Family Dynamics and Family Scripts:
A Case Study of Musical Development

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Abstract

This paper adds to the literature on the development of musical abilities in children. In particular, it examines the role of parental influence, adopting a much more psychodynamic approach than previous studies in the field, and by so doing is focused around a detailed case study of the Brown family, a white middle-class English family whose members all play musical instruments. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis is used to examine the impact of the parents' beliefs and behaviours on their two sons' musical progress. In particular, the eldest son's sense of self is tied up with his mother's "script" about his musical ability is examined. We see that a believed symbiosis between mother and son leads the boy to develop a very positive self image as a musician; whereas the younger brother, who is excluded from the special mother–son "script" rebels against the emphasis on music within the home and seeks his sense of self and identity elsewhere. Byng-Hall's "Family Script Theory" from psychodynamic work in Family Therapy is integrated into our theorising on the outcome of the study.

Introduction

This paper is not about music practice or instrument choice or other typical topics found in research on musical skill acquisition (Davidson and Sloboda, 1996, for a review), but rather, the focus in on family dynamics. The data discussed in this paper reveal that family dynamics are highly important factors underlying the way children acquire practising habits and thinking about their musical instruments. The focus is on how families as social units function and how they support musical activity. A case study of parents and their two sons participating in a longitudinal investigation is subjected to Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (*cf.* Smith 1996; Smith, Jarman and Osborne 1999). Previous research has tended to discuss the family as a unidimensional factor influencing children's progress in music. For instance, Davidson, Sloboda, Howe and Moore (1996) suggest that it is the parent's decision to sit with the child during practice which helps the child to concentrate and so develop skills more rapidly. However, it appears that the interactive nature of the parent–child relationship as a psychodynamic force which influences self-belief, confidence and motivation has not been explored. To begin the current investigation, we contextualise our theoretical approach by examining a literature which we believe provides a deeper level of understanding of the relationships between parents, parent and child, and siblings than previously pursued music psychology research in musical skill development.

Understanding Family Behaviour

A note on parents and music practice

No one would deny the powerful impact a parent has on aiding literacy by reading to and having their young child attempt to read to him or her. Yet, in our culture, the situation in music has been quite different. Davidson, Howe and Sloboda (1997) discovered that many parents expected their children to go and sit in a room away from the rest of the family and work for up to one hour on their musical practice without any social interaction whatsoever. But, these parents were most typically non-musicians who tended to listen to the child's practice with a sense of "awe" at the child being able to "decode" the musical signs and symbols the parents could not interpret themselves. Musician parents had a far more pragmatic approach to supporting practice, and tended to instruct the child. This was identified as a positive strategy. Yet, Burland and Davidson (in press) have recently shown that children who persisted with their music learning and eventually became professional performers were not simply monitored by their parents: they had a complex series of interactions with their parents ranging from the parents providing financial support through to making quite stringent demands on the child, or the parents themselves feeling that their own futures were bound to their child's musical activities. So, parenting style and parental belief are clearly very important factors to be understood.

Parenting Style

Baumrind (1991a; 1991b) and Conger (1991) suggest two major behavioural dimensions of responsiveness and demandingness as global indicators of the parent–child relationship. Responsiveness is a parent's ability to show warmth and acceptance (MacDonald, 1992). Research has shown that parents who are highly responsive are accepting, affectionate, understanding, child-centred and reassuring. In this context, the child's self-esteem is developed and constructive and rewarding relationships ensue, with the child feeling confident in his/her own abilities and identity (Eshelman, 1994). By contrast, parents who lack responsiveness are found to show a lack of sensitivity toward their children. Children brought up with unresponsive parents are more likely to develop cognitive difficulties, impaired social relations, neurotic disorders, psychophysiological disturbances and deliquency (see Conger, 1991).

Demandingness is manifested through controlling and restrictive parenting (Baumrind, 1991a; 1991b). Such parenting strategies include the strict enforcement of rules, possibly a rigid insistence on neatness, orderliness or obedience. However some degree of demandingness is desirable. Where it is absent (as in the case of undemanding parents) children are granted unregulated autonomy and allowed to make decisions without parental input or guidance and this can lead to a child feeling chaotic and out of control of him/herself. For example, since it is necessary to practice specific technical skills in order to make any progress when learning a musical instrument, it seems obvious that some form of extrinsic pressure is beneficial if the child is to fulfil his/her musical potential. However, if no pressure is present, it is more than likely that after the initial excitement declines, without parental "demandingness" in some form or other, the child will loose his/her sense of direction and stagnate.

From these two dimensions, Baumrind (1991a; 1991b) developed an interactive model of parental behaviour. This is of particular relevance to the current research since it hypothesises that motivation levels for learning in the children are linked to three core parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative and neglectful) which are tied to the child's self-assessment of skill competencies. Therefore it seems beneficial to explore this hypothesis with regard to parents' role in supporting music practice, with the expectation that there will be a correlation between parenting styles (attitudes toward instrumental learning), the child's motivation levels and perceptions of their own instrumental competency.

Authoritarian parents place particularly high demands on the behaviour and performance of their children. They are strict disciplinarians, highly controlling. They tend to make their children's decisions and arrangements for them. Children believe that fate and outside forces control destiny rather than the self. Eshelman (1994) suggests that authoritarian parenting appears to have a generalised effect in that it is related to extrinsic and a-motivation and as a result of this mediator, an overall self-perception of low competency on a child's part. Clearly this is of key importance when thinking about children's musical development since it implies that excessive parental pressure will have a negative effect in terms of a child's attitude development toward his/her instrument learning.

Authoritative parents make demands and set limits but grant their children a suitable level of autonomy, encouraging responsibility, self-discipline, involvement in family decisions, adaptability, independence and creativity. Furthermore, intrinsic motivation can be developed in order that they may set their own goals and work to target for the sake of the task rather than parental pressure.

Neglectful parents are unavailable to their children's needs in the way that they fail to either control, support, self-regulate or become involved in their children's behaviour. Again, children feel little impetus to perform and become a-motivated.

So, it seems that parenting style is not only key in terms of availability of parental support, but also a key determining factor in the child's overall motivation level to learn an instrument. It seems that parental belief and behaviour in musical skill acquisition is an issue for more rigorous practical investigation.

Siblings and their Birth Order

Since siblings usually share the same home environment and they experience the enforced proximity and intimacy of one another for a significant portion of their lives, they seem key to the overall development of their brothers and sisters. The nature of their interactions and the resultant family dynamics shape the progress of each child and determine the competition for resources and parental attention. However within the music literature, little research to date has focused on the developmental impact of these sibling relationships (Davidson, Howe and Sloboda, 1995/6). Although Howe and Sloboda (1991) acknowledge sibling roles in terms of their musical influence, their findings little more than touch on the actual nature of the sibling interactions taking place. At best, they describe how the majority of successful young musicians perceived their eldest sibling as having had a positive influence over their musical development. So given the paucity of

information available on this subject, these underlying sibling dynamics will be explored within this paper.

Plomin and Daniels (1987), Dunn and McGuire (1992) and Dunn, Slomkowski and Beardsall (1994) all show the significant influence of a wide range of interrelated factors on the positioning of a sibling's perceived and realised competencies including their past histories and environments. In particular, birth order, age spacing, gender, sibship size, and the individual's personality are discovered to be critically important factors. So, for instance, an older sibling may be recognised as the skilled poet because she is five years older than the next sibling and so has already more language skills. Also, she may show the most extroversion and so be more willing than her other siblings to share her poetry writing with her family and friends, and therefore seem more competent.

Sibling roles are not only relevant in terms of perceived skills, but also in terms of how the siblings interact with one another. For instance, it is now well documented that older siblings often take on the roles of teachers to their younger siblings and that sibling boys are more protective of their younger siblings if those siblings are female (Dunn, 1993).

The effect of chronological sibling birth order is substantial. Many attempts have been made to document the characteristics of each sibship role (for example first born, second born, etc.) in order to predict general patterns of sibling behaviour. Isaacson's (1997) descriptions communicate the essence of each typology. Here are examples from first and second born:

First Born

. . . comes to feel unloved through the perceived loss of mother's love to the new baby. This child mentally trades love for attention in the forms of respect, admiration and approval, seeking these in the place of unconditional love.

(Typical bad feeling: Guilt.)

Second Born

. . . must cope with the oldest child taking away attention by out-performing him or her. The child feels inadequate, tries to overcome the feeling by choosing perfectionism in some area of life. Also, the second born feels that no one cares about how he or she feels because the oldest child clearly does not. Consequently, to avoid pain the second born tries to suppress his or her own feelings.

(Typical bad feeling: Inadequacy.)

The majority of sibling research findings emphasise the differentiation between first and second born sibs, and this is something that we shall explore within this paper for Sosniak's (1985) study with young pianists revealed that it was the norm for only one child per family to receive special parental attention. She found that parents were especially motivated to make efforts to encourage the child if s/he was perceived to have special or unique musical talents within the family.

Sibling Rivalry

Additionally, differences in the children's relationships with their parents are often predictive of conflict or jealousy between the siblings (Brody, Stoneman, McCoy and Forehand, 1992; Stocker and McHale, 1992; Volling and Belsky, 1992). Rivalry results when parents show favouritism by directing unequal practical, emotional or cognitive support toward their children (Brody, Stoneman, McCoy and Forehand, 1992; McHale and Pawletko, 1992; Stocker *et al.*, 1989). Generally, less rivalry is reported between cross-sex sibs (Cicirelli 1989).

The child

As mentioned above, parental approach clearly impacts on the child's motivation and ability to learn new skills (Davidson, Howe and Sloboda, 1997). O'Neill and Sloboda (1997) provide some interesting insights into individual difference and how this may impact on music learning. They traced a cohort of children with no musical training for the first nine months of their instrumental lessons, hypothesising that children displaying adaptive or maladaptive motivational behaviour (focusing on success or failure respectively) would perform differently in their musical learning. O'Neill and Sloboda gave the children tasks in which both success and failure were manipulated, so that in the failure condition, the child was told: "sorry you did not pass". When the results of the success and failure conditions scores were worked out, the researchers discovered that one third of the participants deteriorated in thµeir performance following the failure condition, thus showing maladaptive motivational patterns. In other words, some children tended to deteriorate in performance given a failure-based feedback. The other two-thirds either improved or maintained a similar level of performance.

After nine months of musical instruction, all the children in O'Neill and Sloboda's study were assessed in terms of their musical performance standards. It was discovered that those children who had displayed maladaptive behaviours in the initial tests had done less well after nine months of instrumental instruction than the other children. Certain children may be predisposed towards improving quite independently of the specific content of their musical instruction.

Commentary

In a detailed case study of the type described in the following investigation, it is not possible to assess how all sibling and parenting factors interface in a family's interaction over time. However, the literature above has suggested that parents and siblings have a profound effect on many aspects of each family member's behaviour and general development. Within this framework, we realise that the musical development of a child within the context of his/her family will be profoundly affected too.

The Case Study Family

We got to know the Brown family when the youngest child, Daniel was just six years of age and still at infant school. He was just over three years younger than his only brother James. Both boys had been learning the violin from their mother, Helen, a professional violinist, from a very young age, although both

learned other instruments as well. John, their father, is a keen pianist, part-time music teacher and music administrator. So music and education are key elements of the parents' daily lives. The Brown family was selected to represent the kind of household that gives central priority to music performance within its daily functioning. We wanted to see how a musical family functioned and how success and failure was explained and what expectations were or were not present between parents and children, and between the siblings.

The Browns are a middle-class family living in a busy British city. During our study, the two boys attended the local government-funded schools that provide a general standard of music provision.

Research Methodology

The approach was a longitudinal case study in that the family was visited fortnightly over a period of eighteen months and the researcher, Sophia (the second author of this paper), was integrated into family activities. Data spanning such a period gave the researchers the potential to describe major and minor changes and developments over time. Also, familiarity could be established and inter-familial behaviour and beliefs could be explored in detail.

The visits occurred on a regular day in the early evening, each visit lasting approximately two hours and often involved the preparation and sharing of meals, activities such as Easter-Egg making, as well as musical play, reading, etc.

The relationship between Sophia and the family obviously played a highly significant role in influencing the type of data generated. In line with similar research approaches (see Robson, 1993) Sophia engaged in a process of systematic personal reflexivity to attempt to understand ways in which her values and approaches influenced the interactions with the family. Jane (the first author) assisted this process through regular meetings and *ad hoc* analyses of transcript and diary data. In the current paper, these methodological issues are not centralised but both authors draw attention the fact that they attempted to be sensitive to and aware of how, why and when data were generated. Readers are directed towards Denzin and Lincoln (1998) for further details about the reflexive and ethical approaches to be considered in this type of case study enquiry.

The data collected were semi-structured interviews with each family member (these occurred at two-monthly intervals) which were tape-recorded and transcribed, the researcher's diary of the fortnightly events, activities and any additional information gleaned during the visits.

For this paper, it is the interview data which is drawn upon. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (I.P.A.) as described by Smith (1996; 1999) is the technique adopted for transcript analysis. In I.P.A., transcripts are subjected to a systematic textual analysis, with emergent themes and like concepts being grouped and categorised. I.P.A. enables provisional hypotheses to be modified in the light of new evidence. Thus, theorising can begin from "tentative hypotheses which are refined and strengthened to deal with challenges from the corpus of data" (Smith, 1999, p. 284). I.P.A. was used as the aim was to produce a theoretical model which derived from, and was grounded in, rather than predating and constraining, the body of data. I.P.A. shares much with other grounded

phenomenological approaches (see Strauss, 1987; Charmaz, 1995; Pidgeon and Henwood, 1997), thus is a form of analytic induction working to build an understanding of each participant and his or her beliefs and opinions.

In the current paper, the interview data were examined for individual approaches to the perception of and engagement with music. Consistency between family members in their views and behaviours was also explored. For the sake of confidentiality, the identities of the participants have been changed.

In line with I.P.A., the results of our analyses produce emergent themes which form the basis for the interpretation of each participant's thoughts, feelings and perceptions of themselves and others. Interviewer reflexivity, co-author discussions with joint interpretations being presented to a third party for validation are the means by which the reliability of the interpretation of these analyses have been made.

Results

(i) Mother-son relationship

Probably the most poignant dynamic in this set of family data is the way in which Helen believes that the eldest son has inherited her high-level musicality. For her, this construct is critical to her perception of a strong sense of shared identity, regarding James as a musical projection of herself:

> *You see, James has it, he has the point. I was playing a piece of Bach with him for his grade four the other day, and, well I slowed up and he copied me exactly. It was incredible. I didn't say a word. It was if he knew exactly what was going on in my head. As though he could read my thoughts – telepathic! It wasn't as if I made great gestures or anything. He's really got it, I can't tell you how special that is, there's a musical understanding there [between us], a unity.*

Helen really sees herself in James. For him this is a huge boost. He comments:

> *I think I have a gene from my mother because she's a very, very good musician. It's great. I feel so proud to be like her. You see I really want to play like her.*

The mother–son symbiosis is only perceived to be between James and his mother, however, and it is a family story that John also corroborates:

> *So much of James is Helen, and he's getting more so as he gets older, it's so funny. There're like a double act, so it's not surprising that they share this exceptional ability to do music.*

This appears to have a direct impact on Daniel's self-esteem with regard to music. Indeed, he is quick to recognise his mother's lesser level of musical expectation for him. He says, for instance:

> *Well, James is the really good one. Everyone says that, I'm fed up of hearing it. I suppose, you see, he's got mum's gene for music, you know, he's really good at it like she was when she was little. Dad says I'm good too, but I know that James is better.*

These views seem quite fixed, and they certainly did not alter over the 18 months of involvement with the family. Given Daniel's views, we would not be

surprised, in line with Dunn's theme of sibling rivalry, that Helen's projection of self onto James may have sowed the seeds of future rivalry and failure for Rachel.

(ii) The father's perceptions

Although Helen's projection forms the root of Daniel's lesser status, John is keen to attribute it in terms of stable internal characteristics with respect to physiological factors which clearly, are unable to be changed:

> *Daniel, yes, he really does try, poor thing, he really does. But I rather think he hasn't quite got it like James has, you know. Whereas with James, well there seems to be more there, playing's not such a big deal, so he seems far more able somehow.*

At one level, this view seems depressing, accounting for the child's lack of improvement because of some innate deficit. But the story is completely consistent with the Browns' thought processes on these issues. The father, like the mother, is explaining Daniel's incompetencies through a "fixed fact".

(iii) Locating a new niche

Due to James's on-going musical success, and the lack of such progress for Daniel, in interview it becomes increasingly obvious over time that Daniel feels forced to find himself a "niche" within the family, since there seems to be little chance of him matching James's outcome in music. Also, because the spotlight is so clearly on James, there seem little parental resources left in terms of their attention.

> *James gets all the attention round here, mum's always helping him the whole time. She does help me but I think James is the main one really. I don't think it's fair.*

Indeed, James himself recognises the imbalance of parental availability:

> *Well she's [Helen] always there for me if I want some help, it's very useful really the way things are, I really like our arrangement.*

Therefore Daniel works toward attaining his new role as family artist. He seems satisfied with his new identity:

> *You see I've decided that my thing is going to be art, you know painting, and they'll all say Daniel's our artist in the family. It's really good.*

This new role was first suggested to him by his father, who encouraged him to join a local after-school art club in order to develop his skills. But the niche is not a totally new area since, effectively, he is taking on the role of his maternal grandmother who has enjoyed painting for many years:

> *We thought Daniel would really benefit from going to a local after-school art club. He seems to show such a flair for art work – always has done so since he was a really little boy. I think they thought that at school, certainly his teacher did. And it's something which could certainly be developed. He's got quite a talent, just like his grandmother – it's exciting that we've found his thing now.*

Therefore Daniel still remains within the boundaries of the framework of his family identity although his new role falls outside the core construct of music.

Also, and inescapably for these two boys, Daniel's identity as an artist was attained in competition with his brother, in response to the direct competition from his elder brother.

> *Well, James made some cardboard Roman centurion armour too, but I really thought they thought mine were the best [laughs], but maybe I shouldn't say that, but I mean he has got his music. He is the one they're always saying how good he is, so now I have my art.*

As third generation artist – linking back to his grandmother – Daniel basks in the limelight of success. This gives him a special domain, leaving his elder brother to enjoy the glory of his mother's legacy.

(iv) Effect on the relationship between the parents

As a result of the mother–son projection, some stress seems to impact upon other interfamilial relationships. Clearly, Daniel is not the only member of the family to feel excluded. Although John is a keen amateur musician, Helen has far more desire to share in music-making with James rather than her husband, resulting in John feeling marginalised.

> *Well, Helen plays with James a lot, we don't seem to play together as much as we used to, but that's life [laughs].*

Clearly then, the sense of musical loyalty between husband and wife diminishes as James shares the level of intimacy which formally represented the marital partnership. Of course, John's behaviour can be framed as good parenting: he places the child's needs and potentialities above his own. He is there to facilitate things for his boys. But, he places James upon the same metaphorical pedestal as Helen, and as a result, his own self-esteem seems to be affected:

> *I play a bit, but really I'm not a serious musician like James is. And I play less and less nowadays. James is the one we're interested in. I mean Helen just wants to put all her energies into him. She says it's so exciting because there's so much potential there.*

So, John's is a tricky role to play: a parent of a prodigiously talented son, and a partner to a great musician. In both cases, he occupies the lesser status. His relationship with Daniel is also troublesome because the boy wants to identify with his mother's family, not the father's. . . .

> *I want to be a real musician like mum, you know she's really really good at it. Dad's good at it too but not like mum is. So well I think to myself, yes, then I want to be like mum, not dad.*

(v) Tensions between the boys

Daniel has never been under the impression he is or ever has had the potentiality for equal musical status to his elder brother, irrespective of age difference:

*No, I'm not as good as James, he's always done better than me
[sighs]. She [Helen] thinks that too. But I'm okay. He's really really
good. It's just not fair. You see mum and dad just think James is
wonderful at playing and I know they say I'm good but I just know
they're saying it to keep me happy. "You're brilliant!" they say,
"Clever boy!" a lot of the time when I do my practice without making
a fuss. But it's all because they say that to James too and they want
to be nice to me the same. I just know they think I'll never be like
James.*

Indeed, he gives his elder brother credit for being more musical than he is.
He acknowledges his mother's claims of James's superiority:

*James is very good at everything he does [in music] but it gets me
a bit sick the way they always go on about him, all the time, how
wonderful he is. I want to put my hands over my ears and shout
"Stop! I know he is, I know he is!".*

James, enjoys the apparent superiority:

*Well, Daniel is quite good at the violin but he's in year three and
I did grade two violin in year four, and was already good at easy
pieces and things. I don't think he's ever going to be really
interested in music unless you get a teacher who gives him a lesson
on a really easy piece.*

So at one level, the boys are good friends: they play with their toys together,
and participate in everyday family activities, like playing on the computer with
their Dad. But, when it comes to music, there is more than a frisson of tension
between them.

The parents seem to have no awareness of how the statements about James
and Helen affect Daniel. For us, this was a striking point. So great was Daniel's
effort to get Brown family membership recognition, he was eager to tell the
researcher at a number of points that he had been told by his mum that he was
very like her physically:

*Mum's very musical. It's quite good and I also think me being musical
is from her because I got my brown eyes from her . . . and James
said I've got a ski-slope nose, so has my mum, so my nose is from
her and so basically everything [laughs] is from her. And I think I
have a gene from my mum because she's a good musician.*

At the very least, the theme so far explored shows the power of a family story
to take on a position of "reality" within the family's belief system.

(vi) Practice

Family dynamics were also at a fore when discussing the routine of practice.
Here, the tables turn somewhat. James feels that his parents are unfair in allowing
Daniel to boycott sessions as a result of his rebellions against practice. Of course,
James does not realise that Daniel's attitude could be fuelled by his generally
perceived superior status.

The parents with their lower expectations for their younger son seem more reluctant to enforce a strict practice strategy. This is where James feels some understandable resentment, for his parents insist that he must do his practice.

> *James hasn't a choice. He'll practise because that's what we expect in this house, I'm afraid. And we can't be slack about that can we? We've decided music has to be a serious option, you know, and it just doesn't work to muck around. He's no exception, he needs to practice!*

So, in a complicated sequence of perceptions and misperceptions, James feels unjustifiably pressured to work at music. Daniel, on the other hand, seems to get away with doing relatively little. James recalls this differentiation in parental expectation:

> *I get a bit annoyed at having to play on Saturday morning for three-quarters of an hour and Daniel spends six minutes and then goes and watches TV. It does get very annoying that he hardly does any practice at all. Well it isn't fair really, but there's not much I can do about it because he'll just have a tantrum and stomp off . . . it's not fair. You see they let him get away with it but with me, well they just say I have to do it. I can't just go and watch TV when I feel like it.*

John justifies the "slacker" label they give Daniel:

> *We expect James to practice, there's no doubt about that. I suppose we are less harsh on Daniel because he'll practice when he practices, he's Daniel.*

Intriguingly, the story about Daniel's practice does not end there. James describes a feeling of duty to adopt the role of surrogate parent to ensure that his brother practices:

> *Well it's up to me a lot of the time to see he does it. I mean I'll say 'Come on now Dan' it's time you did some practice and I'll wander over towards his instrument case. He doesn't like it very much but I am older than him and he'll have to get used to the idea that practice is important, you see you can't get any better without it. Mum says so.*

The parents were unaware of James's advice to his brother!

For the first twelve months of the study, routines and patterns seemed stable. But, in the final six months of investigation, we observed that James's part in attempting to tell Daniel what to do led to a split away from his brother. Whilst Daniel had taken his brother's interventions about practice in good part in the first year, he begins to really resents James's interference in the matter:

> *He shouldn't do that you know. It makes me feel very angry that he, well he thinks he can just boss me around like mum and dad and tell me when to practice. I get very cross, very very cross. I say, "Who do you think you are?".*

In parallel to Daniel's increasing irritation, James made a transition from primary to secondary school, and we perceived his behaviour towards his brother as a means of illustrating a separation from his younger brother and a desire to participate more as part of the adult realm.

Examining all the scripts, it is very apparent that no one individual in this family is consciously mistreating any other, and the actions are certainly not intended as being malicious, but they do reflect how easily the intention of a comment or a behaviour can be misinterpreted. It is for this reason that we collected a lot of data in the interviews. Working in as reflexive a manner as possible, Sophia also checked and re-checked how her questions were being presented and perceived so that the family members should be unduly influenced by her reactions to the interactions and beliefs.

(vii) Reclaiming a positive status

With the move to the new school, James's own involvement in music and practice declined as he got into his new routine of being given regular homework. This fact seemed to counteract the impact of Daniel's increasing lack of interest in music on the family's musical expectations. Indeed, James's increased timetable of activities to be done in home time means that he is less available to his parents, and so the parents have more time for Daniel. The effect produces the ideal conditions for Daniel's launch to musical success. John reports, eighteen months into the study, two months after James's entry to the secondary school:

> Daniel's someone who's actually made astonishing musical progress, really.

As a result of this new dynamic, Daniel suddenly enters a phase of intense practice and receives new levels of positive encouragement from his parents who seem to be looking for a new protégé to fill the temporary gap:

> It's brilliant since James started at Hilldale [School]. You see he's been so busy with all his homework that they've just helped me with my music and he hasn't been near the violin.

Not surprisingly, Daniel began recording a greater level of enjoyment and a sense of rising confidence and musical self worth:

> . . . Well, I'm actually doing really well now with my music. I'm starting to get onto harder things, and I'm skipping grade one 'cos Miss Day thinks I'm too clever for the exam.

James, by contrast, falls into a fallow period for music, as he attempts to come to grips with all the other changes in her life at that time:

> I don't know [about practice] you see I've got such a lot to get through at the moment. It's just impossible, I've said to Mum it's impossible, so much homework.

Yet the parents do not seem unduly concerned about James's phase, accepting it as part of their son's key life transitions, but there is still evidence that the mother wants James to do best of all:

> I hope they'll pick him up in the school orchestra and then he'll find himself playing in the orchestra making a nice loud noise with

children who are seven years older than him, which again I think
is an excellent thing. I remember that a bit from my own childhood.
So I hope we can get this homework thing sorted out.

The turn of events actually helps to improve relations between the boys generally. No longer at the same school, the sense of competition between them diminishes immediately, and owing to Daniel's boosted self-confidence over playing – added to by his successful music examination – he changes his response toward his brother's musical successes. Suddenly he joins in the celebration of James's former achievements, whereas in earlier times such sentiments were unheard:

James is so good at it [music]. But it's nice to have someone as
clever like him around so he can help me with my practice. He doesn't
really do much practice now, but it's not his fault because he . . .
always has got his homework to do.

In this late stage of the data collection, it seems that Daniel now shares in the sense of family identity that James has always enjoyed. He now sees himself as one of a team with a new feeling of pride in terms of his musical achievements:

I'm really lucky to be in this family. Everyone knows how good at
music we are, I mean everyone outside says "You're in that family,
you must be good at music then". That makes me very proud and
I can't help smiling. . . . You see, people expect me to be kind of
really excellent because my family's got that standard you see, so
probably I should be, and now I am!

The change in family dynamic resulting from this one event – James's school transition – seems overwhelming. Daniel is enjoying what James has experienced for many years: his parents' undivided attention, belief and substantial interest in what he is doing. Moreover, they seem to believe in his musical abilities far more than before.

It is difficult to predict how other environmental factors, let alone emerging family dynamics, might affect the musical progress of the two boys, but at least Daniel's more recent success should go some way toward resolving the perceived musical imbalance between the two boys, with the possibility of the parents re-appraising their low musical achievement expectation of Daniel.

Summary and some theoretical interpretations

Overall this case study identifies how parental expectation combined with the parental "support" over musical involvement determines the nature of a child's musical progress. In this way, the current study is consistent with the existing literature on parenting style (Baumrind, 1991a; 1991b). Certainly in terms of demandingness, Helen's projection of her musical self onto her elder son may bring about a self-fulfilling prophecy, with the boy responding to the standards demanded (Conger, 1991). Indeed, Helen predicts the same amount of success for her son as she achieved during her own youth. As a result of the general high level of parental expectancy in music, Daniel, the younger of the siblings, is excluded from the musical success equation and is perceived as an inferior musician to his brother, with a far lesser potential. This position seems to affect the younger

boy negatively and may be regarded as an example of the parents being rather less sensitive to him, which is consistent with the concept of unresponsive parenting proposed by MacDonald (1992).

There is tension between the boys over music, which is not untypical of single-sex first and second siblings (Stocker and McHale, 1992). Certainly Daniel's feelings of inadequacy in music fit with second sibling descriptors (see Isaacson, 1997).

Over the first year of data collection, the power of the sibling dynamic and the parents's story together are certainly of influence, and there is evidence to suggest that Daniel struggles to find any familial identification in music. He apparently achieves a family position through other means, using links like his nose being like his mother's and his talent for art comes from his grandmother.

Helen, the mother, evidently wants her entire family to be happy (there is evidence of much warm family banter at meal times), but her focus on music is on her children, rather than her husband. There is some evidence that John, the father, feels somewhat excluded by this, which might hint at the intrusion of the children into the parents' intimate relationship. However, since John states that he regards his "exclusion" as a "normal" part of family life, it seems that he accepts rather than being negatively influenced by the dynamic. We interpret this as an understanding, child-centred approach which is regarded by Eshelman (1994) as being essential to successful family life.

Overall, one key event – James's change of school, which occurs in the final two months of the study – opens a possibility for Daniel to change the family perception of him, and he takes up the opportunity well: passing his music exam and being happy to practise for his mother.

Discussion: Introducing Script Theory

We wish to end this current paper by introducing a somewhat different theoretical model to those already discussed. From the domain of Family Therapy, Byng Hall's script theory (1985; 1988; 1995; 1998) is a useful model here. The theory proposes the notion of metaphorical "family scripts" to describe the underlying reasons for family behaviour, especially in terms of defining specific roles within the family like those of "artist" and "musician" as assigned to the children above. So the theory is of value in attempting to bridge the gap between the individual and the family and between different generations (Byng-Hall, 1998; 139).

Overtly psychodynamic in position, Byng-Hall's use of the particular metaphor of a "script", that is, instructions for a predetermined set of behaviours, is a particularly successful means of identifying family. He explains:

> *For me the most compelling reason for using the term "script" is that families understand it immediately. If they complain about how the same situation arises again and again, we are soon likely to find ourselves talking about scripts. Although I will probably have introduced the actual term "script", it may soon be forgotten and a shared set of metaphors emerges in the discussion: old scripts, writing new scripts, and improvising, etc. (Byng-Hall, 1995; 23).*

Byng-Hall regards each family member as taking on a metaphorical role to support the scripted (pre-determined) "plot" of family expectations (for example the need for a family musician, a mathematician, a sportsman, etc). Byng-Hall (1998; 136) explains ". . . family members know their roles and enter on cue in unfolding family scenarios".

We believe that the Browns do play out "scripted" roles. However, we see evidence of the family "cast" being flexible, as in the changing attitude of Daniel when his brother goes to secondary school, and Byng-Hall has reported evidence that changes can be instituted over time. We conclude, therefore, that despite a tendency towards a fixed image of familial roles, there is always the potential for change. Byng-Hall, of course, uses the notion of change as a positive construct for family therapy work. We look at it in this context as a positive, albeit accidental, set of circumstances for Daniel.

Conclusion

This paper has revealed that the parental perceptions of children can become prophecies to fulfil, an expectation becoming a fact, shaping the progress of one specific child, and the paths of the remaining sibling too. We believe that this case study has highlighted the need for detailed case studies drawing on phenomenological analytical techniques to access dynamical information about how families interact so that otherwise missed motives and behaviours can be observed and their impact on each family member assessed. Of course, it is evident that the data examined are specific to and perhaps relevant only to the Browns. Therefore, further and more detailed research involving other families with different dynamics and varying degrees of musical involvement will help to develop a complete theory of scripts for musical development.

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