Making music experience: data collection instrument with families

Abstract

Objective: This study aimed to know the making music experience (MME) as an instrument of data collection with families in the process of reunification.

Method: it was used as a theoretical philosophical symbolic interactionism. We interviewed 4 families with a total of 20 participants.

Results: the analysis identified the perception of the participants about the experience of making music as an instrument of production and data collection, which is presented in two significant moments – Making authentic the data collection and Arousing the children’s participation in data collection.

Conclusion: the study showed that the use of MME to produce and collect data for research is a way to include all family members in the interview enabling authentic expression of social and family interaction.

Keywords: family, data collection, family nursing, music therapy, music

Introduction

The qualitative research contributes to social manifestations and interactions understanding. This research method becomes increasingly important in the knowledge development for health practice; precisely because it is based on evidence arising from the responses of people who report their real problems and health potential. The production and data collection in qualitative research serve as a map to guide the course to enter in previously unstudied experiences. The data collected do not only describe the experience, but portray how this experience happens in the context, considering the interactional behavior among the people and therefore being very useful for the clinical practice of the health and nursing professional in the work with families. Aiming at music as a form of human knowledge and competence, we also consider the possibility of its applicability in the data production for research with families in nursing; since nurses have shown intimacy with music, using it as a therapeutic modality; as a technological resource focused on human relations, as a strategy of sensitization, care and teaching for nursing.

Anthropology and ethnomusicology understand music as a social phenomenon; being the mediator and integral part of social relations. The use of music by society and individuals is very common, considering the music can have many social meanings, configuring itself as a social activity. Using music to mediate and broaden the communication in family interaction can be a way to understand the family’s way of acting from both inside and outside. Understanding the family as a system in interaction, the musical doing experience can contribute to the inclusion of all family members during the production and collection of data. The purpose of this study is to describe the experience of musical making as a data collection tool and to understand the families’ impressions in situations of family reintegration related to the experience of musical making during the interview.

Methods

Ethical aspects

The study was developed ethically in resolution 466/12, which involves human beings, it was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of São Paulo, Brazil and all participants signed the Free and Clarified Consent Term. The representation of the families was expressed by the musical vocabulary to guarantee secrecy and anonymity of them, throughout the research process.

Theoretical-methodological framework and type of study

This is a qualitative research study that uses Symbolic Interactionism as a theoretical framework. These theoretical framework to explore topics that have not yet been studied, allowing the research to acquire original contributions.

Methodological procedures

Study scenario

The reference scenario was a shelter association, founded in 1973, located in the South Zone of the city of São Paulo (SP), Brazil which maintains children and adolescents in nursing homes. While sheltered, children who were under family reintegration were visited by their families on weekends, fortnightly or monthly; still regularly, family members took their children and teenagers home on weekends, returning to the association late on Sunday with the release of a judge. At the time of the study, the association received 73 children and adolescents from zero to 17 years old in six homes and the children were taken in three different houses.

Data source

Four families participated in the study, which together comprised 20 participants and met the inclusion criteria: people experiencing making music as an instrument of production and data collection, which is presented in two significant moments – Making authentic the data collection and Arousing the children’s participation in data collection.

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The characteristics of the families participating at the time of the interview are presented below (Table 1).

### Collection and data organization

Data were collected from April to September 2013. Participant observation and an interview for each family mediated by the experience of musical making were performed at a time and place preset by the institution, which lasted approximately 1 hour, guided by the following guiding questions: What is the meaning of family reintegration for you? What if we compose a soundtrack representing it? How was the experience for you participating in this interview?

### MME Steps

The steps below were adapted and constructed from the interconnection of the theoretical assumptions of symbolic interactionism and music therapy.

#### Musical context

**Step objectives:** Understand the family experience situation and enter their social, cultural and family universe.

**Dynamics:** Presentation of the musical instruments, allowing the participants to freely handle and come in contact with them. Following, it was requested for the family to use the musical instruments to express and create a soundtrack that represented the situation of family reintegration experienced by them.

#### Musical thinking process

**Step objectives:** Activate reflective processes and promote sensitive, generous and resonant listening

**Dynamics:** At this moment the researcher becomes mediator and organizer of the verbal and non-verbal mobilized communication tuning, using questions related to the sound and music played. Example: What is the meaning of family reintegration for you? What if we compose a soundtrack representing it? Movement of reflection with action and action with reflection, inter-relational process and tuning performed by the participants in the soundtrack improvisation and composition.

### Musical presentation: final musical composition

**Step objectives:** Recognize and publicly present the musical creation analyzed and considered by the participants in their historical / social / cultural and ideological context.

**Dynamics:** How do you imagine that the family and the house will stay after the family reintegration? At this moment the researcher invites the family to create sentences related to the question asked, while the same notes the sentences. At the end of the sentence creation, the family chooses a rhythm to pack them and everyone is invited to sing the song.

In this study, a guiding question was used at the end of the Making Music Experience (MME): How did you participate in this interview making music? With this, the families were invited to reflect on the lived experience, focusing on the realization of an appreciation of the family interaction and the experience of the production of data by musical making.

### Data analysis

In this study our focus is on the data obtained from the guiding question: How was the experience for you to participate in this interview making music? The interviews were recorded and transcribed in full to be submitted to data analysis. For the musical experience, a musical scenario containing musical instruments of percussion (drums, caixixis, rattles, triangles, cymbals and clefs) was prepared and adapted, as well as melodic and harmonic ones (keyboard, xylophone, metallophone and guitar) in a room provided by the institution. Musical instruments were used as support for expression of feelings, repertoire and skills, and as a projective support, in order to facilitate verbal expression.\(^9\) During the musical expressions, participants’ speeches regarding reintegration emerged and opened space for verbal dialogue, which was articulated by the performance of circular questions\(^11\) complementary to the guiding question.

### Table 1 Characteristics of families at the time of the interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Family members interviewed</th>
<th>Type of family</th>
<th>Sheltering time/reintegration</th>
<th>Reason for sheltering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treble Clef</td>
<td>Paternal aunt and 3 children</td>
<td>Extended</td>
<td>6 months sheltered</td>
<td>Drug addiction of the mother and neglect/abandonment of the father. The children were locked up alone at home without food and in the middle of a lot of dirt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bass Clef</td>
<td>Mother and 7 children</td>
<td>Origin</td>
<td>4 years sheltered</td>
<td>Parent negligence. Children have been left alone and without food, having to ask for help at the traffic lights and in the bakery to feed themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Clef</td>
<td>Father, stepmother and 1 child</td>
<td>Origin</td>
<td>2 years sheltered</td>
<td>Drug addiction and maltreatment from the mother. The mother got pregnant of this child after the intimate visit to the father in the prison. The other daughter of the couple was in another shelter for being spanked by her mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentagram</td>
<td>Maternal grandmother, uncle and 3 children</td>
<td>Extended</td>
<td>6 months post-reintegration</td>
<td>Drug addiction and abuse by parents. Everything she had at home was sold to buy drugs and the children were forced to steal and sleep in a motel with their mother and other men</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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individuals, we opted by the individual analysis of each report created from the interaction of the individual with the collective and with the music making experience. According to symbolic interactionism, people act based on the situation meaning for them, which can be redefined by themselves and thus be socially constructed. Despite conceiving the individual sense, the meanings referred to life and things are transformed when they are in interaction. Thus, attentive readings of each report were made separating the sections by meaning units presented themselves as fundamental nucleus for understanding and description of the significant moments and interpreted by the participants. The reports were recorded and transcribed to compose the experience description that was interpreted in light of the theoretical assumptions of symbolic interactionism making possible the understanding of socialization and resocialization processes.12

Results

The data analysis performed in the light of Symbolic Interaction allowed two representative moments to emerge: “Making authentic the data collection” and “Arousing children’s participation in data collection”.

Making authentic the data collection

It was observed during the interview that the MME distracted the participants, discharging the interview formality, making the moment relaxing, fun and stimulating, providing an environment to try new experiences and making the communication integrated and authentic. Through the sentences given below, it was understood that when playing the musical instruments, the families experienced a different form of interview in which they were not accustomed to participate:

How good to be here, everyone together, to be able to talk and at the same time to be distracted by the instruments, was different. The music made a difference. Especially for them (children) who like to be making a mess, these things. I met new things that I had never seen. (Mother – “Treble Clef” Family)

It was observed that the music opened a communication channel, facilitating the participants to express their feelings and emotions, providing an opportunity to say the unspoken and hidden. It evidenced expressive and communicative needs.

I met new things that I had never seen. It was really fun. It was easier to talk about my emotion suffering from music. It is that saying: Whoever sings his evils scare, and who plays also.

Researcher: Who plays also? Is there some evil to scare?

Mother and children: Had.

Researcher: What evil?

Mother: The evil of longing, desire to be together. He left something different in the air.

Researcher: What difference?

Mother: Oh, the way we act. We did it here the way we are, it did not have to be serious. (Mother – “Treble Clef” Family)

Arousing children’s participation in data collection

The MME has created a ludic environment, arousing children’s participation. Families reported the children were accessible to play the musical instruments. They were able to entertain themselves during the interview by playing the instruments while responding the research questions without being in a hurry to leave. They have proved a moment of mutual “gain” in a captivating, attractive and listening environment, as the following reports show:

It was very good, very nice, the children participating, everyone participating. Where there are a lot of people like this it is good to have music. Sometimes we have to raise our voices because there is a lot of noise, sometimes there is music and sometimes there is talk, I stop to hear their sound and then I talk. (Grandmother – “Staff” Family)

Music is joy, happiness, we do not even want to leave, and no one was tense with such emotion. When it is serious, the children close themselves and do not say anything, they do not express themselves, and they have to participate also, of everything. (Aunt - “Treble Clef” Family)

I do not know how to play anything but I like to sing and I want to sing the song of my story together with them, this song says everything about us, about our desire to live together, I do not need to say anything else, the music says everything, that we want stay together and want to be happy together. (Father – “C Clef” Family)

Discussion

The interaction between individual, family and music made possible the realization of an interpretative process leading to a cooperative action in the attribution of meanings to the acts performed by the families. Because the family is understood as an open and relational system, it influences and is influenced by a larger social system in which it is part.10-11 This larger social system that embraces the family can show us complex and contradictory historical realities, built in relation to the place occupied by the family in society. Thus, it is believed that the experiences lived in family may constitute the development of the necessary skills for community life.13 In this research we focus on the family in reintegration situation. This research is configured to integrate again children and adolescents hosted in government institution to their origin family, extensive family and ultimately, to a surrogate family. This scenario of family reintegration is replete with experiences of individual and group interactions, making it specific and peculiar to provide families with a consolidated state of formation and development. The insertion of music to mediate and extend the communication in the family interaction for data research production data showed in this study a way to understand the family’s way of acting, both from inside and outside it, because when focusing on a study with family, we consider the relationships between its members and not just individual members, leading us to think about the relationship between the individual and the collective. In order to create and interpret expressive and cultural forms, the music presents itself as a tool that organizes sounds in time. Its components (timbre, intensity, melody and rhythm) can be applied to elaborate and give meaning to the experience of human life.14

The word “music” has several meanings for people and because of this, opens a range of possibilities being able to think about it, talk about it and even execute it, in other words, people can have some kind of relationship with music which is not necessarily professional. The Making Music Experience (MME) enables the individual to execute a musical performance; that is, individuals producing meanings with musical symbols through improvisation, composition, performance and musical hearing. Every musical performance can be considered as a standardized event in a system of social interaction, whose meaning


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is understood along with other events in the system. The experience of families with MME has been shaped by dynamic moments of interrelation and communication, in which music can rescue significant cultural symbols and provide the manifestation of social and cultural processes. The MME in the research data obtaining and production showed to be a social interaction strategy, in addition to provoking a movement, an action that facilitated the externalization and collaboration of all the participants for the meanings construction.

In the line of the symbolic interactionism reasoning, the self is being constantly developed through interaction and the experience lived by the families in the interaction with the music made the thinking and action of each family member would bring something universal, besides the individual and thus could create and recreate perceptions through the non-verbal communication produced by the resonance. Another relevant issue for Symbolic Interactionism in relation to the participants is that when interacting, they inhibit tendentious actions. Feelings can be contained by reason of the one whose values himself, in the way he either judges or interprets, the reports revealed that MME facilitated the expression of emotions, levering intersubjectivity. The results confirmed that the authenticity in the communication was experienced by the participants through MME; since music is an activity that mobilizes and homes body affectivity with cognition and this could provide a consistency in the data collected for the research.

Children are also benefited with MME as shown by the results, the child’s contact with music provides the mobilization of a physical and affective energy that drives the will to explore the sound world spontaneously transforming it into a musical action that implies movement and the body appears as a representative sound producing instrument of an expressive process. The making music experience contributes to the expression of an individual musical collection, but which has a multiplier effect amplifying and creating a network of interactions, where the adult receives and recognizes within the sound created and expressed by the child and vice versa and thus, in a ludic way everyone participates and making possible to use the music to “tell” what it feels. As we reflect on the results, we can understand that the use of MME to produce and collect data for research can be configured as a way to include all the familiar members in the interview allowing the authentic expression of social and familiar interaction.

Study limitations

Although this study presents limitations on the size of the population due to the great difficulty of finding families who are experiencing this process, it does not limit the validity of the results, since this experience gives credibility to the possibility of the rethink the importance of other studies aimed at coping with family and family abandonment, and the use of data collection tools that could include all persons in the family. Another limiting factor in the use of MME as data collection for research is the lack of familiarization for nurses and other health professionals with the use of music and musical instruments to perform it.

Contributions to the area of nursing, health or public policy

In view of the results revealed in this study, it contributes to health professionals contemplate the family context in their actions of caring and not their members in isolation, being able to use musical making, not as a therapeutic practice, but as a strategy of approximation between the professional and the assisted family.

Final remarks

The results of this study contribute to motivate nurses and other professionals interested in research with families to use MME to activate individuals’ perceptions of themselves and others when they are in group contexts, facilitating the verbalization of feelings that are often difficult to speak. Contact with music by playing or singing a song can be an experience of mobilization and facilitation in the production and information obtaining. It is considered important to carry out studies that focus the researchers’ experiences in the family area related to the use of MME in the data collection, as well as a proposal of an interdisciplinary study with health professionals that extends the use of MME as a proposal of instrument of care.

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None.

Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

References


