Young children's experiences of music and soundings in museum spaces: lessons, trends and turns from the literature

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Introduction

This paper considers the value and role of early years music and sound activities in museum spaces – in relation to children themselves, as well as their families and wider communities. While 'active music-making is relatively common amongst preschoolers', Lamont (a British music psychologist) took up a further concern saying, in 2008, that 'to date there has been very little systematic enquiry into early musical experiences that take place outside either the home or preschool educational settings' (249). Furthermore, Young noted in 2016 that there was 'no research-based literature describing, analysing and critiquing early childhood music education policies, programmes and systems' (15) outside of a special issue in which she was writing. Drawing from the literature on cultural psychology of music education, Barrett (2011) argues that culture plays a significant role in shaping young children's musical thinking and engagement. She makes explicit the situated knowledges which reveal the imperative for re-thinking what matters when young children engage with expressions of music, and where music and sound reflects and represents a group of people, with the repertoire of different groups identified or not from which it originates. This alerts us to think more about the way we define and frame music and sound in terms of the impact and value of education and practices: the 'representational practice' that serves to locate and identify specific identities (Duffy 2018, 189).

This paper aims to review the literature around early years music and sound activities, participation and programmes in museums, focusing on the role of music and sound in such spaces and particularly seeking to identify gaps in the literature and areas for further research. The review focuses on parents and young children; music, sound and multi-modal arts practice; museum spaces; and community engagement (particularly with so-called 'hard-to-reach' families). Initial searches found that there was a lack of studies which explicitly focus on music with young children in museum spaces, and so instead this review has concentrated on the intersections between these broader foci, in order to establish frameworks for how music and sound modalities for young children might find expression in museums. Furthermore, we are interested to explore the generative possibilities that might come from bringing music, young children and museum spaces together. This presents some interesting challenges and dilemmas for adults including parents, carers, museum and early years staff: dilemmas that invite a reconceptualization of the child and the museum and which we endeavour to map out in this paper.

The paper is based on a pilot study funded by Cambridge University (Burnard et al. 2018) which set out to investigate the role that musical and sonic activities in museums can play within their local communities: museums represent a potentially rich space for families with young children in disadvantaged communities to access, and hence enjoy, multiple benefits. Specifically, museums hold the potential to engage such

families in early years music practice, which has been shown to offer myriad cognitive, social, emotional, and educational benefits (Pitt & Hargreaves, 2016; Pitt & Hargreaves, 2017; Osgood et al., 2013a). Furthermore, perhaps more broadly, 'a permeating presence of self-initiated music making in childhood suggests that it may serve a purpose in human development, that is, to provide the child with the cultural tools necessary to make sense of their world' (Custodero et al. 2016, 56). However, despite the recent and dramatic increase in museum education, disadvantaged communities neither regularly access museums, nor do museums generally offer inclusive music and sound-based programmes to very young children. As such the broader project sought to identify the potential extent of impact and actual support for museums as spaces for very young children and music/sound to come together in productive ways. Understanding relationally the potential for museums as places in which music and sound-based spaces can be cherished, as articulations of time-space enactments of social and material practice, requires more research attention and framing for policy change.

By reviewing the wider field of literature this paper aims to map the current research terrain, as well as identifying key gaps and opportunities for additional research. There is a recent field of enquiry which contextualises the child and the museum in new ways: re-constructing the child in the context of museum experiences (Hackett et al. 2018a); proposing new understandings of the role of space; and exploring the role that co-authoring can play (between children and adults) in terms of constructing understandings of museums as spaces for debate rather than as 'temples' (e.g. Carr et al. 2018). But even though these new contextualizations of the child and the museum space are exciting and open up new possibilities for understanding, they don't engage yet with music or sound. In contrast, there is a growing body of literature which explores music-making in the home (e.g. Young and Gillen 2007) or in public spaces (e.g. Custodero et al. 2016) but which has yet to centre on museum spaces – which provides a rationale for exploring this area more fully.

Method

This systematic review used inclusion and exclusion criteria in order to structure our search and to determine which scholarly literature and documents to review. These criteria included:

- Language of publication: English
- Date of publication: 2000 and more recent
- Topic: including at least two of the areas of focus: i.e. studies had either been located within museum spaces; involve participants comprised of young children and their parents; or involve music-/sound-making/multi-modal arts practice and engagement.

Our search strategy itself was designed to maximise the experience and expertise of the whole research team and thus allowed for individual team members to nominate prospective papers and sources for review – these were collated in an online 'cloud' storage system and reviewed alongside other literature that was identified via a search of online databases including 'Summon' (Middlesex University's in-house platform); 'Web

of Science'; and 'ERIC'. All items that met the inclusion criteria were reviewed, initially via their abstracts and then in their entirety.

This paper considers literature in a number of key areas, firstly concentrating on the role of music and sound in young children's lives and secondly on early childhood experiences within museums and why this is important now. It then turns to some of the ways children are reconceptualised within museum spaces – particularly with regards their relationships with each other and with adults. Although there are few studies which directly address music in museums, those that do exist are discussed, before the review considers the generative possibilities available when early-childhood, music and museum spaces are brought together; and specifically how this might offer potential for wider communities and, specifically, so-called 'hard-to-reach' families, to conceive of museums as spaces that are both inviting and relevant.

Music and sound in early childhood

The value of music and sonic activities, and engagement with music and sound for young children, has been professed by numerous studies and relates to a number of benefits, including the development of language and literacy skills, emotional skills, mental wellbeing and happiness. Hallam's comprehensive synthesis and review of literature suggests that active engagement with music can be of benefit throughout our lives, but specifically cites the development of 'perceptual skills which affect language learning'; 'acquisition of literacy skills'; 'fine motor coordination'; and improved 'spatial reasoning' as benefits that emerge during early childhood music activities and the playing of instruments (2010, 277-280). Interactions between young children and adults/their families are important in recognising such benefits: music can be a central pillar of emotional coordination between mothers and their children (Dissanayake 2010); and Blandon's research around music sessions involving young children and care home residents showed that for both groups, happiness improved after taking part (2017). Although with older children, Zarobe and Bungay's research suggested that structured group activities help build resilience and mental wellbeing (2017). Furthermore, this can lead to happiness and enjoyment and music can help overall learning according to practitioners (Zarobe & Bungay, 2017). Barrett suggested that music can be a form of story-telling, and performing/engaging in music can help young children to:

> Identify the characteristic features of their worlds and how these operate, the nature and extent of the web of relationships in which they live, and give voice to their innermost feelings, their likes, their dislikes, their wishes and desires [providing] a means of making sense of events that might otherwise seem disconnected, even chaotic in their life work (Barrett 2010, 406).

In their editorial to a special issue on music-making in early childhood, Niland and St. John described some of the more holistic benefits that can emerge from music-making practice for children – particularly outside of the formal environments in which such practices are often conceived:

> A shift away from focusing on children's musical development as primarily the responsibility of trained music educators, towards a more holistic, socially and culturally situated conceptualisation of young children's musicality and musical learning. This perspective recognises children's natural proclivity as music makers and honours the many places from which children draw to resource affordances in their environments. It values the contrapuntal layering of lived experiences which children bring with them in their musical explorations and views them as co-constructors of learning (Niland & St. John 2016, 4-5).

Such approaches more widely mirror the paradigm shift described by Tronick (2007) which saw young children/infants formerly characterised as 'incompetent' or 'blank slates', now recognised as 'competent' and 'responsive' to their environments. Furthermore, such potential benefits should not mask the broader inherent value that can be derived from participation in music and sound-making (e.g. Črnčec et al. 2006).

Knight et al. outline the benefits of participation for children, in particular, who have not previously experienced music-making activities or performances – claiming that their confidence, language skills, social and emotional interaction all improved (2017). However, despite the evident value of music and sound participation and engagement activities for young children, there is only a limited range of literature which broadens the scope of enquiry to consider music as an ongoing and active part of children's lives:

> Music engagement is central to young children's experience of the 'everyday' yet few studies have investigated the ways young children and their families engage with and use music in their daily lives (Barrett 2009, 115).

As recently as 2016 Young noted that the special issue in which she was writing drew together some of the only research-based literature on the topic, highlighting the disparity between mainstream music education's primary concern with music learning and teaching in schools, despite the fact that 'music for preschool children takes place in a wide range of places and situations' (10).

Early childhood and museums

While music-making activities in early childhood are yet to feature in the body of research around the experiences of children and families in museum spaces, there is nonetheless a wide literature base which contributes to this paper's synthesis (e.g. Leinhardt et al. 2002; Dierking 2010). Such literature is often aimed at improving displays and exhibitions from a curatorial perspective, or understanding the learning experience of those involved from a museum educators' perspective. Some museums have explored the role of music in their programming more widely (e.g. Ridding 2017) however our search has shown that such approaches rarely involve very young children. As such, this section of the literature review will consider the broader experiences of young children and their families (often their parents/guardians) in museum spaces, focusing on the benefits of such experiences; the uniqueness of the museum environment itself; and other related spatial concerns – which might then lend themselves to an

understanding of the importance of space as a consideration in our wider discussion. Museums constitute powerful centres for both formal and informal learning (Hein 1998) and have significant educational and developmental potential for children in particular (Hooper-Greenhill 1991).

In the context of the UK, Wolf and Wood have argued that the benefits of attending museum exhibits and environments (in their case, specifically children's museums) extend beyond the acquisition of content knowledge into developmental areas (2012). Similarly, in the USA, Krakowski has explored the role of play as a vehicle to engage young children in the museum, contending that intellectual, social and emotional development can all be supported in such situations, providing a link to help children understand 'themselves, others and their world' (2012). Furthermore, research by Bowers suggested that although there was often a fear (amongst museum professionals) that young children's presence in museums could be a 'disruptive influence' in reality those that worked with such audiences rarely found 'maintaining focus and control' a challenge within gallery spaces (2012).

The uniqueness of a museum space is often identified as key in delivering such benefits – providing an alternative environment to the classroom or home. Hackett's research in the UK has focused on the way that young children, often together with their families, use this space and the way that the space can shape interactions (2016). Contemporary museums are more likely to include spaces dedicated to children (CloreDuffield 2015) – whether they are part of the traditional gallery or a more discrete activity/learning room – although as Manchester-based researchers, Hackett et al. point out, there is no 'one solution' in planning space for young children (2018b). Museums can be places of exploration for young children and their families – as in the 'Art Trek' programme run at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, which focused very explicitly on the architectural elements of space (Chang 2012). Indeed, as Hackett et al. note, museum spaces can actually invite such exploration – with the space itself positioned as a kind of facilitator:

> Exploring the physical elements of a building, including aspects such as lifts and staircases, was significant for families. Things to catch the eye up high or down low, from high ceilings to images on the floor, invited this kind of exploration (Hackett et al. 2018b, 8).

Chang proposes that children are allowed to engage with art objects 'from their own points of view' as opposed to from the point of view of adult facilitators, hence the importance of free exploration of space (2012); although MacLeod cautions against ignoring the balance between more traditional didactic engagement and provision of open space for reflection or creativity (2005). Piscitelli and Penfold have observed that experiential exhibitions that deliberately focus on children's creativity – providing content-rich environments and taking account of spatial quality (including factors such as room layout and furniture design) often provide the best learning environments for children (2015). Specially-designed spaces in museums often provide more hands-on interactions and activities for young children and families, sometimes including visual representations of artworks or museum objects (Knutson & Crowley 2010) which can

lead to more meaningful engagement and which can encourage children's creativity without needing to overcome many of the hurdles associated with more traditional museum spaces (e.g. Mallos 2012). Nonetheless, it is pragmatic to anticipate that museum spaces will inevitably serve multiple functions and 'zoned' landscapes which allow for this multiplicity of uses are a way to marry the latter with such practical concerns (Clayton & Shuttleworth 2018). In bringing these insights together, into how researchers around the globe are theoretically and empirically engaging, or re-engaging (as with Hackett et al. 2018), and moving in conversation with one another, we see the need to design and advocate for social science research that engages music and sound practice and discourse meaningfully, and in doing so, contribute to new understandings of young children's experiences of music and sound practices in museum spaces.

The importance of certain spatial elements within the museum should not be discounted: landmarks in particular can help children and their families to make connections, both personal and social, and to negotiate buildings via fixed and constant points (Clayton & Shuttleworth 2018). Likewise, these spaces can provide a forum for understanding non-verbal communication, i.e. through the way that children move around a space. Hackett suggests that walking is communicative and movement around museum spaces can 'provide a realistic context for the meaning making of young children in that place' (2014, 20). Ultimately, the importance of space and children's experience of place (and the uniqueness of museum spaces) is a way to understand young children's experiences:

> As place, children and objects come together, they design and make one another (Hackett et al. 2018b).

While museums and gallery spaces have vastly different collections, the importance of interaction with those collections and exhibitions was apparent in much of the research around young children's relationships with such institutions. Artworks specifically were cited as being a powerful means to stimulate both interest and excitement in young children, engagement including a 'willingness to describe images, suggest changes, and imagine themselves in the paintings' (Lopatovska et al. 2016, 1214). Chang described art-orientated activities as one way to nurture children's development:

> If educational programmes encourage children to interact with artworks in meaningful ways, art museums can provide significant learning environments for young children (Chang 2012).

Children's relationships within the museum

As well as the inherent properties of museum spaces which the literature strongly suggests modulate and affect the experiences of young children, children's relationships and interactions within such spaces was another area of rich discussion (e.g. Leinhardt et al. 2002). To return to our wider theme, such interactions contribute to a holistic approach to understanding children's music-making activities – for instance, Berger and Cooper's research studied the impact of adult interaction during parent-child music classes (2003). Within museum spaces specifically, Dockett, Main and Kelly emphasised the importance of intergenerational interaction, particularly, for example, in order to

engage with many of the activities provided by museum staff (2011); they found that adult instruction enabled children to complete and participate in such activities which would otherwise be beyond their ability or interest (e.g. the Vygotskian concept of scaffolding). Meanwhile Dooley and Welch found that as part of their navigation of museums, interactions between children and adults were frequently collaborative (2014). Their study found that such interactions could be both child-led and adult-led, emphasising that children in such contexts exercised agency to direct their own experiences – categorised by the authors as often 'show-and-tell' or 'learning' interactions; while adult-led exchanges were more likely to involve 'telling', 'prompting' and 'labelling' (Dooley & Welch 2014, 129). Nonetheless, despite the clear indication that children's roles should not be discounted, much of the research around such connections focused on the adult role:

> Adults played a strong role even in the presence of museum educators, and these adults used a variety of strategies to maintain and support their role as learning facilitators for their families (Pattison & Dierking 2012, 76).

Such strategies often centred on the role of explanatory talk provided by parents to their children in order to explain exhibit content – which in turn makes it more likely that such children will 'manipulate and attend to key aspects of exhibits' (To et al. 2016, 370). Indeed, Wolf and Wood suggested that active adult guidance directly led to 'positive effects on children's learning cycles' (2012, 31). While such benefits were widely espoused, there remains a scepticism regarding parents' own abilities to support or guide their children in their learning experiences within the museum: Downey et al. claimed that most parents lacked 'confidence in and knowledge of how to play with their children' in a children's museum (2010, 27). This characterisation relies on a deficit model of both the child and parent, which does little to assist a reconceptualisation of museums as inclusive.

Although there is little doubt that in general families engaged in active conversations in museum and gallery spaces, there was a perceived deficiency in the knowledge and tools that would enable adults to 'make their talk richer' (Knutson & Crowley 2010, 20). Furthermore, it may be that both the nature and design of museum spaces does not always best facilitate these interactions between parents and children (Downey et al. 2010). Hackett's research co-opted parents as active researchers in order to utilise their expertise and their unique insights into their children's lives; which led to them paying greater attention to the 'moments and incidences which are usually fleeting and given little attention' (Hackett 2016, 12) and which helped them challenge the hegemony of museum professionals telling that what to do (Mayall 2000). Despite this evident tension, there is a role for both museum staff (see Piscitelli & Penfold 2015) and the adults within a child's family, and although these groups might play divergent roles (Wolf & Wood 2012) through negotiation they can each provide support and guidance.

Williams et al. have shown that the frequency of shared music activities between parents and their children positively correlates with 'children's later prosocial skills, vocabulary, numeracy and attentional and emotional regulation' (2015, 120). Meanwhile, Pitt & Hargreaves' work with parent-child group music making found many benefits for both children and the parents: social, cultural, emotional and cognitive (2016). They went

on to show that as well as parent-child interactions in such groups, peer-to-peer interactions also took place:

> This may provide a rich learning environment for children to rehearse, try out, and practise tasks with close adult guidance in the one-to-one space, and then to self-assess with peers in the wider group interaction context (Pitt & Hargreaves 2016, 14).

Furthermore, their research showed that the majority of families in their study continued music activities at home and began to integrate singing and music into their daily routine (2017) – a finding shared by Koops; suggesting that parental influence may have been a factor in this continuation away from formal or practitioner-led activities (2012).

The relationship between children and their parents/guardians is often framed within a deficit model of parents by researchers concerned with engaging families or communities that are described as 'hard-to-reach' – Parkinson and Knight note that parents often expect to be able to remove themselves from the activities or the sessions when they are more obviously aimed at their children, but that they challenge this and 'look to equip them with the skills to make their own music, interacting creatively between them, so that the processes can extend into their homes and daily lives' (2016, 4). Similarly Herman reflected that activities tied only to children's interests are unlikely to maintain the engagement of parents: 'if museums could find ways to connect with mothers, and not just their children, perhaps museums could retain these visitors longer' (2012). Such an approach does not necessarily recognise, or respect, the diversity of differing levels of participation, or of varying family practices.

There are challenges, but also benefits, to engage communities in programmes – potentially providing 'an emotionally safe and positive introduction to the museum' (Jensen 2010, 46), but this 'requires space to think differently' (Osgood et al. 2013b, 218) and to acknowledge that the nature of certain groups being 'hard-to-reach' is as a result of barriers that are constructed (tacitly or not) by both museums and music practitioners.

Music in museums

Although previously infrequently reported on, some museums are exploring the role that music and sound can play within their environments – a recent series of articles collated by the Museums Association focused on this very topic. Two such examples include the British Museum, which has regularly used music or ambient sound within their exhibits (Frost 2017); while the much smaller Buxton Museum and Art Gallery has appointed a composer-in-residence to create and compose unique musical pieces (Johnson 2017). Based upon evaluations and research into such practices, Frost argues that there are positive and negative aspects to the inclusion of music within a museum space:

> Soundscapes and well-chosen pieces of music can be exceptionally effective at creating atmosphere, signalling narrative change and engendering emotional engagement. Objections usually focus around an inability to block-out distracting sound, frustration about repetition or sound inadvertently spilling into other areas (Frost 2017).

Such objections, around the disruption of an atmosphere or environment of reverence or quasi-worship, are often similarly made of children in museums spaces (e.g. Warwicker 2014; Craig 2014).

While music-making activities within a museum, aimed specifically at young children and their families, clearly represent a different proposition to an approach which directly incorporates music into an exhibition for all visitors, there are nonetheless crossovers. Johnson's belief that 'music has the power to engage visitors emotionally with the people and a story behind the objects' (2017) has significant resonance for activities taking place in museums which explicitly seek to make connections with the spatialities of the museum (and the materials within it). As with children's experiences of moving around in museums as a place bound by adult rules, there is often very little attention given to issues of space and place. Music and sound are often located on the periphery of most social science inquiries, not integrated as core components of the analysis or in the selection and development of a research methodology and methods of data collection and analysis. If music and sound is mentioned at all, it is typically inserted at the outset in discussion of the museum policy rather than practice, as research site.

Although music-making in museum spaces is under-researched at present, some researchers have explored the effect that space has on voice/music/sound-making amongst young children in other environments: Eriksson and Sand's research focused on a tunnel in Stockholm and the effect that not only the spatial qualities of this tunnel, but also its nature as a public space (with other people moving through it), had on the sound-making activities of pre-school children (2017). Meanwhile, Custodero et al. studied children's music-making in a different public setting, namely the subway in New York; surmising that 'children's predisposition to use music' might be an example of 'natural agency; by providing an always accessible tool, a "security blanket," with which to bring familiarity into less familiar spaces' (2016, 71). They went on to contrast the experiences with those that take place in more typical or structured environments:

> Children found affordances for music making without the shared child culture and movement friendly structures of a playground or the beautifully crafted instruments and teacher guidance of a classroom (Custodero et al. 2016, 72).

'Hard-to-reach' families

A problematic aspect of the discourse which has been briefly referred to above, is the deficit model which is often adopted to characterise decisions by individuals and families not to engage in either formal/structured music-making activities or museum visiting (and thus applies to the combination of the two). It has been argued that one of the ways that museums can adopt socially engaged practices is by forming closer connections and working with their local community (e.g. Frasz & Sidford 2017), which can often include working with so-called 'hard-to-reach' families. Osgood et al.'s authoritative research centred on traditional notions of these groups and early years musical activities: highlighting this deficit model that such terminology inevitably resorts to (2013a). They make the point that we must always question our 'underlying motivations to engage

parents in music-making' (Osgood et al. 2013a, 12) – a question which can be equally applied to any socially engaged practice. While there may be implicitly and explicitly constructed barriers to engaging in formal music activities – and that these barriers might be different for different groups (Osgood et al. 2013a) – we would argue that it is important not to assume disadvantage on the part of families that don't engage in particular ways. As the same authors go on to note in a different article:

> In many respects formal early years music-making represents an innocuous striated space in which to herd the 'hard to reach' to access the much-vaunted cultural capital in order to emulate normative modes of parenting and ways of being (Osgood et al. 2013b, 210).

It is certainly the case that often both music-making projects for young children and museum spaces can be exclusionary and complicit in the creation of barriers for certain groups. Formal early years music-making activities are often delivered by white middle-class musicians and the music choices are often 'traditional' English ones – which can combine to demand certain normative behaviours and discourage certain groups (Osgood et al. 2013b). Symptomatically, Herman recounts a commonly-cited feeling among mothers with babies – 'ultimately I decided we didn't belong' (2012, 79). Outside of such spaces, music and sound-making is a democratic activity in which children are able to demonstrate their own agency (Niland & St. John 2016) in relation to their family, community or cultural contexts.

Many museums do actively seek to engage and work with their communities, including groups and families which they perceive to be disadvantaged. Jensen's work 'calls into questions the political view that art museums are inherently exclusionary' and finds evidence for what he refers to as 'home town museums' that often engage strongly with 'disadvantaged communities' (2010, 46). Similarly, Halstead, while recognising the challenge that cultural organisations inevitably face attracting and retaining non-regular visitors/participants, identifies a number of successful partnerships, often created by working with early years providers in the wider community (2018). To this end, the literature more broadly identifies features and characteristics of successful attempts to engage communities by museums and other multi-modal arts organisations – with a specific focus on engaging families and those with young children. Many of the individual features identified centre on the quality of relationships created and maintained between families and practitioners (see Halstead 2018). Within these relationships, in order for a level of trust to be built up (often over a period of months or even longer) flexibility (Osgood et al. 2013a; Herman 2012), innovation and a long-term approach (Osgood et al. 2013a) were all important. Osgood et al. also suggest that working with solid interagency practise is essential in order to provide support, and being open and honest internally to recognise potential exclusionary behaviour (2013a). In terms of the practical aspects of activities or sessions, Herman suggests that relatively unstructured start times, the ability to not require advanced registration, and buy-in from/negotiation with other parts of the host organisation are all vital (2012). The social aspect of music-making sessions has also been emphasised: Parkinson and Knight urge practitioners to allow time before/after formal activities for participants to 'unwind and chat' (2016). Furthermore, for some participants, in order to feel welcome in a museum space an explicit invitation is required – particularly for families with babies or very young

children who might otherwise feel that they do not belong (Parkinson & Knight 2016; Herman 2012).

Reflections on research turns and trends

We press back against theorisations of museum spaces as fixed, passive, given or static. We have sought to argue in this paper – through an analysis of the existing literature – that museum researchers need to attend to the relative and socially constructed nature of museum space and place, music and sound experiences and the reconceptualization of the young child.

The pilot study of which this literature review is a part (Burnard et al. 2018) explores the ways in which young children can experiment with sounds and music in museum spaces and what such activities generate – both for the children themselves and also in terms of what they can potentially do for communities and families. Such an approach has rarely been studied before, as this review has shown. Hackett et al. point out that the dominant approach towards studying children in museums has previously largely neglected certain aspects or perspectives, including:

> The embodied and spatial nature of museum visiting, the tacit ways in which museums may feel meaningful to children, and the vibrant materiality of the museum itself (Hackett et al. 2018a, 481).

The literature reviewed draws upon a wide range of theoretical traditions from social learning theories to sociological attention to the cultural capital and exclusionary practices often associated with music and museums. Framing investigations to interrogate the value, experiences and potential of music, museums and community engagement with varying theoretical lenses inevitably foregrounds different foci. For example, the sociological research undertaken by Osgood et al. (2013a) was framed by a concern to trouble the concept of 'hard-to-reach families' and to turn attention to the structural barriers that are often (unwittingly) in place by the ways in which music activities are organised and delivered, and the agendas that underpin them. Meanwhile, other research, such as Young's extensive research into early years music-making is more concerned with the educational benefits of participation (2016). The work of human geographers and cultural theorists (e.g. Hackett 2014; 2016) is particularly pertinent as it highlights the significance of place and matter and how children's engagements with space are a way to understand their experiences.

Some aspects of the multiple literatures studied (drawing on disciplines comprising education, psychology, and museology amongst others) suggest:

- Interactions between adults and children were a central feature of the review and much research has focused on the importance of this characteristic of early years provision, whether concerned with music or located within the confines of a museum.

- Space is an important consideration when working with young children, and the uniqueness of museum spaces makes them conspicuous when considering the role that multi-modal arts practices can play in children's lives.
- The benefits of music and an engagement with museum spaces are regularly emphasised by researchers, particularly in developmental terms (including emotional, social, cultural, and linguistic development). The implication from much of the literature is the benefits for both children and adults go beyond the context of individual sessions or activities and can be transformative.
- Such benefits are especially important when considering reasons to engage the community more widely, including the targeting of so-called 'hard-to-reach' families (a term which has been problematized previously).

Existing research stresses the importance of music-making in the early years, the centrality of museum as spaces for childhood; and the need to ensure more inclusive community engagement in both. We take note of Haraway's (1994) insistence that research should seek to go beyond reading webs of knowledge production and instead participate in processes of reconfiguring both practice and knowledge.

Conclusion

The gaps in the literature and critique that have been highlighted in this paper present an opportunity for museum practitioners, educators and curators to open out ideas and practices about how music and sound might engage young children, their families and their local communities (and particularly non-typical audiences) in unanticipated, but generative ways. Furthermore, they provide a space in which future research might extend museum practices – particularly in light of the reconceptualisation of young children (Murris, 2016; Osgood & Robinson 2019) and specifically young children in museum spaces (Hackett et al, 2018a). Niland and St. John have argued that:

> Children embody musical experiences, using their bodies to create physical boundaries and for tactile exploration, to play with music, and to draw upon multiple modes of engagement and cultural artefacts to make their music making meaningful (Niland & St. John 2016, 6).

As such, we would argue that museums make ideal spaces for children and their families to explore music and sound making activities and to engage with both the space and the artefacts within those spaces, in a range of ways.

This paper seeks to prompt researchers to re-consider how we are contributing to museums as spaces that invite the experience of museum soundings and sound-creation events and ultimately the development of innovative museum methodologies. While museums are particular cultural spaces that are not necessarily accessible to all, music-making is one possible vehicle that can help enact changes and dismantle the barriers that stop families from engaging.

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