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Children's Participation in Ritualized Circle Time - Ritual in music sessions in the multicultural kindergarten: How does it comply with children's right to participation?

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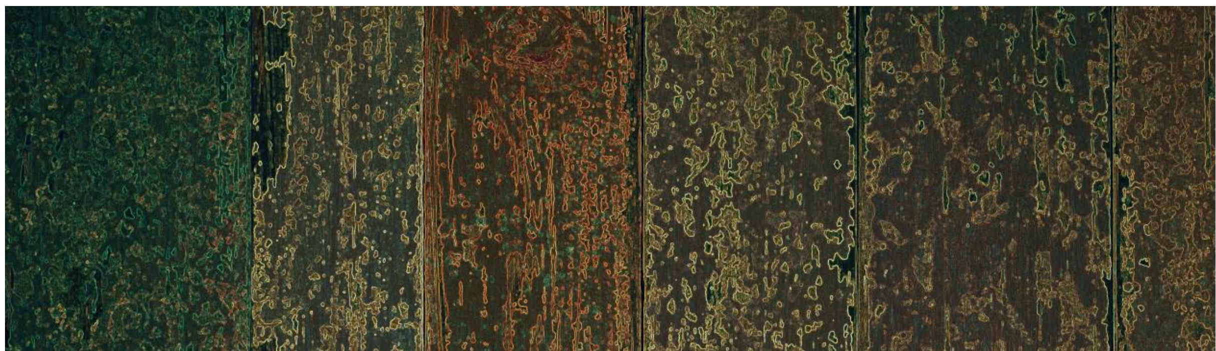

Abstract: This article addresses the possibly contradictory relationship between children's right to participate and ritualized circle time. It presents an analysis from an arts-based research inquiry within self-study, conducted during circle times in multicultural kindergartens (children aged three to six). The focus of the analysis is aspects of the ritualized song circle time that might enhance or undermine children's right to participation. Examples from videotaped material and interviews with kindergarten teachers are presented in the context of Small's (1998) and Dissanayake's (2008, 2014) notions of ritual, and of Bae's (2009) and Eide et al.'s (2012) understandings of children's participation. Results indicate that a structured and ritualized song circle time enhances children's participation in a multicultural kindergarten.

Keywords: children's participation, circle time, musicking, ritual, ritualization

Introduction

Active and widespread use of music activities in the multicultural kindergarten, such as singing in circle time, might be advantageous on several levels, e.g. minority-language children might break into the majority language at an earlier stage (Kulset, 2015a). This article presents findings based on Hamilton's (1998) method for self-study in arts-based research inquiry and seeks to shed light upon aspects in the ritualized song circle time that might enhance or undermine children's right to participation. The study was inspired by discussions with kindergarten staff who claim that I undermine children's right to participation when I conduct circle time with a structured, ritualized form. As I had not considered the ritualized form from the angle of children's right to participation, which is high on the educational agenda in Norway and the Nordic regions, I had to ask myself if the staff could be right. Have I, in my eagerness and enthusiasm for making music, disregarded children's right to participation? Consequently, I needed to analyze my behaviour towards the children during the ritualized circle times. The circle-time situations that comprise this inquiry consisted exclusively of music (which I will elaborate later in the article). Thus, in the following, I refer to the situations as music sessions.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children are entitled to express their views on everything that affects them, and that their views should always be taken into consideration. This is also a significant part of Norway's Kindergarten Act and thus also of the Norwegian *Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks for Kindergartens* (2011). In the analysis, I will build on Bae's (2009) understanding of children's right to participate as more than self-determination and individual choice. In addition, I will use the idea of Eide, Os, and Samuelsson (2012) who view children's participation as twofold: First, it concerns children's opportunities to be included, to be involved, and to participate in the group's fellowship and identification. Second, it is about being listened to and being given the opportunity to express their feelings, thoughts, and wishes – and being encouraged to do so.

Eide et al. (2012) question whether it is possible to conduct a structured circle time and still secure children's participation. According to them, circle time belongs to the Norwegian kindergarten tradition and is still very much alive, despite criticism of its legitimacy (see Eide et al., 2012, pp. 3–4, for a review). A central objection to circle time concerns the asymmetric relationship between the adult and the children. Because circle time is an adult-led activity, this places a particular responsibility on the adult to ensure that he or she is not misusing his or her authority (Eide et al., 2012, p. 4) and thereby violating the children's right to participation. The music sessions that this article builds upon all have a set structure decided by the adult and thus leave little space for the children to decide what will happen. Furthermore, the structure is repeated in the same manner every time, which creates a ritualized form. Consequently, one might ask if the structured music sessions contribute to an undesirable asymmetric relationship between the adult and the children, which in turn might undermine the Kindergarten Act and The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in terms of the children's participation. Or, on the contrary, are there possibilities for a ritualized music session to open up for children's participation despite – or perhaps because of – the already set structure?

Hence, I have examined the role of structured ritual in the music sessions by studying myself in my own practice and in the context of the multicultural kindergarten, where many children do not yet speak Norwegian. The research question for this article is as follows:

What important aspects in a structured and ritualized music session might enhance or undermine children's right to participation?

This article has four sections. First, I present the theoretical framework for my analysis. Second, I turn to the methodology and design of the study. In the third section I present the data,

which will be both analyzed and discussed. In the fourth and final section, I conclude and look ahead. All names of participants in the study are anonymized.

Ritual in music sessions

The empirical data in this article are analyzed in the context of theories within the meaning and purpose of ritual and ritualization, with an emphasis on Small (1998) and Dissanayake (2014).

Small and the theory of musicking

Small's concept of 'musicking' says that music first and foremost is an activity, an act of togetherness – hence the verb, 'to musick'. He argues that to musick is to communicate, but in a different manner than verbal language makes possible. When we musick, we make use of other aspects of our communication abilities, aspects that Small brings down to purely biological needs for exchanging information to answer questions about our relationship with one another: friend or foe, offspring or potential mate. Fight or flight, feed or breed. Small calls this our 'gestural language of biological communication' (Small, 1998, pp. 50–63). He argues that verbal languages have limits compared to this gestural language of biological communication, a view also supported by Cross (2005, pp. 30, 35) who emphasizes music's ambiguity and floating intentionality as a positive factor in group cohesion. Each individual can interpret music independently and hence make it meaningful to them, and yet still be a part of the collective musicking. Their individual meaning-making does not undermine the group cohesion in the way that a similar independent and individual meaning-making would do in a verbal conversation. Cross (ibid., p. 36) exemplifies this in the following way: "One only has to envisage a group of children interacting verbally and unambiguously rather than musically to see (and hear) how quickly conflict is likely to emerge in linguistic rather than musical interaction!" Musicking may give children the opportunity to explore forms of interaction with others while minimizing the risk of conflict. This is highly relevant in multicultural kindergartens, where the lack of a shared verbal language may stand in the way of group cohesion and social interaction. The children in these kindergartens need to be given what Cross (2003, pp. 26–27) calls a 'consequence-free means of exploring and achieving competence in social interaction'. It seems that musicking – the gestural language of biological communication – may give us the chance to articulate and explore relationships, to 'try them on to see how they fit' (Small, 1998, p. 63).

Rituals are given a vital position in the theory of musicking. Small defines rituals as organized behaviour based on our gestural language of biological communication, or paralanguage, that leads us to affirm, explore, and celebrate our ideas and conceptions of our relationship to the cosmos, the world, our society, and each other (Small, 1998, p. 95). A ritual might be a family dinner, a large state celebration, a romantic movie date – or the music session in kindergarten. They all have in common that they contribute towards articulating people's concepts of how the relationships of their world are structured, and thus how humans ought to relate to one another. This is what defines a community, and therefore rituals are used to say, 'This is who we are' (affirmation), 'This is who I might be' (exploration), and 'We are happy to share this identity' (celebration). Thus, the ritual is a cornerstone of human life; Small says simply, "[R]itual is the mother of all the arts" (1998, p. 105). To take part in a ritual means that we not only see and hear, listen and watch (or maybe even smell, taste, and touch), but also that we *act.* Small emphasizes that the more actively we are able to participate, the more each one of us feels empowered to act, to create, and to display – and the more satisfying we will find the ritual (Small, 1998, p. 105).

Dissanayake and the Artification hypothesis

Dissanayake's research on the origin and evolution of music (and all forms of art) also gives the ritual a predominant role. Her point of departure is mother–infant behaviour, which is dyadic, performative, and multimodal. Dissanayake proposes that the affinitive mechanisms in this interaction between ancestral mothers and infants is our 'proto-music',[1] from which all other musical expressions later evolved (Dissanayake, 2008, p. 172). In this interaction, it is the ritualization of the behaviour that is the essence, she says, a ritualized behaviour we share with other animals. Ritualized movements transform ordinary operational movements into something 'extraordinary' and thus attract attention. Dissanayake describes them as typically becoming (a) simplified or stereotyped (formalized) and (b) repeated rhythmically, often (c) with a typical intensity; signals are (d) exaggerated in time and space, and (e) emphasized by the development of special colours or anatomical features (Dissanayake, 2014, p. 47). In the ritualized behaviour of mother and infant, the visual, vocal, and gestural expressions used (look at, smile, open eyes and mouth, mutual gaze, raised eyebrows, head bob, head nod, head and body leaning forward and back, soft undulant elaborated sounds, touching) are, in the same way, simplified, stereotyped, repeated or sustained, exaggerated and elaborated (Dissanayake, 2008; 2014, p. 48).

Her 'Artification hypothesis' (Dissanayake, 2014) proposes that this ritualized behaviour developed as a way of demonstrating individual and group care and concern about biologically important outcomes, such as necessary bonding (to facilitate care taking) between mother and infant. The ritual might thus serve to coordinate behaviour and emotionally unite the group, in spite of the possible self-interest of each individual.

Dissanayake highlights two adaptive functions of the ritual (Dissanayake, 2014, pp. 53–54). One function of the ritual is to provide shaped and elaborated actions as something to do when beset by uncertain circumstances and thus ease the harmful effects of the stress response in participating individuals. "Simply keeping together in time with other persons produces a feeling of well-being and euphoria" (Dissanayake, 2009a, p. 259). Another function is to instil collective emotions, such as trust and belongingness, and to coordinate (physically, neurologically, and emotionally) members of the group so that they cooperate in confidence and unity. Through this participation with others in formalized and rhythmically repeated activities, brain chemicals like cortisol are suppressed while endorphinic substances, such as oxytocin, are released, creating pleasurable feelings of unity with others and strengthening our commitment to each other (Keeler et al., 2015; Kosfeld, Heinrichs, Zak, Fischbacher, & Fehr, 2005; Zak, Stanton, & Ahmadi, 2007). Dissanayake hypothesizes that it is from these affinitive mechanisms, which secured and contributed to human survival, that the temporal arts, such as music, have evolved. Thus, participation in a ritual is, according to Dissanayake, a capacity that humans have that contributes to a feeling of safety and reduced stress on an individual level, and to bonding and cooperation on a group level.

Communicative musicality

The literature on communicative musicality (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009) also speaks of the importance of the ritual in music making. Communicative musicality supports a view of musicality as a psychobiological capacity that first and foremost facilitates group cohesion and coordination, thereby making it essential to human cooperation (Dissanayake, 2009b, p. 26). According to the concept of communicative musicality, music making is an innate ability connected to human relationships. As with language (another innate human skill), musical skills are learned and socially determined through rituals in shared performance (Bannan & Woodward, 2009, p. 467). The music

[1] Dissanayake affirms that 'proto-music' and 'communicative musicality' (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009) are corresponding terms (Dissanayake, 2008, p. 177).

session in the kindergarten is an example of such a shared performance, a ritual in which social skills are tested and acquired through the floating intentionality of musicking.

The study

Methodology

This analysis is conducted within the methodology of arts-based research, more specifically a/r/tography. Arts-based research (ABR) is a form of practice-based research rooted in the arts that uses art forms to reveal the features that matter educationally (Eisner, 2008, p. 47). According to Barone and Eisner, the purpose of ABR is 'to challenge the comfortable, familiar, dominant master narrative' (Barone, 2008, p. 76) and to raise significant questions that will bring forth conversation rather than offer a new totalizing counter-narrative (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 53). A/r/tography is a category of ABR within educational research. The a/r/t stands for artist–researcher–teacher, which represents the role(s) I have held as a researcher in this inquiry. I have been an artist by using my skills as a professional, educated musician in the music sessions; I have planned and carried out the research; and I am a teacher searching for new knowledge that might contribute to further new knowledge on the educational level.

By taking on these three roles openly, I have consciously become more open minded as a researcher in a sense that has made me aware of my professional skills as a trained musician and music teacher. Previously, when I did not combine these roles openly, I would tend to devalue my skills and experiences as an artist. Rather than bring them to the front, I argued that 'anyone' could perform music sessions that would lead to increased group cohesion, despite the lack of a shared language among the children. By doing so, I in fact ended up overlooking important aspects in my research – for instance, my artistic skills as a professional musician and trained music teacher. To be allowed to hold all three of these roles opened up the possibility of moving around in the spaces between the art making, researching, and teaching. It is in this in-between space that the a/r/tographer may interrogate and rupture meanings and understandings in a constant flow between knowing, doing, and making – three forms of thought equally important to a/r/tography.

One way of finding new knowledge by knowing, doing, and making, is through self-study, which is typical of a/r/tography. The reason for doing self-study research is to find out 'what I do and why I do it' (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2009, p. 3), making it a perfect fit for generating the empirical data upon which this article is based. One of the key arguments of self-study is that those engaged in the practice of a particular profession are particularly well qualified to investigate that practice (Schön, 1995; Zeichner, 1999). Essential to the quality of self-study is that the data be derived from multiple and varied sources and perspectives so that the researcher can analyze her research questions from more than one data source or perspective. 'Critical friends' are one such data source (Samaras, 2011, p. 214): peers who serve as validators and who provide feedback while the researcher shapes her research. They also serve as the researcher's validation team to provide feedback on the quality and legitimacy of her claims (McNiff & Whitehead, 2005, p. 11). My critical friends were the teachers and heads of the kindergartens and colleagues in music teaching and education.

Design

I conducted weekly music sessions in three different kindergarten[2] groups over a period of 19 weeks. Each group consisted of ten children, approximately 50% of whom spoke little or no Norwegian and

[2] In Norway, we use the term 'kindergarten' for all pre-schools, crèches, or playgroup activities led by educated kindergarten teachers alongside other care givers. Children start school at the age of 6.

were thus in the category of 'minority-language children'. One or two kindergarten teachers[3] always joined in, preferably the same person/s each week. Every music session was filmed and analyzed, with an explicit focus on the music teacher (myself), on what I did and how this affected the group. For a further description of the design, see Kulset (2016). What is more relevant for this article is the design of the 'structured music session':

The music session programme
A specific music intervention programme was designed to meet the following criteria:

- No musical instrument
- Includes songs, rhymes, and dance
- Repetition of the same songs, rhymes, and dance for the whole period

I set the criteria so that any kindergarten teacher would be able to conduct the same music session.[4]
I chose five songs (including rhymes) that I thought would encourage participation on the basis of certain attributes:

- Contains movement and gestures
- Promotes varied use of voice
- Is both with and without melody
- Rhymes both with and without steady beat
- Includes both sitting down/standing up and dancing/moving around
- Cues the start and end of session with a particular song or rhyme

Furthermore, I set a rather loose didactic framework that would correspond with the criteria already set:

- Songs in the same order every time (ritual-based structure)
- Little talking in between songs to identify which song comes next or to ask the children whether they want to sing the song one more time
- Never counting to three before starting
- Repeating songs at least three times
- Varying songs using easily accessible musical parameters (high and low volume, high and low pitch voice, and so on)
- Not asking the children what they want to sing next

Each music session had a typical duration of 15 minutes.

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[3] When I use the term 'kindergarten teacher' in this article, I refer to those who are educated as kindergarten teachers. This is on the account of their educational curriculum, which to greater or lesser degree will contain music as a subject.
[4] In Norway, all kindergarten teachers have been trained in music during their education and are expected to be able to make use of music in their profession. However, many are shy about musicking, ashamed of their own voice (Schei, 2011) or are caught up in a negative self-image (Ehrlin & Wallerstedt, 2014; Ericsson & Lindgren, 2011; Kulset, 2015a; Lamont, 2011). In addition, the number of music lessons they have been offered varies, both between institutions and as a result of the students' own choice. Hence, their musical skills and ability may vary greatly. Due to the limits of the article format, this is not the place to elaborate on these issues further.

The design is based on my teaching experiences from conducting music sessions over 20 years. The criteria also correspond well with the concept of 'ritual' (Dissanayake, 2008, 2014; Small, 1998), as well, in part, as the notion of 'communicative musicality' (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009), and Cross, Laurence, and Rabinowitch's (2012) theory of Empathy Promoting Musical Components (EPMC), in which elements such as imitation, entrainment, flexibility, and floating intentionality are cornerstones.

Data generation

The data in this inquiry are based on two qualitative interviews (Mona and Ingrid), two e-mail interviews (Lise and Kari), 23 informal talks, feedback from critical friends, one staff meeting, and 23 video recordings from music sessions with three different groups of children.

The analysis

The data were structured using CAQDAS (Computer Assisted Quality Data Analysis System). I applied a stepwise-deductive inductive (SDI) approach in which empirical data are thematically categorized (by induction) followed by a verification of these thematic outcomes in the empirical data (by deduction) (Tjora, 2012, pp. 175–176). The intention in SDI is to develop concepts that capture central characteristics that also have relevance to cases other than the one being studied. In the first step of the analysis, the video data were coded into nodes or themes that reflected the actual content of each music session video and not my main research questions or what I initially (thought I) was looking for. I found this particularly important because I was studying myself; in this way, I reduced the risk of a biased point of view. I compared my preliminary findings continuously with data from the informal talk and feedback from critical friends, which would lead me again to new understandings. The qualitative interviews and staff meeting were conducted at the end of my data-generating period and contributed greatly to the 'interrogation and rupturing of meanings and understandings' and thus to the 'knowing' of my 'doing and making' (cf. a/r/tography). The topics brought up by the interviewees and staff both confirmed some of my findings; in addition, they made me aware of significant notions I had not discovered myself. This revealed some of the challenges in self-study research and illustrated how important one's critical friends are. Out of 56 different themes, all with the explicit focus on the music teacher, four main categories were created and used as a basis for further analysis and concept development.

Results and discussion

The research question for this article is:

> What important aspects in a structured and ritualized music session might enhance or undermine children's right to participation?

This section of the article is in three parts. First, I address some of the differences between the ritualized and the un-ritualized music sessions in the context of children's participation. Second, I turn to the kindergarten teachers' reflections upon a felt positive atmosphere in the ritualized music session and how this might enhance or undermine children's participation. Third, I present the chaos–structure connection and question the role of this contradictory relationship in children's participation.

Ritualized and un-ritualized music sessions

To ritualize the music session means to repeat the structure and content and also to include ritualized behaviour, as explained by Dissanayake (2008, 2009a, 2014). Here, the un-ritualized music session is

understood as a situation in which the children's suggestions determine the content and structure of the music session. The discussion of children's right to participation was prompted by a presentation of a video clip from a ritualized music session (see below) at a staff meeting in the kindergarten. At that point, I had not realized that my conduct could be regarded unfavourably in relation to children's right to participation. The staff's feedback resulted in further analyses and theory development.

> We are sitting on the floor in a circle: the children, kindergarten teacher Mona, and me. We have just finished the song 'Dippi do' and applaud as we always do after this song. Annam asks, "Can we do the mouse rhyme now?" I start drumming on my knees (which signals the beginning of another song) and answer her: "Soon, soon". She smiles and starts to sing along in the drummer song. When we have finished singing all our rounds of this song, I clearly mark that this is the last round as I slow down the tempo at the end. Annam is quick: "The mouse! It's the mouse!" "Yes, now it is the mouse", I reply. Abel says, "But I want to sing more!" "First, it is the mouse", I tell him and hold up my thumb. He has no objections and holds up his thumb, too.

This episode demonstrates how I dismiss the children's suggestions. When they ask for songs, I do not follow their wishes. Instead, I guide them through the original structure. When I persist in holding on to the original structure in this way, a ritual is being formed. Ritualization of an activity means altering ordinary communicative behaviours, such as sounds and movement, with formalization, repetition, exaggeration, and elaboration. This will in turn attract attention and will structure the emotions of the participants (Dissanayake, 2008, p. 169).

There are several examples of ways that I formalize, exaggerate, and elaborate my behaviour, both in sound and movement, in this short excerpt. For example, the applause after 'Dippi do' is not only a repetition performed in every music session; it is also a formalization of a way to end the song and an exaggeration (as we cheer and give a really big round of applause) that attracts everyone's attention. I then move on to the next song without making any pause to announce which song is next. Instead, I start drumming on my knees to signal the start of the next song. By this, I elaborate the intro, building it up from the drumming, which is distinct in pulse, for the upcoming song, but without starting to sing. I wait for all the children to join in the drumming. In this way, I use my body to exaggerate both the lyrics in the song (which is about a boy who plays the drum), the beat of the song, and the fact that this is a song with already set movements that we may now join in doing. The thumb that indicates that the mouse rhyme is also a formalized, exaggerated, and elaborated way of announcing the rhyme. It aids Abel in coordinating and conjoining with the group, although he would rather sing the drummer song once more. This manipulation of my behaviour is, according to Dissanayake (2009a, p. 534), what produces the emotional responses or effects of the arts. It is also a significant part of establishing a ritual.

What about children's participation in this context? Staff members said, "I do not agree with your not letting the children decide which songs to sing in that way. We need to consider children's participation." Is deciding what song to sing equivalent to children's right to participation? This view accords with Bae (2009, p. 395), who points to a possible pitfall in interpreting children's participation primarily as self-determination and individual choice. This might lead to an underestimation of the children's dependent and vulnerable sides, she claims. If one looks closer at a music session that has no set structure regarding the music and songs, but where the children raise their hands to suggest the next song, it is not difficult to spot what Bae suggests:

> Filip [the adult] suggests we sing 'Old MacDonald had a farm'. As he starts to sing and play, some of the children immediately raise their hands. When we reach the point in the song where an animal is supposed to be named, Filip stops the song and points at one of the children with a raised hand. The child thinks for quite a while, then names an animal, and the song continues. During the song, half of the children constantly keep their hand up in the air while they also partly sing along. The children who do not raise their hand are mostly silent. (Excerpt from video filmed for the present inquiry)

Filip clearly opens up for children's participation in this situation. He points at them in turn while saying their names, and he waits patiently to give the children time to think. However, in Eide et al.'s (2012) twofold understanding of children's participation, both the feeling of being included in a fellowship and the feeling of being listened to and given the chance to express oneself are given equal importance. How does this conform to the two different music sessions presented here?

In the un-ritualized music session, the children were given the opportunity to express their wishes, and Filip clearly listened to them. However, he only listened to those children who were able to express themselves, and who showed this by raising their hands. What about the others? Were *all* children given the space to be listened to and a chance to express themselves? Moreover, where is the feeling of fellowship when you hope only that Filip will pick *you* and not your peers? I propose that the ritualized music session also opens up for being listened to and expressing oneself – but not necessarily with the consequence of deciding what will happen. Although I ignore the children's wishes in the video clip above, I do not ignore them as such. I clearly signal that I have heard their wishes and their initiative while guiding them back into the ritual. In addition, both Annam and Abel are minority-language children. It may be that they are given a voice because everyone participates on an equal basis, regardless of language competence. This is in contrast to the un-ritualized music session where only the children with sufficient language competence can express themselves. According to Bae (2006, p. 8), children's participation includes experiencing their voice being heard and mattering in the fellowship.

Another significant aspect in the ritualized music session is my ritualized behaviour that establishes a communication channel besides the spoken language, as pointed out by Small (1998, p. 58) in the idea of 'the gestural language of biological communication', which is also supported by Cross (2005, p. 36). This is an essential point in a kindergarten where many children speak little or no Norwegian. The ritualization thus complies with the Kindergarten Act, which says, "Children shall have the right to participate in accordance with their age and abilities" (section 1), because it gives equal opportunities for participation regardless of social or cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984; Kulset, 2015b). As all the children were able to participate in the ritualized music session, it is possible that the ritualized music session contributes to a feeling of being included and a feeling of fellowship, aided by the ritualization, as understood by Dissanayake (2014) and Small (1998).

The 'what song shall we sing next' situation (which largely defines the un-ritualized music session in this context) was independently brought up by all four kindergarten teachers in the interviews and thus taken as a consequential factor in my further analysis. This is Mona's reflection:

> You don't have to ask, "What song do you want to sing?" Oh, that's such a trap! Everyone shouts, some get sad, others leave, and yet others don't understand a thing we are saying. "Is there anyone who has a wish?" and then they suggest a song you don't know yourself, or that only a few of the children know. It simply causes trouble, really. Suddenly it is all about who can shout the loudest, or who can think of a song to suggest the quickest. It is true chaos, really.

What Mona brings forward is that by asking the children what song they would like to sing, one might end up undermining the children's participation. Kari describes it like this: "Singing together creates social cohesion, a sense of community and social inclusion, as opposed to 'adult communication and a show of hands', which simply create competition and a sense of defeat."

By letting the children 'take the helm', the intention of music making might disappear. Instead, it ends up having random content and, as a consequence, not benefiting from the ritual's ability to coordinate behaviour and emotionally unite a group (Dissanayake, 2014, pp. 53–54). As Bae (2009, p. 402) argues, children's participation is not solely about self-determination and individual choices. According to her, such an interpretation might threaten children's right to participate because it reduces the concept of participation to formal routines emphasizing individual choice. It may be that there is nothing wrong in asking what song the children would like to sing next but, as argued here, perhaps not on the basis of children's right to participation.

Positive atmosphere

In the interviews, the topic of repetition – which was unfamiliar to the kindergarten teachers to the extent that I engaged in it – was brought up from different angles. However, all emphasized the positivity that the repetition caused.

> Mona:
> I already knew you would repeat things because you told us you would, but I mean … [she laughs] this was beyond what I thought of as repeating [laughs]. No surprises here! [laughs] And that is what made the whole thing work so well, but in the beginning I was thinking: "… Hm … ok … she is doing the same thing again … and again. And the children they want her to. Hm" [laughs].
>
> Ingrid:
> You never had to ask them to sit down or to hush them. The fact that this was repeated in the same manner each and every time, the same beginning and the same end. And it never became dull to them.

These statements suggest that the atmosphere of the music session is on the positive side because of the ritualization. Could it be the adaptive functions of the ritual mentioned by Dissanayake (2014, pp. 53–54), promoting feelings of pleasure and unstrained unity with others by the release of brain chemicals like oxytocin? Perhaps it is also the process that reduces individual anxiety and coordinates and unifies a group (Dissanayake, 2008, p. 180). As Bae (2009, p. 401) points out, children's right to participate also means leading the attention to friendly and trusting aspects of relations, thus stimulating the children's willingness to show solidarity. It also accords with Eide et al.'s (2012, p. 7) understanding of children's participation as 'children's opportunities to be included, to be involved and participate in the group's fellowship and identification'. Both of these notions conform to Dissanayake's Artification hypothesis (2009a, p. 259), in which she proposes that one of the adaptive functions of the ritual is to instil collective emotions such as trust and belongingness, and to coordinate members of the group so that they cooperate in confidence and unity.

The chaos–structure connection

However, as discussed in Kulset (2016), a significant component of the 'successful' music session in a multicultural kindergarten is to tolerate chaos. This is exemplified by such elements as the fact that the

children were allowed to sit elsewhere than in the circle and that they could leave the room and return whenever they wanted, and so forth. In other words, both 'allowing chaos' and 'keeping the structure' are important findings from the larger PhD study of which this article is a part. How is it possible for both chaos and structure to simultaneously play significant roles in the music session in a multicultural kindergarten? Hence, I had to ask myself the following: What is the connection between chaos and structure in the music session in a multicultural kindergarten?

Eide et al. (2012, p. 10) describe children's 'scope of action' within the set frames of the ritualized music session as an important component of listening to children, a situation in which the individual child is allowed to act on his or her own premises and interests within the frames of the music session, but without undermining the music session's fellowship.

To address this, I will turn to a video clip presenting a 4-year-old boy named Johan. He is what the adults call 'a troublemaker'. He cannot sit still, does not manage to participate in adult-conducted activities, and does not seem to pay attention when adults are giving instructions. In the music sessions led by me, he has been allowed to sit wherever he wants to, preferably standing one or two metres away. However, he always participates in the singing.

> In the middle of the last song before our closing procedure and while every one is laughing and skipping, Johan makes me bend down to him. He puts his hands in front of his mouth as he is playing the trumpet, a movement we use in one of our songs, which I left out today. "Oh, I forgot that one", I reply, and he nods. I continue with the jumping song, but I make it shorter because now I know that Johan is waiting for the song I left out. As soon as we have sat down back in the circle, still singing, I tell the other children that Johan has reminded me that we have forgotten a song. I imitate Johan's movement with the trumpet as he did when asking for the song. He looks at me very seriously and focused. "Good thing you remembered", I tell him. Mona pats his head and smiles at him while I start the song. Everyone joins in without objections (although we are out of our habitual succession, but we *did* skip that song), and Johan, who normally has big difficulties staying in the circle, joins with full pathos for the whole length of the song, sitting in the circle.

There are three factors in this excerpt that I would like to highlight. First, it may be seen as a support to Mona and Ingrid's observations about how the children might want the repetition. By reminding me of the song, this child expresses the importance of doing *all* the things we usually do. Second, Johan displays his knowledge of the ritual. He knows both our songs/rhymes and the normal structure of the music session – he knew that this particular song would be left out if he did not remind me, as the normal 'timing' of the song had passed. This provides him with highly needed cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1984; Kulset, 2015b). Third, Johan is normally a 'challenging' child who never seems to 'get things right'. Now he displays perfect knowledge of the ritual, and one can only imagine the empowerment he feels (Small, 1998, p. 105). Mona expresses her revelation about Johan:

> "And now I know that it works out just fine, although Johan stands over there in the corner.… I have realized that Johan gets it although he still can't cope with sitting down with us. And no one likes to be forced into a situation, right? But when we make the atmosphere nice and easy … He is actually joining [the music session]! And having a good time, too.… We have told him to sit down countless times. Or to come and join us. And now, when he has been allowed to sit elsewhere, he has calmed down."

Within the structured frames of the ritualized music session, Johan is given both the chance to perform the ritual on his own premises and to display to the rest of the group that he has paid attention and thus knows the ritual. This makes Mona realize that it is okay that Johan 'stands over there in the corner' and that he is nevertheless participating just as much as the children sitting in the circle. He is given his 'scope of action' within the set frames (Eide et al., 2012, p. 10).

Chaos and structure create a new space.
Mona brings up the fact that the adults have told Johan to sit down or to come and join countless times, without result. He has not been allowed to choose, because the structure of their music session has mostly been about the correct placement of bodies, what Eide et al. (2012, p. 5) call 'external structure' (*ytre struktur*). If, on the other hand, the structure of the music session is shaped in the form of a ritual, a space in which social skills are tested and acquired through the floating intentionality of musicking, the children can come and go as they please, largely what Eide et al. (2012, p. 5) call 'inner structure' (*indre struktur*). In other words, the structure and ritualization are not there for the teacher to be in control of the situation but rather to offer the group the benefits of joining in a ritual. Hence, it might be the combination of tolerating chaos and still keeping a structured ritual that facilitates children's participation. The chaos and the structure appear to be intertwined and interdependent in a new space that allows the object of the activity to expand and extend so that the activity itself reorganizes. In this way, this space may be linked to 'third space theory', which has been used in a variety of disciplines to explore and understand the space 'in between' different discourses or conceptualizations (Bhabha, 2004). It is in the space between the chaos and the structure that Johan and Mona in the example above experienced new opportunities for thought, understanding, and learning.

Conclusion

In this article, I have addressed the dilemma between keeping an adult-set structure in circle time and at the same time facilitating children's right to participation. I have done this by analyzing my generated data in the context of Dissanayake's and Small's theories about ritual and research into children's participation in Norwegian kindergartens (Bae, 2009; Eide et al., 2012).

According to Dissanayake (2008, p. 180), one purpose of the ritual (and all ceremonial practices) is, among other things, to make life easier because you are 'doing something' to address uncertainty with the joint participation of your fellows. The uncertain social situation for many of the kindergarten children who yet do not speak Norwegian, and even their Norwegian-speaking peers, might be such an uncertainty to address (for a broader discussion on this, see Kulset, 2015b). In this article, I have argued that as the children in the kindergartens became familiar with the routine of the music session ritual, they were given the chance to participate actively regardless of language skills: they could – if they wanted to – make the music, create the atmosphere, participate in gestures, and display their own skills within this routine. I propose that the set structure of the ritualized music session might facilitate an equal opportunity to participate regardless of language competence and thus enhance children's right to participation.

There is also a likelihood that the de-stressing and bonding effects on the group facilitated by the structure of the ritualized music session appears to be afforded by a necessary counterpart of the structure: the acceptance of chaos. In fact, one might say that this 'tolerated chaos' is a part of the ritual. Within this tolerates chaos, a new space is created in which the child can experience a 'consequence-free means of exploring and achieving competence in social interaction' (Cross, 2003,

pp. 26–27). As a result, chaos and structure in joint collaboration may afford children's participation in the music session.

Looking ahead

As a consequence of my position as an a/r/tographer, I acknowledge the importance of my musical competence (described in Kulset, 2016) to conduct the chaos–structure musical sessions that appear to comply with children's right to participation. I also acknowledge all the meaningful conversations that might take place during a circle time when the children raise their hands. However, to ritualize the music session in a set structure is not, as argued by staff members, tantamount to undermining children's right to participation. Hence, we still need to address the necessary competences and attitudes of the kindergarten staff in this context. What teacher competences are needed to conduct such a ritualized circle time/music session as described here? What makes educated kindergarten teachers think that the ritualized music session undermines children's participation, while the 'what song shall we sing next' approach does not? Where did the kindergarten teachers acquire these attitudes? During education or in their practice? These questions are left for future research.

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