THE USE OF MUSICAL SYMBOLS IN THE MUSICAL-AESTHETIC LIFE OF A TODDLER: AN HOLISTIC EXAMINATION OF THE ARTISTIC LIFE OF A TWO AND A HALF YEAR OLD USING CASE STUDY DESIGN

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Abstract

Research on the nature of the artistic life and interests of toddlers is still emerging. When it comes to the study of how a two and a half year old may think and operate artistically there can be sequence and logic in what she expresses. Yet on account of the rapidity of change from one mode of expression to the next, some of that sequence and logic can be easily missed, which makes it challenging to capture and define. The key focus of this project was to capture some of those magical moments belonging to the inimitable inner child talk, the child who is so naturally drawn to self-expression through the arts. The toddler works fleetingly on some occasions but with more serious attention, emerging skill and efficacy in a range of artistic disciplines on other occasions. Although Music was the focus discipline with which the researcher worked, multi-modal use of artistic forms was undeniably present in the child’s search for self-expression and personal creativity. Therefore this examination of how a toddler interacts in relation to all the artistic forms of expression was set within a case study of Corinne, a qualitative paradigm. There is currently great scarcity of research into how toddlers use musical symbols; this paper attempts to address that scarcity. Further to this, how toddlers use the arts to make meaning matters because children develop aesthetic knowledge with which to interpret and also challenge the worlds within and without. This reading and engineering of symbols that abound in the arts provide links and bridges to scrutinizing other literacies. Orchestrating multiple literacies, an inalienable right of all children, all ages, everywhere, expands humans, creating pathways for creative expression and innovation.

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

(YOLETTE STEWART, FORMERLY LEVY)
(March 25th, 2016)
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Chapter 1
The Research Question

1.1 Vignette:

Two-year-old ‘Cush-cush’, affectionate family name for Corinne, is busying herself on this hot afternoon with some pretty stickers. She likes to take all of the stickers off the page and conglomerate them on top of each other on the cool surface of the coffee table. The feeling in her fingers and the control she has over the task is most absorbing to her. As she sinks deeper into what appears to be a meditative state she sings verse one of ‘Twinkle Twinkle Little Star’ over and over again to herself:

‘Twingle, twingle, won wonger,  
Won, won ,won, won wonger.  
Like a won wonger  
Twingle, twingle won wonger,  
How I wonger won wonger.’

The words are not all clearly articulated and one line is missing but the feeling for the beats and accents specific to this nursery song are largely all present. ‘Cush-cush’ has absorbed the pulse through repeated exposure to the song and is using this pulse to accompany her deeply relaxing hand movement; she appears to have slowed the pace of the tune down though to suit her current calm and engaged mood. The words and the tune seem to provide the accompaniment to the layering of the stickers and not the other way round. She is not in a rush and nor is she frantic; instead she is pensive and dream-like in physical stance and mood. One hip juts out to one side as she leans on her left hand. She is teaching herself, reminding herself and learning through a pre-acquired framework (here, a well-known children’s song) that has been given to her culturally and through family life.

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1.2 Introduction

In this paper I present a case study that examines a toddler’s use of musical symbols in relation to her cultural milieu and what this may signify to her inner aesthetic life. Corinne, the toddler under examination, moved quickly from one art form to another clearly demonstrating that very young children are multi modal in their use of aesthetic expression. However for the purposes of this paper music was the focus artistic form.

Why may this research be of importance to the research into early childhood education?

Research into the symbols children use when making music is not as substantial as research done into the area of symbols that children use in the visual arts. Thus a case study with an underlying phenomenological lens may provide a rich ‘still’ into the inimitable inner musical-aesthetic life of a child. The use of music by children is different to their use of visual arts symbols as often times no material, physical product is left behind at the end of their creation-exploration (“play”) time; this makes the capturing of the use of musical symbols and the analysis of such challenging for researchers. I thus argue that the toddler in this case study was able to engage with her musical-aesthetic experiences in a range of ways and at a range of levels, clearly experiencing ‘flow’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992) responding to and using recognizable musical symbols as part of her approach to expanding her own consciousness and thus knowledge of ‘other’ (Whiteman, 2008) and the world.

Philosophical writings into human aesthetics, which can encompass but are not limited to embodiment through the arts, and the nature of being through the arts, originates in the phenomenological writings of Husserl (1970; 1983) where the descriptive analysis of consciousness is proposed as the transcendental foundation for all other sciences (Gallagher, 2015). Later phenomenologists such as Merleau-Ponty (1962) went into considerable detail regarding intentionality, perception and intersubjectivity. All of these facets to the human aesthetic experience are deeply relevant to the research into Corinne’s use of musical symbols and interrelated in many complex, rich ways.
As a sub-theme to this paper I also examine a range of definitions of literacies with a particular emphasis on literacies in the arts. The ability to respond to, use and manipulate musical symbols, as demonstrated by Corinne in this paper, illustrates the toddler’s ability to be literate artistically, oftentimes well before literate with words, which also helps guide us in our educational policy making and planning.

Notably, after reviewing the ‘state of play’ in music education research at present, Young (2016) concludes that not only are the views on how young children relate to music and music making are frequently fragmented and disparate, since they come from the very broad subjects areas of arts therapy, neuroscience, psychoanalysis, developmental psychology to name a few, “there is a shortage of research on very young children from diverse economic, social and cultural backgrounds”. Although this particular statement was made with an emphasis on broadening the nationality and cultural backgrounds of subjects of current research into music, Young’s point is that research into the musical making habits of young children is considerably under-represented at present. It is my hope that this paper fills a small gap in the area of the use of musical literacy and the ability to ‘read’ (however this term may be defined) musical symbols and signs by very young children and that this discussion will provide a springboard from which others may bounce.

A mother-researcher’s perspective on the child in the home, one of the cultural milieus referred to by Young (2016), may then be an important lens through which to see the child’s music making experiences as it becomes a window of intimacy through which to view the toddler’s symbol use in and through music as an art form. Given that children develop in individually nuanced ways and not necessarily according to normative models, and this was one of a number of paradigm shifts noted by Young (2016), this so-called ‘window of intimacy’ may be useful in terms of more phenomenological understandings of musical children and how and why such musical expression is expressed in their daily lives. It is with this in mind that I now proceed to a conversation about cultural influences in the use of musical symbols to convey meaning.
1.3 The cultural influence of learning to use musical symbols to convey meaning

Historically it has been noted that children develop and employ specific symbols in the visual arts (Barrett, 2003; Kellogg, 1969; Wright, 2014). Research in this area is substantial not only because it has been occurring for over seven centuries (Fineberg, 2006; Wright, 2014), but also because children leave behind a tangible, material product after engagement with the artistic process (Gardner & Wolf, 1983; Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi, 1992; Kellogg, 1969). An interaction with music as an art form however leaves behind less tangible material for the adult eye to inspect although the use of video can help capture a child expressing himself or herself through music; however such musical expression is often fleeting and difficult to document.

Symbols that children use in art might include but are not necessarily limited to: the use of formal elements such as spatial arrangement on the page, lines, shapes, use of colour, light and dark, texture and shading (Wright, 2014). Children also often employ a graphic-narrative-embodied style of relating to their worlds and themselves as they make art, and this helps adults understand their art making process at both surface levels (denotation) and deeper levels (connotation) (Wright, 2014). Symbols that children use in music include but are not necessarily limited to vocal sounds, narrative and embodied forms of self-expression, such as the stance and finger motions Corinne uses, as described at the outset of this paper (Dunn & Wright, 2015).

Children aged 4 to 7 can and do use symbols to express themselves musically, and research demonstrates a linear development in children with respect to the use of such symbols (Gromko & Poorman, 1998). Forrester (2009) conducted a case study involving the musical development of a toddler from the ages of 1 – 3. He found strong links between musicality, early word use, interpersonal skill and narrative development. Barrett (1997) reported on ways in which children use idiosyncratic symbols (invented notations) to encode their compositional experiences in music. When viewed as vehicles for conveying meaning invented notations can be seen as precursors to the development of adult literacy. Barrett’s research suggests that, as children become more experienced in encoding their responses, their recordings become less context-bound and more concerned with ideas and concepts. In a case study involving a five-year-old boy, Barrett
(2001) found that the adult understanding of children’s notational inventions could be improved through attentive listening and substantive responding to children’s meaning making as composers/notators. Although her work showed some commonalities in the processes and products of children notating their inventions, it also proved the existence of some anomalies some of which included the fact that children would move back and forth between notational strategies as opposed to following a clear linear development. Further to this, there was evidence in Barrett’s case study that a young child (Max) could identify song structure and melodic phrase even though he represented that structure with pictorial images and with considerable attention to the lyrics, rather than the music.

In a similar vein, Bamberger (1982) was able to ascertain two different types of graphic-based representations of rhythm in children: metric and figural. Building on Bamberger’s (1982) work Smith, Cuddy and Upitis (1994) and Upitis (1991; 1992) found that figural drawing was a more accurate indication of metric understanding than metric drawing. Smith, Cuddy and Upitis (1994) and Upitis (1991; 1992) categorized the levels of graphic representation into two categories as well: mathematical and pictorial.

From a neurological perspective, music appears to possess social benefits that enhance children’s learning from and with other people (Spelke, 2014). Researchers such as Barrett (2005) and Kenny (2016) have promoted the notion of learning through musical communities, enhancing both Wenger (2002) and Bruner’s (1996) respective concepts of ‘communities of practice’ and building knowledge through a ‘community of mutual learners’. In the process, children begin to draw on cultural symbols to make meaning of music.

Corinne, introduced at the outset of this paper, has had cultural exposure to musical meaning through family and daycare settings. Her use of the song “Twinkle” to create meaning is a cultural signifier that allows to her expand her mind and grow herself (Eisner, 2002). Folk culture is used by children of all ages, to explore their emotions and bridge gaps between real and fantasy worlds (Wright, 2014). Being able to draw on the folk music culture of the day allows children to make connections to their families and communities (Kenny, 2016), imagined musical worlds and real musical worlds. Music appears to be the bridge between the form and the formless (Khan, 2015).
Realizing the fundamental connectedness between humans drives the creation of values (Miller, 1986). This allows children and adults to see the world in an holistic way. Orchestrating musical symbols allows children freedom to define themselves in relation to others, to develop worldviews and values. It is thus the aim of this paper to explore symbols that toddlers manipulate when using music to create meaning, and to explore interconnectedness. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s flow theory and the concept of holism in education guide this discourse and Vygotsky’s views on child’s play, the ZPD (discussed later) and the role of the arts in developing children also provide an underpinning theoretical basis for exploring the aesthetic experiences of a toddler and educational implications associated with these.

1.4 Using human aesthetic experience to improve educational outcomes

Early childhood educators, researchers and writers around the world are currently exploring the use of the arts in the encounters that young children have with the world around them (Anning, 2002; Barrett, 2003; Copple & Bredekamp, 2007; Davis, 2008; Davis & Gardner, 1993; Dyson, 1986; Kress, 1997; Matthews, 2004; McArdle & Wright, 2014; Wright, 2012b; Wright, 2013). It is of great importance to address some of the unanswered questions that exist in relation to the way that children learn, perform and understand the arts (Hertzberg, 2001; Jalongo & Stamp, 1997; Nelson, 2002) as such knowledge can use the human aesthetic experience to improve educational outcomes (Robinson, 2010). The links between human aesthetic experience and the capacity for growth or expansion, are noted by Robinson, who states that:

The arts especially address the idea of aesthetic experience. An aesthetic experience is one in which your senses are operating at their peak, when you’re present in the current moment, when you’re resonating with the excitement of this thing you’re experiencing, when you’re fully alive (Robinson, 2010).

It is that exact sense of being ‘present in the current moment’, ‘resonating with the excitement of this thing you’re experiencing’ and ‘when you’re fully alive’ (Robinson, 2010) that allows human beings to live life in a ‘peak’ zone and to be highly creative and we know that creativity generates solutions (Cropley, 1999). Compare the Robinson
(2010) statement with this one by Csikszentmihalyi, who observes that creative adult
playfulness is marked by the following traits:

“they (creative adults) concentrate their attention on a limited stimulus field,
forget personal problems, lose their sense of time and of themselves, feel
competent and in control, and have a sense of harmony and union with their
surroundings . . . they cease to worry about whether the activity will be
productive or whether it will be rewarded . . . they have entered a state of flow”
(Csikszentmihalyi, 2000b, p. 182)

We know that children use play to learn (Matthews, 2004) but it appears that arts media
may facilitate this sense of flow that can arise during play allowing children (and adults)
to expand their minds (Eisner, 2002). This state of flow can be experienced by young and
old alike: young ‘Cush-cush’ from the vignette at the outset of this paper appears to have
been experiencing Csikszentmihalyi’s (2000b) state of flow as she sang ‘Twinkle,
Twinkle’. Intrinsically, Corinne’s experience of flow involved but was not limited to the
following features: her attention was directed to a ‘limited stimulus field’, she ‘lost sense
of time and herself’, she ‘had a sense of harmony and union with her environment about
her’ and she experienced the moment with little apparent regard for any particular
outcome (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Notable too was the fact that Corinne was using
music as an expressive art form in order to transport herself, or experience flow, to be
creative. Corinne’s slow rhythmic approach to the singing of the children’s nursery song
and her body movements in time to her singing allowed her an almost meditative and
introspective perspective whilst she played. And Corinne played in a range of ways
(Bruner, 1964; Bruner, 2009a; Vygotsky, 1967): she played with the words, she played
with the rhythm, she played with the stickers, she played with her hand, she played with
time and she played with the moment. Although the notion of ‘logic and sequence’ as
mentioned in the abstract for this paper may not appear to concur with the notion of being
‘at one with one’s surrounds’, the logic and the sequencing is present and embedded
within the art form she is using to express herself. For example, the rhythm, the lyrics and
the melody to “Twinkle” all provide the structure, or the ‘logic and the sequence’;
Corinne uses that embedded structure, logic and sequence to experience flow
(Csikszentmihalyi, 1992).
1.5 Arts forms and flow

Arts forms, music in particular, can be conducive to experiencing flow; Csikszentmihalyi knew this and this is why he said:

Music, which is organized auditory information, helps organize the mind that attends to it, and therefore reduces psychic entropy, or the disorder we experience when random information interferes with goals. Listening to music wards off boredom and anxiety, and when seriously attended to, it can induce flow experiences (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992, p.109).

Of course one does not have to use just arts form to experience flow since any vehicle that interests a person may be used and such flow activities can include “play, art, pageantry, ritual and sport” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992, pp. 6, 72). Flow allows a person to experience “a state where people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter and that the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at a great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it” thus characterizing happiness in part. This need to characterize happiness was what inspired Csikszentmihalyi (1992) to develop a theory of ‘optimal experience’ in the first instance and it was this optimal experience so characteristic of people who enjoyed themselves he labeled as flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992, p. 4). Thus Corinne has engaged with an optimal experience when she relaxed into her poised yet serene performance of “Twinkle”; clearly nothing else mattered at that ‘peak’ moment (Robinson, 2010), she was engaging with an ‘aesthetic experience’ (Robinson, 2010) and she was doing it for the sake of doing it (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). In singing “Twinkle”, and using kinesthetic responses and a meditative pose (Freedberg & Gallese, 2007) Corinne has conjoined the flow experiences of play and music to experience the manifestation of flow, which was in part a reflective moment of happiness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992).

Music for Csikszentmihalyi (1992) is a way humans feel reassurance in their lives and avoid feeling chaos since ‘the soothing sounds of music restore order in their consciousness’ (p.109). Consciousness, for Csikszentmihalyi, exists in terms of its functionality and its function is to ‘represent information about what is happening outside
and inside the organism in such a way that it can be evaluated and acted upon by the body’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992, p. 24). Consciousness ‘corresponds to subjectively experienced reality’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992, p. 26). Consciousness is thus inextricably linked to attention and intention (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). Music thus provides an ideal medium for ‘subjectively experienced reality’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992), which induces flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). Music also provides an ideal medium for processing internal and external information and translating that into physical body motion, that is, ‘evaluating and acted upon by the body’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992, p. 24; cf. Freedberg & Gallese, 2007), as was demonstrated by Corinne’s interaction with music. A conclusion we may thus draw is that the deeper and more intricate the physical learning of music the greater the potential for internalizing, ‘ordering of consciousness’ and reflection (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). Any deeper and more intricate learning may need to be done away from parental pressure or adult definitions of play and engagement as this may mechanize the learning and exploration and inhibit flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992, p.112). This may be because the creative experiences of adults and children differ qualitatively (Cropley, 1999). Adult conditioning can inhibit adult experience of the arts (Wright, 2012b).

Csikszentmihalyi spoke about three levels of engagement with music: (1) listening to music as a sensory experience where one responds to the quality of sound, (2) one can engage with music in the analogic mode of listening where the skill to evoke feelings and images based on the patterns of sound arises and (3) listening to music can involve the analytic mode where one’s attention shifts to the structural elements of music, instead of the sensory or narrative ones (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992, p.109). Although Corinne had not experienced overt or obvious ‘disorder’ or ‘chaos’ prior to her singing of “Twinkle”, there appears to be an aspect to her performance that suggests she was seeking out ‘order in consciousness’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992), ‘joining everything to a meaningful pattern’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992, p. 7). ‘Joining everything to a meaningful pattern’ in this case involves Corinne using musical symbols, or ‘patterns of sounds’ to invoke feelings and images and also to create ‘order’ in her self (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). And although listening to her self was an important part of her ‘musical-flow’ encounter, she was also performing the song to herself; ‘playing’, ‘listening’ and ‘performing’ can apparently induce flow, creating that ‘sense of union and harmony with one’s surrounds’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). Hearing and feeling the reverberation in her small body as she
sang the nursery rhyme, the feeling of her hands gently and rhythmically playing with the stickers as she sang and the jutting out of her hip were all physical, sensorial modes she was using to ‘self-regulate’ (Barrett, 2009), to ‘self-make’ (Barrett, 2009); she was invoking the analogic mode of listening to evoke feelings since she exuded serenity and she was employing the analytic mode of self-listening to ‘harmoniously order her consciousness’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992, p.6). The link between the desire for ‘order in consciousness’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992), a need for structure and the use of music to provide that structure or ‘regulation of thought and action’ (Barrett, 2009) is clear from Corinne’s experience. The use of music facilitated reflection, meditation and movement for Corinne at that point in time.

Csikszentmihalyi argues that during flow, the notion of the self is lost (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). The self, according to Csikszentmihalyi is one of the most important elements of consciousness; it is shaped by attention just as attention is shaped by the self (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992, p.34). The self is what slips below the threshold of awareness during flow or ‘optimal experience’ and when we are not preoccupied with ourselves we have a chance to expand who we are (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). According to Csikszentmihalyi (1992), the organization of the self is more ‘complex’ than it had been before prior to flow (p. 41). Thus complexity comes into being as a result of ‘flow’ because of either differentiation or integration (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). Differentiation is the separation of oneself from others whilst integration moves towards union with others with ideas and entities beyond the self (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). This position is similar to Khan’s (2015), who believed that music helps us to concentrate or mediate independently of thought (Khan, 2015). Corinne thus lost the consciousness of her self in this experience and she has expanded who she is by connecting with ideas and entities outside her self. Music was the artistic medium by which she connected to ideas and entities outside of herself. The song is what Corinne uses to sustain and focus her attention, she regulates her own thought and action and she is practicing an important musical skill whose acquisition requires repetition (Barrett, 2009). The soothing, rhythmic kinesthetic gestures and stance she employs help her to ‘self-make’ (Barrett, 2009); this statement calls to mind Csikszentmihalyi’s (1992) words that ‘the soothing sounds of music restore order in their consciousness’ (p.109). Corinne’s experience and use of music in this instance is both concrete and abstract since she employs a recognizable tune (the concrete aspect) but is using it to expand her experience of her
own consciousness (the abstract aspect) (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992), or to regulate the self (Barrett, 2009). Yet the use of music here is also abstract in the sense that it emanates from within Corinne’s consciousness; she selected the song as a means to focus her attention (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). The rhythm of “Twinkle”, taught to her via her cultural milieu and family setting, the lyrics, the tune and her ability to replicate the pitching of the tune all comprise aurally embedded musical symbols, held within Corinne’s consciousness, as a means to engage with flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992).

1.6 Criticisms of the Flow Theory

Critics of flow theory, when it first emerged, found it too mystical in nature and more suited to Western styles of thinking (Sun, 1987). Yet the theory was still deemed a universal human experience to the extent that many fields of study and research have adopted flow as a measure for research; for instance flow has been studied in the contexts of advertising, sociology, education, work related activities, anthropology, religion, play and leisure (Carl, 1994). Carl (1994) also noted that, for flow to occur, there needed to be a balance between the challenge and the skill level of the individual, and that even when these were matched, flow was not always guaranteed.

Csikszentmihalyi (1998) noted that most of his original research had centered on male, not female artists, which posed an initial bias. In what appears to be an attempt to address this perceived imbalance, he presented a chapter on “Women, work and flow” in his book “Optimal Experience: Psychological Studies of Flow in Consciousness” (1998).

Another critical observation of Csikszentmihalyi’s (1998) work is that he provides very little explanation as to how to enter the state of flow; instead he tends to report on it, naming those who find it easy to enter the state of flow as “autotelic personalities” (Carl, 1994). Csikszentmihalyi initially wanted to understand what motivated artists at an intrinsic level. He stated that “regularities in human behaviour don’t just happen by chance”. The concept of “sublimation” (i.e., the symbolic expression of the artist’s true desires which are repressed instinctual cravings) may have explained the intrinsic motivation of many artists up to a point. However it did not explain all facets of the type
of motivation that saw artists enjoy what they were doing for the sake of what they were
doing (Csikszentmihalyi, 1998).

In the mid-sixties, Csikszentmihalyi reported, few psychologists were studying intrinsic
motivation, as many still saw extrinsic motivation and reward systems as the key driver
for human behaviour. One of the few exceptions to this widely held view was that of
Abraham Maslow who distinguished between process and product (Maslow, 1965).
Maslow’s (1965) notion of “self-actualization”, (i.e., the need to discover one’s
potentialities and limitation through intense activity and experience), was in part
responsible for driving Csikszentmihalyi’s subsequent research. Csikszentmihalyi then
described how he turned his attention to the literature on play in children, since it dealt
with intrinsically based activity. He learned, as did others (deCharms, 1968) that if people
were rewarded for doing things they had initially chosen spontaneously, their intrinsic
motivation in relation to these tasks would decrease. Thus there is a rich history and
framework out of which Csikszentmihalyi’s research arose and in spite of aforementioned
perceived imbalances, the theory of flow has generally withstood the scrutiny of those
who have opted to use it as a framework for thinking.

1.7 Young children, self-making and learning to control inner life through the arts

Drawing on the work of Piaget (1962; 2013), Matthews (2004) notes that the child’s
learning processes involve ‘self-locomotion’, a concept that embraces the notions of self-
direction, self-initiation and self-control. In employing self-locomotion (Matthews, 2004)
children are ‘self-making’ (Barrett, 2009). Although Matthews (2004) discussed these
concepts in relation to art and the child’s need to explore their worlds through physical
media, the concept is relevant to Corinnee’s experience since music does not emanate from
a child without first passing via the vocal cords and establishing resonance and
reverberation, also physical media. Thus we note the initiative, or self-locomotion
(Matthews, 2004) Corinne took to exploring her external and internal worlds
concurrently; the immediacy of that link-up is obvious but so was her relaxed, meditative
state. What is interesting about Corinne’s self-locomotion in this instance is not just the
physical stance and the kinesthetic aspect to what she does as described in the vignette
but also the fact that she intended music and “Twinkle” the song as the medium for inner
exploration (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992), she put her **attention** on the task to explore her consciousness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992), and that clearly her music emanates from an abstract part of her self (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992) since she is self-directing and that self-direction comes from within (Matthews, 2004).

In his discussion on infancy, early childhood education and the child’s use of art, Matthews (2004) draws on Piaget’s (1962; 2013) theory that action for a child is gradually interiorized in the brain to become thinking. This thinking process gradually clarifies for the child what the self is in relation to the world, hence the significance of self-locomotion (the child’s innate desire to explore the world and self-initiate his or her learning) (Matthews, 2004) or self-making (Barrett, 2009). Corinne is using music to develop her thinking skills which is a linguistic discourse in and of its own right (Best, 2000a; Best, 2000b); her self-locomotion or her desire to orient her self in relation to the world around her (Matthew, 2004) prompts her to use music as a means to ‘order consciousness’ which entails thinking skills (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). Corinne’s use of music in this way is thus a great symbol of a child’s desire to learn (Matthews, 2004), to grow (Matthews, 2004), to expand (Eisner, 2002), and to use, here, musical play to develop her understanding of signs, symbols and representations (Best, 2000a; Best, 2000b; Matthews, 2004). The important relationship between play and exercising skills in symbolization, representation and expression applies to other media as well (Best, 2000a; Best, 2000b; Matthews, 2004).

It is interesting to note that when Csikszentmihalyi (1992) later discusses how we can develop the **autotelic self**, the part of the self that transforms and translates potential threats into enjoyable challenges thereby maintaining its inner harmony (p. 209), he describes four stages in developing that ‘autotelic self’ and they are: (1) setting goals, (2) becoming immersed in the activity, (3) paying attention to what is happening as concentration leads to involvement and (4) learning to enjoy immediate experience. By the time we reach adulthood, Csikszentmihalyi suggests (1992), we have different modes of analytical thinking that necessitate a more formal explanation of how best to reach out for flow, as demonstrated through the above four ‘rules’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992); the transition from child to adult styles of engagement with creativity or flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992) is a qualitative one (Cropley, 1999). Children seem to enjoy flow more frequently and with a greater sense of immediacy than adults because they
don’t need to think about it, they just do it and that is one of the ‘tricks’ to flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). Although adults may have to learn (or perhaps, re-learn) what it means to ‘enjoy immediate experience’, and children don’t, it is ‘the ordering of consciousness’ for children and adults when they engage in ‘immediate experience’ that allows them the freedom to learn and grow from the experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992, p.109); children don’t necessarily need to learn or re-learn a formula prior to engaging in an activity that will induce flow, as adults may do.

Learning to control inner life is the key to determining the quality of lives and thus the sense of personal happiness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). This is tantamount to self-locomotion, self-direction (Matthews, 2004) or self-making (Barrett, 2009). Corinne appears centered, thoughtful, at peace and happy in this process of learning to control inner life, her swayed posture, her reflective stance and her soothing hand actions suggest she is ‘happy’ because of her ‘inner harmony’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992, p.9). Csikszentmihalyi argued that happiness must be prepared for, cultivated and defended privately and when he did this he referred to a quote by John Stuart Mill, the very influential nineteenth-century English-speaking philosopher:

“No great improvements in the lot of mankind are possible, until a great change takes place in the fundamental constitution of their modes of thought.”
(Csikszentmihalyi, 1992, p.9)

Although contextually Mill was discussing the greater good and political power, it is important to know that when one pays attention to the inner thought life of the individual this can impact on the inner thought life of the collective. Thus we may not imagine that a child is ready to ‘privately defend happiness’ consciously but it seems Corinne ‘defends her happiness’ unconsciously, simply by engaging so flowingly with her “Twingle, Twingle, won wonger” song. Her external pose and sense of harmony is naturally reflecting her internal sense of pose and harmony and it is no mistake that music, richly embedded with explicit and implied harmony is the medium for this act of self-expression and search for meaning (Best, 2000a; Best, 2000b; Wright, 2012a). It is also interesting to note Csikszentmihalyi’s linkage of the notion of harmony to the human desire to ‘order consciousness’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). Music with its explicit and implied harmony
may thus be the best medium for ‘ordering consciousness’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992), particularly when encountered within playful contexts.

1.8 Play, young children and play-based learning

The notion of play is central to discussions about young children and the way they learn (Anderson & Hilton, 1997; Barrett, 2003; Barrett, 2005; Eisner, 2002; Kress, 1995; Marjanovic-Shane & Beljanski-Ristic, 2008; Nilsson, 2009; Otte, 1995; Pascoe, 1998; Piaget, 1962; Peim, 2002; Rushton, Juola-Rushton & Larkin, 2010; Sheridan, Howard & Alderson, 2010; Vygotsky, 1967; Vygotsky, 1986; Wright, 2003a; Wright, 2005; Wright, 2013). Vygotsky (1967) has argued that children’s play comes largely from unsatisfied desires - a generalized wish fulfillment - and is often about their relationship to the adult within which they interact. Since Vygotsky (1967) also noted that play is arrested in intellectually underdeveloped children and those children with a limited affective sphere, it is important to examine what may assist both children (and adults) affected by arrested play development. This would be with a view to using any arts-based activities that can expand the human aesthetic experience, drawing children into a richer experience of the world around them, not just as stand-alone therapeutic or educational events but with both therapeutic and educational perspectives richly intertwined with opportunities for symbolic exploration and manipulation. It would also be a view to developing the ability to read and interpret symbols, thus expanding the mind (Eisner, 2002). This is not dissimilar to Maslow’s (1965) notion of ‘self-actualization’, elaborated upon later.

Given that research overwhelmingly supports play-based learning for children (Bruner, 1964; Bruner, 2009a; Eisner, 2002; Kress, 1995; Marjanovic-Shane & Beljanski-Ristic, 2008; Matthews, 2004; Vygotsky, 1967) it is important to consider the role the adult has with the child in relation to play. In being ‘interlocutors’ with children where children can and do learn much from us (Wright, 2013), we are their role-models (Matthews, 2004); thus we have a responsibility to role model and understand play, happiness and cohesion ourselves. The inference for Corinne then is that her cultural milieu, her interactions with adults, and the degree to which that part of her life is playful can both expand and inhibit her sense of play just as it might for any other child. Adult awareness of both inhibiting and enhancing factors for childhood learning are important for the advancement, growth
and expansion of society (Anning, 2002; Matthews, 2004; Rolnick and Grunewald, 2003; Schweinhart, 2004). Barrett (2009) explained this when she researched joint music making in families, showing how such experiences are foundational to the creative development of a child. Such experiences also consolidate the use of music to help children regulate their thoughts and actions, much like Csikszentmihalyi’s (1992) notion of how the self is shaped by attention, just as attention is shaped by the self (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992, p.34), just as Corinne regulated her thoughts and actions through music.

Matthews (2004) raises the issue that whilst many educators may notionally deem play to be important in the lives of children, play often comes to be adult-supervised and adult-dominated tasks designed to fulfill learning tasks deemed worthwhile by the adult. Anning (2002) noted a similar state when she documented how children lose confidence in themselves as artists if adults they work with at school do not encourage them to engage with art for its own sake instead of viewing it as a precursor to literacy. Often the education system is preparing children for goals that become obsolete by the time the child leaves school (Matthews, 2004). Matthews (2004) argues for supporting hypothetical worlds that children create on the grounds that this work-play that children engage in helps them prepare for ‘probabilistic futures’. This is similar to Marjanovic-Shane and Beljanski-Ristic’s (2008) notion of fictitious ‘playworlds’ or ‘play-frames’ where adults and peers explore the relationship between reality and imagination. Media that encourage children to exercise skills in symbolization, representation and expression such as art and music (not the only ones of course) support the exploration of hypothetical worlds, thus allowing the child time for ‘complete freeplay’ (Matthews, 2004). According to Matthews (2004) we allow the child to follow the Vygotskian model of separating words from objects and actions from meanings. In allowing children freedom from the constraints of reality as defined by others, they develop ‘combinatorial flexibility’ (Bruner, 1964); they make meaning from their experiences (Wright1997; Wright, 2012a). The learner is an active part of his or her own learning and continually structures and restructures that learning via selective perceptions of certain aspects of that environment (Bruner, 2009a). Corinne has combined numerous factors to take ownership of her own learning (Bruner, 2009a) and meaning making (Wright, 2012a) and this allows her to structure and restructure her concept of the world around her (Bruner, 2009a), in and through the art form of music. Corinne took ownership of her own musical learning by
thinking “in” the art form of music, which is inextricably tied to the ordering of consciousness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992), as we shall now discuss.

1.9 Thinking “in” as opposed to thinking “about” arts forms

Best (2000a) strongly endorses thinking “in” as opposed to thinking “about” arts forms. Best (2000a) emphasized that the arts have their own discursive language by which we make and communicate meaning. Best (2000a) points out that words and numbers are not the only way in which we can make use of the intellect; rather, still and moving images, abstract sounds, pitches and textures are also fertile grounds for the application of the intellect. Best (2000a) was a composer and believed that the making of art, not just the discussing of it, was of prime importance for the development of the aesthetic sense. Corinne was clearly thinking in the art form of music, as she was an active maker of music, abstract sounds, pitches and textures in her musical imagination and so all of these aspects to her musical experience as described in the opening vignette, would have enabled her to think ‘in’ the art form of music.

Other intellectual aspects that a child draws on when engaging with music as an art form include but are not necessarily limited to pitch, form, structure, choice, texture, colour, acoustics and devices (Best, 2000b); all these technical aspects of music constitute intellectual and aesthetic engagement with music. In an analogy between architectural design and music, Best (2000b) refers to the integration of tension, compression and design when composing music. Corinne certainly employed her own varying degrees of tension when singing her nursery song; she chose a relaxed or loose tension, which reflected her inner self-direction (Matthews, 2004), she made choices about vowels and sounds she wanted to convey within her relaxed state and she compressed those choices into her own design, her own unique expression and personal performance. Corinne also used musical imagination and craft to shape and present her performance (Best, 2000b). These intellectual devices or aspects to a child’s engagement with music as an art form constitute thinking “in” music as an art form. Thinking “in” music as an art form is thus an important aspect of this discussion as it is linked to the ability of music to order consciousness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992) and also to its ability to expand mind and the musical imagination, which are manifestations of human intellect (Eisner, 2002).
If Best (2000a) is correct in stating that “all disciplines are dialogues of one another”, then we may understand that Corinne’s expression in the art form of music could symbolize many things for her in other art forms and in her life in general. This may also be why Dunn and Wright (2015) note the syncretism of children when they rely on the arts to express themselves. The syncretistic behaviour of children and their use of art forms may constitute ‘dialogues for other disciplines’. It may be quite appropriate then to understand Corinne’s behaviour as described in the vignette at the opening of this paper as multi-layered with multi meanings. As Best (2000a) says, “a true, or full experience is something we so completely go through that it can be described in multiple ways and from different perspectives, each of which is incomplete without the others. It is a synthesis, a balanced composite in which “experience” in the contemporary sense is but one segment.” Thus thinking ‘in’ any art form as opposed to thinking about or discussing art form is extremely complex and multi layered, rich in all its aspects.

The notion of thinking “in” the art form is similar to Csikszentmihalyi’s (1992) concept that music emanates from an abstract part of the self. If music has the capacity to emanate from the abstract part of the self then this may explain why music and other art forms help us to think metaphorically and in the language or the literacy of the art form. Thus to think “in” music we would need to be familiar with structural aspects of music and its emotional connotations for us in order to be familiar with the ‘discursive’ aspect to the language of music. Yet also, when we think “in” music, music is abstract by nature, so we are also thinking in abstractions when engaging with music. As Best (2000b) indicates, the abstract musical self that is drawn up and employed by an individual is about the systematic use of procedural devices (in Corinne’s case, a pre-acquired nursery rhyme with its own innate structure) and the working out of puzzles and intricate structurings (in Corinne’s case, demonstrated by her reflective, meditative stance and the playing with the stickers). Thus, it seems that the abstract part of the self (abstract thought being most suited to music as an art form), is what leads and is lead by thinking “in” the art form.

Best (2000a) believed that music as an art form is superior in its ability to express ‘humility’ (Best, 2000a). This is because we don’t always have to understand all of the technical facets of the art form in order to engage with it (Best, 2000a; Livermore, 2003). Best’s (2000a) argument that music is by nature ‘humble’ indicates that music as an art
form does not force us to engage with it technically in order to enjoy it or instinctively use it to express deeper aspects of the self (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992), as Corinne did at the outset of this paper. Thus a work or a piece of music may have great technical prowess applied to its technical construction, such as a Mozart or Beethoven symphony, but a person who is not trained or skilled in such technical, intellectual devices and their applications, can still aesthetically appreciate and emotionally engage with the music of these two composers. This is what makes music as an art form, ‘humble’, according to Best (2000a). The ‘humility’ of music allows everyone engagement, even little children, and in Matthews’ (2004) view, permits the child to self-direct from within; the musical experience, the song, the music making becomes a kind of a bridge for this musical expansion and intellectual use of musical imagination. The inner musical life of the child is self-directed by the child and expanded by the child. The inner musical life of the child is the inner musical imagination, where musical ideas, conjoined with other precepts and notions about the living world, emerge and are grown in a consciousness that is focused on play and grounded in a state of innocence.

Best (2000b) demonstrates a metaphysical aspect to his thinking when he says, “those who acknowledge categories of body, mind and spirit must make a choice between trichotomy or unity, one in which separate categories are mystically juxtaposed, or one that espouses the paradox of unity-in-distinction or distinction-in-unity.” Best (2000a) infers that discourses other than speech-oriented ones or text-bound ones are required to think about and describe musical experience and that such discourse emanates from the art forms themselves. Therefore if we are to accept inner musical discourse as unity-in-distinction or distinction-in-unity, we may understand its power to bind the body, mind and spirit parts of us, individually and collectively. Khan (2015), also from the metaphysical perspective, believed that music ‘helped us concentrate or mediate independently of thought’. Corinne’s introspective stance as described in the vignette suggests a concentration mediated independently of thought. It appears that music, which ‘orders consciousness’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992), has stand-alone value in the inner musical life or imagination of a child and constitutes a language in and of its own right. It is a mediator’s role in the consciousness and may be why it speaks across many different bridges and cultures. It has the capacity to help us merge body, mind and spirit (Best, 2000a) and this merging allows us to concentrate and mediate independently of thought.
(Khan, 2015). So music’s role in the consciousness of the human being is extremely multi-faceted and complex.

Grounding in experiential knowledge, through music, is an important factor in the support for arts programs in education systems. Dunn and Wright (2015) posit that, even though teachers recognize a need for students to participate in arts forms as means for exploration and learning, opportunities for discursive, artistic modes of communications can be hampered in school contexts (Best, 2000a; Best, 2000b). The very thing we want children to do, which is to communicate in a wide variety of styles, to make art, seems to be something we are not always having success with (Best, 2000a; Best, 2000b).

Wright (2012) states that “artistry involves open-endedness, and open-endedness capitalizes on emergent features and relationships, through exploration and discovery (p. 206).” She also argues that the classroom is a place where collective meaning and artistic representation can be mediated by social conventions. It is in translating the world of the inner private person to a state of identifying with the outer public world that the ‘emergent’ communicative styles and preferences arise (Wright, 2012). The communication between the inner self and the outer self (or what we show/use to communicate with the outer world) is naturally one way of interpreting artistic experience. Hence, the agentive nature of the child’s own investigations and inner dialogues need to be actively supported by adults (Dunn & Wright, 2015). Giving children the opportunities to have quality arts experiences on a daily basis (Dunn & Wright, 2015) is akin to McArdle and Wright’s (2014) belief that children should be using their primary languages or first-order signs and symbols systems of art and play to (1) make meaning of the world and (2) develop the second order systems of reading and writing. The embodied and empathetic learning inherent to arts experiences facilitates constructive thinking, insight, ability and divergent thinking (McArdle & Wright, 2014). Such thinking ‘in’ the arts often draws upon an imaginative and playful attitude, not only of the children themselves, but also of the adults engaging with children during the artful encounters. Such thinking in music as an art form allows children the space in which to self-direct (Matthews, 2004) and grow the musical imagination (Eisner, 2002). This inner work constitutes the growth of inner self and binds body, mind, spirit (Best, 2000a) for the purpose of mediating the abstract self independently of thought (Khan, 2015).
1.10 Adult playfulness in supporting learning

Even the business world has noted a need for a more playful attitude on the part of its employees and so has turned to artists to help understand how workers can best ‘play’ in their work (Meisiek & Hatch, 2008). The reason for this is that in an instrumental work environment, workers focus on the object or goal, instead of focusing on the meaning of the objects surrounding them (Meisiek & Hatch, 2008). Believing that the artistic process, which employs play, turns employees’ attention away from practical matters towards reflection and self-understanding, business has come to understand that ‘play’ allows employees to attain an appreciation of their reality, giving them a chance to both value and relate to that reality (Meisiek & Hatch, 2008).

Csikszentmihalyi (1992) notes that individuals who part from the norm – ‘heroes, saints, sages, artists, poets, madmen and criminals’ (p. 28) – look for different things in life than most others do. Flow’s best moments occur when a person’s body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something that is difficult yet worthwhile (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). Pressures such as ‘psychotic entropy’ have the potential to interfere with or minimize what humans can achieve in relation to flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). If we seek that humans, children and adults alike have ‘flow’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992) and that we resonate at our ‘peak’ (Robinson, 2010), we are essentially seeking ‘ordering of the consciousness’ at both individual and collective levels (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). The potential for ‘flow’ between the child mindset about play and the adult mindset about play improves; we resonate at our ‘peak’ (Robinson, 2010). We also come to see that subjective reality is possibly just as important as perceived objective reality is.

There is significantly less research into adult playfulness compared to child playfulness (Proyer & Ruch, 2011; Proyer, 2012a; Proyer, 2012b). Experiencing a state of flow in adulthood is linked to not only adult notions of ‘playfulness’ but also happiness, group cohesion amongst adults, creativity, spontaneity, intrinsic motivation, quality of life, positive attitudes to the workplace, innovative behaviour and academic achievement (Barnett, 2007; Proyer & Ruch, 2011; Yu, Wu, Chen & Lin, 2007). Crawford and Caltabiano (2011) have also presented arguments for humour programs, also a form of
adult play, suggesting that they may assist in well-being by increasing self-efficacy, positive thinking, optimism and perceptions of control, while decreasing negative thinking, perceptions of stress, depression, anxiety and stress. Although there may be qualitatively different experiences of creativity between children and adults (Cropley, 1999), it is nevertheless important to link the two when considering that an adult conceptual framework is brought to bear whilst studying children and their play habits (Barrett, 2009). Adults role-model creativity to children and children attune themselves to that role modeling; this points deserves some attention (Barrett, 2009; Barrett, 2011; Matthews, 2004).

Proyer and Ruch (2011) suggest that adult playfulness is a state of virtuousness which is robustly associated with ‘good character’. In light of this then, was Corinne developing her character when she used music as the artistic medium through which to meditatively transport herself into a state of inward self-reflection? Was she adding value to her world and life in some way that was important to her as a toddler? Certainly Corinne’s appearance of relaxation and deep contemplation and the fact that she took her time over the whole activity seems to indicate that at some level she was creating meaning.

Corinne’s choice of nursery song “Twinkle” with its rhythm, pulse, melody and lyrics arose from a prior link in that she learned the nursery song through her social, family and daycare settings. She was drawing on prior learning and appropriating this kinesthetically, aesthetically, aurally, emotionally, tonally, musically, artistically, meditatively, thoughtfully, harmoniously and intrinsically. In drawing on her own rendition of the nursery song, Corinne has personalized the song and this was how she was enjoying an aesthetic experience. She was linking outer harmony with ‘inner harmony’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992), ‘ordering consciousness’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992); she was ‘self-making’ (Barrett, 2009).

1.11 The relationship between the child and adult meaning-making process

Drawing links across meaning-making processes in both early childhood and adulthood enables insight into aesthetic experience for humans, human creativity, and the lateral thinking skills incumbent upon us as a race if we are to plan effectively for our future
(Cadwell, 1997; De Bono 1992; Sloan & MacHale, 2005; Waks, 1997). Indeed, it is believed that creative, lateral thinking is necessary for the survival of the human race (Bamford, 2006; De Bono, 1992; Seng, 2000; Waks, 1997) especially if we think in terms of confronting change through enterprise, technological literacy, problem-solving skills, initiative, creativity, leadership skills, to name just a few aptitudes that employers search for these days (Bamford, 2006; Seng, 2000). The “fundamental constitution of the modes of thought” needs to be capable of change (Mill, in Csikszentmihalyi, 1992, p. 9). Exactly how that aesthetic experience enables us to ‘resonate our senses at a peak level’ (Robinson, 2010) in and through the arts is an issue I would like to explore further.

Any encounter that draws on the adult-child relationship where the adult functions as the ‘interlocutor’ (Wright, 2012a; Wright, 2013) is one that allows the child to function within her ‘zone of proximal development’ (Vygotsky, 1980) while facilitating observation of those unique and individual processes the child undergoes. Vygotsky’s (1980) zone of proximal development has been defined as ‘the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance’ (Vygotsky, 1980). A body of authors (cf Chaiklin, 2003; Forman, Minick & Stone, 1993) argues for the expansion of the meaning of ZPD through examination of social dynamics and systems of motives, goals, values and beliefs that are closely tied to all forms of social practice. The role of interlocutor (Wright, 2012a) in engaging with children within their ZPD applies to not just adults but any person with the knowledge and experience to nurture problem-solving skills of another. It find parallels to the Montessori (Montessori, 1917; Montessori, 1965) notion of older children in multi-age classes, acting as teachers to the younger children; they may not have training that adult interlocutors (Wright, 2013) may have but nevertheless they provide links between the child’s learning and the older peer’s learning as represented by the ZPD theoretical framework (Vygotsky, 1967; Vygotsky, 1986). An adult assessing the ZPD of a child’s creative or artistic or ‘flow’ potential would need to have a fairly broad aesthetic platform from which to determine the distance between ascertained problem solving ability and potential for problem solving.

Yet the point that children model themselves on adults/guardians and adult/guardian behaviour has significant implications for those very adults or older persons as they are
role-modeling approaches to aesthetic development and value creation and character building in young people (Anning, 2002; Matthews, 2004; Wright, 2012a). Educators across all levels of schooling in Australia are modeling ‘metacognition’ in their teaching - the capacity for students to reflect on and manage their own thinking - but also ‘emphasize that such knowledge, skills and behavior are important to lifelong learning’ (Victorian Essential Learning Standards [VELS], online, 2004); after all, the logic implies, what does any education mean if one cannot draw wisely on the life knowledge and ‘lived’ skills one has gained in order to manage life’s challenges? This presents difficulties when considering that many teachers, particularly at the secondary education level, have been trained to teach specific subject matter as opposed to a broader and more far-ranging curriculum that may encompass discovery of and expansion of moral capacity (Burton, Horowitz & Abeles, 2000; Dei, 2002) and also ‘flow’ and creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Many educators and researchers argue that gearing students towards a utilitarian approach of their own thinking ability is incumbent on schools as children spend so much of their lives in schools; children and teenagers need the skills with which to manage social problems and life problems (Perkins, 2006). The notion of ‘metacognition’ therefore clearly has implications for the study of human aesthetic engagement with the arts as engagement with the arts facilitates the type of reflective thinking (Davis, 2000; Johnson, 2002; McMahon, 1991) that develops self-regulation (Hetland et al., 2013). Perkins (2006) suggests in fact that too much of our current education is focused on surface knowledge and does not encourage students to work towards the unknown as opposed to the known; his work focuses on active understanding and being able to take the surface knowledge to a point where students can manipulate that knowledge in a range of complex, real-world scenarios. The arts are typically quite powerful channels for such explorations (Livermore, 2003). As per Seng’s (2000) view, the manipulation of any knowledge gained implies a sense of creative thinking skills that can engender the ability to draw links across numerous domains of thought and research (Raab, Johnson & Heekeren (Eds.), 2009). As per Robinson’s (2010) view the arts may hold the key to achieving this active understanding since active understanding may be affiliated with resonance and ‘peak experiences’.

I would argue that the arts induce expansion or mind creation, (Eisner, 2002), or a state of mind that promotes the growth of self-awareness, and in fact Corinne’s musical presentation as recounted at the commencement of this paper presents an example of such
expansion. Barrett’s (2009) ‘self-making’ and Matthews’ (2004) ‘self-direction’ are ways of expanding mind (Eisner, 2002), becoming self-aware. The arts in and of their own right do not necessarily achieve this expansion alone; there are of course many, varied and unique ways and means of achieving the outcomes of raising the awareness of self: this can be by improving happiness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992), the ‘ordering of consciousness’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992) human character (Proyer & Ruch, 2011) and enriching our lives aesthetically (Livermore, 2003; Robinson, 2010). Corinne was travelling a pathway between her extraneous world and her inner world, her Inner Subjective Life and she was mediator between her objective and subjective realities. She was using music, rhythm, pulse, tactile encounters with stickers, body pose, gesture, mood, flow, union with her surroundings to achieve all of this, and it may be said that perhaps no amount of words or description can truly capture every aspect of what she was encountering. The travelling of that pathway between External Self and Internal Self was an examination of the Self, a growth of Self-awareness and expansion (Eisner, 2002). Music as an art form that is resonant, has, in Corinne’s world, been a medium for her senses resonating at their peak (Robinson, 2010). The music, the singing, the resonances Corinne would have felt whilst singing, the self-making (Barrett, 2009), the expansion of mind (Eisner, 2002), the ordering of consciousness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992), the use of tactile modes of rhythmic soothing, all contribute to Corinne’s aesthetic experience which enabled Corinne’s senses to resonate at their peak; she was in union with her surroundings (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). Given the richness in which a child opts to expand her consciousness, given the multi-modal facets to such growth opportunities, there is something holistic about this approach I now wish to explore.

### 1.12 ‘Holism’ in relation to children and arts education

The notion of crafting children into human beings that can manage their own thinking and applying the skills of ‘lifelong learning’ as situated in an ‘holistic’ context is pervading many areas of education at present and often also has links to the development of ‘global citizens’ (Edwards, 2002; Malaguzzi, 1993; Maslow, 1965; McArdle & Wright, 2014; VELS, 2004). The final contribution a person can make back to society is the focus of such a paradigm (Edwards, 2002; Forbes & Martin, 2004; VELS, 2004) in addition to a personal spirituality as engendered by creative thinking and living (London, 2006). As
per the secondary school sector drive towards training young people how to think, the
early childhood sector also has a deep and abiding interest in the way that young children
think (Edwards, 1993; Edwards, 2002); for example there are educational movements in
Europe whose key philosophical positions are that of seeing the role of the adult as
helping the child (Edwards, 1993; Edwards, 2002; Malaguzzi, 1993; Montessori, 1965;
Montessori, 2011), [the ‘interlocutor’ again (Wright, 2012a; Wright, 2013)] and
improving human society by realizing the child’s full potential as an intelligent, creative,
whole person who is influenced by natural, dynamic and self-righting forces within
himself/herself (Edwards, 2002; Montessori, 1917; Montessori, 2004; Montessori, 2011).

This desire to help young children reach their potential is in part geared by research that
demonstrates that children lose their spontaneity and creativity the older they get
(Aljughaiman & Mowrer-Reynolds, 2005; Robinson, 2010); the question for researchers
then is this – how do we maintain that spontaneity and creativity all the way throughout
our lives, not just as children but as adults as well? How can we best maintain that
freshness and innovation engendering creative solutions to problems around us in the
world? Where do we find adults in possession of high levels of understanding about the
means in which to deliver values-driven educational programs that can and do use the arts
as a means to enhancing and expanding the human experience?

An holistic approach in early childhood contexts is appropriate when considering the way
that young children seem to move quickly between tasks (Nelson, Erwin & Duffy, 2007).
An holistic framework would appear to cover the broad range of experiences, modalities
and art forms that children utilize and the multitudes of ways in which adults can write
about those experiences. Barrett (2003), for example, in her discourse about the child’s
meaning making processes in the arts (in particular, music), focuses on processes of
improvising and composing and active music-making experiences. She places this style
of research in an holistic context. The holistic framework as a means for studying the
child’s activities and explorations into the field of the arts acknowledges the complex but
rich crossover that occurs between the arts forms. For example a child may make music
with dramatic elements in it or she may make drama with song accompanying her role-
play. She may combine play dough activities (art and craft) and internal story telling to
relay stories or impressions that unfold in her mind; she may use gesture and employ
elements of dance and movement to recount a story that is sung or improvised
spontaneously (Arnold, 1995); she may use artwork and narrative to present and recount
her stories (Wright, 2005; Wright, 2012a; Wright, 2013); or she may use and refer to culturally agreed-upon symbols and signs such as nursery rhymes and songs to either dance, reflect upon her inner world or to explore a topic or an adult behaviour that interests her (Barrett, 2003).

The notion of holistic education has been defined by Miller (1992) as a philosophy of education that is based on the premise that each person finds his/her identity, meaning and purpose in life through a connection to the community, to the natural world and to spiritual values such as compassion and peace. Elsewhere Miller (2002) suggested that holism is a search for wholeness in a cultural context that has historically suppressed and resisted wholeness. Maslow (1965) explains holistic education as aiming at helping students to be the most that they can be. He terms this process as ‘self-actualization’. Self-actualizing learning relies on what Maslow (1965) terms ‘intrinsic learning’, that is self-actualizing learners listen to their own voices, take responsibility, are honest, they work, they are involved in causes outside of themselves, they experience fully, vividly, with full concentration and absorption and are skilled at making decisions in favour of personal growth. Certainly Corinne ‘experienced fully and with full concentration and absorption’ and she ‘was listening to her own voice’ (Maslow, 1965). Eisner (2002) believed that when we create an aesthetic experience, our minds need to be animated by our imaginative capacity, which promotes emotionally pervaded encounters; he thus saw perception as a cognitive event. This too is a form of self-actualization (Maslow, 1965) as we are building on and linking into prior knowledge and learning. The aesthetic moment in which Corinne was involved (Eisner, 2002), in which she was self-actualizing (Maslow, 1965) saw her utilizing complex thinking modes where she was working meaningfully on the creation of images (Eisner, 2002). Her holistic use of the arts (here, music), kinesthetic playing with the stickers and her dream-like stance suggests creation of images that were helping her to self-actualize (Maslow, 1965) or to create mind (Eisner, 2002).

Historically the notion of holistic education has its roots in the writings of individuals such as Rousseau, Emerson, Froebel, Plato and more recently, Steiner, Montessori, Gardner and Jung (Campbell, 2011; Gardner, 2011; Miller, 1991). Forbes and Martin (2004) divide the philosophy of holistic education into two categories: *Ultimacy* and Bernstein’s (2000) notion of *Sagacious Competence*. Ultimacy for Forbes and Martin
encompasses the ideas of enlightenment, ‘self-actualization’ and the highest levels a human can attain. The Bernstein model of Sagacious Competence deals with six levels of human learning: (1) psychological freedom, (2) self-governance, which includes good judgment, (3) meta-learning, where each student learns in his or her own way, (4) social ability, (5) developing character or the refining of values and (6) self-knowledge, or emotional development. These themes of character development and self-knowledge (Bernstein, 2000; Forbes & Martin, 2004) are clearly keys to building meaningful links between ourselves and the world at large as young Corinne does (Wright, 2003a; Wright, 2005).

Three European approaches to the teaching of children incorporate elements of holistic education (Edwards, 2002; Miller, 1986) and these three approaches include Waldorf, Montessori and Reggio Emilia (Beyers, 2008; Edwards, 2002; Edwards, 2003; Miller, 1986). Edwards (2002; 2003) found similarities between these three styles of teaching, particularly in the sense that they focus on coherent visions of how to improve human society by helping children realize their full potential as intelligent, creative whole persons who can author their own developments. All three pedagogies believe that children could self-right themselves. These systems of education aim at educating human beings who ultimately create a just and peaceful society. Montessori believed in multiage groupings of children for optimal learning and included holistic peace education in her curriculum, in addition to infant programs and mathematics and music programs (Montessori, 1917; Montessori, 1965). Reggio Emilia is unusual in the sense that its teachers are generally not accredited but instead see themselves as engaging in a dialogue with the children, a provocation and a reference point (Edwards, 2002), or, as Wright (2012) says, they are ‘interlocutors’ with that child’s learning.

London (2006) sees holistic arts education as a ‘transformational experience’, based on a synthesis of ‘mind, body and spirit’. This finds a parallel in Wright’s (2013) tripartite graphic-narrative-enactive model for communication in which children transform experiences they encounter with the arts into meaningful modes of expression. London (2006) is critical of the current system of schooling for its emphasis on data acquisition and deliberate reasoning. For London (2006), holism in arts education pertains to making us ‘whole’ in the sense that we can become graceful in mind, body and spirit. Although London (2006) acknowledges contention in relation to one aspect of the holistic
paradigm, which is the notion of ‘spirit’. He argues that ‘spirit’ or ‘spirituality’ can be taught in and through the arts but also claims that spirituality is a personal aspect to each individual on the planet that, like all other aspects to the human persona, needs cultivating and nurturing. It could be that notion of the personal self, the spiritual side to us that engages us at peak levels during engagement with the arts. Certainly there appeared to be a spiritual aspect to Corinne’s engagement with her Self, her moment of self-reflection and the time and manner in which this all took place. London’s (2006) understanding of ‘spirituality’ and his openness to interpretations of what spirituality may mean to differing individuals is akin the ‘self-actualization’ and ‘ultimacy’ that Forbes and Martin (2004) spoke of. Campbell (2011) notes that spirituality as opposed to religion, has come from the deep ecology movement in recent times and is therefore affiliated with a sense of finding meaning and purpose to one’s life, rather than being affiliated with New Age mysticism. Campbell (2011) also notes the need for critical inquiry and spiritual awareness to be combined when teaching students social responsibility and interconnectedness to the world around them. It seems that ‘holism’ in terms of the artistic education of the individual is about creating ‘global citizens’ (VELS, 2004).

Arts education allows children to draw together numerous high-end, complex and diverse thinking skills (Bamford, 2006; Eisner, 2002; Wright, 2013). Eisner (1998; 2002) argues this point when he examines the role of the arts, in all their manifestations, as having a pivotal role in cultivating our imaginations and refining our sensory systems. He also compares the arts, in all of their manifestations to play and suggests that when preschoolers are engaged in play that they are engaged with a sensory world that is replete with satisfaction and exploratory delight; play is crucial to the imaginative processes (Eisner, 2002). Imagination allows us to engender images of the possible, the creation of possible worlds in the privacy of our own minds and sets a rehearsal stage for private experimentation (Eisner, 2002). Representation, as a cognitive function of imagination, stabilizes an otherwise evanescent idea or image; editing, as a cognitive function of imagination allows the author to provide polish to that original idea for the purpose of providing quality and communication, as a cognitive function of representation, allows us as a culture to experience growth (Eisner, 2002; Light & Barnes, 1995). Eisner (2002) sees cognition as a process through which our own living organism becomes more aware of its own environment or its own consciousness. This is not dissimilar to Robinson’s (2010) view on how the arts engage us at ‘peak’ levels.
Arts education as a means of expanding the consciousness of the young child and initiating him or her into the private, personal world of his or her own mind can be workable in the context of holism because this expansion of consciousness, not unlike London’s (2006) concept of personal spirituality, constitutes complex, high-order thinking skills (Eisner, 2002). Like arts education, holistic education exposes children to a range of symbolic discourse, or semiotics (Siegel, 2006). The creativity of children is syncretistic, that is, the individual arts are not always separated in their thinking or actions (embodiments) (Dunn & Wright, 2015). This explains why children seem to be able to move quickly between one art form to the next, seemingly as part of one great big discourse about their lives (McArdle & Wright, 2014). Thus when we discuss arts education of the young child or even meaning-making experiences that young children experience in and through the arts, it is possible to see this education in terms of holism and holistic educational philosophy. Both arts education and holistic educational philosophy aim to educate the whole child and help him or her to see the world from a multiplicity of perspectives. Holism, like much of Proyer and Ruch’s (2011) discussion is also about values creation. The support for holism in the education of young children moves us away from atomism and pragmatism in education (Miller, 1986; McArdle & Wright, 2014) and instead into a space where children are active authors of their own development, strongly influenced by natural and self-righting forces within themselves (Edwards, 2003). Children become producers of culture, values and rights (Rinaldi, 2001).

Thus questions and general precepts I view as being integral to the scope of this thesis and investigation are:

- What is meant by meaningful, holistic, artistic education for a young toddler?
- What symbolic meaning making occurred in her artistic modes of self-expressions?
- Can the use of symbols in the development of arts-focused skills in a toddler be framed in the context of Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development?
1.13 Summary

In this chapter we have seen that the child’s response to aesthetic forms of self-expression is richly exploratory and motivated by intrinsically oriented desires to grow and expand. It is important to have arrived at this point as we have seen now that the intrinsic aspect to a child’s desire for growth and expansion is linked inextricably to the expansion of consciousness. Consciousness, it seems, can be ordered through music, the focus art form of this paper, and that ordering of consciousness, the inner life, allows children, like adults, to enter into a state of flow where the inner self is developed. The line of communication between the outer person and the inner person (Wright, 2003; Wright, 2012) is developed in the language of the arts. These arguments have been presented within a holistic framework. We now turn our attention to literacy in the arts and what this may signify for the education of children.
Chapter 2
Artistic Literacy and the Toddler – What the Research Says

2.1 Introduction

Husserl (1999) says:

“Soul and psychic Ego “have” a Body: there exists a material thing, of a certain nature, which is not merely a material thing but is a Body, i.e., a material thing which, as localization field for sensations and for stirrings of feelings, as complex of sense organs, and as phenomenal partner and counterpart of all perceptions of things….makes up a fundamental component of the real givenness of the soul and Ego.” (p. 183).

In using any symbol, even embodied symbols, to understand her world, a toddler is dealing with the ‘sensations and stirrings of feelings’ (Husserl & Welton, 1999). We know that toddlers embody symbols in the visual arts by talking about them and that this helps to explain how they relate to the world and what feelings they carry inside of them (Wright, 2014). We know less about musical symbols and how toddlers may be sensing, feeling or thinking as they develop them and manipulate them. Given that symbols in any art form whether literature, dance, media, visual arts or music are ways and means by which very young children read the world and become literate in the world and literate about the world, even prior to having control over spoken language, reading and writing, it will be important to look at a range of literacies with a view to deepening our understanding of how very young children engage with literacy, in all of its manifestations. It needs to be noted that music as an art form does hold a special place in this discussion owing to its non-material, more abstract aspects, that is, once performed, there exist no further visual imprints for us to examine as the music has dissipated into the realms of never-ending tone vibration and resonance.

This chapter, although essentially a literature review, thus comes to highlight the ways in which children are often literate in art forms prior to being literate in the more traditional
forms of literacy that educational institutions promote. If as Husserl suggests, the Body is the ‘phenomenal partner and counterpart of all perceptions of things’, the implication that the soul too may have its own literacies with which to interact with the world at large, becomes rather intriguing. What then is the role of the arts in articulating the inner world and inner life of a child who is not yet able to speak a full, articulate sentence in the way an adult may do this? In the language of Husserlean transcendental phenomenology, could the arts thus be defined as a voice or literacy for the soul? Given that immersion in an art form is an inner and subjective process and given that this type of subjectivity suggests a need for a phenomenological lens through which to examine it, it is difficult to ascertain to what extent a sense of transcendence is also experienced by very young children when engaging with the arts. However the possibilities for a child to experience transcendence through music, or any art form, is always there, as suggested by the vignette presented at the outset of this paper.

Merleau-Ponty (1962) talks about returning, reawakening and rediscovering aspects of a phenomenon that may have been overlooked or missed by the natural point of observation. He indicates that “the perceptual ‘something’ is always situated in the middle of something else, it always forms part of a ‘field.’” (p.4) The realms of possibility in which a young child and by which he or she may become conversant with the world around are not going to be capable of numeration. It is thus with this phenomenological lens in mind that this literature review proceeds.

2.2 What The Research Says

Traditional concepts of literacy encompass reading and comprehension from printed text (Pellegrini & Galda, 1998). Australian views on critical literacy in particular have been heavily influenced by post-structuralist literary theory (Gough & Price, 2004). In the ongoing LLANS study by an Australian team of researchers who were searching for a more appropriate definition of literacy, the aspects of literacy tested in children were phonological awareness, print concepts, children reading aloud, making meaning from text, and writing in response to text (Anderson & Meiers, 2001; Meiers & Rowe, 2002; Olson & Astington, 1990; Rowe, 2001). Literacy also has a long association by political default with numeracy, in an effort to capture the attention of parents and educators at
election time (DEETYA Report, 1998; MCEETYA Report, 1999). Even back in 1975 the Ministry of Education in the United States, using the Watts-Vernon test, defined illiteracy as having a reading age of less than seven years (Kedney, 1975) thus by default defining what literacy was for that time. Functional literacy was always defined as a reading age of nine years in Britain (Levine, 1986). So not only has literacy often been used as a tool for political expediency, being viewed as a means of measuring and predicting social and academic success, it has also been defined in terms of its opposites and functionality.

Oracy as an aspect of literacy (VELS, 2004) has been defined as “the verbalization of experience” (Wilkinson, 1970) or the ability to employ verbal, vocal and non-verbal cues all at the same time (Anderson & Hilton, 1997; Grugan, 1999; O’Toole, 2003; O’Toole, 2009; O’Toole, Stinson & Moore, 2009; Otte, 1995). Both younger and older children vocalize enormously in their developmental stages and this is an important facet of childhood learning and growth, which can be harnessed and explored further through the use of dramatic and musical play (Anderson & Hilton, 1997; Kress, 1995; Otte, 1995; Peim, 2002). Arts educators of course have long understood the value of oracy in self-expression, meaning making, interaction and dramatic play (Barrett, 2003; Eisner, 2002; Wright, 2003a; Wright, 2005; Wright, 2013). That children verbalize their meaning making experiences, often through narrative (Wright, 2013), is not only the means for adults to develop a greater level of insight into how to children think and work but is also oracy in its functional state.

Concepts such as multiple literacies (Piazza, 1999; Roberts, 1995), ‘multimodal literacies’ (Carrington, 2001) and ‘multi modal approaches to learning’ (Kress 2000a; Kress, 2000b; Kress, 2003; Kress, 2010) have been introduced into the conversation about literacy as well. These terms now have broader usage amongst researchers in different fields notably the arts; Livermore (2003), for example has compiled a series of papers by respected specialists studying the notion of literacy in the arts. Dance literacy, for example, is defined as a way of ‘knowing’ dance’s unique concepts and skills, a way of understanding the problems of choreography, performance and appreciation whilst being able to situate dance in a historical-cultural context (Buck, 2003). This notion harmonizes with Eisner’s (1986) argument that being literate means using a variety of representative forms for conceptualizing meaning as opposed to the ability to read words.
2.3 Literacy in the Arts

The term ‘literacy in the arts’ can be applied to the embedded mode of expression within each art form and not necessarily the more technically focused aspects of each art form, such as reading and writing of notation associated with music, dance or dramatic scripts, although these are important aspects to these art forms (Livermore, 2003). Both Reimer (1994) and McKechnie (1997) for example, argue respectively that the musical mind and the value of dance lies in a way of knowing, which is both sensory and aesthetic; such artistic literacy is communicated through the physical body (nerves, muscles and bones), the use of imagination, aesthetic discrimination and skill (McKechnie, 1997). In the performing arts, the performance itself is akin to the literary text and the audience ‘reads’ that final product wherein they construct their own meaning (Livermore, 2003). In order to decode meaning within these performances, an understanding of symbols and symbolic processes embedded within these art forms is required of both creator and audience (Livermore, 2003). In order to make meaning, interpret and respond to a range of forms of communication, we need to ‘think’ in different modes and express a wide range of ideas via multiple literacies (Livermore, 2003).

Multiple forms of literacy can be expressed in and through nontextual modes, thus enriching and reconceptualizing traditional notions of literacy (Binder & Kotsopoulos, 2011). Nontextual modes include art forms (Binder & Kotsopoulos, 2011). Multiple forms of literacy are also defined as situational, instructional, and transformative, allowing the child to examine her place in the world (Binder & Kotsopoulos, 2011). Using visual narratives is one way in which the arts enhance literacy (Binder & Kotsopoulos, 2011). This concept of multiple literacies had previously been tracked through the work of Edwards (1993) who believed children naturally represented using multiple symbolic languages and also that of Eisner (1998) who saw literacy as any form that conveys meaning. Individuals see themselves reflected in images in ways they may not see themselves reflected in words (Kendrick & McKay, 2004).

Multimodal literacies using the arts are another way of assessing children’s identities (Binder & Kotsopoulos, 2011). Based on the argument that individuals see themselves in terms of images and not always words and also that children do not often have the words
with which to express themselves, Binder and Kotsopoulos (2011) conducted a research project using a discourse based on visual images and verbal texts. They also included soundscapes, books, poetry and quilts (Binder & Kotsopoulos, 2011). Through this project the researchers learned the value of experiencing the artwork of children not independently, but as part of a process; children as meaning makers and adults as researchers and participant-observers were all assessing “cultural capital” and working with emerging themes together (Binder & Kotsopoulos, 2011). This reciprocity between the children’s learning and adult participant-observation is reflective of Vygotsky’s (1980) zone of proximal development. Binder and Kotsopoulos (2011) also found that children were capable of representing symbolically, not just literally, and claimed that the children understood that it was the process of representation they were trying to master and not the ability to imitate and reproduce an adult concept; perhaps the children came to this understanding through referring back to the previous week’s lesson, allowing them to ‘scaffold’ as learners, that is, the adult initially guides the students and then gradually steps back to allow students to follow emerging themes (Pea, 2004).

As mentioned above, Montessori (1965) argued that children could self-right and so it has been noted in more recent times that children can also direct their own learning too, by following themes that are important to them (Binder & Kotsopoulos, 2011). The themes are often generated and selected by the group, or the culture (Barrett, 2005). Gardner and Montessori shared a commonality in that they viewed children as having untapped potentialities, which could be garnered in and through cultural context (Gardner, 1982; Gardner, 1983; Vardin, 2003). Learning for children then is a complex process generated by exposure to cultural experience (Vardin, 2003), the interactions and dynamics of the group of children themselves (Barrett, 2005) and a literary journey that can be enhanced and illuminated through the arts (Binder & Kotsopoulos, 2011: Eisner, 2002).

2.4 Literacy in specific art forms

An understanding of musical literacy has been affiliated with standard notation (Elkoshi, 2004; Ohman-Rodriguez, 2004), invented notations, developmental readiness, language literacy, out-of-school musical experiences and a strong social context (McCusker, 2001). Hair (1993) noted that Suzuki students between the ages of 5 and 10 could pictorially
notate their repertoire and could represent high/low pitches to a certain extent; she also suggested studying the wealth of information given out by the children as they spoke about their graphic representations of the music they studied, since this was an insightful means for adults to gain deeper understanding of children’s artistic thought processes.

Barrett (2005) confirms that children’s ability to make meaning out of their musical experience is done in and through social contexts; this notion stems from the Vygotskian (1986) view that children work within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) as a means of internalizing cultural meanings through interaction with knowledgeable others. It is both through interaction with others, and through play, that children work within their ZPDs (Vygotsky, 1986). Barrett (2005) acknowledges that a socio-cultural perspective sees the arts, particularly music, as a cultural practice that provides a powerful means of communicating human thought and feeling without recourse to language. She situates the conversation in terms of ‘cultural literacy’, namely, the ability to negotiate oneself in terms of the rules and conventions of a culture - assessing and working with “cultural capital”, in other words (Binder & Kotsopoulos, 2011). Williams et al. (2014) noted shared parent-child music activities that are based on cultural conventions, such as supported singing (action songs, counting songs, nursery rhymes and children’s songs), the generation of original songs to accompany routines, dancing, playing basic instruments and listening to music on CD, DVD and MTV function as ‘signs’ or ‘cultural tools’ (Vygotsky, 1986).

Tomlinson (2013) also suggests that children are not just receivers of cultural conventions but also are active transmitters of culture in situated learning contexts. Creativity and flow in the learning of children is framed by Tomlinson (2013) as, intensified engagement, heightened forms of connection in thinking and communication and deep enjoyment of collaborative activities. Drawing on the work of Csikszentmihalyi (1996), Tomlinson (2013) further clarifies creativity and flow by explaining that children merge action and awareness and are in control of their actions and environment when they are deeply immersed in their work. Tomlinson (2013) clearly has a profound interest in how children make transformations in their conceptual thinking and refers to a process known as ‘transduction’ (Kress, 2010), where children delete most of what there is in the information and experience but signify essential meaning. She refers to ‘modal
affordance’, where ‘affordance’ is the potential of a mode to convey meaning but also the limitations of that same mode (Tomlinson, 2013).

Deborah Bradley (2008) argued that choirs using global song were a medium for promoting not only global issues to do with multiculturalism, but also ‘glocalization’, an inner world of morality, self-identity and a personal understanding of racialism. The entire conversation was situated in the context of young choristers (notably ‘choirs’, ‘choral singing’ and ‘choristers’ are European terms, important to note in the context of a conversation about ethnicity, cultural identity and racial issues) using musical experience (here: global songs), to learn more about themselves and their own identity in and through the learning about others. This argument is significant for the meaning that children make of the world around them because although the meaning is made in and through social settings and situated contexts (Barrett, 2005), the individual also makes sense of the experience in and through his or her own world view and also brings his or her own unique lens to the encounter. This leads to self-understanding: an understanding of how self stands in relation to the world and ‘others’. It depends on having prior understanding about that self and being able to relate that notion of self to situated learning experiences. Barrett’s (2011) more recent study of a young child’s identity work in and through music-making also confirms the link between individual and cultural settings.

Emery and Flood (2003) note that, while literacy may be culturally specific, visual images are thought to be universal and capable of transcending cultural barriers. Thus visual images may serve a bifocal purpose: (1) to express the individual within the context of a culture and (2) to speak to members of other cultures. This may signify something about the richness and universality of human experience. Artworks engage us because they convey meaning (Emery & Flood, 2003), and that meaning is conveyed via culturally agreed-upon symbols (Pascoe, 1998). When intensely engaged in art making, we are experiencing ‘flow’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996), a state that allows us to resonate energetically with recognizable symbols contained in the artworks (Eisner, 2002). Another reason for this ‘flow’ experience is the resonance we encounter when we engage aesthetically with artworks (Robinson, 2010). The beholder of art (the audience) must be able to perceive something of the artist’s intention (Emery & Flood, 2003; Kellogg, 1969). The cultural exchange between artist and audience is enabled by the use of cognitive functions when engaged in aesthetic perception and contemplation of visual
form (Eisner, 1972). Our sensory responses are evoked when we recognize the ‘otherness’ of the artwork we read (Langer, 1953). Reading images and constructing meaning in and through artworks invokes multi-dimensional responses, both from their makers and audiences thus allowing for the engagement of the whole human being (Eisner, 1991).

In like fashion young children learn to decode visual images during ‘joint involvement episodes’ (Anning & Ring, 2004). The child’s artistic activity is ‘refracted through the prism of his social thought’ (Vygotsky, 1980). “The child enters into relations with the situation, not directly, but through the medium of another person” (Vygotsky, 1980).

Drama and media are intrinsically language based and language rich (Pascoe, 1998). Yet in spite of this, drama and media make meaning through interconnecting; this interconnection is made through facial expressions, gestures, postures, whole body movements, placement in space, sounds versus silence, voices, energy and combinations of all the aforementioned (Dunn, 2003; Edmiston & Wilhelm, 1996; Pascoe, 1998).

For children, drama and play provide a forum for freedom from concrete objects (Kendrick, 2003), where intention and meaning shape activities. Dramatic anticipation is sensed and built when adults are involved in the experience (Edmiston, 2007). When adults are involved in the drama experience alongside of children, they all socially imagine other spaces and worlds, which extends their learning (Heathcote, 1984); adult and child become co-creators of “possible worlds” (Bruner, 2009b Drama can productively disrupt the more formal aspects of educational classroom routines to develop children’s strengths in multi literacies (Edmiston, 2007).

Language is the bridge between not only the mind and body within individuals but also between individuals and groups (Pascoe, 1998). This idea links back to the potential bifold aspect to visual images and how, although they signify culture, they can also transcend a single culture to have meaning across many. Meaning arises out of negotiation, or communication, between maker and audience. The currencies of that negotiation are the symbol elements and how they are shaped and shared in conventional ways (Pascoe, 1998).
The adult takes on the role of interlocutor (Wright, 2012a) to help the child operate in the ZPD (Vygotsky, 1980). The relationship between artist and audience is therefore infinitely negotiable and the meanings emergent between them dynamic and shifting; this means that the audience becomes artists to a certain extent (O’Toole, 2003; O’Toole, 2009). The child artist has the chance to become the ‘mantle of expert’, where the notion of mantle is used as a metaphor for the qualities of leadership, carrying standards of behaviour, morality, responsibility, ethics and the spiritual basis of all action (Heathcote, 2009).

Design is the disclosure and subsequent development of order, form and pattern, and its language is found in the all the arts (Russell, Grushka & Middleton, 2003). Design offers a language of objects that is open to ethnographic, sociological and phenomenological concern (Russell, Grushka & Middleton, 2003). Design involves aesthetic decisions in the creative, meaning making processes (Eisner, 1972; Lowenfeld, 1957). Eisner (1972, p. 65) stated that,

artistic learning deals with the development of abilities to create art forms, which are inextricably linked to the powers of aesthetic perception and the ability to understand art as a cultural phenomenon.

Design, like visual arts and all other art forms can transcend cultural barriers because of how meaning is assigned to the language, symbols and literacy embedded within each art form; design, as per all other art forms, is specifically involved with ways of experiencing (aesthetics), ways of being (ethics) and ways of making (poetics) (Russell, Grushka & Middleton, 2003).

By way of example, after hypothesizing how a teacher might get students to relate to a poster about refugees, Harste (2003) suggests that we view (design) literacy not as an entity but as a social practice. Celebrated designer Wendy Ramshaw, known as ‘Designer of Dreams’, acknowledges stories from her childhood as sources of inspirations for her beautiful artworks; geometry and naval items also inspire her (Moignard, 2013). These latter inspirations were around her as she grew. Ramshaw has allowed symbols to permeate her artistic thinking; these have been drawn up from her own childhood to
speak to other people of all cultures (Moignard, 2013). Thus design, like so much of art, has a past-present-future aspect to it.

In an argument that stipulates that arts experiences are part of the human psychobiology, Blatt-Gross (2011) discusses the dynamics of a pre-kindergarten art class, wherein rhythm and sound mark every step of the class: “Their words are often emphatically staccato, melodic or cadenced. Rhythm is everywhere.” Blatt-Gross (2011) also noted the ‘social navigation’ of the children during the art class, where delight was constantly being shared at each new discovery of some pretty design that could be used for the class activity. Teacher actions, such as designs and making small clay models cause the children to ask many questions and to learn through mimicking (Blatt-Gross, 2011). All these ways of experiencing are part of how human thought and action form culture (Barrett, 2005).

Dance literacy involves understanding the problems and concerns of choreography, performance and appreciation (Livermore, 2003). The symbols associated with gesture and movements carry many different meanings and interpretation within differing cultures (Livermore, 2003). In the study of dance, students learn to use their bodies expressively and within space with dynamics and impact to create meaning (Queensland BSSSS Senior Syllabus in Dance, 1998). Through the physicality of dance and the use of their bodies as a medium for artistic expression, students engage in problem solving and critical reflection in individual and group circumstances (Queensland BSSSS Senior Syllabus in Dance, 1998).

Children naturally embody their narrative, which in turn strengthens their personal agency (Dunn & Wright, 2015). Thus children’s narrative and movement-based problem-solving abilities can be fostered through research, synthesis and communication of concepts, images, themes and feelings (QSA, Dance Senior Syllabus, 2010). Dance education fosters the development of special interests and talents not emphasized in other educational areas and it encourages the holistic involvement of the individual. It engages the mind, body and spirit and provides opportunities for the development of physical, expressive, critical, imaginative, appreciative and perceptive abilities (QSA, Dance Senior Syllabus, 2010). Dance literacy is therefore about creating and reading meaning in and through the moving body, which is a three-dimensional medium (Livermore, 2003).
Children use gesture to express something that is different to what may be expressed in and through speech (Gather, Alibali & Goldin-Meadow, 1998). Gesture may thus give an insight in the mental processes, inner thoughts and knowledge that they may not have the verbal skills to relate (Gather, Alibali & Goldin-Meadow, 1998; Wright, 2010). Gesture is only one means via which dance communicates; Hanna (2008) describes at least six symbolic devices to encode meaning: (1) concretization such as a dance movement that represents a warrior, (2) the use of the icon such as representing a god in dance, (3) stylization where a dancer may point to his heart as a symbol of love for his lady, (4) a metonym such as the use of a single word to characterize something much bigger than itself and of which it is part, (5) metaphor such as expression of a thought, feeling or phenomenon in place of another that it resembles and (6) actualization, such as woman who dances to convey her maternal role. Dance, for Hanna (2008) is defined as human behaviour composed of purposeful, intentionally rhythmical and culturally influenced sequence of nonverbal body movements and stillness in time and space with effort.

Other dance educators of young children define dance in the following way: Dimondstein (1971) defined creative dance as the children’s interpretation of ideas, feelings and sensory impressions expressed symbolically in movement forms through unique uses of his/her body. Creative dance/movement can provide structured movement opportunities that lead to spontaneity, originality and individuality; it encourages innovation and teaches children about their own strengths and weaknesses (Joyce, 1994). Joyce (1994) believed that repetition, where appropriate, could lead to a “sense of security and accomplishment” in children (p.74). Thus dance, according to Hanna (1995; 2008) is a very powerful and at times metaphoric means for nonverbal communication.

Although there are differences between the way verbal language and dance communicate, the similarities lay in that they both have vocabulary (e.g., locomotion and gestures), grammar (rules for the sequencing of certain movements) and semantics (meaning) (Hanna, 2008). Dance, for Hanna (2008) utilizes bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, which in and of its own is a form of thinking. It is a way to solve problems through the control of the body’s movements and motions.
Young children learn to “read” and “write” nonverbal language when they make dance and when they watch dance (Hanna, 2008), which may be linked to social learning. Research on an eight-week creative dance/movement program showed that positive gains were made in terms of both social competence and internalizing/externalizing behaviour problems in low-income Head Start preschoolers (Lobo & Winsler, 2006). The gains in internalizing/externalizing behaviours of these preschoolers were clearly linked to the ability to find solutions via the nonverbal experiences of meaning making (Hanna, 2008). Hanna (2008) also links feelings into the dance making and dance viewing processes, stating that feelings are integral to cognition and education in general.

Thus when Corinne stood with one hip jutting out to the side and used her hands to rhythmically support her meditative engagement with “Twinkle”, she was employing a bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, which is a type of thinking and which is clearly linked to problem solving and cognitive processes. Corinne not only used music as a means of “ordering consciousness” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992), her utilization of metaphor through bodily-kinesthetic intelligence also helped her problem solve (Hanna, 2008), make meaning and “order consciousness” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). She was utilizing embodied cognition (Adessi, Mafiolli & Annelli, 2015).

Notably, in a co-funded European project coordinated by the University of Bologna, the MIROR (Musical Interaction Relying on Reflexion) Project was designed for early childhood settings and then introduced into a wide range of educational and home settings (Adessi, Mafiolli & Annelli, 2015). This project was based on reflexive interaction (where users manipulate virtual copies of themselves) and embodied cognition. It aimed to create a natural, organic dialogue with the child (Adessi, Mafiolli & Annelli, 2015). This dialogue was based on repetition and variation, which was central to reflexive interaction and allowing the child to perceive her/himself as a sound image (Adessi, Mafiolli & Annelli, 2015). The MIROR-Body Gesture became a means to capture children’s movements and convert them into ‘reflexive’ sound, that is, sounds with similar, related movements such as heavy/light and fast/slow (Adessi, Mafiolli & Annelli, 2015). Children danced and created music through movement and controlled their own improvisations and compositions. The software was designed to support children as they discovered the dynamic nature of their bodies and the embodied musicality of their own gestures (Adessi, Mafiolli & Annelli, 2015).
2.5 Artistic Literacy and Artistic Meaning within a Vygotskian Socio-Cultural Framework

Vygotsky socio-cultural theory stipulates that children are active social agents who internalize cultural meaning through interaction with knowledgeable others in their Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1986). Vygotsky believed that we could understand social reality through the study of individuals because they are configured through their social existence (Rey, 2011; Vygotsky, 1986). He had also seen the value in studying sign mediation in the higher psychological functions of humans since he saw the sign as a means of social connection, a means of affecting others and a way of influencing oneself (Rey, 2011; Vygotsky, 1980). Vygotsky (1980) perceived drawing and speaking to be “first-order” symbol systems; using alphabetic notation for him was a “second-order” system.

This position has led educational researchers to examine how children participate in artistic communities. Barrett (2005) examined children’s participating in “communities of musical practice” and Wright (2013) studied how children create and embody meaning as they draw and narrate (Wright, 2013), labeling the child-adult interaction as one in which both serve as ‘interlocutors’ in their co-construction of meaning. Children are known to narrate and even sing while they make art (Blatt-Gross, 2011; Wright, 2013); the child’s propensity for exploring art through the rhythm underlying artistic endeavour was known some time ago:

Because rhythm is a universal scheme of existence, underlying all realization of order in change, it pervades all the arts, literary, musical, plastic and architectural, as well as the dance….underneath the rhythm of every art and every work of art there lies, as a substratum in the depths of the subconsciousness the basic pattern of the relations of the live creature to his [sic] environment. (Dewey, 2008)

This rhythmic language of art, which could also be interpreted as the rhythm underpinning life, artistic literacy and artistic meaning, all come to be seen in the Vygotskian framework when we understand that children use play as an interactive social
form of embodied imagination (Connery, John-Steiner & Marjanovic-Shane, 2010; Vygotsky, 1980). When children draw together with other children and interact with adult interlocutors (Wright, 2013), when they sing, when they use gesture, when they narrate with speech and embodied motions, when they dance, when they create, they are attuning themselves to the social rhythm prevalent in the art of all cultures. All these art forms require the use of the imagination, or the ability to perceive futures that have not yet happened. As Vygotsky (1980) stated, play is imagination in action. And this ability to perceive as yet untold futures is what keeps children buoyantly creative, alive and fresh in their explorations, a state much envied by many adults. There is a time-space aspect to this view in that children seem to be capable of remaining in the joyful ‘now’ while drawing on cultural tools and symbols acquired in the past and the now in order to imagine potential futures, those “possible worlds” (Bruner, 2009b).

Corinne’s music making experience may have been a personalized attempt to “order consciousness” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992) whilst using bodily-kinesthetic gesture to enhance that ordering process (Hanna, 2008). But it stemmed from music making she had engaged in with adults, ‘knowledgeable others’ (Whiteman, 2008), in her daycare setting and also at home with her parents (Barrett, 2005). The song had emanated from her cultural milieu. Corinne had been an interlocutor (Wright, 2012a) with knowledgeable others (Whiteman, 2008) which served the purpose of helping her to create meaning within a cultural context (Barrett, 2005). Through the lyrics of the nursery song that Corinne chose to express herself with, she was exploring the wonder of language, signified by ‘Twingle, won, won, wonger’. She used sung speech, rhythm and lyrics to find a tone or mood within herself that allowed her to pause for a while and be; her singing, her “won, won, wonger” is a symbol of connection to the inner self and the ordering of her consciousness. She was using the arts, music in particular, to ‘self-make’ (Barrett, 2009) and to understand her world.

Barrett (2005) argues that a socio-cultural perspective acknowledges the arts, particularly music, as cultural practices that provide a powerful means for communicating human thought and feeling. Hanna (2008) too has argued that dance, as one of many art forms, is ‘thinking through moving image’, that dance is a ‘multichannel gestural system used to communicate’, that gesture as part of dance is a powerful tool for communicating ideas and feelings that cannot be expressed using words. Metaphor, heavily relied on in dance,
is another means of communicating ideas, thoughts and feelings that words cannot express. Corinne’s singing thus becomes a metaphor for ‘thinking through image’ (Hanna, 2008). The artistic literacy and the artistic meaning in Corinne’s story is a metaphor, a moving image, a sung image, a mood, a tone, a momentary connection to the underlying rhythm of artistic life, a poetic performance that stills her for a while and allows her to take stock of her world. She has interpreted the moment through sound vibration, a type of natural, child ‘resonance mechanism’ (Rizzolatti, et al., 2002).

The study of play in children is thus important because play allows children to separate words from objects and actions from meanings (Vygotsky, 1967). This reminds us of the little girl who in Matthews’ (2004) article uses “mimetic, elliptical hand movements” (p. 254), not speech, to “explain” that the children in the room were expected to draw, not write. When children sing, dance, draw, play, act and when we attempt to interpret these actions, we learn about the development of aesthetic and artistic thought in human development (Matthews, 2004; Robinson, 2010). The child’s discovery of semiotic systems, which help develop symbolic thinking and aesthetic/artistic thought, is crucial for the development of thinking skill (Matthews, 2004). Corinne is thinking through action, through gesture, body position (hip jutting out), music, singing and lyrics. She is using embodied narration to explore her inner world. Her cultural milieu supported her in the acquisition of this ‘cultural tool’ (Vygotsky, 1986) so she is using artistic literacy and acquiring artistic meaning through her singing of “Twinkle”. Artistic literacy is therefore linked to the notion of the reading of signs and symbols of a particular cultural context specific to that artistic domain (Rey, 2011; Vygotsky, 1986) and artistic meaning then arises out of a socially shared understanding of those signs and symbols (Rey, 2011.)

For the purposes of this paper I have aligned the theory with a Vygotskian perspective but want it noted that there are other frameworks for thinking about the matter that we can examine. For example, I note Whiteman’s (2008) variance over the issue of relying on solely a Vygotskian perspective when interpreting how children read symbols; the works of Bronfenbrenner (ecological systems theory, 1979), Corasaro (symbolic interactionist perspective or “Orb web model”, 2005) and Thelen and Smith (dynamic systems approach, 1994), are alternatives that Whiteman (2008) suggests using as a theoretical framework for studying children and their aesthetic thought development.
By way of citing methodologies that support the Vygotskian perspective, Barrett (2005) cites the Suzuki methodology as one instance of modeling for the purposes of communication, both aurally and visually. The Suzuki teaching model allows for children to learn using imitation and engagement with the adult world through keen observation. Russell’s (1997) work with the Fijian musical culture supports this view, as she suggests that it is through modeling themselves on and responding to significant and respected adult members in the community that the younger members of the community access knowledge of the rich and extraordinary levels of part-singing skills that are present in this community. Russell suggests that the level of part-singing skill is so high in this community that it makes us question our prejudices about ‘talent’ (2012). Russell (2012) engages with Wenger, McDermott and Snyder’s (2002) notion of ‘sites of learning’ as being a part of a community of practice to suggest that children learn through shared vision about their artistic encounters, or in this case musical experiences, and that shared vision comes from role modeling on the interests of the valued enterprises embedded within the adult community. The specific ways in which Russell (2012) stipulates that the Fijian children learned from their adult peers includes the following: they absorbed the repertoire, the singing skills, the musical languages and the attitudes towards singing that were displayed by significant others in their social circle, or community. Thus a community pursues common goals and passions but such pursuing must also stem from the ‘inner morality’ and self-identity, the ‘glocalization’ effect that Bradley (2008) espouses; an external pursuit obviously cannot happen without an internal state of mind that idealizes some aspect of that pursuit, whether it be the process or product, or both. The children in this community of singers learn from the ‘knowledgeable other’ (Whiteman, 2008).

Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002) and Wenger and Snyder (2000) espouse the view that a community of practice is a group of people informally bound together by common passions and interests. It is because of the free-flowing way in which such communities of practice share their information, that creative solutions to problems can be engendered. Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002) emphasize meaning, practice, community and identity as being part of how humans learn and make meaning in their world. “Practice” for Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002) is about shared repertoire, joint enterprise and mutual engagement. Wenger, McDermott and Snyder’s (2012) ideas are largely geared to the corporate world but clearly such social theory has relevance in the understanding of
the creative world of children and how they relate to the adult world and also amongst themselves.

Both Russell (2012) and Barrett (2005) were interested in the work of Wenger, McDermott and Snyder for this reason. O’Toole’s (2003) stance is that negotiations between maker and audience mean that even the observer is an artist when considering that audiences must make meaning of what they see, using culturally agreed upon symbols and signs. Lindqvist (in Nilsson, 2009) saw a similar need to unite consciousness, playfulness and solidarity in her ideas about creative play and creative pedagogy.

Miall and Dissanayake (2003) argue that the baby talk experienced between mother and infant is poetic and symptomatic of pre-wired human tendencies towards aesthetic engagement. When studying motherese they note the presence of poetic devices such as parallelism, hyperbole, alliteration and assonance, rhyme and vowel matching. They opine that the traits that artists use to engage audience emotionally are the same ones that mothers use with their babies (Miall & Dissanayake, 2003). Drawing on the Russian Formalist School of thought, they argue that, although dialogue is natural, it is also cultural and is interpreted by a reader within cultural constraints (Miall & Dissanayake, 2003). They suggest that motherese is not always emotive but instead emotional, carrying with it a language or narrative (Miall & Dissanayake, 2003).

In using “won” and “wonger” repeatedly in her rendition of “Twinkle”, Corinne employs vowel matching (“o” sound in “won” and “wonger”) with particular emphasis on the “ng” sound being held at the back of the throat; her “twingle” also emphasizes the predilection for the “ng” sound. There appears to be something about deliberating over the “ng” sound that Corinne finds soothing. And yet the vowels are important aspects of assonance too as they allow her to create an internal rhythm in her verse and poetry. If hyperbolism is to be defined as exaggerating or drawing out a point, then Corinne has done this too; “won, wonger” unifies the whole song; these two little sung words become the nouns and the verbs of the song. They become the description, they become the story. With the presence of the “won” sound in so much of this performance, Corinne can certainly also be said to have used alliteration but it may be a little harder to argue for the presence of parallelism although the use of “won wonger” on every line of Corinne’s poetry could be the unifying
feature for exploration of her vowel sounds which seem to establish a pleasurable internal resonance for her. In terms of this analysis of Corinne’s performance then, and given that she is two and half at the time, there are aspects to this performance that indicate Corinne’s attachment to and exploration of motherese (Miall & Dissanayake, 2003).

Vygotsky viewed play as a complex phenomenon that employs the higher cognitive processes of cognition, volition and emotion (Nilsson, 2009), like Eisner’s (2002) creation of mind. Perhaps adults need to engage in a more playful aspect in their work in order to access the freedom of expression and creative enjoyment that children seem to have (Seng, 2000).

In following the Swedish play scholar Lindqvist, Nilsson (2009) examines the relationship between reality and imagination when adults and peers engage in fictitious ‘playworlds’, or ‘playframes’ (Marjanovic-Shane & Beljanski-Ristic, 2008). A distinction is made between reproduction and production (genuine creativity), and play is perceived as an important source of development of consciousness about the world (Nilsson, 2009); such a distinction with the emphasis being on genuine creativity, would no doubt be considered of high value when contemplating characteristics of future leaders (Bamford, 2006; Seng, 2000).

Play, according to Vygotsky, is related to drama (Nilsson, 2009) and involves two coexisting levels: the ‘real’ level and the ‘conditional’ level. This twofold fictitious engagement between adults and children is not dissimilar to Pascoe’s (1998) concept of negotiations made between maker and audience and Wright’s (2010) notion of interlocutor-child co-playing while constructing meaning. This capacity for maker and audience to ‘read’ and ‘interpret’ each other at their respective levels is therefore an aspect of artistic literacy and the twofold process is also the creation of artistic meaning.

Artistic meaning can occur in any art form using the signs and symbols specific to that art form (Barrett, 2005). Lindqvist believed that viewing the study of culture in terms of combining both anthropological concerns and also fine art, as opposed to those being two separate fields of study, could aid us in understanding connections between play and art form such as dance, music, lyrics and drama (in Nilsson, 2009); this is important for us if we are to make further links in ascertaining artistic meaning that is made and expanded
on by children. Lindqvist also believed that, in getting children to act out certain roles in
traditional Swedish stories they are exploring important emotions such as fear and
loneliness (in Nilsson, 2009); this belief of Lindqvist links in to Vygotsky’s notion of
emotion as being inseparable from imagination or fantasy (Rey, 2011).

Play, like art, is an aesthetic form capable of producing aesthetic emotion (Nilsson, 2009). Exploring art forms therefore incorporates play or elements of play if they are to be
creative in the sense of transformation, exaggeration and shrinkage (Nilsson, 2009).
Transformation through creative play allows the individual to synthesize mind, body and
involves being graceful. Emotion and thought unite in the construction of knowledge
(Nilsson, 2009). So artistic meaning arises from constructing knowledge (Nilsson, 2009),
from culturally agreed-upon symbols continuously being used in a dynamic and enriching
way, which has a final result of building cultural lore (Marjanovic-Shane & Beljanski-
Ristic, 2008).

2.6 Summary

Artistic literacy encompasses the ability to read, write and orate in range of artistic forms,
which allow us to create artistic meaning (Barrett, 2003; Eisner, 2002; Wright, 2003a;
Wright, 2005; Wright, 2013). When adults and children “read” the symbols and signs
embedded within those art forms, they are using ‘cultural tools’ (Vygotsky, 1980) to
interpret those symbols and signs and then make meaning from them (Dewey, 2008;
Eisner, 2002). This is a high level, complex aspect to human thinking that expands and
creates mind (Eisner, 2002). When children use play to create aesthetic meaning and
develop artistic literacy this is a special form of the zone of proximal development
(Vygotsky, 1980); meaning making is the construction of knowledge into understanding
across a range of contexts (Vygotsky, 1986). Thus the creation of artistic meaning is
created across multiple art forms for children through their syncretistic use of the arts
(Dunn & Wright, 2014).

Being literate means using a variety of representative forms for conceptualizing meaning
as opposed to the ability to read words (Eisner, 1986). Engagement with the arts, it seems,
promotes the development of complex, representational styles of thinking as we learn to use nonverbal languages to imagine (Hanna, 2008). There is clearly a deep, rich inner world within every human that has the potential to be expressed in a variety of ways, sometimes multi modal ways (Carrington, 2001; Kress 2000a; Kress, 2000b; Kress, 2003; Kress, 2010). As a result we have multiple literacies (Piazza, 1999; Mc Ardle & Wright, 2015; Roberts, 1995). It is clear that when children communicate they don’t always use one way of communicating (Kress, 2000; Wright, 2003b). Given that individuals see themselves reflected in images in ways they may not see themselves reflected in words (Kendrick & McKay, 2004), art forms may convey some types of information better than other languages can (Dewey, 2008; Hanna, 2008) and this is because art forms are relying on images, imagining and imagination (Hanna, 2008; Vygotsky, 1980).

The use of play as an interactive social form of embodied imagination (Connery, John-Steiner & Marjanovic-Shane, 2010; Vygotsky, 1980) is essential for the growth of the child. Corinne played with “Twinkle” and the vocalizations she created were an embodied musical imagination in action (Connery, John-Steiner & Marjanovic-Shane, 2010). Our imagination (internal) is part of what helps us connect to images (external) as means of communication; this is our rich, inner subjective life expressed in images reaching out to the forms and images available to us in the extraneous world. Our imagination is also linked to the ‘ordering of consciousness’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992).

Each art form has its own type of literacy embedded within it; musical and dance styles of communicating for example, are linked to ways of knowing as much as the literacy embedded within that form (Livermore, 2003). Different ways of knowing or creating artistic literacy and meaning might include enacting, imagining and symbolizing through non-verbal languages (Wright, 2003b); different ways of knowing might also include the more formal elements of each art form such as line, shape, colour, texture, verse, chorus, form, timing, rhythm and so on. Thus artistic literacy is an aesthetic experience that allows us to engender new possibilities in culture, politics and the environment (Bruner, 2009b; Hanna, 2008).

Artistic literacy allows us to play with forms in ways that is reflective of twentieth century abstraction in the arts in general (Hanna, 2008). Emotion, a significant source of human motivation, constrains or inspires people as they create and relate to one another
(Hanna, 2008; Wright, 2003b). Drawing on the work of Leavy (2009), Wright (2003b) says that the arts can also be deliberately confronting, subversive and consciousness-raising. Artistic literacy is also a form of bilingualism, which develops creativity, mental flexibility and expanded worldview (Bialystok, 2001; Hanna, 2008; Torrance; 1969). Wright (2003) has said that the arts are “supraverbal”; they seem to elevate us to a level within ourselves where speech is not necessarily required and we explore consciousness without constraints of spoken language. It is with this in mind that I now explore the case study model within a qualitative framework in relation to acquiring information on how one toddler interacts with the world around her.

Thus we have seen how a toddler’s vocalizations and musical exploration may constitute embodied cognition (Dunn & Wright, 2015). This is important because the inner life of any human is elevated to a point where consciously driven conversation is not as vital for self-consideration. The arts thus become the media through which we explore ‘supraverbal’ states of existence (Wright, 2003), in other words, our consciousness is expanded and grown (Csikszentmihaly, 1992; Eisner, 2002). In the next chapter I discuss research methodology and the qualitative framework in which this project was placed and its implications in the meaning making activities of one young toddler, namely Corinne.
3.1 A Qualitative Framework

Well over twenty years ago Tesch (1990, p. 55) stated that “qualitative data is any information the researcher gathers that is not expressed in numbers.” A number of researchers would contest this definition since numbers define patterns and both quantitative and qualitative researchers seek out patterns in their work (Tesch, 1990). Yet the aim of this study was not to find a numerical pattern across cohorts of persons; rather it was to seek detailed and rich knowledge of the inner artistic workings of a single two and a half year old toddler. Thus, an intrinsic case study model of research within a naturalistic paradigm (Stake, 1995; Tesch, 1990; Yin, 1994) seemed the best way of providing rich detail about the syncretistic ways in which a very young child relates to and makes meaning in music (Dunn & Wright, 2015; Wright, 2003b). Tesch (1990) indicated that if we accept her definition of qualitative research then the range of qualitative data would include pictures, drawings, painting, photographs, films, DVDs, music and sound; in the context of a case study on a toddler immersed in artistic activity this statement appealed to me.

More recently Aten and Denney (2014) defined qualitative research as a type of scientific inquiry that emphasizes the qualities or essences of the phenomenon under examination and that this type of research relies on nonnumerical data such as words and images. Parse (2011, p. xxiii) defined qualitative research as “the systematic study of phenomena with rigorous adherence to a design, the data of which comprises oral, written, or artistic descriptions of human experiences, and for which there are no digital findings.” Clearly the definition of qualitative research in terms of nonnumerical data has remained consistent over time but these authors (Tesch and Parse) were notable on account of their reference to data and activities deemed to be ‘artistic’. Qualitative research, according to Aten and Denney (2014) arose out of naturalistic inquiries conducted in the disciplines of sociology, anthropology and linguistics but it is now applied across the social sciences.
including education. Naturalistic research uses actual settings as a direct source of data (Bogdam & Biklen, 1982). There is no expectation on what the outcome of the naturalistic research will be and the researcher does not manipulate the study conditions as he/she is often required to do in quantitative research designs (Patton, 2014). The natural unfolding of events is permitted, the process being described is discovery-oriented (Patton, 2014) and the researcher comes to provide “thick descriptions” about the phenomenon being studied (Hays & Singh, 2011). Qualitative methods of research provide rich, “thick” descriptions of complex or multidimensional phenomena and illuminate diverse perspective and experiences of people (Aten & Denney, 2014; Hays & Singh, 2011). The “thick descriptions” present a “focused picture of a behaviour or an occurrence that includes relevant psychosocial, affective and cultural undertones” (Hays & Singh, 2011, p. 8). In a particularly expressive and well-written book Michael Patton (2014) provides further illumination about the nature of qualitative research by providing a number of core strategies for qualitative inquiry. These include: naturalistic inquiry, personal experience, qualitative data, dynamic systems, empathic neutrality, personal experience and engagement, unique case orientation, inductive analysis and creative synthesis, holistic perspective, contextual sensitivity, voice, perspective and reflexivity and design flexibility.

In many cases the questions chosen and the research method used say something about our views on what constitutes valuable knowledge and our perspective on the nature of reality. Qualitative methods of research are generally supported by the interpretivist paradigm, which portrays a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex and in constant change (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). This stance suits the notion of arts, music in particular, being socially constructed (Barrett, 2009). Thus in the language of Patton (2014), the nature of the research is both qualitative and naturalistic as I am studying Corinne my two and a half year old toddler in her own home (natural) environment. Corinne and I therefore present a case study based on Corinne’s personal experience in relation to music. I have applied empathic neutrality in being an observer and transcriber of toddler activity as it evolved without recourse to interfering with events. I submit that this case study’s unique orientation is the study of musical symbol making and what this may signify in the creative language of the toddler. I attempted to provide Corinne’s inner musical world a voice to the extent that I as the observer was able to make inferences and draw conclusions based on research supporting artistic education of young children. I
attempted to synthetize the findings creatively and holistically by drawing on holism as an educational theory and also by including syncretistic instances of Corinne’s use of the arts to make meaning.

Qualitative research is also emic (focusing on the insider’s point of view). It is inductive and it deals with emerging issues and usually involves written, descriptive assessment at the conclusion of the process (Bogdam & Biklen, 1982). Qualitative researchers look for complexity of human relations and desire to expand their understanding of these complexities. To grasp the complexities of human interaction and experience more deeply, qualitative researchers immerse themselves in the lives of others and they use a variety of means by which to collect data (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Data collected have been termed soft, that is, rich in description of people, places and conversations (Bogdam & Biklen, 1982). Participant perspectives are important to qualitative researchers who become concerned with process rather than outcomes (Erickson, 1986; Bogdam & Biklen, 1982); this is akin to the artistic creative work where the emphasis lies on the process and less on the product. Sometimes there are issues requiring exploration for which quantitative data is not suitable and therefore a qualitative research process may be more suitable (Aten & Denney, 2014; Patton, 2014).

3.2 Case study design

The three different types of case study (intrinsic, instrumental and collective) were originally described by Stake (1995). Case study design has been described and articulated really only since the 1970s (Aten & Denney, 2014). When a case study is driven by a desire to learn about that particular case, aside from any extraneous learning that may be deducted or ensure, it is called intrinsic case study (Stake, 1995). According to Patton (2014) the key function of the case study is to gather comprehensive, systematic and in-depth information about each case of interest. My case study involving Corinne is an intrinsic case study given that it examines one specific case and is not attempting to understand a specific issue or phenomenon as would be the case if I were using instrumental case study or collective case study design (Aten & Denney, 2014; Patton, 2014).
Case studies involving mother-researchers are rare and therefore there is no broad array of examples to work from in terms of drawing conclusions about analysis of data. The only scenario similar to my case study that I could locate was one involving Marcia Baghban (1984) who studied the development of her daughter’s reading and writing skills from birth to age three. As mother-researcher, she too relied on the use of diary entries, tape recordings and videotapes. In the process Baghban (1984) also discovered, described and analyzed her daughter’s drawing samples. Thus in setting out to make discoveries about her daughter’s reading and writing development, she also discovered that drawing was a part of that early childhood literary development; noteworthy is that this research project was completed over thirty years ago and therefore unique for its day. In a similar vein, Helga Eng (1954) studied the drawings of her niece Margaret from infancy until about the age of eight and gave psychological analyses of these drawings. Eng (1954) confirmed that the receptive side of an activity is developed earlier that the productive. She also pointed out that Margaret had few playmates or social stimulation and came to drawing of her own accord (Eng, 1954). Eng (1954) notes the physical responses from Margaret as she moved from mental states to attentional states. In an attempt to broaden our current notions of ‘embodied cognition’, Kress (1997) argued for the inclusion of a broad range of approaches to the teaching of children; he thus conducted case studies into the numerous literacies of children, some of which included but were not limited to drawing and the use of visual arts. And further back in time still, is the case of the physician Jean Heroard (1551-1628) who came into the care of the future Louis XIII and documented 25 of the young prince’s drawings across a four-year period.

Studying one’s own children for the sake of research of course is not new. In an article entitled “Test Subjects Who Call the Scientist Mom or Dad” (The New York Times, 2009) we learn of Jean Piaget, who studied his children to describe stages of childhood development, Jonas Selk, who vaccinated his own children with polio vaccine and Clarence Leuba, who studied his newborn son’s innate ability to laugh in response to tickling, all studied their own children with positive outcomes (The New York Times, 2009). The debate in The New York Times article (2009) centered on whether or not scientists should declare whether their own children were used in studies or not since some scientists saw no need to do this.
In the case study I have undertaken, I openly disclose the mother-daughter relationship, as it is phenomenologically fundamental to such a research project. Given the qualitative paradigm in my case study work, my aim with Corinne is to expose potential biases as well as potential positives and understand that these also exist even in case studies where the researcher-participant is not the parent (Elliott, Fischer & Rennie, 1999). Such bias-positives are part of what it means to be human. Potential positives in studying one’s own children include the opportunity for more in-depth research. Researching one’s own children can seem an attractive prospect when funding is unavailable and working with your own children intimately may prompt questions and research that take us into new directions (The New York Times, 2009). Potential negatives in a case study design involving a mother-researcher and her own daughter might include: a negative effect on the child who does not appreciate probing or being videotaped or it may be tempting for a parent to encourage responses when there are none to be given and there may possibly be a breach of child privacy (The New York Times, 2009). Also, while some research projects are benign we do not always know the effect (The New York Times, 2009).

By way of positive effects of being a participant observer, DeMunck and Sobo (1998) suggest that participant observation as a research methodology technique provides a rich “backstage culture”, that it allows for richly detailed descriptions and it provides opportunities for viewing or engaging in unscheduled events. With respect to the last point, I felt strongly that this was a very useful research technique when dealing with a case study on a young child that would move swiftly from one artistic mode to another as a way or means of exploring the world and making meaning out of her encounters with the world. DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) also suggest that being a participant observer improves the quality of data collection and interpretation and can assist with fine-tuning newer research questions and hypotheses. DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) also point out that the researcher needs to understand how his/her gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class and theoretical approach may affect observation, analysis and interpretation (explored later). Although this point may work as a negative in certain contexts, one positive aspect to this point is that it may also have the effect of forcing the participant researcher to think more deeply and closely about his/her own impact on the findings and the lens through which he/she views the world. Ratner (2002) suggests that one’s subjectivity can facilitate an understanding of the world of others. Reflecting upon one’s biases, he/she then can recognize those biases that distort understanding and replace them with those that help
him/her to be more objective (Ratner, 2002). Merriam (1998) suggests that the point is not whether the process of observing affects the situation or the participants but is more about how the researcher accounts for those effects in explaining the data.

The intrinsic case study model of research “catches the complexity of a single case” (Stake, 1995). Yin (1994) has argued that case studies can clarify complicated processes and generate new knowledge about phenomenon, in this case, toddler artistry and symbol meaking. Case studies also have the power to enrich and build our understanding of seemingly unrelated things. The case study model can be married effectively to qualitative research styles since qualitative research emphasizes nuance, the wholeness of the individual and the sequentiality of happenings in their context (Stake 1995). Case study allows for a ‘palette of methods’ (Stake, 1995). Case study model allows the mother-researcher to examine her daughter holistically in the sense that the mother-researcher can grasp her child’s artistic and aesthetic experiences in the context of that lived experience and draw on it richly. Yet it must be acknowledged that the mother-researcher paradigm is akin to the participant-observer paradigm where nothing we involve ourselves is left untouched (Reinharz, 2011). Reinharz (2011) identifies a tripartite arrangement of the selves that work in research out in the field: research selves (the selves concerned with research), personal selves (selves that one brings to the field) and situational selves (the ones that are created while researching).

3.3 The ‘selves’ present in this intrinsic case study

My cultural heritage is that of a white, middle class working background. My lineage is Anglo-Saxon, my mother being Dutch and my father Australian. Corinne’s father is Israeli and musical himself, not shy of singing. Although Corinne’s father and I never clashed about religion, there was always an expectation that our children learn the Jewish faith and follow the traditions. It seemed to me as I came to learn more about the Jewish faith and culture that family life and religion were inseparable in many senses. Thus this is the cultural milieu in which Corinne has grown and the lens that I bring to this research project.
Since Corinne was my first child and there was a two-year gap between her and her sister Ariel, Corinne had a lot of extra time with me that Ariel never got. Corinne and I would sit down at the end of a long workday and read books. She would ask me to read them again and again and so I would. When she was about eighteen months old she became fascinated with a television series called “Boobah”; I understood that she was attracted to the swirling images, the swirling colours and the largely, non-verbal style of communicating with young viewers, which incorporated many images of children playing together and laughing. Corinne began to point to parts of this series and express surprise and delight. I bought her the DVD from a bookstore and we watched a lot of it for a while. She became interested in “Thomas the Tank Engine”, “Bananas in Pyjamas” and all the songs that were sung and performed during these shows. I bought those DVDs too. I also bought her an easel, butcher paper and paints to play with outside whenever she wanted to and she used the easel and paints many times of her own accord. These natural proclivities and tendencies towards the arts as ‘primary languages’ (Dunn & Wright, 2015) intrigued me and I came to feel that I needed to know more about these behaviours.

I have always taught piano and voice from home. I scripted shows and composed music for school productions, which entailed inventing narratives that would interest children and the teachers that coach them. So Corinne has always been a part of this process, frequently sitting on my lap as I taught students coming to my home or wrote and arranged music. Since I am also a class teacher and have taught Music, Drama and Art across my whole career, obviously I present with a high attachment to such activities and understand their value because I practice them daily and know what they bring to me personally. I also value books and reading as a source of creativity and inspiration for the same reason. This cultural, educational context in which Corinne has grown has no doubt contributed greatly to her own artistic growth. I also come from a class of people who value education and understand the precept that working for the community adds value to the whole as well as the parts. And this is a value I tried to instill in Corinne from a young age. She was always an eager helper and it was through this natural propensity too that we would talk about things like changing her baby sister’s nappy, how to bath the baby, how to hold her, how to read to her and so forth. These activities were wonderful for both of us to expand the way we interacted with our respective worlds.
Thus this is my personal and cultural ‘self’ (Reinharz, 2011); this personal-cultural self was expanded in and through the research I began to conduct involving Corinne and my interest continued to develop and expand as I continued to research and gather further information about children’s learning trajectories. Corinne’s activities and natural propensities propelled me to learn more; she influenced me and I propped her up with her interests so there were definitely ‘intersections of mothering and art making’ (Kennedy-Lewis, 2012). Her interests also happened to be my interests, which helped the two of us to have a happy relationship over engagement with the arts. Even prior to the research project involving Corinne, I preferred to let her find her way to an interest and knew it would be fruitless to force her to do anything so we already had an established style of interacting with each other over the arts. Like many mothers, I had constant fear and guilt that I was either not doing enough or doing too much so I know that ‘mother guilt’ was always hovering over my head. I have done much work on myself over the years to try and shift some of that mother guilt but it is hard to move; striking the balance between being involved at the right level and stepping back on other occasions is extremely challenging.

Thus it becomes clear that the ‘situational self’ (Reinharz, 2011) that was created throughout the project was a balancing act for me where I knew not to interfere but still carried mother guilt and anxiety over whether I was doing enough or not enough for Corinne and her siblings. Interestingly the research ‘self’ (Reinharz, 2011) that I brought to this project allowed me to step back and behave internally in a more objective fashion. I thus found that the research side of me, always intrigued with readings and articles helped to provide a calming balance to my perspective at times. I would be deemed a novice researcher for the purposes of this project and felt that ‘novice’ aspect to myself acutely so tried very hard to address issues of collecting data as they arose. I would pull my notepad out only when Corinne initiated a conversation or activity herself and not intervene. Thus this is the rich “backstage culture” (DeMunck & Sobo, 1998) in which Corinne and I are both situated in relation to one another.

As Erickson (1986) pointed out interpretation is very important in qualitative research but the distinction between researcher interpretations and participant interpretation/experience must be made clear. The case study researcher may need to refine, modify or replace initial key questions in mid-study as the aim is to thoroughly
understand. This is why this process can be construed as creative, emergent and evolving; I guess it’s a form of academic evolution. The researcher may have to adjust to emergent themes or issues that had not presented themselves at the outset of the case (Stake, 1995). This is not unlike the child’s sense of wonderment and joy in play, out of which emerging themes arise for them as they play with multiple perspectives and multiple meanings (Barrett, 2005; Eisner 2002).

3.4 The mother-researcher paradigm

In the context of this project the technique of participant-observation was used (Bogdam & Biklen, 1982). I had an intimate relationship with the participant, being her mother, and was already deeply immersed in the life of my daughter. I was also able to bring a mother’s perspective to the research, which allowed for a rich grasp of small, almost imperceptible judgments and decisions that my own child made in relation to the questions I posed for the purpose of this research project. Small innuendo and signals that exist only between parent and child could be noted and described in that ‘rich sense’; a parent would be able to apply a more intuitive understanding of the inner workings of the child. This is not necessarily something a researcher unrelated to the child could bring to the case study. For instance both Kohler (2014) and Chapman (1988) describe Piaget’s own interactions with his daughter Jacqueline. Kohler (2014) mentions an account where Piaget was able to access his daughter’s cot to conduct observations using home made inventions, suggesting intimacy between parent-researcher and family routine. Chapman (1988) recounts the story of Piaget’s daughter Jacqueline learning ‘stage four imitative’ actions such as identifying where her nose on her face was, when someone else blew their nose (p. 117).

The mother-researcher is also likely to possess an understanding of her own child’s reasoning and the histories behind such reasoning (Chapman, 1988; Kohler, 2014). Matthews (1982) was able to rely on the same kind of parental understanding as a researcher of his own children too. I functioned as an interlocutor with Corinne (Wright, 2012a). Although I did not prompt her aesthetic responses, and recorded them only as they arose in the home, I was similar to a playmate for Corinne as I went along with
Corinne’s imagination, suspending disbelief and allowing Corinne to take the lead in many senses (Wright, 2012a). This understanding of the role of the mother-researcher is not unlike Kennedy-Lewis’ (2012) view that self-narrative is a useful tool for teachers who had turned to research as this allowed intersections between research and practice to be revealed that may otherwise remain tacit, inaccessible or invisible to a broader audience. In essence, in being the mother-researcher in relation to my daughter Corinne, I am bringing ‘intersections’ of mothering and art making in childhood to this discussion. I am giving ‘voice’ (Wright, 2013) to the child’s ‘vocal contagions’ (Chapman, 1988) and I am a co-creator in the ever-expanding world of Corinne’s musical imagination (Wright, 2012a).

When engaging in art, Corinne presents performances of her own contemplation and, through her senses and body (embodiment), brings those ideas and feelings into existence (Dunn & Wright, 2015; Wright, 2012a). Engaging in a dialogue with Corinne means that I facilitate, sustain and extend her ideas (Wright, 2012a). I hear and understand the reason, the purpose, the meaning, the function, the process and context of what Corinne is trying to convey (Wright, 2012a). These actions, on my part as participant-researcher in a naturalistic paradigm, are aligned with the discovery-orientated process where we are co-creators of mind (Eisner, 2002; Reese & Cleveland, 2006). During the child’s aesthetic experience, she is immersed in an otherworldly state of mind, she is having an intimate moment with herself and has internalized her experience - a matter the interlocutor needs to recognize (Wright, 2012a). Reese and Cleveland (2006) have noted that the capacity for young children to understand mind, make elaborate recall and recount autobiographical detail is strongly linked to the ability of the mother to do the same. The mothers of children with a developed mind understanding were more elaborative than mothers of children with a less developed understanding of mind (Matthews, 2004; Reese & Cleveland, 2006; Welch-Ross, 1997). So again, although a researcher unrelated to a child can have an impact on what is elicited from a child in an art making session, even if only implicit, the mother is often the being in a child’s life linked to the internal life of that child.

Elliott, Fischer and Rennie (1999), when discussing Evolving Guidelines for the publishing of qualitative research studies, state that there is an important need to avoid
stifling creativity in rapidly evolving research traditions. Using the mother-researcher-participant research model can be viewed as a creative application of studying children in a naturalistic setting. I certainly found the process 'eye-opening' as I was looking at my daughter through a more focused lens and identifying themes in what she was doing; I felt that the process and experience expanded who I was as a parent, researcher, writer and thinker. Since I am working in a qualitative paradigm and looking for nuances in the child’s relationship to the world, and that world includes me, I never felt pressure to obtain ‘correct answers’ since I never understood this project to be about correctness. I genuinely enjoyed working in this framework and seeing my child with more attuned attention. It was creative in all senses; Corinne created her world, Corinne made meaning from her world through the arts and her mother as researcher-participant attempted to describe that process as richly and creatively as she could. Corinne and I co-created meaning (Barrett, 2009; Kress, 1997; Wright, 2012a).

Husserl (1965) argued that phenomenology is concerned with ‘pure consciousness’. Since the nature of experience is fleeting and cannot be pinned down to a permanent state that can be objectively studied, this presents researchers with the need to discuss human involvement in a world via ‘lived experience’ (Husserl, 1965). Merleau-Ponty (1962) saw coherence in the world as lived and that perception is original awareness of the appearance of phenomena in experience. Toddlers like Corinne are examples of humans living ‘in the now’ and enjoying the moment, abandoning a sense of time (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992) and resonating with ‘peak experience’ (Robinson, 2010). Thus while quantitative research tends to observe the act or object, qualitative research tends to conduct dialogue with the act or object and a phenomenological perspective also reflects on the researcher-subject relationship (Boyd, 1993). At times this relationship is inferred as much as it is stated.

3.5 Studying the processes of musical symbol use of a toddler

The key purpose of the research project was to explore and examine, in a broad sense, how a toddler uses artistic modes of expression with a specific emphasis on whether or not toddlers use symbols of music when using music as an art form. The notion of toddlers using symbols in their music making is situated in a socio-cultural context.
Corinne for example, made music as described in the vignette at the outset of this paper with symbols she has learned from her cultural milieu. The song she uses is a symbol of her social milieu and perhaps even how she perceives her relationship to that milieu. She uses the song symbolically to explore a private aspect of herself. So when I state that I am exploring the use of symbols by a toddler, it is a symbolic perspective I take, a semiotic one. I also want to examine the notion of what is meant by meaningful artistic education for a young toddler.

Key questions I envisaged as being integral to the scope of this investigation have already been stated but are presented again:

- What is meant by meaningful, holistic, artistic education for a young toddler?
- What symbolic meaning making occurred in her artistic modes of self-expressions?
- Can the use of symbols in the development of arts-focused skills in a toddler be framed in the context of Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development?

3.6 The time frame

The participant was one two and a half year toddler by the name of Corinne. The data (5 vignettes) were collected over a period of three months, from December 4th, 2006 until February 14th, 2007. Detailed notes were collected on the child and she was observed in her own home closely under the participant observer eyes of her researcher mother. On several occasions she was also videotaped using a small hand-held Sony camcorder. However, given that I was selectively focussed on arts-based, symbolic events, these recordings were discarded if they did not fit my search criteria. Although the video recordings were discarded on these terms, the notes were retained for verification of artistic behaviours.

Corinne would frequently change tasks at lightning speed; this meant it was difficult to keep abreast of those changes whilst also dealing with another younger baby sister, Ariel, in the house. There were moments when the baby was asleep of course, and I could focus more intensely on Corinne. But the presence of the baby was often an important trigger for Corinne too. On occasion I would let the camera run, hoping to ‘catch’ a spontaneous musical or artistic moment; it was very rare when this happened of course. The moments
worth capturing, in my view, were those I saw, heard and witnessed just after they happened. Out came the notepad and the pen and furious note taking would commence. I was very conscious of the fact that this was the first time I was doing anything like this and wanted to be sure that what I was observing and writing about was accurate and relevant, so there was a degree of uncertainty in what I was doing, but constant revision of notes and final write-ups helped iron out some of those uncertainties. I was anxious to build a ‘rich’ picture and make some worthwhile findings. Anxiety is not always helpful in such work but it did put me ‘on my toes’ as it were.

Trustworthiness has proved to be an issue for qualitative researchers however Krefting (1991) highlights ways in which a qualitative case study may present as consistent. Truth value asks whether the researcher has established confidence in the findings for the subjects or the participants; thus internal validity is based on the assumption that there is one singular reality to be measured (Krefting, 1991). A qualitative study would become credible when it presents accurate descriptions or interpretation of human experience that people, who also share that experience, would immediately recognize, based on the descriptions (Krefting, 1991). Thus reference to and reliance on accounts from researchers with similar interests, goals and findings is important (Krefting, 1991). Trustworthiness in qualitative research is also measured against whether or not the findings would be consistent if the inquiry were to be replicated with the same participant and in the same setting (Krefting, 1991). Internal stability of the research project is thus measured by repeatability (Krefting, 1991). Variability is expected in naturalistic settings, where many extraneous factors can influence what occurs in the naturalistic setting (Krefting, 1991).

As noted above, there has been considerable research into the visual arts activities of young children (Anning, 2002; Arnheim, 1966; Barrett, 2003; Copple & Bredekamp, 2007; Kress, 1997; Matthews, 2004; McArdle & Wright, 2014; Wright, 2012b; Wright, 2013). However the search for symbolic use during music-making events is not as commonly researched and evaluated which is part of why this issue is being studied within a naturalistic context (Wright, 2014).
3.7 On the selection of the opening vignette

The vignette presented at the outset of this paper was selected for discussion and prompting due to the seemingly reflective and intimate nature of Corinne’s experience to and with music making on this occasion. It gave me a deeper reason for pursuing phenomenology as the research lens through which to discuss Corinne’s musical experience. If this vignette is compared with the one, for example, at section 4.4 (Chapter Four) of this paper where the use of the maracas is described, the maraca vignette potentially demonstrates the toddler’s recognition of aural form based on repeated exposure to culturally defined musical form. Corinne was clearly excited and engaged at this time but not as contemplative or reflective. The “Twinkle” vignette was the one I selected for deeper analysis as it presented aural awareness, some understanding of musical form based on prior cultural exposure and deeper, internalized connection to ‘self’.

3.8 Summary

This project involved an intrinsic case study using naturalistic, qualitative research methodology of one female child of two and a half years of age. The project was conducted in an inductive style (Patton, 2014) in that it began with a small set of questions in order to focus and attune the attention of the researcher. Intrinsic case studies are useful for defining aspects of community relationships and community living such as social support and care, fostering a sense of belonging and acceptance (Parker, 2016), the internal world of morality, self-identity and a personal understanding of racialism (Bradley, 2008). Although Corinne may not be pondering big questions such as racialism when singing her unique version of “Twinkle”, she was using it to explore self-identity and morality, if that means exploring one’s relationship to the world around her. It appears that both group singing and solo singing are means by which we explore ourselves, ‘order consciousness’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992) and create values that help us better empathize with interconnectedness (Miller, 1986).

The next section details further instances of Corinne’s interactions with aesthetic experiences. The recording of these other events is with a view to contextualizing Corinne’s aesthetic experiences in relation to her cultural milieu (Barrett, 2009) and
presenting her musical explorations with a view to creating a more holistic image of Corinne’s thinking and embodied actions and narratives (Dunn & Wright, 2015).
Chapter 4
Musical Stories of Corinne and the World Around Her

In addition to the opening vignette in Chapter One, Chapter Four describes five further stories or encounters that Corinne had during the time notes were taken on her artistic engagement with the world around her (4 December 2006 to 14 February 2007). These stories are intended to contextualize her lived, artistic experience and provide a more rounded, ‘holistic’ grasp of how she responded in various aesthetic settings. I label the observation with a title that features an aspect of how Corinne engaged with a mitigating cue, I list the date the incident took place, I describe the event and then provide an analysis of the event.

Recalling Maslow’s (1965) concept of ‘self-actualization’ these further stories help us to understand more about Corinne’s engagement with ‘intrinsic learning’. Her ‘intrinsic learning’ (Maslow, 1965) is a self-perpetrated learning environ whereby she listens to her own voice (literally and metaphorically), she takes responsibility for her own craft and performance, she is honest, innocent and playful in the way she works, she is involved in a cause outside of herself, she experiences fully, vividly, with full concentration and absorption and she is skilled at making decisions in favour of personal growth.

4.1 Corinne recalling DVD characters’ “jumping down” action and singing and applying it spontaneously (27th December 2006)

Mum, Corinne and Ariel went to the St Kilda library today in order to reissue books. As Mum was standing in the queue being served by the girl at the desk, Corinne was seated on a chair (which should have been used by her pregnant mum) excitedly examining everything on the desk. She spied a headphone set and immediately grabbed hold of it, tried to put it on her head and pretend to talk into the little microphone on the end. Mum looks at the young lady at the desk, who does not seem to mind too much, but asks Corinne to put it back. Mum has to do this several times. Corinne continues to play with the headset. Mum takes it from
her and puts it back on the desk when Corinne refuses to put it back. Mum then asks her to get off the chair. Corinne jumps down from her chair and promptly breaks off into singing “See Saw Margery Daw”. The pitching of her performance is accurate and Corinne performed it confidently in front of the librarian. This is not a song Mum believed Corinne had learned at home. Mum wondered where Corinne had picked it up.

I asked myself at the time of this incident if “See Saw Margery Daw” was on the fairly new “Bananas in Pyjamas Singing Time Special” DVD we had recently bought. I did not think it was. Later that afternoon when we were at home again watching the DVD, I realized that in fact the song was on the DVD. I had never been seated when it had played on the DVD and so did not know it was now part of Corinne’s repertoire. This is not a hard song of course and uses the Curwen/Kodaly pitches of “soh”, “mi” and “lah”, which may vary slightly from version to version of the song.

The library incident taught me how quickly and independently Corinne was able to absorb and recall this song. Brief songs utilizing intervals of minor thirds are aurally important to young children; research shows that the first musical interval that arises from the singing habits of young children is the descending minor third, and so this is why the Kodaly methodology begins teaching using songs built on minor thirds (Tan et al., 2010). The simplicity of this song and the use of the descending minor third have made it easy for her to learn (Tan et al., 2010).

The way “See Saw Margery Daw” is presented in the context of this DVD is that it is part of a long story strung together by the characters, B1, B2, Rat and the Three Teddies. The characters all meet up and decide to have a singing day. They then sing very simple songs together in varying contexts. The point at which “See Saw Margery Daw” appears is when the narrator explain that the teddies have been to the park to play and they are balancing on a see saw. The song itself does not go for longer than fifteen seconds and is preceded and followed by “Row, Row, Row Your Boat”. Perhaps Corinne took special note of this simple and extremely short tune on account of its placement in the middle of the “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” song.
Corinne loves the Teddies, as they are very cute. When they play on and jump off the see saw, perhaps she has related to the story as much as to the song because of the characters and their jumping actions. She has made a connection or a link between the story of the Teddies jumping off the see saw and herself jumping off the chair in the library and she is using music in the form of a song to express her knowledge and awareness of that connection. She has made an embodied association with the Teddies jumping off the see saw (Dunn & Wright, 2015). All of this would suggest that again, Corinne, in spite of her age, is capable of ‘reading’ the story and its context, and extracting meaning from it. She is creating new structural templates (Bowman, 2004) from which to assert new meaning and significance, linking her expression of joy as she jumps from the library chair to the joy experienced by the Teddies. Thus the use of narrative and embodied actions in helping her to learn was also potent.

Some of the older nursery tunes such as “See Saw Margery Daw” when, it seems, are attached to stories that appeal to and engage children at their level with cute characters, can also have the same effect, for what else could “See Saw Margery Daw” have been to Corinne’s ears other than a “hook”, or a form of a brainworm (Sacks, 2010)? “See Saw Margery Daw” appeared so briefly in the Bananas in Pyjamas DVD it had to have had a musical “hook” (the traditional child’s chant of “soh” to “mi”, or descending minor third common to many children’s tunes; other tunes that fit into this descending minor third category include “Rain, Rain, Go Away”, “Come Home All My Ducks and Geese”, “Caterpillar” and “Bounce the Ball”, to name a few) as well as a contextual, culturally agreed-upon narrative “hook”.

The usefulness of the DVDs such as the ones discussed here lies in the fact that they have become a medium for repeating musical and artistic experiences in and through which young children can learn:

1. How to ‘read’ and follow stories and narratives (Edwards, 1993; Marjanović-Shane & Beljanski-Ristić, 2008; Matthews, 2004; Wright, 2005).
2. How to interpret stories, identify with the characters in the story and identify with the songs attached to those songs (Marjanović-Shane & Beljanski-Ristić, 2008).
3. How to extract meaning and apply it through artistic forms such as music, song, movement and dance (Dunn & Wright, 2015).
4. How to make connections in and through narrative and the arts to the world around them (Bowman, 2004).

Corinne, as the viewer of the art forms on the DVD, has indeed perceived something of the artist’s semiotic intention (Emery & Flood, 2003). The cultural exchange between artist and child was enabled cognitively via aesthetic perception and contemplation of visual form (Eisner, 1972). This promoted the reading of the story and the music in relation to the story (Luquet & Costall, 2001).

4.2 “Kermit’s Swamp Years” – cross-modal response to a first time hearing inspires a dance (27th December 2006)

A funky little song appears with Jim Henson puppets dancing everywhere; they are mostly all frogs and telling the story of what it is like to be a pet for humans. In response to the movements of the puppets and the lyrics, these are movements Corinne makes on this first-time hearing:

1. Shoulders side to side
2. Baby rocking motion (cradling a baby motion)
3. Upper torso motion
4. Elbow digging in the air movement
5. Jumping up and down, her favorite movement
6. Hands up in the air

The puppets in the movie were not doing the same movements; their movements were much wilder and wobblier than Corinne’s impromptu dance, but certainly the happiness and exuberance of the puppets elicited a creative and expressive moment for Corinne. All of Corinne’s movements used a full range of body parts and body movements thus demonstrating her need at that moment to be fully expressive, ‘fully alive in a peak moment’ (Robinson, 2010) and to use embodied musical movement (Dunn & Wright, 2015).
Corinne was active and engaged in the tune, the characters, the narrative and the funkiness of the combinations. Mum had never seen Corinne do moves like this before and understood she may have seen or learned them from other clips or childcare. Corinne’s sensory responses have been evoked once she has ‘read’ and recognized the ‘otherness’ in the artwork (here: film) and the music making she encountered (Langer, 1953). Her whole human self has been engaged through this encounter and she has experienced a multi-dimensional response because she has read images, both visual and musical, and constructed some meaning from that (Eisner, 1991). The meaning manifested itself in whole body movements, energized and enthused by the funkiness of the tune. Corinne was responding to musical style in this context which was cross-modal learning at its most potent: following narrative, responding to music, responding to rhythm, moving to music, embodying meaning and significance through music. Thus music in this kind of context fulfills its cognitive duty as “an educator of feeling” (Bowman, 2004).

4.3 Creating repeated actions and singing to DVDs while travelling in the long silver car (28th December 2006)

Since I drive a lot and believe in the power of music to teach young children at many different levels, I have a fairly large collection of children’s songs from which Corinne can select. When we travel in the car, Corinne insists on having The Wiggles Party CD playing most of the time. She occasionally asks for the Crocodile Song on a collection of folk songs I have and again sometimes asks for the ‘Nanas’ CD (Apples and Bananas CD-a collection of US folk songs). I have noticed that sometimes just listening to the CDs allows for Corinne to be a little inventive with her own movements. I note that in these instances Corinne is not following the actions of the adult entertainers she sees on a screen but is trying to build her own vocabulary of actions and movements in response to the music she is hearing. Clearly Corinne’s full body movement is impeded by the car seat, but she uses her voice and her hands during these times in order to express herself rhythmically and to accentuate the beat. Most of her hand actions are pulsed in time to the beat but at times they are not and appear to be more circular in
motion. The circular actions appear to be helping her understand shape and phrasing in the melody; she is shaping and phrasing her aesthetic world.

It is likely that Corinne, like many other toddlers and children in general, enjoys learning through repetition but as respected physician Oliver Sacks (2010) notes in ‘Musicophilia’:

> Sometimes normal musical imagery crosses a line and becomes, so to speak, pathological, as when a certain fragment of music repeats itself incessantly...for days on end (p. 41).

Sacks’ (2010) notion of musical imagery is a good suggestion as to what Corinne may be doing when listening to her favorite songs over and over again: she is employing musical imagery, building a bank and storehouse of favorite tunes and melodies. Although this process or habit may not be the same as visual imagery, she is using the music to tell herself something, a story perhaps, and to relax herself in the process just as she did in the “Won, won, wonger” vignette at the outset of this paper. She uses the repetition to work her way into a contemplative mode, to build memories, emotions and associations (Reese & Cleveland, 2006; Welch-Ross, 1997). She is creating a bank or stash of musical memories on which she can create new musical links and structures (Bowman, 2004). As Sacks points out, such musical memory building experiences may be linked to emotions:

> Our susceptibility to musical imagery indeed requires exceedingly sensitive and refined systems for perceiving and remembering music ... These systems, it seems, are as sensitive to stimulation from internal sources – memories, emotions, associations – as to external associations. (p. 39).

Sacks (2010) refers to the anomalies of when fragments of music replay themselves inside a person’s mind as ‘brainworms’. A brainworm is an “endless repetition”, “a coercive process” where “the music has entered and subverted a part of the brain forcing it to fire repetitively and autonomously (as may happen with a tic or seizure)” (Sacks, 2010, p. 41). The fact that sometimes, in the process of physical trauma to the brain,
musical phrases can return to a patient, sometimes from his past, in his inner ear, may be an indication of the brain’s happy interest in and connection to aural-musical repetition.

Musical imagery, the hearing and replaying of musical phrases, then could be counted as a way in which young children make meaning of the world around them. This is the brain’s way of relating to and internally recording the rhythms present in the world about them. Similarly, Dewey (2008) believed that rhythm was the underlying, binding force of all life and art forms and that it played a role in unifying the subconscious aspects of ourselves. Rhythm, an essence in and of music, ‘orders consciousness’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). The rhythm and the melody appear to provide some form of security and necessary structure for the brain. The brain seems to latch onto the rhythms and the tunes and builds meaning out of those tunes, and sometimes that meaning has an emotional connotation.

Sacks (2010) talked about his own experiences with brainworms and recalled that his earliest encounters with these brainworms had meaning and emotion since the tunes on which the worms were based came from Jewish tunes that had been sung together as a family as he grew up. All had a sense of history and heritage, a feeling of family warmth and togetherness. Is Corinne seeking out connections to a cultural heritage and looking for a sense of family, warmth or connections in her constant replaying of her favorite tunes? Does the constant repetition provide security for her brain, a way of finding rhythm and pattern in the world around her? Given her specific preferences for some tunes over others and her rejection of Mum’s favorite tunes in preference to her choices, this is certainly a strong possibility.

4.4 Corinne recognizes verse chorus form and responds with playing a maraca following the outline of the musical form (7th January, 2007)

We are watching a DVD of “The Big Red Car” by The Wiggles on our television set. One song has an interesting effect on Corinne. Each time the music cycles back to the chorus, she runs to the little maraca lying on the bench under the television and shakes it along with that chorus. She then puts it down for the verse and tries to follow the actions on TV for the verse. To get to the maraca she has to run back to the bench and shake it along with the music. This is quite a
complex task she sets herself, all impromptu and on the spur of the moment as she sees and feels it.

Corinne has aurally identified a musical difference between verse and chorus; this identification, although aural at first, has also become kinesthetic (embodied), as demonstrated by the need to make a movement along with (although not necessarily in time to) the music on the television (Bowman, 2004; Dunn & Wright, 2015). This is an example of Corinne using culturally learned musical symbols to express herself. She has internalized the musical form of “verse chorus” (strophic form) from prior listenings and can now respond aesthetically to that structure with a musical instrument that was kept in a box on the bench next to the television set. She did this without prompting or encouragement; this was her way of engaging aesthetically with the music.

Corinne’s application of the culturally transmitted musical structure has come after numerous hearings of this song and the DVD in its entirety. She is expressing this understanding through ‘cross-modal’ or ‘intermodal transfer’ (Bowman, 2004), that is schemata encountered or used in one experiential domain (performing the actions of the verse along with the TV personnel) functioning as a structural and organizational template for another (shaking the maraca on the chorus). Bowman (2004) states, “The human capacity to use experience from one domain to make sense of another is an extraordinarily potent cognitive resource” (pp. 30-31). Corinne’s embodied response to the musical form she has discerned is ‘cross-modal’ or ‘intermodal’ (Bowman, 2004); the use of musical instruments, her aural perception skills and her body are allowing her to explore and develop her concepts of aural, musical form. She allows herself to feel form as much as hear it. Her lack of shyness in expressing her physical connection to the music and singing this is indicative of her ‘being in the moment’, or ‘resonating in a peak moment’ (Robinson, 2010).

The entertainers in the clip are very good at telling simple stories using narrative and song. DVDs allow for children to engage in repetitious styles of learning of which they are very fond; DVDs allow young children to engage aesthetically at their own pace and appear to support their creative learning. At the chorus, when The Wiggles sing the words, “Toot, toot, chugga, chugga, big red car” they roll their hands in a forward motion as they drive the car, a trademark of The Wiggles. Although it would have been
easy for Corinne to use these same, simple hand movements, and although she had used them this way previously, she chose to use the maraca instead. Was Corinne personalizing her response to the song? Or was she simulating the actions of the adult entertainers? Since the trumpet makes an entrance at the chorus, thus making the musical texture bigger and richer, it is therefore possible to conceive that Corinne was creating her own personal interpretation in response to the presence of the trumpet, which was contributing to the richer texture. So this was also an issue of textural response; her aural recognition and the subsequent embodiment of that recognition is cross-modal transfer in that it allows her to explore texture as well as form (Bowman, 2004; Dunn & Wright, 2015). This ‘textural response’ suggests that at some level, Corinne was ‘reading’ the music aurally, that she was ‘interpreting’ the music kinesthetically. She was ‘interpreting’ the musical score as a whole and her unique personal aesthetic preferences were being applied to the performance instead of The Wiggles’ normal dance movements.

Corinne was creating ‘musical mind’ (Eisner, 2002) and using embodied ways of making meaning, employing cross-modal transfer (Bowman, 2004; Dunn & Wright, 2015). Music making of course is a kinesthetic response in its own right. Corinne had heard this song and seen the clip many times previously, so she was building on prior knowledge and developing her listening, performing and interpretational skills through repetition. This cultural transmission via repetition (Barrett, 2009) has provided Corinne with the opportunity to expand her self (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992; Eisner, 2002; Reese & Cleveland, 2006; Welch-Ross, 1997) and to order consciousness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992).

Through imitation, repetition and scaffolding, young children make meaning of their world; they use any or all of these three processes as ways of making symbols on which they can rely to understand and make meaning of the world around them (Barrett, 2005; Barrett, 2009; Eisner, 2002; Forrester, 2009). They use these experiential, embodied and kinesthetic domains of exploration to create new structural templates (Bowman, 2004; Dunn & Wright, 2015).

It is significant that Corinne had access to the music, the DVDs and the maracas at home. She was able make musical meaning of the world around her through the presence and subsequent use of these simple musical instruments (Kennedy-Lewis, 2012).
4.5 Corinne sings a musical “hook” and applies it independently during personal play (8th January 2007)

Corinne loves the song ‘Rock-a-by your Bear’ by The Wiggles (1991). It has a very prominent dotted rhythm ‘la-la-la-la-la’ motif in it. The motif is sung on “soh” with the final note being the upper “doh”. She runs everywhere, even in local shopping centers, singing it. She sings it in the house and on car trips and, because Mum has sung it back to her so many times, she now expects Mum to continue with this practice. Dad has also learned to join in. Armand has a pleasant singing voice, a kind of baritone sound and can reach the notes of this motif in the right octave. He instinctively uses his hands in the same way the children on the 1991 video use their hands and Corinne will copy this. On this day, Mum overhears Corinne using the phrase in her bedroom singing it to her teddy bears and toys. As she sings it, she raises the arms of her teddy bears on the ascending perfect fourth at the end of the phrase, as is modeled by the TV presenters on her DVD. It is as if Corinne is taking on the role of teacher when singing to her toys, recognizing the popular interpretation of the rhythm and style.

Pitch matching is clearly an emerging skill at this age and requires active encouragement and nurturing (Tan et al., 2010). Mum notes how well Corinne matches the pitch of the melody accurately after she sings it to her: she does well most of the time. On some days she matches the pitch perfectly. On other days she changes the last two notes of the phrase, which comprise a perfect fourth; the perfect fourth seems to be the hardest interval for her to pitch accurately. Mum would say she gets it ‘spot on’ about seventy percent of the time. Mum will sometimes alter the phrase a little to see if Corinne can identify and match the change. Again, sometimes she will perform what Mum has sung exactly and other times not so perfectly.

Corinne, her mum and dad all reinforce the fun one can have with a small snippet of music such as this one; this helps Corinne feel confidence in feeling and expressing joy; it
helps her link into a musical community (Barrett, 2005). Corinne is not shy about singing this phrase out in public and mum will often sing along with her, ignoring the funny looks of other customers. Mum has found that mostly older women and other mothers will smile; some don’t though. This helps teach Corinne to have a degree of respect for her own passions in spite of the opinions and looks of others. This small yet catchy musical song phrase has become a plaything for Corinne: a link to many activities she engages in, such as shopping with mum or child-oriented games and activities. It is an instance of ‘transduction’ (Kress, 2010) where Corinne has signified the essential meaning through cross-modal transfer - a potential new musical structure for her to draw on at a new point in time (Bowman, 2004). This musical phrase is what Sacks (2010) refers to as a “hook”.

Such hooks are designed to bore their way into the ear or mind, and this particular one is well known by children of many different ages across different cultures. What is especially interesting about the phrase is the dramatic hand-arm action that goes with it. When Corinne uses the musical phrase in her playacting at home, she rarely sings it without the upward arm actions. It is as though the musical hook is linked irrevocably to a gestural ‘hook’. A hook, it would seem, has more power and symbolic meaning to a child, even adults, when it coincides with an embodied motion (Dunn & Wright, 2015). The “La la la la la” hook is an embodied musical symbol signifying Corinne’s personal link to the culture she lives in and hears music in (Dunn & Wright, 2015).

Since the motif and its song is popular in child care centres and kindergartens as well, it has indeed taken on a cultural significance and is fairly well known by adult carers and grandparents. This notion of families gathering together and singing certain tunes together accompanied by certain actions harkens back to Barrett’s (2005) notion of ‘cultural literacy’, that unique creation of group cohesion and group meaning that relies more on thought and feeling than on spoken language. This is cross-modal transfer (Bowman, 2004).

Corinne draws on and makes links to her culture through embodied music making and embodied singing (Barrett, 2005; Dunn & Wright, 2015). She makes those connections through the use of repetition, reliance on and interaction with adult interlocutors (Wright, 2102a), narrative, song making and performance combined together and musical symbols in the form of culturally agreed-upon forms that the community defers to, such as the “la-
la-la-la” motif, popular amongst many age ranges in the Western world. This soh-doh interval is a musical symbol used by entertainers and carers to teach children self-expression, joy, movement and rhythm and pitching.

4.6 Summary

The musical symbols Corinne used in her musical encounters were:

1. Musical repetition: Corinne wanted to hear the same tune again and again for the purpose of creating meaningful associations, emotional connotations and making connection with the adults around them. The repetition may be training certain neural pathways and exposing young children to enjoyable patterns, rhythms and frequencies which are soothing to them (Bowman, 2004; Sacks, 2010).

2. Musical embodiment: Corinne used the teddies’ arms to rehearse and extend her developing understanding of motifs and social contexts in which her musical knowledge can be applied. Her jumping down from the chair in the library was a musical-kinaesthetic simulation of a story she had become familiar with, one that also involved Teddies from the Bananas in Pyjamas story. Corinne embodied her understanding musically and physically. Even using maracas to identify verse and chorus form is a type of musical embodiment (Dunn & Wright, 2015).

3. Musical form and structure: musical form such as verse chorus form is a musical structure that helped Corinne to read, identify and respond to a popular song. She read and applied musical form, texture and style or signposts in a range of ways, including dance, instrument playing and movement and repetition in real-world contexts that reminded her of other musical-narrative contexts she had been exposed to (Bowman, 2004).

4. Musical “hooks”: hooks such as the dotted “la la la la la” motif with the soh-doh pitching structure engage children and the broader carer/parent/adult community, and elicit specific artistic, embodied responses from children (Bowman, 2004; Dunn & Wright, 2015). Corinne aurally recognized the “hook”, situated it in a context that was connected to a child friendly narrative with positive emotional support from an adult. This culturally agreed upon motif (the dotted “la la la la
la” motif) establishes a type of musical engagement between carers and parents with young children (Barrett, 2005; Sacks, 2010).
Chapter 5
In Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This section aims to answer the questions at the outset of this paper. I note that language from its inception is musical (Rousseau, 1781), that imagination is crucial to the raising of consciousness (Eisner, 2002) and that music has the capacity to order the consciousness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). I note that children seem to find their own way to syncretistic, holistic, cross-modal forms of self-exploration and that this holistic, syncretistic framework could be useful for educational policy makers. Symbol-use in the domain of music definitely holds true for children just as it does in the visual arts but it can be useful to examine such musical-aesthetic activity in terms of ‘cultural capital’ (Binder & Kotsopoulos, 2011).

5.2 What is meant by meaningful, holistic artistic education for a toddler?

It may be said that meaning is made for toddlers when they use the arts in syncretistic and holistic ways. The toddler’s education involves ‘open-ended’ ways and means of exploring the world around them (Wright, 2012b). Artistry is about being open-ended and capitalizing on emergent relationships (Wright, 2012b). Meaning for toddlers is made through relationships with knowledgeable others (Whiteman, 2008) and through child-adult reciprocity, where adults function as interlocutors (Wright, 2010; Wright, 2012a). Collective meaning and artistic representation can be mediated through social conventions (Wright, 2012b). Social conventions may include but are not necessarily limited to nursery rhymes whereby music orders consciousness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992) and allows young children to transport them and behave and think meditatively. The toddler experience of music and music making will be inextricably linked to motherese because they are not far from that time in their life when mothers used motherese to soothe them (Miall & Dissanayake, 2003). Corinne’s use of vowel matching, hyperbolism and alliteration is certainly indicative of her attachment to and manipulation of motherese.
For toddlers the arts offer a form of thinking and awareness that is strongly connected to the body via visualization and action (Dunn & Wright, 2015). This embodied style of impressing their own learning upon their own selves allows them to connect their external self with their emerging internal self (Wright, 2012b). They learn to give that emerging internal self a voice and the value of that emerging voice can be enhanced when positively endorsed by the adult interlocutor (Wright, 2010, Wright, 2012a). Thus with music making, which is kinesthetic and embodied by nature, a child can be learning about form, structure, lyrics, melody, pitch, rhythm, beat and timing at the same time; this becomes the very complex process of musical ‘play’ that Vygotsky referred to (Nilsson, 2009). Music making for a toddler thus becomes a rich and diverse learning experience which allows them to perceive, think, embody, imagine, feel, touch, experience and create syncretistically and holistically.

This is not dissimilar to Husserl’s (1999) views about the body being the localized point for the experience of ‘sensations and stirrings of feelings’. If the ‘stirrings of feelings’ are indeed a phenomenal partner and counterpart of all perceptions of things’ (Husserl, 1999), then one might conclude that the ‘partner of all perceptions’ may be what Husserl indicates is the soul. We may consider that perception may emanate from the Husserlean notion of soul. This is why very young children may indeed have a proclivity for introspective states such as the one described at the outset of the paper and that this type of introspection induces ‘flow’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). The arts appear to be the primal means of communication in and through that soul aspect to our lives, allowing for the establishment of non-verbal and verbal modes of engagement with the worlds around us. Indeed, the arts allow us communication between the external self and the internal self (Wright, 2012b). Meaning making appears to be a pre-wired or hard-wired aspect to human existence when one reflects on the possibility that Corinne was using music in a communion sense. One wonders why humans appear to be driven, even pre-verbal, to seek meaning from the world – does this drive indeed emanate from the ‘soul’?

The arts have their own discursive language by which toddlers learn to make meaning (Best, 2000a; Livermore, 2003) and it is by playing in and through the arts that imaginative facility is developed and expanded. The arts can be a medium by which toddlers experience ‘flow’ and create internal, personal meaning (Csikszentmihalyi,
Play, like art, produces aesthetic emotion (Nilsson, 2009) and since humans see themselves in images that cannot always be translated into words, the arts are important for the conveying of meaning since they rely on images, imagining and imagination (Hanna, 2008; Vygotsky, 1980). Thus the imagination is expanded in musical play as it is in play with other art forms but it is a musical imagination, deeply linked to embodied ways of knowing (Dunn & Wright, 2015).

Thus the toddler studied in this thesis appeared to be creating meaning in syncretistic, holistic ways, allowing meaning to be absorbed in those same, syncretistic, holistic ways. Artistic-aesthetic education is extremely important to the young child, it seems, as it permits a range of sensorial, embodied manners of knowing and thus communication. Adults are vital in this holistic encounter as they help a child to situate their learning, providing the contextual frames of references yet in learning through adult interlocuters, the child learns about self.

5.3 What symbolic meaning making occurred in Corinne’s artistic modes of self-expression?

Corinne’s self-expression took her to musical ways of knowing form, structure, narrative, words, lyrics, melody, dance and body. She was able to make personal, private meaning from her encounters with music that enhanced her knowledge of the mechanized, material world, as was evidenced by her using the teddy arms to open up on the perfect fourth interval of The Wiggles’ song. Her understanding of the perfect fourth was enhanced by a culturally significant song, ‘Rock-a-bye-your-bear’ by The Wiggles and also by using embodied actions with her teddy. She reinforced social conventions and musical conventions at the same time (Barrett, 2005).

Form, structure, narrative, words, lyrics, melody, dance and body are of course symbols for the ‘knowledgeable other’ (Whiteman, 2008) and hence knowledge of the self. It could be said too that the knowledgeable other is a cultural symbol of information exchange and internal growth for the very young child. Through form a young child finds order, creates reference points, and ‘reads’ the patterns of form; not only does she ‘order
her consciousness’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992) in this way, she also creates views and responds subjectively through patterns. Artistic structure becomes a symbol of verbal expression wherein the preverbal child uses artistic structure to develop his or her verbal, syntactical understanding. Artistic forms and structures may provide a basis for the grasping of verbal language; they provide context and syntax. Narrative is a symbol perhaps for sequence and again, ordering of ideas. Narrative allows for starting point, middle point, climax and resolution formulae to be introduced to children. Introduction, middle sections, climaxes and codas (resolutions) are all to be found in many musical works, such as the one Corinne used her maracas in to identify with the musical form. Narrative, words and lyrics allow the use of mental imagery and mental constructions, all of which seem to be centered around the need for the ordering of the consciousness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). Melody is a symbol for the aural imagination, whereby the inner musical life of a child is articulated and activated vibrationally. Music and melody is often affiliated with emotional experiences and these emotions also become the vehicles by which children develop frameworks and narratives about themselves. Dance and body of course are symbols for self-expression and the centrality of all aesthetic encounter; the body houses the Husserlean ‘soul’ and ‘ego’ so in a sense the body can not truly be severed from its internal meaning-making aspects. The body thus symbolizes the literal, material aspects to human existence and how this may translate to a deeper, more internalized facet to one’s experience. This is why Corinne’s stance as described in the opening vignette was significant; it was a symbol of connection between an outer literality and an inner subjectivity.

Corinne’s use of a familiar nursery song as described at the outset of this paper is in itself a use of an important cultural symbol, which she uses to create links and meanings within herself; she is using “cultural capital” (Binder & Kotsopoulos, 2011). She is an active transmitter of culture in that she is intensely engaged, she is in a heightened form of connection in thinking and communication, she is experiencing deep enjoyment of her activity and she has merged action and awareness so that she is in control of her environment (Barrett, 2005; Csikszentmihalyi, 1992; Tomlinson, 2013). She is engaging in multiple literacies - sensorial, kinaesthetic - embodied and aesthetic ones for the purpose of making meaning (Piazza, 1999; Dunn & Wright, 2015). She has found a way
to create links between the external self and the internal self that transform her understanding of the world around her.

Corinne used four different musical symbol systems: (1) musical repetition, (2) musical embodiment, (3) musical form and structure and (4) musical “hooks”. Although these musical symbols are differentiated in this essay, they did, as per arts forms in general, become used syncretistically by Corinne. For example, Corinne used a musical “hook” such as the “la la la la la” motif to discern musical form, repetition and structure. In musically embodying a story with her teddy arms, she reinforced the pitch of the perfect fourth, the shape of the melody, the narrative with which the teddy was connected and she understood musical form by identifying a particular musical interval in her musical play.

5.4 Can the use of symbols in the development of the arts-focused skills in a toddler be framed in the context of Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development?

When children use play to create aesthetic meaning and develop artistic literacy this is a special use of the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1980). The use of musical play and subsequent expansion of musical imagination is a complex phenomenon that employs the higher processes of cognition, volition and emotion (Nilsson, 2009). Play is an important source of consciousness about the world (Nilsson, 2009). Music becomes crucial to the child’s play, as it is important for the ordering of consciousness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). Perhaps it is rhythm, hooks or emotional connotation that helps orders human consciousness (Sacks, 2007). Whatever it is in a precise sense, engagement with music thus becomes the bridge between the form and the formless (Khan, 2015) very much like the Zone of Proximal Development, which is the difference between what a child can do without guidance from a knowledgeable other and what she can do with help (Vygotsky, 1967; Vygotsky, 1986). Music helps us to mediate independently of thought (Khan, 2015). This independent mediation indicates music may have a transcendent aspect to it; Corinne’s ‘flow’ experience as described in the vignette certainly suggests a moment of introspection and connection to a deeper aspect of her self; she was self-making through music (Matthews, 2004).
Orchestrating musical symbols thus allows children freedom to define themselves in relation to others, to develop worldviews and values and thus meaning making is the construction of knowledge into understanding across a range of contexts (Vygotsky, 1986). Thus artistic symbols and their emergent and consolidated use by the toddler in this paper can be discussed in the context of Vygotsky’s ZPD as they provide a bridge or a pathway to the creation of mind (Eisner, 2002). Artistic symbols as used by toddlers, who are often pre-verbal, are clearly a window into how a child may (or may not) progress in his or her understanding of the world. The use of artistic symbols in the context of their art forms (i.e., hooks, forms, songs, lyrics, motifs, gestures and dance in music) thus may help children to grow independently and learn to measure that growth against the knowledgeable adults around them (Whiteman, 2008). Given that engagement with the arts appears to be a child’s primary language as opposed to speaking and writing, which emerge later, it may be that the arts hold a crucial place in the lives of children who later become disengaged with their learning for one reason or another.

The artistic life of a toddler is clearly rich and embedded both intrinsically and extrinsically with a process of meaning making. This meaning making is often done with joy and exuberance, or at other times, as modeled by Corinne at the outset of this paper, with reflective and meditative tendencies. Both joy and reflection allow the ‘spiritual’ (Bakan, 1966; London, 2006) human to develop as much as the creative being (Robinson, 2010).
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