

# 41.1 ‘It Is You in My Picture!’ A Holistic Approach to Six-Year-Old Children’s Art Experiences

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## **Abstract**

The case study is a part of the research and art-based developmental project Rinnalla (Side by Side) – Mentors of Arts- and Narrative-based Approaches as a Support for Social-Emotional Learning and Growth in Early Childhood Education, where arts and narrative-based methods were used to support children’s social-emotional growth in early childhood education. This research focuses on six-year-old children’s experiences of a fairy tale and music based on H.C. Andersen’s *The Ugly Duckling*. The research questions are: (1) How do children express the emotions they experience while listening to a fairy tale and music? (2) How do the children express and build their peer relationships through communication while drawing? The intervention was implemented in a preschool group of 15 children. The data included around 120 minutes of recorded video and 30 drawings. The holistic and context-sensitive interpretation method of visual analysis was used to analyse the data. The interpretation demonstrated the importance of peer relationships and offered insight into the context significance. By drawing together and telling small stories in a shared time and place, the children negotiated their roles within the small group. They strengthened friendships and built peer relations. The drawing situation probably exposed pre-existing tensions between the children, and the children showed interest, support, care, and willingness to welcome others. The music and fairy tale experiences allowed children to process emotions and share their current daily lives.

## **Keywords**

preschool, art education, children’s drawings, music and fairy tale experiences, socio-emotional expression, holistic approach

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## Introduction

The study is part of the research- and art-based developmental project Rinnalla (Side by Side) – Mentors of Arts- and Narrative-based Approaches as a Support for Social-Emotional Learning and Growth in Early Childhood Education. In our study, we implemented two independent art education interventions. We instructed a group of six-year-old children in a Finnish preschool to listen to a fairy tale and music, and to draw and tell stories about their experiences. Both situations were analysed to understand the children's unique listening experiences in relation to their individual daily lives.

Methodologically, our study was narrative-based, holistic and experience-oriented. Our goal was to describe the children's experiences without preconceived biases. The social and emotional qualities of an experience are seen regarding the child's unique way of existing in the world (Greene & Hill 2005; MacNaughton *et al.* 2007). Our study aimed to increase the understanding of six-year-old children's manners of expressing their art experiences individually and as a peer group. Our emphasis is on recognising the unique value of the experience itself, rather than trying to find direct parallels between the fairy tale or music and the descriptive expressions the children gave.

## Theoretical Framework

One of the main goals of art education is to support children's well-being and personal growth. Art education enables a child's to enjoy the empowering effect of the arts (Salomäki & Ruokonen 2011). The holistic arts-based methods that cross the boundaries of art forms are particularly effective for human growth, including emotional and social competences. Holistic art education is inclusive; it highlights children's unique strengths. Participants can enjoy the arts and have fun without pressure. Creative and communal art experiences improve children's self-knowledge and self-esteem and help them understand each other (Coholic 2010).

Early childhood and the preschool years are periods of rapid social competence development, that is, when one's abilities to interact with others and regulate one's emotions quickly evolve. The development depends simultaneously on individual characteristics as well as group and context. A child's status within the group, the quality of their relationships, their perceived self-efficacy and the required interaction skills may vary in different contexts (Malti & Noam 2015; Thomson & Carlson 2017). Emotional identification and regulation are necessary for positive relationships, such as self-distancing, empathy and sympathy with peers (Alwaely *et al.* 2020). Formal educational environments, such as kindergarten and preschool, challenge children's emotional and social skills differently. The ability to empathise closely relates to understanding others' emotional states and is a prerequisite for functional peer relationships. (Siekkinen *et al.* 2013.)

Children attend preschool from different families and cultural backgrounds. Numerous studies have observed that children with difficulties in language or communication are typically less integrated into preschool groups. They may avoid social interaction, and their relationships with peers may be poorer than those of others (von Grüningen *et al.* 2012). The arts can be perceived as an open space where prejudices and expectations are challenged – a multicultural space, a third dimension, where we can knock down cultural borders (Pääjoki 2004).

Research has shown the many positive effects of art education on children's social skills. Joint musical activities increase children's social skills, such as spontaneous co-operation and helping others (Kirschner & Tomasello 2010; Nevanen *et al.* 2014). During joint creative activities, we simultaneously create our own present moment and build a common future (Rusanen & Ruokonen 2011). Shared arts experiences can support children in processing their past life events and strengthen memories shared within a peer group. (Vecchi 2010, p. 58.)

An artistic experience is the sum of the interactions between a person, a community and art. We continually perceive the world through our senses and process these perceptions through imagination. We shape our experiences and share them through communication with others. This process is a dialogue between our inner and outer worlds (Wichers & Poncelet 2011).

## Study Design and Research Questions

This study examined how six-year-old children in a Finnish preschool described their experiences of a fairy tale and music individually and as a group. We used the fairy tale *The Ugly Duckling* by H. C. Andersen (1844), and music composed by Tauno Marttinen (2013) for the ballet based on the same fairy tale. Each of the above-mentioned was used independently in separate sessions. Despite the composer's efforts to replicate the themes of the fairy tale in his music, we did not disclose the connection to the children.

Research questions were:

- 1 How do children express the emotions they experience while listening to a fairy tale and music?
- 2 How do children express and build their peer relationships through communication while drawing?

In addition to questioning how, the open and holistic approach allows the process and the product to be examined as a unit.

## Methodology

### Participants and Data

We collected the data on two consecutive days in one preschool class of 15 six-year-old children. The teacher divided the group into two small groups (seven to eight children per group). Both sessions were scheduled as parts of the children's ordinary preschool days.

Both groups listened to *The Ugly Duckling*, as told by the researcher. To support the understanding of a few children who had recently moved to Finland and did not speak Finnish as their first language, the researcher told the tale with her own words using simple silhouette pictures, that were present only during the storytelling.

Three small pieces of ballet music were played on a CD player by the other researcher. The children were not made aware of any connection between the music and the fairy tale. This allowed them to freely use their imaginations.

During and after listening to the story and the music, the children could draw with crayons, and they discussed the fairy tale, the music, and their drawings with the researchers and the other children. Both researchers encouraged the children to draw pictures and talk about the drawings based on their impressions of the fairy tale and music. It was up to the children how long they spent drawing and discussing. Each of the four sessions took about 30 minutes. The data included around 120 minutes of recorded video and 30 drawings.

We transcribed the videos, including the children's and researchers' verbal and emotional expressions and physical activities. We mainly focused on situations in which the children discussed their decisions and drawings with others and when they reacted verbally or through body language to the stories told by their peers.

## Interpretation

This approach, in which the children themselves interpreted their experiences of the fairy tale and the music, reflects an interest in studying children as unique individuals. Children's experiences are seen as their active engagement with their surroundings.

Additionally, the enquiry values children's autonomous reports on their subjective worlds. To gain subjectivity, we implemented creative methods that facilitate the child's imagination while drawing and telling short stories (Greene & Hill 2005; MacNaughton *et al.* 2007). To allow the children autonomy during art sessions, we encouraged the children to discuss, but we did not interview them. To inspire the children to discuss their drawings, we ensured that the interpretation was not purely influenced by the researchers' views (Mukherji & Albon 2011). Nevertheless, since this study was an adult-initiated project, the children's spontaneity and engagement might have been limited.

The interpretation method of drawings applies cultural visual analysis, where the content analysis of the images is often practised (Bal 2009; Rose 2008). The analyses can be described as a holistic reading, including the cycles of interpretation (Orland-Barak & Maskit 2013). The cultural visual analysis uses the concept of the *image* to refer to an idea or a mental representation. In contrast to that concept, we use the word *drawing* to emphasise the material and physical quality of the child's picture.

Several studies about children's pictorial development have shown that drawings of five- to seven-year-old children usually comprise symbols or schemas based on their visual experiences. Most six-year-old children can transfer three-dimensional environments onto two-dimensional paper. They can also represent complex ideas in their drawings and share precise information with others. Nevertheless, drawing variations are wide. The visual environment provides various models and examples to be explored and used. Social context is often crucial; children learn by observing their peers or older children. (Brooks, 2005; Luehrman & Unrath 2006).

Children's drawings are also a way to communicate with adults or other children. In their drawings, children may explore important questions in life. The themes of fear, threats, death or dreams may appear only in pictures. Children can also tell stories and amuse others using pictorial storytelling. Socially, children may combine drawing and with shared ideas; thus, drawing can be seen as a social mediator (Brooks 2005; Soundy & Lee 2013).

A child is aware of the context in which the important questions of belonging and acceptance exist. Simultaneously, a child is in a situation where the power

position of the adults influences their choices; a child's background is relevant too. When the child's family's visual culture differs from the visual world of the main culture, drawing may be challenging for the child (Granö 2016; Luehrman & Unrath 2006; Pearson 2001; Soundy & Lee 2013).

Adding to the actual social and cultural context of the drawing situation, materials – such as the quality of the tools, paper, and the physical environment – are reflected in the drawings. Drawing reveals the child's general development, plus their interest, or lack of, in drawing and previous experiences of creating pictures.

Interpreting a child's short stories unveils detailed descriptions of that child's current social and emotional state (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008). Evidently, stories are a collection of signs and texts that make children's thinking visible (Galas 1994; Wichers & Poncelet 2011).

The term 'visible rhythm', coined by McLeod *et al.* (2017, pp. 15–16), refers to every child having an individual way of expressing their arts experiences in a visually observable manner, such as a repetitive pattern of gestures or movements. Observing these child-specific visible rhythms is a crucial part of an arts educator's job.

In our study, the situational questions – the social and cultural context – were emphasised. We observed the children both as individuals and as a group.

The data were initially interpreted by both researchers as a team, and then the results were analysed and reported by the researcher present in the session in question. We analysed and described the children's drawings, speeches and body language simultaneously, as holistic experiences. The music and the fairy tale were used to spark inspiration. Any fairy tale, music or art experience could have been used instead. The focus of the analysis was the children's experiences rather than these specific works of art.

## Results

### Children's Experiences of the Music in the Ballet *Ugly Duckling*

#### *The Meaning of the Home as a Place of Safety and Trust*

Before listening to the music, the atmosphere in the class seemed slightly tense. To lighten up the mood in the room, I discussed with the children what we intended to do. I told the children that they could draw while listening to the music, then proceeded to distribute the paper, coloured pencils and crayons to them. While the music was playing, the children listened quietly, but each expressed their experience in their own way. Leo was hunched over his paper on the desk. Kasper used his whole body to express his experience, smiling while making drawing motions in the air, occasionally demonstrating the clanking of imaginary cymbals. Ada and Joel joined in, swinging imaginary conducting batons. Smiles were exchanged, but the children did not talk to each other.

We listened to the music in short bursts and discussed the experiences in between. First, the children answered my questions cautiously with short descriptions of their drawings. Kasper explained his drawing, 'A bee came out of its nest' (Figure 1). The second music piece made Kasper think of home, 'I drew Helsinki ... Everyone walked there. They are going home'. The home in the drawing is a house with a black roof and windows covered by either black curtains or bars. After the last music piece, Kasper explained, 'These are soldiers. They will attack Spain, and



**Figure 1**  
Kasper

then there will be a war'. I asked him if the soldiers were scared. 'No. They are never afraid. Nothing scares them'. All of Kasper's soldiers in their red outfits and the people he drew in the home had serious expressions on their faces. His drawings and stories seemed to reflect the seriousness of life and overcoming fear. However, Kasper explained everything casually without melodrama.

Ada, who sat next to me, seemed to be in a good mood. She smiled a lot, moving with the music while remaining seated. She tugged at my sleeve, looked me in the eyes and used facial expressions to emphasise her story. In Ada's imaginary world (Figure 2), cars came to life and acted like humans: 'I thought of a car. Cars'. Later, she elaborated, 'A car goes home to play with toys and to sleep'. During the second piece of music, Ada drew three humans: 'When this human is with this one, they want to be quiet'. Ada put her finger in front of her mouth to signal silence and checked if I understood her. I nodded. Ada could draw facial expressions. In the drawing, the two bigger humans had their eyebrows raised and were doing the shushing motion. Ada had drawn a girl at the bottom of the picture. 'Home, this one goes home'. I asked if she had drawn herself, but she shook her head. I asked curiously who the girl in the picture might be. Ada replied, 'Bea'. Bea, who sat across the table from Ada, remained unmoved. I asked Ada what kind of mood Bea was in while going to her home in the picture. Ada said, 'In a good mood'. Ada's linguistic expression was limited; she explained, for example, 'Bea wears an apple and takes it home'. Kasper and Joel found it amusing, laughing and repeating, 'Wears an apple!' Ada smiled at the boys and seemed to ignore their comments. What she lacked in linguistic expression, she compensated for her with her drawing skills, facial expressions and body language.

Doris did not draw home as a building; instead, she approached the concept differently. First, she drew a child in a swing, saying, 'Girl is swinging. She goes up and down'. The girl in the drawing looked happy in her colourful dress. During the



**Figure 2**  
Ada

next part, she drew animals. 'Forest,' she said. I asked her what might be happening in this forest. 'Well, a vole and a fox are in the forest'. For her last picture, Doris drew a person playing the piano with many notes and hearts floating around them and said, 'Piano'. I asked her who was playing the piano. 'Mum,' she replied. I asked her how the mum was feeling. 'Good'. Doris did not speak much, but the drawings revealed a safe feeling of warmth, joy and love.

Perhaps the way the children described different home concepts reflects the preschool stage of life. Home is still the centre point of their lives, hopefully providing a feeling of safety to rely on while they are slowly widening their horizons, intrigued by the world around them, inviting them to venture a little further daily in search of new adventures and experiences.

### ***Conversations about Death and the Supernatural***

In another group, some of the children picked seats next to their friends. Greta, Frida and Emma all drew graves. Greta: 'Jesus and God. This person is dead'. She did not want to elaborate further and did not lift her gaze from her paper with the drawing of a tombstone. Frida's and Emma's graves were covered by rain. There seemed to be a thunderstorm with dark clouds and lightning over both of their graveyards. Frida drew a human figure without a mouth and another figure lying down on the ground (Figure 3). She did not answer my questions but managed to write the words 'dancer faints' on her paper. The countless crossed-out words suggested anxious or tense emotions being poured out onto the paper. The piano drawn with sound coming out of it connected the expression in the picture to the experience of the music.

A ghost was represented in Noel's story: 'And there is a guitar. Maybe the ghost is playing the guitar. I have seen it with a piano once. No one was playing the piano, but the keys were moving up and down. But there was no human



**Figure 3**  
Frida

around. It was so impossible. I think it was a ghost'. Greta's response was, 'Ghosts do not exist'.

The topics of death, graves and supernatural spirits were on these children's minds. The theme chosen could simply reflect the fear of death. The music allowed for discussion of the topic without specifying one's own fears and anxieties. Drawing with friends and talking casually created a safe environment for letting emotions and thoughts out. Once the listening experiment was over, the children were in a seemingly good mood; they showed no visible signs of distress.

### **Football Denotes Capability, Acceptance and Belonging**

Many of the drawings were football-themed. Leo showed his drawing, saying, 'There is a person playing football with his friends'. I inquired whether the person in the drawing was Leo himself. He shook his head and said it was 'someone else'. Martin: 'I play football with my friends in this picture'. Leo and Martin described experiences with the same topic but from different perspectives. Could this indicate that playing football was important in Leo's mind, but he saw himself as more of an observer, while Martin thought of himself as the active player? Both boys mentioned friends in their scenarios. For these boys, football was ultimately a social event.

Noel's description made a compelling case about the importance of football and football-related skills in these children's lives. After the first piece of music, Noel said, 'I had some thoughts about crying'. To my question, 'why', he answered, 'Being excluded from the game by the others'. During the next part, Noel's mood changed significantly though, and he said it was 'quite nice'. I asked if this music made him feel happier than the previous. Noel responded, 'Yes. In this one, someone is singing, and then I can play football very well'. I asked if Noel's drawing was of himself. 'Yes. Everyone is complimenting me, and that is why I am happy'. The



ways in which Noel expressed his thoughts gave many insights into real experiences and the need for acceptance. Playing football seemed to be a skill that defined group hierarchy and respect from others among the boys. The sense of belonging to a group and being admired and accepted were themes these children processed through their pictures and stories.

## Story of the Ugly Duckling

### *Drawing and Social Pressure*

The children listened to the story of *The Ugly Duckling*. I instructed them to draw something related to the story, any part they chose, or even just an idea or thought they had about the story they heard. I distributed paper and placed the coloured pencils and crayons in the middle of the table. A few of the children began quickly; others took their time, choosing the colours carefully. The atmosphere seemed somewhat tense and nervous. The children were making comments and evaluating their own drawing abilities. 'I already know', 'I am drawing quite a lot', 'I cannot', and 'I can draw better from a reference'. Others started drawing, but Emma, who did not speak Finnish as her first language, doubted her ability and observed what others around were doing. She also asked another girl, 'What are you doing?' Emma wiggled and glanced around at the others before she began drawing. She ended up drawing a part of the story where a cat and a chicken were in a house. A swan was about to take off, flying from the pond, and there was a girl on the left-hand side of the picture. 'I have ears. I will draw ears. I have learnt to draw ears', she said. Towards the end of the experiment, most of the children finished drawing and moved to the playroom, but Emma continued to draw, seeking out my attention. She listed what she had drawn. The girl on the left was herself with her eyes closed, 'because I am tired', she explained. Emma left but returned to draw a sun and a line of hearts. She moved around in an excited manner and smiled (Figure 4). Emma was initially shy in the scenario and proceeded with caution. She relaxed visibly after performing well with the first figures in her drawing. She recognised my interaction as encouraging. The whole process was strongly tied to emotions.

Noel drew doodle-like figures in the middle of the page. On the video recording, I could be seen approaching him to have a conversation. He instantly stopped drawing, squirmed around in his seat and hid his hands under the desk. When I moved along, he sat leaning on his hands now over the desk but did not continue to draw. When one of the children announced that he was done with his drawing, I asked him if he knew how to write his name. Right then, Noel also reorientated himself and began writing his name. 'I can write Noel', he said, as he continued to write. 'My paper is full', he added. Another child remarked, 'Noel is writing quite a few'. 'I can, as many as I want to!', replied Noel. This boy, who was clearly underperforming when drawing compared to his age group, could write his name. He proved this by filling the paper and writing his name 15 times. He seemed instantly debilitated after I talked to him, asking about his drawing. When he realised that writing his name was part of the task, one he could do, he did so to compensate.

These examples describe situations in which a researcher, a complete stranger, has shown up, demanding capabilities to be showcased. It can be clearly observed how drawing is affected by situational factors. The relatively asymmetrical distribution of power and authority in the learning environment of children induced an achievement- and performance-orientated atmosphere. Most children did not



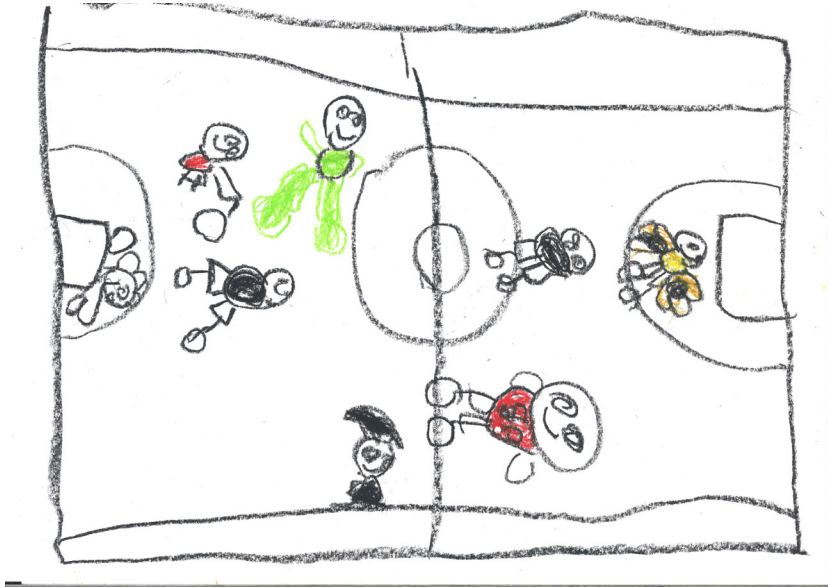
**Figure 4**  
Emma

verbalise their nervousness and anxiousness; they only expressed it by following the instructions and commands given by the adult. Yet a few comments related to abilities and capabilities clarified that the children were strictly performing.

### **Acceptance and Friendships**

Three boys were sitting around the end of a table. Joel was the tallest and sat in the middle. The two other boys, Leo and Kasper, started drawing pictures about the forest in the story, but Joel sat back, observed and then began talking about football loudly while drawing a football pitch. Leo and Kasper then also abandoned the original story theme and joined in drawing football-related pictures. They drew each other as football players, making remarks like 'this is you', 'it is you. I will draw a head for you', 'what colour is your jersey?' The boys continued discussing football, especially the colours of their jerseys, and their assigned player numbers, double-checking with each other. Kasper and Leo observed Joel's drawing (Figure 5), and Kasper picked up his drawing, showing it to Joel. 'Look!', said Kasper, but Joel was not interested. Joel: 'I messed up mine; I will draw on the other side of the paper'. The other two boys now also declared that their drawings were messed up and flipped their paper to start over. The boys were talking about tournaments and exchanging smiles. Joel: 'Here comes the opponent. Look what he looks like'. Leo: 'Look how big the pitch is'. Joel: 'Mine is bigger'.

Doris stopped by and quickly glanced at the boys' drawings. Leo kept drawing and said, 'Then here is Doris. Doris has a red jersey'. The girl returned to her seat smiling. The boy continued, 'Doris, this is Doris'. Joel asked about Doris's most recent game. It was obvious that Doris also played football and was, therefore, considered a part of the boys' group. The drawing scenario showed Joel's leadership and the extent of his influence on his peers. The two other boys followed his example, quitting the assigned story drawing to join the football theme with Joel.



**Figure 5**  
Joel

By drawing each other and discussing the jersey colours and numbers, they included their friends in the same game. Joel was privileged to display his skills to others, but when Leo tried showing his to Joel, Joel was uninterested. Joel was in a good mood. His visual art skills were stronger than those of the other boys, and he could draw a whole game scenario, even including the goalkeepers and referees.

The quick stop Doris made at the boys' table was interesting. She only took a very quick peek at what the boys were up to, yet it induced her instant appearance in Leo's drawing, and Joel asked her a football-related question. Doris drew her story-themed picture (Figure 6) with concentration and did not join the boys' football theme but clearly earned appreciation from the boys. She did not actively seek anyone's approval.

Verifying the friendship between the three girls was a more delicate process than observing the same about the boys. The girls focused on selecting colours and often used the same ones as the person sitting next to them. They pointed at the details in each other's drawings without a word and showed their work to one another. The children supported each other both verbally, 'it is good!', and through gestures. When one started a drawing, claiming they were not good at it, another soothed them calmly: 'You do not need to be.' Or when a girl lifted her paper up for the girl on the opposite side to see and received a silent nod, the support was received. Building friendships included empathy too: 'I drew you', 'look, you are here'. The other person was acknowledged, and they would feel seen. Support did not always require words. A simple look or nod of approval could be enough.

The story of *The Ugly Duckling* was about being excluded or left out, helping and growing up to be an adored member of a group. It was interesting to see how the character of the ugly duckling was represented in pictures. In two drawings, the small swan was all alone. Five of the drawings included more than a bird. A



**Figure 6**  
Doris

group of birds was a sign of belonging and safety, whether it be a mother bird and a child bird, a flock of birds or a drawing with a story arc of its own, with both the ugly duckling and the beautiful grown-up swan.

The group activity the boys chose, drawing football pictures, perhaps coincidentally but nonetheless, was an astonishingly parallel reflection of the story of *The Ugly Duckling*. Just like a flock of fine birds, a game or a team with skilled players is also a hard group to join. Some are rejected and excluded, while others are dressed in a fancy plumage.

Themes, such as football, were probably central in the children's current lives even before the story. However, the experience shared within the group while drawing and reflecting on the story of *The Ugly Duckling* offered the children an opportunity to build connections between the fairy tale and the interests they share in their current everyday lives (see Savoie, 2017).

## Discussion

A child as a talented artist will have no trouble receiving appreciation and respect; their work will be admired and copied or plagiarised, or they themselves will be the subject of others' art. Someone with the skill to draw does not have to speak a word, but occasionally, they might boast. Meanwhile, someone with less talent for the visual arts might be overly self-conscious and insecure, talking themselves down.

Drawing together around the same table is a prime social situation for building and strengthening relationships. A child in a vulnerable position is subjected to comments from others. Drawing together not only brings up pre-existing tensions in friendships but also provides an opportunity to show support and kindness and to feel a sense of belonging or membership to a group.

An art experience, such as listening to music or fairy tales, allows a child to process emotions freely without the need to subjectively experience feelings the child might not be ready for yet. A discussion in the safe presence of an adult helps a child regulate their emotions and learn to recognise them.

The experience of listening to music or fairy tales together is a secure collective situation. The children understood that, though their peers heard the same, they experienced it differently. Hearing others' perspectives helps children express and process their own experiences in the future. Sharing the experience is especially enriching in a multicultural group of children, improving cultural awareness and strengthening the understanding of those representing a different culture.

Children participate and engage with more focus when the adult turns the situation into an interactive experience. Asking questions and responding to children's comments also helps children with varying linguistic skill levels and foreign first languages. For example, understanding *The Ugly Duckling* by H. C. Andersen requires an understanding of the Nordic seasons and how they impact birds. The storyteller can add gestures and expressions to support the listening experience. Children with weak or underdeveloped visual schemas, trouble with fine motor skills, or limited vocabularies or understanding of spoken language can benefit from visual prompts and references provided.

## Conclusion

### Emotions

In the listening scenarios in this study, we saw feelings of empowerment and involvement in common jokes and joy, or an increase and decrease in anxiety, eventually resulting in a calm and restful mood. However, the music listening was a limited experience from which to 'step out' of everyday life and space before returning perhaps to the same space from which the listening experience began, in a slightly changed mood.

Notably, after drawing graves and sad people, and discussing ghosts and death, the children set out in their games in a good mood. In the art experience, the feeling should not be let on the skin too much. Children chose whether to place themselves as participants of the image or story, in which case the emotional state would be felt more personally. A safer choice, especially for describing difficult emotions, is the role of an outside narrator, which allows greater distance from the emotional state.

### Social Relationships

This study revealed the significance of the actual situation, such as the social and cultural contexts and the engagement of the children. The activities during the drawing and storytelling highlighted the importance of peer relationships. By drawing together and telling small stories in a shared time and place, the children negotiated their roles within the small group. They strengthened friendships and peer relationships and tried to achieve social competence. The drawing scenario potentially exposed tensions between the children. Conversely, the children could potentially demonstrate interest, support, care and willingness to welcome others.

### Implications for Educators

Educators can enrich children's experiences and emotions by providing multiple art forms addressing a variety of sensory experiences. All art experiences are

meaningful and unique. Situations, like the ones presented in our study, provide children with opportunities for expressing their feelings, sharing them with each other, and forming connections between the arts and their daily lives. Art-related activities offer children valuable chances for showing and developing empathy within groups.

The importance of listening, observing and asking questions rather than offering answers and explanations should be emphasised during art education. This way, educators can create environments for open dialogue, thereby allowing children to become the narrators of their own subjective arts experiences.

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