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**What Changes in Relationship with their Children do Primary Caregivers
Perceive as Having Occurred Since Being Involved in a Centre-Based Early
Intervention Music Therapy Programme?**

**A thesis presented to fulfill the requirements for the degree of
Master
of
Music Therapy**

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to examine how participation in music therapy (MT¹) influenced the carer²-child relationship when both carer and child were involved in group and individual MT as part of an early intervention (EI) programme³. The study took place at the Wellington Early Intervention Trust (WEIT), a centre catering for children with significant disabilities, and their families.

Four primary caregivers involved in this centre-based, multi-disciplinary EI programme involving both weekly group and individual MT were interviewed. Two carers had more than twenty MT sessions, while two carers were interviewed after only ten sessions. Analysis of the transcripts comparing the carers' responses revealed a number of common features: First, a marked change was observed in the nature and quality of carer-child interactions consequent on participation in a specific EI programme. All four participants⁴ spoke positively about their involvement with their children in both the group and individual MT sessions. Second, not only did the carers report positive gains in their children's overall development as a result of their experience of MT in EI, but all four participants reported how they now used music as part of their every day lives as a tool to encourage and maintain positive carer-child interactive experiences. Third, each carer became more aware and confident in how to use their own voice and body language to engage in successful interactions with their child.

This study found that the interactions between child and caregiver changed in nature and quality since being involved in MT in EI. Their relationship with their child had strengthened with positive results for the child's developmental objectives.

¹ Acronyms are identified when first used

² Throughout this thesis the terms primary caregiver, carer, parent, are used interchangeably to refer to primary caregivers who may or may not be parents.

³ English spelling will be used in text, such as centre, programme, behaviour, colour, favourite. American spelling will be used if it is in the original text being quoted, such as center.

⁴ The term "participants" refers to the caregivers in this study.

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This study received ethical approval from the Wellington Ethics Committee (Ref No: 03/05/049). It was also reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, WGTN Protocol 03/107.

Contents

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES	vi
INTRODUCTION	1
LITERATURE REVIEW	4
CARER-CHILD RELATIONSHIP	4
EARLY INTERVENTION	14
MUSIC THERAPY IN EARLY INTERVENTION	26
THE MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO EARLY INTERVENTION AND ASSOCIATED ISSUES	34
HOME-BASED VERSUS CENTRE-BASED EARLY INTERVENTION PRACTICE	37
MUSIC THERAPY IN CONTEXT OF THIS STUDY	39
REFLECTIONS ON THEORY AND PRACTICE - TOWARDS A RESEARCH TOPIC	42
METHOD	44
CONTEXT FOR THE RESEARCH	44
MUSIC THERAPY PROCEDURES AT WEIT	45
RECRUITMENT FOR THE STUDY	47
PARTICIPANTS	47
PROCEDURE FOR DATA COLLECTION	48
PROCEDURES FOR ANALYSIS	49
RESULTS	50
CASE #1 SONYA	50
CASE #2 LEANNE	54
CASE #3 JACQUI	60
CASE #4 EVA	67
COMPARISON OF CARERS' RESPONSES	73
DISCUSSION	77
REFLECTIONS ON CENTRE-BASED EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAMMES	77
MUSIC THERAPY'S ROLE IN ACHIEVING FAVOURABLE THERAPEUTIC OUTCOMES	78
THE INTERVENTION PROCESS: GENERATING POSITIVE FEEDBACK DYNAMICS	79
THE ROLE OF CHANGING RELATIONSHIPS IN THE INTERVENTION PROCESS	81
MUSIC THERAPY AS AN INSTRUMENT OF INTERACTIVE INTERVENTION	83
GENERALISATION OF DEVELOPMENTAL GAINS OUTSIDE WEIT	85
THE EFFECT OF DIFFERENT PROGRAMME DURATIONS	86
SUMMARY	90
LIMITATIONS OF PROCEDURES	91
IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND THE STUDY'S CONTRIBUTION TO MUSIC THERAPY LITERATURE	93

CONCLUSION.....	96
APPENDIX 1: DESCRIPTION OF SYNDROMES.....	98
SOTOS SYNDROME.....	98
DOWN SYNDROME.....	98
AUTISM.....	99
FRAGILE X SYNDROME.....	100
CEREBRAL PALSY.....	100
APPENDIX 2: INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANT CARERS.....	102
APPENDIX 3: CONSENT FORM.....	105
APPENDIX 4: GUIDELINES FOR INTERVIEWER.....	107
APPENDIX 5: TRANSCRIPT #1.....	109
APPENDIX 6: TRANSCRIPT #2.....	119
APPENDIX 7: TRANSCRIPT #3.....	135
APPENDIX 8: TRANSCRIPT #4.....	156
REFERENCES.....	168

List of Tables and Figures

TABLES

Table 1	Participants' situation at time of study	48
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FIGURES

Figure 1	The cycle of positive interactions	7
Figure 2	Positive and negative feedback processes in intervention.....	80
Figure 3	Evolution of carer's experiences with music therapy intervention	84