International Journal of Education & the Arts

http://www.ijea.org/ **ISSN: 1529-8094**

Volume 24 Number 17 **October 12, 2023**

Music of the World's Cultures and Feelings of Connectedness: Interpersonal and Social Aspects of Elementary School Children's Participation in a Culturally Diverse Music Program

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Citation: Papageorgiou, P. (2023). Music of the world's cultures and feelings of connectedness: Interpersonal and social aspects of elementary school children's participation in a culturally diverse music program. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, *24*(17). http://doi.org/10.26209/ijea24n17

Abstract

This ethnographic study explores how elementary school children's participation in a culturally diverse music program, which featured their active engagement in group music-making and their acquaintance with the cultural-historical context of the music, affected them on interpersonal, collective, and social levels. The study focuses on the feelings of connectedness that the children experienced with their classmates, with the teacher-researcher, and with the people whose musical cultures they studied. The research involved fifth- and sixth-graders from two Greek elementary schools. The data are derived from participant observation, interviews with the children, and the children's written reflections. The analysis brings to view the many different nuances of the above feelings, the avenues through which they

emerged, and the value they had for the children. The study shows that a meaningful engagement with the world's diverse musical cultures has the power to positively transform relationships inside schools and the children's feelings toward the cultural Other.

Introduction

Over more than four decades, eminent scholars from the fields of music education and ethnomusicology have pointed to the social benefits that engagement with the diverse musical cultures of the world can offer students. A common thread is that such engagement can foster awareness, understanding, and appreciation of culturally different people, confront students' prejudices, and move them toward greater empathy (Campbell, 1992; Elliott, 1989; Kraus, 1967; Nettl, 1992). Scholars also note that the collaborative and interactive processes in which students are involved when they jointly learn and perform musics from the world's cultures, help build bridges of communication between them, improving their relationships (Heimonen, 2012; McIntosh & Ramnarine, 2016). With these ideas in mind, several researchers have sought to identify social outcomes resulting from students' experiences with various musical cultures within school settings, focusing their investigations on the development of cultural understanding and other related concepts (such as cultural sensitivity, empathy, and tolerance), and, to a lesser degree, on how these experiences affected participants' interpersonal relationships (Chen-Hafteck, 2018; Edwards, 1998; Hess, 2010; Howard, 2018; Mellizo, 2019; Nam, 2007).

However, while feelings –particularly feelings that involve a sense of connection with others– are inherent in the above concepts, these have not been adequately addressed by the researchers, whose studies provide little information on the possible sources and different qualities of the students' feelings. Music teachers interested in social outcomes of culturally diverse music programs need to know more about the impact of such programs on students' feelings toward other human beings near and far. Within this context, the present study will seek to dig deep into how children's engagement with various musical cultures in the school class may lead to feelings of connectedness with other people related, directly or indirectly, to their experience, either co-participants in the musical and learning processes or people from the respective cultures. Connectedness in this study will be understood as the state of feeling or being socially, emotionally, and/or spiritually close to others.

Previous Studies

Only a handful of studies conducted in school settings have examined how learning music from various cultures affects students' feelings toward other people. Therefore, in the

following review I also examine research studies conducted in other educational settings, namely in universities and in the area of community music.

Culturally Diverse Music Education and Feelings of Connectedness with People from Other Cultures

A number of researchers investigating the effects of culturally diverse music instruction in school classrooms included students' feelings about people from other cultures in the framework of "cultural sensitivity", without, though, exploring these feelings further (Bradley, 2006; Chen-Hafteck, 2018; Edwards, 1998; Howard, 2018; Mellizo, 2019; Nam, 2007). Edwards (1998) examined the outcomes achieved by fourth-grade students as a result of four instructional approaches utilizing Native American music. She found that several students developed cultural sensitivity, a concept which she defined as "affective cognizance or perceptiveness of cultural elements" (p. 67). Edwards provided children's comments indicative of the above, but did not explain them or offer any context. Nam (2007) focused her research on two groups of fourth-graders, one working on African drumming and another learning songs and moving to listening examples from a variety of cultures. She found that some children-participants demonstrated cultural sensitivity, a notion which, according to Nam, involved respect for cultural elements or empathy about cultural insiders' feelings. Nam provided children's comments supporting the above, but again did not explore the subject further. Chen-Hafteck (2018) found that only a few children participating in a Chinese and Cuban music program developed cultural sensitivity, which she understood as involving emotions and cognitive understanding of a culture. She provided no details on the matter. Mellizo (2019) investigated changes in levels of "intercultural sensitivity" after students aged 9-13 participated in a program based on the traditional music of Benin. She conceptualized intercultural sensitivity as knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors informed by encounters with cultural difference, and did not discuss at all the students' feelings.

Howard (2018) examined the outcomes of a music-and-culture program that introduced musics from Africa and the African diaspora among fifth-graders. Providing a much deeper analysis than the above researchers, she showed that some children, spurred by the lyrics of the songs and the classroom discussions, felt an empathetic connection with the people related to the studied musics. Lastly, in her study of a community youth choir that performed songs outside the Western canon, Bradley (2006) found that many choristers experienced a sense of connectedness with people from other cultures through singing their music.

Culturally Diverse Music Education and Feelings of Connectedness with Co-Participants

Little is known about how students' participation in culturally diverse music programs affects their interpersonal relationships. Exploring elementary school students' motivations for participating in a drum and dance ensemble that performed Ghanaian music, Hess (2010)

found that the sense of community the students felt while making music with co-participants played an important role in their decision to remain in the ensemble. In her study of a university drum and dance ensemble that performed West African music, Silverman (2018) highlighted as an emergent theme the sense of oneness that the participants experienced during their participation. She suggested that this sense derived from the musical "dialogues" taking place among the drummers and the dancers.

More related literature, wherein encounters with music of the world's cultures seem to have improved students' (or young people's) interpersonal relationships can be found in the use of music in peace-building and conflict transformation initiatives, as well as in community music projects. Skyllstad (1997, 2000) discussed a three-year project involving 18 schools in the Oslo area, which aimed to address racism among students through creating an understanding for the traditions of the immigrant communities. During the project, students aged 10-12 were exposed to musics and dances from various cultures, which were presented to them by immigrant artists. Skyllstad reported fewer ethnic conflicts and improved social relationships in the schools after the project, but he did not provide details about how these results came about. Tan's (2018) article focused on two community musical theatre projects, initiated in multicultural Malaysia, wherein young performers, artists, and facilitators from different ethnic, religious, and class backgrounds were involved in collaborative processes, such as jointly devising scripts, song texts, and music, and participating in performances. Tan reported that during the projects the young participants learned about each other's history, religion, and culture, and built bonds across ethnic and social backgrounds.

Ethnomusicologist Balandina (2010) discussed insights from a youth music festival that took place in 2008 in Kumanovo, North Macedonia, with the aim of fostering inter-ethnic cooperation. During the festival, Balandina coached a music ensemble of twelve young volunteers of different racial, ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds. As part of the project, the participants taught each other songs and dances from their own traditions, composed together a multilingual rap song, and performed their repertoire in a concert. Balandina mentioned that during the project there were visible signs of befriending among the participants and argued that the intense emotional experience of music-making and the enjoyment that arose from collective effort nurtured cohesiveness and connectedness within the group.

It is worth noting that there seem to be no studies so far examining how (if at all) student's engagement with music from the world's cultures (in school or in other educational settings) affects their feelings toward the teacher/person who introduces them to these musical cultures.

Personal Experience

Being an elementary music educator with ethnomusicological training and with a personal fascination with musical-cultural diversity, I have been teaching musics from diverse, often unfamiliar, cultures of the world in my classes for years. Over these years, I have witnessed the multiple ways in which engagement with music outside of their own cultural backgrounds benefits children on musical, cognitive, and ethical levels. I have also noted that in the course of this engagement, children come to feel deeply connected with each other, with me, and with the people whose cultures they study. These observations raised some questions: Through which paths do these feelings of connectedness arise? Which factors and which teaching, musical, or other processes contribute to their formation? In what, possibly different and unique, ways does each child experience them? How important are they for the children? So far, these interpersonal and social aspects of children's encounters with unfamiliar musics have not been thoroughly investigated. The present study is an attempt to fill this gap in the literature.

Purpose of the Study

This ethnographic study explores how elementary school children's participation in a culturally diverse music program, which involved their engagement in group performance activities and their acquaintance with the cultural-historical context of the musics, affected them on interpersonal, collective, and social levels. I am particularly interested in the feelings of connectedness that the children experienced with their classmates, with the teacher-researcher, and with the people related to the musical cultures they studied. I seek to reveal the avenues through which these feelings emerged, the ways they were experienced by the children, and the value they had for them. My aim in this study is to provide evidence that meaningful experiences with the world's diverse musical cultures can bring children closer to other people both inside the class and globally.

Methodology

The data included in this article derive from a larger ethnomusicological study which explored how fifth- and sixth-grade children's experience with a culturally diverse music program affected them on musical, cognitive, social, or other levels (Papageorgiou, 2022). The present article specifically addresses the interpersonal, collective, and social aspects of the children's experience.

Since my intent in the research was to capture the children's lived experience and acquire an insider's view of their actions and perspectives, I chose to employ an ethnographic methodology (Brewer, 2000; Pole & Morrison, 2003). I conducted field research in two elementary schools in Athens, Greece –the Kedros school and the Prasia school– between

October 2016 and June 2017. During the research, in which I participated as both researcher and music teacher, I implemented among the students of two fifth- and two sixth-grade classes of the two schools a 38-lesson curriculum, known as the *Musics of the World* program (MUWOP).

The Program and the Lessons

I designed the Musics of the World program on the basis of the ethnomusicological conceptualization of music in-culture and as-culture (Merriam, 1964; Nettl, 1994), wishing to promote the understanding of music as sonic and performative experience as well as expression connected with the values of the people behind the music (Campbell, 2004). The program featured repertoire and experiences from nine musical cultures: Ghanaian, Puerto Rican, Bolivian, African-American, Canadian, Irish, Palestinian, Chinese, and Maori. It involved the children's active, bodily, and participatory engagement with the specific musics through multiple performance activities, while also laying special emphasis on the presentation of the music's historical and sociocultural context: In each musical culture unit, the children learned to sing a traditional song in the original language and accompany their singing with traditional dance steps/movement, rhythmic patterns performed on (original and classroom) instruments, games, or body percussion. They were informed about the songs/dances' histories and function in the culture, and watched videos that presented people engaging with the music in the original cultural setting. Through information, video recordings, and photos the children were also introduced to the historical circumstances and the sociocultural issues associated with each musical culture, and took part in discussions which prompted them to consider important ethnomusicological and anthropological matters.

I chose the content of the program with special attention to its potential to offer the children meaningful and fascinating musical, cultural, and learning experiences, but also based on the fact that, through ethnomusicological training, personal experience, and study, I had acquired the necessary knowledge and skills to teach effectively the specific repertoire and musical cultures. My decisions about process and approach were informed by perspectives provided by Campbell (2004), Elliott (1989, 1990), Schippers (2010), and other leading scholars working in the nexus of culturally diverse music education and ethnomusicology.

For the implementation of the program, I taught 38 weekly and (from the tenth week on) twice-weekly lessons over the span of seven months. The lessons ranged from 20 to 60 minutes in length, depending on the day's schedule. Each music culture unit was allotted four lessons on average.

My intention in designing and teaching this program was to acquaint the children with the rich variety of music around the globe, to give them the opportunity to bodily experience the

making of different kinds of music through enjoyable activities –enjoyment was a major consideration in the design of the lessons– and, more importantly, to bring them into encounters with many different and unfamiliar (musical and cultural) value systems, leading them to important understandings about "self" and "other" (Elliott, 1990). The inclusion of nine musical cultures made the above possible, while also minimizing the possibility of essentializing any particular culture or viewing any particular system as "the norm." At the same time, the considerable length of the intervention (seven months), the large amount of time dedicated to the musics' sociocultural context, and the carefully designed performance experiences ensured that the program would offer the children deep and significant experiences with the specific musics.

Sites and Participants

The research sites were two public elementary schools located in urban neighborhoods in the Athens area: the Kedros school and the Prasia school. The student population in both schools was principally of Greek origin, with a small percentage of other ethnicities. I selected the specific schools based on their directors' and music teachers' willingness to accommodate my research. Acting as a guest music teacher for the research period, I implemented the MUWOP among the students of two fifth-grade classes of Kedros school and two sixth-grade classes of Prasia school. In total, 60 students participated in the program. The schools' regular music teachers attended the MUWOP lessons, facilitating my interaction with the students.

Data Collection and Analysis

The ethnographic data I collected come from (a) participant observation; (b) interviews and informal conversations with the children; (c) two questionnaires with open-ended prompts which all the children filled out at the end of the program; and (d) the children's notebooks, where they recorded their thoughts occasioned by our lessons. I also conducted one interview with each of the regular music teachers at the two schools. All interviews and lessons were audio-recorded.

As a participant observer, I took fieldnotes after each lesson and reviewed them within the same day while listening to the audio recordings. In addition, I conducted more than 30 interviews with students of the two schools throughout the research period. While all the students-participants in the MUWOP frequently engaged in informal conversations with me, 37 students participated in more in-depth interviews. These were semi-structured interviews, whose flexible character allowed me, when needed, to skip the questions I had prepared and follow the children's lead toward unexpected directions (Mason, 2002). Most interviews occurred in groups of six to eight children, with their duration ranging from 20 to 50 minutes. The interview questions aimed at eliciting the children's perspectives, thoughts, and feelings

related to their experiences in the course of the program; for example, "How did performing music from other cultures/learning about the various cultures/collaborating with other children make you feel?"; "Did your participation in the program perhaps affect the way you think or feel about some things or some people?" The questionnaires' open-ended prompts were of this kind: "During this program I had some experiences that were important to me."

All fieldnotes, lesson recordings, and interviews were transcribed. The texts from the children's notebooks and questionnaires were first saved as images and then also transcribed. My daily routine of transcribing the data provided some initial analytical ideas. After completing the fieldwork, I reviewed all the transcriptions and began the coding process. In a first phase, I searched for recurring issues and important ideas related to interpersonal, collective, and social aspects of the children's experiences. In a second phase of focused coding (Emerson et al., 2011) I embarked on locating and refining the most relevant themes. Once these themes were identified, the final step was the interpretation of the study's findings. This step involved further reflective analysis, as well as turning to literature in order to frame and provide support for my interpretations (Wolcott, 1994). In particular, to interpret the children's experiences, I drew on theoretical views and research from the fields of anthropology, ethnomusicology, sociology, psychology, and music education.

Presentation of Themes

The analysis of the data revealed three themes pertaining to the program's effect on the children's feelings toward other people related to their experience: (a) the MUWOP as an experience of "we"; (b) connections that transcend borders; and (c) the critical link. These themes are discussed below, with the research questions in mind. Seeking to offer a polyphonic ethnographic text (Clifford & Marcus, 1986) and convey the children's perspectives in a rich and representative way, I have included writings and direct quotations from them. To ensure anonymity, I have used pseudonyms for the children, the teachers, and the two schools.

The MUWOP as an Experience of "We"

One of the first things I noticed when I met the children who would participate in the MUWOP was the lack of unity that characterized their classes. Indeed, many children did not get along with their classmates at all, while others seemed detached or isolated. In the first few months, this state of affairs even caused me some trouble in implementing the program, all the activities of which were group-based and required constant interaction between the children. But soon the situation improved, and it was obvious that participation in the program was positively affecting the children's interpersonal relationships. This impact is discussed by

children of Kedros school in the following dialogue, which took place after the program's completion:

> Myrto: For me, another important thing in the program was that we came closer to each other. I mean, beyond learning many things, we also cooperated and developed a team spirit in our class. Before, we were all divided.
>
> Foivos: Yes. Each did his own thing in our class. We were never able to work together, not even during the break. But with this program, it is like a miracle happened.
>
> Myrto: Exactly. I don't know how, but in some magical way everything we did in the program united us.
>
> Diamandia: And the best was that, out of all this, many friendships were created. And girls and boys, we all became one team.

The elements mentioned here –the feelings of connectedness and fellowship and the development of team spirit– were described by nearly all the children as outcomes of their participation in the program. In their discussions and writings, the children also revealed the multiple channels through which these outcomes occurred.

Shared Music-Making

Several children associated the connectedness that developed among them with the fact that during their participation in the MUWOP they were fully engaged in collective music-making. This was a new situation for these children, whose previous opportunities to make music as a group had been mainly limited to group singing or playing together a tune on the recorder. MUWOP, on the other hand, was replete with group performance activities, wherein the children, divided in groups with different tasks, had to combine singing with synchronized dance/movement and body percussion, while also playing complicated patterns on instruments. Myrto explained the unifying effects of these experiences:

> I think that what united us was that with these musics we did everything together. We played instruments together, we sang together, we danced together, we did many musical things together. And it's impossible to do all that and not come closer to the others.

The power of collective music-making to connect participants has been discussed by several scholars in a wide range of disciplines, including psychology, sociology, anthropology, music

therapy, and music education (Anshel & Kipper, 1988; Bailey & Davidson, 2005; Bowman, 2005; Boyce-Tillman, 2000; Schütz, 1951; Small, 1998; Turino, 2008). Providing one of the most influential approaches, sociologist Alfred Schütz (1951) argued that when people share a musical moment, they experience a common "inner time," they live "through a vivid present in common" (p. 92). According to Schütz, this sharing results in a "mutual tuning-in relationship" between the participants, who, at that moment, experience themselves as a collective "We." More recently, musicologist Small (1998) argued that music-making creates relationships between participants, embodying the relationships created between sounds. From the field of music education, Bowman (2005) stressed the social character of musical performance, asserting that music-making "is not just about sounds and selves and 'flow,' but also about people and relatedness" (p. 147), while Boyce-Tillman (2000) noted that "when a group of people makes music together, unity is restored" (p. 93).

Anastasis, who also referred to the children's engagement in group music-making, laid special emphasis on the issue of synchronization:

> We were not used to working as a team. But the musics we did here demanded a group effort, so we had to synchronize, we had to dance or play the rhythm as if we were one. And when we finally got it, and the piece was in sync, then we felt really good. We felt we were a real team.

Anastasis directly links the feeling of togetherness experienced by the children with their moving and producing sound in synchrony. That synchronization may generate feelings of connectedness between people is widely asserted in the literature. Anthropologist John Blacking (cited in Clayton et al., 2005, p. 20) argued that the awareness of synchronizing with the physical movements of others in a musical situation –a state he called "bodily resonance" or "bodily empathy"– is experienced not only as a physical, but also as an emotional connection, which results in "fellow-feeling" and a sense of unity with co-participants. Ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino (2008) asserted that "through moving and sounding together in synchrony, people can experience a feeling of oneness with others" (p. 2-3). Turino characterized this feeling as "sonic bonding", rephrasing the term "muscular bonding", with which historian McNeill (1995) described the sense of connection experienced by people who march or dance in synchrony. The study by psychologists Valdesolo and DeSteno (2011) also indicated that synchronized movement evoked rapport among participants, a fact which the researchers associated with the view that synchrony creates a sense of similarity between self and others.

Christophoros highlighted some other elements of collective music-making:

> Because in these songs everything we did we did as a group, we had to co-operate with the other kids. We had to mind what the other guy next to us was doing, so that we could also make the right movement or beat the correct rhythm on the drums. I mean, we were interested not only in what we were doing ourselves, but also in what we were all doing together. I think this is why team spirit was built among us.

As participants in group music-making, the children realized that their musical actions were interdependent and had to be coordinated. Thus, they became more attentive to each other's actions and started to work as a team. Christophoros believes that these elements – interdependence, increased communication through visual, auditory, and kinesthetic channels, and collaboration– were crucial in developing a sense of togetherness among them. In her study of a prison choir in Israel, Silber (2005) likewise noted that certain interpersonal processes required in group singing, such as listening carefully to others, blending, and cooperating, helped develop cohesion among the choir members. Christophoros also mentions that shared music-making led the children's attention from the self to the "we". His comment is consistent with Turino's (2008) view that participatory performance leads to a heightened concentration on the people one is interacting with musically, with this concentration being one reason why "participatory music-dance is such a strong force for social bonding" (p. 29).

Being Enchanted by the Same Musics

Many children attributed their bonding to the fact that they all shared the same enthusiasm for the musics offered in the MUWOP. Galini explained:

> With the musics in this program, all of us kids became friends. Because we liked the musics we were learning, all of us liked them. And that united us. I mean, we enjoyed very much singing the songs together during the break, or wherever we were, and talking about them. And I noticed that even some kids who did not speak to each other before, came together with this program. Because they liked the same songs. So they started to sing them, to talk about them, and then became friends.

It is well-known that preference for the same music can bring people together. What is more, many scholars have studied social groups that were formed around specific musical genres (e.g., Cavicchi, 1998; Finnegan, 1989; Shelemay, 2011; Slobin, 1993). Ethnomusicologist Kay Kaufman Shelemay (2011) acknowledged "affinity" for specific musical genres, repertoires, or musicians as a category of social processes that may generate musical communities. Shelemay argued that affinity is "quickly followed by a desire for social proximity or association with others equally enamored" (p. 373). Galini's words offer a vivid picture of how the children's desire to share their enthusiasm for the program's songs with "equally enamored" classmates brought them closer and forged bonds of friendship.

Having Fun While Making Music and Learning Together

Loukia mentioned one more factor that, in her view, united the children:

> It was also that we had so much fun together. I mean, we had a good time with the things we were doing here, dancing, playing, learning together. We really laughed a lot, it was the first time we had such a good time together. And I think this is how we became friends.

When I designed the MUWOP, I took special care to ensure that it would include enjoyable and entertaining activities, which would reverse the children's possible biases against unfamiliar musics, offering them exciting experiences with these musics instead. As it turned out, these activities achieved more than the above goals, since they also allowed the children to experience real fun with their classmates and finally bond with them. Exploring children's connectedness in a kindergarten music class, Nortjé and van der Merwe (2016) also found that participating in group music activities that entailed playful interaction brought enjoyment among the youngsters and connected them with each other. Enjoyment and connectedness derived from sharing the program's musical and learning experiences with peers are more than clear in the following comments (Figures 1 and 2):

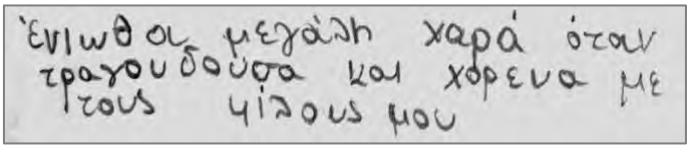

Figure 1. Excerpt from Ioannis's questionnaire. "I felt deep joy when I was singing and dancing with my friends."

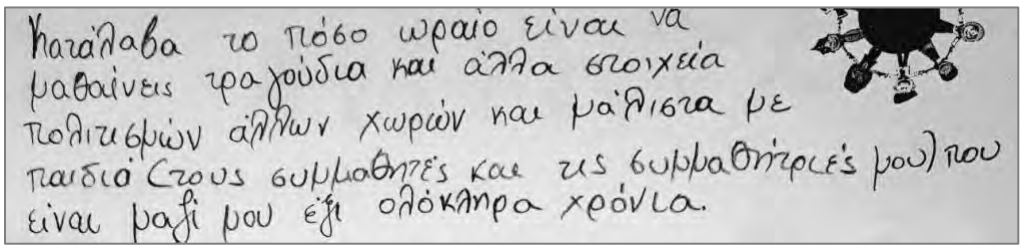

Figure 2. Excerpt from Sevastiani's Questionnaire. "I realized how wonderful it is to learn songs and other cultural elements of foreign countries, especially together with other children (my classmates), who have been with me for six whole years."

Sharing a Life-Changing Experience

Foivos attributed the coherence that developed between the children not to any single aspect, but to their overall experience with the MUWOP:

> What united us was everything, all that we did in this program: the songs, the instruments, that we danced, the things we learned about unfamiliar cultures, the rehearsals, the collaboration, the performance, everything really. Because we did it together. And because this program was so different from any other, unique and wonderful, and we were so lucky to do it.

Foivos believes that what brought the children closer was that they went together through a very special situation and shared the multi-faceted experiences that it occasioned: They shared musical moments and the acquisition of new knowledge, they shared special events, they interacted musically and socially, they had fun together. They also shared the awareness that they were experiencing something exceptional, important, and rarely offered within school education.

The result was that the children perceived their experience with the MUWOP more as a team experience –an experience of "we"– than as the sum total of individual experiences. This is also evident in their language, where the first plural, "we", prevails overwhelmingly over the first singular. Due to some of its characteristics, this collective experience could be seen through the lens of sociologist Randall Collins's (2004) "interaction ritual theory". This theory refers to situations in which the following conditions apply: (a) People are bodily present in the same place and interact with each other; (b) there are boundaries to outsiders, so that participants are aware of who is taking part and who is not; (c) participants' attention is focused upon a common activity; (d) participants share the same intense emotions regarding this activity. According to Collins, in situations that combine a high degree of participants' mutual focus of attention with a high degree of convergence of their emotions, the outcome is feelings of togetherness, solidarity, and a sense of belonging. The above conditions were all present in the children's experience with the MUWOP: Throughout the program, the children were physically co-present and interacting with each other; they were fully aware that they constituted a distinct group –that of the students who had the privilege to participate in this specific program; their attention was focused on the program and its activities; and, most importantly, they shared the same intense emotions about this experience. In such a situation, the children lived some highly intersubjective moments which created strong emotional bonds between them.

The fact that the MUWOP offered them the opportunity to experience collective ways of making music and, in this way, to connect with each other, was described by the children as

one of the major benefits derived from their participation in the program. What is more, many children came to regard musics from less familiar cultures, or the programs that offer these musics, as an environment where human relations are built. This belief is reflected in Diamandia's words (Figure 3):

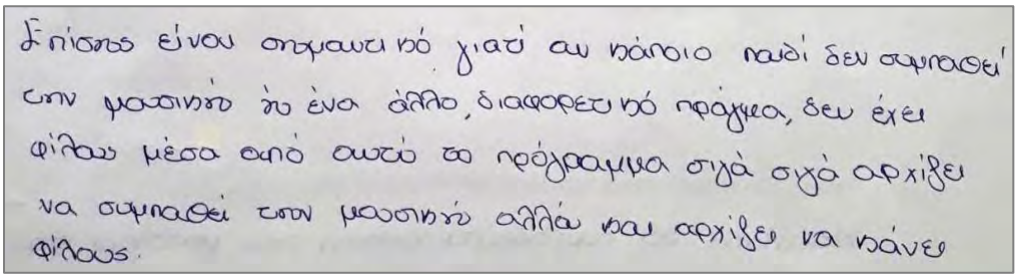

Figure 3. Excerpt from Diamandia's Questionnaire. "It is important [for children to learn musics from other cultures] also, because if a child does not like music or another does not have friends, through such a program they gradually start liking music, and they start making friends as well."

Connections that Transcend Borders

The children experienced feelings of connectedness not only with their classmates, but also with the people whose musics they explored in the program. Foivos offered an impressive comment:

> This experience affected me in my relation to, say, a child from other countries. It brought me closer to that child, it kind of showed me some of what these children do, and not only the children, the people generally who live in Africa, in China, in Oceania, how they think, how… And for a short time, I felt like I was in the place of that child from another country. I felt like I myself was a child there.

Through his engagement with the musical and cultural content of the MUWOP, Foivos gained insight into the lives and values of people from other cultures and felt a sense of closeness to them, especially to the children among them. His concern for these children was so intense, that at times he imagined himself in their place, trying to see the world through their eyes. Anastasis wrote about a similar experience (see Figure 4).

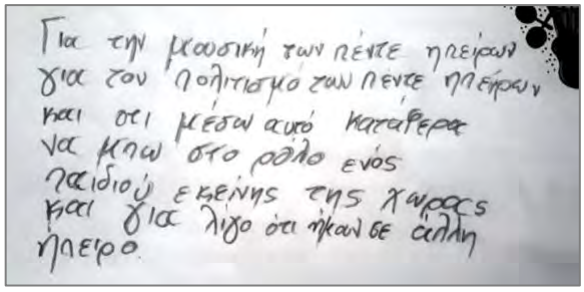

Figure 4. Excerpt from Anastasis's Questionnaire. "[In this program I learned about] the musics and cultures of the five continents, and so was able to put myself in the shoes of a child from that country and, for a while, feel that I was in another continent."

These accounts are eloquent expressions of the deep sense of empathy that the children experienced for the people from the studied cultures. Empathy is a broad concept, generally defined as a cognitive and emotional process whereby we enter imaginatively into another person's inner state, trying to understand how this other person experiences his/her world and how he/she is feeling. As a result, we experience some feelings which may be similar, or different but sympathetic, to those of that person (Coplan, 2011; Laurence, 2007).

Several ethnomusicologists mention empathy as a positive effect of engaging with other peoples' music. Nettl (2005) noted that "exposure to another culture stimulates empathy with both the strangeness and the common humanity of another society of people" (p. 10). Titon (1995) argued that the process of performing a foreign culture's music can induce moments of "subject shift", wherein we "step" outside our ordinary identity, thus becoming able to learn something about other people and ourselves. In another article, Titon (2003) equaled the experience of subject shift with empathy, noting that empathy may not enable us to feel the other person's pain, but it offers insight into their feelings and fuels our concern for them.

Lida was quite specific as to which experiences in the program motivated her feelings of empathy. She also expressly used the word "connection."

> Now I feel very differently about people from other cultures, those whose songs we did. I feel like I have somehow become connected to them. Because we spoke their language a bit, we sang their songs, we did their dances, we learned how they are, how they live, some of their history. I mean, we understood a few things about these people, we thought about them.

The MUWOP provided the children with experiences that incorporated elements of foreign people's cultural identities. Lida feels that these experiences, through which she gained access to the world of Others, functioned also as threads that connected her with these people.

In the case of Ilias, the sense of connection with people from other cultures was experienced as a sharing of their feelings:

> We also sensed something of their feelings! Such as the feelings of a man from China. His love... Through the song we felt his love!

Ilias is referring here to "Kangding Love Song," the Chinese traditional song from Sichuan province that the children learned during the program. This song was most likely composed by a young local musician in the 1930-40s and recounts a romantic love story. Tradition has it that the story recounted is based on the composer's own real and unfortunate love affair. Moved by this theme, Ilias imagines the Chinese composer's feelings and empathizes with him. And he does so, although he knows that this story may be a myth and unhindered by the temporal and geographical distance or by the different culture.

Some children indicated dancing as a channel through which they approached the feelings of people from other cultures and felt connected with them. The words of Loukia and Kiki speak for themselves:

> Loukia: When I was dancing, I felt a sense of oneness with the people who sing these songs in their daily lives.
>
> Kiki: I sensed how a person feels when performing these dances.

In his discussions about the importance of involving the body in the musical act, Blacking (1973) argued that the physical experience of moving to music may bring us in contact with the feelings of the creators, or of other performers, of the specific piece. Blacking believed that when we reproduce the same bodily movements as those performed by the creators/performers at the time of the making of a musical piece, we may also recapture the feelings of that moment. Thus, Blacking saw the combination of music and dance as a powerful path to cross-cultural understanding, stressing that "to feel with the body is probably as close as anyone can ever get to resonating with another person" (p. 111).

The view that music, music-making, or generally art can lead to a sense of bonding with people from different cultures is endorsed by several scholars. Clarke et al. (2015), from the fields of sociology and psychology of music, maintained that musicking is an environment wherein "participants (listeners and makers) can engage with the real and virtual subjectivities of other real and virtual participants, and in doing so come to experience (and perhaps increasingly understand) the cultural perspective that those others (real or virtual) inhabit" (p. 11). Music educator David Elliott (1995) mentioned that engagement with unfamiliar musics

through performative experiences "connects the individual self with the personhood of other musicers and audiences in other times and places" (p. 209). Philosopher Maxine Greene (1993) asserted that "encounters with the arts can awaken us to alternative possibilities of existing, of being human, of relating to others, of *being* other" (p. 214). Psychologist Kendall Walton (2015) argued that art can connect people, since it enables us "to empathize with the artist and with other people who experience the same work, sharing emotions with both" (p. 2).

It must, however, be stressed that in the case of the children it was not music/music-making alone that prompted their feelings of connection with people from other cultures. Indeed, the children described or suggested both musical and knowledge-based experiences as sources of their feelings. It was, thus, the *combination* of experiential musical activities and engagement with the music's historical-sociocultural context that acted so effectively in inducing the above striking outcomes. This combination –which was central in the design of the MUWOP, and is also advocated by Campbell (2004), Elliott (1995), Roberts & Beegle (2018), and other scholars in their approaches to teaching culturally diverse musics– emerges, then, as a key element in the process of helping students to develop empathy and sensitivity toward people from other cultures.

The Critical Link

Another relationship that featured prominently in the children's experience with the program was the one they developed with the person who initiated them into this experience, namely myself, "Mrs. Yiouli". This relationship is particularly important, because it played a major role in leading the children to accept, appreciate, and ultimately develop enthusiasm for the program's content. Kassiopi, the music teacher at Prasia school and mother of a student-participant, described this relationship as follows:

> As I am also the mother of a child who participated, I want to say that, beyond all the knowledge they acquired and the new attitudes they developed and everything else this program offered them, I also saw that the children felt a profound bonding with you and came to love you very, very much. And they felt that you too bonded with them. I saw that you came into their life like a person of their own, who is in their heart, whom they love.

This close bonding did not happen overnight. Indeed, in the first weeks of our acquaintance the children were generally reserved toward me, not only because I was a new face for them, but also because I had come to teach them about musics that were unfamiliar to them. But soon a warm atmosphere was created among us, finally leading to the feelings of bonding and

love that Kassiopi describes above. As the children's own words reveal, there were several factors that gave rise to these feelings.

First of all, for the children I was the carrier of knowledge about the "outside world", the mediator for some unknown musical cultures, "the critical link …, the individual who delivers musical and cultural knowledge of the Other" (Trimillos, 2004, p. 27). This reason alone was enough to make them feel that I was an important figure in their lives. Diamandia suggests so, placing me on the same level as her classroom teacher:

> I really enjoy learning so many things with you. And I think, it is not only Mrs. Dioni who teaches us letters, but it is also you who teaches us, not exactly letters, but the life and the songs of other cultures.

In the same vein, Raphael associates my presence among them with the fact that they learned some valuable things about music and the world:

> And all this we learned this year with you... I am thinking that if it was not for you, we would have never learned anything of this.

Even more than the person who opened up a window for them to take a glimpse at the world, the children saw me as the teacher who gave them the opportunity to live an once-in-a-lifetime, as they perceived it, experience, and enjoy a series of fascinating music lessons. And, naturally, they loved me for that. The following phrase, written by Filanthi, echoes the sentiments of nearly all the children, who felt fortunate and privileged for participating in the MUWOP:

> It was an unforgettable experience, which I would certainly never have had if Mrs. Yiouli hadn't come to our school.

Many children expressed their gratitude to me for the experience I offered them. In a card she gave me on the last day of our lessons, Galini wrote (Figure 5):

Figure 5. Galini's Card. "Mrs. Yiouli, thank you very, very much for the wonderful year we had together, and I think that not just for me, but for all of us, it took us out of the reality of our lives and travelled us to other places."

Besides the above, there were also some elements of my teaching practice that the children liked and which positively influenced their feelings toward me. Evangelia, for example, commented on the inclusive and participatory character of our lessons:

> Some of my thoughts were that I was lucky to have Mrs. Yiouli as my teacher, because she did not differentiate among the children and her lesson was wonderful.

Evangelia liked the fact that all the children had equal opportunities to engage in the various activities of the MUWOP, irrespective of their personal strengths and competence. Turino (2008) called this practice "participatory ethos" and associated it with participatory music-making, wherein "priority is placed on encouraging people to join in regardless of the quality of their contribution" (p. 35). Evangelia commends me for promoting a participatory ethos in the MUWOP, possibly because she felt that the joyful atmosphere that prevailed in our lessons had a lot to do with the fact that no child was excluded from this joy.

Some children were touched by the fact that I believed in their abilities and helped them achieve things they had never imagined they would: sing in unknown languages, perform

unfamiliar dances in synchronized movement, play complicated rhythmic patterns on percussion instruments, and much more. Sevastiani's comment indicates that my trust in them urged the children to surpass their limits, while also contributing to their bonding with me:

> I liked this program very much. We had the opportunity to play on instruments from other cultures and sing wonderful, important, and extraordinary songs. We also had a great teacher to teach them to us, who encouraged us so much to do them well, and taught us to believe in ourselves. I thank her very much.

Claire, for her part, was moved by another element she discerned in Mrs. Yiouli as a teacher. She wrote:

> For me, the important thing in this program was that I met Mrs. Yiouli and realized how passionate she is about her work, and so I did my best not to disappoint her.

In a conversation we had earlier in the year, Claire had again referred to the subject of passion. Then, she had described that while she had entered the MUWOP negatively predisposed and certain that she would not like the musics it included, she changed her mind from the very first lesson, when she saw the passion with which I was teaching these musics. It seems that this passion inspired Claire and generated a similar passion within her. A comment made by Diamandia provides further proof that my enthusiasm for music in its various cultural manifestations was contagious:

> I feel joy in every lesson, because you infect us with your joy.

Several studies in the fields of psychology and education indicate that teachers' positive emotions for the topics they are teaching influence accordingly their students. Mottet and Beebe (2000), for example, examining the theory of emotional contagion (Hatfield et al., 1994) in the classroom context, found that teachers' enthusiasm and the pleasure they take in a subject are transmitted to the students, who end up experiencing the same feelings. Similarly, Bakker (2006) found that music teacher's experience of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) may crossover to the students. In the interview I conducted with him at the end of the year, Perseas, the music teacher at Kedros school, said that the passion with which the children participated in the MUWOP and the enthusiasm they developed for the musics I taught them were directly linked to my own passion and enthusiasm. Perseas believed that the children's fondness for me made this transmission possible. He added:

> In fact, I am not sure how much they wanted the program or how much they wanted Yiouli. Because it was your passion that motivated them and made them stay during

> the breaks. They felt that here there is someone who puts her heart and soul into it, that here there is real joy. And this joy was transmitted to the children like a positive current.

That the teacher is "the key factor for a responsible and successful realisation of world musics in the curriculum" (Schwadron, 1984, p. 11) is asserted by several scholars, who stress the need for music teachers with positive attitudes toward the world's diverse musics, cultural sensibility, and capacity to consider matters of content, process, and approach (Campbell, 1994, 2002; Lundquist, 2002; Schippers, 2010; Teicher, 1997; Volk, 1998). The previous discussion, however, reveals yet one more critical factor in relation to the teacher, highlighting the importance of the human relationship that will be developed between him/her and the students. Perseas' words make very evident that the children's love and trust in me opened the way for them not only to accept the material I was teaching them, but also to absorb part of my personal fascination for the world's rich musical traditions. In this way, the strong bonding that was built among us served as a major catalyst for the program's success.

Closing Remarks

If engagement with the musics from the world's diverse cultures can lead children to develop feelings of connectedness with their classmates, with their music teacher, and with people from other cultures, then education initiatives that provide experiences with these musics can act as an important tool for improving interpersonal relationships and social interaction within schools and on a global scale. By bringing to light the paths through which the children who participated in the MUWOP experienced such feelings, this study offers insights that could guide the design and delivery of future culturally diverse music programs, in order to achieve similar outcomes. It indicates that a program which (a) promotes active and group-based engagement with the musics, thus allowing students to resonate physically, emotionally, and mentally with each other, and experience in embodied ways other people's music; (b) offers an attractive repertoire and fascinating activities, which fill students with a shared enthusiasm, (c) puts emphasis on the music's historical-sociocultural context, prompting students to reflect upon other people's situations; and (d) is delivered in the context of a participatory, supportive, and enjoyable lesson by a teacher who inspires with his/her own passion for the world's diverse musical-cultural expressions may function powerfully in raising feelings of connectedness to people both near and far, in the form of those that emerged in the present study.

In the context of discussions surrounding what can be gained on a social level when students engage with music from diverse, less familiar, cultures within the confines of the school class, the responses of the children-participants in this study provide a promising picture. They strongly suggest that a program which provides rich and meaningful experiences with the

world's musics has the potential to positively transform relationships inside schools and the children's feelings toward the cultural Other.

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International Journal of Education & the Arts

http://IJEA.org ISSN: 1529-8094