

Constructing a Grounded Theory of Parents' Musical Engagement with Their Premature Baby Contributing to Their Emerging Parental Identity in a Neonatal Unit

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Abstract : Scholarship highlights the need to further examine and better understand and foster the process of becoming a parent to a premature baby in the neonatal context to support the critical development of the parent-infant relationship. Music therapy research documents significant benefits of music therapy on neonatal physiological and neurodevelopmental function, reduced maternal anxiety and validating parents' relationship with their premature baby, yet limited studies examine the role of music in supporting parental identity. This was a multi-site study, exploring parents' musical engagement with their hospitalised baby and parental identity in a NU. In-depth interviews with nine parents of a premature baby across varying time points in their NU journey took place. Data collection and analysis was influenced by Constructive Grounded Theory methodology. Findings in the form of a substantive grounded theory illuminated the contribution of parents' musical engagement on their sense of parental identity in the NU. Specifically, the significance of their baby's level and type of response during musical interactions in influencing parents' capacity to engage in musical dialogue with their baby emerged. Specific conditions that acted as both barriers and fosters in parents' musical engagement across a high-risk pregnancy and NU admission also emerged. Recommendations for future research into the role of music and music therapy in supporting parental coping and transition to parenthood during a high-risk pregnancy and birth and beyond the NU will be discussed.

Keywords : grounded theory, musical engagement, music therapy, parental identity

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