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Sound Reflexes: Micro-Analysis of
Meaningful Moments with Children
Receiving Music Therapy

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Abstract

This study investigates meaningful moments in improvised music created during individual music therapy sessions with children who have delays in various areas of development. Secondary analysis of clinical records (session notes and video footage) was used in this music centred research to identify meaningful moments in the music. Six meaningful moments were chosen, each from a different child, and subsequently the musical interactions of the child and student music therapist were transcribed in detail. An ethnographic, microanalysis approach was applied to analyse and interpret the observable features of the music.

The analysis of what was happening in the music helped the researcher to understand and articulate the meaningful moments. Meaningful moments were found to be shared experiences in the co-creation of music, which provided opportunities to foster a responsive interpersonal relationship between the child and therapist. They occurred because the music provided a framework for structure and change through synchronicity and regularity/flow as well as variation, tension, suspension, expectation and anticipation. The meaningful moment was facilitated by musical elements: rhythm, tempo, pitch/melody, harmony, timbre and volume/dynamics; and musical techniques: imitation, pause, space, repetition, anacrusis and gestural actions.

A review of the literature was undertaken to examine the use of improvisation and the importance of meaningful moments, in music therapy. The findings are discussed drawing from the related literature and the theory of expectation. The strengths and limitations of the study are stated along with the implications for training and further research in this field.

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