedures for gathering data can document on-the-spot interest (Alexander et al., 1995). Using a protocol established by Palmer (2009), a one-item survey was employed. Interest level was measured with the following item:

	very boring		in-between		very interesting
I though this part was:	1	2	3	4	5

In order to render these experiences as brief as possible, children were assigned elements of a computer-based performance system, also known as CPS systems and commonly referred to as “clickers” (Weerts, 2009). Using these devices, students quickly entered their interest rating on a digital keypad, which then transmitted the answers via radio frequency to an interactive whiteboard for documentation. CPS devices have been seen as a way to obtain formative assessments and self-reflective statements of students’ learning experiences (Moss & Crowley, 2011). Each fourth grader received a clicker for the entire project, so that he or she was able to quickly and easily enter the requested information. The clicker protocol was used to determine ratings for 11 different activities at various points throughout the project. These experiences represented a range of activities, such as playing drums and learning a folk dance move called the “grand right and left” in the song *Goin’ Down to Cairo*. The self-reports were used as a basis for further questioning during the interview process.

The children also engaged in six free writing opportunities referred to in this study as “free-writes”. The technique of free-writes is akin to “think-alouds” (Freeman, McPhail, & Berndt, 2002), in that the respondent simply writes down his or her stream of thought. Free-writes allow children to write as they do in other classroom subjects, freely and without a sense of borders and boundaries that might hem in the creative thinking on the subject. Utilizing an open-ended question format used by Freeman et al. (2002), they answered the following question: “What made the previous activity interesting or not interesting?” The class contained a class set

of iPads, enough for each child to have his or her own. At six different points throughout the project, the students brought their iPads to the music classroom. Immediately after the target activity, they typed answers to the above question, and then e-mailed their responses directly to me in an attachment. They could choose to identify themselves or remain anonymous. The e-mail accounts from which their writings were sent did not refer to their names, but the numbers that they had been given by their classroom teacher. I did not have access to their class numbers, which allowed the e-mails to be anonymous. These writings were collated and coded for themes.

Material culture.

Material culture typically encompasses artifacts “comprised of elements or constituents, of variously composed matter: the tangible, the worldly, and the real” (Tilley, p. 2006, p. 3). Materials are commonly examined in ethnographic approaches to research in order to provide a fuller understanding of a culture (Creswell, 2005). Lesson plans for the class under study created in the past two years were reviewed, in order to understand the arc of the curriculum. Previous formal and informal assessments, such as ratings of in-tune singing, were examined in order to explore the skill sets of the students in relation to their stated and perceived interests. In addition, the statement of purpose of the music education program for the school was reviewed to understand the school’s official perspective on the music program.

Fieldwork Follow-up

All interviews were transcribed, and the videotaped classes fieldnoted. The interview transcriptions, fieldnotes, and free-write compilations were repeatedly examined for themes and patterns. Initial passes through the data used an open-coding strategy (Emerson et al., 1995), to “sift through and categorize small segments of the fieldnote record by writing words and phrases that identify and name specific analytic dimensions and categories” (pp. 150-151). Once core themes emerged from the open-coding strategy, I re-engaged with the data using a focused coding approach, which “involves building up and elaborating analytically interesting themes, both by connecting data that initially may not have appeared to go together and by delineating sub-themes and subtopics that distinguish differences and variations within the broader topic” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 160).

Validity

Triangulation, which Stake (2005) considered “a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation” (p. 454), was addressed through a comparison of observation field notes, interview transcriptions, written responses to open-ended questions, and the one-item surveys. I also engaged in member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), in which students were consulted on my understanding of their stated and perceived interests. In addition, the self-reports that comprised the major part of data have been seen as a valid means by which to measure interest (Swarat et al., 2012).

Timeline of the Study

In the introductory two-week phase of the study, all children participated in ten-minute small-group interviews, in order to determine the perceived willingness

of individuals to engage in discussion. The children answered an open-ended writing prompt, in which they listed the aspects of music class that were most interesting and least interesting to them, and the reasons behind their interest. The writing prompts were collated and coded for themes, in order to create initial impressions for interview questions and observations.

In the main phase of the study, I engaged the children of focus in three to five interviews each, while the children who did not serve as children of focus were interviewed once or twice. (The exception to this was one child who indicated that he was uninterested in being interviewed at all). The videotaped observations, free-writes, one-item surveys, and examination of material culture occurred during this period. This second phase lasted three months.

Strengths of an Ethnographic Approach to the Study of Children's Musical Interests

I employed an ethnographic approach to the issue of situational interest in the elementary music class for a variety of reasons. First, no research has been undertaken that specifically explores the nature of situational interest in the elementary music classroom, which distinguishes this study as an initial examination of the multiple facets of a vital component in the musical education of children. While one can make connections from the literature on situational interest within other topic domains, and from the research on musical attitude and preference, this study charted new territory. Instead of posing issues such as, "How interesting is it for you to play instruments?," I asked more generally, "What is interesting about the activities of these classes?" Ethnographic techniques allowed

me to not only look at specific behaviors, but the “whys” behind them (Graue & Walsh, 1998).

Second, the four-month time frame for the study allowed me to identify the consistency of situational interest. Did all (or most) children find specific types of activities interesting over repeated similar activities? Or did individuals hold varying levels of interest for the same or similar activities at different times over the period studied?

Third, the repeated interview format afforded the children of focus to develop an ease with the process, becoming more open and comfortable with the patterns of the interview and increasingly willing to “open up” to me (Fontana & Frey, 2005). In addition, the multiple sources of data collection (interviews, observations, and free writes) gave me the opportunity to note if the children reported the same interests in different formats.

Strengths of a Teacher-Researcher Approach to the Study of Children’s Musical Interests

Teachers have used their own students as subjects in qualitative research in the fields of music education (e.g. Abril, 2007; Beegle, 2006; Wiggins, 1992; Wiggins & Bodoïn, 1998) and interest (e.g. Palmer, 2004). The teacher-researcher paradigm poses a number of potential challenges. First, there can be issues of objectivity. It can be difficult to obtain perspective on experiences in a school, due to the knowledge of the participants and the institution that occurs by serving as a teacher in the setting (Smyth & Holian, 2008). I attempted to combat this in a variety of ways. I applied member checking regularly as I reviewed my understandings with

participants. Also, all of my daily reflections included explicit attention to the impact that my role as a teacher might have played on my interpretation of events (Portelli, 2008). Further, I used other researchers for periodic coding checks, in which they examined my transcriptions to code data for comparative purposes (Beegle, 2006; Burnaford, Fischer, & Hobson, 2001).

The power issues that come into play when adults interview children (Holmes, 1998; Wyness, 2006) can only be exacerbated when the adult interviewer is also their teacher. Throughout the study, I made repeated assurances to students that their honest opinions were the desired outcomes, and that they could choose not to participate at any time (Holmes, 1998). With regards to the issues of this specific study, interest research has explored the situational impact of the content of the material in lessons, the qualities of the activities, and the elements of the instructional style. Interviewing students about their thoughts concerning instructional style, in which the students would effectively have been critiquing my teaching, could have proven to be uncomfortable for the students, resulting in inadequate or inaccurate understandings on my part. For the purposes of the study, then, the focus of the interviews concerned the qualities of classroom activities and content of the material. Issues of teacher style have been the least researched area in the scope of situational interest (Rotgans & Schmidt, 2011), so holding that topic for later study was deemed acceptable.

Abril (2007) faced similar issues of power and objectivity when he studied the nature of singing anxiety in preservice elementary education teachers in a music education class for which he was the instructor. Conceivably, students could have

felt uncomfortable discussing their anxiety over a portion of a class that comprised a major portion of their grade. However, Abril found that they seemed to value “being heard,” and that talking about their anxiety helped them to feel more positively about the class (personal communication, 11/5/2010).

Benefits of the teacher-researcher paradigm are many. Among Burgess’s (1984) criteria for site selection in ethnography, accessibility is essential. Using my school and my classes provided a number of ways that accessibility to students, teachers, and classes were enhanced. Student interviews needed to be arranged outside of normal class time, during recesses, lunchtime, and during periods of other academic content. Due to previous relationships with the students that are mostly positive, they may have been more willing to be interviewed during “break” times than they would have been if they had not known me. Having developed goodwill with the teaching staff and administration over fourteen years of teaching experience at the school rendered the interview arrangement process easier than had I had no experience in the school. This was particularly important for arranging interview times that involved taking students out of their regular classes, but also led to the informal conversations I had with teachers and administrators about aspects of the study or questions of specific students that they had taught in the past. My history with the community also increased the likelihood of buy-in by parents, so that forms were returned with permission to participate granted.

Serving as the teacher during the data collection process allowed for flexibility in terms of lesson design, both in terms of on-the-spot decisions and also longer-range plans. As themes emerged during the data collection, lesson plans

were slightly modified in order to further investigate an idea. For example, initial interviews suggested that children were least interested in activities targeting music literacy, but highly interested in activities in which they exercised creativity and worked in groups. From those three initial findings, I created an activity where the children worked in small groups to create ways to practice music literacy skills. If I did not serve as a teacher, these interventions would have been inappropriate for the setting. The curriculum was not altered overall, but individual activities were created, deleted, or modified in order to delve further into particular themes.

Other benefits of the teacher-researcher model for the current study include an immediate understanding of the history, culture, and politics of the institution under study (Robson, 2002). Whereas an outside researcher would have a period of adjustment as he or she identified traits in the school setting, I had the advantage of “hitting the ground running.” In addition, previous knowledge of the students may have allowed me greater insight into their meanings (Roberts, 1994). My emic, insider status enabled me to deal with the data in more complex ways, checking with other members of the community (e.g. former teachers), as appropriate.

Overview

Fieldwork began in March, once the Institutional Review Board at the University of Washington had granted permission, and continued until the end of the school year in June. Observation fieldnoting occurred directly following each class (or in the evening on the same day), and interview transcriptions took place within a week of the interview. Analysis of the interviews, transcriptions, free

writes, one-item surveys, and material culture was ongoing and iterative. Notes and analyses were continually reviewed for new insights.

Summary

Interest differs from other theories of achievement motivation in that it emphasizes both affective and cognitive dimensions, rather than the primarily cognitive aspect of most approaches to motivation. Often broken into two parts, individual interest is slow to develop, relatively stable, and specific to the individual, whereas situational interest is evoked spontaneously by characteristics of the environment and is common across most individuals. In the short term, situational interest is easier for teachers to impact, and has been shown to influence children's academic performance. This study used a combination of interviews, observations, free-writing opportunities, one-item surveys, and an examination of material culture to explore the nature of situational interest in one fourth grade music class. Using an ethnographic approach in which I served as the teacher as well as the researcher, data were collected over a four-month period of time. If music educators can identify qualities of common classroom activities that are perceived as interesting by children and incorporate those interests into their lessons and curricula, overall interest would conceivably improve, leading to better educational outcomes and a greater likelihood of continuing in the field of music education through their secondary school experience and into adulthood.

Context

The following section will describe the context of the study. The location and demographics of the school will be conveyed, as well as the physical spaces in which

the children spent their days, the children themselves, and their classroom teacher. In addition, the curriculum of the music program will be described, and one sample class period will be depicted.

The School

St. George's school resides in a major urban area in the northwestern United States. One can find the school in older part of the city close to the downtown business and retail core. The leafy streets are lined partly with large, single-family houses. Thirty years ago, the ramshackle homes were populated with many large middle-class families, with as many as five or ten or even fifteen children. Today, families in the houses have fewer kids, and are decidedly wealthier; it is not unusual for the now-renovated houses in the area to cost well over one million dollars. The area near the school also holds businesses, primarily independently owned restaurants and cafes, as well as one branch of a smaller chain of coffee shops.

The campus of St. George's consists of two main buildings, the "upper school," a 1960s-style, low-slung building, and the "lower school," a three-story structure that has the look of a classic 1920s elementary school, with red bricks and large windows, brightly painted white. Behind the school buildings is a large blacktop, approximately the size of a football field, which serves as both the recess playground and the parking lot at the beginning and end of the school day, when parents ferry their children to the school for the day.

Inside the school, the three floors of upper school house the students in fifth through eighth grade. The seventh and eighth graders live on the top floor, comparatively huge bodies that swarm the halls in masses of middle-school energy,

loudly calling to each other, slamming lockers, and laughing whenever possible. The main floor contains the fifth and sixth grade classrooms, as well as the offices in which the secretary and nurse attend to hurt children and needy parents, and teachers come to make photocopies and obtain other school supplies such as paper, pencils, and markers. In addition, the offices of the two vice-principals lie on this main floor, directly off the office. The lowest level holds one fifth grade classroom, the cafeteria, the offices of the after-school program, and the “Jaguar Room,” a room used as a tutoring center in which a staff member works with small groups or individual students who need extra assistance. The choir room, one of the two music rooms in the school, is also found on the lowest level of the upper school.

Students in kindergarten through fourth grade populate the four floors of the lower school. The oldest children make the three-story climb to the top floor to find their classrooms, as do the teachers when they want to go to the teacher’s lounge to grab a cup of coffee or sit with their cohorts during lunchtime. In addition to second and third grade classrooms, the second floor houses the learning resource center, where students in the lower grades come to work with one of the three staff members if they need extra academic support. The first floor holds first grade classrooms, the principal’s office, and the finance office. Kindergarteners are housed in the basement, along with the library and the music room.

The lower school is in an old building, built in 1923. The wooden floors creak underfoot as one walks the halls, giving off a satisfying sound that suggests “school.” Teachers take care with the walls in the hallways, regularly placing examples of current student work. The school has a full-time art teacher, and she

also mounts many of the children's projects for the school community to see as they walk through the building. When walking through the halls at night or on the weekend, one can still feel the vibrancy of the children's work, knowing that children are actively engaged in growing their minds.

St. George's serves 610 children in kindergarten through eighth grade, divided into three classes of children per grade level. As a parochial school in the Catholic tradition, parents must apply for their students to attend the school. The school typically receives more applications for spots than there are spaces available, so the size of the classes remains relatively consistent. Kindergarten classes hold 20 children, and the class size gradually increases to 25 by fifth through eighth grade. Students of color – African American, Asian American, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, Native Hawaiian, and multiracial – comprise 23% of the population, while the remainder of the students come from European American heritage. Most families speak English as their native language, although the past two years has seen a small increase in Spanish-speaking families. The majority of the families come from the middle- or upper-middle class, and 76% of the students are Catholic. Parents are asked to pony up \$9000 per child for tuition, but 23% of the students receive financial aid to help meet the needs. Visually, the children at St. George's have a certain uniformity, both because of the Catholic-school uniforms they are required to wear and the fact that they appear well groomed, with neatly combed hair and shirts tucked in. To the teachers' occasional dismay, the students' orderly appearance does not always mean that the school spaces are always quiet and studious; a gentle (or not-so-gentle) reminder from teachers to remain quiet or stop

running in the halls is not uncommon. For me, the proximity of the music room to the girls' bathroom, a particularly popular place for experimentation with dynamic contrast (i.e. "how loud can we be?"), occasionally requires intervention.

Children begin to gather outside the school between 8:00 and 8:15 in the morning, running around and shouting playfully at each other while their parents visit with each other, occasionally holding cups of steaming coffee to ward off the typically misty mornings of the Pacific Northwest school year. At 8:15 promptly, the bell rings, and the children walk (or, occasionally, tear) into the building towards their classrooms. The tardy bell rings at 8:25, followed invariably by some children trying to hurry towards their classrooms before they become officially late, as well as their parents ("Come on, hustle!"). By 8:30, the halls are quiet, as children get down to the work of the day.

Between 8:30 and 2:45, the children spend approximately half of the time in their classrooms with their all-subjects teacher. The rest of the school day is filled with a variety of activities. The kindergarten through fourth grade children that populate the lower school eat one twenty-minute lunch in the cafeteria and have two recesses, one of which lasts 15 minutes, the other of which is 25 minutes. In addition, throughout the week are a number of "specials," all thirty minutes long. Once per week, a Spanish teacher and social skills teacher work in the classroom with the students. The children also travel from their classroom to make weekly visits to the classrooms of specialists in library and computer, and twice per week they take classes in physical education and music. In addition, the third and fourth graders have an art specialist they see once per week for forty-five minutes. 4B, the

class under study, takes music class on Wednesdays from 9:30 – 10:00, directly before their morning recess, and on Thursday afternoons from 1:15 – 1:45.

Mr. Linton's Class

Jayson Linton is in his tenth year of teaching fourth grade at St. George's School. He is one of seven faculty members who attended the school as children. While attending a large state university, he returned to Seattle and spent one month interning in a kindergarten classroom at St. George's, then returned to college to earn a teaching certificate and a degree in Early Childhood Education. When he graduated, a job at St. George's was open. He applied, and was hired. Mr. Linton's two children now attend the school as well, a son in third grade and a daughter in first grade. He is known as an excellent teacher, and parents often want their children in his class. He brings a great deal of humor into the classroom, has high expectations for classroom behavior, and is known as being thoughtful, caring, and responsive to his students' intellectual, emotional, and social growth.

"4B," as Mr. Linton's class is known, consists of 24 students. The class is fairly diverse for St. George's School. Charity is biracial, African American and European American, and is the adopted child of parents with the same heritage. Xui Li was born in China then adopted by two lesbian mothers. Anna is part Native American. Isaiah and Parker are African American with African American parents. Maya's parents immigrated from the Phillipines, and Maya can understand some Tagalog although she does not speak it. Brandon's grandparents emigrated from India some 40 years ago. Daniel J.'s family has a more recent immigration story as well, with a father born in Ireland and a mother in Poland. Grace is the most recent

immigrant, born in Australia to Australian parents, having moved to the United States when she was in first grade. The remaining 15 children come from American-born parents of European American heritage. Of the 24 young students in the class, 20 of the students had attended the school since kindergarten.

When asked to describe his class compared to other groups he had taught, Mr. Linton offered this commentary,

This class, I would say, is an interesting mix of some really scholarly-type kids, the ones that are really bright academically, and then...a mix of four or five really high energy [kids who] struggle with self-control, [kids that are] really looking to get kids to look in their direction, get attention for themselves. [In addition], there are two or three kids with some pretty heavy attention issues. So it's an interesting mix, there's some really high achievers, along with some kids who really struggle, with some kids who maybe aren't performing to their potential, because they're spending time being social.

He commented on the gender breakdown as well, noting that there were more boys than girls who were particularly motivated by the social connections with peers. The high social energy of the group led Mr. Linton to modify instruction to some extent, lessening the amount of humor he employed in his classes, and limiting the number of games that he would play. As he noted, "some kids this year, they just can't rein it in." A second grade teacher, when she saw the group of students walking through the halls, mentioned to me that there were a number of challenging students in the class, saying, "How did that class list get put together?" Mr. Linton felt that they were "a pretty creative bunch," although sometimes they found

abstract thinking more challenging than other groups he had taught in the past. My experience of 4B was that they had a moderate skill level compared to the other two fourth grade classes I taught, with some enthusiastic, capable singers and bright students, but others who were less consistent performers. But they were also in many ways the most challenging of the fourth grade classes, with individual students and groups of children who were, at times, more interested in interacting with their peers than engaging in the activities of music class, and with less need overall to please the authority – me. They typically entered the music classroom full of energy, and while sometimes that led to exciting opportunities for engaged learning experiences, at other times I had to employ more classroom management tools in an attempt to channel their focus towards my agenda.

The Children of 4B

Within the class, nine children served as students of focus, with more interviews than the other children.

Leah, a tall girl with dark hair and dark eyes, excels academically, and often makes comments in interviews that show remarkable insight into her own sense of how her interest worked. She mentions multiple times how she likes writing on the iPads in order to add “depth and detail.” She has a history of very high anxiety at school, and earlier in the year, would often pull herself from class in order to gather her emotions. By the time of the study, this issue has lessened, and she is able to participate for the whole class period to the full extent. In performances, she takes part with great enthusiasm, her face lighting up to such an extent that she stands out, even in a group of 75 children.

When Mr. Linton is asked to describe Joe, he begins to laugh and rub his eyes, saying “Oh man. The thing about him is, he’s pretty bright, too....but he will not do a darned thing.” I, too, find him to be generally uninvolved in the activities of class. In the beginning of the year, I assigned him a seating spot in the front of the class, in an attempt to head off the social interactions that were common between he and his friends. I am not clear that it has been particularly effective. Joe is a strong athlete, and, according to Mr. Linton, admired by many of the other boys in the class. He stands somewhat taller than other children in the class, with brown hair and big brown eyes, eyes that grow particularly large (and often somewhat wet) when he is being reprimanded. He is by far the youngest of three children in his family, both of whom had excelled academically during their time at St. George’s. Mr. Linton does not sense that the parents are overly concerned about Joe’s apparent lack of drive when it comes to academics, trusting that it will work itself out.

Xui Li stands small and wears glasses, with straight black hair that swoops down over her eyes and that she constantly sweeps back behind her ears. Easily distracted by other students in class, she becomes frustrated when class members do not act as they should. According to Mr. Linton, Xui Li excels at concrete tasks, particularly math, but struggles with longer essay-writing activities. She was adopted by lesbian mothers at birth from China, and one of her mothers died of cancer when Xui Li was in third grade. Her older sister, also adopted from China, now attends the local Catholic girls’ high school.

Bryan is notable for his emerald green eyes, slight lisp, sharp wit and creative mind. He and his fraternal twin brother (in another fourth grade class) were both

tested by the local public school system, and were found to be particularly high-fliers academically. His easy-going demeanor makes him well-liked by peers, teachers, and parents. He works well in groups, encouraging his work-mates without being pedantic to those who are less forthcoming in their participation.

Anna identifies as part Native American, a conventionally pretty girl with large eyes and a ready, wide smile. She's verbally precocious, with an interesting way of putting words together. Mr. Linton notes that she's "not a traditional learner at all," with a propensity to move around the room rather than staying in her chair to focus on seatwork. She excels at reading aloud, with a dramatic intensity to her expression. In music class, Anna is at times preoccupied with her thoughts, staring off into space, and at other times ultra-focused, responding to aspects of the class with enthusiastic creativity. She has a beautiful singing voice, and I have chosen her to sing solos in all-school concerts.

Grace moved to Seattle from Australia at the end of first grade, and is still holding on to the vestiges of her Australian accent. A big-boned blond girl with glasses, she enthusiastically throws herself into anything that comes her way. She will give you the straight-up truth, with no apparent self-editing, a refreshingly endearing trait. She's always actively engaged in music class, joining in with songs before she understands how they go (which occasionally leads to incorrect renditions), and is among the first to volunteer to show a dance move or sing a solo. Her skills fall on the lower end of the scale, but her enthusiasm compensates for the diminished skill level.

Parker is a solidly-built African American boy, with close-cropped black hair and warm black eyes. The opposite of impulsive, he carefully considers his thoughts, and speaks slowly and carefully, always ensuring that his words accurately reflect his views. This slow-and-steady approach applies to his schoolwork as well, with impeccable handwriting and thorough attention to detail. However, this focus sometimes means that he takes a long time to accomplish tasks he has set out to do. Parker likes classes to run smoothly, and becomes frustrated when some of the students do not act in the way they are supposed to.

Lucy is tall and willowy, with blond hair that flows down her back. According to Mr. Linton, she is one of the most academically intense children he has ever taught, “very, very driven, to the extent that I don’t know how healthy it is.” Her parents, he noted, are somewhat flummoxed by this trait as well; although they are happy that she is a strong academic performer, they agree that it is perhaps it is a bit excessive. In music class, she is actively engaged, focused, with hand constantly raised when she has an idea about the activities of the class. She is well-liked by the other students, supportive and enthusiastic. She is a strong athlete as well. I once observed her playing basketball, and she shot five free throws in a row – an impressive feat for a fourth grader.

Sam may be small in stature, but more than makes up for it with his energy, enthusiasm, and the wide smile that is perpetually plastered on his face. A boy of European American heritage, Sam rarely stays still, so he sits in the back of the classroom, where he can stand up and move about as necessary. At times, this physicality translates into off-task behavior, but at other times he can be actively

engaged in teacher-approved ways. His propensity for movement also applies to his mouth, which rarely seems to turn off. He's verbally participatory, shouting out questions, answering questions that have been posed by other students or me (typically without raising his hand), and providing running commentary about class activities. He thinks creatively, and works well with his peers. If he were not such a bright light, the extent of his verbal patter would prove tiresome, but as it is, he provides positive energy to the class culture.

Of the 14 remaining children of Mr. Linton's class, seven were interviewed once and seven were interviewed twice. They will be described in lesser detail.

Max, a thin tall boy with light brown hair, often sits quietly attentive at the side of the room. He excels academically in a shy way, and can therefore be lost in the bustle of a rambunctious class.

Charity is the biracial adopted daughter of a European American mother and African American father. An enthusiastic singer, she sits in the front because she is often distracted by the behavior of other students.

Sarah, the dreamy child of a fifth grade teacher at the school, takes piano lessons and has belongs to a choir in the area. She has a lovely voice, but is often lost in her own thoughts.

Daniel M. is an athletic boy with droopy eyes and a loping gait. A pleasant boy with a sharp sense of humor, he tends to disengage from both music class and his regular class.

Nathan, a small brown-haired boy, excels academically. In music class, he is generally more focused on child-child informal communication than participating in

the activities of class, although he usually can perform the expected skills and retains class knowledge.

Maya's parents emigrated from the Philippines before she was born. A quiet girl with long black hair, she is a solid though unsure musician.

Daniel J. is the third of six children born to European immigrants. A brown-haired boy interested in music, he takes guitar lessons outside of music class, although schoolwork in general (including music) can be challenging for him.

Conor, a tall, lanky boy with sandy-blond hair, struggles with skill development and focus in both music class and in his other classes. His demeanor is positive, but school is a challenge for him.

Isaiah joined St. George's School this year, the only new child in 4B. An African American boy, he throws himself into classroom activities, and though many of the skills are new to him, has succeeded in most skills due to his positive demeanor and strong effort.

Sophie is a very strong student, with long brown hair and bright blue eyes. A quiet student who takes piano lessons outside of school, she focuses her attention on class activities, which leads to general success.

Brandon, an Indian American with light brown skin and close-cropped brown hair, is an eager-to-please child – whether it be his classmates or his teachers, he seems to get along with everyone. An excellent athlete, he is proud to be on a select soccer team in the area.

Luke is a small, blond boy, the youngest of three children. A boy with low affect and poor muscle tone, he slouches in class and has participates minimally. Each year, he puzzles his teachers, as they try to determine ways to reach him.

Audrey is Luke's opposite: hard-working, engaged, with ramrod-straight posture and a wide smile. Her almond-shaped eyes light up as she exults over some small piece of trivia that has occurred.

Jaden and his twin brother (who belongs to another fourth grade class at the school) joined St. George's in third grade. A happy-go-lucky child, he seems to always have a smile on his face.

Music

Music classes occur in a small room, easily missed by those who tromp past on their way to the school library, a room that is tucked away in the corner of the basement of the old school. When first-time visitors walk into the room, they often make one of two comments, either "That's a lot of instruments!" or "Wow. You don't have any windows." Both facts are true. No walls border the outside, so the only light comes from the insistent glare of overhead fluorescent lighting. A custom-made shelving unit takes up a whole wall of the classroom. It holds a variety of instruments, including a set of 12 djembe-style drums, a variety of barred instruments (12 xylophones, four metallophones, and four glockenspiels), and a set of 12 guitars for whole-class instruction. In addition, there is an assortment of non-pitched percussion, including hand drums, talking drums, bongo drums, triangles, gankoguis, guiros, rhythm sticks, tambourines, and flexitones. Three whiteboards, one of which is an interactive board that connects to the Internet, hang on the other

three walls. The internet-connected whiteboard also holds a document camera that can project images onto the board, and the speakers to the sound system, which are not quite as powerful as I would like them to be. The rectangular-shaped room stands small compared to music rooms at other elementary schools in the area, running approximately 18' X 30'. In the corners of the room sit a slightly dusty upright piano, the cluttered teacher's desk that is pressed tight against the wall to maximize floor space, and the sole door that leads into and out of the classroom. One wall holds two maps, one of the United States and another of the world. The "Music Room Covenant," prominently displayed on another wall on large yellow sheets of paper, lists the rules of the classroom (1. Enter and leave the room calmly, 2. Follow directions immediately, 3. Participate actively, 4. Be respectful, 5. Recall what we learned in class) and the consequences for disobeying the rules (1. Receive a warning, 2. Take a time out, 3. Go to the office). Next to the interactive whiteboard at the front of the room is posted a large red sheet of butcher block paper, on which nine different "jars of stars" have been pasted, each jar representing one of the classes that I teach. Inside each photocopied jar lie hand-drawn pictures of stars, some of which have been colored with magic marker in a variety of shades. This represents one of the management systems in place, in which a student in each class colors in one star for each of the rules that is followed per class session. After the class fills all of the fifty jars in the star, they earn a free choice day, a class period in which they can perform for each other on instruments, and select the singing games to play during the class period.

The school employs four different music teachers, all of whom teach part-time. I “job-share,” working half-time with another teacher. My jobshare partner and I teach either kindergarten, second, or fourth grade or first, third, and fifth, alternating grade levels every year in order to “loop” with the children so that they have the same teacher every year. I will follow the students that I teach in kindergarten, teaching them every year through fifth grade. In sixth grade, all students move into the band program, taught by a separate band teacher who teaches part-time at the school. In middle school, all students choose one “exploratory” class, either band, choir, art, or film-making. The choir is taught by one of the assistant principals, who was a full-time music teacher in the school 25 years ago, before he moved into an administrative role. The choir takes trips each year, to other cities and areas in the Pacific Northwest, and at other times to more distant places such as Disneyland and New York City (where they performed at Carnegie Hall three times in the past 15 years). In one memorable year, the choir traveled to Europe for two weeks, a trip that included a performance for the Pope of the Catholic Church. In part because of the trips, the choir is the largest elective class, in which over half of the seventh and eighth graders choose to enroll.

The elementary music program addresses all of the national standards (Consortium of National Arts Associations, 1994), but the curriculum is most influenced by the Kodaly approach to music education (e.g. Choksy, 1981). As such, the curriculum pays particular attention to singing skills and conventional Western-style music literacy. In addition to these skills, the students also develop instrument performance skills (on instruments such as recorders, xylophones, glockenspiels,

and metallophones, unpitched percussion, and djembe-style drums), engage in movement experiences in the form of folk dance and play parties, gain skills in musical memory, listening development, composition, improvisation, and audiation, and develop a knowledge base surrounding instrumental identification and the traditional Western-style orchestra. The repertoire emphasizes folk music from the United States and various world cultures. Two all-school performances take place each year, one in December and one in May. The December concert pertains to the Christmas holiday (as a Catholic school, this is expected), while the May concert has a different theme each year, such as “Water,” “Picture Books,” or “Values”. In these evening performances, all 60-75 students in each grade perform a song together for parents and other interested observers. The children dress in costumes designed by a parent volunteer, and individual children from each grade are selected to read short descriptions or reflections related to the theme.

I served as the music teacher during the period of the study, and have been teaching at St. George’s School for 15 years. It was the first job that I took upon earning my teaching certificate in K-12 music education. Early in my teaching career, I studied both Kodaly and Orff pedagogies, with three intensive two-week classes of Kodaly-inspired instruction, and one course of Orff study. For the past eight years, I have worked in the Kodaly Levels Program in Seattle, teaching preservice and inservice music teachers musicianship skills, folk song analysis, and Kodaly-inspired pedagogy.

During the period of this research, the fourth grade students of St. George School (in classes called 4A, 4B, and 4C) were involved a beginning unit on the

playing the recorder, a unit on African drumming, as well as continued skill development in xylophone playing, in-tune singing, composition, and part-work (i.e. singing rounds, canons, and partner songs, as well as playing instrumental accompaniments for song-based activities). The children expanded their range of “known” melodic notes and phrases, with the presentation of the solfege note “fa” and “ti,” thus filling them with knowledge and skill of the full diatonic scale. Rhythmically, they practiced the syncopated pattern of eighth-quarter-eighth note pattern (“syn-co-pa”), and learned how to perform, read, and write patterns that incorporated a dotted quarter-eighth note pattern. In addition, they prepared and performed in the spring concert, in which they sang the song *Ghost Ship*, an up-tempo song written in sea shanty style.

Music for 4B: A Sampler

Wednesday, March 2, 9:33 am. I knew that 4B was on their way to music class, 3 minutes late, when I heard the sounds of recorders coming down the hall. This was their third class since they had received their recorders, and I detected a combination of *Hot Cross Buns*, the first song they were learning, as well as note blasts, in which it sounded as if the children were just blowing as hard as they could to make as much noise as possible. As they entered the brightly-lit, windowless classroom, I said, “Put your recorders in the box, please.” As Matthew wondered why they must put them away, I let them know that they’ll be playing the recorders towards the end of the class period.

At the beginning of the school year, students were given specific places to sit or stand, positions that I chose based on both musical and non-musical factors. For

example, since Matthew and Joe often had challenges attending to instruction, they were placed directly in front of me. Luke did not consistently sing in tune in a range much larger than a fourth, so he was placed near Bryan, a boy who sings with dependable pitch accuracy. As they went to stand in their assigned circle spots, I began singing the song *Pizza Pizza*. (See Figure 2-1.). When I called the opening words, “Daniel has a girlfriend,” the class tittered and Daniel smirked a bit, while some of the students began to do the jumping pattern that accompanied the singing game.

Pizza, Pizza

Call: Response: Call: 3 Response:

Jen-ny has a boy-friend, Piz - za, piz - za, dad-dy - o, How do you know it, Piz - za, piz - za, dad-dy -

9 Call: Response: Call Response: Call:

o, 'Cause she told me, Piz - za, piz - za, dad-dy - o, Let's rope it, rope it, ro - pe it, dad-dy - o, Let's end it!

Game. Standing circle, with one player in the middle. All sing the name of “it.” On the words “Pizza, Pizza, Daddy-o,” perform the following foot pattern:

“Piz” – jump, landing with feet apart

“-za” – jump, landing with right foot crossed over in front of left

“Piz” – jump, landing with feet apart

“Dad” – jump, landing with left foot crossed over in front of right

“-o” – jump, landing with feet apart

The center player then invents as many actions as he/she can (let’s rope it, swing it, dance it, clap it, swim it, etc.). The whole class imitates the movement of that player, while singing “Rope it, rope it, Daddy-O!” When “it” runs out of ideas, he/she ends with “Let’s end it,” then spins around and chooses the next player for the middle.

Note: the game can also be played as without the creative movement part. In this game, the first player sings the name of another player who “has a girlfriend/boyfriend.” The first player continues to sing the call for that time through the song. At the word “-O!” at the end of measure 13, three rests follow, then the named player sings the name of a new player, then sings the call part of the verse before play begins again.

Figure 2-1. *Pizza, Pizza*

This was the second time this song had been programmed into the class, and I proceeded to tell the students: “Two things I’m looking for today: coming in [i.e.

singing] at the right time, and everyone singing ‘Pizza Pizza.’” After two more times that I demonstrated the “call” of the call-response form, I asked Nathan if he thought he could sing the next name. “No,” he replied matter-of-factly, while turning to his friend and neighbor Joe and laughing. For his part, Joe was turning in circles, like a dog might do before lying down to sleep—not a move that was part of the game. Matthew, the student who often had a difficult time attending but typically demonstrated skill and interest in music in general, volunteered to sing the next name. His performance was accurate. Eight more students were called, performing a short solo by singing the name of the student who would “have a boyfriend.” I marked down their pitch accuracy, noting that five of them performed it perfectly, two made what appeared to be a valiant effort, and one stated, “I don’t know how to do it.” All students that can be seen on the video recording were attempting to perform the jumping pattern that accompanies the game, with the exception of Nathan and Joe who appeared to be standing still, laughing with each other or performing other unrelated moves for much of the time.

Three minutes after the activity started, I sang the directions in the tune of the song: “Go to your row spots.” As the students moved from a standing circle into seated rows, I began to sing solfege patterns using handsigns of the notes that they had learned up to this point: *s, l, drm sl d’*. I then held “melody cards,” 4-beat patterns of musical notation written on the staff, and sang patterns on each card for the children to echo on their own. The video indicates that some children like Parker and Sophie were engaged with the activity, accurately showing patterns, while others did not participate at all. Daniel J., for example, was leaning against the wall,

seemingly looking at the map on the other side of the room. (In this case, the video is static, and as such does not provide a view of all children in the class.) After 45 seconds of this echoing activity, I spread the cards out on the board, and asked, “Who thinks they can do one of these by themselves?” Four students (Audrey, Sophie, Matthew, and Lucy) chose to do so, and each of them performed one of the melodic patterns with general accuracy. After one of the students sang a card, the rest of the class was asked to identify the card that the child performed, in a form of multiple choice. The video shows most children attending carefully, while a few are slouched in an apparent indication of disinterest. When asked to identify the card that the previous student had performed, however, all fourth graders pointed, the majority of them correctly.

Four and a half minutes after this segment started, I told them that the next song started on *do*, and then began to sing a known singing game, *I Lost the Farmer’s Dairy Key*. “Move to your circle spots while you sing the song,” I told them. In this game, the players sing the song, then immediately play a version of rock-paper-scissors with a partner. (See Figure 2-2.) For this class period, I added a new twist to the game, by moving the children from one circle of partners into two concentric circles, in which “the people who are in the center circle are stuck in the garden. This isn’t a nice garden, with pretty flowers, but a garden filled with old flowers that have been sitting on the counter for too long, and that stink to high heaven.”

I Lost the Farmer's Dairy Key



Game: Rock/Paper/Scissors game. Formation: two concentric circles, where the inside circle is "stuck in the garden." After singing the song, the students speak: "Rock, rock, scissors; rock, rock, paper; rock, rock, rock, rock, rock, rock, choose!" On "choose," the students show rock, paper, or scissors. Rock beats scissors, scissors beats paper, paper beats rock. If the person on the inside wins, then he/she gets out of the garden, by switching places with the loser. If the inside player loses or there is a tie, no one changes. For added excitement, the teacher can yell out "Switch!" in the middle of a round, at which point the outside circle moves one player to the right, thereby facing a new player.

Figure 2-2. I Lost the Farmer's Dairy Key

As I proceeded to tell them that the only way for the inside players to escape this garden was to win in the rock-paper-scissors battle they play with their partners, their bodies grew still, their eyes trained on me, and small bits of laughter started to grow throughout the room. They turned to face their partners and we sang the song and played the game for three additional minutes. As the game continued, the singing grew both in volume and general raucousness, and was accompanied by jumping and shouts of enthusiasm.

Thirteen and a half minutes into the class, I called out, "recorders, recorders, get your recorders" and they moved to the back of the room to retrieve their recorders. Forty-five seconds of transition followed, as the students continued to laugh with each other over the last game while moving into the next activity. As they brought their recorders to their assigned row spots, I once again heard *Hot Cross Buns*, as well as some children who seemed to be blowing as loud as they can. Other students appeared to be experimenting with a variety of sounds that they can

make. Isaiah, for example, puffed out his cheeks and moved his fingers wildly on the recorder. Charity walked to her spot with her hands covering her ears, apparently due to the loud noise. After 30 seconds of bedlam, I said “chin position, rest position,” an indication that they should place their recorders on their chins, and then on their laps. After the room quieted, I provided a quick reminder about remembering to stop playing when I give those directions, and that if they neglected to cease their playing, they would instead watch for the duration of the class. This was the third class period that the students had been playing their recorders. When I showed the students how to separate the mouthpiece of the recorder from the bottom, Anna said, “Wow, it comes apart!” All students proceeded to twist off the top and bottom of the recorder, as one unseen student says, “That’s cool!”

After three minutes, I told the children that we would review the letter names of the staff so that they would be able to figure out how to play recorder pieces from their book. I held up flash cards, each with one note on the card. They told me the letter name of the note (“A.” “B.”), first as a whole class, then row by row. The curriculum had just addressed the names of the notes on the staff just prior to learning recorders, so both the knowledge base and the cards were novel, used two or three times as a way to drill the notes into them. Whereas the melody cards from earlier in the class did not garner much attention, these flash cards invoked a more consistent level of focus – even Joe, a student often checked out, sat up straight and answered the questions. “How do you know what note it is?” I asked them, as a means by which to review the staff names. Hands shot up, and Parker

said, “Empty Garbage Before Dad Flips,” an acronym that helps the students remember the names of the lines of the staff when the treble clef is used.

The students shifted into “playing position,” moving their recorders up to their mouths, and echoing four-beat patterns that I played on the notes B, A, and G. All eyes observable on the video, even Joe, were trained on me. After two minutes of echoes, I told them they had one minute to try to play *Hot Cross Buns* on their own. They played with varying degrees of success, and I worked with Joe on how to hold the recorder. After a minute, I stopped the class, asking, “Who can show us how to play it?” Almost every child thrust his or her hand into the air, some of them waving wildly. Matthew demonstrated accurately, but Xui Li did not. The students brainstormed “why it might not be sounding like she wants it to,” suggesting that she was not covering the holes completely. Following Xui Li’s second, more successful effort, the class played the song as a whole group, with varying degrees of success. I told the students “You all were late to class today, so we have to stop now.”

They returned the recorders to the box in the back of the classroom, and then came back to their assigned row spots. We reviewed the activities of the class, where they earned a point for each of the five class rules that they followed as a group. One student walked to the front of the class to color in stars on a jar that is used to track the success of the students. I designated Matthew as the “student who did his best.” He proceeded to come to the front of the class, sing the names of individual students, who then walked out to recess.

While each class period is different, for the most part music classes at St. George's School follow much of this format. Thirty-minute class periods hold between four and seven activities, each with a different objective. Opportunities for movement are provided to the children, usually in the form of singing games or play parties. Most lessons, like this one, address music literacy skills to some extent, and other objectives are incorporated as well. In this case, the recorders took up a slightly longer period of time than would be typical of other activities, due to the transition time that occurs when instruments are retrieved and then put away.

Summary

In the current study, an ethnographic approach was employed to explore the nature of situational interest in one fourth grade music class. Fieldwork consisted of interviews, observations, free-writes, immediate assessments of situational interest, and examination of material culture. The study was undertaken in a fourth grade classroom at a Catholic elementary school in the Pacific Northwest in which I served as the music teacher as well as the researcher. In the chapters that follow, the four themes that emerged from the fieldwork will be described, and conclusions will be made.

Chapter 3: Novelty

CR: We just started recorders last week. How interesting did you find that to be?

Audrey: I think that it's just different, and once we get used to it, it will be sort of regular.

Introduction

An exploration of the situational interest of children in the music class is a means by which to probe the characteristics of the activities and learning environment of classroom music which children find the most interesting. The current study employed interviews, observations, free writing experiences, and rating scales to ascertain the perspective of children in one fourth grade class concerning their interest in class experiences. This chapter will describe the construct of novelty as a broad category of situational interest for the children in Mr. Linton's classroom. Novelty in the context of the classroom included repertoire or experiences that are new to the children, or lesson segments that contained novelty within the activity. In addition, experiences that incorporated some form of surprise, when the children were taken off-guard by an aspect of the learning experience, or humor, when a feature of a class period was found to be funny, also evoked the children's interest. The chapter will open with a vignette taken from a videotaped observation of the students in a classroom, and will then describe each of the three subcategories in detail.

Vignette

One day in early April, the fourth graders watch a video about the instruments of the Western orchestra in preparation for an upcoming assembly of instrumental performers who dramatized the story of "Peter and the Wolf". While most class periods hold between five and seven activities in a class, this class session centers on one activity that runs the full 30 minutes of class time. In all the years that I have been their teacher, these children have only seen a video when I was absent and they were left with a substitute teacher. When the young students are told that they will see a video, an excited-sounding buzz immediately filled the room. Attention is very high at the outset, as the fourth graders fix their eyes on the screen, sitting quietly mesmerized. The class progresses, and by six minutes into the video, the children's attention begins to wane. Students begin talking to one other, and their verbal commentary increases in frequency. At times, the sound of particular instruments seems to spark their interest, and side conversations dwindle as students look to the video to determine what instrument is playing and who is playing it. When a bespectacled woman plucks the glissando-like stream of pitches on her harp, for example, student conversations cease. One girl declares, "I love it!", while another student wonders aloud, "How does she carry that thing?" Yet another student asks no one in particular, "How many strings does it have?" The harp music continues for a minute and twenty seconds before the attention of the students once again dissipates as they transfer their attention back towards each other and commence conversations. Twenty minutes into the video of orchestral instruments, when the classroom noise has grown louder, the percussion section demonstrates the piercing sound of a gunshot. Conversations immediately stop, the children sit up straight, and after a period of

stunned silence, they begin laughing. Their laughter returns later in the class period when the conductor leads the orchestra through a final piece of music. A shout comes from the crowd: "Look at his cheeks!!" The children begin laughing at the conductor's flabby jowls, which shake seemingly in time with the music. By the end of the class period, I find myself issuing "reminders" with increasing frequency, in order to minimize the children's talking. In my reflections after the class, I write, "Well, we won't be watching a 30-minute video again."

Novelty

Novelty can be conceptualized as "a gap between information known and unknown...[and it] has a function to elicit human beings' exploratory behavior" (Chen, Darst, & Pangrazi, 1999, p. 159). In *New: Understanding Our Need for Novelty and Change*, Gallagher (2012) noted that in today's world there is a constant bombardment of new stimuli, from newfangled products available for immediate purchase to information available at our fingertips through internet-connected cell phones. Gallagher maintained that neophilia, or fascination with the new, is a natural part of the biology of humans. It helps us "adapt to, learn, about, or create the new things that matter, while dismissing the rest as distractions" (p. 2), and motivates us to focus our attention on the novel stimulus. The children in Mr. Linton's class were no exception to this statement. Throughout the course of the study, learning experiences that contained aspects of novelty heightened both the self-stated and investigator-observed interest level on the part of the students. Conversely, activities that occurred many times over the course of the study or individual activities that went on for too long often led to decreased levels of

situational interest. This manifested itself with regard to novel repertoire, as well as novel activities and learning situations. Surprise and humor, both of which typically contain elements of novelty, also contributed to the situational interest of the children in the study.

Novelty of Repertoire

Music classes at the elementary level are most often active learning experiences, in which children make music in a variety of ways. The core of these music making experiences for the fourth graders during the period under study was the repertoire that they performed. Repeatedly, the boys and girls of Mr. Linton's class both showed and expressed a greater interest in musical material that was new. For example, Leah, a tall girl confident in her opinions, said "I...like learning new songs in music class...after a while I get really tired of the old songs." The young students regularly asked questions about unrecognized names of activities that were listed on the board. For example, as Audrey, a quiet, attentive girl with almond-shaped eyes, sauntered into the classroom one day, she looked to the list of activities, and when she failed to recognize one of the names of the songs, asked, "What's *Telephone Song*?" Audrey claimed that a benefit to her in learning new solfege notes was that "sometimes you get to play new games or sing new songs." One of the advantages offered by children regarding learning instruments was that they functioned as tools with which to learn new repertoire. For example, Sam, a slightly built little boy with a humorously mischievous demeanor, and Charity, a tall and solidly built girl with cocoa-colored skin, in separate interviews, found the recorder to be interesting because, as Sam reasoned, "you get to learn new songs."

classroom goals can be seen as a time-saving device (Klinger, 1990). To these young students, however, this repeated featuring of a song had a detrimental impact on their interest levels.

This interest of children in “anything new” was not universal, however. Leah pointed out that “some of the songs will forever be good for me, like...*The Whale* [*Greenland Whale Fishery*], but some of them I get tired of really quickly.” (See Figure 3-2 for the first verse.) This song that Leah found interesting takes five verses to tell the story of a whale hunt, in which a boat capsizes and sailors drown.

Greenland Whale Fishery

The image shows a musical score for the song "Greenland Whale Fishery". It consists of two staves of music in 4/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is written on a treble clef. The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff contains the first line of the verse, and the second staff contains the second line. The lyrics are: "Twas in eigh - teen hun-dred a - nd fif - ty three, and on June the thir - teenth day, that our gal - lant ship her_ an - chor_sveighed, and for Green-land bore_ a - way, brave boys, and for Green-land bore_ a - way." The score ends with a double bar line.

Figure 3-2. Greenland Whale Fishery

Also, “free choice days,” the class periods that were devoted to children’s own choosing of the singing games to play for the class, did not always include recently learned activities. For example, *Doggie, Doggie*, a game that the students learned in first grade, was selected as one of the class activities on both of the free choice days that occurred during the period of study. (See Figure 3-3.)

Doggie, Doggie



Game: One child is chosen as the dog. While that child closes his/her eyes (or, better yet, leaves the room), a “bone” is hidden somewhere in the room. When the dog re-enters the class, the rest of the children begin singing the song. Upon completion, they chant “a-rat-a-tat-tat,” over and over, growing louder as the dog moves nearer to the bone, and quieter as he/she moves further away. When the bone is found, a new dog is chosen, and play continues.

Figure 3-3. Doggie, Doggie

In addition, when children wrote about the assembly on the instruments referenced in the opening vignette, Sarah, an eager student who often could be heard singing or humming quietly to herself, noted in a free-write exercise following the experience: “I think that the assembly was very interesting because I like hearing songs I know.” Leah also remarked, “usually, if you know a song, you like it better, in general.” However, these comments are the exception to the rule, in which the children in the study found novel repertoire to enhance their interest, at least initially.

The literature on music listening preferences has often found that familiarity with song material correlates with higher degrees of preference (e.g. de Vries, 2011). In a study that explored the listening preferences of 160 students in third through fifth grades, Siebenaler (1999) found that students preferred known songs to unknown songs. Sixth graders in a study by Gregory (1994) also rated familiar music higher than unfamiliar music, although high school and college students did not have the same preference profile. Similar findings of higher preference for familiar musics have been made when the repertoire consists of world music traditions (Shehan, 1985) and music from the Western classical tradition (Hamlen &

Shuell, 2006). These findings differ from the current study, in which for the most part interest was heightened by new repertoire. However, the music studies addressed listening experiences, while the current study explored repertoire that children performed. In the context of music classes, it appears that children's interest level is more immediately enhanced by the presence of new musical material that they themselves execute.

Novelty of Activities, Tasks, and Bases of Knowledge

In addition to pieces of repertoire, the young students stated that specific types of activities or learning experiences were interesting because of their novelty. Joe, an athletic boy who often seemed lost in his thoughts, believed that the drums were "kind of fun because you never heard them before." To Anna, singing in another language was "kind of interesting because it's fun and new and fresh – because it's different. Usually, we'll sing in our own language." Studiously steady Parker, a solidly-built African American boy, wrote enthusiastically in his free-write exercise that he thought the instrument assembly was "awesome...it was cool because of all the instruments they sampled...that I didn't know about." In an interview with the fourth grade classroom teacher, Mr. Linton referred to a school-wide Christmas caroling competition that had occurred for the first time in December, commenting that "this is the kind of thing that the kids remember. It's different than the typical day." Even being a part of the study was interesting to many children. Bryan, a bright-faced boy with a ready smile, liked being interviewed as a part of the study because it was "something different."

Observation of the videos also suggested that the young students were more interested during first repetitions of activities or tasks than in later renditions of similar experiences. For example, on the first day that recorders were introduced to the young students, the children trained their eyes on me unwaveringly as I described the process of making initial sounds on the recorder, by “blowing hard enough to make a candle flicker, but not go out.” They blew through the instrument, free of any fingers stopping the holes, and then followed instructions to finger a ‘b’ (with the index finger of their left hand). The charge to blow softly was met with moderate success. The children watched, listened, and responded to instructions without hesitation, and were intent on trying out all suggested maneuvers. During later class periods, however, attention seemed to slide away and dissipate. Similarly, *Pizza, Pizza* is a game in which children sing the name of another child in class, proclaiming that he or she “has a boyfriend” (or girlfriend). (See Figure 3-4.)

Pizza, Pizza

Call: Response: Call: **3** Response:

Jen-ny has a boy-friend, Piz - za, piz - za, dad-dy - o, How do you know it, Piz - za, piz - za, dad-dy - o, 'Cause she told me, Piz - za, piz - za, dad-dy - o, Let's rope it, rope it, rope it, dad-dy - o, Let's end it!

9 Call: Response: Call Response: Call:

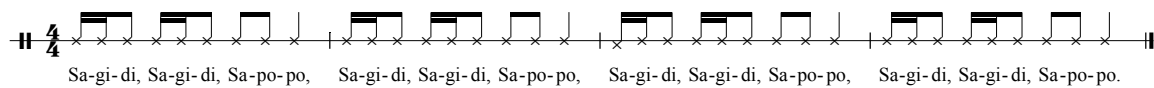
Game. Standing circle, with one player in the middle. All sing the name of “it.” On the words “Pizza, Pizza, Daddy-o,” perform the following foot pattern:
 “Piz” – jump, landing with feet apart
 “-za” – jump, landing with right foot crossed over in front of left
 “Piz” – jump, landing with feet apart
 “Dad-dy” – jump, landing with left foot crossed over in front of right
 “-o” – jump, landing with feet apart
 The center player then invents as many actions as he/she can (let’s rope it, swing it, swim it, etc.). The whole class imitates the movement, while singing “Rope it, rope it, Daddy-O!” When “it” runs out of ideas, he/she ends with “Let’s end it,” then spins around to choose the next player for the middle.

Figure 3-4. *Pizza, Pizza*

On the first day that I introduced the song to the children, focus was high and laughter consistent, as the pre-pubescent fourth graders imagined this life experience that was still likely a few years off. By the third time the song was performed, the novelty had worn off, and the increased focus and titters were less pronounced.

When old activities were given a new twist, or common skills were addressed in new ways, the fourth graders' interest was often heightened. For instance, in the Filipino chanting game, *Sagidi Sapopo* (see Figure 3-5), one player makes up movements which the rest of the class copies.

Sagidi, Sapopo



Translation: vocables.

Game: This is an improvisatory game. There is no limit to the number of players. A leader is chosen to create movements for each measure and the rest of the players imitate the movement a measure later. The movements are executed in a canonic fashion. For the older children, the leader can combine different movements in the same measure. You can also have three or more groups, each one imitating the group before it.

Figure 3-5. Sagidi Sapopo

Dark-haired Anna declared, “I like it when a person [i.e. a student rather than the teacher] leads it, I don’t like the normal thing. I like it when we lead it, because it’s something new...and we have to pay attention.” The students had played the game previously and I had led the class, but the novelty of a student leader raised the interest level. Similarly, the first time that the young students used “staff mats,”

pieces of felt on which five lines were drawn to represent the musical staff, all children who can be seen on the video attended to my directions, with eyes that were focused on me and a lack of verbal interaction with each other. The class had previously worked on solfege skills in a variety of ways, but engaging with the skills in this new way was more interesting to the children. Also, Audrey found creating verses to *When I First Came to This Land* (see Figure 3-6) more interesting than simply singing the song in part because, as she wrote during a free write, “it will be a lot more fun if we have new ideas.”

When I First Came to this Land

When I first came to this land, I was not a wealthy man. So I got my-self a shack, and I did what I could. (And I)

5
called my shack "Break my back." But this land was sweet and good, and I did what I could.

Cumulative song: repeat measure 5 as many times as needed, with the appropriate characters.

2. When I first came to this land, I was not a wealthy man.
So I got myself a cow, and I did what I could
And I called my cow, "No milk now," and I called my shack, "Break my back."
But this land was sweet and good, and I did what I could.
3. When I first came to this land, I was not a wealthy man.
So I got myself a duck, and I did what I could.
And I called my duck, "Out of luck," and I called my cow, "No milk now," and I called my shack,
"Break my back."
But this land was sweet and good, and I did what I could.
4. When I first came to this land...
And I called my wife, "Run for your life!"
5. When I first came to this land....
And I called my son, "My work's done," ...

Figure 3-6. When I First Came to This Land

The fourth grade children also found classes in which the unusual occurred to be more interesting than other classes. A diminutive girl with hair constantly falling into her eyes, Xui Li said, "I didn't like regular music class... when we're doing game, cards, learning, then game again....it's the same old thing." The structure was predictable to her. Anna also found that the ending of class, when we reviewed the rules of the class and whether or not the group had followed each rule for the duration of the class, to be not interesting, "because it's just regular, you know?" Although the students' interest level in the Instruments of the Orchestra video did not remain high due to the length of the excerpt, initial interest levels appeared elevated, in part because watching a video when I was in class was new; an excited buzz occurred when announced that we were going to watch a video, students sat up straight, and all eyes were trained on the screen. Consistency of class structure has been seen as beneficial for both learning and classroom management (Reese, 2007), but it may be that occasional deviations from the structure provide interest to students.

The reverse occurred as well, such that specific types of activities were deemed less interesting by the children because they occurred too often for their own taste. For example, solfege is used as a tool to teach music literacy, with students gradually gaining working knowledge of greater combinations of notes. The fourth graders began the period of study knowing *s, l, drm sl d'*, and learned *fa* in the middle of the study period. After being introduced to the new note, they practiced it in a variety of ways during different class sessions. For example, they derived the solfege notes for the known song *Obwisana Sa*, sight-read four-beat

cards of musical notation, and used felt mats to demonstrate knowledge of staff placement (along with other activities). To many students, the time spent practicing the new solfege notes became tiresome. Matthew said, "Well, I [like] when you learn a different letter [i.e. solfege note]...but when you don't for a really long time, like six months, it gets kind of boring, because we've already done this." Lucy, a lanky, tow-headed girl, wrote that the "least interesting thing in music class I think is when we do the number staff or say the notes," because "we have done it a lot before and to keep doing it again and again some times [sic] isn't very interesting any more." Repeated and varied forms of practicing literacy skills have been advocated as a means by which to improve skills (Klinger, 1990), but such repetition may come at a price in terms of student interest. Although effort was made to vary the specific types of activities used to practice the skill, interest still suffered.

Other skills experienced the same decline in interest over time. During the period under study, the curriculum included a unit on recorders, the first time the students had been introduced to the instrument. On the first day, the young students were very focused on the instruction they were given, with all children easily seen on the video looking at me and responding immediately to instructions regarding issues such as where to hold the recorder or how to make introductory sounds. During the next two classes, some students played the recorder as they walked into the class, despite their classroom teacher's requests that they keep their recorders away as they walked in the halls of the school. By the fourth class, this demonstration of enthusiasm stopped. One means by which the students practiced recorders was by working in self-directed small groups. In early classes, I as an

instructor thought that they were working effectively in this format. On the seventh class session that used recorders, I noted, “if you’re just going to be fooling around instead of practicing, you won’t be allowed to work in small groups,” suggesting a drop-off in attention. As Audrey expressed after the first class period on recorders, “I think that it’s just different, and once we get used to it, it will be sort of regular.” Additionally, Sarah compared learning the recorder to taking piano lessons outside of school, stating, “it’s like piano for me, when I first started, it was really cool, but then sometimes I just don’t want to practice.”

Even iPads, a new technology for fourth graders at St. George’s School in 2011, did not maintain student interest over the duration of the study. Children used the iPads to answer their open-ended question, “What made the previous activity interesting?” On the first day, students eagerly opened their iPads, with many questions concerning issues such as the kind of document to open (their choice), if they had to give their name (they could be anonymous if they wanted to; the students had e-mail addresses at school that did not have personally identifying information), and whether or not they could use color (it was up to them). I always told the children that answering questions on iPads or interviews was optional. All students performed the task on the first three times that the children were given the opportunity to answer the open-ended question. On the fourth time, one student elected not to participate, and by the sixth time (the last one), half the class chose to return to their classroom early rather than provide written comments. In general, the children stated that they enjoyed the requests for their opinions, but over the course of the study, interest in the iPads waned as the novelty wore off. A similar

pattern occurred with the “clickers,” which the children used to rate the interest level of an activity immediately after it was performed. The task was optional for the children, but initial interest was high as all students chose to participate. By the end of the study, more children were electing not to use the devices. Technology has been found to elicit situational interest in children (Mitchell, 1993; Bergin, 1999; Swarat et al., 2012). The fact that in the current study, the initial interest in the iPads and clickers wore off over time suggests that the source of interest may not in fact be the technological aspect of the activities, but the novelty of the technology. Mitchell (1993) noted that the primary reason that computers elicited interest for students in a high school math class was that “they provided a change of pace and variety to the usual state of affairs in the...classroom” (p. 427). As Grace commented when explaining why iPads were not one of her preferred activities in music class, “we do a lot on our iPads.”

Two studies by Palmer (2004, 2009) found that novel activities in the context of a class positively influenced interest. Palmer (2009) guest-taught an inquiry skills lesson in ninth grade science classes in Australia, giving the high school students both a one-item questionnaire at six points throughout the lesson while also allowing time for freely written comments. The novelty of the lesson activities was the main reason provided by the students for heightened interest levels. For example, a boy liked engaging in an experiment because “it’s not what we usually do.” Similarly, they were least interested in writing notes, which was seen by the students as “repetitive and typical of their normal science classes” (p. 157). In an earlier study, Palmer (2004) explored the nature of situational interest in the

context of a science content and methods course for preservice teachers, and also found that novel learning situations positively influenced levels of situational interest. For example, one student found classes particularly interesting when “we learnt something new in every lesson” (p. 902). In a series of two studies that explored the nature of situational interest in middle school physical education classes, Chen and colleagues (1999, 2001) tested a construct of five aspects deemed to interesting, and found that the newness of an activity positively influenced the level of situational interest. Incorporating novelty into classroom activities appears to be an effective means by which to improve situational interest for learners of a variety of ages and in a range of subject matters.

Novelty Within a Lesson Segment

The length of a lesson segment often impacted the interest of the fourth grade children in Mr. Linton’s class. Within each 30-minute class, students typically engaged in five to seven lesson segments, each with a different objective such as group singing, instrumental development, music literacy reading skills, or part work. Most activities lasted four to five minutes. Interest often declined if the lesson segments continued for a longer period of time. The vignette at the opening of the chapter, in which the students watched a video for the entire 30-minute class period, highlights the diminishing level of focus on the part of the young students. Similarly, the class played the card game *Memory* as a way to practice rhythmic skills. This activity, in which students try to find matched pairs of rhythms that had been scribed on index cards, took most of the class period. When asked what she thought about it, Audrey enjoyed the fact that the activity was a game, but noted, “I

didn't really like that it took really long." Also, when the students brainstormed ideas for how to make the upcoming performance as successful as possible, Daniel M., a tall brown-haired boy with a devil-may-care attitude, noted, "it was fun talking about it [the spring concert in the class that immediately followed the performance], it just went on a little too long." In a separate interview, when asked about what teachers should know about maximizing student interest in the class, Leah said, "don't do games for too long." Finally, when watching the students at a school-wide mass on the last day of school, the children took out their hymnals for one of the songs. Most students were singing during the first verse, but by the sixth verse, few students trained their eyes on the hymnal or appeared to be singing. Other studies on interest have explored the novelty of the activity as an instigator of interest rather than the duration of the activity itself (e.g. Chen et al., 2001), but it is logical that newness would apply to the length of lesson segments as well as the originality of experiences themselves. Further study could explore the applicability of the finding in other learning environments.

At times, the length of the segment itself may have been typical, but the repetitiveness of activities within segments impacted their interestingness. For example, Charity did not find the song *Telephone Song* interesting "cause it's like the same thing over and over again." In comparison to much of the other fourth grade repertoire, the call-response song is textually repetitive. (See Figure 3-7.)

Telephone Song

The musical notation for the Telephone Song is presented on two staves. The first staff contains the melody for the call and response, with lyrics: "Hey, John-ny! I think I hear my name, Hey John-ny! I think I hear it a-gain, You're wan-ted on the". The second staff continues the melody with lyrics: "te - le phone, If it i - sn't Ma - ry, then I'm not home, With a rick - tick - tick - e - ty tick___ Oh yeah." The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a common time signature (C). The melody consists of quarter and eighth notes, with rests indicating the call and response structure. The lyrics are written below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across notes.

Figure 3-7. Telephone Song

In this song, players take turns singing the call, choosing the next player. Other children mentioned that they enjoyed the opportunities to sing a solo and “be named,” but for Charity the repetitiveness trumped any other positives she might have felt. In addition, Anna thought that the play party *Goin’ Down to Cairo* was interesting “because you’re constantly moving to different people, so you’re like change, change, change, and so it’s not like it’s the exact same person, doing the exact same thing, over and over again.” (See Figure 3-8.) Within the activity itself, there was novelty in the form of new partners, and that raised the interest level for her.

Goin' Down to Cairo

Verse:

Go - in' down to Cai - ro, good-bye, and a bye-bye, Go - in' down to Cai - ro, good-bye, Li - za Jane.

5 Chorus:

Black them boots and a make them shine, good-bye, and a bye-bye, Black them boots and a make them shine, good-bye, Li - za Jane.

Source: Folk Songs North America Sings (Johnston); Sail Away (Locke); Handy Play Party Book (Rohrbough/Riddell)

Play Party: Double circle formation, with partners standing in skating position. [Alt: single circle formation]

Mm. 1-4. All promenade with partner. On the words “Liza Jane,” players move into single circle, partners facing each other. [Alt: circle left.]

Mm. 5-8. Grand right and left. Partners face each other and join right hands as if to shake hands. They pull past each other, each player offering his left hand to the person heading towards them. They pull past this one also, offering a right hand to the next. Repeat, moving around the circle, until they return to their original partner. At that point, partners perform a right-arm swing, then move into the double circle formation to ready themselves for the next round. The chorus (“Black them boots...”) is repeated as often as necessary, in order to return to original partners. Essentially, the players weave in and out of each other, half the class moving clockwise, half counter-clockwise. It works best if the students pass right shoulders after shaking right hands.

Figure 3-8. Goin’ Down to Cairo

Surprise

Surprise, which has been described as “unexpected or discrepant information” (Palmer, 2009, p. 161) can be seen as a category within novelty. In order to be surprised, one is faced by an unexpected or novel stimulus; if it were expected, it would not be surprising. At times, interest literature has referred to surprise and novelty as if they are similar constructs (Hidi & Anderson, 1992; Kintsch, 1980; Palmer, 2009; Schank, 1979; Wade et al., 1999), because, as Palmer (2009) noted, it is “sometimes difficult to separate them” (p. 161). For example, Hidi and Anderson (1992) noted that “surprising or novel information” (p. 228) in

the context of reading was recalled with a greater degree of accuracy than information that lacked these characteristics. Although the two traits can both be seen as positive emotions (Gallagher, 2012), surprise appears to be a stronger emotion, one that incites a more extreme response. In the current study, the fourth graders found aspects of class that were surprising or suspenseful to be interesting.

Surprising Aspects of Repertoire

For the all-school spring concert, the fourth graders sang a song called “Ghost Ship,” a song that contains an unexpected rest on the downbeat of the chorus. (See Figure 3-9.)

The image shows a musical score for the song "Ghost Ship" in 4/4 time, key of D major. The melody is written on a single staff. The lyrics are: "Now lis - ten well as a tale I tell of a night I slept in fear, We were sai - ling west on the o - pen seas, hea - ding home from a lo - ng, long year." The score includes a measure rest (indicated by a vertical line with a diagonal slash) on the downbeat of the chorus, which occurs after the phrase "I slept in fear, We were".

Figure 3-9. Ghost Ship

Luke mentioned that in addition to liking the story of a pirate ship, he thought the song was interesting because of the surprise that occurred “when we rest, when we stop for a second.” Grace, Anna, and Sam, in separate interviews, also mentioned the surprise rest as a reason that the song was interesting (Anna: “I like how the Ghost Ship, how like the rhythm goes – rest – and then it keeps going”). In addition, the song *Greenland Whale Fishery* contained a phrase that included the text “brave boys,” sung at a much lower pitch than the notes around it (see Figure 3-2, on pp. 78). Bryan declared that “the whole class liked doing “brave boys” in like the

lowest voice possible, and it's kind of like a whole surprise...all of a sudden: (sings) 'brave boys!'" Schank (1979) argued that interest is enhanced when expectations are violated through an unexpected event or combination of words. In music, rhythm and pitch are two of the structural elements that could correspond to word combination in reading. For *Ghost Ship*, the children expected a sound on the downbeat, but those expectations were thwarted, heightening their interest. On *Greenland Whale Fishery*, the abrupt change in registration was surprising in a way that elicited interest.

When asked to name the most interesting parts of music class, most children named the singing games and play parties that were regularly played in class. One of the reasons given was the suspense or surprise that was part of many games. *Obwisana Sa* is a rock-passing game from Ghana, in which one person per round is eliminated completely by chance (see Figure 3-10).

Obwisana Sa



Translation: I hurt my finger on a rock, Grandmother

Game: Seated circle. Students pass a rock around the circle, landing on one person every two beats. At the end of the song, the player with the rock is out.

Figure 3-10. Obwisana Sa

Bryan and Grace had this conversation about the game:

Bryan: Once the ball is in the air....

Grace: ...you can't control where it's going.

Bryan: you can't tell what's going to happen, you don't know.

Grace: I like that.

Bryan: Yeah.

Obwisana Sa was interesting to them in part because of the chance that was involved, the fact that the player who is eliminated at the end of each round comes as a surprise.

When students named their favorite singing game in music class, more students named *Hey, Betty Martin* than any other game. In this game, students sing a song while performing different movements. At the end of the song, students must stand completely still, and the teacher calls out any students seen moving. (See Figure 3-11.)

Hey, Betty Martin

9
Hey, Bet - ty Mar - tin, tip - toe, tip - toe, Hey, Bet - ty Mar - tin, tip - toe fine;
Hey, Bet - ty Mar - tin, tip - toe, tip - toe, Hey Bet - ty Mar - tin, tip - toe fine.

Game: Students sing the song and tip toe around the room. At the end of the song, they freeze. Anyone caught moving by the teacher (or other judge) is eliminated. Continue play, with different movements (jump, march, float, skip, crawl, slither, disco, surf, shower, scratch, etc.), until one student remains.

Figure 3-11. Hey, Betty Martin

While this game is often found in music education textbooks for younger students (e.g. Choksy & Brummitt, 1987; Campbell and Scott-Kassner, 2010; Campbell, 2008),

the fourth grade students enjoyed it in part because, as Max said, “you never know if you’re going to be called out.” The suspense of not knowing if their name would be called raised interest levels.

Surprising Aspects of Activities

When watching the video recording of instruments of the Western orchestra, Isaiah, an African American boy with eyeglasses found the gunshot sound effect that was part of the percussion explanation interesting because “I didn’t expect it.” This part of the video occurred halfway through the 30-minute class, when the students were less visually engaged with the DVD and more focused on peer interactions. While other students did not mention this part of the video specifically in their interviews, all students observable on the video of the class ceased their conversations to watch in surprise at the unexpected sound, and then talked excitedly about it to their neighbors. The gunshot sound was much louder than the other sounds that surrounded it, and the dynamic contrast caught them off-guard, elevating their interest.

Grace and Bryan had the following exchange referring to a “jar of stars,” which was a piece of paper with stars drawn on it that was used for management purposes. At the end of each class, the class earned a point for each of the five class rules that they followed. For each point, students colored one star on the jar that was posted in the class, and once the jar was full, the class earned a “free choice day.” On a free choice day, the class period was comprised of student performances and singing games of the children’s choosing.

Grace: I think it would be kind of fun if you could, um, keep the little stars a secret, and then when we have one [a free choice day], you could tell us the day before.

Bryan: Like the star jar, keeping it a secret, in that you don't know about a free choice day until we fill it up. You say like, "you filled up the jar, did you guys know that you just filled up the jar?" So you keep it like a secret jar...

CR: And so you wouldn't know when the free choice day would come?

Grace/Bryan: Yeah, yeah.

Adding an element of surprise to a typical activity would heighten the interest for these children.

Early literature on situational interest focused on the role of surprise and suspense in reading situations (e.g. Iran-Nejad, 1987; Jose & Brewer, 1984; Kintsch, 1980; Schank, 1979; Wade et al., 1999), particularly with regard to text qualities. For example, Jose and Brewer (1984) found that suspense as a characteristic of text-reading enhanced the situational interest of children in second, fourth, and sixth grades. In addition, Iran-Nejad (1987) found situational interest to be elicited by high-surprise story endings, but noted that the surprising aspect needed to be incorporated into the existing knowledge structure. Paris, Yambor, & Packard (1998) also determined that activities in a science unit that incorporated a sense of "mystery" were enjoyable to elementary students due to the surprise involved in the activities. In the current study, the surprising aspects occurred in a familiar context. For example, in the scenario that Bryan and Grace created in which they wanted to keep the status of their class's star jar a secret, they would still know that the free

day was on the horizon, but their interest arose due to the suspense. Similarly, in *Hey Betty Martin*, the students understood that it was a possibility that they would be called out, but they never knew when it would occur. Other studies found that surprise enhanced situational interest in disciplines outside of reading, as well. For example, Dohn, Madsen, and Malte (2009) found that learning experiences that included surprising or sudden “a-ha!” moments also contributed to situational interest for undergraduate students in a science course. The current study broadens the applicability of the finding to include elementary students in school music classes.

Humor

Humor is a common (and welcome) quality valued by people throughout their lifespan, and children are no exception to the enjoyment of comicality in multiple manifestations. Elementary-aged children have well-developed “funny bones,” and are perhaps more influenced by humor than their older peers (LeBlanc et al., 1992). In informal musical play, children commonly incorporate elements of humor in the form of parodies, chants, and plays-on-words that they perform outside the realm of adult influence (Campbell & Lum, 2007; Kartomi, 1991; Marsh & Young, 2006). Within the context of this study, humor refers to a comic or absurd quality, or an unexpected event that causes amusement. It can be used to enhance interpersonal relations or group cohesiveness, provide relaxation, help assuage fears or anxiety, or provide satisfaction by creating successful humorous exchanges (Masten, 1986). For children specifically, humor can emerge from incongruous or novel juxtapositions of events or ideas, in which the unexpected occurs (McGhee,

1971). They often use humor “for coping with fear, anxiety, and current concerns, and work to create group cohesion” (Masten, 1986, p. 262). It has been theorized that humor elicits attention, and that this increased attentive state allows children to absorb learning material that they would have missed (Bergin, 1999). In the current study, situational interest was heightened by repertoire and activities that contained humorous elements, and children attempted to be funny as a way to boost their interest levels. In addition, children altered repertoire and activities by adding humor, in an attempt to enhance their own (and their classmates’) situational interest.

Humorous Repertoire

Repertoire that students found humorous often led to higher levels of interest. For example, Max and Matthew both noted that they liked the song *Oh My, No More Pie* because, as Max said, “it was funny.” (See Figure 3-12.)

Oh My, No More Pie

Call: Response: Call: Response:

Oh my___ Oh my___ No more pie___ No more pie___

Meat's too red...I want a piece of bread...
 Bread's too brown...I think I'll go to town...
 Town's too far...I think I'll take the car...
 Car won't go...I fell and stubbed my toe...
 Toe gives me pain...I think I'll take the train...
 Train had a wreck...I fell and broke my neck...

Figure 3-12. Oh My, No More Pie

Parker noted that *When I First Came to this Land*, the cumulative song about a pioneer farmer accruing assets for his farm, was one of “...these songs...that everyone likes to sing” because of the “funny parts in the middle, like the shack.” (See Figure 3-6, on p. 83.) In a later series of classes, students worked in small groups to write and then perform new verses for the same song. One of the most notable verses to the students was one made up by Bryan and his group: “I called my iPad, you’re so stu-pad.” In interviews, four different students mentioned that they thought this was particularly funny, and therefore interesting. Wade et al. (1999), using a think-aloud protocol in which students verbally reflected on their interest levels, found that humor within texts positively impacted interest level among college students reading about dinosaurs. For children in the current study, hearing humorous textual aspects of song repertoire enhanced their interest, whether the words occurred naturally in the context of the song or were created by other students.

Humorous Activities

In addition to funny repertoire, specific activities that were deemed humorous elicited more interest, as well. For example, Leah, Max, and Parker all commented during their interviews that when individuals attempted to sing the entire final phrase of *Hi Ho the Rattlin’ Bog* (see Figure 3-13), typically without success, “it was fun and funny to hear people mess up,” as Leah put it. During this segment of the lesson, all children’s eyes were trained on the visual in front of them, and they were thoroughly engaged, bouncing along with the beat—a clear indication of their focus and interest. It was not the song itself that was seen as funny, but the

fact that some children would make mistakes when attempting to sing the song by themselves. Surprise played a role here as well, as the class never knew when (or if) a fellow class member would err.

Hi, Ho, the Rat-lin' Bog

The musical score is written on two staves in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The melody is simple and repetitive. The lyrics are as follows:

Hi, ho, the rat-lin' bog, the bog down in the val-ley - o; Hi, ho, the rat-lin' bog, the bog down in the val-ley - o. Now

5
1. in that bog, there was a tree, a rare tree and a rat-lin' tree, 1. Tree in the bog and the bog down in the val-ley - o.
2. on that tree, there was a limb, a rare limb and a rat-lin' limb, 2. Limb on the tree and the

Cumulative song: On each verse, repeat measure seven as many times as necessary, to include all the elements that have been introduced in previous verses. For example, verse four would be sung: "...and on that branch there was a nest, a rare nest and a rattlin' nest; nest on the branch and the branch on the limb and the limb on the tree and the tree in the bog, and the bog down in the valley-o."

3. ...and on that limb, there was a branch...
4. ...and on that branch, there was a nest...
5. ...and in that nest, there was an egg...
6. ...and in that egg, there was a bird...
7. ...and on that bird, there was a tail...

Figure 3-13. Hi, Ho, the Rattlin' Bog

One of the students' assignments was to create new verses to the pioneer song *When I First Came to This Land*. (See Figure 3-6, on p. 83.) Initially, I led the students through the process of making verses as a whole class, then on a later day they broke into small groups to create new verses. After brainstorming, they chose their final verses to share, then performed them for the class. When we worked as a class to come up with ideas, suggestions were fast and furious, and I had to cut them off in order to hear each one. After five minutes, I stopped the activity, but Joe and Matthew, two students who were academically capable but typically less involved in

the activities of the classroom, continued to laugh with each other about verses that they continued to create. The video shows Matthew to be particularly proud of “I called my bird, big fat turd,” smiling and telling his neighbors of his creation. His humorous intent was unmistakable. When the students worked in small groups, for the most part they were particularly focused, working well with each other, writing their ideas on the board in order to remember them and drawing pictures to represent their verses. High levels of engagement often correlate with interest in an activity (Harvey, 2010; Hidi, 1995; Schraw et al., 1995). To be sure, the creative aspect contributed to their interest in the activity (see Chapter 6), but the ability to create music that appropriately contained humor was also interesting to them.

Humorous Modifications of Activities or Repertoire

The children also transformed repertoire or activity type in an attempt to be funny to other students in the class. For example, on the video of a class in early June, a child can be heard changing the words of *Hey, Betty Martin* by singing the words “Hey Betty Fartin’,” a reference to flatulence that children often find funny (See Figure 3-11, on p. 94, for original text). The class played the game *Kye Kye Kule*, a Ghanaian song in which one student sings a call while keeping the beat on some part of their body, and the rest of the class copies the beat of the leader. (See Figure 3-14.)

Kye Kye Kule

Call: *Resp:* *C:* *R:*
 Kye Kye ku - le! Kye Kye ku - le! Kye kye ko - fi - nsa! Kye kye ko - fi - nsa!
 5 *C:* *R:* *C:* *R:*
 Ko - fi - nsa lan - ga! Ko - fi - nsa lan - ga! Ka - ka shi lan - ga! Ka - ka shi lan - ga!
 9 *C:* *R:* *All:*
 Kum a - den - de! Kum a - den - de! Kum a - den - de Hey!

The text has no meaning.

Game: One leader (the teacher or a student) sings the call and performs the following motions, then the rest of the players echo the phrase while repeating the movements.

Kye Kye Kule: Tap head four times on the beat

Kye Kye kofinsa: Tap shoulders four times on the beat, while twisting torso from side to side

Kofinsa langa: Tap waist four times on the beat, while twisting torso from side to side

Kaka shi langa: Tap knees four times on the beat

Kum adende: Tap ankles twice on “kum,” tap waist twice on “adende”

On the last phrase, all tap ankles twice on “kum,” tap waist twice on “adende,” then jump in the air, hands outstretched, on “Hey!”

Figure 3-14. Kye Kye Kule

Matthew, a boy for whom humor appears to be particularly engaging, volunteered to be the leader, and on the last phrase, lay down on the ground, acting dead with his tongue splayed out of his mouth, causing other students in the class to laugh. Also, during the strophic song *Greenland Whale Fishery*, each verse is different, but it always has the text “brave boys,” performed on the lowest note of the song. The boys invariably sung that text at a higher volume with a more forced vocal quality, proceeding to laugh at a level just loud enough to indicate to each other that they thought what they were doing was funny, but not loud enough to warrant a rebuke from me. (See Figure 3-10, on p. 93.) A variety of silly voices – high-pitched wails, mincing baby sounds, unexpected glissandi, or extra-wide vibrato, for example –

were often employed as an apparent attempt to “be funny” to the other students in the classroom.

In the interviews, no children admitted that they themselves were trying to act humorously (perhaps due to the perceived offense to me as their teacher), but they mentioned that they thought that other students employed this attention-getting strategy. Sam and Anna thought that Bryan and his group were trying very hard to be funny when they came up with the idea of “called my iPad: you’re so stupid” on the *When I First Came to This Land* verse-creating activity. Anna and Daniel M. thought that kids were “trying to be funny” when we played the play party *Goin’ Down to Cairo*, by purposefully performing the movements incorrectly.

Occasionally, these attempts at humor were frustrating to other students. For example, Daniel and Anna found the disrupted play party frustrating. Along similar lines, while most groups worked very well together when creating new verses, Brandon complained about his group, saying, “They’re just trying to be funny, they’re just doing poop and stuff.” Nonetheless, attempts at humor appear to be a means by which some children enhance the situational interest of the learning situation for themselves, by appealing to their peers’ humorous inclinations.

Scholars suggest that humor may be a way to enhance the situational interest of learning situations (Bergin, 1999). Typically, humor in these contexts refers to text characteristics of reading materials (Wade et al., 1999) or teacher’s use of humor (Dohn et al., 2009; Bryant, Comisky, & Zillmann, 1979). In music, LeBlanc, Sims, Malin, and Sherrill (1992) found that perceived humor positively influenced preference for a listening task among undergraduate students as well as children in

third, seventh, and eleventh grades. The humor in the listening examples that were used in the study included text-based humor, while also noting that specific instrumental techniques and vocal qualities incorporated into jazz performances were funny to children as well, such as the “growl” of a saxophone and scat singing. In light of the current study, humorous repertoire and activities appear to be a means by which to improve situational interest in the classroom.

Summary

During the last group of interviews, I asked the children to comment on the themes that had emerged during initial coding. Regarding novelty, Joe said, “Yeah. Something that’s new, not doing the same thing over and over,” while Sam thought that repeating activities was less interesting “because it gets old.” When asked to choose two of the themes that were “most true” to them in terms of what would be interesting, both Sam and Anna picked “doing something new” as one of their choices. For the children of Mr. Linton’s fourth grade class, novelty impacted their interest in the activities of the class. Interest was heightened by newly learned song repertoire and activities, as well as lesson segments that did not extend for lengthy periods of time. Music class experiences that incorporated surprising or novel information or tasks also elicited interest on the part of the children.

Chapter 4: Self-Efficacy and Challenge

Parker: The belts, the belts make you feel like a kung fu master. They do! I would get a green belt, and I would go home and start kicking the couch (laughing)...I get those belts, and I feel like...I could do anything!"

Leah: I won that game once! I think...when you're really good at something, it helps boost your self-esteem. [But] the people who were not as good at recorders, they were like probably not going to...try.

Joe: I like the games where it's hard to do it at first, and then you get used to it.

Introduction

The current chapter is arranged in two sections that address the issues of the children's sense of their competence and the perceived challenge posed by lesson activities. The first section addresses children's self-efficacy, by exploring issues surrounding students' interest levels when performing successfully or unsuccessfully in learning environments that involved instrument-playing experiences, songs and games, as well as other learning situations such as activities addressing music literacy skills. In addition, the role of visual representations of success will be examined. The second section of the chapter will look to the role of challenging activities in enhancing situational interest.

Vignette

A handsome boy with pale skin and big puppy-dog brown eyes, Joe is popular with his classmates and an excellent athlete. However, according to Mr. Linton, "hard

work is not his strong point,” and I had to agree. Rarely in either his regular all-subjects class or in music class does the effort he expends appear to go beyond the bare minimum. The exception to this in music class is the xylophones. Joe demonstrates deft xylophone skills, with the ability to easily pick out known songs “by ear” and the physical dexterity to master the more challenging rhythmic patterns posed by some of the musical material. Joe is among the first to show off his mallet skills, demonstrating to the class how to play a particularly difficult part, a satisfied smile on his face. Bryan and Lucy succeed at most tasks in music class fairly quickly, and they appear surprised when Joe demonstrates his mastery before they do, with arched eyebrows and mouths slightly ajar. On the other hand, Joe perceives his singing skills to be not quite as strong (and he is right; my evaluations over the year found only one assessment in which he sang with pitch accuracy). The videos consistently show Joe with a closed mouth during singing activities, staring vacantly into space. In the card-sorting activity, Joe ranks singing-based experiences lower than many other activities, “because I stink at singing also.” For Joe, like many of the students, the success he experiences impacts his interest level in the activity.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy can be defined as “people’s judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action, to attain designated types of performances.” (Bandura, 1986, p. 391). When people feel that they are likely to be successful at a task, they are apt to show increased persistence and effort, and are prone to experience feelings of serenity as opposed to the anxiety and stress that can accompany negative self-efficacy beliefs (Schunk & Pajares, 2005). When the

children of Mr. Linton's class were engaged in activities in which they believed they were likely to be successful, they described a level of interest that was higher than experiences where they anticipated failure. This manifested itself in activities involving instruments, songs and singing games, and other activities such as those targeting music literacy skills.

Occasionally, the literature on self-efficacy has distinguished between perceived competence and self-efficacy, maintaining that self-efficacy is defined as "individuals' beliefs about their *own* capabilities to accomplish a task or activities" (Wigfield & Wagner, 2005, p. 225). In this view, perceived competence is similar, but refers to children's comparison with each other, rather than to a particular task. For the purposes of this study, the terms are used interchangeably, as has often been the case in the literature (e.g. Schunk & Pajares, 2005).

Instruments

When the fourth graders in the current study played instruments, the level of interest often related directly to their perceived competence at the specific activity. Sam, a bubbly boy with a ready smile, found the recorder unit interesting, he said, "because it's kind of easy because I know how to play the piano, and I know the notes." Laid-back Daniel J. and eager Anna also liked the recorder, because they felt that they had well-developed skills on the instrument. When Joe listed the activities he felt were the most interesting, "playing xylophones" was at the top, because "I think I'm good at it." Conversely, children believed that the lack of success on the instruments inhibited their interest. Daniel M., an occasionally morose boy, differed from Joe, in that "I suck at the xylophones, and I don't like it." When rating the

interest of specific activities, Grace, a blond girl who emigrated from Australia when she was in first grade, placed “working for recorder belts” in the middle of her list “because sometimes it can get a little frustrating.” Grace attributed her low recorder skills to the fact that she had returned to Australia to visit family during the spring, and had missed two weeks of classes in which we had focused on recorder. For Maya, the daughter of Filipino immigrants, her least favorite part of playing the recorders was “getting the notes down...because it’s hard, I keep forgetting which note on the graph, it’s like, ‘what note was that again, what note was that? Oh no, I forgot this note!’” Bright-eyed and well-spoken Leah summed up many children’s attitudes, stating, “Yeah, when you’re really good at something, it helps boost your self-esteem. [But] the people who were not as good at recorders, they were like probably not going to...try.”

The observations also found children to be more engaged with the instruments when they performed successfully or believed that they were competent, and less engaged when they were not. For example, Joe (described in the vignette at the beginning of the chapter) could typically be seen playing the xylophones with enthusiasm and focused concentration. However, by the end of the unit on recorders, when he did not see himself as strongly skilled, his attention was often more directed towards his peers, being social. One of his friends in the class was Sam, the boy who stated that he thought he was an adroit recorder player. Although Sam was often interested in socializing with Joe and other of his friends in general, the videos indicate a high level of involvement with his recorder when the lesson segment addressed recorder skills, a particular area of strength.

The overall arc of interest in recorders for the students in Mr. Linton's class fluctuated throughout the study. Initial interest in recorders was very high for all the students (including Joe), as demonstrated by interviews that transpired early in the unit, as well as observations of the first two class periods addressing recorder skills, in which all students were focused and participating in the activities. Even Joe, for example, raised his hand to demonstrate a skill in the second class of the unit, with this voluntary behavior a rare occurrence for him for any activity other than playing the xylophones. However, by the end of the unit, the students that had achieved less initial success on the recorders were found using the time allotted for small group work to engage in activities unlikely to improve their skill level, such as playing *Hot Cross Buns* (the first song that all students learned that was fairly simple for them), trying out sounds on the recorders, or talking with their friends. It appeared that some children, had decided that success was not attainable, and sunk collectively into a fundamental melody that they were able to play together, with little interest in climbing the ladder to more sophisticated melodies and skills. While the ebbing of the recorders' novelty played a role in the declining interest (see Chapter 3), the lack of success of some children on the recorders also led to a gradual disengagement from the class and depressed interest levels. Children who experienced more success continued to demonstrate high levels of engagement.

Songs and Games

The enhancement of interest due to perceived or actual success also manifested itself in the context of games or songs. When sorting classroom

experiences by interest level, Joe ranked the jumping game *Pizza Pizza* low, because “it’s hard....I don’t get it; I can’t really do the feet.” (See Figure 4-1.)

Pizza, Pizza

Jen-ny has a boy-friend, Piz - za, piz - za, dad-dy - o, How do you know it, Piz - za, piz - za, dad-dy - o, 'Cause she told me, Piz - za, piz - za, dad-dy - o, Let's rope it, rope it, ro - pe it, dad-dy - o, Let's end it!

Game. Standing circle, with one player in the middle. All sing the name of “it.” On the words “Pizza, Pizza, Daddy-o,” perform the following foot pattern:

- “Piz” – jump, landing with feet apart
- “-za” – jump, landing with right foot crossed over in front of left
- “Piz” – jump, landing with feet apart
- “Dad” – jump, landing with left foot crossed over in front of right
- “-o” – jump, landing with feet apart

The center player then invents as many actions as he/she can (let’s rope it, swing it, dance it, clap it, swim it, etc.). The whole class imitates the movement of that player, while singing “Rope it, rope it, Daddy-O!” When “it” runs out of ideas, he/she ends with “Let’s end it,” then spins around and chooses the next player for the middle.

Note: the game can also be played as without the creative movement part. In this game, the first player sings the name of another player who “has a girlfriend/boyfriend.” The first player continues to sing the call for that time through the song. At the word “-O!” at the end of measure 13, three rests follow, then the named player sings the name of a new player, then sings the call part of the verse before play begins again.

Figure 4-1. Pizza, Pizza, Daddy-O

Indeed, the video of a class in mid-March finds Joe standing still while the rest of the class plays the game, making no effort to perform the movements correctly.

Similarly, Lucy, a tall, tow-headed girl of considerable athletic ability, placed the game *I Lost the Farmer’s Dairy Key* towards the bottom of her list, because “I’m not good at rock-paper-scissors,” the game that accompanied the song. (See Figure 4-2.)

I Lost the Farmer's Dairy Key



Game: Rock/Paper/Scissors game. Formation: two concentric circles, where the inside circle is "stuck in the garden." After singing the song, the students speak: "Rock, rock, scissors; rock, rock, paper; rock, rock, rock, rock, rock, rock, choose!" On "choose," the students show rock, paper, or scissors. Rock beats scissors, scissors beats paper, paper beats rock. If the person on the inside wins, then he/she gets out of the garden, by switching places with the loser. If the inside player loses or there is a tie, no one changes. For added excitement, the teacher can yell out "Switch!" in the middle of a round, at which point the outside circle moves one player to the right, thereby facing a new player. Calling "switch" more than one time in a round ratchets the excitement level up that much more!

Figure 4-2. I Lost the Farmer's Dairy Key

Joe also mentioned that he'd rather listen to the vocal sounds of others than sing himself, because "I'm not good at it." While Grace (from Australia) herself thought singing solos was interesting, she noted, "I think some people who think their singing voice is bad...they don't like singing as much." In addition, Xui Li preferred vocalizing in a big group than alone, because "if you mess up, no one will hear." The students who deemed themselves unskilled at specific objectives professed disinterest in engaging with activities that targeted them.

Other Activities

Other activities of the music class were deemed more or less interesting depending on the children's self-perceived skill or ability level. This was particularly evident in the case of activities targeting music literacy. For both Anna and Grace, they thought that rhythms were more interesting than solfege because, as Anna said, "they're a little easier." Sarah also liked the solfege notes because she knew them from a prior choir experience (indeed, she was a top performer in music

literacy activities in class). Two common means to practice melodic literacy skills were seen as difficult (and therefore less interesting) to some children. “Handsigns” are specific hand shapes that can be used to represent the vocal pitch. With the “hand staff” or “finger staff,” individual fingers act a proxy for the specific lines and spaces on the staff. While some students thought these two approaches enhanced interest due to the physical involvement (see Chapter 5), others maintained that they inhibited their interest because of their perceived lack of ability. For example, Sam said that “Oh, and I don’t like the hand staff, because I always get mixed up,” and red-haired Matthew noted that he wasn’t interested in the handsigns because “the signals are really hard for me.” In another activity targeting music literacy skills, the class played a form of the game Bingo using four-beat musical patterns on each square. Charity said that the activity was interesting because it was a game, but that she had a difficult time “figuring out where the notes go,” so overall she gave the activity an interest rating of “medium.” Observations often found the students more engaged when performing literacy skills at which they felt competent, and less engaged with activities in which they believed themselves to be weaker. For example, during a class in mid-March, Nathan, Leah, Sophie, and Lucy, all strongly skilled rhythm readers, could be seen actively reading rhythm cards, while Joe and Daniel J., students whose rhythm-reading skills fell on the lower end of the accuracy spectrum, were less engaged.

Initial success mattered. In the first two classes of the recorder unit, all students demonstrated an interest in recorder and earning recorder belts. As the unit progressed, some students were more successful than others in terms of

earning their belts, whether due to prior experience with playing instruments outside of school, more consistent practice habits, or better ability. By the end of the unit, students who demonstrated less skill were much less engaged during the small group work, while those students who were towards the top of the class continued to push themselves to earn more “belts.” For example, in an early interview one month into the project, Max, a high achiever in the all-subjects classroom who quietly took everything in, excitedly volunteered, “I like doing recorders, and I want to get farther in my belts.” In his next interview with Daniel J., in late April, Daniel enthusiastically talked about the recorders and the fact that he had almost all the belts even though “I didn’t practice any of the songs, really.” Max looked away, quietly saying with downcast eyes, “I just don’t really know how to learn it, is the problem.” Nonetheless, at this point, he still stated that he thought the recorders were more interesting than the xylophones, “because you use, um, all your fingers, and its kind of fun because of that.” He never developed the proficiency of some of the other children, and by the end of the project, his interest had declined significantly: “It’s not my favorite thing, no.” The interest of the children that had less-developed skills suffered.

Literature on Self-Efficacy and Interest

A number of theories of motivation (other than interest theory) incorporate issues of competence into their framework. For example, self-efficacy theory has posited that children are motivated by their conceptions of their competence, with their self-beliefs influencing the degree and type of effort expended, as well as the length of time that effort will be sustained (Bandura, 1977). Also, self-

determination theory proposes that children's perception of their competence impacts their broader motivation to learn (Deci, 1992). In interest theory, issues of competence are usually considered most relevant to individual interest (Bergin, 1999; Deci, 1992; Marsh et al., 2005), since one's self-efficacy tends to be slow to evolve and change. However, some research has indicated that students' competence beliefs impact their situational interest as well. For example, Schraw and colleagues explored the nature of situational interest in reading, and found that ease of comprehension contributed to children's interest (Schraw et al., 1995; Schraw, 1997; Schraw & Lehman, 2001; see also Wade et al., 1999). If children were able to easily understand reading excerpts, they were more likely to become interested in the reading passages. Skill at the task level bred positive interest. In the domain of vocational education of high school students, Minnaert, Broekaerts, & de Brabander (2007) found that perceived competence while working on a group project contributed to the students' interest in the activity. Ciani et al. (2010) also found that self-efficacy correlated with "school-prompted interest" (p. 387), the likelihood of pursuing domain content outside the school day. In addition, Chen et al. (2001), in the context of physical education classes for middle school students, suggested that initial success might be particularly important in terms of inciting situational interest that will cause children to remain engaged. The current study broadens these findings to elementary children in music classes.

Challenge

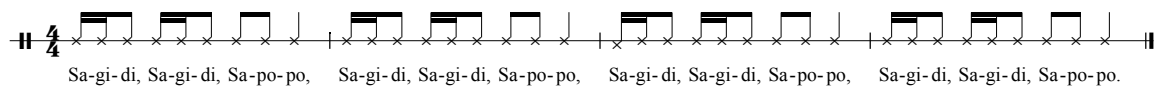
Initial success helped elicit initial interest in activities of the class, but when the activities reached a point of "optimal challenge," the growth of situational

interest was most pronounced. Challenge can be described as “tasks that are moderately difficult...[in which] the success is reasonably high but uncertain” (Paris et al., 1998, p. 269). For the children of 4B, the interest-enhancing aspect of optimal challenge manifested itself in instruments, games and songs, and other activities of class.

Music Class Activities

When aspects of song or game activities provided challenges, the children’s interest was often increased. For example, many students mentioned that they were interested in *Sagidi Sapopo*, a beat-keeping game from the Phillipines. (See Figure 4-3.) In this game, the children chanted a short, repetitive rhyme while one child stood in the front of the class, patting the beat on different parts of his or her body. The rest of the class copied the leader, one measure behind, canon-style.

Sagidi, Sapopo



Translation: vocables.

Game: This is an improvisatory game. There is no limit to the number of players. A leader is chosen to create movements for each measure and the rest of the players imitate the movement a measure later. The movements are executed in a canonic fashion. For the older children, the leader can combine different movements in the same measure. You can also have three or more groups, each one imitating the group before it.

Figure 4-3. Sagidi Sapopo

On successive days, the game became more complicated, as children divided into groups of six students, and they followed the leader’s movements one on a part, in a six-part beat-keeping canon. Bryan, when ranking songs, initially placed *Sagidi*

Sapopo low in his ratings, because “it’s, like, repetitive.” However, when “talking about the new kind [with the six-part rhythm canon], it would be like up here...[because] it was more challenging.” Leah concurred, saying that it was interesting because “I was the leader one time, and that was really hard,” but it was satisfying to have performed it accurately. During a class period in early June, I noted to the class that being the last person in the game would probably be a pretty big challenge, and almost every hand shot up, indicating interest in taking it on. Bryan, Parker, and Daniel M. each mentioned that they wanted to be the last person in the group; Daniel M. said, “...’cause always keeping track of what you’re trying to do is just weird but hard but fun,” while Parker noted, “I would probably be last, because I like the challenge things.”

Challenge played a role in the interest level of other song-based activities as well. Sam stated that, in general, he liked the challenge of singing and doing movements at the same time. When asked about foreign language songs, Anna declared, “It’s kind of fun singing in a different language. It’s a little bit hard at first, but when you like learn it and get the hang of it, it’s usually fun and catchy.” The challenge of learning foreign language material made it more interesting for her. Grace suggested that we sing the song *Ghost Ship* in canon, noting, “I really like challenging things, and I think that would be pretty challenging.” Singing a solo on *Hi Ho, the Rattlin’ Bog*, a cumulative song that becomes very long at the end, was interesting for Bryan, Parker, Xui Li, and Anna, in part because of the challenge involved. (See Figure 4-4.)

Hi, Ho, the Rat-lin' Bog

The musical score is written on two staves in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The melody is simple and repetitive. The lyrics are as follows:

Hi, ho, the rat-lin' bog, the bog down in the val-ley - o; Hi, ho, the rat-lin' bog, the bog down in the val-ley - o. Now

5
1.in that bog,there was a tree, a rare tree and a rat-lin' tree, 1.Tree in the bog and the bog down in the val-ley - o.
2.on that tree,there was a limb, a rare limb and a rat-lin' limb, 2.Limb on the tree and the

Cumulative song: On each verse, repeat measure seven as many times as necessary, to include all the elements that have been introduced in previous verses. For example, verse four would be sung: "...and on that branch there was a nest, a rare nest and a rattlin' nest; nest on the branch and the branch on the limb and the limb on the tree and the tree in the bog, and the bog down in the valley-o."

3. ...and on that limb, there was a branch...
3. ...and on that branch, there was a nest...
4. ...and in that nest, there was an egg...
5. ...and in that egg, there was a bird...
6. ...and on that bird, there was a tail...
- 7.

Figure 4-4. Hi, Ho, the Rattlin' Bog

Music literacy activities were generally among the least interesting experiences to the children of Mr. Linton's class. However, for many students, the best learning experiences within that broad learning goal were those in which they were challenged. For example, Maya, Leah, and Sarah thought that singing a known song while switching between rhythm words (e.g. ta, ti-ti) and solfege was interesting, as Maya said, "because it's fun and kind of difficult at the same time." In the game *Solami*, I sang four-beat solfege patterns, and the students echoed the pattern with handsigns and solfege. However, if the four-beat excerpt contained the exact pattern *so-la-mi* somewhere in the phrase (as opposed to *so-mi-la*, for example), they had to sit silently. Luke mentioned that it was particularly interesting in part "...because it's kind of like a challenge," and Grace added, "Yeah, it's not hard, but it's not easy." During a class period in mid-May, children were

given the opportunity to sing the known song *Chairs to Mend* (see Figure 4-5) showing either solfege handsigns or “finger staff,” in which the five fingers of the hand represent the five lines of the staff.

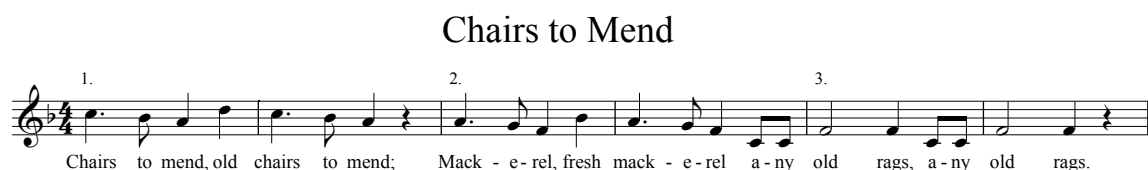


Figure 4-5. Chairs to Mend

I told them, “the finger staff is *hard*, so I’m interested to see if any of you can do it.” Most children chose to use the finger staff, demonstrating their understanding of staff placement by singing solfege syllables while pointing to the finger that represented the corresponding staff placement. In a later interview, Leah said about the activity, “I do agree that it’s pretty confusing, but it can get a little boring to sing the song over and over, and for me it’s pretty easy to only do the solfege [handsigns], and it might get a little boring.” Xui Li also chose the hand staff, and thought that “for some people, they chose it so that they can do a challenge.” She counted herself in this group. The perceived challenge of the activity increased the situational interest.

Not Too Easy, Not Too Hard

The children of 4B made comments in which they said that some activities were not challenging enough, and therefore uninteresting. Referring to “melody cards,” four-beat phrases of staff notation, Sam said, “Sometimes it’s not

interesting because it's really like short and really easy." Regarding the ease of instruments, Sam, Joe, and I had the following exchange:

Joe: The triangle!

CR: Is the triangle good?

Joe: It's easy...

CR: Are easier things more interesting?

Sam: I actually like the things better that are more challenging.

Joe: Yeah, me too.

Sam was a student who played piano outside of school and generally had high levels of achievement in music class. Joe, on the other hand, was less successful in many of the activities of music. Regardless of skill level, both students found activities that were too easy to them to be boring. For example, when working towards learning a new solfege note, the first step is often to identify a "new note" in hummed patterns. When learning *fa*, I hummed some patterns that had only the previously learned solfege notes (*low so, low la, do re, mi, so, la, and high do*), and some patterns that included "something new." For example, I would hum a pattern such as "*so-mi-la-so-mi*," while another pattern would include "*so-mi-la-so-fa*." To work on aural identification skills, students were required to identify which hummed phrases included the unfamiliar note, which they would later learn was named "*fa*." Joe's opinion was that "those are too easy," which therefore made them uninteresting. Challenge was motivating for Joe, even though his skills were generally lower.

When asked how to heighten the interest of some activities, students often offered ideas that included increased challenge. Leah, for example, suggested that

we play *Sagidi Sapopo* in a 24-part round, because “I think it makes it more challenging, and maybe more fun.” (See Figure 4-3, on p. 115.) Similarly, Anna also proposed that we play the beat-passing game *Quack Diddlioso* with more claps at the end, to up the challenge level. (See Figure 4-6.) Leah thought that the game *Doggie*, *Doggie*, a hide-and-seek game that the children learned in first grade but continued requesting through fourth grade, would be improved if “we could do some harder hiding spots.” (See Figure 4-7 for more explicit game directions.) The more difficult hiding spots would cause the game to be more challenging, and therefore increase the interest level. Further, even regularly emerging from a competitive game as the winner apparently had its negative aspects. In the singing game *Hey, Betty Martin*, children sing a song, then stand stock-still as the song ends. The teacher then calls out any children caught moving. (See Figure 4-8 for song and game directions.) Matthew noted that he often won this game, and said, “I mean, sometimes it gets kind of boring if you make it to the finals every single time you play.” For all these students, increasing the challenge would heighten their interest level in the activity.

Quack Diddlioso

Quack did - dli - o - so Quack quack quack, sing san ma - ri - co, ri - co, ri - co,
 8
 ri - co, va - lo - ra, va - lo - ra, va - lo, va - lo, va - lo va - lo!

Spoken: 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5!

Translation: Vocables, with no meaning.

Game: Seated circle. Students extend their left hand to their left, palm up, and then place their right hand in their neighbor's open hand on their right. As the song is sung, the beat gets passed from hand to hand around the circle. Once the song is finished, the students count from one to five, passing the beat all the while. On "five," the person whose hand is about to be (gently!) patted tries to move it before being touched. If they move their hand in time, the player trying to tag him/her ("four") is out; if not, player "five" is out. The game then begins again. During the counting portion of the game, it is appropriate to go out of tempo, i.e. as fast as they can!

Figure 4-6. Quack Diddlioso

Doggie, Doggie

Dog-gie, dog-gie, where's your bone? Some-one's found it far from home. Where is your bo - ne? Where is your bo - ne?

Game: One child is chosen as the dog. While that child closes his/her eyes (or, better yet, leaves the room), a "bone" is hidden somewhere in the room. When the dog re-enters the class, the rest of the children begin singing the song. Upon completion, they chant "a-rat-a-tat-tat," over and over, growing louder as the dog moves nearer to the bone, and quieter as he/she moves further away. When the bone is found, a new dog is chosen, and play continues.

Figure 4-7. Doggie, Doggie

Hey, Betty Martin

Hey, Bet - ty Mar - tin, tip - toe, tip - toe, Hey, Bet - ty Mar - tin, tip - toe fine;

9
Hey, Bet - ty Mar - tin, tip - toe, tip - toe, Hey Bet - ty Mar - tin, tip - toe fine.

Game: Students sing the song and tip toe around the room. At the end of the song, they freeze. Anyone caught moving by the teacher (or other judge) is eliminated. Continue play, with different movements (jump, march, float, skip, crawl, slither, disco, surf, shower, scratch, etc.), until one student remains.

Figure 4-8. Hey Betty Martin

Navajo Happy Song

Hi - o hi - o - ip - pee a - na, hi - o hi - o - ip - pee a - na, hi - o, hi - o - ip - pee

9
a - na hi - o, hi - o - ip - pee a - na, hi - o, hi - o hi - o

Translation: Vocables, with no meaning.

Game: Seated circle, sitting so that students' knees are almost touching those of their neighbors. In order of difficulty, perform the following patatching ostinati while singing:

1. O O F F
2. O O L L
3. O O R R
4. O O L L O O F F O O R R O O F F
5. O L O F O R O F

O = Pat own lap

F = Pat floor

L = Move hands one knee to the left; i.e. right hand on own left knee; left hand on neighbor's right knee

R = Move hands one knee to the right

Figure 4-9. Navajo Happy Song

Similarly, when the challenge was too difficult, the children found it less interesting, and often “checked out.” In the game *Navajo Happy Song* (see Figure 4-9), the children had to perform the following hand-patting pattern: pat their own knees, pat their left-hand neighbor’s knee, pat their own knees, pat the floor, pat their own knees, pat their right-hand neighbor’s knee, pat their own knees, then pat the floor. This pattern was repeated throughout the song, with no break, at the rate of roughly three pats per second. Daniel M. noted that to him, the beat pattern was very difficult, so he was not very interested in it. Parker discussed his piano lessons, stating that on some of the songs, the leaps were too big for his fingers, and therefore frustrating and not fun. Also, Xui Li said, “I don’t like doing the staff, because it’s kind of hard to remember the things.” In the observations, children who were less successful would disengage once they realized that they were not successfully performing the task. For example, on the second day of the recorder unit, Joe actively raised his hand to try to show how to play Hot Cross Buns to the class. I called on him, he played it incorrectly, and I suggested alterations he might make to improve the performance. From that point on, the video shows him sitting with his recorder in his lap.

Optimal Challenge

There was a sense of optimal challenge that maximized the children’s interest in activities. Grace said, “I like being challenged when I can actually do it, but when I can’t it’s frustrating.” Sophie, a strong recorder player, enjoyed working on recorders in small groups “because people who could do it better than other people could do different stuff, and didn’t have to review stuff all the time.” Xui Li,

referring to *Sagidi Sapopo*, the beat-keeping game from the Philippines, thought that being in the middle of the group of children would be best for her: “I wouldn’t really want to be the first or the second, I’d rather be the third or fourth....I feel like it’d be a horror in the beginning, then the whole line will mess up. And the last person would be the easiest.” For Xui Li, she determined her own comfort level, where she would be challenged. As Grace said, “It’s not hard, but it’s not easy.”

Within lesson segments (i.e. the four- to seven-minute sections that comprised most classes), the children were often more interested when the challenge was increased. As Parker watched a video segment in which the young students sang the song *Alabama Gal* with solfege (see Figure 4-10), increasing the tempo with each rendition, he commented, “it was kind of fun because it was a challenge, but it was complicated!”

Alabama Gal



Figure 4-10. Alabama Gal

Luke and Nathan made similar comments after watching an excerpt of *Sagidi Sapopo*, which started with one person leading the whole group, but increasingly raised the challenge by adding more people in canon, stating, “it was...better with more people” and that “when it’s harder, you focus more.” Leah and Grace brainstormed ideas for increasing the challenge for *Sagidi Sapopo*. Grace suggested

that the game “would be more fun if could do it faster...because it would be more of a challenge.” When singing *Chicken in the Fencepost*, with solfege and handsigns, the tempo increased; at first, energy was fairly low, but as it sped up, most students became more enthusiastically engaged. Similarly, on the following class, the students sang *Singabahambayo*, first while keeping a simple beat, then with a two-part ostinato using body percussion, then a four-beat ostinato. As the task became more challenging, the children can be seen sitting up straighter, with more “eyes on me”, trying to move their hands at the correct times.

Literature on Optimal Challenge.

Csikszentmihalyi (1975) addressed issues of optimal challenge, maintaining that the experience which he called “flow” occurs when “opportunities for action are in balance with the actor’s skills;...when skills are greater than opportunities for using them, the state of boredom results;” but if “opportunities are too demanding for his capabilities, the resulting stress is experienced as anxiety” (p. 49). Deci (1992), too, asserted that optimal challenge was a central characteristic of interesting tasks. Some interest research has found that experiences of challenge positively impact situational interest (Chen et al., 1999; Paris et al., 1998), while others have found that challenge does not contribute to situational interest (Chen et al., 2001). Chen et al. (2001) proposed that that initial success with a new activity may be important in order to encourage initial interest, and that challenge should perhaps occur later. In music education, Barrett and Smigiel (2007) found that “a desire for challenge” (p. 39) was a major reason that children chose to participate in elective music activities. For the children in the current study, challenges that were

achievable were deemed interesting, whether or not they were associated with new experiences.

Puzzles and Games

Puzzles, games, or other opportunities for children to “figure things out” often posed challenges for the children in 4B, and these experiences led to heightened situational interest on the part of the children. In Chapter 5, games that included active movement will be addressed. In this chapter, games refer to activities that were more sedentary, but posed mental challenges. This manifested itself in higher interest towards games that the children played to practice music literacy skills. In addition, when children brainstormed activities that would enhance their interest, activities with qualities of games or puzzles were often mentioned. Finally, learning activities in which students needed to “figure it out,” in puzzle-like fashion, were seen as interesting.

Games for Music Literacy

The interest of students in puzzles and games was evident in activities targeting music literacy skills, one of the objectives of the class that was generally seen as less interesting. Leah said, “I think solfege is not as fun, but if there are actual puzzles, they’re more fun.” For example, *Rhythm Bingo* and *Melody Bingo* were variations on the classic Bingo game, with individual squares filled by four-beat rhythmic patterns or melodic patterns on the staff. (See Figure 4-11.)

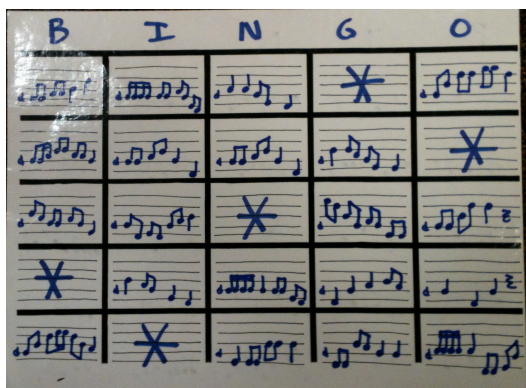


Figure 4-11. Melody Bingo

Typically, the patterns came from song repertoire that the children learned, so there were a variety of ways in which the game could be played. With *Melody Bingo*, for example, I could sing the solfege patterns with solfege notes, hum the patterns, or sing the patterns with the words from known songs. Referring to working on solfege skills, Grace said, “I think it’s way better doing it in Bingo and stuff like that.” When I brought up the activity during interviews, Max, Luke, and Nathan all professed interest in the game, with Luke saying, “That was fun.” Another game targeting music literacy that elicited student interest was *Solami*, in which I sang isolated four-beat patterns with solfege, and the students had to determine whether or not to echo my pattern. Their responsibility was to echo me and show hand signs, unless the phrase contained the pattern *so-la-mi*, in that order, in which case they were to sit silently. If the class was silent at the correct time, they earned a point; if anyone echoed, then I earned a point. The game was primarily intended to provide them with a quick means by which to echo typical patterns, without taking up very much time in class, but it quickly became a much-requested activity. On the first day

we played the game, the students directed their attention on me as I explained the rules – even Daniel M, a child who could often be seen leaning against the wall with his eyes unfocused, appeared to be listening closely to the directions. Once we began playing, the students showed their excitement when they earned a point, through fist-pumps and cries of ‘Yesss!,’; as well as raised voices in disappointment when a student mistakenly echoed a pattern to which they should have remained silent. Bryan and Lucy said that games like *Solami* made working on solfege skills “more fun.” When I asked Nathan and Luke if there was anything else that teachers should know about what kids find interesting, Luke said, “Well, I don’t really like the solfege notes,” to which Nathan quickly responded, “Yeah, unless it’s the *Solami* game.” Towards the end of the study, I engaged in member checking, asking the children if games were more interesting to them. I said, “I’m wondering if it would be more interesting if teachers did more games when we’re doing that music literacy stuff.” All the children agreed with this statement.

After initial interviews indicated that one of the least preferred educational objectives was working on music literacy skills, the students had an assignment where they worked in small groups to create ideas for more interesting ways to practice music literacy. Most groups suggested games. For example, Bryan suggested that there could be a “find-the-*so*” game, in which one child stood outside the room while the teacher designated one of the remaining children as “the *so*.” In Bryan’s game, the player outside the room would return to the classroom, and ask individual students “are you the *so*?” If not, the person asked would sing their solfege note out loud (e.g. “No, I’m the ‘*do*’”), but if were the named solfege note,

they would sing it out loud while jumping up and down. Although it does not appear that this would lead to improved skill at performing and understanding the melodic and harmonic functions of solfege syllables, the game was one that Bryan thought would be interesting. Another group created a version of the card game *War*, in which a higher solfege note would beat a lower solfege note (e.g. *la* would be higher than *do*). Again, it does not appear that this game would lead to better solfege skills, but it indicates an interest in game activities on part of the children. In the free-write that addressed the create-your-own-solfege activity, students referred to the fact that a game was part of the outcome. One young student wrote that it was interesting “because it was fun to create your own game...”, while another penned, “I thought it was interesting because u [sic] invented a game w/ [sic] your friends.”

Children had other ideas for how to incorporate puzzles and games into music class in order to make the periods more interesting. Joe and Sam had the following exchange:

Sam: If I could choose one thing that we could do the whole time, it would be playing games.

Joe: I want to play a game where there’s a person in the corner, and everyone else is in a circle, and the person is closing their eyes in the corner, and then somebody like has to sing something...and the person has to guess who it is.

Sam: And it’s like a little part of a song.

Joe and Sam perceived that the game aspect of the soloing activity would be fun. It is particularly notable that a game involving solo singing was suggested by Joe, a student who often did not participate in song-based activities. Another example

occurred during an interview in which Anna was sorting cards with song titles on them by interest level, when she blurted out, “Wait, I have an idea!” She thought that once she and Sam finished sorting cards into piles of “interesting/sort-of interesting/not interesting,” another pair of students would guess which pile represented which degree of interest. Once again, games were seen as a way to enhance their interest in class.

Puzzling Activities: “Figuring It Out”

The phrase “figuring it out” was uttered with some frequency throughout the interviews, as the children described reasons that particular activities were interesting. Aspects of activities that required their focused attention, in which the young students had to actively engage their minds to decipher the solution to a problem, often heightened their interest. To the fourth graders, these experiences often felt like puzzles or games. In one common xylophone activity, the students were sent to the instruments in pairs, with the direction to “sound out” a song that they had previously sung in class. When trying to determine the correct notes to play for the song, either by using their ear or by referring to the notation on the board, the children were actively engaged with the activity, participating with enthusiasm and verve. Three children in an opening interview mentioned that they liked “figuring songs out on the xylophone.” Bryan elaborated, “it’s fun to just hit the little notes and then find the song.” Luke, Leah, and Nathan also mentioned liking to learn a new solfege note, with Leah stating that “it’s interesting to figure it out” by using her knowledge of solfege from the movie, *The Sound of Music*.

The observations also found students particularly engaged when there was a puzzling activity. Rhythm and melody flash cards were used in a variety of ways in the class. The card activity in which their focused attention was the highest used the cards in multiple choice fashion. Three students held one card each, and I (or a student) clapped or sang one of the three patterns. The goal for the remaining students was to identify the card that had been performed. During a class period in mid-March, the students were very focused on the cards in order to determine which one was being performed. As they identified the solution, almost every hand was raised. Lucy said that the multiple choice activity was “the best thing we do on the solfege. It’s not my favorite thing to do, but out of all the solfege things we have, it’s the best one.” Luke said that it was “kind of fun” because “you get to figure it out.” Solving problems elicited interest.

Other problem-solving activities that appeared to incite interest included identifying a “mystery song,” a known song whose musical notation was written on the board. Students attempted to identify the song by reading the musical notation in their heads, and attention was high. Similarly, when practicing the correct placement of measure lines during a class period in early June, individual children in the class filled in missing bar lines on a score that was displayed on a white board. As the students closed their eyes, I erased one bar line, re-drawing it in an incorrect location, and told them to try to find the new placement. Once allowed to look, their eyes raced to find the “mistake,” yelling out, “Ooh! I found it!” In an observation early in the study, the students were challenged to identify the song that I was showing on my “finger staff” – that is, I pointed to my fingers to specify specific line

and space placement, in time with a song but without emitting any sound. When Daniel J. figured out that I was showing *Hot Cross Buns*, he waved his hand wildly in the air to try to get my attention. Daniel was often not focused during the class period, but when he had to solve this problem, his engagement rose. Finally, when watching an assembly in which *Peter and the Wolf* was performed, the performers introduced each instrument while engaging the children by playing songs that they thought the children would know, while the students attempted to “name that song.” Daniel and Isaiah thought the best part was “the guessing game....where they would do a song on their instruments, and we would have to guess what it was. They did *Lord of the Rings*, *Harry Potter*, *Pink Panther*.” Max and Daniel J. agreed that this was “the best part of the assembly.” Part of the interest in these problem-solving activities was due to the success that the children felt or anticipated, but the puzzle factor was a large part of the goal as well.

Literature on Games and Puzzles

In interest literature, games and puzzles have been found to enhance situational interest (Bergin, 1999; Mitchell, 1993; Morgan, 2010). Mitchell (1993), for example, found that logic puzzles or mind-teasers were effective in eliciting students’ interest in high school because they “functioned as a form of cognitive stimulation that caught the students’ interest” (p. 427). While investigating the nature of situational interest in a high school history class, Morgan (2010) also found that games enhanced the interest of the students, in part because, as one of the students noted, “it allowed them to play while learning” (p. 315). As Parker said in his first interview,

The most interesting thing about music are all of the games...Because we have a lot of hard work with the hand signs and the note reading and we have a lot to think about when we do it and everyone likes them and it's like our time to have some fun.

In the field of music education, Bowles (1998) administered a survey to 2251 elementary-aged children in three states, and found that “playing musical games” was one of the most desired activities across grade levels. In the survey, the students reported whether they liked 21 different common classroom activities. Playing musical games, playing instruments, and attending concerts were the only activities that did not have a declining preference curve as students aged; fourth and fifth graders liked those activities as much as younger children did. All other activities had decreasing levels of liking. In addition, games have been found to have a positive impact on student engagement and levels of learning (Hernandez, 2009).

Competition

The fourth graders also made comments indicating their interest in games that were competitive, or suggested games that included aspects of competition, in which one child (or group) would win and another would lose. For example, we played *Rhythm Concentration* in late April. In this game, like the children's card game *Memory*, pairs of index cards containing rhythms were hidden in envelopes on a large piece of cardboard (see Figure 4-12). The class was divided into two teams, and one at a time, students tried to find the matched cards, clapping the rhythms along the way. When a match was found, their team earned one point. The activity took approximately 20 minutes, much longer than the typical five- to seven-minute

lesson segment. However, the children were very focused, working together as a team to remember where the matches would be, cheering as their group found an identical set. In the interviews, blond-haired Lucy, a strong athlete and conscientious worker, noted that she thought the whole class found the competitive aspect interesting, because “our class is *really* competitive.” The students also listed competitive singing games as among their favorite activities. Isaiah said, “I wish we could do a whole class of *Hey, Betty Martin*, it’s so much fun.” In this game, the children sing a song and then freeze at the end. If a player moves, he or she is called out, with the players competing to be the last one standing. (See Figure 4-8, on p. 122.) Despite the fact that this can be found in textbooks for early childhood (e.g. Forrai & Sinor, 1988), this was the most-requested game.



Figure 4-12. Rhythm Concentration

Children engage in musical play such as singing games outside the realm of adult-mediated instruction, and these experiences often incorporate elements of competition, where there is a winner and a loser. Educators suggest minimizing

competition in the classroom (e.g. Miller, 1994), partly out of concern that competitive activities can negatively affect the self-esteem of the children who are on the losing end of the competition. However, the children in the current study only expressed positive feelings towards competition.

Summary

The situational interest of the children of 4B was enhanced when they felt as if they experienced initial success or anticipated experiencing success. Conversely, when they believed they were likely to fail or were in fact unsuccessful at a task, they were more likely to verbally express disinterest, as well as become disengaged from the learning situation with which they were faced. However, if activities were deemed either too easy or too difficult, situational interest was often negatively impacted. Instead, the children were most interested in activities that held experiences of optimal challenge for them. The young students were at their most interested when faced with learning experiences of optimal challenge, in which effort was required but they had opportunities for success. Often, challenge came in the form of games or puzzles, which would lead to increased interest for the fourth graders of Mr. Linton's class.

Chapter 5: Kinesthetic and Visual Modalities

Daniel M.: You know, because we're kids, we like to be active, instead of just sitting there, saying so-la-do, and you notice how all of us, most of the time, are moving around, not sitting still.

Introduction

In this chapter, the contribution of modality-rich experiences will be addressed as they impact children's situational interest, with particular attention to those that involve children's kinesthetic or visual sense alongside aural learning. It will first focus attention on the interest towards active singing games and instruments, then explore examples of sedentary activities that led to a lower degree of interest for the children. Following this, the chapter will provide examples of children's ideas for incorporating movement into activities to make them more interesting, and then will note the ways in which children felt that movements helped them learn more effectively. Next, I will describe examples from the videotaped observations in which the shift in activity levels impacted their engagement and interest. Finally, examples in which visual stimuli generated situational interest will be highlighted.

Vignette

Two children, Leah and Bryan, accompany me into the music classroom for an interview. Both students wear the standard blue-and-white garb of St. George's School, although Leah's pants show a hole in the right knee, and Bryan's shirt has become untucked. It's the end of the day, towards the end of the school year, and both parents and teachers are much less picky about the children's appearance. As we walk

in, Leah excitedly tells me about another version of the beat-passing game Aquaqua that she learned when she was at camp last summer. Bryan joins in, saying, "did you know that we were all playing it in our classroom after last music?" I laugh, and ask what Mr. Linton thought of that. Neither child answers, as they visually survey the room, which much seem different to them without their classmates. The three of us sit on the floor, and I proceed to provide each of them with a set of index cards on which different names of songs are written. Leah asks questions and makes comments about activities, while Bryan moves quickly and quietly, focused on organizing the 16 cards in order from most interesting to least interesting. When Bryan finishes before Leah, he stands up to roam about the room, occasionally returning to check on Leah's progress. As she finalizes her order, Leah joins him standing, and for the remainder of the interview they remain upright, rocking back and forth on their toes, jumping up and down, and moving throughout the room. I, on the other hand, sit with my knees pulled up to my chest, clearly comfortable staying still. When Leah asks Bryan why the song Greenland Whale Fishery was towards the bottom of his list, he says, "I just thought it was kind of like Roll On, Columbia and Sail Away [two other songs placed towards the bottom], it was just us looking up there and singing a song." Later, he commented on a play party, "it's fun because we get to be active." When I point out that three of Leah's top four songs involve movement, she says "Sometimes the games help me understand the songs more, even if it's just a little jump...For me, it makes a little more meaning." Bryan, likewise, has placed more sedentary activities towards the bottom of his list, while the active experiences are up top. According to Mr. Linton, these two children are academic high achievers in their classroom, suggesting that

when they want to, they have no problem sitting or standing still. Without that ability, they would not be as academically successful in fourth grade as they have been.

Nonetheless, physical experiences clearly earned their interest.

Kinesthetic Modality

The kinesthetic modality refers to activities that involved physical activity in a variety of ways. Although the common American secondary school traditions of choir, band and orchestra are mostly sedentary activities, many musical traditions throughout the world regularly incorporate movement with music. In parts of India, for example, the term *sangita* refers not only to music, but to dance as well (Wade, 2004). In children's informal musical cultures around the world, too, youngsters typically make movements while musicking, in the form of hand-clapping games, counting-out rhymes, or circle games (Marsh, 2008). As Carl Orff created his philosophy of music education, he was inspired by children's natural movement, noting that elemental music for children is "never music alone, but music connected with movement, dance, and speech – not to be listened to, [but] meaningful only in active participation" (Orff & Wagner, 1963, p. 71). In the context of education, Dewey (1913) maintained that for children, "interest is at first active, projective, or propulsive" (p. 16). Both gross motor skills, which can be defined as the large-scale movements such as crawling, running, and jumping, and fine motor skills, which refer to smaller movements of the hands and fingers (Krapp & Wilson, 2005), were found to elicit the situational interest of the children in Mr. Linton's fourth grade class.

Movements in Singing Games

The first set of interviews asked one main open-ended question: “What are the most interesting activities in music class?” Without exception, the first answer from all 24 children involved some sort of activity that involved movement, with singing games mentioned more often than any other activity. When asked to provide reasons for their interest in these activities, the children usually mentioned the level of physical activity. For example, *Kye Kye Kule* was interesting for Charity because “you get to jump up and it’s a really cool sound.” (See Figure 5-1).

Kye Kye Kule

The musical score for 'Kye Kye Kule' is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of three lines of music, each with lyrics underneath. The first line starts with a 'Call' section followed by a 'Resp:' section. The second line continues the 'Call' and 'Resp:' pattern. The third line begins with a 'C:' section, followed by an 'R:' section, and ends with an 'All:' section. The lyrics are: 'Kye Kye ku - le! Kye Kye ku - le! Kye kye ko - fi - nsa! Kye kye ko - fi - nsa! Ko - fi - nsa lan - ga! Ko - fi - nsa lan - ga! Ka - ka shi lan - ga! Ka - ka shi lan - ga! Kum a - den - de! Kum a - den - de! Kum a - den - de Hey!'.

The text has no meaning.

Game: One leader (the teacher or a student) sings the call and performs the following motions, then the rest of the players echo the phrase while repeating the movements.

Kye Kye Kule: Tap head four times on the beat

Kye Kye kofinsa: Tap shoulders four times on the beat, while twisting torso from side to side

Kofinsa langa: Tap waist four times on the beat, while twisting torso from side to side

Kaka shi langa: Tap knees four times on the beat

Kum adende: Tap ankles twice on “kum,” tap waist twice on “adende”

On the last phrase, all tap ankles twice on “kum,” tap waist twice on “adende,” then jump in the air, hands outstretched, on “Hey!”

Figure 5-1. Kye Kye Kule

In a free write, Lucy wrote about *Kye Kye Kule* as well, stating, “I love that activity!

It’s so fun to do the movements. The reason I like it is because it’s so active...I love

to be active so when we get to play games like this I love it.” When ranking song activities from most to least interesting, Lucy placed *Pizza Pizza* (see Figure 5-2) towards the top, remarking that “I just liked the movement part.” When talking about games overall, Joe noted, “I like the games where you have to sing AND do it,” to which Sam added, “Yeah, like sing and do movements.”

Pizza, Pizza

Jen-ny has a boy-friend, Piz - za, piz - za, dad-dy - o, How do you know it, Piz - za, piz - za, dad-dy - o, 'Cause she told me, Piz - za, piz - za, dad-dy - o, Let's rope it, rope it, rope it, dad-dy - o, Let's end it!

Game. Standing circle, with one player in the middle. All sing the name of “it.” On the words “Pizza, Pizza, Daddy-o,” perform the following foot pattern:

- “Piz” – jump, landing with feet apart
- “-za” – jump, landing with right foot crossed over in front of left
- “Piz” – jump, landing with feet apart
- “Dad” – jump, landing with left foot crossed over in front of right
- “-o” – jump, landing with feet apart

The center player then invents as many actions as he/she can (let’s rope it, swing it, dance it, clap it, swim it, etc.). The whole class imitates the movement of that player, while singing “Rope it, rope it, Daddy-o!” When “it” runs out of ideas, he/she ends with “Let’s end it,” then spins around and chooses the next player for the middle.

Figure 5-2. Pizza, Pizza

While students appeared to find virtually all the singing games interesting, those that contained more vigorous movement-based activity were more interesting than those with only a moderate extent of activity. When discussing the seated beat-passing game *Aquaqua* (see Figure 5-3), Joe said, “I actually like the games more where you stand,” and Lucy added, “I like the moving-around games.”

Aquaqua

A - qua - qua del - a o - mar qua, qua, qua,
 5
 Del si - ma tri - co tri - co, tri - co, tra Va
 9
 lo, va lo, va lo, va la va la, va lo,

Source: First grade students of Givat Mordecai, in Jerusalem, Israel; September, 1979. Collected by Rita Klinger.

Game: Seated circle, left palms up, right palms down; lightly touching both neighbors' hands. The beat is passed from right hand to the neighbor's right hand, until the end of the singing. On "1, 2, 3, 4, 5," the action speeds up. If the person who is supposed to get the tap on "5" gets his/her hand out of the way in time, the one who tapped goes in the middle of the circle for the next round. If the person who's supposed to get the tap on "5" isn't quick enough and does get tapped, he/she goes into the middle.

Figure 5-3. Aquaqua

Obwisana Sa

Ob-wi-sa-na sa na-na, Ob-wi-sa-na sa. Ob-wi-sa-na sa na-na, Ob-wi-sa-na sa.

Translation: I hurt my finger on a rock, Grandmother

Game: Seated circle. Students pass a rock around the circle, landing on one person every two beats. At the end of the song, the player with the rock is out.

Figure 5-4. Obwisana Sa

Like *Aquaqua*, the game *Obwisana Sa* is played in seated position, in which players pass the bean bag to the beat of the song. (See Figure 5-4). Jaden thought the game was interesting, but not as much as more active games, because "when you don't have the beanbag, all you're really doing is going like that," moving his arm from left to right, simulating the passing pattern, "and singing it." *Draw a Bucket of Water*

(see Figure 5-5), a game that the students recalled from second and third grade, contains two sections, one of which is more active than the other. Children stand in groups of four for the first half of the song, rocking back and forth with their hands joined. During the second half of the song, the foursome jumps in the air at the same time and turns around, faster and faster, which often leads to group members toppling over onto the ground. When talking about this section, Sam said, “Can’t we just do it with like the fun part, the jumping around part, four times in a row at the end?” For the children, the overall attitude could be described as “the more movement, the better.”

Draw a Bucket of Water

Draw a buck-et of wa - ter, for my old-est daugh-ter, One in the bunch and two in the bunch and num-ber one goes un - der.

9
Frog in the buck - et and you can't get him out, Frog in the buck - et and you can't get him out,

13
Frog in the buck - et and you can't get him out, Frog in the buck - et and you can't get him out.

Source: Variants can be found in *150 American Folk Songs* (Erdei/Komlos), *Bought Me a Cat* (Trinka), and *120 Singing Games and Dances for Elementary Schools* (Choksy/Brummitt)

Song: mm. 1-8 are repeated four times. The text remains the same except for the “number” in measure seven, in which “one” is followed by “three,” “two,” and “four.” After singing “number four goes under,” then move to the B section, which can be sung either once or twice.

Formation: Group of four, facing each other in a circle. Number off, counter-clockwise. Players two and four join hands over top of the joined hands of players one and three.

Game: Players sing the song, with each pair rocking their joined hands back and forth. On the words “number one goes under,” players two and four raise their hands in the air, player 1 goes into the middle of the small circle, and the hands go back down. Repeat the A section, with player 3 going under. Repeat again with player two going into the middle as players one and three raise hands, then again with player four. On the B section, the tempo speeds up, and the players jump up and down while circling to the left, keeping their hands joined. If players lean back as they are jumping, the circle can move more and more quickly, heightening the fun factor.

Figure 5-5. Draw a Bucket of Water

Observations of singing games bore this out, with students typically engaged when playing a singing game. For example, the children learned the play party *Goin' Down to Cairo* during the study. This game involves a series of moves called a “grand right and left,” in which the players weave in and out of each other in a circle, grabbing hands as they move. (See Figure 5-6 for more complete explanations of the actions.) The movement was challenging for the children, and even when the outcome was not perfect, interest and engagement was high.

Goin' Down to Cairo

The image shows a musical score for the song "Goin' Down to Cairo". It consists of two staves of music in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff is labeled "Verse:" and contains the lyrics: "Go - in' down to Cai - ro, good-bye, and a bye-bye, Go - in' down to Cai - ro, good-bye, Li - za Jane." The second staff is labeled "Chorus:" and contains the lyrics: "Black them boots and a make them shine, good-bye, and a bye-bye, Black them boots and a make them shine, good-bye, Li - za Jane." The score includes musical notation such as quarter notes, eighth notes, and rests.

Play Party: Double circle formation, with partners standing in skating position. [Alt: single circle formation]

Mm. 1-4. All promenade with partner. On the words “Liza Jane,” players move into single circle, partners facing each other. [Alt: circle left.]

Mm. 5-8. Grand right and left. Partners face each other and join right hands as if to shake hands. They pull past each other, each player offering his left hand to the person heading towards them. They pull past this one also, offering a right hand to the next. Repeat, moving around the circle, until they return to their original partner. At that point, partners perform a right-arm swing, then move into the double circle formation to ready themselves for the next round. The chorus (“Black them boots...”) is repeated as often as necessary, in order to return to original partners. Essentially, the players weave in and out of each other, half the class moving clockwise, half counter-clockwise. It works best if the students pass right shoulders after shaking right hands.

Figure 5-6. Goin' Down to Cairo

Exceptions to the lack of participation during active games only occurred when students’ level of active participation became minimized during the game. For example, in *Hey Betty Martin*, the game that the fourth graders most commonly listed as their favorite in the opening interviews, the children made different

movements around the room while singing a song, then stopped completely still as the song came to a close. I called out any players seen moving, and those students stood against the wall, no longer able to move around. At this point in the game, children often lost focus, and on the videos, I can be heard reminding them, “don’t forget to sing if you’re out;” typically, the video shows them lounging against the wall, critically examining one of the maps on the wall, attempting to surreptitiously draw on the whiteboard with dry erase marker, or talking with their friends. They stated that they liked the game, but once they became eliminated, their interest waned.

In interest research, most studies have explored the nature of situational interest in the fields of reading, science, math, and physical education. The first three domains are typically more sedentary areas of study, and no research was found suggesting that the types of large motor movements found in the current study were commonplace in classrooms of those subjects. In physical education, a discipline in which activities involving large motor movements are more typical, researchers have not looked to the correlation between the degree or type of kinesthetic activity and situational interest, but rather to issues like optimal challenge and novelty.

In elementary music education, physically active participation is also common, and some studies have explored the role of movement in children’s affective responses. Mizener (1993), for example, looked at a variety of common singing experiences, asking third through sixth graders to rate their preferred activities. With singing games, she found that all students preferred games where

“we get up and sing and dance and move around the room,” rather than “the ones where we sit or stand at our places and sing and do motions.” The current findings also suggest that children prefer more active movement.

Two studies looked to the role of movement in preschool music classes. Moore (2002) taught eight multicultural songs with varying degrees of movement to 195 children, aged four through seven. Results indicated that as the amount of activity in a song increased, the amount of off-task behavior decreased. Based on this finding, Moore suggested that children “obviously enjoy moving to songs that they sing” (p. 35). On their stated preferences, the most active song held the highest preference ratings, but for the other songs, degree of activity level did not correlate with preference. Moore hypothesized that perhaps children hold preferences for learning experiences with greater activity level, but that other factors with the songs mitigated the results. For example, *Sorida* is a relatively active song, but the children had less success with the movements. Perhaps, in this case, relatively less success (the theme from Chapter 4) trumped movement in terms of the impact on interest level. In another study, Temmerman (2000) found that more preschool children named moving/dancing as their favorite activity in music classes than four other options (listening, singing, playing percussion instruments, or working together with instruments to make their own music).

Movements with Instruments

In addition to singing games, many children stated that they found playing instruments to be interesting. The reasons children provided for these high ratings for instrument-playing typically included movement (of the fingers, hands, arms,

and even mouth). Daniel M. noted, "I like sports and moving, so drumming kind of exercises my arms while I do it." Parker also found the physical aspect of playing instruments to be a positive aspect, stating, "every time you play an instrument...you use some kind of muscle...like in the xylophones, you have to use your arm muscles." Also, Bryan thought the African-style djembe drums were interesting "because we don't just have little sticks, but we get to...[demonstrates large hand movements, simulating playing the drums]." The observations reinforce these statements. When the children were playing xylophones, drums, or recorders, they usually can be seen demonstrating a high degree of engagement, actively patting drums, blowing their recorders, or sounding out songs on the xylophones.

Conversely, when the children were not actively playing during a lesson segment with instruments, they were less mentally as well as physically involved. The music program at St. George's owned enough xylophones and drums for two children to share an instrument. Typically, I planned activities in which one child would play while the other would observe, believing that observing a partner could help improve skill level (in addition to the practical reality that there were only enough instruments to share). In the videos, the non-performing child can be seen "checked out," staring into the distance instead of attending to the actions of his or her partner. On the video of one class period in May, this comes into particularly stark focus: Daniel J. can be seen briefly rolling around on the floor while his partner is playing the drums; when I told the class to switch partners, he immediately moved to the instrument to begin practicing his part. Not only was he not attending to his partner, but he was making gross motor physical movements of rolling on the

ground while he wasn't playing. The drive to be physically engaged manifested itself in this period in which he was less engaged.

Playing instruments typically involves physical movement that is less active than many of the singing games referenced earlier in the chapter. Children move their hands to make sounds on an instrument, but they do not make gross motor movements while doing so. A steady stream of research has indicated that interest is enhanced through hands-on activities, which Bergin (1999) described as “activities in which they manipulate materials, move around, and engage learning in a physical way” (p. 92). A number of studies in science have found students’ situational interest improved through these experiences, for preservice teachers (Palmer, 2004), college students (Dohn et al., 2009) high school students (Palmer, 2009; Dohn, 2011), and middle school students (Swarat et al., 2012). “Hands-on,” in these cases, has typically referred to experiments in which the participants are relatively stationary, but physically engage with materials. This is similar to instrument playing. The current study extends this finding, in terms of the age of the students (elementary) and the subject (music), but also in the scale of the movements. Both gross and fine motor movements were found to be interesting.

Movements to Make Activities More (or Less) Interesting

The students saw learning experiences that contained minimal movement as less interesting. When organizing index cards that held song titles in order of interest, the lowest-ranked songs almost always had minimal movements. In the opening vignette, Bryan unfavorably compared songs in which the students sat and sang to activities in which they were more actively engaged, declaring, “I thought it

was kind of, *Roll On Columbia* and *Sail Away*, it was just us looking up there and singing a song.” Similarly, when discussing the reasons that the song *Canoe Song* was not higher on her list of songs that were interesting, Audrey noted, “I think it’s that you’re just singing something, you’re not really doing anything.” Observations bear this out. For example, when the class discussed a recent concert performance, they sat cross-legged on the floor in rows. The only opportunity for the children to move was to crane their necks in order to see who was making the comment. Very little neck-craning occurred, however, as the young students can be seen slumping lower and lower as the conversation ensued. Without movement, attention was more difficult.

Audrey followed up her comment that *Canoe Song* did not have enough movement, by going on to say, “I mean, the song is good, but if you added a game or a movement or something it would be more fun.” When the children were asked to provide suggestions to make activities of the music class more interesting, they often mentioned adding kinesthetic activity. This interest in movement-based participation was perhaps most notable during an activity in which children worked in small groups to create activities that they thought would be interesting ways to practice music literacy skills. All five of the groups came up with ideas that involved movement. For example, as they were working in groups, Brandon called me over, saying, “We have the best two ideas ever!” Daniel M. proceeded to tell me their idea:

You make a human staff, where people lay on the ground in five lines, and then we roll Nathan [one of the physically smallest children in the class] up

into a ball and put him in the space, and then on a person, and then on a space, and then a person.

Brandon excitedly interrupted, saying, “And then like you hit him and he’s like *do!*” The children that were lying on the ground represented the lines of the staff, and Nathan represented the notehead. Similarly, Luke’s group made up dance moves for each different solfege note. The activities of other groups were not as large-scale, but they still incorporated some sort of movement. Sophie’s group, for example, invented a game in which players had to touch a different part of their face for each rhythm when reading a four-beat rhythm card. When the young students saw a quarter note, they would touch their nose, and when they saw two paired eighth notes, they would pull on their ears. For a quarter rest, they would lean their head onto their joined hands, as if going to sleep. The video of this class period shows the students huddled up with their groups, talking and moving excitedly as they created these active experiences. In my reflective notes after the class, I commented on Luke, a boy who generally acts lethargically in class (and throughout the school day, based on conversations with his teacher), writing, “I have NEVER seen Luke smile so much.”

In interviews, children made a number of suggestions as to how to improve their interest level in sedentary song material, and many of their suggestions incorporated movement. In addition to Audrey’s reference to *Canoe Song*, above, Brandon thought that *Sizohamba Naye*, a song that the whole song had learned to sing at all-school church masses throughout the year, would be more interesting if “we could add some movements, too.” (See Figure 5-7.)

Sizohamba Naye

Si - zo- ham - ba na - ye, wo wo wo, Si - zo - ham - ba - na - ye. Ngom-hla wen - ja - - bu - la___

4
si - zo- ham - ba na - ye. Ngom-hla wen - ja - - bu - la___ si - zo- ham - ba na - ye.

Figure 5-7. Sizohamba Naye

Leah, a particularly bright and well-spoken girl, wrote a lengthy response when asked to express her interest level in the new song, *Goin' Down to Cairo* (See Figure 5-6, on p. 143):

I didn't think that that song was that interesting because we didn't get to do anything like a game. I think it would be more fun if we could do something active while singing. If you could add something like that, that would be great. Maybe you could do something like have most of the class line up at one end of the class and have the rest go in the middle of the class. Then, the men (the majority of the class) would have to get to Kalo [sic] (the other end of the class) without being caught by the women (the smaller part of the class.) Everyone would have to sing. If one of the "men" gets caught by one of the "women," then they would become one. That would make that song pretty interesting!

Leah's idea incorporates other themes, such as creativity (see Chapter 6) and games and puzzles (Chapter 4), but the physical activity is a large part of what would have been interesting to her.

Many children stated that activities addressing music literacy objectives were among the least interesting to them. However, the most interesting music literacy activities were those that incorporated fine motor movements. (No games that they played used gross motor movements.) For example, the children played “Melody Bingo,” a traditional Bingo game using common melodic patterns for each square. Attention was very high throughout the activity, in part because, as Audrey said, “you get to put it different places.” In addition, when the students used the staff mats, in which they individually placed felt noteheads on felt squares containing the five lines and four spaces of the staff, children were very focused on the activity; the video shows all students participating, occasionally discussing their findings with their peers. A common activity that was employed to practice melodic skills was to sing a known song with solfege. On some days, the children were asked to use their “finger staff,” in which their five fingers represented the five lines of the staff. Daniel M. and I had the following exchange after he watched a video of the class singing *Hot Cross Buns* using the staff letter names, while also pointing to their finger staff:

Daniel: That stuff is better than actually doing the *so-mi-do-la*

CR: What makes it better?

Daniel: Because you actually get to like do something

CR: You mean like touch your fingers?

Daniel: Yeah. You know, because we’re kids, we like to be active, instead of just sitting there, saying *so-la-do*, and you notice how all of us, most of the time, are moving around, not sitting still.

In an earlier interview, Daniel had stated that solfege was not his favorite activity because he did not see himself as successful at it (Chapter 5), but incorporating this small physical movement made it a more interesting activity.

Movements to Help Children Learn

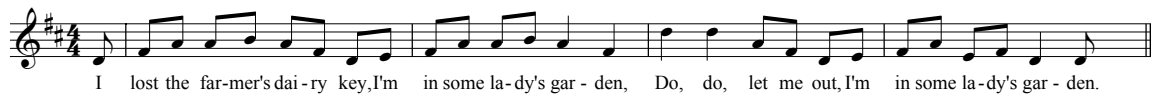
In addition, children thought that an added benefit of activities involving movement was that they increased their ability to learn. Regarding the felt staff mats, Max said, “we...learn it better by actually seeing it, actually putting it there.” Later, Max mentioned that he found “being physical” interesting, emphatically stating, “I like doing that, ‘cause you don’t only get to play around with your friends, but you are also learning and singing songs and stuff.” As Leah noted in the opening vignette, “Sometimes the games [help me] understand the songs a little more, even if it’s just like a little jump.” Research in science education has found that hands-on work with physical objects to be one of the factors that positively impact student achievement (Schroeder, Scott, Tolson, Huang, & Lee, 2007). Swarat et al. (2012) pointed out that active physical engagement in learning are focal themes in educational theories such as constructivism and constructionism, even going as far back as Dewey’s (1902) theory of Learning by Doing. The children of 4B were perhaps wise, reflecting these storied educational theories.

More Movement, More Interest

The observations repeatedly show situations in which a shift from a less active learning experience to a more active one heightened the engagement, and presumably the interest level. For example, when reviewing their performance for the end-of-year concert, attention was low (as indicated by some children playing

with their shoelaces or fingernails, or staring off into space, seemingly at nothing), but when we shifted into the moving game *I Lost the Farmer's Dairy Key*, the children threw themselves into the game with vigor, singing strongly and excitedly playing the rock-scissors-paper game with their partner. (See Figure 5-8.)

I Lost the Farmer's Dairy Key



Game: Rock/Paper/Scissors game. Formation: two concentric circles, where the inside circle is "stuck in the garden." After singing the song, the students speak: "Rock, rock, scissors; rock, rock, paper; rock, rock, rock, rock, rock, rock, choose!" On "choose," the students show rock, paper, or scissors. Rock beats scissors, scissors beats paper, paper beats rock. If the person on the inside wins, then he/she gets out of the garden, by switching places with the loser. If the inside player loses or there is a tie, no one changes. For added excitement, the teacher can yell out "Switch!" in the middle of a round, at which point the outside circle moves one player to the right, thereby facing a new player.

Figure 5-8. I Lost the Farmer's Dairy Key

The turn towards re-attending to the class activity following their daydreaming or otherwise off-task behavior is particularly prominent with children who were less consistent in their participation overall. Daniel J, for example, did not participate when reading rhythm cards, but snapped to attention as soon as an active hand-patsching game began, performing the movements accurately. Joe, also, can be seen sitting passively as the rest of the group of children sang through *When I First Came to This Land*, but when the class directly turns to drum-playing, he happily pounded away, attempting to play the rhythm of his name.

Observations of the students during the other activities of the study indicate an increased focus and attention when participating in a hands-on, physical fashion. For example, during the interviews, the children were invariably highly engaged when they had cards to sort. The video of the vignette at the opening of the chapter shows Leah and Bryan actively participating with the cards, picking them up, bending the corners of the cards, moving them from place to place as they considered their interest level. Xui Li mentioned this activity being positive, noting “I like sorting the cards because you can show what you like and dislike without saying words.” While other students did not articulate this feeling in the same way, all members grabbed the cards as soon as they were introduced, excited to get to work.

Visual Modality

During class periods, various forms of visual stimuli were presented to the children of Mr. Linton’s class, and when it did, their attention was often focused and their interest heightened. For example, when the children learned the song *Goin’ Down to Cairo* (see Figure 5-6, on p. 143), I projected pictures of the town of Cairo, Illinois, onto the interactive whiteboard in front of the class. The children’s focus was on the visual imagery, which detailed the devastation that occurred during the 2010 floods in Cairo, Illinois (a small town on the Mississippi river), as well as other contemporary pictures of this mostly rundown town. Previously, we had discussed a period in Cairo’s history in the 1850s, when it had been an important trading and social hub. Xui Li thought the pictures were interesting, noting, “I liked them, to see what it looked like, because then they were so like really popular, and I’m pretty

sure a lot of people lived there, and so it's interesting to see how it gets like that." Having photographic images was more interesting than simply hearing about the history.

Other points in which visual imagery enhanced the interest of the children included puppets that were used to teach the song *Telephone Song* (see Figure 5-9), a song in call-and-response form in which I sang the call and manipulated the puppet's mouth so that it looked like it was singing the response. Luke also remarked that he thought singing songs while looking at picture books was interesting. When the students sang the cumulative song *Hi Ho, the Rattlin' Bog* (see Figure 5-10), I sat in the front of the classroom, with a felt-covered piece of cardboard on my lap. Each time that a new part was added to the tree, I placed a corresponding felt cut-out onto the felt board. All eyes were focused on the board both on the first time that the song was sung in class as well as the fifth.

Telephone Song

Call: Response: Call: Response: C:

Hey, John-ny! I think I hear my name, Hey John-ny! I think I hear it a-gain, You're wan-ted on the

6 R: C:

te - le phone, If it i - sn't Ma-ry, then I'm not home, With a rick-tick-tick-e - ty tick__ Oh yeah.

Figure 5-9. Telephone Song

Hi, Ho, the Rat-lin' Bog

Hi, ho, the rat-lin' bog, the bog down in the val-ley - o; Hi, ho, the rat-lin' bog, the bog down in the val-ley - o. Now

5
1.in that bog,there was a tree, a rare tree and a rat-lin' tree, 1.Tree in the bog and the bog down in the val-ley - o.
2.on that tree,there was a limb, a rare limb and a rat-lin' limb, 2.Limb on the tree and the

Cumulative song: On each verse, repeat measure seven as many times as necessary, to include all the elements that have been introduced in previous verses. For example, verse four would be sung: "...and on that branch there was a nest, a rare nest and a rattlin' nest; nest on the branch and the branch on the limb and the limb on the tree and the tree in the bog, and the bog down in the valley-o."

3. ...and on that limb, there was a branch...
4. ...and on that branch, there was a nest...
5. ...and in that nest, there was an egg...
6. ...and in that egg, there was a bird...
7. ...and on that bird, there was a tail....



Figure 5-10. Hi, Ho, the Rattlin' Bog, With Felt Board Visual

Situational interest on part of the fourth graders in Mr. Linton's class was also enhanced through visual representations of their success. This was particularly evident in the use of "recorder belts," a motivational system from *Recorder Karate* (Philipak, 2002), a recorder method book. This system uses an approach similar to karate, in which different colored belts represent levels of achievement, with a white colored belt representing the easiest level and black the most difficult. In *Recorder Karate*, the belts consisted of small pieces of color-coded string that were tied to the bottom of the recorder once a child successfully performed a particularly piece. Student interest in the recorder was the more pronounced than in previous years, in part because of this karate program, with many children regularly remaining in the classroom during recess in order to practice and try for a more advanced belt. Xui Li liked the belts "because then you actually make it look more pretty," and Audrey thought it looked "sort of cool." Other students thought that the visual representation of success was an important motivational tool. Max also found recorders interesting, because "I want to get farther in my belts," while Leah maintained that the belts "encourage me to learn the song, without the belts I probably wouldn't practice as much." Success (the theme from Chapter 6) was important, but the visual representation of that success was even more important.

This is not to imply that all students achieved the same high levels of success. Some students struggled with the instrument, despite tutoring by me. For those students, the initial excitement about the belts appeared to turn to dread as they were not able to perform at the level of their classmates. The lack of belts tied to their own recorders served as a reminder of their lack of skill. For most students,

however, the visual representation of success heightened their interest in the activity. Audrey liked the belts enough to suggest that we use them for learning xylophone pieces, so that students could earn a belt for each xylophone part that they could play perfectly. She recognized that it was unrealistic to tie pieces of string to a xylophone, but “maybe you could use stickers!”

Some children used visual imagery to express themselves as well, in an indication of interest. In her free-writing experiences on the iPad, for example, Sarah chose to use a variety of colors in her text, as well as musical notes. Leah asked if she could add images from the internet to her free-writing comments. Relatedly, some children professed an interest in the visual aspect of wearing costumes for our final performance. Nathan, Luke, and Leah all noted that the pirate costumes that they wore for the all-school costume in May were motivating to them.

Summary

With regard to musical experiences, Campbell (2010) noted, “children show how it is that the human body ranks with the voice as a personal source of their musical expression” (p. 240). When children hear music, they rarely sit still, constantly bopping their hands or tapping their toes as the music physically manifests itself in their beings. In addition, movement is a core part of major theories of music education, such as Kodaly and Orff (Marsh, 2008), seen as a way to allow children to gain skills and knowledge bases by tapping into this natural propensity to move while making music. The current project suggests that movement also enhances their situational interest. For the fourth-grade children in Mr. Linton’s class, experiences in which they were able to be active were among the

most interesting activities to them. Of particular interest were the activities containing gross motor movements, such as the active singing games in which they moved extensively throughout the room. Learning experiences with smaller movements, such as playing instruments, were also considered more interesting than sedentary activities, such as sitting still while singing a song. When identifying ways to improve the interestingness of activities or less desirable objectives, the fourth graders suggested that adding various forms of movement would improve the learning experience. Visual stimuli were also found to be interesting to the young students, focusing their attention and raising their affective response. Over a century ago, Dewey (1910) observed the proclivity of children “to be reaching, poking, pounding, prying...without them intellectual activity would be feeble and intermittent through lack of stuff for its operations” (p. 31). If they could meet Mr. Dewey today, the fourth graders in Mr. Linton’s class would likely thank him for his perspective – probably through active expressions of praise, through a standing ovation in which the children would jump around, high-fiving each other, patting him warmly on the back.

Chapter 6: Creativity

CR: So, did you think that making new verses was interesting?

Parker: Yes,...because everyone is creative, and they have their own ideas that they can share.

Introduction

In the exploration of sources of situational interest for students in Mr. Linton's fourth grade music class, creativity is an evident construct, a fundamental experience present within music class periods that effectively gained and maintained children's interest. Csikszentmihalyi (1975) maintained that creativity is "an important component of absolutely all aspects of cultural life, enabling artistic, scientific, and technical creation alike" (p. 10). Creativity in a musical context has been defined in a variety of ways (for literature reviews, see Richardson, 1983, and Running, 2008). For the purposes of this chapter, creativity will include classroom activities in which the students took known musical material and modified it in either musical or textual ways, as well as experiences in which they individually or collectively selected movements to accompany a musical piece or brainstormed possible meanings of song texts.

This chapter will address children's heightened interest in activities that involved creativity. Most creative activities occurred in learning contexts that included social interaction, so the enhanced interest that emerged during group work will also be considered. First, I will explore the situational interest that resulted from children's textual creativity, as they played with song rhymes and verses. This occurred during enterprises in which the children created new verses

to known songs, activities in which they sang songs or played singing games that naturally incorporated textual improvisation, and experiences in which children parodied known songs on their own, outside the realm of teacher-directed lessons. Next, the chapter will look to the interest of children in sonic exploration on the instruments they learned, and then to the movements that they created to accompany activities. The penultimate section will discuss experiences in which the children's situational interest towards activities with less interesting objectives was heightened when they incorporated aspects of creativity. Finally, the chapter will address group work, the instructional format in which many creative activities took place.

Vignette

"Let's get to work!" I say, in the opening minute of one class late in the school year. I remind the children that in the previous period, they had begun working in groups to create new verses to the song When I First Came to This Land, a humorous pioneer song in which a farmer sings of the challenges of moving west to start a new life. (See Figure 6-1 for the original text.) Today, I tell them, they have five minutes to finalize the text for their favorite invented verse, practice it to make sure that the words are understandable, and then perform it for the class. Despite the fact that is the middle of the afternoon in May, the children move quickly, "circling up" with their group-mates. The sound of multiple conversations and song renditions layer on top of each other, as the children work to decide on their final product. I grab the camera from my desk and wend my way through the room to check in with the groups. Sam says, "Wait, wait! Listen to ours!" He and Jaden proceed to sing, "called my horse, way

off course; called my cat, very fat; and I called my rat, fat as the cat.” Brandon, a child who in interviews stated that singing was one of his least favorite activities in music class, interrupts Sam’s group at the end, singing, “I called my ox, small as a fox.” I laugh, and say, “Right! ‘Cause who’d want a small ox?” When I check in with the rest of Brandon’s group, asking if they are ready to sing the verse Brandon shared with me, they said, “No, no!” I reply, “Well, work it out,” and go to listen to Lucy, Leah, and Sophie, who are sitting in a circle, rocking to the beat as they sing their verses over and over again. Walking to the far corner of the room, I read through the three verses that Xui Li, Audrey, and Maya have written on the board, which include: “I called my ox, stinky as socks.” Smiling, I tell them to make sure that everyone can understand the words when they practice the singing, then move on down the whiteboard. Matthew and Max’s group have also written their verses on the board, and I sing one of their verses out loud. “I called my daughter, a big fat otter.” I laugh, despite my suspicion that the girls of the class might conceivably take offense on behalf of their gender. Matthew picks up a black-colored whiteboard pen and adds two exclamation points to the end of the phrase, to provide emphasis to the invented text. When I move back to Brandon’s group (which includes Isaiah, Joe, and Nathan), Brandon complains, “they’re just doing poop and stuff.” I tell them, “When I picked the groups for this one, I chose people that I thought you’d want to work with. If it isn’t going to work out with your group, we won’t do it that way next time.” After a brief brainstorming session with them, I leave them to make their final choices, and move through the room to other groups. As I say, “one more minute!,” I pan the room with the camera, and find Bryan’s group practicing a three-person high five (which they will perform at the end

of their last verse); Sam and Parker each writing the verses for their respective groups on the board; Matthew drawing a picture on the white board to represent one of his group's verses; and Maya making decorative red dots on the whiteboard to add color to the text. As the minute passes, the groups sit with each other, and then we rotate through the class, with each crew performing their composed verses. Other than Brandon's group, which never completely reconciled their conflicting ideas and performs one verse (and rather badly, at that), all the small ensembles proudly share between two and four verses. Daniel M. and Matthew, two students who are often unengaged in singing activities of the class, appear particularly proud to share their verses with their classmates, with bright shining eyes, oversized smiles, and full-throated singing.

When I First Came to this Land

When I first came to this land, I was not a wealthy man. So I got my-self a shack, and I did what I_ could. (And I)
 5
 called my shack "Break my back." But this land was sweet and good, and I did what I could.

When I First Came to This Land is a cumulative song. Measure five is repeated many times as needed, with the appropriate characters. It is the point of creative invention, when singers add rhyming couplets.

2. When I first came to this land, I was not a wealthy man.
 So I got myself a cow, and I did what I could
 And I called my cow, "No milk now," and I called my shack, "Break my back."
 But this land was sweet and good, and I did what I could.
3. When I first came to this land, I was not a wealthy man.
 So I got myself a duck, and I did what I could.
 And I called my duck, "Out of luck," and I called my cow, "No milk now," and I called my shack,
 "Break my back."
 But this land was sweet and good, and I did what I could.
4. When I first came to this land...
 And I called my wife, "Run for your life!,"
5. When I first came to this land...
 And I called my son, "My work's done," ...

Figure 6-1. When I First Came to This Land (Original Text)

Creativity

The children's propensity towards creativity emerged both in activities structured by me as well as in informal interactions with each other. Interest of the young charges was heightened if they had the opportunity to engage their imaginative faculties in the music class through a variety of ways, such as creating verses for known songs or participating in songs that included text-based improvisation. Also, they altered song texts through spontaneous enhancements, typically without teacher direction. Exploring the sound possibilities on instruments, designing new activities to practice music literacy skills, and creating new movements for existing songs and games also enhanced their interest in the activity.

Creating Verses for Known Songs

Two different times during the period under study, the class created new words to accompany a known song. In addition to *When I First Came to This Land*, from the vignette above, the children created verses for *Chairs to Mend*, a street cry in which the performer sings about the services he or she will provide or objects to sell or buy. (See Figure 6-2.) In this version of the verse-creation activity, the children composed verses in small groups, then sang the song in canon for the class. The two activities in which the students composed texts for the two songs were interesting to students, in great part due to the opportunity to be creative. When interviewed about the activity, Sam stated, "I like making it up....to get to be creative." Bryan enthusiastically explained that it was interesting because "yeah,

you get to be creative, like cats are very fat, and I called my vacuum, macuum, or something.” On an afternoon in late spring, Luke and Nathan worked together to rank common activities of the music class, placing them in categories they called “Not interesting, medium and very interesting.” The only singing activity that they ranked high was “creating new verses for songs;” the others fell into the categories of medium or low interest. In addition, seven of the eight children who ranked songs in order of interest level as part of their interviews placed *When I First Came to This Land* towards the top of the list.

Chairs to Mend

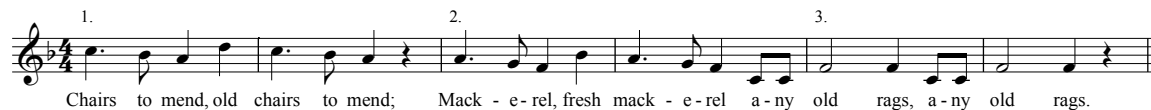


Figure 6-2. Chairs to Mend

The observations found them very engaged with the two activities, for the most part conscientiously working with each other, brainstorming ideas for how to make clever (and often humorous) verses. When we first worked on *Chairs to Mend* as a whole class, there was a marked uptick in calling out by the children, as they had many ideas to share, such as “ice cream, frozen ice cream” and “root beer, cold root beer.” During the following class period, when they worked in groups, the children participated enthusiastically, filling the classroom with the noise of excited children talking over each other in an attempt for their ideas to be heard. I gave them five minutes for the activity, asking them to agree on one or two verses to

share. Two groups wrote the words that they created on the whiteboard, to ensure that they performed correctly, and one group created pictures to accompany their verses. Clearly, they were proud of their creative work..

Creating new verses to songs appeared to be particularly interesting for two students who often had problems attending to lessons or participating in the activities of the music classroom. Joe, a child who often acted lackadaisically in music class, with limp posture and unfocused attention, brightened considerably when we brainstormed ideas as a class. When first working on *When I First Came to This Land* in a whole-class context, he proposed ideas (“called my life, just like my wife”), and persisted in brainstorming even after we had moved on to other experiences. To be sure, humor (Chapter 3) was an aspect of the activity that interested him (“I bought my son, a big fat bum” was Joe’s handiwork that he thought was particularly funny), but creating his own humor positively impacted his interest. When I discussed the activity in an interview, Joe made up a verse on the spot (“called my cat, a little bit too fat”). At the end of the study, I member checked the initial themes suggested by open coding, by asking the children if they thought that the themes helped contribute to their interest. Then I asked the students to identify their top two themes. For Joe, the card that read “creativity” was the first one he grabbed.

Matthew, a red-haired, freckled boy, often had trouble participating in school-appropriate ways, and from the time he was in kindergarten, he spent more time in the principal’s office for misbehavior than any other child in the fourth grade. (Unfortunately, he was the one student who elected to not participate in

interviews beyond the first one.) He too demonstrated enthusiastic attention during the activity, brainstorming ideas when we worked as a class, continuing to discuss ideas with Joe even after we had moved on to the next activity of the period. The following class, when we began singing the song, Matthew said, "Can we make more new ones? 'Big fat luger?'" Again, he was interested in creating humorous texts, parodying the traditional material. Since he was not interviewed, I could not confirm that this was his opinion of the reason for his interest level, but the creative aspect appeared to elicit his interest.

Literature on Creativity in Children's Informal Musical Cultures

Creativity can often be found in children's informal musical cultures, in the songs that they sing and singing games that they play when adults are at some distance from their creative enterprise (Marsh, 1995). For example, song parodies, in which children alter the texts to known songs, have been regularly found in settings where children are at play, both in-school and out of school (Campbell, 2010; Campbell & Lum, 2007; Marsh, 1995; Marsh & Young, 2006). Children re-make songs in their own way, by changing texts to known musical material while keeping tunes intact. The experiences of the verse-creating activities of the music classes in the study fall in line with these natural inclinations towards textually innovative music-making. In the context of the classroom, it follows that the children's interest level would be positively impacted by teacher-directed learning experiences that incorporate elements of musical play that children choose to perform on their own. In addition to parodies, children have been found to innovate the musical material in their informal musical cultures, by adding or altering

phrases, words, or additive closing sections; incorporating melodic patterns from other songs into existing ones; or altering movements that accompany singing games (Marsh, 1995, 2008). In the context of the music classroom experience of the current study (and in the interviews), children made smaller textual adjustments to lyrics, slightly modifying them in ways that appeared to enhance their interest.

Songs With Built-In Textual Improvisation

Some songs included as part of the curriculum had built-in places for textual improvisation. *We Like Spinach*, for example, is a singing game in which individual children sing about their favorite foods. (See Figure 6-3.)



Game: Standing circle. One student sings the first two measures, substituting a favorite food in place of the word “spinach.” The rest of the class sings mm. 3-4, then the whole class repeats mm. 1-4. Everyone jumps 360 degrees on “one turn around now.”

Figure 6-3. We Like Spinach

Charity, Xui Li, and Parker all stated that they found the song interesting due to the opportunity to create ideas. Parker said, “That song’s pretty good, to tell the class what you really like. Every time I get called, it’s just fried chicken all the time!” Maya also said, “I like how...people get to make up stuff they like, like mac and cheese, or candy.” *Kitty Alone*, similarly, is a song that incorporates textual improvisation, but in this case the children listened while I created rhymes for the children’s names. (See Figure 6-4.) Leah thought it was really interesting, in part

because “I bet the whole time, people were thinking, what can he use to rhyme with Leah or Charity.” Even though they were listening to the textual improvisation occur rather than participating themselves, Leah thought that she and her classmates were still mentally involved and interested in the activity.

Kitty Alone

Saw a crow a - fly - in' low, kitt-y a-lone, kit-ty a-lone, Saw a crow a - fly - in' low, kit-ty a-lone a - lye.

Saw a crow a - fly - in' low, and a cat a spin-nin' tow, Kit-ty a-lone a - lye, Rock-um-a-rye - ree_____

Note: The song can be used with textual improvisation. For successive verses, the text would substitute in the name of a child: “The first to come in was Ms. Grace, Kitty alone, kitty alone (repeat); The first to come in was Ms. Grace, When she grows up, she’ll go to space, Kitty alone alye, rock-um-a-rye-ree.”

Figure 6-4. Kitty Alone

Charity also mentioned a game that the children had played in second grade, *We are Dancing in the Forest* (see Figure 6-5), in which one child plays the role of a wolf, making up activities that the wolf can act out (e.g. going shopping, washing his hair, organizing his sock drawer). After several rounds of creating movements, the wolf says, “I’m coming to get you!”, chasing all the children. For Charity, it was a favorite activity “‘cause you get to make things up.”

We are Dancing in the Forest

Figure 6-5 shows a musical score for the song "We are Dancing in the Forest" in 2/4 time. The melody is written on a single staff in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are: "Weare dan-cing in the fo rest while the wolf is far a way, Who knows what will hap-pen to us if he finds us at our play?"

Figure 6-5. We are Dancing in the Forest

Child-Initiated Text Alterations

At times, the children improvised texts to known songs when it was not a part of the educational objective; they enhanced their own interest by “playing” with the song texts. On one Thursday afternoon in May, Parker ran up to me as the class started, saying “I changed the words for *Kye Kye Kule!*” (See Figure 6-6).

Kye Kye Kule

Figure 6-6 shows a musical score for the song "Kye Kye Kule" in 4/4 time. The melody is written on a single staff in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (D# and F#). The lyrics are: "Kye Kye ku - le! Kye Kye ku - le! Kye kye ko - fi - nsa! Kye kye ko - fi - nsa! Ko - fi - nsa lan - ga! Ko - fi - nsa lan - ga! Ka - ka shi lan - ga! Ka - ka shi lan - ga! Kum a - den - de! Kum a - den - de! Kum a - den - de Hey!"

Figure 6-6. Kye Kye Kule

This song from Ghana includes the vocables “Kofi sa langa,” but Parker taught it to his parents at home with the words “Kofi lasagna.” This, he thought, was exceptionally funny. In an interview, when asked what they thought about the singing game *Pizza, Pizza, Daddy-O*, Joe sang, under his breath, a slightly different version of the traditional text, “Pizza, Pizza, Brownie-O,” then laughed. Also, Charity

mentioned liking a song that the children had learned in first grade, *Apple Tree* (see Figure 6-7 for the traditional version).

Apple Tree



Figure 6-7. Apple Tree, Traditional Version

However, she preferred a variant created by her younger sister, in which sound effects were added (see Figure 6-8):



Figure 6-8. Apple Tree, Modified Version

The “special effects” of the vocal play that her sister invented enhanced Charity’s interest in the song.

The class was particularly engaged with the song *Hi Ho, the Rattlin’ Bog*, a cumulative song. (See Figure 6-9). In an interview, Bryan, Leah, and I had the following exchange in which they designed texts to extend the song:

CR: What about *Hi Ho, the Rattlin’ Bog*?

Bryan: Oh, I liked that

Leah: Me too

Leah: Maybe you should add leaf – and on that tail there was a leaf

CR: I think there was something else, too, that people did – (sings) on that tail
there was a...

Bryan: Flea!

CR: Flea! That's right!

Bryan: I came up with that.

CR: Did you come up with that, I think other kids might have done it too.

Bryan: (sings): and on that tail there was a flea...

Bryan: (after a pause, continues singing) 'and on that flea there was an
amoeba' -- I think someone sang that.

Leah: (sings) and on that flea there was a speck of dust...

Bryan: (sings) and on that speck of dust there was a piece of air....and in that
piece of air there was a germ...

Leah: And on that germ there was some chemicals...

(Both children break into laughter.)

Creatively thinking of new texts was a means by which these two children boosted
their interest in the activity.

Hi, Ho, the Rat-lin' Bog

The musical score is written on two staves in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes. The lyrics are: "Hi, ho, the rat-lin' bog, the bog down in the val-ley - o; Hi, ho, the rat-lin' bog, the bog down in the val-ley - o. Now 5 in that bog, there was a tree, a rare tree and a rat-lin' tree, 1. Tree in the bog and the bog down in the val-ley - o. 2. on that tree, there was a limb, a rare limb and a rat-lin' limb, 2. Limb on the tree and the". The score includes a key signature change to 2/4 time for the second line and a final 4/4 time signature.

Cumulative song: On each verse, repeat measure seven as many times as necessary, to include all the elements that have been introduced in previous verses. For example, verse four would be sung: "...and on that branch there was a nest, a rare nest and a rattlin' nest; nest on the branch and the branch on the limb and the limb on the tree and the tree in the bog, and the bog down in the valley-o."

3. ...and on that limb, there was a branch...
4. ...and on that branch, there was a nest...
5. ...and in that nest, there was an egg...
6. ...and in that egg, there was a bird...
7. ...and on that bird, there was a tail...

Figure 6-9. Hi, Ho, the Rattlin' Bog

Instrumental Exploration

When playing instruments, the fourth graders often heightened their own interest by experimenting with different sounds. For example, during the beginning of the recorder unit, red-headed Matthew ran excitedly up to me at the beginning of a class period, recorder in hand, saying, "Mr. Roberts! Look what I figured out how to do!" He then proceeded to play a high-pitched trilling sound, smiling proudly as he finished. Leah, too, told me in an interview "I learned these sort of simple things on the recorder, like I've learned to make this sort of Native American sound."

During a beginning drumming unit, the children were given time to explore the instruments with a partner. Brandon was excited to tell me that he and his partner had "figured out one thing to do with our partner!", while Leah referred to a known song, saying excitedly "Guess what? We figured out how to play [the rhythm of]

Alabama Gal!” The opportunity to experiment with the sounds of the instruments enhanced their interest in the activities.

Creativity in Music Literacy Activities

Other in-class activities where children were provided an opportunity to create their own ideas were met with enthusiasm. For example, the learning objective that the children most often mentioned as the least favorite was working on music literacy skills. On a Wednesday morning in mid-April, the students were given 10 minutes to invent an activity to practice literacy, at which point they shared their idea with the class. During the class period, the children busily engaged with their groups, putting their heads together to generate ideas. Engagement was high, with Daniel M. calling to me, “We have the two best ideas ever!,” and Sam beckoning me over, saying, “Mr. Roberts, we have a *really* good one.” A number of themes that occur in the study were reflected in this experience. Most of the activities that they created involved movement (Chapter 5) and games (Chapter 4). But in the free-writing experience that followed the activity, the most commonly referenced reason for finding the activity interesting was the creativity involved. Audrey wrote, “I liked thinking of ideas to make things more fun,” and another child wrote, “The last activity that we just did in music class was interesting to me because the class actually had the chance to bring together their ideas to think of a new game.” Brandon noted, “That was cool to me because we got to try to make our own ideas. I thought it was fun.”

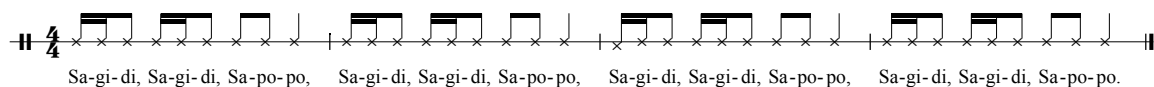
Similarly, when the children were learning the note names on the staff with a treble clef, they participated in a brief activity where they formulated their own

mnemonic device to remember that the letter names assigned to each line of the staff are E, G, B, D, F. In this lesson segment, students were actively engaged, brainstorming ideas to share. For example, Bryan produced the phrase “Enormous Grizzly Bears Destroy Fiats,” which caused the other students in the class to laugh, and then try to modify (“Enormous Grizzly Bears Destroy Fish!” “Enormous Grizzly Bears Devour Fish!”). Matthew, the red-haired student who often misbehaved, took the activity one step further, saying “I know how to do the lines backwards.” If you create a phrase starting at the top line of the staff (“F”) and moving downwards, “it could be ‘Finish Dad’s Barbecue Grilled Eggo.’” Their interest was heightened by the creativity involved in the activity.

Creating Movements

Creating original movements elicited interest as well. In the Filipino game *Sagidi Sapopo*, one child stood in the front of the class, choosing different places to pat the beat on his or her body while the whole group chanted a short rhyme (see Figure 6-10).

Sagidi, Sapopo



Translation: vocables.

Game: This is an improvisatory game. There is no limit to the number of players. A leader is chosen to create movements for each measure and the rest of the players imitate the movement a measure later. The movements are executed in a canonic fashion. For the older children, the leader can combine different movements in the same measure. You can also have three or more groups, each one imitating the group before it.

Figure 6-10. *Sagidi Sapopo*

Most children volunteered to be one of the leaders in the activity, which allowed them to determine the movements the class would imitate. For movement activities in which the gestures were typically teacher-scripted, interest was enhanced when they became student-generated. For example, when asking Anna and Grace about *Navajo Happy Song*, a game with a complicated beat-keeping pattern, Anna said, “Yeah, it’s pretty fun, but maybe the kids could make up their own movements.” After that suggestion, I changed the activity of the song *Kye Kye Kule* in the following class. Instead of using preset movements that a leader performed in this call-response song, the student leader was able to design movements that the class copied. In the free-writing experience that followed the activity, comments from the students included “The game was fun because we got to make our own movements;” “I liked the game because we get to move around and be creative;” and “I thought it is super interesting...because you can add your own vibe to it.” The novelty and unexpectedness of the movements contributed to the fourth graders’ enhanced interest (see Chapter 3), but the creativity involved appeared to be the main motivating factor.

Mental Creativity

Activities in which the children were asked to think creatively to interpret a story heightened their interest as well. The pioneer play-party *Goin’ Down to Cairo* was first taught as a song, without the movement. (See Figure 6-11 for text.) I informed the students about this history of Cairo, Illinois, a town at the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio rivers (Trinka, 1996). During the winter of 1858 an early

frost descended upon the southern Illinois, killing many of the crops in the farmlands north of Cairo.

1. Goin' down to Cairo, goodbye and a bye-bye
Goin' down to Cairo, goodbye, Liza Jane.
Black them boots and-a make them shine, goodbye and-a bye-bye
Black them boots and-a make them shine, goodbye, Liza Jane.
2. Where you goin', Liza? Run along, run along.
Where you goin', Liza? Run along, Liza Jane.
I'll be yours if you'll be mine, goodbye an' a bye-bye.
I'll be yours if you'll be mine, goodbye, Liza Jane.
3. Oh, how I love her, now ain't that a shame.
Oh, how I love her, goodbye Liza Jane.
I ain't got time to kiss you now, but I'll hug you and I'll hug you.
I ain't got time to kiss you now, goodbye, Liza Jane.

Figure 6-11. Verses: Goin' Down to Cairo

The area south of Cairo was spared the destruction, and when the farmers north of the city began to run out of food, they went to Cairo to procure provisions. The distances were great enough (and travel by horse-and-buggy slow enough) that the men who would travel to Cairo would often stay overnight. The women noticed that the men were getting dressed up, and began to travel with the men. For a period after this time, Cairo became a bit of a “party town.” The students brainstormed ideas about the meaning of “black them boots,” and tried to determine who the Liza Jane in the story might be. Although some students stated that they found the sedentary activity uninteresting (“very boring because we don’t do anything”), other students positively referred to the brainstorming activity. One child noted, “I thought it was not too fun, but kind of fun because we did get to use our thoughts.” In addition, the video shows the children with eyes focused on me during the storytelling aspect, and many hands raised during the brainstorming session,

indicating a high degree of mental engagement. The fact that the activity was sedentary negatively impacted the interest level (see Chapter 5), but the mental creativity that was required mitigated the negative perspective.

Creativity to Enhance Interest in Less Interesting Objectives

In general, opportunities to act or think creatively enhanced interest in otherwise less interesting activities. In addition to the learning segment in which the students worked in groups to create ways to practice music literacy skills, Anna mentioned the verse-creating activity of *Chairs to Mend*, saying, “I just...don’t really like the song...well, I like it a little bit when we make up our own ones, but I still don’t really like it.” Even though the song itself was not interesting to her, she enjoyed creating verses. Similarly, when sorting the cards of songs, Leah mentioned *When I First Came to This Land*, the other song for which the children created verses, asking, “Does it include everything we do with it? Because I really like making up the verses, but I don’t really like the song.”

Some children also expressed an interest in composing their own music, a learning objective that had not been addressed in third or fourth grade. When asked in the very first interview how to make music class more interesting, Anna mentioned composing “because some kids might want to grow up and be great singers or something, and they think that they are going to be able to learn how to do that in music, but they really don’t. Maybe we could learn how to do that.” In my last set of interviews, I asked the children if there was anything else that I should tell teachers, and Joe said, “I think that next year, for maybe three or four weeks, we should try to make a song.”

Literature on Creativity

In music education, research on creativity has mostly considered issues of definitions of the concept, explorations on how to assess creativity, and the effects of instruction on creativity skill levels (Running, 2008). In addition, curricular suggestions regarding creativity in the elementary music classroom have been published in books, magazines and online journals (Higgins & Campbell, 2010; Cooper, 2012). Research on preference has found that children enjoy common activities that include aspects of creativity, such as improvisation (Murphy & Brown, 1986). Bowles (1998) provided the most direct finding in interest of creative activities. Using the terms preference and liking (similar to the words the current children often chose to employ), she provided the students with a list of common classroom activities to rate. Included in the list were “composing” and “creating movements.” Out of the 21 activities, creating movements ranked eleventh and composing ranked twelfth across all grade levels, lower than activities like “having performers come to class” and “playing games” but higher than “follow score/map while listening” and “performing alone in programs.” The current study suggests that these activities are perhaps more interesting to students than Bowles (1998) found.

In a study that relates to the current project, Kiehn (2003) assessed the creativity of children in grades two, four, and six. He found an increase in improvisational creativity from second to fourth grade, with a leveling off of creativity development by grade six. He posited that sixth graders may see creative endeavors highlighting and celebrating differences at a time when they may feel the

need to conform socially. Similarly, Brophy (1998) explored improvisations of children aged six through twelve, and found that children experienced a creative growth from ages six through nine, followed by a plateauing of creativity from ages nine through twelve. The fourth graders (mostly nine and ten) in the current study may be at a particularly beneficial point in their psychosocial and intellectual growth for creative outlets to be seen as interesting.

Literature on situational interest in learning experiences has not highlighted issues of creativity. However, aspects of the literature could point towards issues that are related. For example, offering students choices in their work has been found to be situationally interesting (Deci, 1992; Flowerday et al., 2004; McPhail et al., 2000; Palmer, 2009; Schraw et al., 2001), and to stimulate their engagement in the activity (Reeve, Jang, Carrell, Jeon, & Barch, 2004). When students are provided options of their choosing, situational interest in an activity can be enhanced due to an increased sense of ownership over the activity (Schraw et al., 2001). Offering choices has been found to positively influence situational interest in reading, particularly among students with low individual interest (Schraw et al., 2001).

When the children of 4B created their own song texts, they were given more choice than they would normally be given in music class. This differs, perhaps, from other subjects such as writing, where children in fourth grade are often given autonomy to choose the topic about which they wish to write. Indeed, the act of writing necessarily involves a degree of choice, in terms of how to craft an opening sentence, what facts to choose to support your argument, and other decisions made as to how to put words together. In music, the teacher usually chooses the

repertoire the children perform (it certainly was true in the case of the current study). To the students, the activity to create texts felt liberating, and it was one of the reasons their situational interest was increased. On the free-write in which they were asked to discuss the interest level after creating an activity involving music literacy, one student used the word choice, stating, that “the last activity that we just did in music class was interesting to me because the class actually had the chance to bring together their ideas to think of a new game and the class can make their own choices in music.” To the young students, the fact that the opportunity to be creative allowed them the ability to provide input for the final products may have influenced their situational interest.

Interest research has also identified “active learning” to be a source of situational interest. Typically, “active” has referred to hands-on, physical movements (see Chapter 5), such as physically manipulating live animals in an aquarium (Dohn, 2011). However, the creative experiences in the current study incorporate active mental engagement, and some literature has found learning experiences that require particularly active mental work to be situationally interesting as well (Rotgans & Schmidt, 2011). On the free write experiences in which the students engaged after they created activities targeting music literacy, “I thought it was fun because our minds were active,” while another stated that the activity was interesting “because it got my brain thinking.” When writing about creating movements for *Kye Kye Kule*, another student typed, “I really do like it...it is mind activating and it is very fun.” The active mental state that is involved in these creative experiences contributed to the situational interest of the activity as well. It

appears that physically active engagement is more interesting than intellectually active engagement (Swarat et al, 2012), based on the extensive comments made by the children concerning movement, as well as observations of their heightened engagement during kinesthetic activities. But for the young students in the current study, the mental activity enhanced their situational interest as well.

Group work

Many (though not all) of the experiences that elicited creative reactions from the children involved group work, in which the fourth graders interacted with their peers in ways that enabled them to respond to each other's ideas. The group work format was an element of instruction that elicited their interest, based on the stated reflections of their experiences as well as observations of small group work. For the most part, interest in these activities was seen as positive, but occasionally, if the groups or pairings did not work effectively, the experience brought negative affect. Even when the experience was not seen as positive for the children, however, their interest was almost always enhanced by the experience.

For the most part, the experience of working in groups positively influenced the interest in learning situations. For example, Luke found group work interesting because "You get to be with your friends, and you can hear other people's ideas and stuff." Luke was a boy who rarely contributed in whole-group interactions, but in small groups, his face often lit up, and he could be seen contributing to the ideas of his group. Then, when working with Nathan to rank the interest level of common activities, Luke placed "working in groups" as one of the five favored activities in the music class. Nathan also noted that he found working in groups to be less tiring:

“It’s a break from singing and stuff, a rest break.” Although small group work had an academic outcome planned, to Nathan it felt less challenging. (It should be noted, however, that groups in which Nathan was a member often had an unimpressive final product, one that other children found frustrating. Nathan in particular was mentioned as a disruptive presence.) When Brandon and Jaden were asked in an interview how interesting they thought recorders were in general, Brandon said that it was “pretty interesting” in part because “me and Jaden usually did it together” (i.e. they worked together to learn the songs from musical notation). The two boys proceeded to “high-five” each other. Brandon’s comment and the pair’s physical response highlighted the social interaction as a positive influence on their interest. One of the reasons that Bryan listed “regular music classes” as one of the most interesting activities at school overall was that “I like working with my classmates.” For others, working with others allowed them to get perspectives that they might not have considered otherwise. Leah found sorting the cards in an interview with Bryan to be interesting because she was able to “see what Bryan’s point of view was.”

The videos find the children actively engaged when working with their classmates. For example, in the verse-creating activities of *Chairs to Mend* and *When I First Came to This Land*, most students actively worked with the children in their group, brainstorming ideas to share with the class. One day in late March, the students were working in pairs to practice placing solfege patterns on the staff. Each group was given one green felt mat on which was drawn a five-line staff, and ten multicolored felt noteheads (see Figure 6-12).

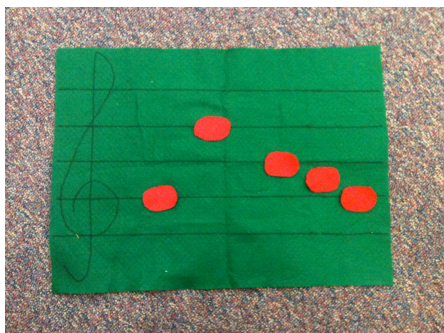


Figure 6-12. Felt Mat

When placed on the staff, the noteheads adhered to the felt. In the activity, I told the young students that *do* would be placed on line one for the day, then sang common solfege patterns. They worked together to place the rest of the noteheads in the correct staff placement. In the video, the fourth graders can be seen actively working with each other to determine how to accurately complete the task, discussing various solutions to the problems posed. Other themes from the study contributed to the interest level for these activities – for example, the staff placement was a hands-on activity – but the peer interaction also elicited their interest.

At times, the pleasure from working in groups was negated, if the group did not work together effectively. Leah, Parker, and I had the following exchange that highlights both the positive and negative aspects of group work.

Leah: I'll just do this one...I love working in groups. I like working individually and creating my own stuff, but working in groups is...challenging but fun.

CR: What's fun about it?

Leah: I really like hearing what other people have to say. Sometimes at recess, Asta and I, we try to think of inventions. And when she says something, it just gives me another idea. And I like hearing other people's point of view

CR: What about you?

Parker: It's kind of like Leah's, but a little different, Um, like I like working in groups but people would like complain like over different ideas.

Leah: Yeah, and sometimes...and I don't like being in a group with a person who only wants their idea.

Parker: Yeah.

CR: So sometimes that can happen?

Leah: Yeah, but that's one of the only cons.

CR: The rest are pros?

Leah: (nods)

CR: And would you say the same thing?

Parker: Yeah.

When the groups were not entirely functional, in that the children were unable to accomplish stated aims, the experience became very frustrating for some students. It may still have engaged their interest, but it produced a negative affective outcome. For example, when the students worked on verses for *Chairs to Mend*, most groups worked productively with each other, brainstorming verses, then selecting the best to share with the class. However, with Brandon and Nathan's group, the group

dynamic was not as successful. Sarah also found working in a group with Matthew and Joe to be frustrating, because she felt that they were not accomplishing what the assigned task. Although most students stated that working with their peers on recorder belts was very interesting, Parker found it frustrating when other students didn't use their time well, "sometimes they just squeak and laugh." He found it distracting that he could not improve his recorder skills to the degree that he wanted. To the children, it was more interesting if they could work with friends from their class rather than students they did not like as much, in part because the dysfunctional grouping was less likely to occur. Anna noted that it was better to work with "people you know more," and Sarah told me that groups were interesting, except that she did not want to work with Joe and Matthew again, "only with my friends."

Literature on Group Work

A number of research studies that looked at the characteristics that influence situational interest have identified group work and social interactions to have a positive impact. Group work has been found to enhance situational interest among college students and preservice teachers (Dohn et al., 2009; Isaac et al., 1999; Palmer, 2004), as well as high school students (Dohn, 2011; Minnaert et al., 2007; Mitchell, 1993; Morgan, 2010; Palmer, 2009). For example, Morgan (2010) determined that group work positively influenced situational interest in a high school social studies class, as students worked in groups of four to examine old advertisements as a way to investigate the role of advertising in history. Palmer (2009) posited that situational interest resulted from group work because of the

social attitudes that are particularly important to adolescents, and that being able to discuss problems with each other enhanced interest. In addition, teachers at both elementary and levels have been found to report that they use group work as a way to enhance interest in their content areas (Zahorik, 1996). Fewer studies of situational interest of elementary school students can be found in the literature, but those that exist also suggest that group work can be positively impactful (Harvey, 2010; Paris et al., 1998). Paris et al. (1998), for example, identified social connections with both peers and adults to be an important factor in the interest of third, fourth, and fifth grade children towards a hands-on biology unit. Harvey (2010) studied the nature of fourth grade children's situational interest in physical education class, and found that working with a partner enhanced interest in a gymnastics unit. In the context of music education, Bowles (1998) documented children's preferences for 21 common elementary music class activities, but did not specifically address issues of social interaction or group work. No studies were found that addressed the effect of group work in music classes on either interest levels or motivation more broadly. Perhaps socially interactive experiences are less common in music classrooms than they are in other school subjects.

The results of some studies have indicated that social involvement, while a source of situational interest, is not perhaps as essential as other factors such as novelty or active engagement (Dohn et al., 2009; Palmer, 2009). For example, Palmer (2009) found that working with peers was a mild predictor of situational interest, it wasn't as crucial as novelty. In the current study, group work appeared to enhance situational interest, but from the children's perspectives, it does not

appear to be as important as other activity characteristics, such as novelty and movement. In addition, the degree to which social involvement may elicit interest can also depend on one's overall interpersonal orientation (Isaac et al., 1999). Although there were some experiences in which the learning experiences that incorporated peer interaction were not associated with positive feelings for some of the fourth graders in Mr. Linton's class, no students stated that they found the experiences uninteresting. Based on the videos and the majority of the interviews, then, group work appears to be an aspect that positively influences the children's interest levels.

Summary

Vygotsky (2004) maintained that creativity is an essential part of children's development, asserting that "we should emphasize the particular importance of cultivating creativity in school-age children" (p. 87). The children of 4B found lesson activities that targeted their creativity to be interesting, as well. In both my observations and the students' written and verbal reflections on the activities of class, interest was elicited when they composed new verses for songs, played singing games that incorporated improvised texts, and created new movements to accompany specific activities. In addition, when less interesting class activities had elements of creativity added to them, such as segments targeting music literacy skills, interest was also heightened. Finally, the form of many creative activities, in which they worked in pairs or groups with their peers, elicited interest for the children in 4B.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

“The major difficulties with our schools is that they have not adequately enlisted the interests and energies of children in school work.”

Suzzallo, in Dewey (1913), p. vii

Early in the last century, John Dewey recognized the importance of interest in the education of children. After lying dormant as an important educational premise in the middle part of the last century, the role of student interest has become more influential in the last 40 years as a critical construct of learning and development, as both educational researchers and teachers work to motivate students to fully participate in instruction (Hidi & Renninger, 2006). Although scholars have provided a variety of definitions of the interest (Renninger & Hidi, 2011), educational psychologists have typically separated the concept into two dimensions: (a) individual interest, seen as specific to each person, slow to develop, and relatively stable over time, and (b) situational interest, viewed as more global in perspective, temporary in nature, and influenced by the immediate characteristics of the learning environment. Teachers have more direct control over situational interest, due to their capacity to stimulate the current educational conditions and its applicability towards all children.

The current study explored the nature of situational interest in the context of one fourth grade music class. Through an ethnographic method that combined interviews, observations, free-writing reflections on part of the children, and one-item surveys, I sought an understanding of children’s perspective of interest in their school music experiences. Four themes emerged from the research: (1) Novelty,

such as a new activity or a novel means by which to engage a specific skill; in addition, surprise and humor can be seen as subsets incorporating aspects of novelty; (2) Kinesthetic and visual modalities, such as singing games or instrument-playing; (3) Self-efficacy, such as children's anticipation of success, as well as optimal challenge, such as those activities that provided goals that were difficult but achievable; and (4) Creativity, such as inventing new verses for known songs or suggesting movements for an activity. In addition, the group work settings in which these activities usually occurred also enhanced interest.

This final chapter will begin by addressing issues of the terminology regarding the construct of interest, and will then describe the contribution of multiple themes to individual learning experiences. After considering the relationship between the themes and sub-themes relative to situational interest of children in a music education setting, a model of situational interest in the elementary music class will be presented, with rationale for its relevance and potential application by teachers in the design and delivery of music instruction to children. Finally, the chapter will offer implications for practice and suggestions for future research.

Terminology: Interest vs. Liking

When I asked the children to talk about the interest levels towards particular learning experiences, they often utilized the term "like," rather than "interest." For example, in my initial interview with Anna, Xui Li, and Charity, I started with this basic question:

CR: When you think about music class, the most interesting thing in music class, what do you think?

Xui Li: I like the games, and I like the instruments.

Charity (leaning forward in her chair): I like the games, too

Anna (nodding): Yeah, I like all the games

A similar exchange occurred in the opening interview with three boys:

CR: When you walk into class in the morning, and you look to see what's on the board, when are you like, "Oh, I'm glad we're doing that, because it's pretty interesting to me?"

Sam: (raising hand, sitting up tall): I like the instruments, and I like when you play that instrument... (points to a mountain dulcimer)

Nathan: I like the 'brave boys' part of the brave boys song.

Joe: I like the part when they kill the whale almost.

I asked the children about their "interest," but they answered using the term "like."

At other times, however, the children responded to my questions using the term interest. For example, when asked about his interest in playing the recorder, Sam said, "Sometimes it's not interesting because sometimes it's really like short and really easy."

At yet other times, they appeared to use the terms interchangeably, in the same discussion segment. When Anna was organizing index cards of common activities based on interest level, for example, we had this brief exchange about singing rounds in which she used both the words "like" and "interest:"

Anna: [Singing rounds is] kind of interesting, because the music sounds a little bit different, but then also it's kind of fun, when there are two people, and we're all singing rounds, and then we're all standing in a circle, and then you're like you two and you two and you two, and then we all sing it in a big round.

CR: Yeah, so actually let's talk about that, because we just did that a couple of weeks ago. So that was an interesting thing, you thought?

Anna: Yeah, I liked it.

In this conversation, the terms "interesting" and "like" appear to refer to the same affective state.

Given the variety of terminology that children used to respond to my queries about interest, a more in-depth view of the literature is warranted. In an early, often-referenced study, Iran-Nejad (1987) stressed the difference between interest and liking. He noted that a snake could be interesting but not liked, while a soft drink could be liked without being interesting. In an empirical study to assess the emotion of interest, Turner and Silvia (2006), using the term pleasantness, found that when rating both disturbing and calming paintings, pleasantness and interest were unrelated. Disturbing pictures were seen as interesting but not pleasant to the college students in the study, while the calming pictures were viewed as pleasant but not interesting. In studies using interest theory, interest has occasionally been defined by the term liking (e.g. Schraw & Lehmann, 2001), but it has been generally accepted that they constitute different psychological constructs (Hidi, 2001).

While most researchers recognize that interest, liking, joy, and pleasantness are separate constructs, they are often seen as related (Rathunde & Csikszentmihalyi, 1993). Both joy and interest have been considered positive emotions (Frederickson, 2001; Frederickson & Branigan, 2005). In academic settings, Ainley and Ainley (2011b) stressed that joy and interest are separate but complimentary affective responses, as “the playfulness of the emotion joy combines with the exploratory and information seeking of the emotion interest” (p. 5) to create positive learning environments. Ainley and Ainley (2011b) further noted that both joy and interest are important in academic settings, because “the essential condition for learning is that enjoyment and the focused attention of interest are both generated in response to the learning activity” (p. 5). When these two aspects occur, learning moves towards more optimal outcomes.

In colloquial settings, Valsiner (1992) noted that the word “interest” can have different meanings in different situations for different people (whether adults or children), and that these understandings of the term are can be difficult to decipher. He pointed out that this flexibility in meaning of the word “interest” can lead to fuzzy use of terminology in psychological settings. In recent years, terminology surrounding the role of interest has become an issue in qualitative research, as it appears that children may use terms such as fun, liking, and interest interchangeably, or have hazy understandings as to the difference between them. For example, Dohn (2011) used interviews and observations in a study of Norwegian high school students’ situational interest when visiting an aquarium. He found that the high school students appeared to use the term “interesting,” “fun,”

and “liking” with similar meanings in mind. While he noted that these can be seen as separate constructs, “what people mean when they express their interest is...not obvious” (p. 24). Similarly, Morgan (2010) found that the high school students that she studied also used the term liking when discussing situational interest, theorizing that perhaps “a sophomore in high school does not have the vocabulary to differentiate among the different...variables” (p. 309). If this was the case for the high school students in the studies by Dohn (2011) and Morgan (2010), it seems likely that the elementary students in the current project would be more likely to have less distinct meanings for the term, since as younger students would have less sophisticated language skills.

A recent study investigated the role of age in children’s understanding of the construct of interest. Frenzel, Pekrun, Dicke, and Goetz (2012) interviewed children in grade five and nine about their interest in mathematics, and found that fifth graders’ use of the term “interest” was characterized by more affective qualities, while ninth graders incorporated more of a cognitive component into their conception of the term. The researchers considered the possibility that the difference was due to more nuanced verbal skills of the older students. However, when they controlled for verbal fluency, this possibility was rejected. The particular study asked questions concerning the children’s individual interest towards math, rather than the situational factors examined here. Nonetheless, the statements to which the children responded, such as “I am interested in mathematics” (p. 14), appear to be comments that would elicit a similar understanding of the word interest to the discussions in the current study. Of particular note is the phrase

“Doing mathematics is one of my favorite activities,” since it clearly implies positive affect, as well. In the current study, the fourth grade students from St. George’s regularly equated positive feelings with interest. As Joe said, “I think it’s interesting because it’s fun.”

Interest theory differs from many theories of motivation in that it incorporates both affective and cognitive qualities into its framework, rather than the primarily cognitive emphasis of theories such as task value theory (Eccles et al., 1993). Within interest theory, the weight on the affective and the cognitive aspects differs between individual interest and situational interest. Situational interest is often seen to more heavily emphasize the affective side of the spectrum, in part because “it is an affective response that initially triggers a person’s attention and because knowledge may only be minimal” (Hidi & Renninger, 2006, p. 120). Individual interest, on the other hand, incorporates more of the cognitive component (Hidi & Renninger, 2006; Renninger & Hidi, 2011). While the affective state of situational interest does not have to be agreeable, it is more often positive in nature. Thus, the children’s use of the word “like” may perhaps be seen as a form of situational interest.

Given the consistent use on the part of the young students at St. George’s School of both terms, “like” and “interest,” final interviews of the children included questions about the words. I had the following exchange with Xui Li and Parker about interest:

CR: So, what do you think it means to be interested in something?

Xui Li: Um, you like it and it’s fun doing it.

Her initial reply was that to be interested means to be liked, that one term defined the other. The conversation continued:

CR: Do you think it's the same thing as liking, or different than liking?

Xui Li: Liking something (pause)... like...you(pause)...I don't know, I think they might be a little different, but I don't know

CR: What do you think, Parker?

Parker: Umm...(pause)...I guess it's kind of the same

CR: Hmm, kind of the same. Can you think of things that you're interested in, but you don't like 'em?

Parker: Like....

(pause)

CR: I don't know if there's a right answer to this, 'cause I kind of think....

Xui Li: Actually, sometimes you see bugs, and they're interesting, but you don't like them.

The last comment by Xui Li was almost identical to the example of a snake by Iran-Nejad (1987) to describe the difference between the two constructs. But the initial responses by both Xui Li and Parker suggested that to them the terms are relatively interchangeable, or at least that if they liked something, they also found it interesting. It may be that in the minds of fourth graders, liking is a subcategory of or equivalent to interest.

Contribution of Multiple Themes to the Situational Interest of Learning Experiences

Four themes emerged from the exploration of the fourth grader's situational interest in the elementary music class: novelty (along with surprise and humor), kinesthetic and visual modalities, perceived competence and optimal challenge, and creativity. Although each theme is presented separately in the dissertation, they often worked in tandem, in overlapping fashion, to contribute to children's interest in an activity. For example, I had the following exchange with Anna and Sam regarding the sources of their interest when composing verses to the song *Chairs to Mend*:

CR: But for you, Sam, you were kind of interested in Chairs to Mend, huh?

Sam: Yeah.

CR: Do you know what it is about it that makes it interesting to you?

Sam: No, not really,...I just...I like making it up.

CR: Making up the verses?

Sam: Yeah.

Anna: I like making up the verses more because we like --

Sam: (cutting her off) Get to be creative.

Anna: Yeah, and like --

Sam: (cutting her off) Get to work with our friends.

Anna: Yeah, and it's like not the same exact song.

Sam and Anna mention three reasons that composing verses to a known song in small groups was interesting: the creative skills they were able to employ, the ability to work with friends in groups, and the novelty of the final product. Similarly, the first day that the children sang the song *Hi, Ho, the Rattlin' Bog*, a variety of themes

contributed to the children's interest in the activity: novelty (since the activity was new), visual stimuli (since the students watched felt pieces representing the different parts of the song), challenge (since individual fourth graders tried to sing the last part of the cumulative song straight through), humor (since the children thought it was funny when individuals erred in their solo attempts), and perceived competence (since some students believed that they were competent singers while others did not).

Previous research has suggested that multiple themes will contribute to the situational interest within a specific activity (e.g. Mitchell, 1993; Schraw et al., 1995). As Swarat et al. (2012) noted,

In a single lesson, students typically interact with several elements of the learning environment they are in. Thus their interest (or lack of it) might well be a reaction to a combination of (some or all) elements. This means that research examining only individual elements might not do justice to the kind of complexity that governs student interest in actual classrooms. (p. 3)

For example, Dohn (2011) found that handling live fish was interesting for high school science students primarily because it was a hands-on experience, but noted that it also incorporated aspects of surprise, novelty, and social involvement.

Similarly, Palmer (2009) maintained that when students articulate specific aspects of situational interest, other aspects may contribute to that interest. He found that a hands-on experiment in a science context incorporated other aspects of situational interest, such as social involvement, due to the work that involved interpersonal interaction, and the novelty that occurred due to the fact that experiments were an

unusual educational activity for the students. In the current study, some students were able to articulate the multiple themes that contributed to situational interest. For example, Bryan spoke to the level of interest that new activities captured for him: “If it’s a game, it’s going to be more interesting than anything that’s new. If it’s a new game, and it’s like a good game, it’s going to be even more fun because it’s new.” Anna’s insightful comments are also noteworthy: “I... also like doing things that are challenging, and doing new challenging things, if these things are smushed together, to do new things that are challenging – that’s fun.”

Dohn (2011) pointed out that while some aspects of learning experiences contribute to interest, the presence of other factors could mitigate the interest. In the example of *Hi, Ho, the Rattlin’ Bog*, if children did not perceive themselves to be successful singers, the likely result was a lowering of the overall level of situational interest for some students, despite other factors (such as the presence of visual stimuli) that would otherwise be expected to positively impact the interest experience.

Relative Importance of Themes

In research on children’s interest in learning across subjects, most studies have listed the sources of situational interest without suggesting the relative importance of each. However, some studies have found sources of situational interest to be of variable important to children (Chen et al., 1999, 2001; Palmer, 2009; Schraw et al., 1995). For example, Chen et al. (1999) found that exploration intention and instant enjoyment had a more direct impact situational interest than novelty and attention demand. Palmer (2009), on the other hand, found the main

source of situational interest for high school science classes to be novelty, although choice, physical activity, and social involvement also contributed to the students' interest.

In the current exploration of children's situational interest in a music classroom, the phenomenon of a singularly dominant theme did not emerge. Instead, the characteristics of different activities provided opportunities for different themes to arise, and children themselves were able to articulate a variety of factors that attracted their attention and interest. In an effort to determine if the young students believed that some factors were more important than others, I engaged in member checking towards the end of the study, using the initial coding of themes. During the final set of interviews at the close of this research, selected children were provided with index cards on which were written the set of themes that emerged during the transcription process. After commenting on each theme, they chose their top two preferred reasons for musical activities to be of interest to them, choosing the themes that they thought were the "most true." The results did not indicate that one theme was appreciably more compelling to them than others. Instead, they were drawn to activities due to a spectrum of reasons that mixed and matched the dimensions of the noted four themes. See Table 7-1 for responses.

Table 3

Top Two Themes, as Selected by Individual Children

Playing games/puzzles	Sam, Joe, Max
Doing something new	Sam, Anna
Being creative	Joe, Leah
Being good at something ^a	Anna, Xui Li
Working towards something	Xui Li, Leah
Doing something funny	Xui Li
Moving/being physical	Max

^a “Working towards something” did not ultimately emerge as a theme, once the interviews and observations were further coded.

In interviews, some themes (novelty, self-efficacy) were mentioned more frequently than others (creativity, humor), but the nature of this particular qualitative study is such that hierarchical relationships cannot be established. The four-month period of fieldwork research was sufficient to probe the questions, to watch for emerging themes, and then to verify them across time and experience, but not enough to determine the relative importance of each. Individual classroom music activities upon which the children commented did not necessarily hold characteristics that would make it possible for all themes to emerge as possibilities at all times. For example, Sam and Anna mentioned the novelty, group work, and creativity as aspects that enhanced their interest when creating verses to the song *Chairs to Mend*. While kinesthetic modalities emerged as a theme through other discussions with the children, it was not mentioned here, since the activity did not require them to move. Other than moving to work in groups, movement was not a part of the process of creating verses, and was not mentioned by the children. Similarly, it stands to reason that if there had been more songs or other learning experiences in

the repertoire that were perceived as funny by the children, the extent of comments related to humor might have been greater. The number of comments reflecting specific themes was likely related to the qualities of the specific activities with which the children were engaged throughout the course of the project.

Towards a Model of Situational Interest in Elementary Music Class

Models can provide a visual means by which to understand the ways in which ideas work together. In the Model of Situational Interest in Elementary Music Class, the themes and sub-themes encircle the construct of situational interest that lies in the center, in order to represent the various characteristics of learning environments that impact the level of situational interest in a learning experience. See Figure 7-1.

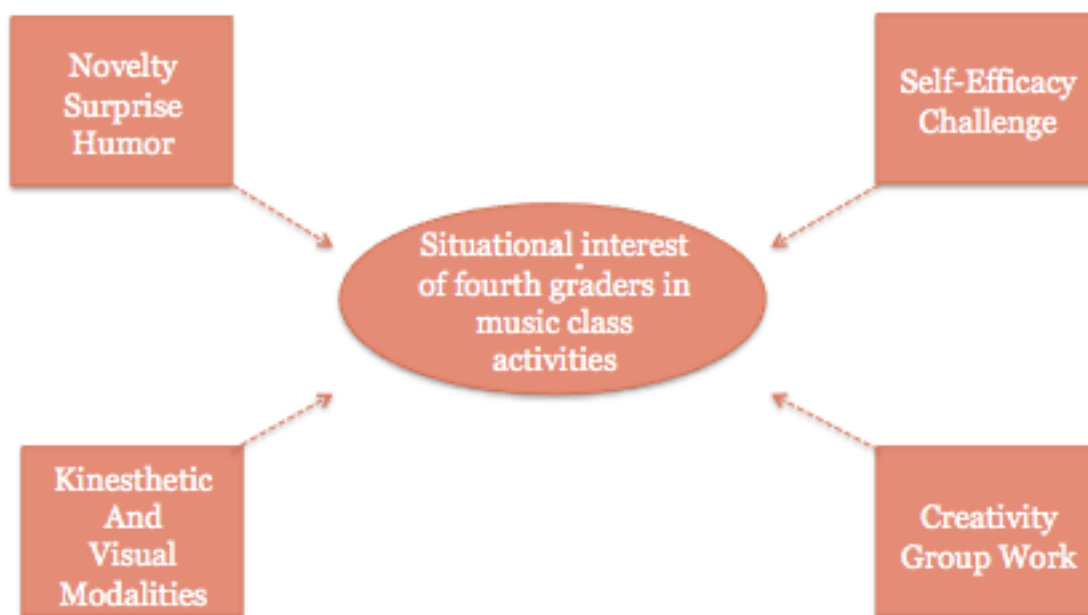


Figure 7-1. Model of Situational Interest in Elementary Music Class

Implications for Practice

The aim of the current study was not to provide a list of specific activities for music teachers to incorporate into their classrooms. Rather, the principal aim was to determine the nature of situational interest of fourth grade children in school-based music classes. Nonetheless, for the music teacher and teacher educator, applications can be made.

The situational interest of the fourth graders under study was enhanced when activities were new or if common lesson objectives were treated in unfamiliar ways. In addition, learning experiences that contained humor or surprise were interesting to the children. Providing completely new experiences for students for each lesson segment is problematic in terms of skill development, as repetition of skills can provide opportunities to improve. However, thoughtful effort on part of the teacher to include novel ways to practice known skills will contribute to heightened interest levels on part of the students. In addition, music educators should ensure that the curriculum incorporates a range of goals and objectives, and that variety occurs in the context of individual classes. Finally, including a wide range of repertoire can help enhance interest on part of children.

The fourth grade children of 4B wanted to move. When activities involving either gross motor or fine motor skills were incorporated into the lesson segments, the children's interest was remarkably piqued. In addition to selecting activities such as instrument-playing and singing games that naturally involve movement, teachers may wish to find other ways to incorporate movement into the class

periods, such as using manipulatives to practice literacy skills, or adding movements to songs that children learn.

In order to incorporate themes of perceived competence and optimal challenge into lesson plans, it is imperative for teachers to know the skills of their students. Vygotsky's concept of the "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1978) in which children have levels to which they can succeed with the assistance of more skilled peers or teachers, perhaps becomes particularly applicable, as teachers have to know how far to push their students in order to increase their skills and knowledge bases. In order to determine the point of optimal challenge for young students, teachers must develop a deep understanding of the children's current skill level.

Children enter music classrooms with different levels of ability and experience, so teachers may also consider ways to differentiate instruction in a bid to elicit interest from their young students. A task that is geared to all students in a classroom (common in elementary school music classes) may bore the more skilled students, while lesser skilled learners may mentally disengage if they anticipate that they will not be able to be successful. Exploring ways to provide different levels of challenge while maintaining high standards for each student can be challenging but is achievable – and certainly important in terms of enhancing interest. (For specific suggestions on differentiation in the elementary music class, see Hillier, 2011; Roberts, 2012; Standerfer, 2011.)

Creative activities such as composing and improvising are included as two of nine national standards laid out by national organizations (e.g. Consortium of

National Arts Education Associations, 1994) and emphasized in textbooks for preservice music educators (e.g. Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 2010), but they have been found to be among the least-taught skills in elementary music classes (Nelson, 2004). Not only are these experiences deemed important, but the children in the current study found their interest caught by such activities. Beyond composing and improvising, teachers can consider incorporating learning experiences that emphasize inventive thinking or creative movement, in a bid to enhance the situational interest of their young charges. (For a review of literature on creativity in music education, see Running, 2008.) In addition, creative activities have been found to be successful when children work in small groups (Beegle, 2006), a social situation which the fourth graders of Mr. Linton's class also found enhanced their interest.

Caution should be taken to incorporate the themes in thoughtful ways. Zahorik (1996) found that when teachers attempted to heighten the interest of the children in their class, the strategies employed did not directly relate to the learning goal. The sources of interest became the focal point of the activity. In the current study, the students made suggestions for enhancing their interest in activities targeting music literacy skills. While the games may have been fun (e.g. a version of the card game *War*, where a higher solfege note trumped a lower solfege note), it does not appear that the games would lead to the children's skill improvement.

Further Research

When queried about the reasons that they found some learning situations more interesting than others, the children in the current study occasionally made

oblique references to the sonic properties of the musical material (e.g. Charity: “It has a good rhythm”). These comments were often difficult to understand, as it appeared that the children did not possess the vocabulary to describe what caught their interest about the musical excerpts. For example, when Charity was asked to explain what was interesting about the rhythm, she said, “I don’t know, it just....” and then proceeded to wiggle her body in a way that appeared to have meaning to her, but did not to me. Anna tried to explain why she liked one section of a song, stating, “No, it’s the exact same [part of the] song but the notes are different...so it’s like [sings] ‘aahh’ ...I don’t know how to explain it.” When it was possible to identify the areas of musical interest, the comments often appeared to refer to rhythmic characteristics, such as faster tempi or syncopated rhythms (e.g. Parker, comparing the music at his Baptist church to the music at the Catholic one at the school: “we have really upbeat songs and we like clap to the songs”). These musical characteristics of material were not investigated fully. Previous research on music preference has found that children prefer characteristics such as faster tempi (LeBlanc et al., 2000/2001), performances with low levels of vibrato (LeBlanc & Sherrill, 1986), and in-tune performances (Geiringer et al., 2001). Further study could address the effect of specific sonic properties on children’s interest.

Sources of situational interest in learning environments can be divided into three categories: instructional conditions, qualities of the learning tasks, and content of the learning activities. Instructional conditions found to enhance situational interest include teacher actions such as autonomy support (Tsai et al., 2008), as well as the teacher’s use of humor (Dohn et al., 2009) and anecdotes

(Palmer, 2004). The current study did not attend to instructional conditions. Since I served as the teacher as well as the researcher, the fourth graders in the study would have in effect been asked to comment on my teaching style. This could have conceivably led to discomfort on their part, causing inaccurate or incomplete understanding of the nature of the young students' interest. Further study could explore the role of the teacher's impact on situational interest.

Specific activities in classes often elicited interest for a variety of reasons. The discussion between Anna and Sam concerning *Hi Ho, the Rattlin' Bog* highlights this, as they mentioned the opportunity to be creative, work with their friends, and engage in a new experience as all being positive reasons for finding the activity of composing verses to *Chairs to Mend* interesting. Additional research could probe the relative importance of the themes more closely, perhaps by asking children to prioritize the reasons for their interest, in an attempt to further understand the relationship between various factors, as well as the relative importance of them.

As discussed earlier in the chapter, the fourth grade children in the current study used the terms "interest" and "liking" interchangeably. In the literature, interest and liking are conceived to be separate but related constructs (Iran-Nejad, 1987; Frederickson & Branigan, 2005; Rathunde & Csikszentmihalyi, 1993). However, age-related limitations on verbal acuity may affect the ways in which they understand and express the idea (Dohn, 2011; Morgan, 2010). Further interviews with students might elaborate on this theme, to better understand the difference between children's understanding of the terms interest and liking.

Situational interest is usually conceived as broadly applicable across large groups of students (Hidi & Renninger, 2006). However, some research and theory suggests that interest may be situated in the specifics of the educational environment. For example, Pressick-Kilborn and Walker (2002) incorporated sociocultural theories of learning into their understanding of interest, arguing that the context of specific classrooms impacts the pathways of interest development. A qualitative study such as the current one, which attended to the nature of situational interest in one group of children, necessarily limits the scope. Although the findings of the current study are within the mainstream of interest research, interest in elementary music class could manifest itself differently in different groups of children with different teachers and different curricula. The present study took place in a parochial school in which most parents valued education and student turnover was limited. Additionally, the curriculum stressed a Kodaly-inspired approach to music education, with an emphasis on singing skills, music literacy, sequential skill development, and song-based repertoire highlighting folk musics from the United States and other cultures. Two elementary music educators were asked to comment on the specific curriculum that the children experienced during the four-month period of study, to provide examples of common activities of elementary music classes that did not occur during the study. They noted, for example, that the curriculum did not include a set of lessons investigating a specific unfamiliar musical culture, and that listening lessons were minimal. Also, typical lessons at St. George's School included four to seven lesson segments, targeting different objectives. Many elementary music educators provide a variety of

objectives within a lesson, but my lessons likely incorporate somewhat more varied activities than many other teachers. Conceivably, these could impact the nature of the children's interest in music classroom activities in a way that is different than other classrooms. Further study with additional groups, both quantitative and qualitative in nature, could address the broader applicability of the findings.

Interest research in non-music settings has identified academic benefits of learning environments that are high in situational interest, such as improved recall of texts (e.g. Schraw et al., 1995), increased task persistence (e.g. Ainley, Hidi, & Berndorff, 2002), and higher levels of engagement (e.g. Sun & Rueda, 2012). Additional study could determine the effect of learning experiences high in situational interest on musical learning outcomes. For example, in-tune singing is a skill that is addressed in most elementary music programs. Further study could ask children to rate the interest level of two different songs (controlling for issues such as tone set, rhythmic content, tonality, and meter), then assess their in-tune singing skill for each of the songs. Conceivably, singing the preferred song could lead to a more accurate vocal performance. The impact of group work and creativity on in-tune singing could be examined as well, by asking children to work in groups to write a short song. Musical characteristics of the composed song could be matched with a song from the children's teacher-taught repertoire, and in-tune performances of the two songs could be compared.

A growing stream of research has explored the perspectives of children on their musical experiences, both in settings outside the scope of the normal school day (e.g. Campbell, 2010; Gaunt, 2006; Lum, 2007), as well as within the four walls

of elementary classroom music settings (e.g. Beegle, 2006; Griffin, 2009; Wiggins, 1992). Campbell (2010) maintained that children's opinions are important, and that "their voices, as much as the voices of experts, should help determine something of an educational plan for them" (p. 5). In the current economic climate, when educational budgets across the country are being slashed, music educators are faced with an increasing need to justify the education that the children receive at our hands. Determining the nature of situational interest is a means by which teachers can identify the types of activities that can interest and engage children in the here-and-now (Hidi, 2001), leading to better attitudes towards the class period and towards the domain as a whole. These attitudinal changes can lead to a further likelihood of continuing in the discipline (Hidi & Renninger, 2006), which in turn can precipitate more support and participation in music programs. Most importantly, it can lead to more engaged and excited learners. In the current study, one class of fourth graders found activities and learning experiences that contained elements of novelty, kinesthetic and visual modalities, creativity, and the opportunity to experience or anticipate experiencing success and optimal challenge to contribute to their interest. Music educators at the elementary level should consider incorporating these aspects into their lessons in a bid to boost interest towards class, ultimately leading to more enthusiastic music learners who make higher achievements in music, both in elementary school and beyond.

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APPENDIX A
PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

University of Washington
The Role of Situational Interest in Music at School
Parent/Guardian Consent Form

Researchers:

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**Please note that confidentiality of information sent by e-mail cannot be guaranteed.*

Researcher's statement

I am asking you to allow your child to be in a research study. The purpose of this consent form is to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether you want your child to be involved in this study or not. Please read the form carefully. You may ask questions about the purpose of the research, what I would ask your child to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a parent/guardian, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When all of your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called 'informed consent.' You will get a copy of this form for your records. Your school's principal and classroom teacher have approved this letter, and have agreed to cooperate with the study.

PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research is to explore the nature of interest of elementary children towards the activities of music class. In this study, I will be identifying the qualities of typical activities in a music class that students find interesting. Classrooms that are high in interest often lead to better attitudes towards the study of music overall, and greater skill and knowledge development, so identifying those characteristics can be a way of improving overall skills of students. Your child may not directly benefit from taking part in this research study. I hope that the findings will help music teachers design lesson plans that are more interesting for most students.

STUDY PROCEDURES

As part of the study, I will be teaching your child's normal music classes. Participation in the study includes the following activities. At the end of this form, you can decide if you would like your child to participate in any or all of the activities.

- (1) I would like to videotape your child's classroom participation during music lessons. I will be videotaping in the classroom even if you and your child choose not to participate in the study. If you do not want to participate, I will blur your child's image from the videotape, and I will not keep a record of his/her participation.
- (2) I would like to interview all children in the class about their interest level of the activities of music class. In order to maximize their comfort level, students will be interviewed in pairs. The interviews will take place during recess or lunch, or at other times during the day that the classroom teacher has indicated will not be disruptive to their learning. The interviews will be videotaped, then I will write down what your child said, putting a fake name in place of your child's name.
- (3) I would like to ask all students in the class to write an answer to the following question after an activity: "What made the previous activity interesting or uninteresting to you?" This will occur once per week. Students will also report their levels of interest for two activities in every class on a scale of 1-5, using a "clicker" technology in which they will enter their response on a keypad that will then send their answers to a computer.

Participation in this study will not require any time outside of school. Your child's participation is optional. Participation will not affect his or her classroom grade or any other evaluation.

RISKS, STRESS, OR DISCOMFORT

Some people feel that providing information for research is an invasion of privacy. I will protect your child's privacy by assigning a fake name in all writing related to this research.

ALTERNATIVES TO TAKING PART IN THE STUDY

If you or your child chooses not to take part in the study, they will still be a part of the regular music class. Video recordings will be made, and their faces will be blurred so that no one knows who they are. They will not be interviewed outside of class. They will not answer in writing the questions concerning their interest level of activities of the music class, and will not use a "clicker" to show their interest on a scale of 1-5.

OTHER INFORMATION

Taking part in this study is optional. Your child can choose to stop at any time. Your decision whether or not to consent that your child participates in this study will not affect your child's grades. Information about your child is confidential. I will use fake names instead of real names. You and your child can view the videotapes of specific class periods or of his or her interviews with me and erase anything that you or they do not want used for research.

With your permission, I will use samples from tapes for presentations at educational audiences, such as at professional conferences and in teacher education courses. I would like your permission to keep the tapes in order to use them for these purposes. I will not use your child's name in any presentation or provide any

information that might identify your child. I will not use the tapes publicly until you have had an opportunity to review and edit the tapes and provide your written consent. I will provide an opportunity for you to view and edit the tapes after the last class has been recorded, in June, 2011. I will then only use tapes publicly if you give your written consent on an additional form.

The link between the study information and your child's name will not be destroyed until June 2015, unless you allow me to maintain your videotapes forever. If I wish to keep the videos longer than five years, I will provide you with a separate "video consent" form at that time. I will keep the link between your child's name and the study code forever in case you decide that you do not want me to use the tapes at some point in the future. If you give me permission to keep video recordings indefinitely, I will keep them linked to the student work indefinitely.

At the end of this form, you can indicate whether or not you give your permission for your child to be video taped for this study.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact me at any time, using the contact information at the top of this letter. If you have questions about your rights as a parent/guardian or your child's rights as a research subject, call the University of Washington Human Subjects Division at 206.543.0098.

J. Christopher Roberts

Printed name of researcher
Date

Signature of researcher

Parent's/Legal Guardian's Statement

This research study has been explained to me. I voluntarily consent to allow my child to participate. I have had a chance to ask questions. I give the researcher permission to observe and interview my child regarding his or her level of interest in the music class, as outlined above. Below, I will indicate whether I will allow these interactions to be video recorded. If I have questions later about this research, I can ask the researcher listed above. If I choose to contact the researcher by e-mail, I understand that confidentiality of any information cannot be assured.

If I have any questions about my rights as a parent/guardian or my child's rights as a participant in this research, I may call the University of Washington Human Subjects Division at 206.543.0098. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

Please INITIAL next to EITHER YES or NO for each of the items below:

I give my permission for the researcher to video record my child's regular music classes.

Yes _____ No _____

I give my permission for the researcher to interview my child about interest in the activities of music class, and video record it. I also give permission for my child to use a "clicker" to indicate his or her interest in specific activities of the music class, and to write answers to questions about interest in the activities of music class.

Yes _____ No _____

Future use of data from this study:

If data from this study is used for further studies:

I give my permission for the researcher to contact me about future related studies.

Yes _____ No _____

Name of Student

Printed Name of Parent or Legal Guardian

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian

Date

APPENDIX B
STUDENT ASSENT FORM

University of Washington
Student Assent Form
The Role of Situational Interest in Music at School

Researchers:

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Patricia Campbell, Ph.D., Professor, UW School of Music, 206.543.4768,
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What is my study about?

I am interested in learning about the activities in class that you find the most interesting, and the least interesting.

What will I do?

- (1) You will have normal music classes. What is different is that there will be a video recorder that will record your class. I will look at the videotapes later, because I want to see when you seem especially interested. You can watch the videos. You can change or ask me to erase anything that you said or did.
- (2) I will talk to you about music class. I will ask you questions about how interesting you think the activities that you are doing in class are. You will not be alone when we talk. You will be with another fourth grader in your class. I will make a video of what we talk about. You can watch the videos. You can change or ask me to erase anything that you said.
- (3) In class, you will use a “clicker” to tell me how interesting an activity is. If you think it is very interesting, you will press a “5” on a keypad. If you think it is not interesting, you will press a “1.” The keypad will send your answer to my computer.
- (4) In class, you will sometimes write on a piece of paper how interesting you thought an activity was, and why you thought that.

I would like to show some of the videos of you and your classmates to other people who are learning to teach. I will give you a chance to see and hear the videos. I will not show the videos to other people unless you tell me that it is okay with you. I will not use your real name.

Your part:

You can choose if you want to be part of this study. You don't have to be in this study if you don't want to. No one will be mad at you. You can ask questions any time while I am in your classroom. Being a part of this study will not affect your grades. You can change your mind about being in this study at any time.

J. Christopher Roberts

Printed Name of Researcher

Signature of Researcher

Date

Student's Statement:

Christopher Roberts told me about this study. I want to be in it. I can ask questions about the study now or later. I know that I will be filmed on video and that is okay with me. I know that if I have more questions, I can ask Christopher Roberts.

I give you permission to video record me during music class.

Yes _____ No _____

I give you permission to talk to me about interest in the activities of music class. I understand that you will make a video of what we talk about. You can ask me to write about how interesting I think some things we do in class are. You can ask me to use a "clicker" to tell you how interesting I think some things we do in class are.

Yes _____ No _____

Student's name

Student's signature

Date

APPENDIX C
TEACHER CONSENT FORM

**University of Washington
Teacher Consent Form
The Role of Situational Interest in Music at School**

Researchers:

Christopher Roberts, Graduate Student, School of Music, 206.909.1644,
cr777@uw.edu

Patricia Campbell, Ph.D., Professor, UW School of Music, 206.543.4768,
pcamp@uw.edu

**Please note that confidentiality of information sent by e-mail cannot be guaranteed.*

Researcher's statement

I am asking you to be in a research study. The purpose of this consent form is to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether you will be in this study. Please read the form carefully. You may ask questions about the purpose of the research, what I would ask you to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When all of your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called 'informed consent.' You will get a copy of this form for your records. Your school's principal has approved this letter, and has agreed to cooperate with this study.

PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research is to explore the nature of interest of elementary children towards the activities of music class. In this study, I will be identifying the qualities of typical activities in a music class that students find most interesting. Classrooms that are high in interest often lead to better attitudes towards the subject, and greater skill and knowledge development, so identifying those attributes can be a way of improving overall skills of students. You and your students may not directly benefit from taking part in this research study. I hope that the findings will help music teachers design lesson plans that are more interesting for students.

STUDY PROCEDURES

- (1) If you choose to be involved in this study, I would like to video record your students in their regular music class. If there are children who do not have parental consent or do not want to participate, I will blur their image(s) and not take note of their participation.
- (2) During one music class per week, I would like to ask all students in the class to write an answer to the following open-ended question: "What made the previous activity interesting

or uninteresting to you?" These will occur once per week. Students will also report their levels of interest for two activities per class on a scale of 1-5, using "clicker" technology in which they enter their response on a keypad and send their answers to a computer.

- (3) I would like to interview students, in groups of two, about their interest in specific activities of the music class. I will arrange with the students to conduct most of these interviews during recess or lunch, but there will be some times when I attempt to arrange times with you to interview students during normal class time. I will work with you to find suitable times that will not impact their learning in your class. Interviews will be video recorded, then transcribed by me.
- (4) I would like to interview you two times. The interviews would concern your perceptions of student interest in the elementary music class overall, and would last approximately 20 -30 minutes. The interviews will be video recorded, and then transcribed.
- (5) I would like to observe the students three times in the general classroom. I will be watching students for indications of interest.

RISKS, STRESS, OR DISCOMFORT

Some people feel that providing information for research is an invasion of privacy. I will protect the privacy of you and your students by assigning a fake name in all writing related to this research.

OTHER INFORMATION

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You can choose to stop at any time. Participation or withdrawal will not affect your standing in your school. Information about you is confidential. I will code all of the study information using pseudonyms for you, your students, and your school. You are welcome to review the video recordings or the transcripts at any time and make changes or delete any of your comments.

With your permission, I will use samples from tapes for presentations at educational audiences, such as at professional conferences and in teacher education courses. I would like your permission to keep the tapes forever in order to use them for these purposes. I will not the name you or your students in any presentation or provide any information that might identify you. I will not use the tapes publicly until you have had an opportunity to review and edit the tapes and provide your written consent. I will provide an opportunity for you to view and edit the tapes at the end of data collection, in June, 2011. I will then only use tapes publicly if you give your written consent on an additional form.

The link between the study information and your name will not be destroyed until June 2015, unless you allow me to maintain your videotapes forever. If I wish to keep the videos longer than five years, I will provide you with a separate "video consent" form at that time. I will keep the link between your name and the study code forever in case you decide that you do not want me to use the tapes at some point in the future. If results of the study are published or presented, I will not use your name.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact me at any time, using the contact information at the top of this letter. If you have questions about your rights as a parent/guardian or your child's rights as a research subject, call the University of Washington Human Subjects Division at 206.543.0098.

J. Christopher Roberts

Printed name of researcher

Signature of researcher

Date

Participant's Statement

This research study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in this research. I have had a chance to ask questions. I give the researcher permission to observe my classes and interview my students regarding his or her level of interest in the music class, as outlined above. Below, I will indicate whether I will allow these interactions to be video recorded, and whether I volunteer to be interviewed. If I have questions later about this research, I can ask the researcher listed above. If I choose to contact the researcher by e-mail, I understand that confidentiality of any information cannot be assured.

If I have any questions about my rights as a participant in this research, I may call the University of Washington Human Subjects Division at 206.543.0098. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

Please INITIAL next to EITHER YES or NO for each of the items below:

I give my permission for the researcher to interview students in my class about interest in the activities of music class, and video record it. I also give permission for students in my class to use a "clicker" to indicate his or her interest in specific activities of the music class, and to write answers to questions about interest in the activities of music class.

Yes _____ No _____

I give my permission for the researcher to observe my class instruction.

Yes _____ No _____

I volunteer to be a part of the interview portion of this study, and to have the interviews video recorded.

Yes _____ No _____

Future use of data from this study:

If data from this study is used for further studies:

I give my permission for the researcher to contact me about future related studies.

Yes _____ No _____

Printed Name of Subject

Signature of Subject

Date

J. CHRISTOPHER ROBERTS

EDUCATION

University of Washington, Seattle, WA

Ph.D., University of Washington. June, 2012

Dissertation: Situational Interest of Fourth Grade Children in Music at School

M.A., Music Education. December, 2007

B.A., Music Education, B.Mus., Education. June, 1996

Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA

B.A., History. June, 1991

Specialized Pedagogical Training

Kodaly

Seattle Pacific University, Seattle, WA

Kodaly Certificate (Levels I, II, III). July, 1998

University of Calgary, Calgary, AB

Advanced Kodaly Seminar. July, 1999

Orff-Schulwerk

University of Nevada-Las Vegas, Las Vegas, NV

Orff Level I. July, 1997

World Music Pedagogy

University of Washington, Seattle, WA

Smithsonian Folkways Certificate in World Music Pedagogy. June, 2011

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

University of Washington, Seattle, WA.

Lecturer

MusEd 301: Techniques for Teaching Music to Children (Fall, 2010; Fall, 2009)

MusEd 452: Ethnomusicology in the Schools (Winter, 2010)

MusEd 465: Classroom Management and Assessment in Music Education (Winter, 2009)

MusEd 440: Music for Children (Fall, 2009)

MusEd 496: Smithsonian Folkways Certification Workshop in World Music Pedagogy
(Summers, 2009, 2010, 2011)

Guest Lecturer (Invited Presentations)

MusEd 535: Children's Musical Development (November, 2011)

"Situational Interest of Fourth Graders in the Elementary Music Class"

MusEd 452: Classroom Management and Assessment in Music Education (February, 2011)

"Culturally Diverse Classroom Management" (February, 2011)

MusEd 503: Qualitative Research Methods (January, 2011)

"Developing a Dissertation Proposal"

MusEd 496: Music, Children, Family (January-February, 2011)

Five independently structured class sessions in professor's absence

MusEd 440: Music for Children (October, 2010; October, 2009)

"Kodaly in the Elementary Music Classroom"

MusEd 440: Music for Children (October, 2010)

"Orff in the Elementary Music Classroom"

Seattle Pacific University, Seattle, WA. Adjunct Faculty member, 2003 – present.

Kodaly Summer Certification Program.

Level I Pedagogy (2003 – present)

Level I Materials (2004 – present)
 Level I Musicianship (2004 – present)
 Level II Musicianship (2009, 2011)
 Level III Pedagogy (2010)
 Level III Materials (2010)
 Demonstration Classes with Children (1999-2004)

Seattle University, Seattle, WA. Guest Lecturer (September, 2011)
 “The Arts and Cultural Diversity: Music for Classroom Teachers”

University of Idaho, Moscow, ID. Guest Lecturer (June, 2011)
 Smithsonian Folkways Certification Workshop in World Music Pedagogy
 “Smithsonian Folkways Children’s Music Collection”
 “Talkin’ Turkey: Music from Turkey in the Elementary Music Class”

St. Joseph School, Seattle, WA. 1996 – present.
 K-5 Elementary Music Teacher
 Mentor teacher for student teacher, 2011, 2012
 Choir director, After-school choir, 1997-2003

St. James Cathedral, Seattle, WA. 1998-2004.
 Choir Director, St. Cecilia Children’s Choir.

PUBLICATIONS

- Roberts, J. C. (In Press, 2012). “Shake it to the one that you love the best:” A historical look at three recordings of children’s musicking in New York City. In Wiggins, T. & Campbell, P. S. (Eds.) *Oxford Handbook of Children’s Musical Culture*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Roberts, C. (2012). Differentiated instruction in a Kodaly-inspired classroom. *Kodaly Envoy*.
- Roberts, J. C. (2011). Yes, I wanna! Learn music from Botswana! A Smithsonian Folkways lesson plan. Available at: http://www.folkways.si.edu/tools_for_teaching/lessons.aspx.
- Roberts, J. C. (2011) Talkin’ Turkey: Incorporating music from Turkey in the elementary general music class. In A. Clements (Ed.) *Alternative Approaches in Music Education: Case Studies from the Field*. Reston, VA: MENC.
- Roberts, J. C. (2011) Music from Turkey. In W. Anderson & P.S. Campbell (Eds.), *Multicultural Perspectives in Music Education* (3rd ed.). Reston, VA: MENC.
- Roberts, J. C. (2010). A Global Music Series web manual for *Music of Turkey*, by E. Bates, Oxford University Press. Available at <http://www.oup.com/us/companion.websites/9780195394146/im/?view=usa>.
- Roberts, J. C. (2010). In P.S. Campbell and C. Scott-Kassner (Eds.), *Music in Childhood*. Contributor to book project as teacher of videorecorded lessons of children, available online.
- Roberts, J. C. (2010). The status of children’s music in the Smithsonian Folkways collection. *Kodaly Envoy*, 37(1): 4-9.
- Roberts, J. C. (2009). Tunes and Grooves for Music Education: A review. *Kodaly Envoy*, 36(2): 27.
- Roberts, C. (2009). The joy of singing games. *The Orff Echo*, 41(3): 14-17.
- Roberts, C. (2008). Help your students sing in tune! *Orff Echo*, 40(3): 13-16.
- Morrison, S. J., Demorest, S. M., Campbell, P. S., Bartolome, S. J., & Roberts, J. C. (manuscript in review). Effect of intensive instruction on elementary students’ memory for culturally unfamiliar music.

AWARDS

- 2011 Elizabeth May Slater Award, from the Society for Ethnomusicology
 2009 Outstanding Research Award – Professional, from the Organization of American Kodaly

Educators. Received for study, “Wanna Race? Competitive and Non-Competitive Singing Games in the Elementary Music Classroom”

CONFERENCE PRESENTATION EXPERIENCE

Scholarly Presentations

- 2012 NAFME (National Association for Music Education) (St. Louis, MO): “Children’s singing cultures, historically: 20th-century recordings from New York City”
- 2012 AERA (American Educational Research Association) (Vancouver, BC, Canada): “Situational interest of fourth grade children in music at school”
- 2011 SEM (Society for Ethnomusicology) (Philadelphia, PA): “Play it forward: Revisiting the legacy of music for children”
- 2011 Festival 500 (St. John’s, NL, Canada): “Children’s singing cultures, historically: 20th-century recordings from New York City”
- 2011 Advanced Interdisciplinary Research in Signing (St. John’s, NL, Canada): “Children singing online: An examination of internet-based resources of children singing throughout the world”
- 2011 United States-Canada Graduate Symposium (Seattle, WA): “Children’s musical cultures in the United States and Canada: An exploration of the Smithsonian Folkways Children’s Music Collection”
- 2011 NW MENC (Bellevue, WA): “‘What do you think?’ Attitude of fifth grade students towards activities in the general music class” (Research poster)
- 2010 MENC (Anaheim, CA): “Effect of internal and external musical stimuli on beat competency of first graders” (Research Poster)
- 2009 College Music Society (Portland, OR): “The children’s music collection of Smithsonian Folkways: Integration into the college classroom”
- 2009 NW MENC (Portland, OR): “Wanna race? Student attitude towards competitive and non-competitive singing games in the elementary music classroom” (Research Poster)
- 2009 18th International Symposium for Research in Music Behavior (St. Petersburg, FL): “Effect of intensive instruction on elementary students’ memory for culturally unfamiliar music”
- 2008 SEM (Society for Ethnomusicology) (Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT): “Talkin’ Turkey: A music educator’s perspective on ethnomusicology in the schools”
- 2008 CDIME-NINE Conference: “Going global: Fifty years of multicultural songs” (Research Poster)
- 2008 CDIME-NINE Conference: “Talkin’ Turkey: Music from Turkey for the general music classroom”

OAKE (Organization of American Kodaly Educators) National Conferences

- 2012 “Kodaly, Orff, Dalcroze, and Gordon: A Panel Discussion” (Phoenix, AZ)
- 2011 “The Smithsonian Folkways Children’s Music Collection” (Minneapolis, MN)
“Singing Games in the Upper Elementary” (Minneapolis, MN)
- 2006 “Going Global: Teaching Music Literacy from World Music(s)” (Charlotte, NC)
- 2002 “Smooth Sailing: Transitions in the Kodaly Classroom” (San Antonio, TX)
- 2000 “Kodaly in the Classroom: A First-Grade Demonstration Lesson” (Seattle, WA)
“Kodaly and Folk Arts Residencies: Does it Work in the Classroom?”
“Kodaly and Folk Arts Residencies: A Panel Discussion”

AOSA (American Orff-Schulwerk Association) National Conferences

- 2007 "Singing Games in the Upper Elementary" (San Jose, CA)
 2006 "Yes! You *Can* Help Your Students Sing In-Tune!" (Omaha, NB)
 2003 "Smooth Sailing: Transitions in the Music Classroom" (Louisville, KY)

Invited Presentations for School Districts, and Regional Chapters of Orff, Kodaly, and Music Educator's Associations:

- 2012 Kelowna, British Columbia Music Educators (Canada): "Singing Games for Upper Elementary Students"
 2011 Green River MEA (WA): "Kodaly in a Nutshell"
 2011 McKinney School District (TX): "Singing Games for Upper Elementary Students"
 2011 North Thurston School District (WA): "Music Literacy Across K-12 Music Classrooms"
 2010 AKTS (Arizona Kodaly Teacher's Society): "Singing Games for Upper Elementary Students"
 2010 British Columbia (Canada) Music Educators Association: "Talkin' Turkey: Music from Turkey for Elementary Students;" "Singing Games for Upper Elementary Students"
 2010 Treasure State Orff Chapter (MT): "Singing Games for Upper Elementary Students"
 2010 Heart of America Orff Chapter (Kansas City): "Singing Games for Upper Elementary Students"
 2010 Highline School District (WA): "Singing Games for Upper Elementary Students"
 2010 Colorado Music Educators Association: "Transitions in the Elementary Music Classroom"
 "Preparing, Presenting, and Practicing 'Do'"
 2009 Lacey, WA School District: "How to Help Your Students Sing In-Tune"
 2009 Reno, NV Orff Chapter: "Singing Games for Upper Elementary Students"
 2008 Greater Milwaukee Orff Educators: "Singing Games for Upper Elementary Students"

 2007 San Jose (CA) Children's Museum: "Singing games for kids of all ages"
 2006 NW MENC: "Yes! You *can* help your students sing in tune!"
 2006 Vancouver, WA School District: "Transitions in the Music Classroom"
 2005 Vancouver, WA School District: "Activities for Upper Elementary Students"
 2005 NKE (Seattle area Kodaly Educators): "Preparing, Presenting, and Practicing 'Do'"
 2004 SWOKE (Portland, OR area Kodaly Educators): "Smooth Sailing: Transitions in the Music Classroom"
 2004 EOC (Seattle area Orff Educators): "Smooth Sailing: Transitions in the Music Classroom"
 2003 ROCKE (Colorado Kodaly Educators): "Planning For Success: Guidelines for Successful Lesson Planning"
 2001 NKE (Seattle area Kodaly Educators): "Kodaly in the Classroom: A First Grade Demonstration Lesson"

PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE***Kodaly Levels Program of Seattle***

Coordinator, 2010-present.

Council for General Music

Northwest Regional Representative, 2008-present.

OAKE (Organization of American Kodaly Educators) National Board

Conference Committee, 2012 National Conference, Phoenix, AZ

Chair, Teacher Education Committee, 2006-2009

Western II Regional Representative, 2006-2009

Representing Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming

Endowment Committee Member, 2003-2006

Northwest Kodaly Educators Board

Past-President, 2006-2009

President, 2004-2006

Treasurer, 1998-2004

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

NAfME (National Association for Music Education), 2000 – present
OAKE (Organization of American Kodaly Educators), 1995 – present.
AOSA (American Orff-Schulwerk Association), 1995 – present.
SEM (Society for Ethnomusicology), 2006 – present.
AERA (American Educational Research Association), 2010 - present
