Music Is the Intervention: The Intersections of Music as a

Therapeutic Activity in At-Risk Youth

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Abstract

Across the United States, public schools face many discrepancies in the quality and caliber of education that a student can expect to receive. While schools try to address the vast needs of students, many children and adolescents are unfortunately faced with choosing between prioritizing their education and the circumstances faced outside of the school day. The discrepancies in schooling range from the quality in the commonly accepted core curriculum like English and mathematics to the opportunities offered outside of traditional academia like music. Unfortunately, at-risk students are unlikely to have access to music education in the same ease as their more advantaged counterparts. The present study seeks to investigate the intersections between the issues faced by at-risk students and the benefits of participating in music programs as a therapeutic activity.

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Defining At-Risk

Educators see extremely diverse populations of students depending on qualities that range from race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status to preferences, learning styles, and behavior patterns. For educators, understanding how students function provides valuable information on how to best manage the classroom and instruction. Many factors must be considered when attempting to categorize specific students. Some literature refers to students by extrinsic qualities like their location with titles including "urban" or "inner-city." In one regard, such labels breed insensitivity as they often carry certain stigmas or stereotypes and are heavily charged with racist connotations. Others chose to refer to students by their conduct with terms like "delinquents." While some contexts require referring to adolescents by factors related to their misconduct, in the context of school, referring to a child by his failures does little for advancing his education. Furthermore, choosing to describe students by their outcome would suggest that only students who engage in malicious behaviors experience specific hardships when that may not necessarily be the case. The much greater problem however is that these labels are ineffective in addressing the multi-faceted aspects that go into working with students of varying behavioral needs.

The present study uses the term at-risk to describe students who are *at-risk* of participating in dangerous or malicious behaviors that lead to an undesirable outcome. Literature discussing the particular nature of students facing many distinct influences including poverty, violence, and family troubles consistently use the term at-risk. Referring to students as at-risk places emphasis on extrinsic factors that limit student success in educational and personal development. Subsequently, students are not faulted for falling into the harsh yet expected

troubles considering their circumstances. Also, the term at-risk is describing what could happen rather than what will or what has happened. Not every student identified as at-risk will necessarily succumb to the expected outcomes of their circumstances, but that does not mean those students need less support just because the ramifications of their difficulties are not publicly known. Therefore, the term at-risk encompasses many more students than hyper-specific descriptors.

In Education

Addressing the issues facing at-risk youth is not a new concept. Studies conducted by Shaw and McKay (1931) in the Chicago area first drew relationships between poverty, social disorganization, immigration, and crime (Jenson J.M., Alter C.F., Nicotera N., Anthony E. K., & Forrest-Bank S. S., 2012). A few decades later, disruptive behavior prevention programs emerged in the 1960s. These programs largely used fear-based tactics including exaggerating and dramatizing the consequences of delinquent behaviors in an attempt to persuade students from participating in that conduct. Those efforts were unsuccessful and even led to an increase in alcohol consumption and drug use (Hawkins, 2006). In the 1970s, alternative programming or programs built on the belief that extracurricular or positive community activities held the power to discourage students from antisocial behavior came into trend though such efforts also ultimately led to limited results (Jenson J. M., et al. 2012).

There is great motivation for the educational sector to take interest in the behavioral issues of youth and adolescents. Research indicates that participation in school-based activities leads to an increase in school belonging and peer bonds that decrease the likelihood of truancy and they have the potential to foster positive youth development (Curran T., &Wexler L., 2016). Students who display conduct problems externally make teaching difficult for educators and

learning difficult for other students. For teachers, managing many students with differing needs and attention while simultaneously delivering instruction can be overwhelming and is an aspect of the vocation that is constantly changing due to the unsustainable results. Also, other students in the learning environment could potentially feel influenced by the behaviors of their peers and may either join in the misconduct or may feel generally less safe and more anxious while at school.

Research defends the stance that effectively handling disruptive behaviors begins with understanding the social, academic, and environmental conditions that determine the likelihood of the behavior occurring (Gable, R.A., 2000). Because school-based programs have a much better chance at success than other means of intervention (Curran T., & Wexler L., 2016), it is imperative for school faculty who work with at-risk students to understand why certain behaviors happen. This idea is especially relevant when designing curriculum and intervention efforts which must be built on the most effective means of addressing behavioral issues. One researcher points out: "defining misbehavior by how it looks only provides us with an incomplete picture of the behavior; it tells us little about why it occurred and doesn't help much in our behavior-change efforts" (Barbetta P. M., et al., 2005, p.14). Understanding an individual's behavior is essential to successfully implementing intervention methods as Kodelja (2019) asserts:

> When two students in school throw a pencil, one because he has finished the assignment and is bored, and the other because he cannot read the directions and thus hasn't even started the assignment-we do not treat them the same, regardless of the behavioral similarly. Any intervention that treats dissimilar problems with similar behavioral outcomes the same is not only unfair but destined to fail. (p. 250)

Another researcher highlights that "The fundamental concept upon which these principles rest is that behavior, abnormal as well as normal, is learned" (Whelan, R. J., & Haring, N. G., 1966, p. 286). If all behavior is somehow learned, then by demanding that students simply change the topographical nature of the behavior in school, a teacher is not acknowledging the conflict between the behavior and the antecedents present and therefore minimizes the effectiveness of the behavior management. In order for behavioral management efforts to be effective, an understanding of what causes a behavior and how to approach adolescents based on those causes is essential:

A developmental perspective is needed to understand patterns of externalizing behavior development due to reciprocal associations between children's adaptation and their context that is, children's behavior, including oppositional, disruptive, destructive, and aggression symptoms, influence how they interact with multiple ecological systems (i.e., family, school, and community), and these influences can in turn augment or decrease externalizing problems over time. A developmental psychopathology perspective may be particularly useful to understand externalizing problems during early adolescence, allowing integration of multiple levels of analysis to capture the multilayered complexity of child functioning. (Figge, C.J., Martinez-Torteya, C., & Weeks, J.E., 2018, p. 259)

Harmful Factors

In the case of perpetration, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) identifies several influences in an individual's environment that contribute to an individual's likelihood of participating in a certain behavior that are observable at the individual, familial, social, and community levels also known as potentiating factors. Youth experiencing such factors are said to be at-risk of participating in potentially harmful behaviors which can be described as either

internalizing: those behaviors which primarily affect the individual like anxiety and self-harm, or externalizing: behaviors which are projected outwardly from the individual including violence and aggression. Though behaviors are recognized in respect to their distinct categories, many of these issues intertwine like poverty affecting academic performance or violence negatively impacting the development of social skills (Hanson, R.F., Self-Brown, S., Fricker-Elhai, A.E., Kilpatrick, D.G., Saunders, B.E., & Resnick, H.S., 2006; Seidman, E., & Pedersen, S. 2003). It is important to understand in the analysis of various potentiating factors that a sad reality is many of these overlap in the lives of adolescents.

Individual

A primary concern in the individual ecological sphere is of the effect potentiating factors for youth and adolescents have on developing cognitive deficits. Exposure to harsh conditions is sure to impede cognitive development. Su, Y. et al (2019) even concluded that childhood maltreatment is "one of the most consistent factors related to later life cognitive dysfunction" (p. 279). That same study reviewed literature which found intelligence and executive function as the most reported cognitive impairments in children exposed to adverse conditions (Su, Y. et al, 2019). Cognitive development, memory, academic achievement, literacy/verbal comprehension, intelligence, executive function, processing speed, perceptual reasoning, ad non-verbal reasoning were all cognitive dimensions that were susceptible to developmental delay in children exposed to abuse, neglect, or domestic violence (Su, Y. et al, 2019). Romano, E. et al. 2015 also supported that children exposed to maltreatment experience difficulties in academic achievement and mental well-being. Another study which sampled school children living in poverty found that children essentially rejected tasks requiring academic skills regardless of maltreatment

indicating that academic success is negatively impacted by poverty no matter the other

circumstances affecting the child's life (Barnett, D., et al., 1996).

Educators working with children and adolescents who experience any of the known

potentiating influences at the individual level must acknowledge that those students likely will

fall behind academically due to the adverse relationship such factors have on cognitive

development. Such an understanding benefits teachers in properly planning course material and

instruction around student need. If students tend to reject school and academia because it seems

unattainable, presenting the material in a more achievable way could improve student

engagement and limit behavioral problems in the classroom.

Social

Adolescents facing prolonged and severe adversity tend to develop social deficits

(Seidman, E., & Pedersen, S., 2003). These deficits in turn become influences that negatively

impact their quality of life. There are many reasons why social deficits are an observable

detriment to chronic maltreatment in children. First, children are sure to develop aggressive and

hostile behaviors in social situations when they are less likely to trust others. Also, social deficits

are notably a part of Attention-Deficit-Hyperactivity-Disorder which is a disorder characterized

by the lack of executive function which overlaps with generalized social deficits (Lochman J. E.,

Boxmeyer C. L., Kassing F. L., Powell N.P., & Stromeyer S. L., 2019). One study on social

skills broke down the several requisite skills that come with socializing and achieving social

competency which included skills like encoding or being able to appropriately respond to a

situation (Cavell, 1990). If a child has only ever known aggressive and hostile behaviors in the

environments most meaningful to him, it will be much harder for him to develop well-adjusted

social skills.

Familial

Experiencing violence to some degree is especially prevalent for youth residing in large, impoverished urban areas where "as many as 90% of children and adolescents witness violence in schools and close to 80% witness community violence" (Mrug, S., & Windle, M., 2010, p. 954). The same study conducted by Mrug and Windle (2010). found "Externalizing problems, such as aggression and delinquency, are related to witnessing violence or victimization in the community, home, and school" (p. 954).

Seidman And Pederson (2003) assert poverty is "considered a pervasive and nonspecific stressor, rather than a bounded one, because it negatively affects many aspects of individual and family functioning; yet at the same time, many impoverished children are positively adjusted" (p. 320). Acknowledging that poverty is correlated to maladjustment and negative outcomes for youth poses the conflict that not all youth who experience poverty are poorly adjusted. There are many factors that determine to what extent poverty will affect a child including the severity and duration of the poverty the child has experienced. A child who is exposed to severe poverty for extended periods of time will be less well-adjusted than a child who has experienced mild poverty for a brief period of time.

While other influences may have a high correlation with victimization and perpetration, one area that did not see increased victimization was substance abuse, according to one study (Miley, L. N. et al., 2020). Even so, children facing physical, sexual, and/or household substance abuse are still at high risk of participating in these "analogous illegal acts" (Miley, L. N. et al, 2020). Even though no strong correlation is presented for victim-offender overlap in instances of substance abuse, exposure to it can still be detrimental to children in many ways including behavioral development.

Why It Is Common and Why It Matters

Up to 40% of students have been exposed to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) according to the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2014). Violence alone is a common occurrence that affects an adolescent's development and in turn has significant effect on the child's behavior. For children aged 2 to 17, findings from the National Survey of Adolescents indicate that 1 in 8 endorsed some form of child maltreatment, 1 in 12 reported a sexual victimization and more than 1 in 3 indicated they were a witness to violence. Furthermore, 71% of all children who reported victimization of violence had, on average, three separate incidents of experiencing violence (Hanson, R.F., Self-Brown, S., Fricker-Elhai, A.E., Kilpatrick, D.G., Saunders, B.E., & Resnick, H.S., 2006). Unfortunately, the problems that children face are rampant and happen all too often. Even worse, these issues again are intertwined with each other such that a student experiencing one adverse event is likely to experience more of the same adversity and those of different categories as well.

Understanding the factors that make adolescents at risk of participating in harmful behaviors is important because of the correlations between experiencing harmful behavior and later perpetuating similar harmful behaviors; a phenomenon known as victim-offender overlap (VO overlap). Research has thoroughly indicated and supported that children who experience victimization are at higher risk of later enacting harmful behavior in their adolescence and even adulthood so much so that it has been known as one of the few "facts" in criminology (Miley, L. N., et al., 2020). According to the theory of self-control by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) children who have endured poor parenting or victimization experiences, and as a result have not been properly socialized, could potentially fail to develop the self-control necessary to avoid the thrill-seeking behaviors that often lead to crime.

Because the potentiating factors that put children and adolescents at risk of offending behaviors later are so common and at times arbitrary interventions in schools should be flexible and adaptable for any student. Given that circumstances are subject to change and students may suddenly experience a very different life outside of school, the resources for students to overcome the challenges that put them at risk should already be put in place and should be available for all students not just those that have been previously identified as "at-risk." Furthermore, allowing children and adolescents who have faced adversity to develop emotional competencies can be a "turning point" as it allows them to positively respond to their circumstances (Bezzina, A. & Camileri, S., 2019).

Compensatory Factors

The main conclusions to be drawn from understanding prevention are that in order to change a behavior, the factors associated with it must be understood and changed themselves, factors that protect against problem behaviors must be the center of any prevention strategies, and effective programs should be disseminated and implemented in school and community settings (Coie et al., 1993, Catalano & Arthur 2002, Jenson 2010, Woolf, 2008). While some of the factors that put students at-risk of harmful behavior can be mitigated in the school environment, a tragic reality is that most potentiating factors are beyond the reach of school intervention efforts as the sources for many negative influences in students come from the home. In fact, the most protective factor among at-risk children is a positive parent-child relationship (Seidman, E., & Pedersen, S., (2003). What school-based intervention programs can focus on are those compensatory or protective factors which ultimately fall on the individual. Perspectives like that of the Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework support that adolescents must be provided with opportunities for positive growth through experiences including caring and

supporting relationships with adults, challenging experiences, skill building activities, social

bonding and engagement, prosocial standards, and positive behavior acknowledgment (Pasiali,

V., & Clark, C., 2018). For students who cannot help the environment they face when they go

home, the hope is that equipping at-risk youth with the means of developing protective factors

would give them the chance to break from cyclical behavioral patterns.

Compensatory factors are what contribute to a child's ability to appropriately respond to

the opposing potentiating factors: an act which some refer to as resiliency. Jenson J. M., et al

(2012) specify that resiliency is a "successful adaptation in the presence of risk or adversity... the

outcome of a process that takes into account level of risk exposure and the presence of protective

factors" (p. 207). According to the CDC, compensatory factors or those that might protect

students from succumbing to potentially harmful behaviors can also be identified according to

their social-ecological status including individual, family, and peer and social factors. For

school-based programs which face limitations involving familial relations, the focus of these

protective factors would center around individual and peer/social factors.

Individual Factors

At the individual level, the CDC cites high intelligence, educational aspirations, and

highly developed skills for realistic planning as some of the protective factors against violence.

High intelligence is recognized as a protective factor for youth (CDC). Intelligence can be a

complex concept to understand and asses but can generally be defined as "the ability to acquire

and apply knowledge and skills" (Lexico by Oxford Languages, n.d., Definition 1). Though

intelligence is a multi-faceted concept, Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences

defends musicality as its own sector of intelligence which is naturally endowed upon an

individual (University of Tennessee, 2021). Giving children and adolescents opportunities to

expand their intelligence in education supports influences that contribute to building a child's resiliency.

Other protective factors for at-risk youth include educational aspiration and developed skills for realistic planning (CDC). For many at-risk students, educational aspirations become seemingly impossible to make. As supported by humanistic philosophies including those of Abraham Maslow in his hierarchy of needs, if students are facing heavy life circumstances as in the factors surrounding at-risk behavior including poverty, violence, and substance abuse, with little to no protective factors supporting their navigation of particularly difficult circumstances, education is sure to become an afterthought. When students do have educational aspirations, those serve as motivators for students to attend school and take a personal interest in their academic pursuits.

Along with educational aspiration comes a necessary skill of realistic planning. Again, drawn from humanistic philosophies, planning can become a difficult skill for students who are not well-adjusted. Some of the skills necessary to realistically plan for the future include time management, organization, and a realistic sense of self capabilities.

Peer and Social Factors

Possession of strong, close, and prosaically oriented affective relationships with those at school, an investment in school and in doing well at school, close relationships with non-deviant peers, membership in peer groups that do not condone antisocial behavior, involvement in prosocial activities and developed social skills/competencies, and exposure to school climates with the following characteristics: intensive supervision, clear behavior rules, firm disciplinary methods, engagement of parents and teachers are listed as peer and social protective factors (Center for Disease Control, 2021).

A major aspect of growing the protective ecological spheres surrounding a student involve social competencies including developed social skills, and involvement in pro-social activities (CDC). Social skills as defined by Nangle, D. W., Erdley, C. A., Schartz-Mette, R. A., (2020) are "the requisite skills that enable effective social responding" (p 337). Social skills, however, are harder to objectively define because of cultural, racial, ethnic, and gender-based considerations (p. 337) that determine social competence which is the term for assessing the effectiveness of those skills (McFall, 1982). Despite the relative nature of social skills and competencies, many intervention efforts specifically target four areas that are common regardless of context: communication, cognition, emotion, and problem-solving skills (Nangle, D. W., Erdley, C. A., Schartz-Mette, R. A., 2020).

Pro-social behaviors are "voluntary actions that are intended to help or benefit another individual or group of individuals" and is "performed voluntarily rather than under duress and is not motivated by the fulfilment of professional obligation" (Eisenberg, N. & Mussen, H., 1989, p. 272). Considering the influence prosocial involvement has on constructing positive youth development, it is important for adolescents to have access to prosocial endeavors and a suggested context for this involvement to occur is at school (Lam, C. M., 2012). In the music program, students develop a sense of empathy and a desire for their classmates to succeed. Because music is such a collaborative experience, are exercising a variety of helpful behaviors when making music with others. Being involved in pro-social activities also give adolescents an opportunity to grow networks with peers that are similar yet are being influenced by positive social factors and in the case of pro-social activities, peers that are motivated towards one common, pro-social goal. Research indicates that for youth: "Affiliation with a group of deviant

peers is one of the most potent predictors of youth delinquent and antisocial behaviors" (Barrera et al., 2002, p. 87).

In order for school intervention strategies to be effective, the programs in place must be aware of the many factors that contribute to a student's behavior and maladjustment as well as the factors which protect against harmful behaviors in spite of the harmful circumstance. An effective school intervention program would seek to build and support students' individual and social protective factors so that they are empowered to later handle adverse experiences on their own.

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Intervention Based Teaching Methods

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Because of the growing need to address the social and emotional support needs of students through the classroom, different teaching methods, philosophies, and pedagogical practices have emerged. One teaching practice which intends to support students experiencing hardships is Wellbeing-Informed or Positive Education Teacher Practice. Positive Education builds on the Trauma-Informed Practice Education model which focuses on supplementing the teacher's knowledge of childhood trauma, its effects on learning and development, and effective approaches to assist students navigating difficult circumstances (Brunzell et al., 2019). Brunzell et al. (2016) concludes that repairing self-regulatory abilities and disrupted attachments are two domains which are necessary for students' classroom learning that teachers can support. Both domains relate to individual and social compensatory factors respectively and demonstrate a method by which compensatory factors can be supported and practiced in the classroom. Positive Education contributes to the domains of increasing self-regulatory abilities and relational capacities by including a focus on increasing psychological resources as part of supporting student success (Brunzell et al., 2019).

Another aspect of considering Positive Education is how it relates to the curriculum. Green (2014) categorizes two approaches: explicit and implicit curriculum. Explicit curriculum would be instruction through stand along courses like a class on wellbeing whereas implicit curriculum is "experiencing and living positive psychology, embedded within the whole-school curriculum" (Green, 2014, p.104). Arguis-Rey et al. (2012) posits that one of the basic conditions for successful implementation of Positive Education programs be that it is integrated into the school curriculum.

One concept that challenges the very design of educational practices is that of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL). UDL specifies that "variance across individuals is the norm, not the exception" (Hall, T. A., et al., 2012, p. 4). This concept becomes applicable for those students at-risk because of the understanding surrounding behavioral patterns. Even in school districts where being at-risk is considered a deviation from the norm, the circumstances that dictate whether a student is identified as at-risk are constantly subject to change. Having interventions naturally included in the formal schooling paradigm would be the most effective means of having the necessary resources accessible by all students at a moment's notice. Rather than viewing diversity in the classroom as the additional consideration when planning lessons and curriculum, the differences in students should be how the instruction is initially designed. In that way, the curriculum would follow suit of the implicit model in Positive Education.

Furthermore, the framework for UDL draws from a movement in architectural design known as Universal Design (UD) where the founding principles are that "the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extend possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability, or disability" (Hall, T. A., et al., 2012, p. 4). Furthermore, UD is a "fundamental condition of good design not special

requirement for the benefit of only the minority of a population" (Hall, T. A., et al., 2012, p. 4).

Pedagogy should also "be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all

people regardless of their age, size, ability, or disability," (Hall, T.A., et al., 2012, p. 4) and such

design in pedagogy should be "a fundamental condition of good design not special requirement

for the benefit of only the minority of a population" (Hall, T.A., et al., 2012, p. 4).

Moreover, there must be special attention to ensuring that the student and the harmful

behaviors are recognized as separate entities. In the case of zero tolerance policies rather than

removing the behavior through effective behavior modification, school administrations and

faculties actioned the behavior and the student are inseparable, so the entire student gets removed

from the learning environment. In this scenario, the learning environment was not

accommodating to the known issues that students bring as a result of extenuating circumstances.

It is not the student that is the problem, it is the behavior. Such policies can have detrimental

effects on a students' social and emotional development particularly on this matter because if

they all they see themselves as are the problem then they will not have self- efficacy as far as the

ability to change. As such, intervention programs must be flexible enough to accommodate

reasonable behavioral issues in the classroom to keep students engaged in the learning

environment for as long as possible.

Considering then that instruction should be designed with accessibility in mind,

specifically in the context of behavioral intervention, the instructional methodologies used

should be interventions by nature. Because the target of the intervention is to develop resiliency

through compensatory factors, and because those factors are naturally occurring within the music

program, instruction would not need drastic alterations but instead special attention would be

placed on the pedagogical techniques and teaching methods that ensure these skills are being consciously developed through their music education.

Music is the Intervention

Music programs offer distinct assets separate to other school based-intervention strategies in that those strategies are created in addition to the school environment rather than the school environment being designed to accommodate for the intervention of at-risk students. Because many compensatory factors are practices which naturally happen in the music classroom, at-risk students who are interested in music to any extent would benefit greatly from participation in a school-based music program.

The influences recognized as protective or compensatory for at-risk students develop naturally in a music classroom. In reference to intelligence, particularly according to the theory of multiple intelligences, music programs offer students who identify with musical intelligence and opportunity to explore and develop that intelligence, further underscoring an importance for school-based and musically driven curriculum as an intervention for at-risk youth. Also, a school-based program gives students the opportunity to succeed in an academically-oriented environment which parallels the compensatory factors of obtaining educational aspirations and a realistic sense of planning. Furthermore, music programs offer a unique opportunity for positive social environments which contribute to developed social skills and generally positive peer influences. Due to the collaborative nature of music performance, students are able to socialize and develop personal relationships in a way that few other academic disciplines can. The social relationships developed in music programs are also oriented toward a common goal of musical performance.

Intersections in Music Therapy

One study on music therapy based activities for social and emotional improvement obtained results that indicated children in afterschool programs receiving music therapy showed improvements in social competence, children from families with low income showed improvements in self-expression, self-efficacy, and social skills, and children with various psychopathologies affecting social skills self-reported improvements in communications and interactions (Pasiali, V., & Clark, C., 2018). Some of the qualities used in the procedure of the study include active participation through improvisation, movement, and playing various instruments while also implementing cognitive behavioral techniques in modeling or redirecting behaviors during the sessions. Furthermore, the therapeutic music practices also focused on performing musical parts, matching musical play to various meters, imitating or initiating musical phrases, and performing various roles in improvisational musical plays (Pasiali, V., & Clark, C., 2018). What Pasiali, V., & Clark, C. (2018) theorized as possible explanations for the relative success of the therapeutic music program include the effect active music-making can have on helping children focus and sustain attention which enabled them to be more receptive towards new information and skills, and the way the program targeted a specific set of skills and introduced them using a step-by-step process. Considering the possibility that music has that students might be more engaged by virtue of the activity, then integrating intervention strategies while students are much more receptive to receiving new information would be more beneficial for students than if students were not engaged in the activity or not interested at all.

A known important relationship for children and adolescents exposed to trauma is a trusted adult outside the family. In a Positive Education environment, the teacher student relationship becomes valuable for the student's personal growth. In fact, one study found that children identified a teacher as the most significant adult relationship aside from parents or

caregivers (Brunzell, T., et al. 2019). A similar relationship, one which is centered on collaboration between the student and an adult outside the familial ecology to support the child's growth is found in therapists. A therapeutic alliance is a "multifaceted construct that includes the emotional bond between child and therapist, as well as their ability to work together in a collaborative relationship" (Lochman, J.E., Boxmeyer, C. L., Kassing, F. L., Powell, N. P., & Stromeyer, S. L., 2019, p. 800). (Hofmann, S. G., & Gomez, A. F., 2017) observed that "children with a higher rate of externalizing behaviors can have special difficulties in developing a therapeutic alliance" (p. 740). If it is known that children exhibiting externalizing behaviors have difficulties with that specific relationship, the same can be said of children having difficulty developing trust with a different adult in a similar position like a teacher.

Though child-therapist and child-teacher relationships have significant differences, needing a child's trust to work together is at least one similarity. If such is the case, then a "positive emotional connection is thought to encourage children's willingness to work cooperatively with the therapist on treatment activities" (Brunzell, T. et al., 2019, p. 601). The student-teacher relationship is relevant in school music programs in that by music curriculum already offering many social and emotional supports for children, the teacher is already at a position to work with students in their social and emotional needs.

Students may find that they are naturally interested in participating in therapeutic practices because of the way music makes it more interesting. Music therapy is a field which is growing in assisting people of various physical, cognitive, and emotional needs. In education, individualized education plans (IEPs) specify that students who are eligible to receive music-based therapeutic services must be able to do so (West et al., 2021). The capability music has in

a therapeutic nature is not limited to those receiving explicit music therapy. In fact, the qualities that make music therapeutic are a natural part of the music making and listening process.

In one study which reviewed the perspectives of music therapists in regard to relational needs in trauma victims found that music played a crucial role in satisfying relational needs (RNs). RNs are "the needs unique to interpersonal contact and the essential elements that enhance quality of life and a sense of self-in-relationship" (Bensimon, 2020, p. 327). If RNs are not met, individuals are susceptible to psychological distress. Research has thoroughly supported the importance that meeting RNs holds in trauma victims (Bensimon, 2020). If a program or activity were able to assist in meeting RNs, it would become a powerful tool in assisting individuals facing trauma or coping with the long-term effects of trauma. The study ultimately concluded that there were many strong indicators that music had a positive effect in promoting a safe environment which ultimately contributed to fulfilling various relational needs including validation, connectedness, and acceptance.

Music played a role in promoting the safe nature of the environment which was essential to promoting healing for traumatized individuals. As discussed in literature in therapist specific relationships trust and security are vital in building a relationship that fosters collaboration between the individual and the therapist to work together towards the common goal of restoration. One therapist who had been working in the field for 15 years described that "trust is created through a caring and stable relationship, and a familiar song creates a safe environment due to its built-in structured components" (Bensimon, 2020, p. 329). Building a classroom that welcomes the same environment can be daunting considering group-dynamics and peer influences in the adolescent (Pasiali, V., et al., 2018), but research supports that group dynamics can be highly beneficial. Bensimon (2020) asserts that "group activity also emerged as a

framework for providing emotional witnessing through music, thus allowing understanding and empathy" (p. 330). In fact, the classroom becomes an ideal environment to apply therapeutic music practices because of the opportunity to build community support.

What the music therapists discussed in the study as successfully met relational needs were recognition, acceptance, and emotional witnessing. In recognition, participants showed that "creating music, especially improvisation, enabled clients to recognize their subjective presence in the world" (Benismon, 2020, p. 338). One of the therapists in the study with 35 years of experience described that in her work: "people who experience trauma feel that they are nothing, dead, an object. When clients create something out of nothing, that new 'being' suddenly provides recognition... The clients engage with the trauma through improvisation, through creativity: when I create- I'm alive, so I exist" (Benismon, 2020, p. 338). This experience was brought by aspects of musical performance as participants observed that rhythm which "accentuates the present moment beat-by-beat" (Benismon, 2020, p. 338) is an element which can support an individual's sense of self-being or recognition. Moreover, another dimension of RNs which is valuable to traumatized individuals is acceptance. Practicing acceptance occurs when individuals are permitted to test boundaries. In music this can look like testing the extremes of dynamic range for example. Another therapist reported on her own experience that testing boundaries is an important development specifically in child victims of domestic violence stating, "they will play loud music or compose a song with curses and swear words. I try to assure my clients that I'm with them no matter what happens, no matter what they do..." (Bensimon, 2020, p. 339). While this extreme method may face its limitations in school contexts where specific codes of conduct must be adhered to, the principles can be applied: making sure students understand that how they feel is valid and worth being heard regardless of what that

feeling is. Finally, emotional witnessing consists of attentively listening and understanding what a traumatized individual may be expressing. In music, sharing the experience of listening to music and joining in music making can be a way of ensuring that the individuals feel understood.

A separate study recognized the importance of this relatability specifically in bereaved teenagers. Though the literature on at-risk adolescents primarily focuses on long-term consistent issues influencing a child's life, bereavement is considered an adverse childhood experience (CDC) and can overlap many of the externalizing or internalizing behaviors as other problems that children may face. In that study, a well discussed topic was that of musical expression positively influencing grieving teenagers. One interesting observation is that teenagers use music for mood management (McFerran, 2010). One crucial structure for interventions in at-risk adolescents. is that they feel a natural interest in the intervention. If teenagers already experience an inclination towards music as a therapeutic practice when coping with heavy emotional distress, then using that very coping mechanism as a vehicle for intervention would be much more effective for those children. The study showed that one of the frequently reported important coping factors for teenagers was to "let it out" referring to heavy emotional burdens surrounding their circumstance. The teenagers in the study recognized that music making gave an outlet for emotional expression and release. The study specifically mentioned that "music therefore has an important role to play in representing the authentic but hidden emotions..." (McFerran, 2010, p. 203). Moreover, teenagers in the study also described a personal change that occurred as a result of being connected with other individuals who could truly understand their experience. (McFerran, 2010). For the teenagers in the study, the felt they were able to relate with their peers in an environment specifically made for that purpose. In the classroom it would seem that teenagers might not necessarily find other youth who have experienced exactly what they have.

While that may be true considering the small and random samples of students that make up

classroom demographics, what students can find is that their situation may not be as uncommon

as the originally assumed and their emotional distress may be a shared experience. By creating a

classroom that fosters emotional improvements, the students may find that relating to their peers

is more likely than they think.

   Pasiali, V., et al (2016) argues that "programs offered in formal settings during school or

after school hours often fail to engage adolescents who are already experiencing school failure,

dropout, or have started showing delinquent behavior" (p. 283). However, studies support that

music-based therapeutic approaches are effective for adolescents above the age of 13 (Pasiali, V.,

& Clark, C., 2018; Porter, S., McConnel, T., McLaughlin, K., Lynn, F., Cardwell, C., Braiden,

H. J., Boylan, J., & Holmes, V., 2016). While some studies caution on group dynamics

influencing students' perception towards the intervention and "peer reinforcement of children's

deviant talk and behavior" (Dishion, Poulin, & Burraston, 2001, p. 347), the Pasiali & Clark

(2018) study found that "interventions that reduce frequency of low-performing/high-risk skills,

particularly in a close-knit group of children, may reinforce shaping each other's positive

socialization outcomes" (Pasiali, V., & Clark, C., 2018, p. 284). If it is true that formal school

programs have seen less success, it would have to do with a lack of interest from the students

either for the content or the program itself not because of its relation to the school day. In fact,

within the TIPE model, positive education topics are encouraged once students are ready to learn

and to integrate new cognitively based strategies (Brunzell et. al, 2019).

In the Curriculum

   Utilizing the music program as a means of intervention alongside the standard curriculum

must be based on a natural interest in music from the student. Having music as an intervention

program is not meant to also serve as a means for recruitment or retention. Forcing students to

partake in an activity they do not want to be involved in may decrease the efficacy of the

program for behavioral intervention. In terms of specific social and emotional learning (SEL)

curricula, intentionally integrated content proves to be an ineffective method of implementing

SEL instruction for older students. Early elementary school SEL programs reported higher

success rates (Yeager, S., 2017). A significant decrease in success in middle school occurred and

eventually dwindled further as students got older. Older students from middle and high school

tended to find repeated information as condescending, and therefore dismissed the ideas entirely.

In the instance of anti-smoking campaigns, high school students found no interest in

advertisements that warned of smoking dangers since those dangers were perceived as well-

known information. High school students did, however, resonate with anti-smoking campaigns

that appealed to a sense of indignant rebellion against cigarette companies. Curriculum

integrated with SEL skills were not intrinsically destined to fail among older students, but in

order for the programs to succeed, they must be implemented effectively by taking into account

the needs of the specific aged group for which the instruction applies.

        While programs specifically designed for intervention like the explicit curriculum model

discussed in relation to the PE perspective are important and can be effective, students still have

so much to gain just by being in structured group settings with optimal environments for social

skills and an end goal other than focusing on what students need to improve in their behavior. In

taking a program like music and using its natural social and emotional demands to foster growth

in students, they are able to experience the intervention while also participating in a "normal"

activity:

On the other hand, children who enter adolescence without the benefit of having had the

opportunity to experience interventions or programs that help them develop different

emotional and social skills, may be less emotionally competent, less regulated, and

therefore more likely to have adverse outcomes. (Lakes et al., 2019; Moffitt et al., 2011,

p. 87)

 In one study on music programs in juvenile detention facilities Hickey (2018) asserts "overall

high arts involvement has shown to correlate with positive outcomes for 'at-risk' youth" (p.

4047). In a separate study, Gardner et al. (2014) found an increase in self-esteem and self-

efficacy, improved communication skills, improved cooperation and relationships with adults,

and a decrease in delinquent behavior and in mental health symptoms through juvenile offender

arts programs.

Conclusion

The demand for school-based interventions in response to behavioral problems is made

obvious in the past attempts made by educational institutions which ultimately led to little or no

sustainable success. While behavior is complex and some aspects reach beyond the scope of

areas manageable by schools, understanding why children and adolescents at times make

negative choices is the start of any successful means of supporting students through their

environments. Music programs offer a distinct means of achieving what seems to be a missing

piece in education.

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