

Lisa Bonnár

Life and Lullabies

*Exploring the basis of meaningfulness
in parents' lullaby singing*



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Norges musikkhøgskole
Postboks 5190 Majorstua
0302 OSLO

Tel.: +47 23 36 70 00
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Preface

Life and lullabies are inherently related. By saying this, I am not suggesting this relationship to be an original, path-breaking insight. What is original is my proposition to the way in which this relatedness is subsumed within the overarching theme of the meanings and meaningfulness of the lullaby act.

This study is an attempt to come to grips with the overt and underlying meanings of an act that has personal and unique manifestations as well as conventional and cultural features. Moreover, the originality stems from an emphasis on the fascinating relationship between psychology and the particular lullaby quality and its affordances and how parents' musicality expresses itself in their living, feeling, thinking and being at bedtime, as an important part of the forming of their social relationship with their children. This sensitive and adaptive mode of lullaby singing evolved as an intuitive way to satisfy a baby's essential human needs at bedtime, creating memorable childhood stories, but which in this day and age I consider to be frequently neglected.

The term life can seem vague, with multiple meanings and associations. I will therefore briefly state an important premise of the thesis; Life signifies the lived and living experiences that 20 Norwegian parents had, arising out of their singing to their children at bedtime. Lullabies refer to the actual songs these parents chose and used at that place and time.

Life and parenting are to be understood as something moving, organic and in development, whereas lullabies may signify something traditional, continuous, predictable, and given, upholding the unity and continuity of nature and culture. However, present everyday circumstances and conditions strongly influence the lullaby act, and bring in variations and unpredictability. The circumstances and conditions of these above-mentioned contrasting aspects will be the comprehensible title of this inquiry.

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PART I

Introduction

*Now roof and rafters blend with starry,
vault on high
Now flyeth little Haakon on dreamwings
through the sky*

*There mounts a mighty stairway from earth
to God's own land
There Haakon with the angels.
goes climbing hand in hand*

*God's angel-babes are watching thy cot,
the still night through
God bless thee, little Haakon,
thy mother watcheth too.¹*

¹ The quote derives from Henrik Ibsen's Margarethe's lullaby in 'Kongsemnerne' (1863), and is translated into English by William Archer (1911).

1 Scope and personal background

1.1 In the beginning lullabies were created

Music exists in its own right, but not always for its own sake. Music can awaken us from habit and grant us the opportunity to place ourselves within the ‘possible’ (what we might do), the ‘actual’ (what we have already thought or done) (Turino 2007, p. 16), the existential (what brings meaning and purpose to our lives and connects us to a wider universe) and the magical (the compelling content that can only happen in dreams).

Music has the power to create strong bonds and facilitate communication between people. It promotes companionship and intimate sharing (Malloch and Trevarthen 2009). Throughout history and across cultures, singing and playing music has been an integral part of an adult and child’s interrelationship. This is especially true for lullabies. Lullabies are a recognized universal and ancient song form considered to be an important part of caregiving in every known culture (e.g. Opie and Opie 1951, Trehub, Unyk and Trainor 1993, Trehub and Trainor 1998, Trehub 2001, Dissanayake 2009). The extensive and global history of the simple lullaby act, albeit in many different guises, is striking. Parents from all over the world sing simple, soothing songs to and with² their children in order to speed up the fall-asleep process (e.g. Opie and Opie 1951).

2 Even though the children participate in different ways during their parents’ singing, and strongly influence the act, I will, for reasons of space, use the terms singing ‘to’ throughout the thesis.

Singing lullabies may be considered to be a biologically rooted behaviour (Young, Street and Davies 2007), belonging to the instinctive nature of motherhood and parenting (Dissanayake 2000a). Singing lullabies lies at the heart of our most profound intimate occasion and experience.

In an evolutionary perspective, researchers argue that the origin of music may be traced back to the musical nature of dyadic mother-child-interaction (Dissanayake 2009, Merker 2009). Dissanayake even suggests that music originates in love or mutuality between two individuals who need each other, and that music's original function 'would have been to reinforce concord' (Dissanayake 2009, p. 23).

Infant-directed speech, known as motherese, 'blends music and language elements in communicative acts that aim to elicit vocal expressive response in infants' and is foundational to many developmental aspects, including those of infant identity (Barret 2009, p. 116). The lullaby-act can be looked upon as a natural extension and elaboration of the simplified utterances of infant-directed speech (motherese) and nonverbal communication (Custodero, Britto and Brooks-Gunn 2002, Dissanayake 2009).

Experts have defined a variety of characteristics within a lullaby, such as slow, steady tempo with little change, rhythmically simple, regular and repetitive character, with just a few notes, fewer melodic contour changes, and a higher median pitch (tessitura) than other songs (Unyk, Trehub, Trainor and Schellenberg 1992, Trehub, Trainor and Unyk 1993). The simplicity of the structure and repetition of the songs are probable indicators for identifying this specific musical genre of lullabies (Bargiel 2004). In short, lullabies may be characterized by the way they are sung and by their formal, rhythmical and melodic aspects.

Yet, lullabies are not remitted to a separate realm, but are naturally embedded in the parents and children's life reality and a larger cultural and collective context (Bjørkvold 1979, 2005, Bonnár 2012). Singing lullabies involves constraints and possibilities, which spring from life realities and the long history of this human practice. At the same time, each generation 'continues to revise and adapt its human and biological heritage in the face of current circumstances' (Rogoff 2003, p. 3).

Even though musical meaning is difficult to capture or translate, the idea that music has no meaning beyond itself is challenged within this intimate and social realm. The act may connect us to a larger human whole, and is of particular interest for several reasons, as it epitomizes the personal voiceprints, personality, mother tongue and culture that emanate from the mother or father whilst singing to their children. Moreover, singing lullabies may involve many different sensory, social and existential modalities: oral communication, facial expressions, bodily gestures, sensory elements, and collective narratives in addition to a wide range of intersubjective

dynamics. Various individual and cultural elements are interwoven, and underlying physiological, cognitive and affective mechanisms also play an influential role.

Many of the lullabies worldwide contain features that are frightening, threatening, sad and melancholic, and these dark undertones may reflect difficulties and dangers in the parent and child's everyday life. In a broad perspective, life today also presents many challenges to both parents and children, and sources of delight should not be disparaged. On the other hand, lullabies reflect hopefulness, gratitude, faith, harmony and parental positive functioning as well as human imagination and playfulness.

By imbuing tension release, deep relaxation and support for the development of early communication and attachment, lullabies have proven to be potentially beneficial to both parent and child far beyond their simple calming and slumberous effect (e.g. Bargiel 2004, Friedman, Kaplan, Rosenthal and Console 2010).

From a public perspective, there is a constant growing focus on the value of culture, art, dance and music in children's lives.³ Various health care centres and service-pools across the globe highlight the significance of music as a resource in terms of building good, healthy, intimate relationships from a very early age. In European countries, lullaby educational programs and lullaby projects for first time mothers are being developed in order to enhance mothers' musical resources (e.g. the 'Sound start project', Clift 2002, the 'Sing, soothe and sleep'-project, Baker and Mackinlay 2006, the 'Lullabies-project', Vitalarts 2011).

A capacity for trust and intimacy is necessary for optimal functioning in intimate relationships (e.g. Erikson 1950, Winnicott 1962), and researchers have documented links between childhood attachments and later social competencies (e.g. Bowlby 1969). Musical experiences may facilitate emotional expressions, and 'help humans to bring out their deepest emotions hidden agendas and symbolic representations of the world that surrounds them' (Ilari and Gluschkof 2009, p. 689). Humans' innate communicative musicality creates dispositions of trust and cultural belonging within a musical context (Trevarthen 1999).

However, there seems to be a growing tendency towards replacing the oral cultural custodians as children's sources for song by television, iPods, computers, games and other technical devices (e.g. Brady 2005, Baker and MacKinlay 2006, de Vries 2009). Western culture has seen great lifestyle changes. Hence the ancient practice of singing lullabies encounters several 'obstacles' in today's society, such as parents' 'lack of time' and lack of 'musical knowledge' (de Vries 2009, p. 402). In addition, many parents send

3 In a national inquiry commissioned by the National Centre of Art and Culture, professor Anne Bamford at the University of Arts in London claims that culture in Norway is considered 'cosy' but not of much importance (my translation)(Bamford 2012).

their babies from a very early age to stay the whole day in kindergartens or with other childcare providers. Skin contact and even the physical presence of the caregiver are stated to be diminishing (Brady 2005). Apparently, many parents have lost hold of their intuitive, caring and creative musical capacities, and often lack the energy to express and share them with their children. For this reason, the argument that parental singing to babies is a lost tradition is marshalled (Baker and MacKinlay 2006).

Regarding this particular study, it moves outside of aesthetics and conventions and is situated at the centre of the lived experience. Culture in this context turns out to be both a process and a product.⁴ The geographical scope is narrow, but a multitude of background questions springs out from the curiosity of the meeting with the personal, intimate pre-bedtime world of Norwegian parents and their children: Why do parents sing to and with their children? Or why do they not? Is the lullaby today enacted out of care, coincidence, desperation, amiability, tradition, happiness, playfulness, personal musical inclinations, devotion, collaboration, duty, impulses, love and affection? Is the act an important contribution to parent-child companionship and the creation of an intimate setting? Is it beneficial in bridging the transition between wakefulness and sleep? And is it central to parents and their children feeling good about their lives? If so, what are the characteristics of this living act in which all these existential, social, physiological, affective, relational and musical aspects are playing out their choreography?

These are just a few of the questions researchers may address when confronting this social, practical and existential phenomenon. The questions begin with words like 'what', 'why' and 'how', and require an understanding of complex knowledge directly given from people with lullaby experiences, their reflections about their experiences, the circumstances influencing their relations to their children, their selfhood, behavioural choices, attitudes and their culture. All the previous questions mentioned cannot be answered fully within the scope of this doctoral thesis. However, some core issues related to them will be touched upon.

Research has explored the lullaby act's developmental contributions, evolutionary origins, regulatory and educational functions and therapeutic implications. Yet, no inquiry has been able to offer a satisfactory *holistic* and *integral* presentation of its specificity, individual uniqueness, meanings and potentials beyond the boundaries of scientific disciplines.

Research shows infant preferences for the music of their mother's culture (Papoušek 1996, Dissanayake 2000b). Further evidence exists of infants' biological predispositions

4 This is a central performance studies-topic in which culture is seen as an unfolding performative invention instead of a reified system, structure and variable (Conquergood 1991)

to musical activity and how they imitate expressive qualities of their mothers' voices (e.g. Fox 1990, Fox and Calkins 2003), and how children synchronize their own vocalization and movement to the rhythms and melodic contours of songs and infant-directed speech (e.g. Trevarthen 1999). Meaning from the phrase structure, tonality and rhythmic organization of the music from their birth culture is also acquired (Trehub 2001), as well as responses with culturally appropriate affect to maternal singing (Trehub and Schellenberg 1995). Taking into account the mental and physical immaturity of an infant, these are all breathtaking capacities. The continuity of musical practices and interaction at home, preschool children's preferences and behaviour, is, however, an underresearched field.

A focus has often been held on finding new sorts of stimuli and developmental and educational vehicles for children, to exploit children's measurable abilities and musical talents, whilst leaving important aspects of wellbeing; like their needs for inner space, calm, authenticity, coherence, meaning, and genuine sense of belonging in the background. In honouring children's high level of sensitivity, I propose that, in our society, the need for integrating experiences in consistent patterns and slowing down the pace, and temporarily overlooking the goal- and tempo-oriented path, is more important than ever.

Details of musical adult-infant interactions among some European, Australian and North and South American populations may have relevance to Norwegian conditions. However, to date, little is known about musical parenting of infants and children in Norway. As far as I know, no studies have been published on lullabies in this country and we know very little about lullaby singing and its existential and relational aspects in our culture. Another important reason for knowing little about parents' musical practices and attitudes about music is of course also due to the fact that musical engagement with infants and young children tends to be an activity naturally hidden within the confines of family life. To date, we don't know how many parents who sing to their children at bedtime in Norway. Is it a typical for parents in this country to sing to their children? This inquiry will not give an answer to these questions.

This research is an attempt to shed light on the everyday practice of lullabies among Norwegian parents in order to make the lullaby act more visible and to promote its importance in today's society. By looking at this small, yet important part of the communication processes and patterns between parents and their children, the act of singing lullabies may add new information to the gestalt of child care and parental care giving, hopefully creating a higher level of awareness and understanding of this interaction.

In the light of human potential, the purpose of this study is to further explore within the relation to the lullaby act, the foundations, structures and processes of

this particularly important first relationship in life. I consider this as a never-ending evolutionary and existential story, and believe that there is a need for an even more sensitive, differentiated, deep and comprehensive understanding of the inherent benefits of lullabies and what they may afford in this particular bedtime setting and context.

Singing a lullaby is not a new way of being musically in the world, but I believe that in this fluid, fluctuating, often stressful and multi task oriented society, this old tradition and practice of singing lullabies is invaluable. The task is to restore continuity between the everyday form of individual, parental effort, undergoing and achievements and the lullaby's universally recognized significance.

1.2 **Personal background and interest**

My personal interest in parents singing lullabies to their children came about from the confluence of personal and artistic circumstances. There was an initial link between my first-hand experience of being a mother, singing to my child, and my professional experience as a singer. The striking and similar point between these two apparently different worlds was the important awareness of various dynamics, timing and affects, and of being sincere, sensitive and present. The act of sharing a story and allowing for the song to become second nature, were similar, yet contained very different standards and contrasting reverberations of quality. The incarnation of the universal role of mother was felt to be the most important of all the roles that I have experienced so far, and the responsibility evoked a lot of creative thinking.

When I was singing lullabies to my own child, a completely new instinctive, intuitive, calm and intimate dimension revealed itself from, I would say, an inner mood. Embracing the precious mother-singing-moment of the day, it struck me how this inner mood stood in contrast to the professional anxiety and perfectionist ambition I often felt when singing a classical concert. In the meeting with my own child, I felt the joy of an amateur in the original sense of being a lover of singing. Despite the fact that my singing was far from perfect—I was very often tired and my voice became airy and weak—I enjoyed and appreciated its more human qualities so to say. The term quality has very different connotations in these two different contexts of singing. Singing lullabies to my own child gave an immediate connection to my inner emotional state and my child's being, evoking an investigation into what I had brought with me from my own childhood.

The experience of the songs I was singing evoked inner representations and memories of my mother singing to me when I was a child. These memories from my own childhood were brought back to me through the songs and were meshed with feelings of now being a mother myself singing to my own child. This created a wordless depth to the moment. Anyhow, my daughter had her own preferences from a very early stage, and the songs she chose were not among the songs my mother sung to me. Each time I started to sing 'my' preferred song, my daughter didn't want to hear it. It was too sad, she told me later. I sensed this, as I felt an air of nostalgia every time I started that particular song. The ones she chose were 'free of charge' and completely 'hers'. In the meeting with other parents, they shared similar stories but also of a very different kind.

Personally speaking, it was in any case, very touching to see how my daughter gradually calmed down during the singing of her chosen song. She also had to remind me of the serene importance she had attached to a song when I had forgotten to sing it. We sang the same song over and over again. She didn't want to hear anything else for the next three years. For her, as it appeared to me, the sweet, short and cuddling Norwegian song 'So, ro' contained the whole dimension of wellbeing and safety. Being together and listening to the well-known sound of my voice and the same rhythm, lyrics and melody seemed to be a crucial manner to her falling asleep. My daughter was often singing or humming along in the beginning and then silently falling asleep towards the end – after the fifth, sixth or seventh time I sang the song. But I have to say that the ritual almost had its own dynamic life – typified by singing a song once to singing a variety of songs, singing together or me singing alone, the same old song over and over again.

Sometimes, when my daughter's level of vitality was still high and mine fading, her attention wandering, or she kept jumping up and down in the bed, the only thing I wanted was to make her fall asleep. Then the act of singing lullabies turned out to be less enjoyable. I then had to put more efforts into singing or it simply didn't work. I often felt I had a far more challenging 'audience' at home compared to the civilized audience in a classical concert hall. My loving kindness was replaced by irritation.

To me, lullabies seemed to be characterized within the continuum of collaboration, flow and consensus on the one hand and resistance, hard work and counterpoint on the other. My curiosity centred on the complex, multi-faceted and sophisticated communicative, relational and existential background of lullabies: individual life-stories based on personality, vitality, affects, thoughts, memories, expectations and experiences intermingled with cultural standards, conventions, myths and social influences, to mention just a few aspects of this multi-faceted phenomenon. I wanted to present

the aspects of lullabies to the parents and their children that might help them generate meaningful thinking and higher awareness over time when fashioning their own lives.

1.3 Focus of attention

1.3.1 Musical parenting

The importance of musical parenting in the lives of children and the parental role as a salient facet of adult and child identity and development are highlighted in this inquiry. Focus is held on parents' levels of involvement with their children during bedtime, their attitudes about childrearing, actual musical parenting practices, and the mental and emotional climate parents create for their children. All these features have each been linked in important ways with child development from infancy through adulthood. Parenting in general terms refers to the ways in which adults construct their individual life stories as they interact and acculturate their children to prepare them to grow and thrive (e.g. Keller 2007). Considering the act's place in an educational and sociological context, it may be part of an authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and intuitive or attachment based parenting style, or from a developmental perspective, as part of the 'motherhood constellation'.⁵ Musical parenting, on the other hand, might be considered to be a benefit for the child and a special sharing of discovery between parent and child, where adults can share their joy and reawaken the child within (Wenmoth 2012).

Musical parenting is characterized by parents integrating musical activities in the child's life and fosters the love of music. Musical parenting is more or less an integrative part of a parents' broader style of upbringing. While some researchers suggest that musical interaction 'fall under the auspices of intuitive parenting' (Papoušek 1996), some music educators are far from convinced of parents' ability to confidently transmit musical culture (Walters 2000). These two perspectives reflect the complexity inherent in examinations of musical interactions between parents and their children. I will not discuss these particularly conflicting views, but the broader concept of musicality applied in this study, embraces both a context-oriented view, which emphasizes

5 Motherhood constellation 'implies that the mother's self-sense becomes largely organised around the presence of her baby, its wellbeing, and their mutual connection' (Stern 1995/2006, p. 112).

lullabies' relational and communicative-based functions and potentials, and an implicit expertise-oriented view. The latter is related to parents' musical abilities and skills, where the interplay of musical dimensions of pulse, quality and narrative (Malloch and Trevarthen 2009), and existential dimensions of time, intentionality, emotions, movement, space and vitality are given great importance (Stern 2010).

1.3.2 The meanings and potentials of lullaby singing

My aim with this study is not to paint a full picture of the act of lullaby singing. Rather, I aimed at gathering data that would grant us the opportunity to reflect and open up some new horizons and possibilities for further discussion and inquiry on a topic that has been comparatively under-researched in Norway. By examining lullaby singing and its various layers of meaning, I wish to contribute to a greater understanding of this fascinating individual and cultural phenomenon. Beyond demonstrating that 'singing lullabies matters', my aim is to depict a broad picture of parental bedtime singing and promote its importance through the parents' own stories.

However, observing the act through parent's narratives means an attempt to encompass broadly and integrate multiple layers of meaning and experience rather than defining human possibilities narrowly (see methodology). Meaning in this context embraces what parents intend to convey by singing lullabies, and also aspects, which remains largely hidden from view. As already mentioned, this is a practice-driven inquiry, focusing on the act of lullaby singing. The focus was the parents' practice of singing lullabies to and with their young children in contemporary Norwegian homes.

The lullaby act's multi-dimensional layers of meaning are explored through the parents' lived experiences, how they experience this act in relation to their own and their children's responses and behaviour, and how they structure their own stories, according to narrative theories (see methodology). This inquiry will only investigate the connection between music and children's states, learning⁶ and development through the eyes of the parents, why they sing for them and what they focus on in their meeting with their children. I have chosen an explorative and open approach to the lived experience of lullaby singing and have hopefully been able to suggest some psycho-social implications that can be investigated more 'to the point' in the future.

The starting point of the inquiry has not been optional, but reflects parents' priority of certain aspects over others. It has been embedded in a single setting: The bedtime situation where a parent is singing for his or her child. The focus is held on the dyadic

6 For an overview of the connection between music and children's learning from infancy to early adolescence, see Zur and Johnson-Green (2008)

parent-child musical interaction at this time. There are also sub-settings related to this, for example whether the child is situated in the bed in her or his own room or in the parents' room, if it is being held whilst the parent is walking around in the house singing, or if the child is lying in the bed together with the parent etc. The distinction between lullaby singing as 'Nurturing', 'Building' and 'Mastery' layers draws upon the emphasis parents place on the different dimensions of lullaby singing.

I investigated the dyadic, musical act of lullaby singing through different choices based on attitudes, feelings, dynamics and ideas taking place between parents and their children before bedtime that were expressed from a parental perspective. I have tried to come to grip with some important and genuine characteristics of the act and its influences on the relationship between parents and their children. Both the adults and children's preferences and influences have been taken into account, as from the perspective of the parents.

The parental presuppositions in the act of lullaby singing are essential to the analysis of its characteristics, meanings and potentials. At the same time, meaning and communicative skills and intentions cannot be separated from the cultural context in which they arise. The collective mentality is creating an important background to its enactments and influences on the act in both subtle and more overt ways. To quote Geertz; 'there is no such thing as human nature independent of culture' (Geertz 1973, p. 49). The scope of this investigation was limited to parents mainly from urban settings in Oslo and the surrounding areas. Their stories are influenced and framed by conventions, their social life, customs and culture in which they live, as well as their own background and personality and the responses they get from their children. Simultaneously, there are universal, human and existential conditions similar to all these facets. However, the focus is held on how the interaction and communication between parents and their children may be enriched and facilitated through the act of lullaby singing.

On the one hand, parenting or in a broader sense, living together, is natural, improvisational and experimental in character and the aspect of improvisation by means of musical features is of particular interest. On the other hand, there seem to be different fixed and repetitive patterns unfolding in the living interaction between parents and children and the routines created to facilitate the everyday life of them all. Consequently, the ritual aspects of singing lullabies will be analyzed and put under scrutiny.

Through this study I sought new insights and fresh understanding of the intimate and musical interrelationship between parents and their children. This study then aimed at capturing the genuine spirit, meaning, communication process and embodied experience of parents' singing to their children at bedtime.

1.3.3 Life (world) and lullabies

Lullaby singing can be considered as part of the parent and the child's life world. The concept of 'life world' is phenomenologically understood as what we experience pre-reflectively, without resorting to categorization or conceptualization, and quite often includes what is taken for granted or considered as common sense. There is no doubt that everyday conditions and circumstances impact the bedtime-moment of singing. Professor of educational research, Peter D. Ashworth relates life world to aspects concerning *Self-hood*, a regarding of what the act means for parents and their social, personal and parental identity, *Sociality* regarding how the act and setting affects relations with the child, *Embodiment*,⁷ in terms of how the act relates to feelings about the child's own body, *Temporality* in terms of how the sense of time, duration and biography is affected, and *Spatiality* in terms of how the act is influenced and affected by the setting and situation (Ashworth 2003, p.145–146). These basic aspects reflect the existential, bodily, relational, phenomenological and qualitative considerations of this inquiry. However, a particular priority of aspects within the life world point at biases in the empirical material.

A traditional lullaby repertoire exists in this country. However, the use of a broader definition of the term lullaby has been necessary, as the study focuses on what parents actually sing to their children at bedtime, and their use of a variety of songs regardless of genre and style. My concern is how to grasp the underlying meanings and meaningfulness of the lived experience in relation to lullabies. In the process of understanding, I also include what parents experience reflectively, their attitudes, beliefs and reflexive orientation regarding caregiving and their everyday life with their children.

1.3.4 Parents' behaviour, beliefs and attitudes

This study is also an attempt to try to understand how parents interpret their bedtime world with their children and to elucidate their act of interpretation. When it comes to the parents' behaviour and beliefs, two distinct approaches have classified the parent-child interaction. The first emphasizes the content of parental behaviour, specifically the domains of parenting and engagement. The second emphasizes the quality of parents' engagements, for example to what extent parents' behaviour is sensitive and attuned to their children's needs, and in what respect the act reflects paradoxes or complementarities of interest. For clarity, the term *act* is often used, and it refers

7 Embodied also signifies that all acts (mental and physical) must take on a bodily and temporal shape while they are being enacted (Stern 2010, p.10).

to parents' singing lullabies to and with their children, and emphasizes the parental perspective of this inquiry. Lullaby singing, lullaby act and singing lullabies are used synonymously throughout this inquiry. Another focus is held on parents' beliefs about how the act can serve to give meaning to their lives with their children or how parents give a rationale to their own singing today. The avoidance of thinking in terms of an ideal or right lullaby singing performance, along with the inclusion of my own value positions, has imbued to fruitful discussions in relation to other parents' reflections on the act.

1.4 **The overarching theme of this inquiry**

The extent of this inquiry is large, and the overarching theme is to explore parents' singing lullabies to, with and for their children through the following primary question:

How can the parental act of singing lullabies be understood as a meaningful way of caring and relating?

Being meaningful in this context does not only relate to parents' experiences of the intended meanings of the act, but how the act is imbued and filled with meaning in a phenomenological sense, and all, in accordance with parents' utterances and experiences. This includes parents' seeing themselves as a parent, carer and singer in the activity of lullaby singing and how they experience the meaningfulness of the act in relation to their children's responses. I will elaborate on the concept of meaning in the theoretical section of this inquiry.

1.5 **Limitations**

The objective of this study has not been to draw comparisons between singing lullabies and the different socio-economical and geographical backgrounds of the population or between those parents who sing for their children and those who don't.

I subscribe to the view that looking at how parents sing to their children and the way they express their experiences, is more informative than studying what they sing. Focus is therefore not so much held on the objects (lullabies) used as on how the

parents use them and their own musicking⁸ strategies related to the meanings and characteristics of the act. Nonetheless, the powerful messages and motives that lie deep in many lullabies (see Garcia-Lorca 1928/2008; Rollin 1992), may or may not be indissociable from other domains of behaviour. In line with Blacking's visions, I will touch upon how music, in our case lullabies, becomes a part of the 'infrastructure' (Blacking 1995, p. 223) of parents and their children's everyday life portrayed through parents' own lullaby stories. I have put less emphasis on aspects purely concerning children's development and innate capacities in order to be able to dig deeper into the intersubjective and relational aspects between parents and their children. For reasons of space, a philosophical perspective of the act is not included.⁹

I have already hinted at the main focus of interest in this inquiry, but the need to define distinct and clear limitations to that will be taken into account. Although of great importance; the relationship between social class and parenting styles that has been the focus of recent investigation (Wetlesen 2000, Lareau 2002, Roopnarine and Johnson 2005), will not be touched upon in this inquiry.

Looking upon the act from different historical lines of development, from an evolutionary perspective, stressing social changes and the differences in gender and geography will not be investigated, nor if or how lullabies have evolved in the sense of a gradual development into a more complex and better form. Describing universal elements and cross-cultural aspects related to the act, and the placing 'all of humankind on equal ground' (Wallin, Merker and Brown 2000, p. 13), is also a compelling and very interesting task, but will not be the main focus of this study.

In choosing as many fathers as mothers to share their stories about their lullaby-experiences, I illuminate the concrete father's and mother's 'real' musical participation in the child's life on equal terms. Aspects of gender are only indirectly shed light upon through parents' own stories.

8 Musicking is here understood as how parents use their own musicality through the act of singing lullabies with and to their children. This correlates with Christopher Small's definition as 'an activity, something that people do and is about the meanings of performing and listening' (Small 1998, p. 2). However, this is restricted to parents' views and experiences, including children's listening and participation, which are seen through the eyes of the parents. For an overview of the concept, see Small (1998).

9 For an overview of the health-philosophical benefits of lullabies, see Bonnár (2012).

1.6 Research questions

The following research questions will be explored:

How do parents experience the act of singing lullabies to their children and what are their characteristics of this act?

What kind of uses, intentions preferences, functions, values and meanings related to the act dominate?

What kind of attitudes, ideologies and level of awareness do parents reflect from when it comes to validating their own musicality, when using singing as part of their care giving?

How do parents bring their different interactional and personal styles to the lullaby act?

The overarching theme of this inquiry has been explored through these main research questions. They illuminate aspects of parents' singing lullabies to their children and in what respect the act is experienced and considered meaningful. The basis of meaningfulness is explored through parents' three-pronged involvement - with their children, themselves and the singing of songs.

1.7 The plan of the thesis

This thesis is divided into 5 parts. Part 1 is an introduction and background; presenting personal interests, focus of attention and research questions. Part 2 presents methodological material and considerations that this inquiry is built upon. Part 3 provides the conceptual framework and presents a review of previous relevant research. Part 4 examines the empirical material. First sample descriptions of the 20 interviewed are given via profile themes, illuminating parents' values, interests and influences. Secondly, the parents' experiences are explored, described and reflected upon within three levels of complexity: *Nurturing, Building and Mastery*.

Nurturing aspects of the act refers to parents' focus on the act as part of their caregiving, their particular loving, caring and communicative way of relating to their children at bedtime, and how their singing 'nurtures' the parent-child relationship. Building refers to parents' focus on building a daily ritual, the particular ritualized

aspects of the act and its educational, cultural and social benefits. Lastly, performance-aspects together with parenting strategies and interactional styles will be examined within the structure of *Mastery*. In this chapter, the main focus is on how parents experience the act, especially in relation to parental coping, sensitivity and control. Part 5 concerns discussions around the basis of meaningfulness of the act, including implications of the empirical findings, the particular lullaby quality, its different affordances and important premises. It also addresses theoretical and practical issues of lullaby singing.

PART II

Methodology

In the experience of art is present a fullness of meaning that belongs not only to this particular content or object but rather stands for the meaningful whole of life.¹⁰

Thinking is bound to life through an inner necessity: it is itself a form of life.¹¹

¹⁰ Gadamer (1975/2004, p. 61).

¹¹ Dilthey (1905, p. 326) (translated into English by Zahavi 2003)..

2 Epistemological aspirations

2.1 Hermeneutic phenomenological understanding

By being a researcher in a hermeneutic-phenomenological mode, I attempt ‘to understand the meaning of events and interactions of ordinary people in particular situations’ (Bogdan and Biklen 2007, p. 25). Exploring the act of singing lullabies as a lived experience-phenomenon invites to a broader approach, both methodologically and theoretically.

Phenomenological and hermeneutic thinking are paired, and like phenomenology, hermeneutic phenomenology is concerned with the life world or human experience as it is lived. The focus is on illuminating details and seemingly trivial aspects within experience that may otherwise be taken for granted in our lives, with the goal of creating meaning and achieving a sense of understanding (Wilson & Hutchinson 1991). Consequently, interpretation is essential on many different levels in order to create understanding based on underlying meaning (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2009, p. 1). It is critical to this process of understanding that I seek to describe, on a deep level, attitudes, thoughts and intentions behind the uses and meanings of lullabies. In order to obtain knowledge about these aspects, the focus is held on the informants’ narratives, with their powerful access to authentic and spontaneous stories of human existence. The informants are sharing their life experiences in a potentially free and open manner, coloured by their own values and ideologies. My interest in themes—my fundamental research orientation—is not primarily epistemological or methodological, but psychological. Drawing upon Dilthey, van Manen points out that what we are dealing with is ‘the human world characterized by *Geist*—mind,

thoughts, consciousness, values, feelings, emotions, actions and purposes, which find their objectifications in languages, beliefs, arts and institutions' (van Manen 1990, p. 3).

Van Manen (1990, p. 76) points out that phenomenological and hermeneutic sources might allow us to see our limits and to transcend the confines of our interpretive sensibilities, bringing attentiveness to the personal signature that characterizes the work of human science. These sources may also help to develop an approach that brings out our strengths, and not simply serve as unfortunate private indulgence.

First, attention must be drawn to parents' own making sense of their experiences, their arguments, assumptions and self-interpretations. From the process of themes emerging, the process of 'homing in' on parent's own, genuine articulations came to the forefront. The meanings parents give to their experience with their children and their process of interpretation are 'essential and constitutive, not accidental or secondary to what the experience is' (Bogdan and Biklen 2007, p. 27). However, one needs to become as aware as possible of, and account for, various interpretive influences along the road to genuine insight about this subjective and collective phenomenon.

Gadamer's emphasis on dialogue-based knowledge, his concept of fusions of horizons and the hermeneutic circular process of understanding, has been an important aid in this process (Gadamer 1975/2004). Drawing upon the hermeneutic circle, which in a simple manner can be described as an alternation between parts and the whole and between preunderstanding and understanding, the method of analysis has undergone necessary modifications throughout the process. For Gadamer, the circle is 'neither subjective nor objective, but describes understanding as the interplay of movement of tradition and the movement of the interpreter' (Gadamer 1975/2004, p. 293). In the process of understanding, a real fusing of horizons occurs.

According to a hermeneutical thinking, it is important to challenge one's own preconceptions and ask questions about one's own established 'truths'. In a hermeneutical deeper sense, truth is not reached methodologically but dialectically (Gadamer 1975/2004). This means that it is through dialogue between our own horizon of understanding and a different one, a partner of dialogue, that one may illuminate differences and create a new and common ground for understanding. This understanding is, however, temporal, based on historical conditions, and does not present 'eternal truths'. New dialogues will again and again challenge it in the future. Inspired by Ricoeur's stance of letting different perspectives confront each other, I tend to bridge the objectivist and alethic hermeneutic tradition. In this tradition understanding is

considered as a form of life rather than a scientific discipline. The leading idea is that there is *something hidden* behind the obvious¹² that we need to *uncover*.

2.1.1 Flexibility of perspectives

To meet the sceptical spirit of our time without falling into the trap of solipsism and relativism, a flexibility of perspectives is needed. The postmodern, structural approach to the concept of meaning may be fruitful in the process of interpretation. However, I believe that meaning is found as we are constructed by the world while at the same time we are constructing this world from our own background and experiences (Lavery 2003, p. 8). There is a transaction between the individual and the world as they constitute and are constituted by each other (Munhall in Lavery 2003, p. 8).

I undertake an expressionistic in-between-position, assuming that there are elements and details of the reality that may be exposed and described. Simultaneously, there might be more 'hidden' patterns and deep structures, which need to be uncovered or 'revealed'. By this assumption, I do not have a merely constructivist standpoint, and by consciously expressing my own prejudices and subjective points of view in a reflexive, hermeneutic tradition, I distance myself from a purely positivistic tradition (Alvesson and Sköldbberg 2009).

The phenomenon of lived experience however addresses various methodological challenges. Given this thematic focus, it is inevitable that a certain circularity enters into the argument. First, there is a need to clarify the distinction between living and lived experience. Secondly, the term 'experienced meaning' will also be touched upon.

2.1.2 Living and lived experiences and experienced meaning

*Play fulfils its purpose only if the player loses himself in play.*¹³

Hermeneutic phenomenology seeks to describe what 'we normally live through, but fail to notice due to our absorption in the surrounding world' (Zahavi 2003, p. 10). A challenging task lies in capturing and documenting the complexity and immediacy of human, subjective and life experience without distorting its genuine character. Parents' vague memories of the lullaby act might lack precision, differentiation and useful details. Furthermore, a blind trust in memory may also, for good reasons, be

¹² According to the Greek notion *Aletheia* that signifies disclosure and unconcealedness (Heidegger 1962).

¹³ Gadamer 1975/2004, p. 103.

questioned (Kahneman 2012). Although parents have indistinct perspectives of the act, trivial and non-trivial informational aspects intertwined and generalizations and nostalgic considerations loaded with emotional meaning, their coherent narratives have been important predictors of experienced meaning.

As turning the focus solely on lived experience may create distant and remote descriptions of the act, an oscillation between empirical materials, based on both lived and living experience (between interviews and videotapes) has been fruitful. Moreover, the oscillation between my own first-hand experiences and parents' experiences through interviews and observations based on video data, might have enriched the material in a very constructive way and better determined the particular phenomenon (Alvesson and Sköldbberg 2009). In our case, there is both a methodological triangulation, involving more than one method in the process of gathering data, as well as a theoretical triangulation, using more than one theoretical scheme in the interpretation of the data (Denzin 2006).

The concept of experience draws upon Gadamer's thinking, when recognizing the importance of parents' own self-understanding. As Gadamer puts it, every experience is taken out of the continuity of life and at the same time related to the whole of one's life (Gadamer 1975/2004, p. 60). Gadamer is talking about the specific nature of the experience of art and how this is self-transcending. From my point of view, this could be transferred to the act of singing lullabies even though parents' singing lullabies for their children is not considered to be an artistic performance, but rather, from their point of view, a trivial, everyday-act and expression. Experience in this picture not only becomes sense perception, but also what is discovered and lived through. Thus, experience takes on the meaning that it is possible to broaden and deepen one's experience simply by reflecting on the necessary conditions of its appearance.

In addition, the lived experience, in a phenomenological, psychological perspective, is an experience that reveals the immediate, pre-reflective consciousness one has regarding events in which one has participated. However, any investigation that tries to transform them into objects of consciousness is bound to fail (Zahavi 2003, p. 4). For Heidegger, experiential life is not an object or a psychological concept, and he thinks it is a fundamental error to approach and investigate life using the same methods that are found in positive sciences (Zahavi 2003, p. 4). The task is to disclose the non-objectifying and non-theoretical self-understanding of life-experience in all its modifications and variations (Zahavi 2003, p. 4).

The thematic horizon of this act is, however, not limited to the realm of subjectivity in its strict sense, inasmuch as the lullaby 'object' and the child's responses and behaviour are part of the experience too. Moreover, the act's ideal meanings and implied potentials are also described in relation to parents' values and relevant

theoretical literature. A key term here is intersubjectivity. Intersubjectivity, insofar means a process, which includes both a need to share and an ability residing in the individual and the emotional communion or companionship, which can take place between individuals. The concept of intersubjectivity¹⁴ in relation to lullabies has a social-emotive focus and explains the communicative basis of the act in line with Stern and Trevarthen's thinking (e.g. Stern 1985, Trevarthen 1993).

The parents' ability to observe both themselves and the child is, however, a limiting factor. If the parent loses him/herself in the act and is totally involved, he/she has problems with telling what happens and details are lost. On the other hand, if he/she is too distant, detached and self-observant, he/she may lose hold of the flow of the moment, the contact with the child and the singing itself.

2.2 The pragmatic and holistic approach

According to Charles Sanders Peirce, the founder of pragmatism, we simply glide along the highway of life, and only when there is a pebble in our shoe is conscious analysis triggered (Peirce 1994). Parents' experiences reflect in one way or the other this pragmatic and non-reflective outlook on life. Peirce's theory of abduction is meant to cover both practical reasoning and scientific inquiry (Peirce 1994). This means a methodological approach that involves using the method, which appears best suited to the research topic. I have therefore granted myself the freedom to use several techniques and procedures typically associated with qualitative research. I recognize that every method has its limitations and that the different approaches can be complementary.

By making use of *creative* combinations of different frameworks in an abductive position, elements of inductive and deductive method are integrated, and each case is interpreted in the light of hypothetical ideas, which may be modified in the course of the analysis. Abduction distinguishes itself from induction and deduction

14 Drawing upon the thinking of Buber (1958), Marcel (1950) and Stern (1985), the Norwegian social psychologist Bråten distinguishes between three meanings of intersubjectivity, between a more 'immediate sense of interpersonal communion', a more 'conventional sense of joint attention to objects of reference in a shared domain of extra-linguistic or linguistic conversation' and a 'reflective intersubjectivity' that is mediated by, among other things, symbolic reference (Bråten 2006, p. 1). Trevarthen's distinction between primary and secondary intersubjectivity has similarities to this three-partite division, in which the first is dominated by a dyadic communication whereas the second refers to the entrance of a third domain (Trevarthen 1993, 2006).

by modifying and reinforcing the hypothetical idea in each case according to new and on-going observations (Alvesson and Sköldbberg 2009). To position myself as a researcher seems inevitable and necessary. In an abductive approach, I will use my preconceptions and my own experiences as a source of inspiration in the continuing work of further collections and interpretation of data. This also means that the modernistic, phenomenological focus on interior-individual, intentional subjective states is paired with the post modernistic emphasis on cultural aspects of an individual's being-in-the-world. These aspects, which are culturally moulded, conditioned and often relative, are not, from my integral point of view, absolutely culturally constructed.

The abductive approach of coming to terms with the distinction between surface and the deep structures in inductive and deductive traditions will consequently serve as a guiding principle. An abductive approach relies on contextual judgements and is context-sensitive. However, one important aspect to keep in mind, and which is a challenge to the process of interpretation and analysis, is the parental need to create coherence and meaning out of the child's inner world of experience (Stern 1985/2000). Furthermore, the parental focus on the child also reciprocates an awareness of its own affects and expressions. Observations based on videotapes may contribute to a more balanced outlook related to these problems.

According to the anthropologist Mitchell, musical settings, and the kind of information they contain, are especially holistic in character (Mitchell 2009). The holistic perspective assumes that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and originates from the Greek notion *holos*, meaning all, entire, whole, total. By including as many meaningful aspects related to a phenomenon as possible, the holistic perspective tends to avoid fragmentary presentations. This is especially important when trying to shed light on the ecology of parents singing lullabies to their children and to grasp particular instances as well as general parental considerations that accompany sleep preparations and the singing ritual act per se. The act will be presented through parents' intuitive anticipation of the whole along with the researcher's consecutive articulating of the parts.

This approach produces culturally situated and theory-enmeshed knowledge through an ongoing interplay between theory and methods, researcher and researched (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2006, p. 5). The main challenge resides in the unarticulated, intuitively grasped appreciation of reality. This becomes especially salient in the meeting with the parents. Their direct descriptions of the act of singing lullabies have great informative value, as do their reflections on their own childhood; their interpretations of current childrearing and family life are considered to be key elements to our understanding of the nature of singing in the context of bed time. Yet the fact that they are both the source and the instrument of appraisal raises certain research issues.

3 The Method of Inquiry

3.1 The explorative and qualitative research design

The method of inquiry used in this study belongs to the paradigm of qualitative research, and focuses on descriptions and explorations of the act of singing lullabies in a naturalistic setting. The parents' diverse experiences, attitudes, beliefs and perspectives are revealed in the process of analysis and interpretation (Kvale 1997). Qualitative methods are especially 'useful and powerful when they are used to discover how the respondent sees the world' (McCracken 1988, p. 21), and to understand themes of the lived daily world from the subject's own perspectives (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009).

Capturing parents' own stories using in-depth interviews, gave me the unique opportunity to look into the basic aspects and subtle nuances that are present in this situation, and how these might be related to one another. The qualitative interview is based on interpersonal interaction, and helps us understand lullaby singing among parents and their characterizations of the act. How they view their own musicality, use of lullabies, and how they interpret their children's' responses is all included through their own language and personal stories.

The study is local: the selection is based upon parents from Oslo and the surrounding areas. It has a temporal dimension: the act of singing lullabies during bedtime is put under scrutiny. It deals with the *complex network* of the lullaby act and has similarities to what Miles and Huberman point out as a cycling 'back and forth between variables

and processes'¹⁵ in the lullaby situation (Miles and Huberman 1994, p. 147). In keeping in line with other explorative studies, the emerging themes in this study have been adjusted by new understanding as well as the merging of appropriate theories into the picture as more data was collected.

The data collection process has been adapted to what emerged in the living meeting with parents as well as to the analytical process. This has led to theoretical triangulation as well as data triangulation.¹⁶ I have taken steps back and forth, in trying to uncover what is hidden there, and also to experience the phenomenon I study and identify what is common and unique as fully as possible.

However, the methodological challenges within qualitative research are many, and I will touch upon some of them.

3.2 **Qualitative methodology—heightened awareness of selected themes through reflective dialogue?**

What should be a qualitative researcher's greatest concerns? A skeletal attempt to answer the question will necessarily include: to maintain a critical and sensitive stance towards the qualitative research process itself through an ongoing, open, transparent and reflective dialogue with its different components, challenging one's own preconceptions and others' positions, without losing hold of *the meaningful whole of life*, as Gadamer crucially puts it (Gadamer 1975/2004, p. 61). According to the philosopher Buber, who adds a deeper existential dimension to Gadamer's dialogue-oriented view, an essential building block of community and companionship is the concept of dialogue (Buber 1937/2000). He stresses the premises of an authentic dialogue, which has implications for the interview situation as well as for the relationship between the parents and their children. The quality of the setting resides in the subjects' abilities to be present, receptive and attentive. People often think of dialogue as merely script, or an exchange of words. Buber presents dialogue as being a living mutual relation (Buber 1937). The importance of genuine dialogue in the process of obtaining new

15 Miles and Huberman use these characterizations in a more specific context of casual qualitative studies (see Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 147); however, I also find them appropriate and relevant to this study.

16 Triangulation is a useful technique that facilitates the validation of data through the process of cross verification from more than two sources (Bogdan and Biklen 2007).

knowledge based on interviews and conversations is highlighted, in addition to that of quality and sensibility to matters at hand.

However, I also have in mind the original, etymological meaning of the term of dialogue, which comes from the Greek word *dialogos*. *Dia* suggest a 'passing through' as in diagnosis, 'thoroughly' and 'completely'. *Logos* means the meaning of the word, created by 'passing through' as in the use of language as a symbolic tool and conversation as medium.

By diving into the ocean of concrete, lived experiences and not only playing on the seashore of abstractions and theories, the qualitative process should aim at clarity and fundamental, ontological insights. To be able to determine more clearly the consistency, validity and fruitfulness of a process based on an in-depth understanding of emerging themes, natural settings, interpretations and meanings, we need to look more concretely into the field of qualitatively obtained knowledge by focusing on its procedures and intrinsic tools. We need to understand how qualitative methodology relates to the view of reality on which it is based and to the teaching that arises from that view.

Moreover, by emphasizing the importance of context and acknowledging the 'situatedness' of both the subject who investigates and the object investigated, we may obtain a moderate, yet bright outlook on qualitatively obtained knowledge. I have not been able to immerse myself in the everyday life of the informants. However, I argue that I will be able to give an interpretive account of their lullaby experiences.

We need to define more clearly what the qualitative research process is all about, its characteristics, and more precisely, what creates its *qualities*. The qualitative researcher seeks to discover the meanings that participants attach to their behaviour; it is of essential concern how they interpret *situations*, and what their *perspectives* are on particular issues. According to Denzin and Lincoln, qualitative research is characterized by 'involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter' (Denzin and Lincoln 1994, p. 2).

Furthermore, it encourages a certain attentive awareness to the detailed and seemingly trivial dimensions of our everyday lives, in addition to an emphasis on a process in search of emergent themes, and diversity (van Manen 1990). As a researcher in this tradition, I choose to look upon the researcher as a free, self-acquainted thinker who struggles to gather new insights and understanding about everyday experiences, going behind the obvious and taken for granted themes and one who strives to attain literary qualities in science as well (Alvesson and Sköldbberg 2009).

Scientifically, the researcher meets many different rigorous demands in a never-ending pursuit of serious, creative and open-ended questions. On the other hand, if she embraces diversity, based on a type of thinking where the plurality of interpretations

and understanding may collide and bring inspiration (Ricoeur 1974), the researcher may, in a matter-of-interpretation-attitude rather than a matter-of-fact-attitude, obtain interesting and genuine knowledge. Let us for fun and horror have an idiosyncratic glimpse à la Barthes into the apparently wide range of specific, methodological underlying demands, principles, criteria, paradigms and agendas in qualitative research:

Coherence, Comprehensiveness, Penetration, Thoroughness, Appropriateness, Conceptuality, Agreement, Suggestiveness, Potential, Awareness, Allegiance, Validity, Concretization of preconditions, Reliability, Objectivity, Engagement, Processing, Interpretation, (self) Critique and (social) Critique, Usefulness, Relevance, Ethics.

All these aspects present themselves on different levels to the qualitative researcher during the process, and the different scientific problems, which emerge, might be considered overwhelming. On the one hand, flexibility and the awareness of diversity are of great importance. On the other hand, the need for concretization and clarification are strongly present. 'In order to create a reasonably accessible and interesting text', the researcher needs to make modifications and as the data may be coloured by social conventions (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2009, p. 292).

However, the quest is not so much about 'getting it right' as getting it 'differently contoured and nuanced' (Richardson 1994, cited in Alvesson and Sköldberg 2009, p. 292). For reasons of space, we will not embark upon all these routes here. Consequently, in order to go more deeply into the material, this section of methodological considerations will revolve around fundamental problems like the role of the language, interpretation and the need for reflection.

At its deepest level, thinking is metaphorical-poetic and not logic-formal. As Aristotle puts it: 'poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since the statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars' (Aristotle 1941, p. 1451).

3.3 Tools instead of rules—beyond technical fixes:

What are the tools the researcher has at hand when trying to cope with problems related to language, interpretation, tradition, inherited practices, implied values and prejudgments? First, the researcher herself is considered the most important research tool (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2009) and 'the key instrument' (Bogdan and Biklen 2007).

3.3.1 The researcher as a research tool

The researcher's *awareness* is decisive during the whole process of inquiry. In order to enhance the analytical process, the researcher's own preconceptions, biases and experiences need to be clearly acknowledged, and consciously used and dynamically confronted and modified. Hertz (1997) outlines examples of the different selves or roles that are likely to influence the research endeavour.

In this particular study, a personal lullaby-diary and a reflective journal were systematically and overtly used in naming key assumptions and influences to the research process as a way to catch personal experiential details, which are often difficult to recall in temporal distance. To understand is also to participate in the kind of scenario the other is inviting, not only as a mental process, but also as sensitive listening and participation.

My own 'participation' as a mother, singing to my own child, has been of great help in this respect. In the meeting with the parents, I used a conversation-like style and shared my own experiences as a mother, which enabled me to get in touch with the intimate world parents had with their children. I present examples of my own lullaby-experiences together with other parents' stories in the chapter on empirical exploration. Quotations from my own experiences are cited from a lullaby diary, written from 2010 until 2013, when my daughter was between the ages of 3 and 6. Parents' views differed from and correlated with my own views, and the presentation presents both these similarities and variations.

In order to define a researcher's obtainable and practical tools in relation to this particular study regardless of psychological and philosophical standpoints and preferences, I will give an overview within the limited, yet flexible frame of thinking of the acronym of RESEARCH:¹⁷

R for Reflexivity
E for Engagement
S for Sensitivity
E for Ethics
A for Awareness
R for Rigor
C for Creativity
H for Horizon

¹⁷ The acronym of 'research' is the author's own attempt to come to grips with some of the most central and crucial aspects of good research.

3.3.2 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a quality often referred to in the qualitative research literature. It is not considered as a matter of methodological control but of articulating tacitly underlying questions, motivating research and evaluating their legitimacy and relevance ((Stige, Malterud and Midtgarden 2009, p. 1508). Applying Reflexivity to my personal standpoints and the social practice of producing knowledge through interviews will be an intrinsic part of the research process (Lavery 2003).

In the reflexive process the focus needs to be held on self and social critique, whereby 'value-oriented questions' should be brought into the open and their legitimacy and relevance should constantly be reflected upon and criticized (Stige, Malterud and Midtgarden 2009, p. 1508).

The privileged role of questioning is placed in the foreground. Nevertheless, there will always be a potential for biases and selective interests on the part of the individual researcher who is 'differentially sensitive to some qualities, problems, themes' (Dewey 1929, p. 216). Using open, individual and collective dialogue may solve this problem, according to Stige, Malterud and Midtgarden. The research community has a responsibility to 'articulate, question and criticize preconceptions from different perspectives' (Stige, Malterud and Midtgarden 2009, p. 1508). On the other hand, the researcher has to be in a constant dialogue with the material at hand, and be utmost careful not to confuse preconceptions with findings (Stige, Malterud and Midtgarden 2009, p. 1508).

3.3.3 Engagement, sensitivity and ethics

From being inspired by the famous Norwegian author Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, I believe that peace is not always the best solution, but the *will* – to accomplish something. Interest and engagement are crucial to the research work, and in the quest for genuine knowledge, the inner peace of the researcher will often be at stake. Furthermore, in our context, my personal involvement, experiences and subjectivity became an intrinsic part of the study. As already mentioned my research agenda was personal and my identities as researcher and mother were intimate and intertwined. This link has both weaknesses and strengths related to a scientific research process.

Understanding the deep nature of how our relationships help shape our lives and how music can create deep human connections and intimacy between people has been a passionate driving force in my professional life. Not in a 'how-to', but 'what-is' approach, the curiosity about other parents' subjective singing experiences has been a strong interest. The point is that I need to make convincing considerations based on

reflection about 'the impact and nature of this specific engagement' (Stige, Malterud and Midtgarden 2009, p. 1508). My own experiences might easily come in-between and influence my findings. Being a mother, I am reminded of many personal experiences when other mothers are talking about theirs. In order to avoid the trap of nostalgia, I needed to be very present and keep a certain distance to the material at hand.

Ethical considerations have also had an impact upon this research project: Dealing with issues concerning the intimate, interpersonal relationships within families, the fear of being inadequate as a mother or father might be present, and a large amount of sensibility and discretion was also needed. At times when I felt that my orientation produced certain unease in the informant, I had to step back and ask differently. People have different standards about what they feel are intimate, delicate and private issues. Consequently, throughout the process, asking questions about my own genuine intentions was necessary. This brings us to the important task of fresh reflections:

Reflections means thinking about the conditions for what one is doing, investigating the way in which the theoretical, cultural and political context of individual and intellectual involvement affects interaction with whatever is being researched, often in ways that are difficult to become conscious of. When we reflect, we try to ponder upon the premises for our thoughts, our observations and our use of language (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2009, p. 269).

From my point of view, the positive outcomes of these 'fresh reflections', or what I choose to call a reflective ongoing dialogue, based upon reflexivity, engagement, sensitivity and ethics are deeply connected to the next aspect:

3.3.4 Awareness

The researcher needs to be aware of different 'forces' and 'influences' by being conscious of her 'historical' position. Conscious awareness is the starting point in building one's knowledge with reality (Lavery 2003, p. 5). It is part of the historical finitude of our being that we are aware that others that come after us will understand in a different way. And yet it is equally indubitable that the same work, whose fullness of meaning is realized in the changing process of understanding, remains just as it is the same history whose meaning is constantly in the process of being defined (Gadamer 1975/2004, p. 366).

Awareness is a relative concept. In order to understand it more fully we need to shape it through concrete examples from our study. In my opinion, the contemporary American philosopher Wilber has a definition, which comes close to its essence; 'Awareness itself is free of feelings and free of thoughts, and allows both feelings and

thoughts to float by, just as clouds float by in the emptiness of the sky' (Wilber in interview 2011). Awareness means being open to what happens, without suppressing or judging. It has its own rewards; being aware of the fullness of our experiences awakens us to the inner world of our mind and immerses us completely in our lives (Siegel 2007). I choose to bring in the concept of awareness as a characteristic of what should be a researcher's concern, a non-judgmental attention and presence transcending the dichotomy between closeness and distance.

Alvesson and Sköldberg bring *scepticism* in as a research approach in relation to reflexivity. In their perspective, scepticism signifies a questioning attitude towards knowledge and beliefs, which is evidently of great importance in the research process. Awareness, from my point of view, is being both aware of one's own scepticism and beliefs. Awareness is balance.

3.3.5 Rigor and creativity

In the search of themes and concepts that work well in the process of interpretation, I will bring in the apparently opposing tools of creativity and rigor. The concept of creativity refers to 'a colouring of the whole attitude to external reality' (Winnicott 1971/1991, p. 87), and we use the term 'Rigor' synonymous to the quest for high academic standards. By connecting the latter to creativity, we suggest that the free flux of thoughts and flexibility is maintained. It is a navigation in the continuum of the 'radical subjectivity of the whole of our experience' (Merleau-Ponty 1948, p. 163, my translation),¹⁸ and theoretical abstractions, canons and academic conventions. Consequently, Rigor can here be seen as a practical concern of respecting essential and necessary academic conventions and standards of validity, coherence and self-reflexivity.

Avoiding premature hardening of theoretical categories, the first step of interpretation included that of self-understanding and critical common sense understanding. This involves what the interviewee himself understands to be the meaning of his actions, attitudes and statements. The focus was held on how they structure their own stories, according to narrative theories, operating within the frame of everyday language. According to narrative theories, these stories unconsciously reflect the values, beliefs and myths of a culture (Levi-Strauss 1978/2005). Furthermore, biography and character are decisive elements in personal storytelling and, as in our case; in the choices parents make to create meaning in their own and their children's life (Ricoeur 1974).

¹⁸ The original quotation of subjectivity by Merleau-Ponty is; 'radical de toute notre experience' in *Sens et non Sens* (1948, p. 163).

In a critical common sense manner, I tried to describe and discuss what we can expect other people to understand from their own statements. As already mentioned, the common ground of all these themes is lived experiences (van Manen 1990), and the individual, subjective definition of the meaning of these lived experiences. According to Bruner, another crucial feature of narrative is that it ‘specializes in the forging of links between the exceptional and the ordinary’ (Bruner 1990, p. 47). This is also connected to the transferability of these unique stories, which I will discuss later.

In the process of uncovering thematic aspects, there is a certain reality-appreciation occurring in addition to what these themes actually reveal about the experience being described and what kind of question they raise. For the sake of brevity and methodological focus we will now focus on one of the themes presented in the five-step analysis model:

— *When you sing for your children, they receive wordless insights about your love (father no. 8)*

In the process of understanding the ‘why’ of the lullaby-act, this initial statement is essential. Behind the act of singing, there are parental intentions of making the best for their children, and singing is part of these good intentions. The act of lullaby is an expression of parental love and maybe even more important, through their singing, the child can feel their ‘wordless’ loving-kindness.

However, in a reflective perspective, we need to go beyond the concept of love, and see more concretely what creates this loving atmosphere. This process of ‘going beyond’ meets many challenges; describing your own love for your children demands receptivity, self-observation and reflexivity (Siegel 2007, p. 203), and a large capacity to be sensitive and mindful while interacting with the child. There are parents with both large and small capacities for reflection, sensitivity and mindfulness. Others are not conscious about what they are expressing, or they might feel it is too pathetic to mention it. As further interviews were made, I could put more flesh on the bones of further investigations to see if this was representative to what the actual parents either feel or not. At least this initial statement needed to be complemented. In addition, the more ‘hard aspects’ of the reality of being a parent also challenged and balanced the more ‘ideal’ nature of the lullaby act, and it brought an important counterweight to the ‘sweetness’ of some of the other parents’ experiences and added more nuances to the act.

Moreover, to impose a value judgement from my own way of regarding good parenting—without understanding how a parent’s behaviour and view make sense for the parent in question should be avoided. Following Rogoff, this is ‘a question of prejudging without appropriate knowledge’ (Rogoff 2003, p. 15). All my own ideas

woven together represent a meaning-system, and I need to be very conscious about how to describe parents' constructions of meanings that differ from mine. This relates strongly to the next aspect:

3.3.6 Horizon

The term horizon could easily have been placed within a play of dialectics between distance and familiarity (Alvesson and Sköldbberg 2009), interiority and exteriority (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2004) and individuality, culture and tradition (Bogdan and Biklen 2007). However, the holistic perspective tends to broaden this horizon. The horizon implies focus, movement and change, to see more than you can see (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2004). The 'whole' also refers to the tradition in which the event takes place.

Furthermore, in order to see the horizon we need to look beyond what is close at hand – not in order to look away from it but to see it better, within a larger whole and in truer proportion (Gadamer 1975/2004, p. 304). The process of fusion is a combination of old and new, a consciously bringing out and mediation of the tensions and otherness between the tradition and the present. Gadamer calls this 'historically effected consciousness' (Gadamer 1975/2004, p. 300). In the process of obtaining 'correct' understanding, the harmony of all the details with the whole should be emphasized.

3.4 **Data collection based on long Interview procedure, semi-structured in-depth interviews and video recordings**

The process of collecting data from interviews and video recordings gave similarities with the long interview process. The base of this being a critical literature review, self-examination, an open, qualitative research interview outlined with a flexible semi-structured framework prior to the interview session, and the submitting of data material to an as-you-go analysis (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). According to McCracken, these elements are part of a distinct and continuous four-step procedure mostly used in ethno-graphic studies (McCracken 1988). I have freely adopted and modified these steps.

The long interview procedure has been based upon a review of analytical categories in previous research literature (similar to step 1), a review of individual and cultural categories (a detailed and systematic appreciation of my own personal experience with

the topic of interest and identification of my own individual and cultural categories (similar to step 2), discovery of individual and cultural categories of the respondents (similar to step 3), and discovery of analytical categories in connection with previous research work (similar to step 4). This review prompts a question of the following kind: What kinds of strategies have been used in the sampling process in order to create rich data material?

3.4.1 Sampling strategy

A mixed type of sampling strategy has been used in this qualitative study. First I had a general idea of where and with whom to start, and then I solicited a few cases through convenience procedures, and then successive parents were selected based on what had already been sought. I then strategically sought out cases that manifested the phenomenon intensely, yet not in the extreme. This is often called purposive sampling (Creswell 1998, p. 118, Ryen 2002 p. 88). I also used the accidental and snowball strategies, and some informants were used to help in selection of sample members. The sample was then adjusted according to conceptualization and the evolution of the project. Sampling continued until saturation was achieved.

Using the emerging insight of what is important for this study and related to the particular focus of interest, I sought out both typical and divergent data. Interviews were based on strategic choices to ensure information-rich cases and thematic diversity. Information-rich meaning in this context means a variety of unique and personally coloured narratives about the phenomenon of singing lullabies, and diversity regarding focus of interest, levels of specificity and differentiations of the act.

From my point of view, this richness is the important quality of the sample and not, as in most quantitative studies, where quality is closely connected to the representativeness of the sample. In this line of thinking, the sample is too biased (parents from urban settings and highly educated), and it will not be possible to make generalizations about parents singing lullabies to their children on a national level. However, tendencies within this group may be described and discussed. An interesting point in this respect is that the deliberate choice of using information-rich cases that happened to be found among highly educated parents in this study reflects somewhat current research findings that imply that there is a connection between higher-educational background and musical parenting (Custodero, Britto and Brooks-Gunn 2003).

The main focus is held on parents' engagement and ability to share their experiences and express their views. This diversity could anyhow be questioned by the apparent consistency and homogeneity of the group regarding levels of reflection and high educational background. Information collected from larger groups of the

population might have contributed to a different kind of richness to which this study had no access. I have followed the lead of Rogoff, who argues that attention should shift from an 'emphasis on categorical identity as a property of individuals or groups to a focus on people's participation in cultural processes that form common practices' (Rogoff 2003, p. 80).

Parents were recruited through different social and public networks, resulting in a wide representational range of educational backgrounds and professional occupations among the participants. In reality, this meant that I both used my own networks (family, friends and colleagues from schools, theatres, health care centres and families) extensively and profited from the accumulative information I received here. I also used these networks in the recruitment of new informants from public channels like kindergartens and health-care centres. Some of the informants used have been revisited. The parents recruited from kindergartens took the initiative themselves to get in contact with me after being informed about the project through posters and kindergarten employees.

I also took advantage of the unexpected, whereby some of the informants were recruited in parks, during spontaneous talks in coffee shops and in other social settings. I chose informants who could convey their use of lullabies in a genuine and eloquent manner and who shared their specific life-stories with both originality and familiarity. This also created a diverse age range from infancy to early adolescence, and of first-born, second born and third born children and included the eventual of singing that took place. This variety could have been a challenge in creating a consistent subject of analysis. However, in line with Heidegger's view (Heidegger 1962, p. 193). I look upon life not as chaotic, but imbued with meaningful variations. Moreover, from an explorative stance, this richness and variety has been considered as fruitful.

3.4.2 Selection

This study is based on interviews with different families consisting of 20 healthy, adult participants, aged 31 and above. The majority of the respondents were born in Norway and all were native speaking Norwegians. An equal amount of mothers and fathers were interviewed, yet this inquiry has not particularly aimed at revealing eventual differences between the genders, only treating them on equal terms. However, gender differences were mentioned, within the frame of presenting the richness of the material. Mothers and fathers of only boys or girls, as well as mothers and fathers of both boys and girls were almost equally represented in the sample.

The majority of the children were healthy, and of preschool age between 1 and 6. However, the age of the entire selection of children ranged from a 1 year old child to

a 13-years old adolescent. I have chosen not to exclude the few cases at the top and bottom line, regarding age levels, because these particular cases provided rich and complex information about the nature of the act, and parents' reasons for singing, and descriptions that were both respectable and irrespectible of the child's age and developmental phases. First, second and third born children were also represented in the sample. However, the majority of interviews were based upon information about lullaby singing to first-born preschool aged children. In retrospect the interviews focused on changes during the unfolding of the ritual, overall phases during preschool years, and the ending of the ritual.

This particular group does not allow us, in the strict sense, to draw comparisons with previous studies of parents singing to their infants, due to few infants in the group. I have chosen this wide range of the children's age in order to be able to see the act and the changes taking place within a longer span of time and with a larger focus on parents' views and behaviour. By putting the act in the forefront, this becomes more a parent study, than a child one. In comparison with child-studies, I know that the children's age range is excessive in this inquiry, as the others seem to operate within shorter time spans. However, important, relevant characteristics, suggestions and findings from other empirical inquiries in naturalistic settings will be touched upon and presented in the section of theoretical frameworks.

Criteria for participation were parents who were regularly singing lullabies for their children at the time of the interviews, or that they had recently been singing regularly for their children for some years and were willing to talk about their experience. Although the criterion was of recruiting parents living in urban settings and having higher educational background, they had enough diversity from one another to enhance the possibilities of giving rich and unique stories from their particular experience of singing lullabies. The mothers and fathers who volunteered for this study represented a fairly culturally specific and homogeneous group: all of them were college educated, were or had been in heterosexual partnerships, and only one was an adoptive father. Single parents were included and treated on equal terms.

The majority of the participants lived within the city of Oslo (Grefsen, Torshov, Sagene, Vinderen, Frogner and Majorstuen and surrounding areas like Nesodden, Asker and Bærum), and had no formal musical education (only two of the informants had professional musical background). They were slightly older than the average parents in Norway (mean age = 38). This is partly due to the fact that mothers in larger cities like Oslo (myself included) are getting pregnant later in life and that the availability of young fathers living with their children is more limited, since 40 % of fathers between the ages of 25 and 34 never live with their children (see Holter Gullvåg, Svare and Egeland's report *Likestilling og livskvalitet* 2007).

Nevertheless, I acknowledge that the choice of method, the number of informants and the way of recruiting them causes some restrictions regarding representation. These restrictions implied that it would not be possible to make any geographical comparative analysis of parents living in the city or the countryside, as it would not be a national representation of parents' use of lullabies in Norway. However, there is no reason to believe that these parents were in any way atypical.

Participation in the study was voluntary. All interviews lasted on average 45 minutes. The number of participants depended on the nature of the study and the data collected along the way. I believe that I reached a point of saturation in the sense that a clearer understanding of the experience was not found through further discussions with participants.

3.5 List of the informants

- 1 Mother, (34 years, married, special educational needs teacher, full time), of a 4-year-old girl and a 2-year-old boy.
 - 2 Mother (42 years, divorced, architect and therapist, part-time, flexible time), of a 16-year-old girl and a 9-year-old boy.
 - 3 Mother, (46 years, married, supervisor, full time) of a 7-year-old boy.
 - 4 Mother, (31 years, married, 'housewife') of a 1-year-old girl.
 - 5 Mother, (41 years, divorced, nurse, part time), of 13- and 16-year-old girls.
 - 6 Mother, (41 years, married, teacher, part-time) of 13-year-old boy and 10- and 9-year-old girls.
 - 7 Mother, (35 years, married, music teacher and musician, full-time) of a 2-year-old boy.
 - 8 Mother, (42 years, married, social educator, full-time) of a 5-year-old girl and a 3-year-old boy.
 - 9 Mother, (38 years, married, student, full-time) of a 6-year-old boy.
 - 10 Mother (32 years, 'housewife' and paediatrician) of 2-year-old twin girls.
-
- 1 Father, (48 years, divorced, director in his own company, flexible hours) of 13-year-old boy and 5- and 8-year-old girls.

- 2 Father, (35 years, married, communication advisor, full-time), of a 2-year-old boy.
- 3 Father, (42 years, married, solicitor, full-time) of a 3-year-old girl and a 1-year-old boy.
- 4 Father, (60 years, divorced, teacher, full-time), of two girls and two boys between the ages of 10 and 30 years.
- 5 Father, (58 years, married, writer, flexible hours) of a 10-months-old boy (2 grown-up children from his first marriage).
- 6 Father, (39 years, married, music teacher and composer, full-time) of a 7-year-old girl.
- 7 Father, (47 years, married, engineer, full-time) of 5- and 9-year-old boys.
- 8 Father, (58 years, divorced, writer, flexible hours) of two boys and two girls between the ages of 6 and 29.
- 9 Father, (34 years, married, carpenter, flexible hours) of a 3-year-old girl.
- 10 Father, (51 years, married, IT consultant, full-time) of 7- and 5- year-old boys.

I will present descriptions of the informants and provide more information about the single case through profile themes in chapter 6. These themes shed lights upon important aspects about the situation and context in which the phenomenon of lullaby singing occurs.

3.6 Interviews

The basic data of the study is collected through 20 interviews,¹⁹ allowing the informers' own assumptions and descriptions to come to the surface, without any particular agenda external to the habitual life of the parent and child. I sat up in advance an overall interview structure and decided beforehand on some of the questions asked. I have recorded the interviews with the use of a Roland digital audio-recorder in order to be as free as possible, and to be able to grasp accentuation, emotional engagement and intonations and 'to concentrate on the topic and the dynamics of the interviews' (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, p. 179). During the initial stage of the interviews, I used an open questioning form whenever possible, paying considerable attention to the

19 On a general basis, this amount is considered to be sufficient in qualitative studies (Kvale 1997).

thematic and dynamic aspects that emerged freely during the conversation, and remained flexible in relation to parents' personal narratives and own ways of thinking. An open questioning approach paired with an active listener stance provided the fullest answers.

In order to fit both the intuitive flow of the moment, the sense of a good story, the vocabulary and linguistic styles, the educational background, and the comprehension of each subject, the following questions sometimes needed a few modifications (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, p. 134). The authors also stress the importance of 'penetrating interviews' (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, p. 134). This approach meant that I had a close follow-up of interesting answers in order to make them as deep and probing as possible. This approach was balanced by vigilance, respect and sensitivity regarding topics about parents' care giving which could easily have turned into feelings of shortcomings as a parent. Nonetheless, in order to go behind the face value of the parents' words, provocative questioning and bringing my own experiences as a mother into the conversation were sometimes necessary. This shed light on the engagements parents had in their children's life and how they justified their own choices compared to mine.

I did not avoid leading questions completely, but rather 'recognized the primacy of the question and attempted to make the orienting question explicit' (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, p. 173). In providing the reader of the interview report with an opportunity to evaluate the influence on the research findings and to assess the validity of the findings, a relatively large amount of the presented quotes in this study were preceded by questions used in the interview. As Kvale and Brinkmann puts it: 'The decisive issue is not whether to lead or not to lead, but where the interview question leads, whether it leads to new, trustworthy, and worthwhile knowledge' (Kvale and Brinkmann, p. 173). The following interview questions were developed in connection with the research-questions:

3.6.1 Research question and interview question

According to Kvale and Brinkmann, the question of why parents experience and act as they do is 'primarily a task for the researcher to evaluate' and the interviewer may go beyond the parent's self-understanding (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, p. 133). The third research-question aims at this expansion of interpretation. However, the primary task 'remains that of obtaining descriptions' so that I will have 'relevant and reliable material' from which to draw my interpretations (Kvale and Brinkmann, p. 133.). Reflections upon methodological questions were made, such as: Do the data collection tools of in-depth interviews extract information that is appropriate for the level of precision required in the analysis? To what degree are the collection

techniques likely to generate the appropriate level of detail needed for addressing the research questions? (Ryan 2005).

Research Question	Interviewer Questions
<p>1. How do parents experience the act of singing lullabies for their children before bedtime, and what are the characteristics of the act?</p>	<p>Can you tell me when you sing lullabies for your child? How do you experience it? What are you doing and performing? Can you tell me in a bit more detail about what is happening when you are singing to your child? What kind of responses do you get from your child? What happens to you? What kind of emotions and thoughts do you have about it? Does it affect you in any special way? Can you give some examples of your child's different responses and reactions in connection with the songs and the way you are singing them? Can you give some examples of what is happening inside you in connection with these songs? Can you tell me about your interaction with your child whilst singing? What kind of songs do you sing?</p>
<p>2. What kind of intentions, motivations, values, meanings and functions of the act dominate?</p>	<p>Are lullabies of any help to you and your child? Why are you singing for your child? Are there any specific intentions behind this? What kind of meanings do you connect to the act? Do you perceive it as important - for your child and for you? Why? Does lullaby singing have an impact on you and your child? How do you consider the act of singing lullabies? Have any changes occurred during the years you have been singing?</p>

Research Question	Interviewer Questions
<p>3. What kind of attitudes, ideologies and level of awareness do they reflect from when it comes to validating their own musicality, when using singing as part of their care giving?</p>	<p>What does the act contribute to regarding your overall life with your child?</p> <p>How do you consider your role as a mother or father?</p> <p>What kind of role has your musicality had in the upbringing of your child and how would you describe and define your musicality and your voice?</p> <p>Is singing lullabies a tradition in your family?</p> <p>Do you have any specific memories from them when you were a child?</p> <p>What is your motivation for singing lullabies?</p> <p>Do you have any specific thoughts about it apart from this? Do you consider it as an integrative part of your lifestyle and your beliefs in life?</p>
<p>4. How do parents bring their different interactional and personal styles to the lullaby-act?</p>	<p>How do you consider your voice and musical ability in relation to your interaction with your child?</p> <p>Can you describe your interpretation, style and presence during the act?</p> <p>Can you describe how you normally sing particular songs?</p> <p>How do you perform and sing in relation to your child's presence and responses, and the particular going to sleep setting?</p>

Table 1. A schematic overview of the research and interview questions

In using open-ended questions and a free conversation style, I paid attention to the features and themes of parent's own stories, and to the importance, focus and experience of meaning they related to singing lullabies. Based upon my own preconceptions, 'legitimate prejudices',²⁰ and attitudes, which have been both theoretically

²⁰ Gadamer's rather positive view of prejudices and his consideration of *legitimate* prejudices as conditions of understanding has been an important aspect to have in mind. He points out that if we want to do justice to man's finite, historical mode of being, it is necessary to fundamentally rehabilitate the concept of prejudice and acknowledge the fact that there are 'legitimate prejudices' (Gadamer 1975/2004, p. 278). What appears to be a limiting prejudice from a viewpoint of the absolute self-construction of reason in fact belongs to historical reality itself (Gadamer 1975/2004, p. 278). Legitimate prejudices are for Gadamer closer to one's own reason if we avoid overhastiness and keep track of the superior breadth of vision (Gadamer 1975/2004, p. 279).

driven and coloured by my first-hand experiences as a mother, I managed to hold a balance between dialogue, everyday conversation and a more ‘penetrating’ interview technique based upon the abovementioned questions. This means a variety of ‘techniques’; i.e. listening to the narratives, which parents had displayed during the interviews, sharing my own stories, letting their comments, remarks and comparisons come to the surface. Questions pertaining to different fields of existential philosophy, music and child psychology, semiotics, anthropology and sociology were also introduced.

In trying to avoid overhastiness, which ‘is the source of errors that arise in the use of one’s own reason’ (Gadamer 1975/2004, p. 279) and ethical transgression, I conducted the interviews in a more emphatic than confrontational form and style. In the process of analysis I used my own critical sense more expansively in order to avoid entanglement in traditional parenting epistemology.²¹ However, some of the questions asked opened up new territories for parents’ reflections and they often told me after the interviews that their consciousness and knowledge about the subject matter had increased.

Responses to the questions varied, ranging in length from just keywords to longer narratives and stories. The questioning covered the following areas:

- ⊕ Lullaby practices in musical parenting
- ⊕ The role of singing before bedtime
- ⊕ The use, functions, values and meanings of lullaby singing
- ⊕ Parents’ attitudes and views
- ⊕ Musical background and musicality
- ⊕ General care giving and parenting
- ⊕ Children’s preferences, needs and behaviour
- ⊕ Parents’ beliefs and behaviour
- ⊕ Children’s sleeping and bedtime-routines
- ⊕ Parents’ and children’s’ mental and emotional states and wellbeing
- ⊕ Socio-demographic information about the parents

21 Gadamer raises the importance of asking epistemological questions in a fundamentally different way in order to escape entanglement in traditional epistemology (Gadamer 1975/2004, p. 278).

3.6.2 Informants revisited and second interviews

In order to gain more 'advanced' information as the process of interpretation of data materials was shaped, I took the opportunity to question 10 of the informants twice. This meant that I was able to focus on changes, which took place within the act between the first and the second interview. This also opened up for both a reporting back and presentation of my initial interpretive account to the informants. In the cases where this was different from their own self-interpretation, it opened up possibilities for the informants that they may not have realized on their own. On the other hand, the danger of distorting the subject matter beyond recognition was also limited by this approach.

For practical reasons, I deliberately chose to conduct the second interviews within 1 year, and had also not been able to interview all of the informants. Due to the enormous amount of data collected, I had to limit it to 10. During the second interview, I also let the parents speak as free as possible, but this time asking them more thoroughly about certain categories like motivation, intentions and meanings, recognition, repetition, ritual, improvisation, changes, structure, affection, presence, regulation and wellbeing. One year later, during the second interview, I learned that four of the ten informants had, for different reasons, stopped singing to their children. This will I come back to.

3.6.3 Transcriptions

The interview data was transcribed in full, categorized and then translated into English. The parents' statements have been transcribed word-by-word; emphasis of intonation and emotional expression of laughter and sighing are included. Even though the core meaning of the informant's utterances is retained, I acknowledge that translating the original interview to another language is not ideal, and that some nuances are probably lost in translation. In trying to maintain some of the linguistic, oral and conversational characteristics, I have transcribed all the interviews in line with what makes them coherent, readable and easily understandable. This meant that the transcriptions have been adapted to a correct written form. There were few rephrasings of the informants' statements, but some repetitive and incoherent verbatim were omitted. All the informants were eloquent and knowledgeable in different ways, which has led to very rich and varied empirical material.

A reasonable recording quality was achieved. However, making interviews in coffee shops, led, on one occasion, to difficulties in hearing a word that the informants had said, due to external circumstances. However, no substantial information was lost. In order to assure the validity and reliability of the transcription, I returned again and

again to registering the interviews. In order to avoid discrepancies, I also gave the parents access to the transcriptions and invited them to give comments afterwards by email or by phone. I purposely chose the natural, urban, café setting, as conversations often float more freely there. Three of the interviews were, for practical reasons, conducted in parents' homes. I have been as sensitive and aware as possible of the nuances, contrasts and discontinuities of meaning during the transcription process knowing that linguistic constitutions of reality have their limits. Bringing in the contextual understanding in line with Wittgenstein's broad concept of language and meaning has added a greater value in this process (Wittgenstein 1953/1978).

3.6.4 Translations of quotations

To ensure precision in the translation process and as an important quality check, all the quotations translated from Norwegian to English were done in collaboration with an external native-speaking English translator. I insisted on the importance of taking part in this process as a researcher, since the translation process also is part of the interpretation process and therefore cannot be outsourced. This is also based upon the broadly applied emphasis on the overall message that needs to be conveyed rather than the particular words themselves. Thus instead of paying attention to the verbal signs during the process of translation, the focus was held more on the informational contents. Moreover, all English translations of Norwegian lyrics are my own unless indicated otherwise.

3.6.5 The video recordings

Parents are 'actively engaged in creating their world', regardless of their level of self-knowledge and ability to conceive their experiences. Kahnemann reveals in his inquiries (2012), that the remembering self (storyteller) dominates the memory of the experiencing self and this observation is problematic. Video recordings are therefore an important supplement.

Video recordings offer a unique opportunity for analyzing interpersonal and nonverbal aspects occurring between the parent and the child. However, given the intimate character of singing lullabies, I invited the parents to become 'co-researchers' in documenting their singing practice based on video shoots during an evening, in order to uncover some possible 'hidden' aspects about performance and repertoire. This is an approach used in previous parent-child research (e.g. Custodero 2006). The wealth of information, however, makes video analysis a time-consuming process (Kvale and Brinkman 2009, p. 179).

By filming 5 parent-child dyads during bedtime routines, I had the opportunity to observe the act several times, and the prosody provided insight into the parents' state, their care giving attitudes and awareness of the child's signals. The regular filming sessions took place by appointment at the family's convenience in two filming sessions per child, lasting between 10 minutes and one hour of essentially continuous filming. Whenever possible the camera was left running in an optimal position without the presence of other persons in the room. On two occasions, the other parent was filming the session, and was as much as possible in the background when filming. The absence of the researcher during the filming was deliberate, because I assume as already mentioned, that in this intimate setting the presence of the researcher would change the atmosphere and influence the parent's and the child's behaviour. On the other hand, this made it difficult to film from different angles and put limitations on what the shooting could grasp during the moment. However, the main intention of filming was to have an overall look at the act in the present moment.

The resulting footage amounted to approximately 5 hours of digital video recordings, featuring highly diverse behaviour. The entire corpus was subjected to three separate content analyses focusing on different behavioural aspects of interest; the first inventory tried to analyze the situation 'as a whole' and the overall atmosphere in parent-child interaction at bedtime. The second inventory tried to identify musical and physical parameters related to the act, including rhythmic, repetitive and iterative behaviour of any body part in addition to the child's behaviour in connection to this. A third focused on the 'how' aspects of the act, focusing on interactional quality and styles.

Given the scope of this inquiry (the meaningfulness of lullaby singing), the video data was not submitted to a detailed 'split second' or acoustic analysis (see i.e. Stern 1985, Malloch 1999, Malloch and Trevarthen 2009), but mainly used as a validating and discerning tool in connection with the parents' statements during the stimulated recall and interviews.

However, as temporal and detailed narratives, descriptions and overall annotations of the parents' and children's interactional style and behaviour, the video material was also sometimes used as a supplement in order to be able to describe in more details different behavioural aspects of interest.

The data of these five dyads had a primacy of content related to the subject of this study, and we cannot be certain that the descriptions of the discrepancies between interviews and videotapes-observations and analysis of important 'how'-premises of the act were similar to the other dyads, as we did not film these.

3.6.6 Stimulated recall

Stimulated recall (SR) provides an opportunity to maintain the real-life context (Lyle 2003, p. 873). SR is a research method that allows the investigation, prompted by a video sequence of cognitive and affective processes, by inviting participants to recall their concurrent thoughts and feelings during an event. Stimulated recall is by definition directed toward the past (Tochon 2008, p. 424). Viewing past actions is a way to remember one's past thoughts with greater validity than recall done without the benefit of video feedback stimulation (Tochon 2008, p. 424).

The object of reflection on some event is different from the way the event originally appeared in the consciousness of the individual involved. The shift from remembering and studying past thinking to objectifying the thoughts emerging from direct viewing and eliciting meta-cognitions about them (Tochon 2007, p. 424), has a potential of making more precise parents' implicit knowledge from the question: What were you thinking in this particular situation? In the lullaby-context, the parent is considered to be an expert as long as 'care is taken to reduce memory decay and make the questions consonant with the process being investigated' (Lyle 2003, p. 875).

This means that theoretical and technical categories were avoided and a common-sense language was used. However, Lyle points out that there are significant challenges in incorporating SR into research designs. Especially, the fundamental problem of accessing individuals' cognitive activity will be present (Lyle 2003, p. 867). In this study stimulated recall was used to facilitate parents' conversations about their own lullaby singing practice.

The influence of the researcher was minimized in order to avoid contamination of the research process, having in mind that my own previous lullaby singing and proximate involvement could have been problematic (Lyle 2003, p. 869-873). However, important issues about their experiences and beliefs were raised in direct contact with the video material at hand, and due to our shared understanding of lullaby singing, it was possible for the parents to describe their thoughts and behaviour without 'feeling that they had to reduce them for explanation and thus distort the flow of their verbal accounts' (Lyle 2003, p. 873). Yet, by taking into account the large amount of information collected from the data, selective attention was necessary. I acknowledge the significance of the questions used to elicit the verbal responses and stimulate parents' reflections and interpretations (Lyle 2003, p. 873).

This approach is especially suitable in grasping more introspect-and interpersonal aspects of singing lullabies for the analysis processes. During conversations related to the video material, important nuances of the act were put under scrutiny. These nuances were hard to grasp on the basis of an ordinary interview session. I used the

video material to talk about important aspects like stability and changes within the act, as well as performance aspects like timing, affects and different dynamics. I talked with the parents by appointment shortly after the video recordings were made.

3.7 Information, consent and confidentiality

This study was submitted to the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) December 2010, and was approved by them in the beginning of February 2011 (appendix 3). All the informants received information about the focus of the research in a written document. Before appointments were made, I told them that their participation would be kept anonymous. They could withdraw from the study at any time without consequences (Appendix 4). This information was delivered prior to the interview-sessions, and they had to give their written consent before starting the process. The consent form was archived in a file kept in a locked cabinet in my office. My data material included MD-recordings of the informant's voices. These were also kept in a locked cabinet until they had been transcribed and subsequently deleted.

The video material was also locked up. The participants from video sessions consented to the material being used at conferences within the three-year-period of the PhD-project. Specific approval and consent from the informants was obtained if extracts including the informant's voice were to be published. The log and the interview transcriptions were saved on memorysticks and also kept locked up until they were made anonymous by the removal of all names of people and places. As reporting rich qualitative data may compromise confidentiality (McLeod 2001, p. 15), I therefore limited all the biographical information to a minimum without losing hold of the specificity of the child's and the parents' age, gender and profession. I have used the terms of 'fathers' and 'mothers' along with 'girls' and 'boys'.

The purpose of the interviews was not to have the informants talk about sensitive themes related to parenting or their life in general. There were situations during the interview-process when I had to think twice, withdraw and let them decide whether they wanted to continue to talk about their personal life circumstances and how this influenced the act of singing lullabies (i.e. a father of a boy with cancer). The parents were always in charge of which personal issues they wanted to 'reveal' of personal issues related to the act, and I didn't encourage them to pursue themes, which I personally found difficult to talk about, or what I perceived as creating tensions during the conversations.

It was not clear when the data collection was finished and when the analysis started. I have chosen to describe the act of singing lullabies through parents' own narratives. This approach needs some comments and clarifications on the analysis and will be treated in the following subsection of analysis:

3.8 Analytic approach

The core of qualitative research lies in the related processes of describing phenomena, classifying it, and seeing how the concepts interconnect (Dey 1993, p. 46). An analysis is a process that entails balancing back and forth between the data collection, the analysis of the data and the relevant theories, concepts and literature as well as studies of previous research in the field. The analysis did not begin after the interviews were finished, but was rather a process that started at the very beginning of the inquiry (Kvale 1997). Description lays the basis of analysis, but analysis also lays the basis for further description (Dey 1993, p. 46). Furthermore, Kvale and Brinkman point out that the analysis 'rests on more secure ground' if it is built into the interview situation itself, in a form they call interpretation 'as you go' (Kvale and Brinkman 2009, p. 190).

Van Manen offers a specific way of analyzing lived experience with the emphasis on emerging themes (1990). This is mainly based on an inductive analysis process, where themes emerged from the data and were not based on predetermined categories. Since the interview questions already contained similar categories, the existence of my own theoretical preconceptions made it somewhat difficult to claim that the themes emerged 100% directly from the empirical data. The categories originated from the empirical material and were then *shaped* by preliminary categories and preconceptions. Van Manen's approach has been of help in the initial process of the analysis. In addition, Giorgi offers a four steps meaning-condensation, widely used and recognized in psychological contexts, and it also has relevance to this study (Giorgi 1997, 2007, 2009). He draws upon Husserl's reflective phenomenology, whereas this study is based upon a pragmatic approach to the subject matter and the avoidance of strong epistemological claims.

The process of analysis is a systematic search for the original meaning of a phenomenon, and also an emphasis on *conflicts* in interpretation and a critical stance in order to obtain meta- perspectives of meaning-structures (Ricoeur 1974). The analytic procedure in this inquiry draws upon multiple voices and is a strongly modified version of Giorgi's analytical four steps model (Giorgi 1997, 2007, 2009).

3.8.1 The five steps model of analysis

I have implemented the above-mentioned influences in a model that comprises five steps. These steps have been relevant during the whole research process, from the elaboration of research and interview questions to the final analysis. Nevertheless, pairing the ‘as you go’-view with a reflective analysis approach, the interview was far from analyzed when the sound recorder was turned off (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). When reading each transcript whilst making notes in the margin while continuously carrying out the categorization of themes, I tried not to lose focus on the original interview-text during the analysis, and the meaning of each statement was decisive. While the analytical process described herein is presented in a structured and step-by-step fashion, it is important to note that the process itself was more often than not cyclical and circular rather than linear. Analyses moved from the broadly conceptual to keywords and then on to a taxonomic analysis of related theoretical categories/descriptors:

- ⊕ To grasp the content intuitively as a whole.
- ⊕ Divide the content into meaning units that cover it as a whole.
- ⊕ Translate the language used in the interviews into a conscious and scientific language, based on theoretical materials.
- ⊕ Meaning units undergo transformation in order to open up to a more general and synthesized meaningful world.
- ⊕ Contrast the meaning structure with other adjacent theories.

1. Identifying main emerging themes	(Mostly) inductive process
2. Identifying different components and categories	(Mostly) inductive process
3. Connecting themes and categories with theoretical frameworks.	Abductive process
4. Synthesizing themes and categories	Abductive process
5. Final meta-revision of themes and categories in relation to theoretical framework and findings	Abductive process

Table 2.

3.8.2 The five steps of analysis in the meeting with the empirical data

By entering the experience in wonder and by withholding ‘any existential claims’ (Giorgi 1997, Giorgi & Giorgi 2003), main emerging themes initiated by open-ended questioning and traced directly from the data and the responses were taken precisely as they were described. The first step was to develop thorough and comprehensive descriptions of the phenomena, known as ‘thick’ description (e.g. Geertz 1973, Dey 1993). In contrast to ‘thin’ descriptions, Denzin suggests that a ‘thick’ description encompasses the context of action, the intentions of the actor and the process in which action is embedded (Denzin 1978 in Dey 1993, p. 47). Evidence of the resonance (and dissonance) of the theme was included in regard to each of the identified relevant dimensions (Hoffman Davis 2003, p. 214)²²:

- ⊕ Emerging theme 1 (prototypical example: love)
- ⊕ Relevant dimension 1 (Nurturing).
- ⊕ Evidence 1 (e.g. the story about a mother and her caring love for her daughters).
- ⊕ Evidence 2 (another resonant example/story).
- ⊕ Evidence 3 (another resonant example/story).
- ⊕ Dissonance (i.e. parental ambivalence when they sometimes feel the act as a pure duty and just want to make the act as short as possible).

The analysis, which involved identifying keywords, moved from the macro, multi-dimensional level to the micro level. The keywords that derived directly from the emerging themes were then clustered into descriptive categories. This process generated outcomes around themes, such as Care (meeting the child’s needs and supporting its development), Relationship (contact and family bonds), Routine (fixed frames and structure) and Coping (supporting the parent’s sense of mastery and control), which could then be applied and discussed in relation to, for example, the theory of communicative musicality (Malloch and Trevarthen 2009). This was done in order to chart these relationships.²³

²² Hoffmann Davis describes a methodological approach based on narratives, but in the different context of Portraiture (Hoffman Davis 2003, p. 214).

²³ This step differs from a pure phenomenological approach, which carries ‘no theoretical weight’ (Giorgi 2009, p. 179), as it uses theoretical material as conscious hermeneutic lenses through which the empirical material is analyzed. However, the common point is that the analysis breaks with the psychological naturalistic and causal emphasis, as it presupposes

The fourth step consisted of synthesizing or condensing these four aspects of the act, as lived experience, along with their different components and underlying categories. Without blending into academic fantasy, this step ended with a series of transformed meaning-units based upon 'free imaginative variation' and 'rendering implicit factors explicit' (Giorgi 1997, Giorgi & Giorgi 2003). By and large, this process was based upon balancing reflections about what is truly essential about them. The term essential is here taken to mean the most essential meaning for a particular context (Giorgi 1997, Giorgi & Giorgi 2003), and reflection is seen as a connection between practice and theory. When facing theories that create frictions to the empirical material, the fifth step was then again related to the act grasped as a whole.

The progress to higher levels of measurements, I had to improve or refine my conceptualization of the data. The final meta-revision was linked to the overall focus of the meaningfulness of the lullaby act, and the themes of *Nurturing*, *Building* and *Mastery* emerged from the elaboration of the overt and implied meanings that parents attached to the act. The main focus was held on the qualitative assessments of parents' statements. These assessments were from my point of view likely to reflect the interests parents bring to their singing and the use they want to make of it.

From my point of view, to describe and interpret data in music research, it is more important to use meaningful categories than to obtain precise measures. These categories mentioned can probably not be considered to be mutually exclusive and exhaustive. However, they are discrete and focused, and points towards important distinctions of parents' singing that illuminate both parents' taken-for-granted assumptions of the act as well as their considerations and emphases, which all together form the basis of meaningfulness of the act. These categories meet the three criteria for being elements that form the basis of meaningfulness: 1) They contribute to differentiating the act's different layers of meanings. 2) They are pursued by some of the parents for their own sake, and not necessarily to gain any of the other elements. 3) They are not necessarily measured independently of the rest of the elements, as parents very often experience the act in a very holistic and global way, but they are discrete features and nuances of the act that make sense to pay attention to, as the parents very often emphasize their value or importance directly or indirectly.

that 'there is prepersonal subjectivity constituted meanings that are of interest to psychology, and can be properly understood within the context of subject-world relations without being naturalistic' (Giorgi 2009, p. 188).

3.9 Interpretation and uncovering of thematic aspects

3.9.1 Plurality of interpretations and challenges

The awareness of the plurality of interpretations is essential: 1. Personal interpretation, 2. Common-sense interpretation, and 3. Theoretical interpretation. In a phenomenological-hermeneutic way, there is a need to stress that 'any description is already an interpretation within a certain context' (Stige, Malterud and Midtgarden 2009, p. 1509). This includes discussions about 'the possibility of multiple interpretations and why and how certain interpretations could be more adequate than others' (Stige, Malterud and Midtgarden 2009, p. 1509). In an attempt to describe the validity of the parental act of singing lullabies, I draw upon Peirce's pragmatic approach (Peirce 1994). This inquiry balances and unifies these three above-mentioned ways of interpretation through what I choose to call human sensemaking as a researcher. This also includes theoretical knowledge and expertise. In fact, the philosopher seems to consider science as just a special case of human sensemaking.

As with all good history, there are also many possible good interpretations of important details like those occurring in the bedtime situation when parents are singing to their children. Hence, many details and nuances are lost and parents' memory and recall are not always differentiated enough. However, I believe that 'how' parents talk about the act of singing lullabies is of great interest and eventual ambiguities and tensions between what they say and what is observed on videotapes will create nuanced pictures of the act, which then become interesting points of discussion.

The disjunction between a person's actual experienced meaning and his or her narrated description has, according to Polkinghorne, four sources: (a) the limits of language with regard to capturing the complexity and depth of experienced meaning (we will come back to this later), (b) the limits of reflection with regard to bringing notice to the layers of meanings that are present outside of awareness, (c) the resistance of people to reveal fully the entire complexity of the felt meanings of which they are aware, and (d) the complexity caused by the fact that texts are often a co-creation of the interviewer and participants (Polkinghorne 2007, p. 10).

3.9.2 The limits of language

Language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs, and understanding occurs in interpreting (Gadamer 1975/2004, p. 389).

The problem of language is evident as in all communicative interaction full of movements, nonverbal communication and sensed and felt experiences. This poses an even greater problem in parent-child interactions, where facial expressions and other nonverbal modalities are highly present. Theories of attunement, holding, mirroring and communicative musicality and narratives also stress this importance (Winnicott 1971, Damasio 1999, Stern 2004, Siegel 2007, Malloch and Trevarthen 2009). The kind of musical interactional style and communicative processes that this inquiry is most interested in appears enormously complex and lend themselves to multiple interpretations.

There is no singularly correct interpretation or ideal parental conjecture. Moreover, when parents are communicating their own experiences of singing lullabies to their children, many are not verbally prepared to describe what happens. Language in itself puts certain boundaries to their descriptions of the non-verbal world that is such an intrinsic part of the act of singing lullabies. I will return to these challenges in the section on validity in narrative studies.

Parents' intentionality and experienced, felt meaning of the act is also more complex and layered than the concepts and distinctions inherent in language. I tried to assist the parents 'to display the intricacy of their experiences by encouraging the use of figurative expressions' (Polkinghorne 2007, p. 10) in order to convey more of the felt meaning's complexity and allow time for them to 'explore reflectively their felt meaning' (Polkinghorne 2007, p. 11).

Parents often came up with metaphors and images in order to describe what is going on in the moment of lullaby singing. The power of metaphoric utterances has been a valuable source in describing a reality often inaccessible to direct description. Ricoeur even suggests that 'seeing-as', which is the nature of metaphors, both as sense and reference, could reveal the 'being-as' on the deepest ontological level (Ricoeur 1984, p. xi). Drawing upon Aristotelian thinking, this, however, requires parents who are perceptive to resemblances. Furthermore, the stimulated recall and the time between the first and second interviews also provided time for the parents to reflect and deepen their responses.

Temporality and narrative are important keywords here. Ricoeur says that time becomes human time to the extent that it is organized after the manner of a narrative, whereas narrative, in turn, is meaningful to the extent that it portrays the features of temporal experience. This circle of narration and temporality is not a vicious circle, but more like two halves that mutually reinforce one another (Ricoeur 1984, p. 3). A fuller account of temporality will take us too far afield, so I let it be it in order to focus on the nature of interpretation.

3.9.3 Experienced meaning as body and psyche-perception

Another challenge resides in grasping the parents' *experienced meaning* of the act. The language descriptions given by the parents are not considered as a mirrored reflection. The stories they narrate may omit or obscure aspects of the meaning of experiences. However, the challenges being how well these stories are understood to express the actual meaning experienced by the parents (Polkinghorne 2007, p. 10). Experienced meaning is not simply a surface phenomenon: it permeates the body and psyche of participants. I will not, as in a Freudian manner, be able to draw attention to unconscious and preconscious dimensions of experiential meanings, even though I am trying to grasp what might be initially hidden to the participants themselves. Encouraging the parents to remain with their 'reflective gaze' and 'to deepen aspects of the experience', 'focused listening' (Polkinghorne 2007, p. 11) has been important. These guidelines together with open, explorative questioning, have aided access to aspects that were even hidden to the parents themselves.

3.9.4 Protection of positive self-image

The parents' resistance to revealing self-explorations, feelings and understandings to others could have presented a problem. Some of the parents filtered out parts of their own negative experiences when they were children, and focused only on the good memoirs. However, in many instances, and on their own initiative, parents were surprisingly open to sharing their negative experiences. They exposed their feelings of lack of time and energy, 'auto-pilot' singing, ugly singing, irritation and manipulations, especially after I had shared my experiences and 'shortcomings' as a mother. This could have put my, as well as their, socially desirable self-image at stake.

3.9.5 Interviews as creations of an interaction between interviewers and participants

'The text might very easily be an artefact of the interviewer's agenda and the tone of the interviewer's demeanour' (Polkinghorne 2007, 12). This problem or possible inclination should to be taken very seriously. I will reflect in one way or the other the parents' responses and they might, to various degrees be sensible to my body movements, personal agendas and voice intonations in looking for indications of whether their responses were acceptable. However, in my experience the parents were very autonomous and independent, and had confidence in telling me what they had in mind. By assuming an open listening stance, acknowledging that they are the only

ones who have access to their experienced meaning, and, carefully attending to the unexpected and unusual in their responses, I could assist in ensuring that the parents' own voices were heard and that the text was not primarily the interviewer's own creation (Polkinghorne 2007, p. 12).

3.10 Validity issues in narrative-based knowledge

According to narrative theories, history, culture, biography and character are decisive elements in personal story telling and, in our case, also pertains to the choices parents make to create meaning in their own and their children's life (Ricoeur 1974). Narratives may be considered to be vectors of intentionality, providing the impulse to connect experiences into meaningful, memorable and recognizable wholes (Bruner 1996). Knowledge based on narratives is the way people make sense of their social reality and their lives. It is based upon a belief in narratives or stories as primary and valid structures through which personal identities, attitudes, ways of thinking and acting are framed and shared (Bruner 1996).

The interview is a key site for 'eliciting narratives that inform us of the human world of meaning' and 'it is a powerful means of making sense of our social reality and our own lives' (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009 p. 55). In the interview process, parents have spontaneously produced narratives on lullaby singing, and this has given access to the 'manifold local narratives embodied in storytelling' (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, p. 55). The issue of validity in this context relates to one's own research 'community protocols' about what, in its view, is acceptable evidence and strong, powerful and effective arguments and claims in relation to these narratives (Polkinghorne 2007, p. 5). However, I borrow Packer and Addison's 'pragmatic criterion' (Packer and Addison 1989 in Giorgi 2007, p. 69), which states that in Heidegger's view 'a good interpretation will not provide validated knowledge, or timeless truth, but instead an answer to the practical or existential concern that motivated our inquiry'.

Based on the thinking of Rosch, Murphy and Habermas, Polkinghorne points out that the concept of validity is a 'prototype' concept rather than a 'definitional concept' (Polkinghorne 2007, p. 4). The validity is a function of *intersubjective judgment*. A statement's validity rests on a consensus within a community of speakers. Validity judgments make use of a kind of 'communicative rationality' that is non-rule-governed that differs from rule-governed purposive rationality (Polkinghorne 2007, p. 5). It is an argumentative practice (Polkinghorne 2007, p. 6). Drawing upon Perelman's ideas, he also addresses 'guidelines of persuasive arguments', which I have implemented as far

as possible in this inquiry: I lead the readers through quotations from the collected text and argue for the adequacy of the interpretation of these quotations. I try to present and make transparent the thought procedure that informed the interpretation of the texts, providing the context in which the text was made and the way my own background experiences produced understandings through the interaction with the text (Polkinghorne 2007, p. 8).

The threats particular to narrative inquiry and qualitative research are in general related to two areas: the differences in people's experienced meaning and the stories they tell about this meaning and the connection between storied texts and the interpretation of these texts (Polkinghorne 2007, p. 1). Narrative research is the study of stories, in our case: oral stories obtained in interviews based upon lived experience. Stories and experiences are ubiquitous, appearing as historical accounts (Polkinghorne 2007, p. 1).

In particular, my concern is the relation of the study of parents' stories to the idea of validity. I posit myself within a reformist way of thinking when it comes to obtaining knowledge, and hypothesize that evidence, such as personal descriptions of life experiences and 'temporal unfolding of human life' can serve as knowledge about neglected, but significant areas of the human realm (Polkinghorne 2007, p. 2). This requires special 'validating procedures' and is related to the 'believability of a statement or knowledge claim' (Polkinghorne 2007, p. 4). Moreover, there are degrees of validity rather than a claim to determine whether something is valid or not. This is related to the strengths and power of arguments and intersubjective judgments. This brings us to the kind of *communicative rationality* that is non-rule-governed (Habermas 1984) and which is dependent on the background beliefs, accepts and assumptions of the research community to which this study belongs. What they accept as *legitimizing evidence* and *sound reasoning* is crucial. Polkinghorne (2007) proposes that validating knowledge claims is not a mechanical process, but, instead, is an argumentative practice (p. 6).

I undertake my inquiry to have something to say about the human, musical parent-child- condition and interaction at bedtime, requiring that I provide *sufficient justification* to my readers for the claims I make. Readers should be able to follow the presented arguments so as to make their own judgment as to the relative validity of the claim (Polkinghorne 2007, p. 6). Consequently, I need to consider, and anticipate the kind of evidence and argument the research performance will yield to justify readers' acceptance of the plausibility of the resulting claims. Validity is about the likelihood and probability that the claim is so (Polkinghorne 2007, p. 6). I will defend the appropriateness of the meaning attributed to the words and phrases of the text by providing the context in which they are made, 'demonstrating' (Perelman in

Polkinghorne 2007, p. 8) and describing ways in which my own background experiences produced understanding through interaction with the different data material.

Validity is also related to transparency, which has led me to make available the steps of the process of analysis and convey at least some idea of how the conscious thinking process behind this relates to the empirical data.

3.11 Summary

This inquiry draws upon a hermeneutic phenomenological, non-dualistic, practice- and dialogue-oriented process of understanding and thinking. From parents' own narratives, information is gained about the meanings and meaningfulness of the act. The threats to validity arise in narrative research because the language descriptions given by participants of their experienced meaning are not mirrored reflections of this meaning. By revisiting the participants, and through stimulated recall and video observations, and through 'penetrating interviews' (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009), I tend to get a broader picture of the disjunctions between the actual experienced meaning and a) the limits of language, b) the limits of reflection, c) the resistance of people because of social desirability to reveal fully the entire complexity of the felt meanings, and d) the complexity caused by the fact that texts are often a co-creation of the interviewer and the participant.

The study has an explorative and qualitative research design, where information was gained through in-depth-interviews and video recordings. Drawing upon van Manen's emerging-themes-approach, Giorgi's psychological phenomenology and Ricoeur's emphasis on conflicting theoretical views as partners of dialogue, the process of analysis was conducted through five steps. Validity issues in narrative inquiry were raised and taken into account. The importance of reflexivity, engagement, sensitivity, ethics, awareness, rigor, creativity and horizon during the research process was addressed in order to transparently elicit reliable information about the lullaby act. The idea of a scientific open-minded approach to where the data may lead was pursued.

PART III

Theoretical considerations

It is our common musicality that makes possible for us to share time meaningfully together, in its emotional richness and its structural holding (Malloch and Trevarthen 2009, p. 5).

4 Research literature

4.1 Literature search results

During fall 2011 and spring 2012, I conducted a structured database search for references in tandem with a review of the existing relevant research, which had been recommended by research fellows from various interdisciplinary fields. The most suitable databases were BIBSYS, WorldCat, RILM, IIMP, PsychInfo, ERIC and JSTOR. The search strings were as follows: lullabies + parenting, lullabies + children, lullabies + wellbeing, musical parenting + lullabies, parent + singing + lullaby, lullaby + health, lullaby + care and variations on these. I intended to create queries that reflected my holistic, open approach to the phenomenon of lullaby singing; from there, I prioritised and delineated the queries based upon the criterion of relevance to the empirical material in this inquiry:

BIBSYS (articles and books)

- ⊕ Lullabies + parenting: 0 references
- ⊕ Musical parenting: 0
- ⊕ Musical parenting + lullabies: 0
- ⊕ Lullabies + care: 0
- ⊕ Lullabies + meaning: 0
- ⊕ Lullabies + health: 0
- ⊕ Lullabies + relationship: 0
- ⊕ Lullabies + wellbeing: 0

- ⊕ Lullaby: 8
- ⊕ Parents + singing lullabies: 0
- ⊕ Vuggesang: 153

WorldCat

(search restricted to French, Italian, German and English articles and books, time period 1990–2012)

- ⊕ Lullabies + care: 258 references
- ⊕ Lullabies + health: 58
- ⊕ Lullabies + meaning: 33
- ⊕ Lullabies + parenting: 38 Lullabies + relationship: 136
- ⊕ Lullabies + social: 245
- ⊕ Lullabies + wellbeing: 53
- ⊕ Musical parenting + lullabies: 10
- ⊕ Musical parenting + sleep: 87

ERIC (search restricted to English only, time period 1990–2012)

- ⊕ Lullabies: 30 references
- ⊕ Lullabies + care: 5
- ⊕ Lullabies + health: 1
- ⊕ Lullabies + meaning: 1
- ⊕ Lullabies + social: 6
- ⊕ Lullabies + parenting: 0 Lullabies + relationship: 7
- ⊕ Lullabies + wellbeing: 1
- ⊕ Musical parenting: 16
- ⊕ Parents + singing lullabies: 3

JSTOR (search restricted to English, time period 1990–2012)

- ⊕ Lullabies + care: 166 references
- ⊕ Lullabies + health: 47
- ⊕ Lullabies + meaning: 169
- ⊕ Lullabies + parenting: 0
- ⊕ Lullabies + relationship: 184
- ⊕ Parent + singing lullabies: 62

- ⊕ Lullabies + upbringing: 0
- ⊕ Lullabies + wellbeing: 14
- ⊕ Musical parenting: 23

IMMP (Pittcat +) (search restricted to French, Italian, German and English articles and books, time period 1990–2012)

- ⊕ Lullabies + care: 557 references
- ⊕ Lullabies + health: 489
- ⊕ Lullabies + meaning: 522
- ⊕ Lullabies + musical parenting: 108
- ⊕ Lullabies + relationship: 408
- ⊕ Lullabies + social: 506
- ⊕ Lullabies + wellbeing: 215
- ⊕ Singing lullabies: 521

PsychInfo (Ovid)

- ⊕ Lullabies: 2 references
- ⊕ Lullabies + care: 1
- ⊕ Lullabies + health: 1
- ⊕ Lullabies + meaning: 0
- ⊕ Lullabies + relationship: 2
- ⊕ Lullabies + social: 1
- ⊕ Lullabies + wellbeing: 0
- ⊕ Musical parenting: 28
- ⊕ Singing lullabies: 0

RILM

(search restricted to French, Italian, German and English articles and books, time period 1990–2012)

- ⊕ Lullabies: 413 references
- ⊕ Lullabies + care: 10
- ⊕ Lullabies + health: 3
- ⊕ Lullabies + parenting: 1 Lullabies + relationship: 23
- ⊕ Lullabies + social: 34
- ⊕ Lullabies + wellbeing: 1

- ⊕ Musical parenting: 18
- ⊕ Singing lullabies + meaning: 18
- ⊕ Singing lullabies: 69

Although a growing amount of research has focused on the musical practices of caregivers and their infants and toddlers (e.g. Trehub, Trainor and Unyk 1993, Papoušek 1996, 2007, Legerstee, Markova and Fisher 2007, Cevasco 2008, Custodero and Johnson-Green 2008, Young 2008, Barret 2009, Ilari 2009, Longhi 2009), little attention has been paid to singing practices involving preschoolers and young children. Moreover, singing to children is rarely approached from a parental perspective in a naturalistic setting, and even fewer studies have brought the father into the picture (e.g. Trehub, Unyk, Kamenetsky, Hill, Trainor, Henderson and Saraza 1997, Custodero, Britto and Brooks-Gunn 2003).

Certain cross-cultural studies (e.g. Trehub, Unyk and Trainor 1993, Brady 2005) as well as national ones (e.g. Custodero and Johnson-Green 2003, Valentin 2004, MacKinlay & Baker 2005, Young 2008, Addressi 2009, Cappelli 2009, Ilari, Moura and Bourscheidt 2010) describe parents' use of lullabies but retain no empirical information as such about the role of musical interaction and parenting in Norway. These studies fail to reconcile the act of singing lullabies to a parent's own existential views and specific parenting style, beliefs, attitudes and experiences. Likewise, the research data concerning parents' and children's everyday lives does not always distinguish between playing music and singing (e.g., Custodeo, Britto and Brooks Gunn 2003).

Parental singing also appears in the company of terms such as parental language, infant-directed speech and motherese (e.g. Trehub, Hill and Kamenetsky 1997). The latter term refers to a manner of singing that is systematically different in its expressivity from the adult's regular manner of singing; it is considered to be an aspect of intuitive parenting that enhances mutual enjoyment and relaxation (e.g. Papoušek 1996).

In general, parental singing is pitched higher, delivered more slowly and vested with greater emotional portent than 'normal' singing (e.g. Trehub, Unyk and Trainor 1993). Moreover, infant developmental research has suggested that the emotional quality of a mother's singing makes it potentially more powerful in regulating an infant's behaviour than infant-directed speech (e.g. Trehub and Nakata 2002).

Presumably, the infant-directed singing style is part of an intuitive, multimodal parenting repertoire that is finely tuned to an infant's abilities and needs (Papoušek 2007); specifically, it is intended to provide music stimulation through multiple sensory modalities (tactile, kinaesthetic, visual face-to-face) (Papoušek 1996).

4.2 Perspectives and approaches: an overview

Research literature supports the premise that parents sing to infants and believe it is important to do so (e.g. Custodero, Britto and Xin 2002, MacKinlay and Baker 2005, Ilari 2009). Specialists also argue that the quality of social interaction in general may be a key element in promoting the infant and child's development (e.g. Legerstee, Markova and Fisher 2007, Barrett 2009), and they highlight the importance and utility of musical interaction in this regard. This virtually universal infant-directed singing has even been found to communicate affective information to preverbal infants and aid in adjusting arousal levels, among other things (e.g. Trehub, Unyk, Kamenetsky, Hill, Trainor and Saraza 1997, Trehub, Hill and Kamenetsky 1997, Shenfield, Trehub and Nakata 2003, Conrad, Walsh, Allen and Tsang 2010).

Related existing studies encompass investigations into infants' fascinating predispositions (e.g. Trevarthen 1999, Trehub 2001, Ilari 2009), universal preferences (e.g., Trainor 1996) and innate musicality (e.g. Trehub 2006), as well as the role of musical practices in the development of memory and phonemic processing (e.g. Trehub, Trainor and Unyk 1993), the refinement of musical awareness (e.g. Johnson-Green and Custodero 2002, Trevarthen 2002), and biological and musical growth in connection to parent-child musical early interaction (e.g. Papoušek 1996, Kitamura and Burnham 1998, Conrad, Walsh, Allen and Tsang 2011). Clearly, it appears, infants have an intuitive capacity for sharing the implicit emotional meaning that is contained in the rituals of human relations (e.g. Bateson 1979, Trevarthen 1979, Dissanayake 2006).

Many researchers are also concerned with the therapeutic use of music in the contexts of, for example, children in zones of conflict, children with different syndromes and palliative care (e.g. O'Callaghan 2008), premature infants (e.g. Osborne 2009, Yldiz and Afrikan 2012) or maternal depression (e.g. MacKinlay and Baker 2005, Marwick and Murray 2009,). Studies stress the therapeutic benefits of singing in particular (e.g. Bargiel 2004, O'Callaghan 2008, Friedman, Kaplan, Rosenthal and Console 2010). Based on impressive research encompassing some one thousand tunes collected throughout the world, the Australian musicologist Robin Brady considers the lullaby to be both a 'transitional vehicle' and a 'multi-sensory communicative event' that boasts an inherent therapeutic potential for the transformation of the singer and/or listener (Brady 2005).

While all of these issues are of the greatest importance, of course, they tend to overwhelm the other existential, preventative and positive aspects of music in otherwise relatively normal settings. Certain researchers do, however, shed light on the educational aspects of music, and singing in particular, such as music's ability to enhance language development, speech processing and cognitive skills (e.g., Young 2008, Barrett 2009).

They point to a parent's intuitive musical parenting style of infant-directed speech and singing as an 'optimal model for early music education' (e.g. Papoušek 1996, p. 108), or they actively seek, by means of educational programs, to enhance parenting-related singing practices or develop approaches to music for parents and their children (e.g. Baker and Mackinlay 2006, Young, Street and Davies 2007).

Ilari, Moura and Bourscheidt (2010) note in their study of forty-three middle-class mothers in Brazil that 'an invasion of lullabies, play songs and nursery rhymes took place in a mother's life after having given birth to a child. While lullabies and play songs emerged as the main genres sung by mothers, fathers tended to prefer other genres, such as rock, pop, radio music, tunes from TV shows and Brazilian standards. Mothers were unanimous in declaiming music's importance in their young children's lives. Some mothers talked about the importance of music for mood regulation, particularly in terms of calming a child down when he was fussy or agitated.

The mothers pointed to a plethora of potential benefits that they saw as attributable to music in the early years in relation to the development of intelligence, concentration, motor skills, expressivity, logical reasoning, artistic appreciation and so forth (Ilari, Moura and Bourscheidt 2010, p. 59).

Custodero, Britto and Xin's (2002) quantitative study reveals a great amount of spontaneous singing and playing of music among parents with their infants, and it finds that parents are quite aware of their infants' responses to their singing. This study also concludes, as already discussed, that parents are naturally inclined to sing to their infants, and that the earliest months of a child's life can be an especially musical time in the lives of the parents as well. Lastly, the study finds that aesthetic evaluations are secondary in this regard and do not hinder parents from singing.

Rock, Trainor and Addison (1999) argue that both lullabies and play songs are important to the communication of affect between caregivers and infants. They also find that lullaby-style renditions were generally more airy, smoother, and more soothing, and that they contained distinctive messages which made the infant turn inwards.

Researchers have also determined that parental singing is a survival function that promotes affective ties between the infant and the parent (Trehub 2001). Dissanayake points out that the development of certain sensitivities and an overall sense of timing are both shaped through interaction within the intersubjective space, and especially through the multimedia performance of baby talk (Dissanayake 2001, p. 86).

Moreover, while there is significant inter-individual diversity in parental singing, there is also a surprising degree of intra-individual stability there over longer periods of time (Trehub 2001). Given its expressive nature and role as a carrier of distinct emotional messages—not to mention its basis in a singing mode that is itself characterised

by its expressive qualities (Papoušek 1996, 2007)—it is clearly the case that parental singing is highly influenced by the presence of the child (Trehub *et al.* 1997).

Each of these scholars has investigated the subject matter from a rather specific disciplinary angle, emphasising the developmental, therapeutic and educational role of parents' singing to their young children. In addition, the research to date has mostly focused on the infant's first year of life. In general, current research is strongly dominated by a narrow, disciplinary, means-to-an-end approach that is generally brought to bear upon only specific angles and scholarly interests; researchers are generally disinterested in integrating their valuable information into the larger existential context of human meaningfulness and (well) being. In particular, those who consistently allude to parental singing's 'expressive song quality' fail to either describe or explore it sufficiently. At the moment, then, the picture is still too small and fragmented; the information is too limited; and the insights are not not existentially broad or deep enough. There is work to be done.

In terms of the interests of the present study, as well, although many researchers point to the innate human musical capacity (often called 'protomusicality') as an important resource for communication and early interaction (Trevvarthen 1999, Malloch and Trevvarthen 2007, 2009, Eckerdahl and Merker 2009, Gratier and Aptor-Danon 2009,) and music's role and importance in everyday life (DeNora 2000, 2011, Bonde, Ruud, Skånland Trondalen 2013), lullaby singing is only briefly touched upon in this regard.

In contrast, ethnomusicology and music sociology as disciplines traditionally favour a broader, more holistic approach, but the interests of these researchers often boil down to exploring the origins of music itself, and to determining music's ontogenic and evolutionary pathways and ritual expressions via collective macro-perspectives. I have encountered almost no information in these studies about the meanings, values and qualities of dyadic musical going-to-bed-routines from a subjective everyday parental perspective.

Nonetheless, all of the above-mentioned studies have contributed to the increasingly positive attention being devoted to musical practices within the private realm. Despite their typically limited scope, they provide important information about parents' musical behaviour and offer conceptual frameworks and ideas that are relevant to the present inquiry.

In order to differentiate among and otherwise nuance the picture of parents' everyday musical experiences with their children at bedtime, I have conducted a host of interdisciplinary searches in addition to this highly selective presentation of research material with relevance to the present holistic inquiry. This latter search remained true to the emerging themes of parents' own views and experiences. In the following section, I will give a more detailed presentation and overview of the

research literature that will be of particular interest here, given its potential to serve as a partner in dialogue and a source of inspiration in the analysis of my empirical data. I will return to this material when I present implications in the final section of my discussions. These particular studies do not always relate directly to parents' lullaby singing, but they touch upon important matters nevertheless. They were selected using the following criteria:

- ⊕ empirical and experiential research (both quantitative [surveys and questionnaires] and qualitative studies [including case studies]);
- ⊕ musical parenting (mostly studies of parents' live musical 'performances' for their children);
- ⊕ a naturalistic setting (research in laboratories was excluded);
- ⊕ a dyadic parent-child musical interaction (mother-child or father-child);
- ⊕ conducted within the past fifteen years;
- ⊕ relevant to the emerging themes of the present inquiry.

I will pursue the main characteristics, benefits and important premises of parents' lullaby singing in the chapter of discussions via parents' own statements and experiences. Finally, I must add that while there surely exists other research projects that might also impact the present inquiry, I had to curtail the present search for reasons of space and priority. A rigorous selection process served to delimit the above-mentioned multidisciplinary research findings so that it would be possible to dig deeper in the space allotted, particularly in relation to those characteristics of parents' singing that, from my point of view, seem to be of special interest to this particular inquiry. Some of these traits are also elaborated upon within the theory of communicative musicality, which will be treated more thoroughly in the chapter about my theoretical framework.

4.3 **Line of research: developmental and social psychology**

4.3.1 The improvised musicality of belonging: repetition and variation in mother-infant vocal interaction (Gratier and Apter-Danon 2009)

This article is based upon two studies of sixty mother-infant dyads from France, India and the United States who were observed in their homes during spontaneous face-to-face interactions (for more details about the circumstances of the studies, see Gratier 2003). The infants were all firstborn and between two and five months old and the mothers were troubled immigrants with borderline personality disorders. Both studies demonstrated that when the mother experienced a loss of the sense of belonging, the vocal interaction between mother and baby likewise lost its improvisational vitality, becoming highly repetitive and predictable. The aim of the studies was to show that these types of vocal exchanges encompass both cross-cultural similarities and cultural specificities (Gratier and Apter-Danon 2009, p. 302). The researchers drew from ‘fundamentally different theoretical fields and practical outcomes’ (Gratier and Apter-Danon 2009, p. 322), and their multi-disciplinary approach makes this article broad and very interesting.

Through their analysis of a form of interactive improvisation that they characterise as a dialectic relationship between repetition and variation, Gratier and Apter-Danon draw attention to important conditions for relational and existential meaning to emerge in parent-child musical interaction. I find their concept of expressive timing to be particularly evocative, and I will return to it in my section on the theoretical framework. I will also return to this important dynamic and dialectic relationship of variation and repetition in relation to lullaby singing. Gratier and Apter-Danon conclude that it is generally through new and efficient forms of expression that belonging—and what they have called ‘protohabitus’—is dynamically renewed (Gratier and Apter-Danon 2009, p. 322). Their study serves as an example of how immigrated mother’s culturally grounded loss of confidence strongly affect their intrinsic ‘musicality’ and their child care practice.

4.3.2 Sleep inquiry concerning the young German child: tradition and modern life (Valentin 2004)

This research is of interest for several reasons:²⁴ it explores parenting style before bedtime; it incorporates both general and specifically musical parent-child interaction; and it looks at bedtime rituals and sleep-related behaviours of German infants and young children. The participants were the German parents of fifty boys and fifty girls aged six to thirty months. This study confronts a complex array of developmental and biological forces that are manifested within the very specific social and cultural setting of children who are going to bed and falling asleep.

Valentin's focus was largely trained on the sleeping patterns, the bedtime ritual and the role and nature of the parental presence at bedtime. However, the study also encompassed aspects of time—how long the children slept, whether the parents stayed with their children until they had fallen asleep, whether the children slept through the night—as well as the children's needs for sleep, the parents' opinions about sleep rituals and lullabies, and the parents' suggestions about the best thing to do when the child did not fall asleep. Study results describe bedtime procedure and parenting before bedtime as well as how the German infants actually went to sleep. Valentin then compares the results to those derived from other European countries, and to various sleep theories in the field.

The findings suggest that, oftentimes, sleeping disorders may have their origins in the parent-child interaction, and that the best way to help families with sleeping problems is to observe inter-individual intra-family interactions (Valentin 2004, p. 123; my emphasis). Drawing upon the anthropologist Wortham, Valentin also points to the tendency in Western culture to fight nature and basic human biology and laments our confusion of what is desirable for our health with what is expected in our society. That is, she concludes, we sometimes allow social standards to override biological processes, particularly in relation to whether children 'ought to' fall asleep on their own, whether co-sleeping is appropriate, and what to do about children who are waking up during the night. All of these issues are culturally determined to be problems (or not). Valentin underlines that the only existing study of co-sleeping demonstrates its positive psychological effects (McKenna, cited in Valentin 2004), and that we take the concept of the physiological independence of the child in relation to its mother too far. Furthermore, she stresses the child's need for external help in order to fall asleep, by means of the mother, the thumb or a transitional object (Valentin 2004, p. 71).

24 The original title of the French dissertation is 'Étude sur le sommeil chez le jeune enfant allemande. Tradition et modernité'.

Valentin's results indicate that bedtime rituals do exist, and that behavioural distance is privileged in those rituals. A so-called 'culte' of independence²⁵ governs the general parental inclination in the West when it comes to the importance of children being able to fall asleep by themselves. Parenting style only becomes 'proximal' (close) in response to bedtime refusal and nocturnal crying. Within this bedtime context, 79 per cent of German parents sing lullabies, reflecting a strong living practice in that country. This ritual does not take a long time: 41 per cent of the study's informants said that they sang for ten to fifteen minutes; 24 per cent said less than five minutes; 16 per cent said about thirty minutes; and only 6 per cent said up to sixty minutes. All of the children slept alone at night, and 22 per cent of the mothers added that their presence was not necessary at the moment of falling asleep. Additionally, 78 per cent of the mothers and 82 per cent of the fathers asserted that it was important not to stay with their children until the moment they fell asleep. Paradoxically, however, 54 per cent of all of the parents said that it was difficult for the child to fall asleep, which Valentin interprets as a sign of ambivalence that merits further discussion.

Drawing upon Stork's (1986) three mothering categories, parenting style is often a combination of both 'proximal' and 'distant' behaviour, in tandem with their combination, somewhat awkwardly termed 'proximo-distant' parenting. The proximal mothering type, which is most common in Asiatic and African societies, is characterised by the dominance of kinaesthetic and tactile mother-child interaction, whereby, for example, the mother's body is the primordial supportive presence in terms of caring for the child and helping him or her fall asleep. The distant mothering type, which is most common in Western societies, is characterised by the insertion of physical space between the mother and the child via arrangements including strollers, changing tables and cradles or cribs.

On the other hand, and perhaps as compensation, the vocal exchange that is involved in distant mothering is very rich (Stork 1986). The mother is in constant contact with the baby through talking and singing to him or her, so that the mother's voice comes to punctuate her movements and the reactions of the baby and ultimately to represent a powerful indication of her presence. This verbal exchange is likewise often intensified through eye contact and face-to-face interaction, though even here, distance remains a factor (it is hard to watch another when one is very close to him or her).

The third mothering type (proximo-distant) likely reflects the influence of African and Indian styles on the Western style—the distance is maintained but modes of calming by means of breastfeeding, for example, are prolonged to modify it (Stork

25 In French: *le culte d'indépendance*. Valentin has elaborated on this characterisation in a separate article (see Valentin 2005).

1986). Stork notes that while this type reveals certain dominant characteristics, they are modified from one region or nation to another, and all kinds of transitions and hybrids may exist as well (*ibid.*).

The German lullaby ritual of today is characterised by lyrics which manifest (1) the maternal expression of love and affection, (2) an aggressive dimension which betrays some maternal ambivalence between love and resentment (because the child will not sleep), and (3) the separation between the child and the parent, which may create death anxiety (Valentin 2004, p. 171).

In contrast to this picture, which is typically extended to the other northern European countries as well, the present study will present a somewhat softer reality. I will describe aspects of the Norwegian bedtime ritual of singing lullabies and examine lullaby lyrics based upon the songs most often sung by Norwegian parents today. I will likewise question the singular focus upon sleep in relation to lullaby singing and instead emphasise the interactive quality of the lullaby-singing act, including its vocal, sensory and communicative elements.

4.4 Line of research: music education

4.4.1 Caregiving in counterpoint: reciprocal influences in the musical parenting of younger and older infants (Custodero and Johnson-Green 2008)

Drawing upon Bornstein's (2002) four distinct caregiving domains—material, social, nurturant and didactic—Custodero and Johnson-Green address the reciprocal character of parent-child musical interaction in their US national survey study of parents of four- to six-month-old infants. The chronic underestimation of an infant's communicative skills throughout history is now commonly acknowledged, of course, and inquiries such as this one begin to shoulder the burden of unpacking the influence of the child on the parent, rather than exclusively the other way around. This study sharpens our focus on the nature of reciprocity and the kinds of influences that occur over time and eventually occasion the parents' modification of their own musical-interactive behaviour. These reciprocal influences prove especially relevant as children grow older and develop their communicative skills further, and they manifest themselves in the ways in which musical parenting responds to that development, especially in the context of lullaby singing. Parents are perhaps best described as

teacher-observers who adapt to the changing needs of infants over time as they recognise the impact of music on development (Custodero and Johnson-Green 2008, p. 32). Study findings indicate a preponderance of social caregiving and demonstrate that the use of music with young infants is both primary and basic (Custodero and Johnson-Green 2008, p. 15).

The study clearly shows that Bornstein's caregiving domains can be broadly applied and related to changes taking place in the parents' musical behaviour in relation to the infant's age. Parents' responses indicate that as the baby grows, nurturant caregiving becomes more closely tied to their teaching; furthermore, music's usefulness as a teaching resource was closely associated with basic caregiving skills and the conviction that music can be educational and is necessary as well (Custodero and Johnson-Green 2008, p. 31). For the parents who participated in both iterations of Custodero and Johnson-Green's study, the music seemed to 'act universally and reliably as contributing to infants' overall health' (ibid.).

My goal is to look more closely at these different 'supportive' and 'educational' aspects in relation to the act of singing lullabies, without losing sight of parents' personal styles, underlying beliefs, overall attitudes and ultimate intentions. My presupposition is that all of these aspects matter to our understanding of music in this context, and that singing lullabies in particular represents an important means of access to these matters, and to the ways in which parents relate to their own musicality.

4.5 Line of research: sociology

4.5.1 To pass on: culture and upbringing in the family (Wetlesen 2000)

This sociological study of mothers from suburban settings in Oslo gives us insight into the most popular lullabies used in Norway by mothers at bedtime.²⁶ Some examples include 'Bæ, bæ lille lam', 'Byssan lull', 'Kjære gud jeg har det godt', 'So, ro, lille mann' and 'Trollmors vuggeviser'. According to the inquiry, parents absorb songs and lullabies from songbooks, school, childhood memories, CDs, kindergartens and elsewhere (Wetlesen 2000, p. 164). They are also prone to introducing songs that are not

²⁶ The original title of this inquiry is 'Å gi videre. Kultur og oppdragelse i familien'.

normally associated with bedtime or the traditional lullaby repertoire, such as 'Eg veit ei lita jente' and 'Gøy på landet'.

Mothers' stories about bedtime rituals indicate that they use songs to settle the child down and structure the last moments of the day, and they refer to their own childhood memories as well, and to their belief that it is important to pass on the tradition of singing lullabies. In this study, most of the parents had been sung to when they were children, and the data highlights parents' active and engaging role in singing and reading to their own children as a consequence.

Parents sing more to the firstborn child than to its siblings, especially when the second child is born relatively soon after the first one. Parents also emphasise their efforts at customisation and their appreciation of the fact that, oftentimes, their children still want them to sing even when they are older. They also remark upon the physical contact during singing. A few also admitted to rushing the ritual so they could have some free time for themselves (Wetlesen 2000, p. 161).

4.6 Line of research: music therapy

4.6.1 Music therapy in perinatal psychiatry: the use of lullabies for pregnant and postpartum women with mental illness (Friedman, Kaplan, Rosenthal and Console 2010)

This study explores the potential of lullaby singing (as well as a host of its evidence-based qualities) for forty-eight mothers and mothers-to-be. It highlights the shared benefits of lullabies in terms of calming babies, stimulating early language development, coping with the many demands of motherhood, communicating emotional messages, improving maternal self-expression, attracting a baby's attention and facilitating a relaxation response in the mother (Friedman, Kaplan, Rosenthal and Console 2010, p. 220). Lullaby use in music therapy, the researchers conclude, serves a dual purpose: 'The lullaby and its accompanying gentle, repetitive, multimodal interactions, such as patting, rocking, stroking, walking and swaying to the tempo of the music, simultaneously soothe the baby and allow the singer to release her emotions' (ibid.). In addition, the social and musical themes of lullaby lyrics can resonate with mothers, as they often encompass their fears, hopes and dreams for their babies and their families, among other things (ibid.). The mother's voice can even be seen to build a bridge between the postnatal and the neonatal, extending that emotional

connection and the bonding process for both the mother and the infant. Newborns depend on others to regulate their relative hypersensitivity, and this specific music therapy intervention can help to decrease maternal distress and therefore also decrease the baby's physiological expression of chronic stress.

4.6.2 Lullament: lullaby and lament-therapeutic qualities actualized through music therapy (O'Callaghan 2008)

This practice-based research concludes that lullabies promote greater awareness, enculturation, adaptation and grief expression through the therapeutic nature of 'restorative resounding', which evokes nurture, care, support, communicated, articulated and embodied love, hope and an acknowledgment of the goodness in life despite the harshness of the wider world (O'Callaghan 2008, pp. 94–96). In dealing with separation and loss in particular, the lullaby's 'cathartic properties' are a great help. Moreover, their meditative and repetitive lyrical motifs help to calm and soothe people (O'Callaghan 2008, p. 93). A personal lullaby creation appears to represent a good way to deal with psychological and existential problems. Based upon Weisner's (2001) Jungian analysis of more than one thousand lullabies, O'Callaghan's study highlights the fact that lullabies incorporate archetypical patterns and otherwise help children to confront the world by drawing upon a psychological and mythological understanding of their place in it (O'Callaghan 2008, p. 94). Based upon personal and sociohistorical relationships and psychobiological, verbal, musical and metaphorical expressions, the relevance of the lullaby to end-of-life care appears to be evident as well, as it may promote release and inner peace in difficult life situations. In terms of the present study, I would also add that these qualities also seem relevant to beginning-of-life care, and I will touch upon them later in relation to parents' views and experiences.

4.7 **Mixed lines of research: ethnomusicology and music therapy**

4.7.1 Nurturing herself, nurturing her baby: creating positive experiences for first-time mothers through lullaby singing (MacKinlay and Baker 2005)

MacKinlay and Baker suggest in their pilot study of eighteen Australian mothers and their infants that lullabies represent a constructive and nourishing aspect of the cycle of caregiving. They examine the ways in which each mother used lullaby singing and her perception of the lullaby *experience*, and they conclude that lullaby singing has the potential to be used as a *preventative* measure in what could otherwise become a downward spiral of negative feelings leading to the possibility of postnatal depression and mother-infant detachment. Not only are the musical qualities contained in lullabies effective in promoting sedation in babies, but singing lullabies also promotes a relaxation response in adults (MacKinlay and Baker 2005, p. 70).

Drawing upon empirical research material from ethnomusicology (Moyle 1997, Macfie 1990), MacKinlay and Baker point out that while the primary purpose of the lullaby is to put the child to sleep, its secondary functions certainly encompass the enculturation of the infant in musical as well as conceptual and social terms. The researchers highlight lullaby singing's dual purpose of soothing a child while simultaneously releasing the singer's own feelings of desire and discontentment (MacKinlay and Baker 2005, p. 69).

The authors were astounded by the individual and unique way in which each mother both sang to her baby and perceived the lullaby-singing experience. Still, there were some similarities and commonalities, particularly in terms of the combination of singing and physical contact in the ritual itself. Among other things, the study notes that the use of lullabies could depend on the mother's energy level, and further that the success or failure of the lullaby singing probably had more to do with the mother's level of commitment, attentiveness and interest in singing to the baby than with the baby's response to it. The routine depended on the mother's ability to relax, and in particular whether the songs were helping in this regard. To succeed, the lullaby singing had to supply a 'momentary escapism'—a time when the mother could focus intently on the baby and shut out her other anxieties and responsibilities.

Lullaby singing did enhance maternal enjoyment and acted to centre mothers upon the precious present moment with their child. Mothers typically experienced a decrease in anxiety and stress and an increase in feelings of success, empowerment

and control. These positive feelings counteracted their negative experiences and validated the belief that they were indeed 'good mothers'. Lullaby singing freed up the time to observe and connect with the baby intensely one last time before the baby drifted off to sleep.

4.8 Placing the present study

This thesis positions itself within the area of musicology that emphasises 'the relationship between music and human beings, society, and ideas' (Bengtsson 1980, cited in Varkøy 2009, p. 34). Included here are many disciplines, such as music psychology, music education, music anthropology, music sociology and music therapy.

The aim of the present study has been to document as well as engage with how and in what respect the act of singing lullabies is considered to be meaningful. I do not seek to undermine the previous findings in this field but instead to redress those studies' generally shared weakness: an overly narrow scope.

The present effort was initiated in a country in which there has been no qualitative study whatsoever on the topic thus far. I looked at the act of singing lullabies in the context of twenty Norwegian parents and their children, seeking to find out more about the current meanings, characteristics and affordances of lullaby singing in the everyday lives of these people. I tried to dig deep into both conventional and unique aspects of the lullaby-singing act, inquiring into the ways in which parents construct meaning in their musical bedtime encounters with their children. What I found will open up new debates in the field and may even challenge some already-established assumptions. In connection with the broad theory of 'communicative musicality', I will use parents' detailed expressions of and observations about the performative act of lullaby singing in order to shed new light on the growing interdisciplinary field of musical communication and parenting. My study will serve as an example of communicative musicality in a normal everyday setting and practice.

My pragmatic approach represents, first and foremost, an attempt to override existing disciplinary boundaries. I also believe that a metatheoretical stance positions the researcher more autonomously in relation to her material. It requires the mastery of a range of theoretical frameworks that are relevant to the empirical material, but it will also become apparent that it is beyond the scope of this thesis to holistically embrace all of the musical, physiological, historical, universal, semantic, symbolic, sociological, relational and existential aspects that are in play during the act of singing lullabies. A personal interest in everyday life and human relationships has guided me

in my effort to control this wealth of material, as has the recent 'relational turn' in the literature (e.g., Malloch and Trevarthen 2009, Ruud 2010, DeNora 2011 and Gergen 2011). An overall psychosocial approach, encompassing the deep interactive layers of a shared sense of time, sympathy and meaning (Malloch and Trevarthen 2009), will therefore be the primary means of structuring this study.

However, I will not attempt to find out any more about the connection between lullabies as a tool and children's development, which seems to be well documented already. Instead, I will engage with lullaby singing in relation to its various layers of meaning and its possible connection to wellbeing. In this respect, my study places itself within the social and 'folk' psychological tradition of Bruner's work, which describes and explores interpersonal aspects that belong to our private realm as well as our shared cultural world (Bruner 1990).

Previous research has paid surprisingly little attention to the question of meaning in relation to lullabies. This is an attempt to create a more basic and fundamental picture of lullaby singing between parents and their children. Along the way, I hope to develop the concepts of meaning, communication, musicality, mindfulness and affordance while privileging aspects of the practice that are related to its qualities rather than normative evaluations as such.

The theoretical platform of the inquiry

5.1 Multiple voices and interdisciplinarity

Theoretical concepts may provide a toolbox with which what parents say about the lullaby-singing act can be unpacked and discussed in a clear, pointed and discerning way. Directly or indirectly, a huge range of theories and concepts sheds light on this act. By balancing theoretical conceptualisation with empirical description while always searching for new and interesting characteristics of the act, one quickly arrives at an open and eclectic theoretical stance, and a study such as this one benefits from the rich variety of insight that such a stance entails. I found it particularly important to reckon theories against one another from a complementary rather than an oppositional perspective and always with the intention of studying things in and of themselves, not as manifestations of some theoretical proposition.

That said, the broad and synthetic theory of ‘communicative musicality’ seemed particularly well suited to this topic. On the one hand, the act of singing lullabies was not taken into account in the latest (vast) theoretical and empirical elaboration of this theory (see Malloch and Trevarthen 2009). On the other hand, there is no question that it offers a new and holistic means of approaching this act. Malloch and Trevarthen point out with clarity and conviction that the power of musicality facilitates and energises meaning in communication, and that musicality has the ability to play a vital role in the nurturing of the self, formulated in terms of pulse, quality and narrative (2009, p. 5).

In order to give a comprehensive account of the theoretical foundations and core concepts that this inquiry relies upon, I will first demonstrate their relevance and then summarise their features. Perhaps it seems unusual to unite these diverse

theoretical disciplines under the relatively straightforward heading of communicative musicality, especially given the various psychological and social processes that they encourage and the different paradigms to which they belong. However, it will soon become clear that these frameworks offer related yet constructively differentiated perspectives upon parents' experiences and provide valuable insights into this topic in relation to the concept of meaning.

By drawing upon multiple voices, I attempt to scientifically grasp a multifaceted reality while coming to grips with an existing approach that reflects significant disciplinary bias. I will not force the issue in any particular direction, particularly any direction that appears counter to the parents' own inclinations or that is otherwise too beholden to the 'canon' of scholarship in the field of parent-child interaction. The use of contrasting partners in dialogue also represents an attempt to avoid sealing oneself within one's own rhetoric and to generate rich answers or fertile further suggestions with regard to the research questions (Bruner 1990, p. ix).

Lastly, my openness to multiple scholarly voices allows for different interpretations of parents' intuitive descriptions and narratives of the lullaby-singing act, which, in point of fact, transcends disciplinary and epistemological boundaries in its very nature. My approach to this empirical material thus evokes Ricoeur's definition of interpretation, which 'consists less in suppressing ambiguity than understanding it and explicating its richness' (Ricoeur 1970, p. 49). I have been compelled to travel over a wide field of thought to fully unpack my fascination about what ultimately makes this act so meaningful, with regard to both good communication and mutual and existential wellbeing. It has been a rewarding journey.

Existentially, as well, life itself is interdisciplinary, and my present scholarly approach resonates with those life practices with which I am concerned. Because I am not primarily interested in reconciling different theoretical materials, I am able to fully activate an innate conceptual pragmatism in relation to my various theoretical partners in dialogue. In the end, I have singled out but a few authors (Trevarthen, Stern, Winnicott and Gibson) from the field of psychology, because of their own interdisciplinary and paradigmatic works. There are others who have contributed to realising a relational, practice-driven and communicative perspective, but space has prohibited their full accommodation in the study that follows. On the other hand, my focus upon my own priorities, however synthetic they may be, has remained resolute.

I will categorise my concepts and frameworks according to my process of understanding my own (and other parents') experiences with lullaby singing. Through both broad and more specific themes with relevance to the empirical material, the following section collects ideas and concepts that have not been juxtaposed in the literature before. Many notions and influences flow from this interdisciplinary encounter which

in turn highlights the complexity of the subject matter. Still most of this theoretical material remains grounded in a phenomenological, contextual, communicative and dialogue-based, relational and practice-aligned mode of thinking that has proven most valuable to me here.

I have structured this theoretical chapter according to its relevance to the empirical data, and the various aspects will be clarified more thoroughly using my empirical data.

5.2 The concept of meaning

I will discuss the concept of meaning primarily in relation to parents' experiences, views and statements, in the hopes of uncovering what it means to be 'meaningful' in the context of a host of differing personal convictions, conditions, circumstances and musical interactions with children. Meaning is, first and foremost, a matter of making distinctions (Dey 1993, p. 12). Most parents use the term informally to express personal feelings about the importance of lullaby singing to them and their children. This includes the different ways in which they grasp the acts' significance in terms of what it may afford or provide for themselves and their children.

Obviously, infants and young children cannot articulate the fact that the mother or father's singing is meaningful, nor are they able to create meaning from the interaction as such. So the meaningfulness of the act will be explored through the parents. We might also note that, for millennia, it has been an adaptive asset for humans to be receptive to the possibility of 'group meanings' (Dissanayake 2000b, p. 98), so it is fair to say that what parents find to be meaningful is in some fashion indicative of their positioning within a larger social collective. Meaning, that is, resides not only in the head of the individual but also in social practice, and it is mediated mainly through the exchange of language and action. Following Bruner, meaning itself is a culturally mediated phenomenon that depends upon the prior existence of a shared symbol system (Bruner 1990, p. 69).

More specifically, we also create meaning by connecting past, present and future together in narrative structures (Schei 2009, p. 10). These narratives allow an adult and her child to 'share a sense of sympathy and situated meaning in a shared sense of passing time' (Malloch and Trevarthen 2009, p. 1). Trevarthen points out that there is no such thing as meaning situated entirely within a single self; meaning must be *communicated* (Trevarthen 2003, p. 67). This study illuminates how parents' own past and childhood memories color the present lullaby act, the choices they make and the narratives they share with their children at bedtime. The diversity of parents'

statements implies that parents have many different personal approaches to the act in order to share and describe its meaningfulness.

Meaningfulness often refers to ‘a belief that things in life are interesting and a source of satisfaction, that things are really worth it and that there is good reason or purpose to care about what happens’ (Antonovsky 1987, p. 19). In the context of parent-child interactions, meaning is connected to what parents find to be positive, engaging, helpful and enriching in their lives with their children, and what they consider worthwhile.

Following Dissanayake, this is also related to the human need for stories and story making (Dissanayake 2000b). I share her view that the notion of ‘meaning’ has lost its precision, and further that the felt belief that something is meaningful does not make it so (Dissanayake 2000b, p. 95).

Based upon the existential conditions within which meaning emerges, I will engage with the concept in relation to the psychological and communicative theoretical aspects that are connected to caregiving and musical parenting,²⁷ such as communicative musicality, holding, attunement, mindfulness, affordance and wellbeing. From my point of view, these different concepts points to different dimensions related to how meaning emerges.

Moreover, there is also a need to connect the process of meaning making to the very essence of musical experiences. The Danish music education researcher Frede Nielsen includes different layers of meaning in search for an understanding of how meaning emerges in musical experiences:

5.2.1 Layers of meaning

When it comes to distinguishing among the various layers of meaning in the lullaby-singing act from a musical perspective, Nielsen points out that there are two poles that must be taken into account. The first he describes as follows: The internal musical structural coherence makes up the essential, or the only entity (also known as the autonomy-aesthetic position; a position of ‘absolutism’ or ‘formalism’). The second encompasses the reference to or expression of something external to the music (such as the emotions) as the truly signifying or meaningful aspect (this is also known as the heteronomy-aesthetic position, or a position of ‘referentialism’) (Nielsen 2012, p.

²⁷ Caregiving and parenting are similar notions, but we might distinguish between them based on the former’s focus on the child’s *needs* and the ways-of-being-taken-care-of as opposed to the latter’s emphasis on parental style, activities, coping strategies and intentions (Bornstein 2002).

19). Nielsen then allows for a third possibility, phenomenologically founded on the thinking of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, which focuses on ‘the ‘experiencing of music’ as a more ‘deeply’ situated dimension of meaning (Nielsen 2012, p. 20).

These deeply situated dimensions of meaning are linked to what Nielsen elsewhere refers to as music’s multifaceted life world (Nielsen 1994, p. 133). He believes that the ‘musical object’ is in essence a world of lived experience—a vast spectrum of experiential possibilities. Music, then, exists as discrete but unified layers: an acoustic layer, a structural layer, a bodily layer, an emotional layer, and a spiritual or existential layer.

Furthermore, Nielsen sees these layers of meaning as corresponding to equivalent layers of human consciousness. From my point of view, this means that we might see the layers of meaning in music not only as structures or discrete dimensions but as diverse *affordances* realised in an encounter with the experiencing subject.

In this study, we will see that, eventually, there exist tacit or underlying agreements and ‘negotiated meanings’ between parents and their children regarding their musical behaviour, sharing, mutuality and dialogue, and that these things can be brought together under the concept of intersubjectivity. This brings me to the Norwegian psychologist Hundeide’s (2007) view of care as a mutual influencing process. As parents report they are greatly influenced by their children’s presence and preferences at bedtime, hence it makes sense to consider parents’ singing as a mutually influencing process, not only in relation to care but also in relation to the particular musical interaction and improvisation at bedtime. I will clarify the aspect of mutuality further using my empirical material.

5.2.2 Meaning in relation to values and wellbeing

Meaning is also connected to the values parents hold. A value is defined here as an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse one (Rokeach 1973, cited in Manfredi 2008). Values form the foundation through which we assign meaning to our lives (Bruner 1990). A norm, on the other hand, is a person’s perception of what others want him or her to do (Manfredi 2008). Values, intentionality and attitudes seem to be filtered through the ‘importance’ that parents place upon the act of lullaby singing.

Following the independent and interdisciplinary scholar and writer Dissanayake’s work in her groundbreaking book about the relationship between art and intimacy, meaning is ultimately equivalent to biological importance: ‘What cultures systematize and value derives from the basic biological requirements for survival and wellbeing’ (Dissanayake 2000b, p. 73). Hence, the concept of wellbeing is central to understanding

the meaning of the act of lullaby singing and will serve as a unifying point of discussion in relation to the concept of meaning.

5.2.3 Psychological meaningfulness

The psychologist Martin Seligman (2011) distinguishes between happiness and wellbeing. Whereas happiness is defined as life satisfaction, wellbeing is oriented towards positive emotions, engagement, meaning, positive relationships and accomplishments (Seligman 2011, p. 12). Wellbeing is a topic of positive psychology, and meaning has a subjective component, so it might be subsumed within positive emotions. Following Seligman, there might be a connection between wellbeing and meaningfulness, but not necessarily. Sometimes parents do things that are not meaningful to them in a strict sense, but they see that it may enhance wellbeing for their children. Meaning in this perspective is not solely a subjective state (Seligman 2011, p. 17). But a parental verdict of meaningful or meaningless derives from their feelings (and pre-existing assumptions) about what is valuable and worthwhile—that is, the significance they attach to the thing in question. Their overall intentions, cultural backgrounds, values, personalities and daily moods colour these judgments. In this inquiry, the term ‘meaningful’ encompasses psychological meaningfulness but is not restricted to it. As Seligman puts it; ‘The dispassionate and more objective judgment of history, logic and coherence can contradict a subjective statement’ (ibid.).

5.2.4 Meaning and the contextual and living dimension

As mentioned, the concept of meaning in its application is not limited to purely psychological phenomena. Music, to a much greater degree than language, appears to manifest what the Reader in music and science Ian Cross (2005) refers to as ‘floating intentionality’, so that it accumulates meaning(s) from the contexts when it happens, or *where* and *how* it is remembered to have happened, and in turn contributes meaning back to those contexts (Cross and Morley 2009, p. 80).

Meaning in the context of lullabies is created and constructed in a relational setting according to the parameters of practice, interaction, individual freedom and choice. It arises between the parent, as a ‘mediator’ who is ‘significant’ (Winnicott 1971/1991), as one who is ‘self-regulating’ (Stern 1985/2000) and as one who is a ‘meaning-bearer other’ (Binder 2005), and the child, as a participant and co-creator (Hundeide 2007). It derives not only from the hedonic conditions of happiness and satisfaction but also from successful functioning and situated aspects of learning aspects that I will clarify further using my empirical material.

5.2.5 Meaning and the bodily and preverbal dimensions

Meaning is also seen in relation to *how* a lullaby is learned and applied. A dynamic understanding of meaning encompasses bodily and preverbal aspects of the lullaby act. Drawing upon the American philosopher Susan Langer (1942), the assistant professor in psychology Maya Gratier and the psychiatrist and researcher Gisèle Aptor-Danon describe a ‘non-discursive meaning’ which is context dependent, temporally based and untranslatable (Gratier and Aptor-Danon 2009, p. 311). In order to be able to describe this non-verbal realm of meaning in early interaction, Gratier and Aptor-Danon also draw upon Malloch and Trevarthen’s work (2009) and introduce the parameters of pulse, quality and narrative. I will elaborate on each of these below, under the heading of communicative musicality, and present the most central theoretical elements of meaning in more detail. I will not launch a new attack on the problem of symbol and meaning as Langer so eloquently did, and who stated that we have lost our life-symbols, and that our actions no longer have ritual value (1942), but stay as close to parents’ experiences of a musical meaningfulness as possible, using their metaphors and descriptions of the sensuous, symbolic, ritualized and bodily aspects of the lullaby act.

5.3 Communicative musicality

For a child, musical expression is as natural as moving itself. (Malloch and Trevarthen 2009, p. 10)

Drawing upon decades of research of mother-infant interaction (e.g. Trevarthen 1979, 1993 and 1999), the theory of communicative musicality was developed from musical acoustic analysis of spontaneous vocal communication between infants and their mothers, known as *infant-directed speech* (Malloch 1999, Malloch and Trevarthen 2009). Their studies paid special attention to the intrinsic musical quality and nature of mother-child communication and interplay and they showed how in mother/infant communication there exist musical patterns of timing, pulse, voice, timbre and gesture. They demonstrated the importance of both parties in the mother-infant dyad as the term communicative musicality ‘recognises that the mother and her infant are partners in a musical dialogue’ (Malloch 1999, p. 32).

Moreover, this theory highlights the power of musicality in communication with infants, as ‘an expression of moods and self-regulations that infants and their

companions, old and young, can share (Trevvarthen in Pavlicevic 1997). Movement—gestural, vocal and emotional—is what allows communicative musicality to occur (Malloch 1999, p. 50). When this movement is constrained or impeded, communicative musicality suffers, and companionship suffers (ibid.)

With their book ‘Communicative Musicality – Exploring the basis of Human Companionship’ (2009), Malloch and Trevvarthen have further elaborated on the concept inviting 35 authors from a very broad spectrum of research areas, such as musicology, anthropology, psychology, music therapy, psychiatry, child development, applied linguistics, neuroscience and behavioural biology. Some authors investigate the basic essence of communicative musicality, whereas others serve as examples of the theory seen in practice. As all the authors in the book show, there are many approaches to communicative musicality and it can be investigated meaningfully within many research areas.

I will concentrate on a few relational and psychological aspects of the theory that I found particularly interesting in terms of their importance to the particular lullaby act. The lullaby inquiry serves as an example of communicative musicality seen in practice, illuminating its power within an everyday bedtime setting.

One interesting point is how parents consider and define their own musicality in their intimate musical encounter with their children. Some of the parents didn’t seem to consider themselves as ‘musical’, and referred to the professional or more conventional sense and use of the term, which involves knowledge or talent for music. Others included the appreciation of music when defining musicality. Interestingly, Malloch and Trevvarthen’s definition is much broader in scope.

5.3.1 Definitions, characteristics and components of communicative musicality

Malloch and Trevvarthen define musicality as follows:

We define musicality as the expression of our human desire for cultural learning, our innate skill for moving, remembering and planning in sympathy with others that makes our appreciation and production of an endless variety of dramatic temporal narratives possible—whether those narratives consist of specific cultural forms of music, dance, poetry or ceremony; whether they are the universal narratives of a mother and her baby quietly conversing with one another; whether it is the wordless emotional and motivational narrative that sits beneath a conversation between two or more adults or between a teacher and a class. (Malloch and Trevvarthen 2009, pp. 4–5)

The lullaby act is one of these ‘cultural forms of music’, and part of the ritualized as well as spontaneous ‘universal narratives’ of a mother and her baby. Moreover, the concept of musicality encompasses expressions and skills; it is a communicative activity that is based upon a compelling sympathy (Malloch and Trevarthen 2009, p. 7). The term musicality could easily be replaced by the term lullaby act, as parents’ singing is very often made in sympathy with their children.

The music therapists and researchers Mercedes Pavlicevic and Gary Ansdell supplement this view by defining musicality as ‘a core human capacity, and a basic response to an engagement with the human world’ (Pavlicevic and Ansdell 2009, p. 367).

In her critical review of the book of Communicative Musicality, the psychologist Sandra E. Trehub expects communicative musicality to involve a sharing of the sensitivity, knowledge or talent for music, but states that Malloch and Trevarthen’s definition is ‘rambling’ and ‘confuse many readers’ as it is broader in scope (Trehub 2010, p. 499). When digging deeper into Malloch and Trevarthen’s statements and analysis of the dyadic parent-child interaction in which musicality is traced, they touches upon a different type of sensitivity, involving ‘attunement’, ‘movement’ and ‘timing’ (e.g. Malloch 1999, p. 31, p. 49-50, Malloch and Trevarthen 2009, p. 4-5). This kind of attuned musicality is not so much oriented towards an object, as on another towards another subject, read: the child. I suggest this to be a special form of musical intersubjective sensitivity, which transcends the conventional object-oriented musical view, and includes the various distinct, relational as well as floating and unified layers of musical meaning mentioned earlier.

In the dyadic context of lullabies, one might expect that communicative musicality involves a kind of sensitivity not only for music and the songs chosen, but a sensitivity for the child and the particular bedtime moment. I will come back to this later in the chapter of discussion.

Moreover, the theory of communicative musicality incorporates the precise parameters of *pulse*, *quality* and *narrative*, which Malloch and Trevarthen (2009, p. 4) define as follows:

- ⊕ *Pulse* refers to the stable recurrence of an implicit interval between vocalisation and onsets. Phrases are sequences of vocalisation and pause that are introduced by what Malloch and Trevarthen refer to as ‘the mother, the infant or both’.
- ⊕ *Quality* refers to ‘the modulated contours of expressions moving through time’ (Malloch and Trevarthen 2009, p. 4). The attributes of quality (direction and intensity of the moving body) will often co-occur

multimodally (ibid.). More recently, Trevarthen refers to ‘the emotional expressive quality of vocal sound’ (Trevarthen 2011, p. 10).

- ⊕ *Narratives* are various combinations of pulse and quality that form structures of expression and intention. Narrative episodes are longer cycles of shared excitement that have a beginning, a development and an end. These narratives may consist of ‘specific cultural forms of music’ (Malloch and Trevarthen 2009, p. 5), fixed ritualised forms or more spontaneous and improvisational forms. What they often have in common is a dramatic temporal structure with four parts: introduction, development, climax and resolution. These narratives may be, for example, universal, emotional and/or motivational. Communicative musicality enables our appreciation and production of an ‘endless variety of dramatic temporal narratives’ (Malloch and Trevarthen 2009, p. 5).

Drawing upon Stern, Ricoeur and Bruner, Gratier and Aptor-Danon clarify the concept of narratives even further, describing them as ‘fundamentally human forms and activities’ with ‘a particular format that is a fundamental intentional means of structuring and conveying meaning’ (Gratier and Aptor-Danon 2009, p. 310).

Through his previous work, Malloch clarified how the pulse and expressive/emotional qualities of voice engage in an improvised ‘musicality’, creating phrases and narratives that enable parent and child ‘to share a sense of passing time’ (Malloch 1999, p. 45). Trevarthen and Malloch then apply this insight to the use of music to converse and share emotions with others. The components of pulse, quality and narrative highlight both the communicative nature of musicality and the musical nature of communication. In the context of parents’ singing lullabies to their children, the communicative nature of parents’ musicality will be explored, and how their musicality is expressed within the dyadic private bedtime setting.

5.3.2 The basis of companionship

Through its character, which is neither language nor music as such, the communicative musicality of infants and toddlers is designed to seek sympathy and companionship—conditions that are essential to all cultural learning and the mastery of all meaningful thoughts (Malloch and Trevarthen 2009). This particular form of interaction also entails an engagement with ‘culturally conditioned meaning’ (Malloch and Trevarthen 2009, p. 2). It is our common musicality, as ‘a source of energy and inspiration’ (Malloch and Trevarthen 2009, p. 7) that makes it possible for us ‘to share time

meaningfully together in its emotional richness and its structural holding' (Malloch and Trevarthen 2009, p. 5; my emphasis).

They demonstrate the impact of musicality upon one's sense of wellbeing via its contribution to a sense of belonging and cultural identity, and to the coordination of practical tasks. Musicality accommodates a shared, intuitively communicated understanding that is necessary for successful relationships and healthy functioning. The cultivation of an intrinsic musicality is a means of declaring one's allegiance to a close other and a lifeline for the emotionally distressed, offering them a way to explore narratives of feeling that engender courage and joy (Trevarthen and Malloch 2002, 2009).

To these scholars, music is therapeutic because it attunes to the mind's regulation of the body, both in terms of its inner neurochemical, hormonal and metabolic processes and its purposeful engagements (Trevarthen and Malloch 2002, p. 13). Malloch and Trevarthen suggest that this musical means of interacting and communicating is positioned within a continuum from separation to complete interconnectedness (Malloch and Trevarthen 2009). They point to the ways in which music and musicality 'hold our degree of interrelationship or belonging with other people' (Malloch and Trevarthen 2009, p. 7) and 'serve our need for companionship' (Malloch and Trevarthen 2009, p. 6). Following this line of thinking, communicative musicality may enhance positive emotions and positive relationships and can be linked to Seligman's theory of wellbeing.

Several other researchers from different disciplinary fields complement and elaborate on the relational value of 'communicative musicality'. Pavlicevic and Ansdell (2009) note that it stirs an awareness in people of their intrinsic connectedness, '*affording a unique human experience of sympathy*' (p. 368; my emphasis). Cross and Morley (2009) celebrate its 'lessening [of] the potentials of misunderstanding and disagreements, due to music's 'ambiguous' and 'floating intentionality' (p. 68). Thus, communicative musicality's relational value or quality is connected with a range of social and relational affordances and enables a higher level of social awareness and positive relationships and emotions. In addition, identity and belonging are closely linked to its capacity for 'engendering a strong sense of group identity' (Cross and Morley in Malloch and Trevarthen 2009, p. 70), and 'promoting [people's] mutual feelings of conjoinment' (Dissanayake 2009, p. 27). Finally, communicative musicality encompasses practical benefits in social settings, structuring social relations (Cross and Morley 2009, p. 70) and reinforcing emotional and behavioural coordination (Dissanayake 2009, p. 255).

These potential benefits illuminate the strong relational and social value of music and musicality. In my discussion chapter, I will elaborate upon these relational aspects with regard to the ways in which the theory of communicative musicality might apply to the parents' experiences in this particular study. Communicative musicality seems

to nurture larger social as well as smaller dyadic relationships. It also includes educational and cultural aspects, 'complementing language by providing us with a means for sharing coordinated, embodied space and time' (Malloch and Trevarthen 2009, p. 6) and 'protecting the growth of cultural meaning invented and shared with intimately known and constant companions' (Malloch and Trevarthen 2009, p. 7). It is part of 'an indispensable emotional background to naming identities' (Brandt 2009, p. 33).

Moreover, it 'nurtures the self' (Malloch and Trevarthen 2009, p. 6) by providing 'a safe, supportive environment in the present moment' (Malloch and Trevarthen 2009, p. 7). It is 'a source of energy and inspiration' (Malloch and Trevarthen 2009, p. 6), and it 'develops the individual cognitive flexibility' (Cross and Morley 2009, p. 71). Relational, individual, communicative, emotional, cognitive and cultural aspects are woven together in everything I have quoted to this point.

Trevarthen, Gratier and Aptor-Danon also use the term holding in order to describe what musicality may afford.

5.3.3 Voice and musicality as holding

Drawing upon Winnicott (1971), Gratier and Trevarthen (2007) propose that 'the vocal rhythms of interpersonal engagement constitute a holding environment for the infant that is in continuity and coherent with the physical holding involved in the caregiver's mothering techniques' (p. 174). The diversity and uniqueness of the voice in the mother-infant exchange contains a wealth of meaning for the baby. Bodily motion and the rhythms of childcare in general are considered to stir children's emotions and excitement, cultivating their expectations regarding live company (Mauss 1934 in Gratier and Aptor-Danon 2009). These aspects fulfil a holding function because they are responsive to the child's need for engagement, and to the improvisation of shared patterns of experience. Drawing upon Trehub and Trainor (1998), Gratier and Trevarthen point out that, likewise, the rhythms of motherese and infant-directed singing also hold the infant's attention, excitement and involvement, just as the infant's delight holds the mother's affection. They draw attention to the multiple voices of a single mother (2007).

'Holding' refers to a particularly confident and intimate relationship between the child and a 'good enough' significant other, based upon a simultaneously psychic and bodily way of being-with that ensures a child's experience of a world that is meaningful and continuous (Winnicott 1971/1991). Winnicott extends the notion of 'holding' to cover all that a mother is and does during the first years of the child's life. The mother has her memories of being cared for, and they can both help and hinder her in her own experiences as a mother (Winnicott 2002, p. 13). The point of departure

for Winnicott was that the mother intuitively understands the child and his or her emotional expression.

Holding implies sensuous experiences for the baby and a sense of achievement for the mother (Winnicott 1960). The way the mother understands and meets the baby's needs creates the foundation for the ideas that the baby presents and uses the next time. The caregiver contributes to making the world understandable to the child (Winnicott 1945/1958, p. 152). These conclusions strongly relate to the continuous and ritual aspects of human interaction that are also touched upon by Eckerdahl and Merker, as well as Dissanayake, within the theory of communicative musicality (see Eckerdahl and Merker 2009, Dissanayake 2009).

5.3.4 The ritualised character of communicative musicality

Drawing upon the founder of the field of human ethology, Eibl-Eibesfeldt (1970), Dissanayake states that changes occur during the ritualisation of behaviour in mother-infant early interactions—exaggeration and stereotypy attract and sustain attention, for example, while strengthening the salience of the affiliative messages (Dissanayake 2001, 2009). The functions of this ritualised behaviour include bonding, socialisation, emotional referencing and the development of human sensibilities (Dissanayake 2001, p. 98). In this study, the parents highlight the ritualized character of their singing, and how their singing easily becomes an everyday ritual. They also experience that the everyday ritual is very important for their children. The distinction between routine and ritual is also touched upon.

Merker emphasises that ritual is not to be 'equated' with either habit or convention, because the latter two are not typically defined in terms of obligatory formal and particular modes of execution (Merker 2009, p. 46). What remains constant among the forms is an insistence on the obligatory nature of the particular form, independent of its outcomes (ibid.). Merker focuses on the cultural ritual behaviour that 'no child is born with' (ibid.).

Within the theory of communicative musicality, Eckerdahl and Merker investigate the learning possibilities of playsongs in the parent-child musical interaction. They describe the particular characteristics of parents' ritualised behaviour surrounding playsongs, and its possible connections to the child's progression and development. The performance aspects of an action/play song may differ according to the infant's age, but the global form of the action song remains invariable (Eckerdahl and Merker 2009, p. 252). What they mean by 'global' remains unanswered. One important point in this respect, is that some parents in my study also use the term 'global' when describing the children's need for familiarity and their resistance to change on the one hand,

and small nuances and improvisations within the more ‘global’ form of the act on the other. I will elaborate on this later within the chapter of empirical exploration.

Eckerdal and Merker conclude that the ritual ‘lacks apparent utility’ in the child’s process of language acquisition, because, in fact, ‘the lyrics of these playsongs appear ill-suited for their purpose’ (Eckerdahl and Merker 2009, p. 251). These songs are simply meant to be performed, and they imply no achievement of an instrumental end beyond the performance itself (Eckerdahl and Merker 2009, p. 252). However, behind this ‘superficial view’ lies a ‘subtle, hidden dynamic’ (Merker 2009, p. 51)—in fact, they find, these songs may epitomise ‘the broad scope of mimesis deployed in human ritual’ (Eckerdahl and Merker 2009, p. 252). This is because they create ‘an integrity of communicative contact’ through which children are introduced to the ritual culture in which they live and its particular ways of relating. The action song, in short, is a ‘developmental vehicle for induction into the ritual aspects of human culture’ (Eckerdahl and Merker 2009, p. 257).

In the previous subsections I mentioned the intrinsic musicality’s social and relational benefits, the ritualized, and holding character of parents’ singing, and how these ‘structural’ aspects are considered as benefits within the theory of communicative musicality. However, the important essence of communicative musicality or the premises of these benefits need to be taken into account as well.

5.3.5 Important premises or essence of musical meaningful interaction

Malloch and Trevarthen illustrate how communicative musicality as a capacity can ensure the fine tuning in human interaction, facilitate and energize meaning in communication (Malloch and Trevarthen 2009, p. 6), and make it possible to ‘share time meaningfully together’ (Malloch and Trevarthen 2009, p. 5). Communicative musicality may support all of the above-mentioned potentials, included the development of meaning, as long as it is based upon

- ⊕ movement—gestural, vocal and emotional—is what allows communicative musicality to occur (Malloch 1999, p. 50).
- ⊕ a dynamic continuum of distance and interrelatedness (... flowing freely along this continuum as the needs of a situation are perceived, because to become to fixed or stagnant’ at either end of the continuum provokes discord) (Malloch and Trevarthen 2009, p. 7).
- ⊕ a dialectic relationship between repetition and variation (Gratier and Apter-Danon 2009,). This relationship is characterised by

- ⊕ *expressive timing* (which is defined as ‘the particular quality or energy of temporal organisation in spontaneous mother-infant interaction’(Gratier and Apter-Danon 2009, p. 306). It also refers to ‘the small deviations from strict metronomic rhythm that musicians use to impart vitality and expressiveness in their playing’ (Gratier and Apter-Danon 2009, p. 306). A loss of expressive timing ‘implies an over-predictability in interaction’ (ibid.).
- ⊕ *attunement* (an attentive and sympathetically attuned interaction) (Trevarthen, Delafield-Butt and Schögler 2011), based upon the sympathy for what the child is feeling, genuine emotional response that is accepting and flexible and good humour in play. (when mothers and babies communicate effectively, it is clear that each is highly ‘attuned’ to the vocal and physical gestures of the other. This attunement is critical (Malloch 1999, p 31).

I will now present a few concepts that are relevant to the performative act of lullaby singing and connected to the theory of communicative musicality directly or indirectly via the parameters of affect attunement, mindfulness, wellbeing and affordance.

5.4 Attunement

Stern emphasizes the intersubjective significance of affect attunement in infants’ and children’s life worlds (Stern 1985, Stern 2010). The term has its roots in developmental psychology, and implies a sharing, alignment or matching of internal states in the domain of intersubjective relatedness based on essential and sensitive elements, such as timing, intensity and form (Stern 1985, Legerstee, Markova and Fisher 2006, Trondalen and Skårderud 2007, Hundeide 2007). It allows the infant and child to sense how he or she is perceived (Stern 1985), depending on the caregiver’s sustaining attention and warm sensitivity (Legerstee, Markova and Fisher 2007).

The approach is based upon a view in which the quality of parent-child interactions is crucial and *how* the interaction moves along (Trondalen and Skårderud 2007, p. 102). Hence, the quality of the act of singing lullabies is dependent on the presence, sensitivity, and responsiveness and the matching of the parent. This matching is however a cross-modal way of relating, inasmuch as the matching occurs in another modality than the original one (Trondalen and Skårderud 2007, p. 102). Attunement is a term to elucidate the sharing of inner feeling states and may be observable at practical levels

through dynamic and procedural qualities such as sound, gesture and movement (Trondalen and Skårderud 2007, p. 101-102). Stern points out that attunement differs from empathy by its immediate nature without cognitive processing and not necessarily being a conscious way of responding and acting. There are three general features of a behaviour that could be matched: form, intensity and timing. These aspects are based upon underlying criteria such as: absolute intensity (e.g. dynamic, rhythmic), intensity contours (e.g. melodic shape), temporal beat (e.g. tempo changes in time), rhythm (e.g. pattern of pulsation), duration (time span) and shape (e.g. feature in time and space) (Stern 1985, p. 146).

5.5 Mindfulness

5.5.1 Definitions and components

Mindfulness, an important, empowering and personal internal experience (Siegel 2007, p. xvi), arises from either a spiritual or a psychological faculty. In a spiritual sense, it refers to a calm awareness of one's body, feelings and mind. In a psychological sense, it refers to the focusing of one's attention and awareness. More specifically, it involves

- ⊕ bringing one's own complete attention to the present experiences on a moment-to-moment basis (Marlatt & Kristeller 1999, p. 68);
- ⊕ paying attention in a particular way on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally (Kabat-Zinn 1994, p. 4);
- ⊕ cultivating a present-centered awareness in which each thought, feeling or sensation that arises in the attentional field is acknowledged and accepted as it is (Bishop *et al.* 2004, p. 232).

According to Siegel, mindfulness in its most general sense is about waking up from a life that has been lived automatically (Siegel 2007, p. 5). It is being aware, each moment, of what we are doing as we are doing it (Siegel 2007, p. 13). According to Siegel, mindfulness is a specific intrasubjective attunement (Siegel 2007), while attunement in a Sternian sense, is related to the realm of intersubjectivity.

The first component of mindfulness involves 'the self-regulation of attention', which allows for the 'increased recognition of mental events in the present moment' (Bishop

et al. 2004, p. 232). The second component involves ‘adopting a particular orientation toward one’s experiences in the present moment, an orientation that is characterized by *curiosity*, *openness* and *acceptance*’ (ibid.; my emphasis).

These previous definitions are, from my point of view, particularly enlightening from an individualistic perspective, but they fail to explicitly account for the relational perspective—that is, the ‘awareness of connectedness’ of Pavlicevic and Ansdell (2009, p. 7), ‘mutual awareness’ or ‘motivation’ of Trevarthen (2011) or the ‘expressive timing’ of Gratier and Aptor-Danon (2009). I will bring these components together and elaborate on this in direct connection to the empirical material in the chapter of discussion. I believe that there is an important link between parental sensitivity and mindfulness and the lullaby act’s affordances and their possible connection to relational and existential wellbeing. Parents’ level of awareness in terms of paying attention to ‘the present experiences on a moment-to-moment basis’ (Marlatt and Kristeller 1999, p. 68) will be explored.

The notion of wellbeing has a range of connotations within the field of positive psychology as well as in the everyday language and needs a further clarification:

5.6 Wellbeing

The term highlights the importance of positive emotions and their connections to our mindset and degree of openness to new experiences. It is a complex construct that concerns optimal experience and functioning (Ryan and Deci 2001, p. 141). The different approaches to the concept primarily have their origin in the Aristotelian distinction between Eudemonia and Hedoné, which are linked to two different areas of the field of positive psychology: psychological wellbeing and subjective wellbeing. Hedonism emphasises modes of happiness, comfort and positive feelings, whereas eudemonia is more concerned with self-actualisation and meaningful engagement in one’s activities and social and professional settings (Haybron 2008, King 2008).

This distinction, of course, evokes the child’s more short-termed hedonistic inclinations, on the one side, and the parents’ more long-termed, mature eudemonia perspectives, on the other. Ryan and Deci (2001) maintain that wellbeing is best captured by the latter, which they define as vital, full functioning of the individual. This definition is based upon a holistic human view, including psychological, social and spiritual aspects, and the belief that people are active organisms with inherent and deeply evolved tendencies towards psychological growths and development (Ryan 2009).

The focus of the field of psychological wellbeing is generally upon self-actualisation, purpose in life, personal growth, skill development and meaning making (Haybron 2008, Keyes, Shmotkin and Ryff 2002). Subjective wellbeing, on the other hand, favours pleasure, immediate satisfaction, comfort, high and low levels of positive and negative affects and life quality (Larsen and Prizmic 2008). From my point of view, happiness, satisfaction, meaningfulness and wellbeing are strongly interconnected to parents' and children's wellbeing, both together and separately.

The empirical evidence tells us that the dichotomy that exists between these two directions has probably been drawn too sharply (King 2008, p. 433). The present inquiry, therefore, encompasses research and perspectives from both alignments. It emphasises the parents' perspectives and individual differences in relation to the lullaby-singing act's various meanings. However, it is also grounded in the belief that the satisfaction of basic psychological and physiological needs fosters subjective wellbeing and eudemonic wellbeing.

People's cognitive appraisal of life informs theories of subjective wellbeing (Keyes, Shmotkin, and Ryff 2002). Wellbeing is closely related to the human existential essence and conditions, which are highlighted by the search for meaning, coherence and integration in life. I see wellbeing and meaningfulness as intrinsically connected via notions such as mutuality, relatedness, personal engagement, positive emotions, relationships and achievement (see Seligman 2011, MacDonald, Kreutz & Mitchell 2012). This connection matters when looking at how parents' experience and validate the meaningfulness of the act. Parents' statements imply a diversity of meanings of the act, and some are closely linked to what the act may provide, but not always. Some parents seem to be aware of the act's different functions, whereas others do not pay attention to its more instrumental' benefits.

5.7 Affordance

Gibson's concept of affordance is therefore useful in the analytical confrontation with the parents' statements, because it loosens the functionalistic and goal-directed hold of previous research findings and allows me to connect the lullaby act to its various meanings and potentials in the bedtime context. Affordance was originally defined by the psychologist Gibson (1977, 1979) as the feature of an object or the environment that allows the observer to perform an action. The affordances of a lullaby are what it *offers*, *provides* or *furnishes* to the parent and the child. The term encompasses action possibilities as well as a functional colouring of the act. However, in

the context of lullabies, we must broaden it even further. The psychologist Norman defines the concept of affordance in relational terms, rather than in a subjective and intrinsic sense, which makes it dependent not only on the physical capabilities of an actor/parent but also on his or her action goals, values, beliefs and past experiences (Norman 1999). Norman's definition tries to anticipate how an object might be interacted with according to the actor's level of awareness of that object and the actor's own abilities. This relates both to conventions and levels of creativity and imagination. Affordances can also be considered 'opportunities for goal-directed action' that arise from the activity repertoire and skills that are unique to the actors in question: they 'determine trajectories of possible engagement and practical outcomes of embodied interaction that are available to multiple affordance-detecting creatures' (Krueger 2011, p. 4). A definition of affordance in relation to the musical dimensions of a lullaby act reads as follows:

Musical affordances emerge through the dynamic, temporally extended interaction between active listener and musical piece. They are realized within this relation, and are the qualities of a piece of music that a sensitive listener both perceives and appropriates in the process of constructing and regulating different emotional experiences and in organizing different social contexts and interpersonal relations. (Krueger 2011, p. 4–5)

This view²⁸ can be supplemented by Windsor and de Bézenac's (2012) assessments of the usefulness of Gibson's concept in understanding the relationship between perception and action in a musical setting. They argue that

- ⊕ the links between the performance, composition and reception are underpinned by the *mutuality* (my emphasis) of perception and action;
- ⊕ each individual has a unique set of affordances available (p. 110);
- ⊕ musical listening or behaviour may not be clearly distinguishable from everyday listening/behaviour, and is rooted in the latter (p. 108);
- ⊕ musical affordances may produce selective pressure on the behaviour of individuals (p. 109);
- ⊕ the significance of music lies in the manner in which it directly specifies interacting organisms and objects in the environment, rather than in quality as an abstract, auditory phenomenon (de Bezenac 2007).

28 There exists critical views of Krueger's emphasis on the affordance-laden structure of music, but for reasons of space, I will not elaborate on this. For an overview, see Menin and Schiavio (2012).

5.8 **Summary**

Pragmatically speaking, we can see that multiple voices and sources will be brought into dialogue with the empirical material. All of them serve as selective contrasting and attentive partners in dialogue in relation to parents' and their children's lived experiences and life world, and they introduce important nuances and differentiations. As mentioned, I will emphasise the concept and construction of meaningfulness in relation to the theory of communicative musicality and its premises, dimensions and complexities that seem relevant to the living practice of lullaby singing, including the notions of holding, ritual, attunement, mindfulness, wellbeing and affordance.

PART IV

Empirical explorations

In this part of the thesis, I will describe, explore and reflect upon parents' experiences. I will first present sample descriptions of the twenty people I interviewed, using profile themes to illuminate the values, intentionality, and influences that determine the ways in which they experience lullaby singing. Next, I will present the empirical material via three profoundly interrelated layers of meaning: *nurturing*, *building* and *mastery*. Together, these aspects form the basis of the significance or *meaningfulness* of the lullaby act, as I understand it from the parents' accounts. Like the layers, the structures with which I present my data are also interconnected. For example, the nurturing qualities of the act, such as care, communication, contact and comfort (listed in chapter 7), overlap with certain of its building and mastery qualities. The notion of calmness thus takes on a range of shapes and meanings in relation to how and where parents place their focus, express their values and interests and experience the act. However, all three layers of meaning have discrete features as well; hence their elaboration within different analytical structures in the chapters to follow.

6 Parental influences and intentionality

This chapter presents and describes parents' intentionality, their thinking, personal convictions, values, influences and backgrounds in the interests of exploring the 'why' of the lullaby act. For some parents, the lullaby act is intrinsically connected to practical everyday matters; for others, it relates more to emotional and relational aspects of their lives. This inclination derives from the given parent's life situation and present and past circumstances, among other things. One's sense of identity, value orientation, priorities and levels of self-awareness all influence one's outlook on one's musical life with her or his child.²⁹

The importance parents attribute to the act is one of the main emergent themes in this inquiry. I ally myself with Bruner's folk-psychological and cultural aspirations, which privilege people's commitments to 'ways of life' and focus upon how people's complex interactions constitute culture. Human values, from his perspective, are not 'shot from the hip, choice-situation by choice-situation', nor are they a product of isolated individuals (Bruner 1990, p. 29). Instead, they serve to triangulate one's self-identity with one's culture (ibid.).

I will now present brief accounts of the ways in which the parents I interviewed in this study relate to themselves as parents—that is, I will introduce their personal convictions and views in the context of the lullaby act, looking at the impact of their intentions upon their choices without prejudice or any endorsement of a particular social hierarchy. For anonymity's sake, I cannot describe the parents' views and

29 In her thesis 'Barneplater – kultur eller bare kult? En intervju-undersøkelse i familieperspektiv', Ingeborg Lunde Vestad (2004) describes parents' choices of music for their children and explores parents' diverse opinions and views, including the 'dimensions' of reproduction and passing on traditions.

situations in detail, and I will introduce their thinking using themes rather than cases, privileging the topic and the goals of the inquiry rather than the real people behind it as such. It was quite clear, in short, that all of the parents found the lullaby-singing act to be very intimate and private.

6.1 Parents' intentionality

I choose to define intentionality in terms of what parents stand for and represent. Here I will provide a few examples of intentionality from the interview data. The following parental statements are so strong and are not typical for the data. They reflect the uniqueness of each parental story told and experienced:

6.1.1 'Music means a lot to me'

In this quote, a father demonstrates a mode of representation of the world as well as a powerful individual interest in music. He wants to share his love of music, which derives from distinct and intense (peak) musical experiences in his childhood, with his son, for both the pleasure and the comfort in it.³⁰

— *Music means a lot to me. Since I didn't grow up in an environment where music was an integral part of my upbringing, it was a shock to meet Mozart at the age of seven. It changed my life, so to speak. I believe it was an enormously significant moment. Therefore, I want my son to have an integrated and fundamental relationship with music from the very beginning. It means a lot. But it is also about comfort. I think that art is human comfort. What should we do in life if art didn't exist?*

— *So it means a lot to you?*

— *Yes, what should we do without it? Almost every piece of art is human comfort. You know, I am so interested in art, philosophy and aesthetics. This is part of my professional identity but it is also my personal conviction. The point is that you recreate the lost paradise when using language and art as symbolic representation. There is no one who has decided the reason why we are here. Our human life has been given to us, and we need to be reconciled with our faith, and we have been thrown out of paradise. We have to do a*

30 For an overview of strong experiences in relation to music, see Gabrielsson (2011).

sort of mourning work. My sense of meaningfulness, joy and reflections—at all levels—are connected to music. I feel a sort of commitment—a commitment to share positive musical experiences with my son. Music gives us comfort and joy, and is an important meeting point. We want to share with others our experiences of something positive. So we say touch this—listen to this. Music is a gift that I feel I have received, that I feel all people have received, in different ways, naturally, and with different points of departure, but I feel a sort of commitment. Yes, that's it: a commitment. I want music to be so integrated in my son's life that he will not be able to say the first time he heard a song. (Father no. 5)

— I have always been very fond of songs for children and I know a vast amount of songs by heart. I sing a lot. (Mother no. 1)

Musical sharing is propelled by the parent's personal appreciations of music, ambitions, influences and passions in life. Father no. 5 also emphasises his desire to share something outside of himself and describes this moment of musical meeting between parent and child. The father's emphasis upon the human need for comfort aligns with his efforts to communicate with his son through music and to meet 'in the third', as he puts it, through their shared perception and intentionality:

— We needed something outside of ourselves that we could share. The musical sharing with my son enable us to meet 'in the third', as I put it. Without music, we are left naked so to speak. It had become almost too empty just the two of us. Through music, we could meet 'in the third' or as three. (Father no. 5)

Ideas and embodied communicative efforts go hand-in-hand in this process. For this father, music supplies a conduit to his son on top of all of its other benefits and dimensions. The father touches upon a personal strong conviction and commitment towards music, while others describe this commitment more in relation to children's appreciation of music, social, educational upbringing, to 'being a good and responsible parent' and a 'parental task'.

Some parents emphasise their love of music and singing in association with a strong interest in their cultural heritage, while others are more immersed in other personal, spiritual and earthly beliefs or the children's upbringing, needs and routines.

6.1.2 'Every child loves to sing'

The child's love of music and its value motivate parents to sing:

— *Every child loves to sing, and it's egocentric, from my point of view, not to systematically sing to your children. I started with ten songs—'Så rart å være flaggermus' and other songs—and had the ambition to sing two hundred songs to my children, to create a sort of song bank, but it all stalled. It is so egocentric. I didn't manage to complete my project, even though I knew it was so important for them.* (Father no. 8)

The combination of the parents' love of music and singing and the children's appreciation of it makes the singing rather 'obvious' as mother no. 7 puts it.

— *Music means a lot to me, and the singing has been rather obvious. My son also loves my singing, and he likes to sing too. Consequently, we sing a lot. The songs I sing mean a lot to me.* (Mother no. 7)

The parents in these examples are aware of these innate inclinations and want to provide their children with musical encounters that both promote an appreciation of music and stimulate their musical abilities.

Many of the parents seem to be aware of the importance of musical influences in relation to their children's musical abilities, sense of appreciation and development. However, they seem to emphasize the importance of music and singing differently. The parents' intuitive cultivation of their children's appreciation encompasses lullaby singing but also music programs for small children such as 'Musikk fra livets begyn-nelse' [Music from the beginning of life], CDs, television, radio broadcasts and concerts.

— *I love music, and I want my son to love it too. Therefore I expose him as often as possible to good music and my own singing.* (Father no. 5)

— *Our home has been a living musical. I wanted to stimulate my children in a deep and natural way.* (Mother no. 2)

I believe that my singing, in a way, cultivates the child's love of music and singing. I become a role model, and when I express myself through singing, and my child observes that I like to sing, she also feels that it's natural to express herself through music and singing. (Lullaby diary, January 2011)

Of course, some parents start to sing to their children because they observe that their children love and appreciate music regardless of their influence. Others take the initiative to learn about music and in turn cultivate good musical taste in their children:

— *I have not been that into music. I am not so interested in music, actually. I played guitar when I was a student, and now, ten years later, I find myself with my guitar again, playing and singing to my son!*

— *So you started singing to your son after all these years? That's impressive.*

— *Yes, it probably is. I can see that it gives me this little extra when talking about it with friends who have kids. They do not sing or play guitar, and I can see that they sort of envy me this moment with my kid. I started to play and sing for him because I wanted to do something together with him, just the two of us. And it has worked out very well. We play football together during the daytime and sing at bedtime. (Father no. 2)*

In this example, the father starts singing because he recognizes his child's love of music, but also in order to share something nice with him. The singing also comes out of a parental sense of responsibility and commitment.

6.1.3 Being a good and responsible parent

Some parents seem to emphasize the connection between singing and the parental identity, role and upbringing tasks to a larger degree than others:

— *Introducing our rich cultural heritage to children is an important parental task, together with creating your own personal signature that gives them insights into your love towards them. This is what is the most valuable thing about parents' singing, I believe. It is also an important part of the children's cultural and social learning process. As a parent, you should sing at least two hundred songs to them. This was my ambition. Have a look at my bookshelves. There are a lot of songbooks there—the good old ones. Unfortunately, my song project became rather limited. I ended up with around twenty songs. (Father no. 8)*

This father emphasizes the importance of the 'cultural and social learning process' and connects his singing to an educational and social upbringing 'project'. Other parents put it this way:

— *I have to be the responsible one—I am the grown up, even though I feel vulnerable sometimes. I am the one who creates this safe space, and I have to contain the daily challenges and accept the fact that sometimes my children are difficult. This is very important. It has to do with the fact that there has been so much insecurity in their lives, related to our divorce. My oldest daughter was six years old, and the youngest was three, when it took place. Their father*

was so unstable and unpredictable, and I really had to ensure stability within our family. I had to show them that I will always be there, and that they can always come to me. I accept them as they are, and I don't try to change them.

(Mother no. 5)

Singing lullabies is often solidly connected to life conditions and circumstances, as well as the individual parent's identity and self-image as a good parent or role model. In this particular case, the mother positions her singing among the remedies for the insecurity in her children's lives. She notes that there are challenging as well as rewarding times in her life with her children, and that her singing is affected by the daily atmosphere in which it occurs:

— When singing, I feel that there is so much to give to my children—creating that calm moment when they are put to bed. It was so easy to be present when they were small, but now there can be things that come between us and harm the good connection that we had. When my presence and love is lost in a moment of quarrel, I am not able to sing. I am not motivated any more. I cannot be fake about it. Now it is much more difficult to open up to the moment. Something has come between. They want their own lives, and they push me away. When they were small, it was this good ending to the day—a safe space to be for all of us. (Mother no. 5)

This value dimension, then, does not derive solely from the act itself but also from the parent-child relationship and, more specifically, the parent's self-image and sense of responsibility:

— I knew it immediately when I became a father: if you want to be close to your children, you need to be there. Now I work only 50 percent. (Father no. 1)

— Sometimes I feel like I have so many other things to do, so I get impatient and a little restless when singing. Then I can feel a little guilty conscience, even though I have been with my children all day, and they have had a lot of quality time with me during the day. There are so many things waiting to be done: pay the bills, clean, et cetera. I get restless thinking about it. But they always get the same four songs. It is just a matter of whether to sing ten more songs or not. (Mother no. 10)

As seen in these examples, the bedtime singing is closely connected to the parental role and identity. Other parents, as we will see next, prefer to emphasise the universal life dimensions of singing, and the human and spiritual depth that their singing affords them and their children:

6.1.4 'Getting in contact with emotions and the deeper layers of reality'

Two more examples will situate and explain the personal context in which lullabies occur, related to parents' own values and intentionality:

— *It has something to do with getting in contact with these deeper layers of reality. We don't have so much of it in our world. So I want to add a glimpse of the deeper aspects of life and not only live from consumer-simplicity. Children are very open minded, so they easily accept what we give to them. I see it as a matter of choice—what one wishes to relate to. Many people seem to choose to live a superficial lifestyle. I see this in the choices I made. I wanted some depth and I found some of the lullabies so shallow and trivial. I believe it is important to integrate depth into our lives—this potential can be revealed through lullabies. Powerful forces and images can be accessed. A kind of transformational 'Plutonian' atmosphere is available. This is often suppressed and censored in the overjoyous TV programs for children, and the sweet-tempered lullabies. To deny or avoid this 'deeper' dimension is dishonest to me. These sweet types of melodies become so simple, kind and harmless. (Mother no. 2)*

Mother no. 2 emphasises the importance of existential depth in her children's lives and elsewhere adds that she has been strongly influenced by her grandmother and the ways in which she lived and treated this mother when she was a child. Her grandmother was a very strong woman with a tragic life story, and this mother accepted her grandmother's faith and inner convictions about culture and art as well. When her grandmother sang to her, she was very focused and centered, and the singing really came from within her. Her grandmother was from Hardanger, and she sang a lot of old lullabies and folksongs, so this mother wants to do the same for her own children. She finds her life to be enriched by her grandmother's singing.

Sometimes, parents are able to track or trace the origins of their own values through concrete rolemodels, traditions, personal childhood experiences or later professional influences. Other times the recalling of their singing to their children evokes strong emotions and reflects a strong connection between parents' immediate affections and their singing:

— *Can you describe you singing to your children?*

— *I feel now that I am getting very emotional when thinking of it. When they were very small, it was so different. I felt that I have so much to give my children.*

I feel that I am missing this very intimate singing. They are getting older now. Oh, this is not working (she starts crying). (Mother no. 5)

— *Your singing is strongly connected with your emotions and expressing them while singing?*

— *Yes, I cannot sing if I don't mean it. (Mother no. 5)*

Sometimes their singing is strongly influenced by the past and the parent's own childhood memories:

6.2 Parents' role models, personal experiences and influences

Based upon recollections about their own childhood experiences with singing parents, many people construct their own ideals and link their reasons for singing to them.

6.2.1 Parents' own parents as role models and happy childhood memories

Many of the parents' musical memories of childhood are rich and often positive:

— *'So, ro' is a song I recall from the time when I was very small. I remember my parents sang it to me, and when they started singing, I closed my eyes and just lied down and fell asleep. (Mother no. 1)*

— *I always sing some of the favourites from my own childhood that my mother sang to me: 'So, ro' and 'Sulla meg litt' and 'Byssan Lull'. They are a natural part of the singing ritual. (Mother no. 7)*

— *I think I sing the same way as my grandmother. She was sitting in her own world, eyes shut, but it was very heartfelt and true. (Mother no. 2)*

— *My mother sang incredibly often to me, so when I start to sing a song from the songbook, I cannot recall it in the beginning, but then it comes back to me—all kinds of songs. It feels like a part of me, and it is so natural to pass them on to my son. (Mother no. 7)*

— *My mother shared the deep dimensions in life when singing to me. I wanted to do the same for my children.* (Mother no. 2)

There is, in fact, a strong intergenerational transmission of songs taking place within this group of twenty parents, and positive childhood experiences have a measurable impact on the parents' positive attitudes towards music and singing in turn. Parents want to perpetuate this particular family tradition and develop similar musical relationships with their own children. This intergenerational transmission is not only related to the choice of songs but also to the particular mood or atmosphere that parents associate with lullaby singing in their own childhoods.

Positive memories are a motivating force for parents, whose own parents and grandparents thus become role models in terms of their singing today. They might even model their performance (and related parenting) styles upon these figures from the past, and they might draw from that repertoire of songs as well. They also remember what they sang in school. Only a few parents actually appear to consult songbooks in order to sing their songs correctly. If it comes to it, they create highly personalised versions of the songs whose melodies or lyrics have escaped them.

In tandem with present social ideals, memories colour the act of lullaby singing in subtle and even unconscious ways, acting to contribute to a deepening of it. Parents' childhoods exert an influence in a tacit and nonverbal manner, and parents' memories are evoked while they are singing. The act resonates with impressions of family and social belonging. However, there are bad memories too:

— *I felt that my mother's singing was so intrusive. When singing, she put her own worries on my small shoulders. I would never do that to my own children. She was singing in minor key. I always sing in a major key.* (Father no. 5)

Parents continually inform their ongoing lives with their children, and past memories, if they have any in particular, are integrated naturally, intuitively and mostly unconsciously into their living musicality. On the other hand, parents reflect quite consciously upon their beliefs, previous experiences and values and are very conscious about not transmitting anything they consider to be dogmatic, shallow or harsh. Instead, they prefer to introduce their own personal sense of what they consider to be important and meaningful in life. The lullaby-singing act balances between past and present, and traditional and personal, inclinations and expressions of creativity:

I carry my own memories from the time when my mother sang [the song] to me. It contains a human depth. Love is passed on through generations. This makes it even more powerful. (Lullaby diary, February 2011)

— *I think I try to imitate my own mother without being aware of it. She sang so softly and melodically, especially in the evenings. I try to make it sound as soft as she did, and there are songs that I have a very special relationship with, because I remember that my mother sang them to me when I was a little girl. Anyway, I try to make my own personal versions. (Mother no. 10)*

— *I remember this song from a time when I was a very little girl. I remember when my parents sang it to me—I closed my eyes and just lay down and fell asleep. They always had to sing it. It feels so natural to sing for my own children, when I think about it. (Mother no. 1)*

— *My mother sang an incredible number of songs to me. So when I start singing a song, it comes back to me. I recall it from my own childhood. I can start singing a song, and I thought I had forgotten it, but it comes back automatically. I have a huge repertoire. And all the songs evoke memories. I find it very interesting. This is something new and probably one of the things that makes the process of becoming a parent very powerful. You get in contact with your self, when you were a child. And it doesn't feel so long ago, either. No, it feels like a part of me that is very natural to share with my own child. (Mother no. 7)*

These mothers' singing feels very natural, because they have experienced their parents doing the same thing when they were children. Lullaby singing, for many parents, represents part of their parental caregiving identity and style; for some, as well, it evokes impressions and aspirations around maternal identity in particular:

— *I believe that I try to sing as softly as I can, like my own mother. She was so good at it, and I have very vivid memories from the time when I was little, and my own mother sang to me. It was such a good memory. If I can do the same thing for my children, I feel that I have succeeded as a parent. (Mother no. 10)*

— *I have one ideal: my own mother. If I can provide for my children a little of what my mother has meant to me, I shall be satisfied.*

— *So what motivates you when singing?*

— *I believe it is tradition and companionship. The singing creates a family bond. (Mother no. 10)*

Mother no. 10, then, is motivated primarily by her own mother's singing and has formed an ideal about how to sing to her own children through this figure.

Other parents do not recall their own parents' singing as such but acknowledge its likely influence nevertheless, alongside the singing's usefulness, their personal inclination towards singing and music, and their various caregiving convictions:

— *My mother and father sang to me when I was a child, but I don't recall all the songs. The reasons for singing the songs that I sing to my children are related to a lack of memory and a bad imagination. I sing the songs that I remember at the moment, and I have not had enough will to learn new songs or modify the singing ritual. I always sing the same songs, over and over again. I actually love singing, and I sang a lot when I was at school and when I was a student. I played an instrument too, but I am not a musical person and not that into music. However, my wife and I want to do the best for our kids, and we are so grateful for having given birth to two healthy children. The singing is part of their upbringing. It takes a lot of time to raise a child, and I take it very seriously.* (Father no. 3)

Parents' singing is thus strongly related to notions of parental caregiving, intergenerational transmission and their own parents as role models. Parents with good lullaby-memories are more likely to sing (on a regular basis) for their children. This is consistent with parts of the empirical material. As we will see further below, it also derives from profound inner personal convictions regarding what a child needs and, more broadly, what is important in life.

6.2.2 Parental intuition versus collective and conventional 'forces'

Very often, parents initiate the act in a spontaneous fashion, and they do not reflect much later on how it came about. This also includes the way in which they sing and how long the singing takes. From the way in which the act of singing lullabies is situated, performed and described by some of the parents, it should be considered a natural act. Parents say that it is natural for them to sing for their children before they go to sleep, because they want to take care of their children in a positive and validating way, and they see that their children appreciate their singing. In this sense, 'natural' refers specifically to parents' instinctively caring disposition, particularly in the context of children's biological and social needs and natural love of music and singing. Other parents seem to be highly reflexive and conscious about the choices they make and the way the act towards their children. They cultivate fixed routines and make deliberate conventional choices of songs to sing to their children. A mother reports that she follows her inner convictions even when the society in which she lives appears not to support her:

— *I just feel it is so natural to do it this way—staying with my son until he falls asleep—even though I can read in the newspapers that I fail if I do it my way.*

— *What do you mean?*

— *I think it is terrible—the last article by Naphaug.³¹ It is pure technique. Awful. This summer I was on holiday with my parents, my sister, my cousin and his family, and they had a daughter who fell asleep on her own. They just went out of the room and said good night to her. She has slept very well her whole life, but not her brother. And I believe that they have left him crying. I don't really know, but I get the impression that they did. But I stayed with my son for one and a half hours, because we were in a strange place, with a new bed. I felt ashamed afterwards, because they sat in the living room and observed that it took me a lot of time. But I still believe that this was the right way to do it.*

— *So you took your time anyway?*

— *Yes, I did, regardless of what they were thinking. It is, maybe, a matter of confidence. I felt very strongly that this was the right way to do it, but nonetheless I felt ashamed. (Mother no. 7)*

The mother struggle to balance social institutions and cultural forces with her own natural instincts at bedtime:

— *According to our sleep specialist Naphaug, our family has a sleeping problem, because it takes at least half an hour every evening to make our son fall asleep. But I think it is terrible to talk about sleeping techniques the way she does. We stick to our way of doing it, and it feels so natural and so right. You just have to take your time with children. (Mother no. 7)*

This mother is devoted to her own intuitive and natural way of making her son fall asleep, though it is perhaps less 'efficient' than it could be. For her, the singing works out well despite the time it takes—the act is pleasant in and of itself and need not be governed by practical exigencies. She is governed by her intuitive 'forces' while singing to her son.

Some parents are governed by conventions and a collective mentality around the lullaby-singing act and follow a more 'mainstream' parental view and behaviour. They do not draw any sharp distinction between nature and culture:

— *We sing the good old lullabies, like all other parents do, I suppose. (Father no. 3)*

³¹ Karin Naphaug is a sleep-specialist in Norway who has written a book about sleep techniques for children, and her 'principles' are applied in many health care centers (Naphaug 2007)

— *I believe that many parents think the same way as I do. Parents have been singing to their children for ages. It came rather easy to me because I am used to singing.* (Mother no. 1)

This 'normal' nature extends to aspects of the performance itself, including the words:

— *I have to sing exactly the same way, and when I forget a word, my daughters correct me, or stop me.* (Mother no. 10)

According to the parents, the children also ensure the 'normal' and correct execution of songs.

— *I have sung the same songs for both my daughter and my son, but sometimes I forget to put his name in it, and then he reacts immediately. This is not acceptable. I have to sing it the same way all the time, and of course not forget to put his name in it.* (Mother no. 2)

Conventionality can even accommodate a bit of uniqueness, now and again:

— *I have always sung something at the end of the song 'Når trollmor har lagt sine elleve små troll' that is not correct. I didn't know about it until recently. I added a dash more than usual. This is how the song was shaped. Through my lack of knowledge of its correct execution, we have created something unique. Now everybody in my family sings it the same way, with this added bit of dash. This is part of our peculiarity. I cannot change it now. It has been sung this way for eleven years.* (Father no. 4)

Others describe their influences as more complex and even ambiguous.

— *Did you start to sing rather instinctively to your children when you became a mother?*

— *I don't know. When I was a child, I had a different focus, and I loved to touch other's souls. But when I grew up, the feedback I received was that this was just nonsense, and that all of the feminine, soft resources and strengths that I had were also nonsense. So when my first child was born, she didn't get the physical and soft caring and contact from me. My caring love that I had when I was a child was damaged by the culture and environment in which I lived. I understood this later on and tried to make up for my lack of tenderness then.* (Mother no. 2)

This mother reports that feminist impulses made her reject her natural maternal instinct and become too tough. Though she saw her mother and grandmother as role models, she read some books about child rearing and was influenced by them:

— *In Anna Walgren's book about parenting and children, I read about how to breastfeed my child. It was cold technique. I was led astray. But I believe this instinctive way of caring came back to me while singing to my child. I luckily came back onto the right track. (Mother no. 2)*

There are also parents who report that they have not had any role models or good childhood memories that they could lean on to while singing to their own children.

6.2.3 'Missing links'

Some parents seem to start singing because they feel that they lacked something when they were children, and they want to give their own children what their parents did not:

— *My parents were Jehovah's witnesses, and I believe it was a big mistake. We became so asocial. I always felt very different from my schoolmates, and there were so many constraints in my life. Don't do this and don't do that. I feel that I have lost so much of what life is all about. We are all connected to nature, and there is something bigger than ourselves out there. If you have the courage to believe in love, and believe that you do the right things, you are not afraid of challenges. It takes a lot of courage to have children and create a family. How will I be able to pay all the bills? How can I change and adapt to this new life? I am an agnostic. God is within you. I am not religious, but I am cultivating harmony in the life of my family. I want my kids to be free, and I believe that singing facilitates this flow of freedom. I want my kids to play and have fun. And I can see that they need it. Unfortunately, I cannot sing many [actual] songs, so I invent them all. But to be honest, I do this more out of duty, because I am so tired at night. But I can see that they need it, and it is fun for me too. (Father no. 10)*

— *My parents didn't sing to me, and I feel that I was very insecure when I was a child, because they didn't manage to create a safe atmosphere around me. They were not available. I felt so alone. (Mother no. 9)*

— *I grew up in an environment in which music was not an integrated part of the children's upbringing. It was a shock for me to listen to Mozart for the first time at the age of seven. It changed my life, I believe. It meant so much to me. For this reason, I want my child to have musical encounters from day one. No—even when he was in his mother's womb, I sang to him every evening. I had huge musical ambitions. I wanted to be a composer. Like I always say, I had*

all the possibilities but lacked the talent. I had an enormous will and interest and took enormous pleasure in music listening and making, but I didn't end up as a musician and composer, unfortunately. I became something rather different, an author and freethinker, but I am still connected to the world of arts.
(Father no. 5)

Some parents feel that they were deprived of this precious lullaby tradition specifically because of their own parents' musical (or human) shortcomings:

— I want to sing to my boy in order to give him what I never got when I was a child. I want to give him a safe and calm place to be. My own parents didn't think in those terms. I felt so insecure. (Mother no. 9)

— My parents did not sing to me, and I feel I lack this deep emotional dimension when singing to my own children because of this. (Father no. 8)

This father goes so far as to say that he lacks an 'emotional dimension' because he was not sung to. For him, it is a parental responsibility to learn a large number of songs from the traditional repertoire in order to transmit this cultural depth. Of course, he failed to manage it, as he ruefully reported, 'only' mastering around twenty songs for his children.

These statements are consistent with the view that previous experiences, either positive or negative, colour the present act in terms of one's instincts, imitation or experimentation with it.

6.2.4 Professional influences

Some parents are also influenced by their professional choices and successes in life outside of children:

— I am a social educator, and I have worked with multi-handicapped children, so I have sung a lot for them. Singing came to me in a very natural way, and I sing for my own kids for that reason, I believe. I started to sing the same songs that I sang at work. My parents didn't sing to me very often when I was a child. Anyway, music has been a very important part of my life. With that said, I also believe that the ability to function well in society—to be able to put on your own clothes, for example—is much more important than musical experience. I am an 'analytical behaviourist', so I also believe that we influence each other very strongly. What kind of responses you get from others in life is very important, for example. I don't believe that you are born in such-and-such a way—you

instead become who you are. Of course, you have your own special point of departure, but there are very powerful external influences that shape you as well. Giving positive responses to my own children is part of my thinking. It is in my blood. However, I don't look at care in the sense that you need to be with your children all the time. They need to learn to be autonomous and independent. I think a lot about that; they need to learn to be independent, to become self-confident and be able to walk the line by themselves. (Mother no. 8)

Mother no. 8 pays particular attention to positive responses in life, and she groups lullaby singing among them. Her professional background strongly influences her own interest in singing as well, and her larger goals for her children's independence and confidence. Others connect music to life in different ways:

— I am a teacher and have been one all of my professional life. In order to become a teacher, I had to learn to play two instruments, and this was really challenging. I had played piano from the ages of four to seven but rather mechanically. This was different. Now there was music during the whole year. And I had to pass a group exam. It came rather naturally to me to sing for my own kids. I never learn the songs' words, but I sing to them. I am not very strict with them. I am very playful. I invent things. You need to be creative both as a teacher and as a father, and you need to be sensitive. You need to listen to what they want and what they are thinking about. We always got into bed rather late, the whole family. This is how I sang to all my kids, except from my stepdaughter. She was ten when we got married. (Father no. 4)

This father pays attention to sensitivity and creativity in the meeting with his children, as he has experienced that a sensitive and creative approach towards children work out well in his professional life as a teacher. Other parents report that their professional background has helped them to be aware of the tools and resources available and lullaby singing become one of them:

— I am fascinated by the tools that exist for people to stay present and focused. Within human resource management, which I am studying for the time being, there are powerful management tools—purely mental tool that can enhance, encourage or restrain, depending on the result you want—for example, control, openness, presence, et cetera. You deliberately sought to affect thoughts and feelings in the way you want them to be, and by singing, you can channel your thoughts and feelings in a good way (Mother no. 9)

Another parent's educational and professional musical background directly informs his thinking about musicality at home:

— *You really need to find out who owns the problem. As a parent, you are the one who is responsible. Sometimes my daughter is angry, and I let her throw pillows all over and just wait until she calms down. Other times, I am the one who gets irritated, because she doesn't listen to my 'beautiful' singing. I learned to think this way—to identify where the problem is situated—when I studied pedagogy.*

— *How do you think about singing and musicality?*

— *Musicality is so many different things. If my daughter had been very rhythmically gifted, or her melodic intonation was perfect, I would not have thought of musicality in so many different ways. But she has a good ear for music—she recognises instruments when listening to the radio, and she describes music very emotionally. If music is sad or scary—I mean sonically scary—she responds very emotionally to music. And when she participates in singing songs, I notice that she sings better and better. There is a musical development going on, both rhythmically and melodically. Musicality for me is so many different things—the whole package. It has to do with being able to respond to music and produce music. (Father no. 6)*

As we will see below, parents' bedtime singing also reflects their opinions about their own musicality and singing voices.

6.3 How parents look at their singing, their musicality and their voices

Surprisingly, many of the parents in this inquiry do not consider themselves as musical and they believe that their singing capacities are rather average if not mediocre:

— *I think I have an ugly voice. I don't like my voice. (Father no. 10)*

— *I feel that I have an average singing voice. Not bad, but not exceptional either. (Mother no. 1)*

— *I have always believed that I cannot sing. I didn't sing in school, and I know I am a terrible singer. I sing completely out of tune. (Father no. 7)*

— *I feel that I don't have a singing voice. (Mother no. 7)*

— *My voice is very ugly, but I don't care about it. I am not that into music.*
(Father no. 2)

— *I hear that other parents say that they have an ugly singing voice, but there needs to be someone in between, who does not have an ugly voice but does not have a voice filled with soul, either, and that's me. My singing is okay.* (Mother no. 10)

Many of the parents' stories reveal a discrepancy between parents' self-evaluations of their voices and singing, as well as their level of confidence as singers, and the act of lullaby singing in the privacy of the home. The aesthetic dimension of their singing ultimately appears to be secondary, and they sing regardless of their opinions about their ability.

By contrast, other parents believe that they have a rather good singing voice, and they consider themselves as musical:

— *I like to sing, and I have always heard that I have a nice singing voice.*
(Mother no. 1)

— *I know that I sing quite well, because I see that all children love it—they want me to sing for them, as do the friends of my daughters.* (Mother no. 5)

— *It came so easy to me and I believe I took my musicality for granted.* (Mother no. 2)

Another parent describes the ways in which her musical awareness grew in relation to her child and lullaby singing:

— *Now I sing without thinking about it, but there was a period, during adolescence, when I didn't sing at all. I think I have a rather good singing voice—not Sissel Kyrkjebø, but I have heard that I have a good singing voice.³² I am quite aware of how to shape a melody—whether it should be fast or slow, sharp or smooth, dramatic or more natural. Of course, when I sing for my children during bedtime, it's not rock and roll. I try to sing the same way every time.*
(Mother no. 8)

These responses demonstrate a range of parental attitudes towards their own voices, but most sing regardless of previous judgments or positive or negative feedback.

³² Sissel Kyrkjebø is a famous Norwegian singer who is known for her clear and beautiful voice.

Some also claim that their lack of confidence does not hinder them from singing to their own children. Interestingly, parents do not generally worry about musical aspects when they sing lullabies; they are happy to softly reproduce the right notes. I will return to lullaby-related ‘performance practice’ below.

6.3.1 Good-enough singing

The majority of the parents do not evaluate their singing from a musical or aesthetic angle. They are content about their singing as long as their children are happy and content about it:

— *My singing is far from perfect. I don't have a beautiful voice. Nevertheless, I sing for my children.* (Mother no. 3 laughing)

Parents sing even though they sing out of tune and use wrong words. As already pointed out, the aesthetic dimension is secondary.

— *I try to sing relatively in tune. If I start too high and the voice cannot bear it, I restart in a lower voice. You sing better when you stand than when you are lying down, so I normally sit when I sing.* (Father no. 1)

— *It's important that it is melodic and calming, a calm séance* (Father no. 1).

— *No competition. I sing even if it's ugly.* (Father no. 1)

Parents often include pitch and intonation when they are considering the act in aesthetic and musical terms. Their concept of musicality is naturally somewhat narrow compared to that of Malloch and Trevarthen, who include the vitality and interests of life in their concept (Malloch and Trevarthen 2009). Yet, there are parents who add other elements in relation to musicality, such as liberation and release:

— *You need to release and liberate yourself, even though you sing very badly. That is what it is all about, and it is fun. And I want them to be free as well. To sing is to set your soul free.* (Father no. 10)

— *I couldn't sing when my husband was around. I was too shy and ashamed. But in front of my children, it was fine.* (Mother no. 9)

Parents, then, often think of one's musicality as being able to sing in tune. They see professional musicians as possessing great skill in this regard. Some simply associate

musicality with people who appreciate and love music, others refer to an innate capacity.

— *I think music is related to what I take for granted. It came so easily to me, to connect with the musical flow and just be in it without being afraid or withdrawn. Just catch the music and participate in it. To me, the more easily one is able to connect to the flow, the more musical one is. (Mother no. 2)*

Normally, however, parents do not frame musicality so broadly and include ‘the whole package’ as one of the parents puts it, and most do not appear to be aware of any innate musical capacity as such. Nevertheless, they acknowledge their own love of music and singing, as well as their children’s responses and what music means to them. This is sometimes connected with parents’ emphasis on fixed routines in their lives with their children:

6.4 The importance of fixed routines

Other parents start singing in the context of a fixed bedtime routines, emphasising the practical benefits of the activity:

— *We have very fixed routines at home, and especially at bedtime. While one of us brushes our youngest daughter’s teeth, the other reads a book to the eldest one. If we change one day, it doesn’t work.*

— *So you have fixed routines that consist of brushing teeth, reading books and singing?*

— *Yes, singing and tickling together. We need to tickle. It is a fixed ritual, every night. First we read a book, then the singing starts—it is obligatory.*

— *Have you always done the same thing?*

— *I remember very well, in the beginning, when she was very small, the sleeping routines were settled right away. It took three or four months, and then she was always put to bed at the same time. I used my singing very consciously. I sang the same songs every evening for the first three weeks, and it worked out very well. Then it became a ritual or routine. It was very important to do it every night. She also wanted it to be this way too. (Mother no. 1)*

— *Routines are very important. We have fixed routines. First she brushes her teeth in the bathroom, then she puts on her pyjamas, and she gets her teddy*

bear. I try to sing the same songs every time, creating a fixed pattern. She loves singing, but I don't want it to be too much play and chaos at bedtime. I use the singing as a sort of reward. I know she loves it so much. (Father no. 9)

I will come back to parents' practical value orientations, which seems to be a rather typical way of evaluating and experiencing the act among many of the parents. Some parents seem to have a more 'instrumental' focus than others regarding the act's purposes and aims as we will see when describing different singing strategies, 'techniques' and styles. Other parents seem to be more bound to traditions and their cultural identity.

6.5 Cultural belonging and tradition

All of the parents in this inquiry grew up in Norway, and Norwegian is their native speaking language. However, some of their parents or grandparents came from mixed cultures and different countries, and this was reflected in their song choices. Some parents seem to valorise and emphasize the human, educational and cultural aspects of their singing. One parent has an Italian father, and he sings an old Italian Partisan song to his children, because it is a part of his Italian identity that he wants to share with his children:

— I am half Italian, and my mother sang 'Bella Ciao' to me when I was a boy. She sang it in Italian, even though she is Scandinavian—my father is Italian. I grew up in an artistic environment. Both of my parents are artists, and I was born in Italy. I am not religious, but I follow the human rights and principles. Life is hectic, being divorced with three kids, but I try to give my children this cultural dimension. Art is about communication, and good communication is about being authentic. Art always generates a response. It is fantastic. I experience this marvel with music, movies and books. Art forces you to reflect upon certain things. It moves you in new directions. (Father no. 1)

Another parent has a Scottish grandmother and sings the Scottish songs he learned from her. One parent has a Swedish mother, and she sings a lot of Swedish songs to her children:

— My mother sang the Swedish song 'Tryggare kan ingen vara' to me every night, because that is part of her national identity. She grew up in Sweden and

moved to Norway when she married my father. My children also love that song, so it's part of our repertoire today too. (Mother no. 10)

The term tradition refers to what is delivered or handed over. It derives from the Latin *trans*, which means over; and *dare*, which means to give. Lullabies themselves are handed down from generation to generation, and many parents pass on their family tradition of singing. Their cultural background influences their choices of songs as well.

Next we will see how certain present or past life situations also contribute to this practice.

6.6 Life situations and circumstances

Some parents refer to life circumstances that influence their perspectives on their singing and their relationships with their children:

— For me, it has been very important to be a parent who is on equal terms with my son's mother. We share the caregiving tasks and we also shared the amount of time equally. My son was in a special situation, because he got cancer when he was only three months old. We have been in and out of the hospital a lot. The first two years of his life have been very special. I have been together with him almost all of the time, perhaps much more than other fathers. We live together and I have not worked in a year. I have been with my son much more than any other parent I know of. Because of this.

— This special situation has perhaps affected you in a very powerful way?

— Yes, that is very true. I believe that I am more attentive to and conscious about caring for my child, compared to my friends who have kids. It will probably change a little as things get back to normal, but for the time being, I am very into being there for him, creating quality time. We don't know how this will end yet. (Father no. 2)

The father who sings to his son who has cancer stresses the importance of creating a predictable, ordinary setting:

— I wanted to do something very normal with my son—an activity that all other parents do with their children—and singing lullabies is part of this. The normal setting of singing is an important contrast to all of our visits and stays at the hospital. (Father no. 2)

Other parents share other life stories:

— *There was a time when life was different. She was adopted from China when she was one year old, so she was not sung to from birth. Anyway, she is very attached to us as parents, so we don't see any difference. But if she had been lulled to sleep when she was very little, maybe things would be different today. Who knows? However, I don't believe this is something to dig deeper into, because I tend to believe instead that when bedtime difficulties occur, it is because she doesn't want to go to bed—she just wants to hold on to the moment, together with us.* (Father no. 6)

In this case, the father prefers not to pay special attention to his daughter's past and wants to stay solidly in the present.

There are also reasons to believe that these highly educated, middle class parents are influenced by the fact that they live in one of the most peaceful, safe and prosperous countries in the world, and perhaps this also is to some degree reflected in parents' choices of songs at bedtime. One of the parents touches upon the choices she made, when picking out songs to sing to her children at bedtime, compared to what parents from other countries may chose to sing and what they have to live through:

— *If you live through difficult times and circumstances, like poor people in Brasil and Africa, for instance, I believe it is rather natural that you sing melancholic and sad songs. To sing cute songs when your life is difficult seems superficial and false. How is it possible to do that? I understand why parents in my country sing soft and cute songs like 'So, ro' and other songs. It reflects our superficial and materialistic time, a 'consumer-simplicity'. I also believe that we try to avoid difficult feelings. But I don't seek to sing sad songs to my children at bedtime either. I want a good ending of the day. Nonetheless, I think it is important that my children learn about the deep dimensions of life as well, so I made a selection of songs based upon my values in life.* (Mother no. 3)

These background stories demonstrate the complex net of influences that contribute to parents' convictions and intentions regarding the act of lullaby singing. Some parents are highly influenced by their professional backgrounds, while others emphasise their family and cultural background, traditions and specific life situations.

The main purpose of presenting these small 'portraits' has been to look at the sources of parents' interest in lullabies. Many factors influence the rituals that motivate and accompany lullaby singing. The act very often originates in love, the parents' and children's love of music and singing and parental love, responsibility and commitment.

Personal convictions of what is important in life, family traditions and later professional backgrounds color and shape the act.

I will now give an overview of the songs parents chose to sing for their children at bedtime. Next, I will more systematically delve into the details regarding exactly what the lullaby act contributes back to these parents' everyday lives with their children. Along the way, I will outline the meaningful components of the act using three inter-related levels of complexity: 'nurturing', 'building' and 'mastery'. First, an overview of the songs parents use:

6.7 Choices of songs

According to the findings of this study, parents choose songs based upon conscious and unconscious, prepared and spontaneous choices, what they have at hand or recall best, what they like and what they want their children to hear. Sometimes this process involves songbooks:

— *I had to borrow and buy songbooks, because I am not so good at recalling lyrics, and I wanted to get to know some beautiful songs from our cultural heritage that I already knew about but hadn't learned by heart.* (Mother no. 1)

— *I had to find some songbooks in order to sing songs that I didn't know, and that I knew my son would appreciate.* (Mother no. 9)

— *We have the songbook lying on the nightstand.* (Father no. 2)

The traditional picture of how we live in Norway is upheld through traditional lullabies, such as the fact that most of us are surrounded by untouched nature with beautiful fjords, high mountains and deep forests that are filled with wolves, bears and deer. In addition, our connection to nature is clearly reflected in the way we cope with our daily existence, together with the domestic animals that appear in our lullabies, such as cats ('Lille katt'), goats ('Blåmann, Blåmann'), horses ('Fola, fola Blakken', 'Ri, ri på islandshest') and lambs ('Bæ, bæ lille lam').

Very few parents in this inquiry seem to think in 'preparatory' terms in the sense that they do not want to expose their children to the hard realities of life when they put them to bed. They want their children to learn about the realities of life but they do not find it appropriate to sing about sad and terrible things at bedtime. They sing traditional songs because that is what they have at hand, and not for any particular

reasons. Parents may even attempt to edit out elements that they deem needlessly violent, religious, antisocial, and so on. Nonetheless, some parents want songs that reflect the deeper dimensions of reality:

'Danse mi vise' (by Einar Skjæråsen):

*Vinden blæs synna, og vinden blæs norda,
lyset og skuggen er syskjen på jorda.
Sommarn er stutt, og vintern er lang.
Danse mi vise, gråte min sang.*

*The wind is blowing south
and the wind is blowing north
The light and the shadow
are siblings on earth
The summer is short
and the winter is long
Dance my melody,
weep my song*

According to mother no. 2, this song evokes certain emotions, some of them difficult. It is a song about the paradoxes and harshness of life:

— The summer is short and the winter is long [she simulates crying]. Yes, the winter is too long. And then you have the line, 'Some are poor and others are rich'. And then there is this line, which I don't like to sing, but it comes automatically out of my mouth: 'Sing about Berit and you will get Brita'. What? You tell your children that there is no hope. You never get the one you really love. Then you sit on a stone and dream that you are sitting on a lap. It is awful. And then I reflect upon it: What am I actually singing and how many times has my son listened to this? It is terrible. But I often forget and sing all the lines anyway. The lyrics are on autopilot.

— So you don't modify the text?

— I try to avoid that part of the song. It is a sad song. No hope. But sometimes I sing it anyway. I forget. It comes rather automatically. If I remember to do it, I change the words—if you sing about Berit, you get Berit. Then I laugh and my son wonders why I am laughing. (Mother no. 2)

From this extract, we can see that there is certain amount of incompatibility between the content of the lullaby text and the mother's personal convictions and values in

life. However, the mother wants the songs she sings to have depth and describes a need to show her children what is important in life.

Many of the old and traditional lullabies seem to be about life's sorrow and misery, and, perhaps as a result, they are underrepresented in the empirical material. Parents seem to avoid choosing harsh or disturbing song material for their children. Perhaps they find that children's lives today are much improved over their predecessors', so parents do not have the same interest in releasing their existential anxieties or worries. This disinterest in introducing the world's harshness through singing also seems to be part of a protective strategy among parents today that runs counter to the traditional approach, which encouraged parents to prepare children for this harshness through singing and storytelling (Garcia-Lorca 1928/2008). While some popular lullabies today do urge the child to go to sleep, there are no threats, direct or implied, in this regard.

Sometimes songs with religious content have rather violent imagery or an over-enthusiasm for the faith, whatever it might be. This can lead parents to skip certain verses or otherwise reinvent them:

— *I only sing the first verse to my daughter. It is neutral and the story turns around a lamb that is lost in the woods. I omit the other verses because this lamb turns out to be us, humans, and the story is about how lost we humans are without Jesus and God. I don't want my daughter to listen to this strong religious hymn. But it is a beautiful melody and we like to sing it.* (Father no. 6)

In contrast, many parents are relatively unaware of the lyrics and underlying messages of these songs. Perhaps they have never bothered to listen to them carefully, or they misunderstood them as children themselves and still do:

— *I have to admit that there are words in the song that I don't understand, and it is rather comical to hear my child repeats the same nonsense words over and over again. There is a song that my mother sang to me when I was a child, called 'Tryggare kan ingen vara' [Safer can no one be]. I thought for many many years that the song was about 'Den trygga rekan' [The safe shrimp]. 'Sing the song about the safe shrimp', I would say to my mother.* (Mother no. 10)

Obviously, then, the words matter, but they need not be the *right* words. Either the parents or the children might well supply their own interpretation of what they are hearing, and it does not always correlate to what the song is actually about.

— *The song is rather meaningless to me: 'Sulla meg litt du mamma mi, skal du få snor på trøya di' [Move me a little, my mommy, and you will get a lace on your jerse], but there is this 'mamma mi' in it, and I think these words, and*

the sounds, meant so much to my son when he was small. He liked the song because it was a song about his mother. They were the first words he got to know: mamma mi. (Mother no. 3)

Regardless of the other meanings in the song, then, the trigger words ‘my mommy’ were enough to engage this particular child’s attention, and the mother stick to this song because her child appreciate it so much.

The following list reflects both typical choices of songs as well as unique personal uses of songs that do not belong to the traditional lullaby repertoire.

6.7.1 The incidence and use of parental songs: overview

This list reflects a great diversity of songs used, though several are more popular than the others; ‘So, ro’, ‘Trollmors voggensang’, ‘Kvelden lister seg på tå’, ‘Byssan lull’, ‘Bæ, Bæ lille lam’, ‘Kjære Gud jeg har det godt’, ‘Sov du vesle spire ung’ are among the most popular. These songs are used by many of the parents in this inquiry. They are either integrated in their bedtime song repertoire on a daily basis or they have been used from time to time and over the course of time.

- ⊕ Aftensang om våren (Nordahl Grieg/Thomas Beck)
- ⊕ Blomster små (unknown)
- ⊕ Blåmann, Blåmann (anonymous)
- ⊕ Byssan lull (traditional Swedish folksong)
- ⊕ Byssan, byssan barnet (anonymous)
- ⊕ Bæ, bæ lille lam (English children’s song by Alice Tegnér)
- ⊕ Bånsull (Alf Prøysen)
- ⊕ Danse mi vise (Einar Skjæråsen)
- ⊕ Den fyrste song (Per Sivle/Torolf Voss)
- ⊕ Det står ein friar (Norwegian folk tune)
- ⊕ Eg veit ei lita jente (anonymous)
- ⊕ Ellinors vise (Klaus Hagerup/Sverre Kjellsberg)
- ⊕ Fader Jakob (French folksong: originally Frère Jacques)
- ⊕ Fager kveldssol (A. H. von Vallerysleben)
- ⊕ Fantorangens sovesang (Berit Neremoen/John Vinge)
- ⊕ Fola, fola blakken (Nordal Rolfsen/Norwegian folk tune)
- ⊕ Hjulene på bussen (anonymous)
- ⊕ Hompetitten (Alf Prøysen)
- ⊕ Jeg folder mine hender små (Torbjørn Egner)
- ⊕ Jon Blund (Sven Lange/Wolfgang Richter)

- ✦ Kjære Gud jeg har det godt (Margrethe Munthe/Jacob Gerhard Meidell)
- ✦ Kjære lille gutten min (Per Winge)
- ✦ Kvelden lister seg på tå (Hagerup/Kristoffersen)
- ✦ Lille katt (A. Lindgren/G. Riedel)
- ✦ Lykkeliten (Almquist/Clasen)
- ✦ På havets bunn står skutene (Prøysen)
- ✦ Ri, ri på islandshest (Gjerdrum/Bjaarstad)
- ✦ Ro, ro til fiskeskjær (anonymous)
- ✦ So, ro lillemann (Torbjørn Egner/Christian Hartmann)
- ✦ Sov du vesle spire ung (Topelius/Nodermann)
- ✦ Sov dukkelise (Ludvig Brandstrup/Elith Worsing)
- ✦ Sov i ro, og slumre inn (Johannes Brahms lullaby)
- ✦ Sulla meg litt (traditional)
- ✦ Så rart å være flaggermus (Inger Hagerup)
- ✦ Trollmors voggeseang (Margit Holmberg)
- ✦ Tryggare kan ingen vara (Swedish folksong)
- ✦ Vente på far (Caroline S. Jensen)
- ✦ Vem kan sägla för utan vind (traditional Swedish folksong)
- ✦ Vi har ei tulle (Margrethe Munthe)
- ✦ Vi ska ikkje sova bort sumernatta (Aslaug Låstad Lygre/Geirr Tveitt)
- ✦ Vinden rider høyt på sky (Jens Gundersen)

This list shows some degree of uniformity when it comes to parental taste and children's preferences. The majority of songs belong to a traditional and national song repertoire that one can find in many song books. Other songs, such as 'Lille Katt', 'Jon Blund' and 'Fantoranges sovesang' are songs from child television programs. There are songs that only a few of the parents sing, such as 'Blåmann, Blåmann', 'Eg veit ei lita jente', 'Fola, Fola blakken', 'Kjære lille gutten min', 'Lykkeliten', 'Sulla meg litt', 'Vi har ei tulle', 'Vem kan sägla för utan vind', 'Fader Jakob'. Moreover, some songs are only used by one parent, such as 'Tryggare kan ingen vara', 'Hompetitten', 'Det står ein friar', 'Byssan, byssan barnet', 'Blomster små'. Moreover, there is not a clear distinction between play songs and lullabies that has been noted in the related literature (Trainor 2002). Playsongs, such as 'Hjulene på bussen', 'Ro, ro til fiskeskjær', 'Ri, ri på islandshest', 'Så rart å være flaggermus' appear together with more traditional lullabies.

6.7.2 The content of the songs

Unsurprisingly, the lyrics of these songs often have a clear message and centre on transition time and the day's end. The most dominant themes also include love, care, safety and sleep. This does reflect previous research results (e.g., Wetlesen 2000, Valentin 2004 and O'Callaghan 2008). The songs also relate to nature and the animal world, real or magical. Animals can be anthropomorphised, and the songs demonstrate an awareness of children's natural affection for animals in other ways as well. Vivid images (lambs, horses and goats, for example) accompany personification of the songs and opportunities for individual interpretation and personal storytelling. Today's lullaby repertoire, in fact, seems to be more adapted to the child's world than to the adult world, which correlates with music as, according to Cross and Morley, 'a means of assimilating the value of juvenile modes of cognition and exploration into the adult behavioural repertoire, while regulating its modes of expression' (2009, p. 74). In order to catch the child's attention in the first place, many songs that parents use are childish and 'child friendly'.

Yet there are those songs that relate to strife and anxiety and existential human troubles. There are not many songs that demonstrate maternal or parental ambivalence as such, but the themes of separation or death are sometimes present. In addition, the lullaby messages may not be those that the parents had planned for. The manner in which the song is performed shows that lullabies are also defined by the way they are sung. The songs that parents and children choose to sing have some common characteristics: they are short; they deemphasise individual virtuosity; they display constancy of rhythm/meter/groove and a repetitive structure.

Most of the songs are written (or sung) in a major key; they are straightforward in their musical and lyrical content; and they display a clear, episodic, 'falling', descending structure. All of them are easy to master, and most of the melodies are immediately compelling, appealing and attractive. Even so, neither the parents nor their children dwell upon the correct execution of the songs in connection to written scores.

Lullaby singing is largely based upon an oral tradition that accommodates personal parental touches that include family history, cultural idiosyncrasies, and musical preferences, both before and after the child is born. In general, there is no logic involved when it comes to which songs the children choose, even when the song in question is meant for a baby rather than a child.

Sometimes parents sing the wrong words because they forgot the right ones, then stick with them. Certain songs are more amenable to alternative renderings than others, which may account for their greater incidence (for example, 'Bæ, Bæ, lille lam') (Figure

Bæ, bæ lille lam

Bæ, bæ, lil - le lam, har du no - e ull? Ja, ja, kjø - re barn,
 jeg har krop - pen full! Søn - dags - klær til far, og søn - dags - klær til
 mor, og to små strøm - per til bit - te - lil - le bror!

Figure 1: Bæ, bæ, lille lam

1). Other songs are particularly suited to bedtime, due to their melodic and lyrical sweetness and soothing quality (for example, 'So, ro' and 'Kvelden lister seg på tå').

Lastly, a new song from a regular children's television program is also sometimes included in parents' contemporary repertoire, namely 'Fantorangens sovesang'

Tekst: Berit Nermoen
Melodi: John Vinge

La - la - la - la - la, la - la - la - la - la, la - la - la - la - la, la - la - la - la - la.
 1. Nå so - ver hcs - ten, Nå so - ver ku - a, Nå so - ver sau - en,
 2. Nå so - ver os - ten, bro - det og ba - na - nen, Nå so - ver søk - ken,
 Nå so - ver gri - sen, Nå so - ver Ed - die, Nå bok - sa og lu - a, Nå so - ver Ed - die.
 So - ve, so - ve, so - ve, Ho - det mykt på pu - ta, So - ve, so - ve, so - ve, Må - nen pas - ser på,
 So - ve, so - ve, so - ve, lil - le so - te Ed - die, So - ve, so - ve, so - ve, Drom om sjo - ba - nan.

Figure 2: Fantorangens sovesang

(Figure 2). This particular song is very appealing to children—it is about an orange elephant or hybrid animal called ‘Fantorangen’ that most children know through the daily Norwegian television program of the same name. While the song’s beautiful melody appeals to parents as well, few of them know the song by heart, so the lyrics are often made up or modified, and sometimes only the refrain is performed. Most parents seem not to bother to learn new songs like this, but they feel compelled to include them for their children’s sake.

So, ro lillemann

So ro, lil - le - mann, nå er da - gen o - ver. Al - le mus i
det - te land, lig - ger nå og so - ver. So og ro og tipp på tå,
sov min ves - le po - de. Re - ven so - ver og - så nå, med ha - len un - der hø - det.

Figure 3: So, ro, lillemann

On the other hand, parents unanimously approve of ‘So, ro’ as a good lullaby³³. The song is easy to master and features a compelling melody and positive, associative lyrics: This song appears to be addressed exclusively to a boy, but this doesn’t hinder the parents from singing them to their daughters. They only make a few changes, and then it fits.

*So, ro lille mann
Nå er dagen over
Alle barn i alle land
Ligger nå og sover
So, ro tipp på tå
Sov min vesle pode*

33 In Trehub and Unyk’s study of lullabies, they use the term ‘prototypical’ good lullaby. I choose to be as close to the parents’ statements as possible. For an elaboration of the term, see Trehub and Unyk (1991).

*Reven sover også nå
Med halen under hodet

Be calm, my little man,
Now that the day is over
Every child in every country
is sleeping now
So calm, tip on toe,
Sleep, my little lad
The fox is also sleeping now
With his tail under his head*

Moreover, many parents and children find this little song, which comes from a 1953 theatre play for children, to be ‘cute’, ‘simple’ and ‘nice’ (see the play ‘Dyrene i Hakkebakkeskogen’ by Torbjørn Egner). They like the melody and the lyrics, especially the image of the fox with his tail under his head. The song is meant to have a calming effect and make the child fall asleep, exactly as it happens in the fairytale to which this song refers, where a small mouse sits in a tree and sings to the fox waiting below to eat him, until he falls asleep.

Personal modifications to the text include saying all children in this country, not all countries, because of international time changes. ‘Little man’ is also changed to ‘little child’ when daughters are involved. The song has no religious implications, and, according to the parents, the reference to the childlike animal world makes it particularly attractive for children.

The distinction between lullabies and action or play songs has dissolved, and no real uniformity of repertoire exists, though certain old lullabies seem to have survived the test of time, and a handful of school and popular songs has joined them. In general, the songs are positive and contribute to the creation of a warm and positive atmosphere. The lyrics tend to display the following characteristics:

- ⊕ the parental expression of love and affection;
- ⊕ human wisdom
- ⊕ a nonsensical, imaginary, magical or childish world;
- ⊕ a bright outlook on life;
- ⊕ beautiful and simple poetic language that evokes images of both domestic and wild animals and natural landscapes;
- ⊕ collective myths and/or powerful spiritual or religious messages.

In the following sections, I will present the analytical structure of the empirical material through three levels of complexities: Nurturing, building and mastery. The first layer reflects parents' typical emphasis on their singing as part of their caregiving, where the focus is held mostly on the nurturing of the child, the parent-child relationship and the bedtime atmosphere. The second layer reflects the typical building³⁴ and creation of a bedtime singing ritual. Moreover, some of the parents' emphasize the importance of the child's well functioning and development and the lullaby's language and cultural 'building' potential in terms of language acquisition and the building of cultural identity and competence. The third layer reflects parents' focus on themselves as parents, their experiences of everyday coping and control and their diverse singing strategies and styles.

34 The use of the term 'building' is not equivalent with the German term 'Bildung' as it includes not only formative aspects, but refers to a broader common sense use of the term, in the sense of creating, shaping and forming over the course of time.

7 Nurturing

‘Nurturing’ refers to the overall beneficial and restorative aspects of the lullaby act that parents emphasise and cherish, including in particular those personal, emotional, communicative, sensory and relational aspects that the act supports, encourages and protects. While lullaby singing is only a small part of parents’ overall caregiving, and of the parents’ relationship with their children, it does appear to be at once intrinsic, natural and necessary to those contexts.

7.1 Care

— *The singing reflects our love and care.* (Father no. 3)

Parents consider *care* to be the primary motivation for the act of singing lullabies, and they view the act through this lens. Here, we might think of care as the intuitive and culturally informed attempt to meet a child’s needs. The lullaby act is seen to further this end—parents think of it as useful for helping the child feel good, comfortable, protected and safe.

The lullaby act could be framed as a parental response to the daily existential concerns that are present in their lives with their children. Its primary aim is to guarantee, as much as possible, that the child falls asleep, easily and gently, and singing lullabies affords a special opportunity for the fulfilment of the child’s basic psychological and physiological needs as well. Characteristics that parents associate with lullaby singing boil down to four: *natural, nice, important* and *necessary*.

Lullaby singing reinforces the conviction that, if the child has the love and company of the parent(s), he or she will feel content, satisfied and calm. Three examples will illustrate this point:

— *I sing until he falls asleep. I have always done that. I don't like the idea that I should leave him crying and let him fall asleep on his own.* (Mother no. 7)

— *I really feel that I am singing to them and that it is important for them.* (Mother no. 8)

What does the mother no. 8 mean by 'really feel' this? She explains that she can see that her children appreciate her singing by the way they are seeking her physical presence, how they are watching her, softly communicating with her and calming down at bedtime. This gives her good, positive feelings. The quotations illustrate 'care' by pointing to the parents' awareness of the importance of being present for their children at bedtime, and especially when the child is about to fall asleep. This relates both to care as a parental motivation and the parents' view of their singing as part of their caregiving, but also to a caring state, including parents' emotional presence and quality:

— *I want to express my loving kindness, and I see that my children like my singing, and it creates a sort of harmony.* (Mother no. 10)

This caring state has no limits for some of the parents, while others have clear limits for how long the singing should take. The mother in the first example is willing to sing until the child falls asleep, while another parent wants his child to fall asleep on his own:

— *I believe it is important that he is able to fall asleep on his own. I walk out of the room even though he is still awake and wants me to sing more.*

— *The videorecording also shows that he was upset and cried when you walked out of the room the last time you sang to him?*

— *Yes, I know, but it is also a matter of being clear about limits. I could sing forever if it had been up to him, I believe. But we have agreed upon two songs, and I stick to that.* (Father no. 2)

Despite this variety of caregiving styles, however, the underlying theme is care deriving from parental physical and emotional presence. The parents' adaptive behaviour and children's particular needs are emphasized:

7.1.1 Parental adaptations and children's needs

Parents are concerned with the persistent and sensitive needs of their children and focus on how to meet these needs. This motivation relates to the foundations of care, contact and love, which make the parent enter into a sensitive caring state of being:

— *When the children were small, I entered into a singing state that I would call 'caring love'. It was just a simple song, not even with a meaningful text, but I felt that I was singing to something inside that touched their souls.* (Mother no. 2)

— *I always sing to them regardless of how tired I am, and I listen to what they want me to sing. I just have to.* (Mother no. 10)

Mother no. 10 sings regardless of how tired she is, and connects her continuous singing to her child's needs. The overriding need of small children for love, comfort and security is recognised by the parents, who note that satisfying it demands constant caring and practical, soothing and pedagogical action in concrete situations. This, of course, perfectly describes lullaby singing.

— *It is incredible how you adapt to your children. We had our living musical for many, many years.* (Mother no. 2)

Parents adapt individually to their child's personality and specific needs before bedtime. They report that singing provides an opportunity to engage in a highly personal activity, to share something socially and, if necessary, to offer other types of care, such as soothing and comforting.

The common thread here is that parents recognise the fact that their children seem to need their presence and singing, especially at bedtime. I have further observed that bedtime is often an especially vulnerable time and even can represent a moment of confession or surrender. Both parents and children can be tired and sometimes short with one another. At this otherwise 'inconvenient' time of the day, children often want to express their specific needs and describe various preoccupations or projects that they have underway. One parent reports:

— *I can see that they want to share their experiences with me, if I take the time and listen to them.* (Father no. 4)

They want to sum up, according to their personality, abilities and age, those daily events that belong to the recent past but remain very present in their minds. Parents see that their singing becomes a way to recollect and put the day behind, and this is often a new and different way of relating to their own musicality.

Some parents start to sing for their children even though they have not sung for years. They adapt to their children's basic needs and musical appreciations:

— *I see that my daughter loves singing, so I sing only because of that. I am not that into music and I haven't sung for years, but she wants it, so I try to do my best.* (Father no. 9)

Here we find a pronounced adaptability regarding the child's wishes and needs, which, as mentioned, range from protection, psychological subsistence and affection to the exploration of creativity and improvisation:

— *You could actually do many things, as long as it was based upon a mutual agreement. We made a mixture of storytelling and singing that could last forever.* (Father no. 4)

When using the term 'mutual agreement', the father no. 4 describes a sort of balance between the child's needs and the parents' wish to respond to the child, by being flexible and staying in touch with their own wishes and preferences as well. However, the parents' level of distraction or other ambivalence sometimes colours the act, so there are exceptions to this quality of parental adaptability:

— *Sometimes I just want to be finished with the singing, to do other things on my own. Then I only sing a few songs, and stop even though my son doesn't seem prepared to be left on his own.* (Father no. 5)

Parents can even be insensitive at times:

— *I regret that I didn't take into account his reactions. I continued to sing a song, even though I saw that he became scared by it. But I thought it was so silly. The song was so cute—it was just the words 'Kvelden kommer svart og stor, alle ting blir borte' [The night comes dark and vast, everything disappears] that frightened him. I regret that I didn't take him seriously.* (Mother no. 6)

What nevertheless underpins all of the parents' descriptions of the lullaby-singing act, regardless of the level of adaptation, sensitivity, or energy, is an emphasis upon its expression of their caring love towards their children, as we will see next.

7.1.2 Embracing the child with caring love

Love interconnects powerfully with care in parents' accounts of the act of singing lullabies, as we see here.

— *When you sing for your children, they receive wordless insights about your love.* (Father no. 8)

— *It is a song of care. I sing to my children's inside. I caress their soul a little. I am not always sitting in my own bubble and just 'contaminate' my child with my calm. If you sing to somebody you really care for, then you sing from the heart. It is very much an act of caring love. I have done it so many times.* (Mother no. 2)

I find that the notion of 'caring love' in fact contains a desire for an *optimal* way of expressing love and giving 'from the heart', in terms of relating to, comforting, soothing and supporting the child. The affective state we call love is in this context related to our innate musical capacity. There are thousands of songs revolving around the universal theme of love that illustrate our needs to both express and share it. In the context of parental love towards their children, parents say that lullaby singing seems to satisfy these needs in a very gentle and natural way. More generally, of course, parental love also encompasses all of the instincts and good intentions around meeting one's children's basic bodily, mental, social and emotional needs. In this context, the act of singing lullabies is described as a sort of fulfilment for both the parent and the soon-to-be-sleeping child.

The mother in the example above specifically mentions the child's 'soul' and describes singing 'from the heart' directly to the 'inside' of the child. The child's spirit is also often met by the inviting presence of the caregiver at that time of the day.³⁵

These qualities inform her choice of songs and reflect her personal convictions about the potential spiritual dimension of the lullaby. As already mentioned in the section of parents' intentionality and influences (see 6.1.4), she points to the content of the songs, which must be deep, real and very human. In the context of care, she emphasizes that the songs should not be too heavy either, because the lullaby act should mark a happy and 'bright' ending to the day:

— *I try to avoid songs that are too sad and scary, because I also want this moment to be a bright ending to the day.* (Mother no. 2)

Other parents also focus on love when describing what the act can provide to their children:

35 The distinction between mind, body and spirit here serves to describe nuances in the lullaby act and has no specific religious implications as such. However, some parents do introduce this dimension and further recognise spirituality as a fundamental domain of human existence (and, therefore, lullaby singing). For an overview of the different levels of spirituality, see Wilber (2006).

— *The most valuable thing about singing is the wordless pleasure and insight children gain about their mother or father's love. (Father no. 8)*

Father no. 8 goes to the core of the lullaby event. Parents express their love when they sing to their children, and children both enjoy it and learn from it. Parents think of the act as a living expression of their love and elevate its expressive and sharing aspects. In addition, the lyrics that parents favour tend to support this specific emphatic, emotional and expressive 'quality', and they echo this with a loving and affectionate tone of voice and, sometimes, physical caresses. The bedtime moment is not one for 'moral upbringing', as one of the parents put it, but one for comfort and validation, and a sweetness of voice underlines the parents' good intentions in this regard.

Parents elsewhere touch upon the 'global' nature of the act, often in metaphorical terms like 'embracing', which implies a hug but also an enclosure or encirclement, in turn evoking a typical song's character and repetitive structure. The circle is present in other parents' metaphors as well, such as this father's 'necklace':

— *Both my wife and I deeply wanted to have children, and when our daughter came into our world, I wanted her to feel as loved and cared for as possible. I know there will be hard times in her life, and I hope she will think of the days spent with her parents as something she wants to keep in her heart and mind. I want my child to think of each day of her life as valuable and pleasant, so that they become like a necklace of pearls. I hope each day that I sing will give her a new pearl that she can wear around her neck. (Father no. 3)*

This father focuses on both the present and the future. He evidently believes that childhood is a very sensitive time, when children's outlooks on life are shaped. Lullaby singing might contribute to a positive perspective on the world, one grounded in a loving atmosphere as well as the comforting, loving tone of the father's voice. He goes on to report that he sings softly into his daughter's ear and they stay close together until she almost falls asleep in his arms.

However, he also emphasizes that he is not expressive or emotional when singing:

— — *I do not express anything in particular or any kind of feelings when singing. I sing because I know that she likes it and it is a nice thing to do with your child, that's all. (Father no. 3)*

Paradoxically, the father reports that he doesn't associate feelings or expressions with his singing, but he wants the best for his child and sings out of love. He just doesn't want to appear 'pathetic' as he puts it. Love is not only emotions or expressions to him. It seems to be more connected with a continuous state of being present and available to his child, and to give her 'happy time', 'support' and 'all the best'.

7.1.3 To be available and give children a happy, sacred time and all the best

The father's focus is clearly directed towards creating positive experiences in his child's life. He wants his daughter to be happy now, and to recall her childhood later as a happy time. He links this to how happy he and his wife were when they had children. For him, singing seems to be an expression of parental positive intentions and emotions, even though he downplays the emotional expressivity of the act. His interpretation of songs is not 'artistic', as he puts it—it is simply down-to-earth-singing that has no power outside his household.

In contrast, one mother, as previously mentioned, starts crying when she describes the act, describing it as 'giving from the heart'. She emphasises her love for her children in the context of what she has to give:

— I feel there is so much to give to them. To give them this calming time when they can really feel that I want all the best for them. To be affectionate and close. My focus is solely on all the aspects of life that are good for them. I wish to save them from all that is bad in the world. At the same time, I also know that experiencing bad things will strengthen them. But I want to be there and support them. (Mother no. 5)

Maternal good intentions are highlighted in this example, though they are more expressive and emotional than some. This mother's love and affection radiate through her singing, especially in relation to a particular song that has become the mother's, and her children's, favourite. By integrating the name of her daughter into the song, she adds yet a further personal, emotional touch:

*Kjære lille Maria mi,
kom og rekk meg hånden din
Ingen er det i verden her
som holder av deg som jeg
Lykke, solskinn og livets glede,
gid jeg kunne den alltid sprede
over hele din fremtids vei,
min kjæreste lille venn.*

*My dear little Maria
come and give me your hand
Nobody in this world
loves you more than I*

*Happiness, sunshine and the joy of life
I wish I could always spread it
over your future path
My dearest little friend*

The song has all the good hopes that a parent could express towards her child, for the future as well as the present moment. This time aspect is particularly important. The mother communicates her abundance of time for her children, along with her embodied, present and supportive role as a parent.

In this case, then, the act could be framed as an extended dialogue that affords not the anticipation or surprise of a play song but a slow-motion and spacious enabling of 'sacred time', as the mother puts it. This extended dialogue is manifested in a temporal as well as an expressive sense, as two sides of the same coin.

Many parents demonstrate an awareness of the importance of being present and available in their childrens' lives. For parents, the harmonious aspect of lullaby singing is often connected to taking one's time and letting go of stress from daily activities. This sense of freedom derives from the temporal aspects of the act and the bedtime setting. One mother deliberately slows the pace of her singing to demonstrate that she is available and present. In this way, she signals to her daughter that she is more precious than time, and that the mother is aware of the fact that the moment can be easily ruined by stress and everyday adult worries. She wants to calm down together with her children and creates a relaxed atmosphere before bedtime that still allows for play:

— I have never been afraid of joking with my children before they go to sleep. It has always been so easy for them when it comes to sleeping. I know that, for other parents, it turns out differently—they cannot laugh together with their children at that time, because for them it is a time for calming down, and laughing means the opposite. I have always made it a little funny. I have started to sing songs like 'Ja, vi elsker' [the Norwegian national hymn], and they have burst out laughing, because it is the wrong song and we all know it. That is not a lullaby, they say, laughing. Oh no, I say, and I find another wrong song, and they start to laugh again. It is a moment of such fun and laughter. (Mother no. 5)

In the context of the lullaby, this mother shows her children that she is available to play and enjoy the time with them. She does not face any challenges around sleeping routines, and the bedtime moment is a positive experience for both the parent and the children.

This example demonstrates the positive impact of free, playful and relaxed lullaby singing, which creates 'harmony', as another mother put it. This atmosphere or mood

relates to parents' presence, intention and focus on spending a good time with their children, and the creation of an inner, relaxed pulse.

Other parents also stress the importance of taking their time with their children:

— *I never want to let my son know that there are other, more important things to be done than staying in the bed with him.* (Mother no. 9)

— *This is free time. No more doing—just lie down in bed and relax.* (Father no. 4)

Parents are also perfectly aware that soon their children will be asleep, and then they may rest and relax on their own. This makes the singing a welcome task for parents, because it leads to a predictable end to the evening. However, this is not always the case:

— *Initially, I had the idea that she should have been to bed at seven, but it remained an idea. It is a good time to be with your children and listen to them.* (Father no. 4)

This father emphasizes a listening stance towards the moment and his children. In order to be able to listen, he continues, you need to be open and receptive, and take the time that is needed. This very often led to late evenings. The initial parental agenda of putting the children early to bed 'remained an idea', as the father puts it. Being together and sharing the moment was more important than following a fixed time schedule.

7.1.4 Multisensory nourishment and comfort

Multisensory elements are closely linked to the parental act of demonstrating their care for their children:

— *First we read, then she lies down in the bed, then I say to her to close her eyes and relax, and then she wants some caressing on her back. She is just as demanding as her father.* (Father no. 1)

Here we see successive elements blended into one longer bedtime ritual. Parents also note that the simultaneity of singing and physical movement such as caressing or rocking the child produces alternative rhythms in the songs. Children perceive these acts in both a modal and a global sense and do not distinguish the singing from the caressing when they are very small. The lullaby singing act is embodied in both a bodily and a temporal sense.

While multisensory elements are a natural part of the intimate setting enabled by lullaby singing, the differences among these elements are striking over the course of the interviews incorporated into this inquiry. No two parents seem to do the same things. Here are two responses to this question: Do you have eye contact?

— *No, I ask him to shut his eyes. When I sit on his bed, I look around in the room or down on the floor, but very often I massage him simultaneously.* (Mother no. 2)

— *I look him in the eyes. I want him to know that I am singing this song for him.* (Father no. 2)

Various kinds of physical touching or massage often accompany singing. Some parents massage the child's whole body, from head to toe, during the act of singing; one mother draws on her daughter's face with her fingers. Moving the child's whole body is also sometimes an integral part of the act:

— *Did you move and lull your children when they were small?*

— *Yes, I sat like this too [moves her body from one side to the other and back and forth]. When they were small, I also had this small kind of sari that I attached to the ceilings of the house, and I pushed them in it while singing to them.* (Mother no. 2)

Some parents are inspired by other cultures in the way they hold or rock their children; others imitate what their own parents did, as previously touched upon. Things get awkward, of course, as the child grows:

— *We do a little more than just singing. I started with it when she was a very small baby. I hold her and sing while I am walking around in the room. And we still do it, even though she is three and a half years old now, and she has become quite heavy.* (Father no. 3)

This father in fact held his daughter until she was about four years old, and then the mother took over, without any holding, in order to change the routine. Obviously, the multisensory act of singing lullabies responds to important parental priorities; it is as if many of these parents try to ensure the child's sense of continuity between body, emotions, mind and language through the act of singing lullabies.

— *'Now daddy will hold you,' I say when it is time to go to bed. Then I take my daughter in my arms and while I am walking around in our apartment, I sing into her ear—the same eight short songs.* (Father no. 3)

The father's multisensory stimulation here realises a very personal, sensitive, affective and physical sense of care. Fundamentally, singing lullabies nourishes the child in both a physical and an emotional way, and parents note that they also cannot separate the associated movements from the singing.

The integration of movement and multisensory content into the act also allows one to explore oneself as a caring parent in a deeper way. Parents seem to introduce all of the techniques they can devise, which include combinations of various physical, auditory, visual and kinaesthetic stimuli using the voice, face and body.

Father no. 3, that is, combines auditory (singing softly into his daughter's ear), physical (holding her), visual (light effects from the lamp in the room) and kinaesthetic features (moving and lulling her); others use face-to-face interaction, body and face massage, or little caresses while the child is put into bed or while the parent is lying beside the child. The multisensory closeness and intimacy of the act appear in many manifestations.

— *We tickle and sing. Tickling and singing are two intrinsic parts of the same act.* (Mother no. 1)

— *What I remember most when it comes to the movements is that he puts another part of his body in my lap. He wants a massage over his whole body—first the back, then the neck and so on. And when I have finished singing, he says, 'and there too'. And then I have to massage another part of the body and I also sing another song before I finish the whole séance. My children have gotten so many evening caresses. Very often I lay in the bed together with my children. I did that the first five years. I lay there, singing to them and caressing them, like a bird on my lap, or we lay in front of each other.* (Mother no. 2)

— *I caress her legs, her face and her eyes, so it then becomes natural for her to close her eyes.* (Mother no. 4)

— *I hold her hand and stroke her front and caress her hair. Or I 'draw' her face with my fingers. She likes that I draw her face: 'Mommy, draw my face, please', she says, and I start drawing around her nose, her mouth and her cheeks.* (Mother no. 5)

These examples illustrate an embodied act that takes shape through multisensory stimuli and relaxation. The child's mind and body are brought along by the flow of the melody and rhythm, together with parents' movements and caresses.

This embodied way of caring for the children, was especially important when the child was feeling insecure or distressed and needed special comfort:

— *When we spent the night at my parents' place or elsewhere, and she felt a little insecure or distressed, I was almost surprised how easy it was to put her to bed, as long as I did the same thing as at home, singing and walking.* (Father no. 3)

— *I always told my babysitter, that when my daughter started to cry, she should just hold her in her arms, sway her and sing. It worked out well every time.* (Mother no. 4)

As we will see next, all of this results in the creation of a comfortable and *safe place* for the child.

7.2 Safety

Through the consistency and continuity of their parents' singing and responding to them at bedtime, children learn that the world is a safe place to be. At bedtime, darkness and transition can evoke separation anxiety and fear, and the predictability of lullaby singing seems to assure the child he or she is not being left alone.

7.2.1 Creating safety through positive and familiar singing

— *I want to let my children know that there is something nice out there—it is a message based upon some kind of confidence, as it was for me when I was a child. It is all about the contact and safety—to assure them that I will always be there for them.* (Mother no. 5)

— *Singing makes it safe for them to fall asleep, even though the dark night is out there. I create a safe frame for the night.* (Mother no. 8)

— *I can see that my children love me, so I hope that I give them a sense of safety. I am not so strict, and I know that clear boundaries also give children a sense of safety, but I am much softer than my husband. I give them a sense of safety through my loving kindness, I believe.* (Mother no. 10)

Most of the parents are aware of the fact that their singing creates a safe space for their children. The predictability of well-known songs and the familiarity of the bedtime routine combine to make the singing a powerful antidote to risk or threat. The singing is part of the children's 'safety toolkit', as another parent puts it.

— *She likes best the songs that she already knows.* (Mother no. 4)

— *She started to get used to a rhythm, and then we had to stick to that.* (Mother no. 2)

— *He knows my voice so well, and the simple words in the songs are so important to him. I think 'mamma mi' [my mommy], the words in his favourite song, are among the first words that children get to know and understand, and they mean a lot to him. He wanted to hear about his mommy over and over again.* (Mother no. 3)

Through lullaby singing, a common understanding is established between the parent and the child. Parents state that their children strongly appreciate 'the known', and lullabies are associated with and crucial to this everyday, familiar world.

The parental voice is familiar and creates a sense of safety for the child. It is an intrinsic part of the common ground of safety and familiarity. Mother no. 2 even reports a very strong connection between her child's associations with and experiences of safety and the particular content of the songs:

— *There is this song which is about buying new shoes. My mother didn't sing this song to me, but she sang it to my daughter, and then every time my daughter felt a little insecure, she wanted to go and buy some new shoes. It is true! She obviously connects buying new shoes with being safe and secure.* (Mother no. 2)

The children's appreciation of familiarity also relates to the child's needs for predictability and stability in life, as we will see next.

7.2.2 Creating a predictable setting for the night

— *I must sing every day to my children—it's very natural, and it is part of the bedtime ritual, which is very important in our family. It creates a setting of security and predictability, which I know is very important in a child's life.* (Mother no. 1)

Parents experience the act of lullaby singing specifically in relation to a safe environment that they see as important for themselves as well as their children. It also provides the parent with a pleasant way to signal the end of the day and shape the bedtime moment.

Parents make their singing style predictable for their children and, together with a clear and distinct musical structure and tempo, this seems to help the child form expectations around music. It becomes naturally integrated into their lives, and they appreciate the familiarity and predictability of the act as well, because it makes them feel safe:

— *They want me to sing their favourite song over and over again, and of course this creates a predictable setting, every evening. We both know and expect what will be the next step at bedtime. Singing and then sleeping.* (Father no. 1)

A sense of familiarity and predictability also helps during those difficult situations that can arise.

7.2.3 Protecting the children when life is difficult

In the following example, lullaby singing enables a normal context of relating. It provides a normal and safe atmosphere in a life that is otherwise very fraught:³⁶

— *He got cancer when he was three months old, so we have been in and out of the hospital. The first two years have been very special. I have spent a lot of time with him, and probably much more than other fathers, because I have not worked in a year. The bedtime singing and guitar playing has been very valuable. We can do something normal together—something that is not part of a medical treatment. I have had to force him to take his medicine during treatment, so this singing is a huge contrast. The sleeping ritual is free from all that. We can do something normal together, and I want him to understand that I am doing it for him. That is important to me.* (Father no. 2)

In this case, singing helps to protect a normal family life when the situation is extremely difficult. The father's singing to his son creates a loving and stable routine during very troubled times.

³⁶ Another related situation is parents singing to their premature newborn babies in incubators at the hospital (see Standley 2002).

Creating a sense of safety in children's lives is connected to the familiar, regular and 'normal' aspects of the singing act. A mother positions this safe context in relation to divorce and other big life changes:

— *It is so important to create safety, especially in the situation of going to bed. Then it has been so important.*

— *Why is it important?*

— *There has been much insecurity around them after the divorce. The oldest was six and the youngest was three, and their father was not a stable kind of father. I thought that I really had to stick to my own security in this situation. I had to show them that I was always there for them and that they could come to me³⁷. (Mother no. 5)*

This mother wanted to show her children that they could trust her, and that home was a safe place to be despite the difficult circumstances. Parents also report that lullaby singing helps them to focus on something other than their problems. Their singing communicates something different. The lullaby singing becomes a safe place to be both for the parents and their children. This safe lullaby space, sometimes the only familiar and predictable moment of the day, becomes especially salient for them both, and is associated with a very positive and safe atmosphere where all daily stress and life difficulties are left behind. I let parents' statements of the creation of a special warm and calm bedtime atmosphere come to the foreground:

7.3 Creating a warm and calm atmosphere

7.3.1 Positive songs

The choices of songs are strongly connected with parents' good intentions of creating a lovely home atmosphere:

— *The song 'Det var en deilig deilig dag' [It was a lovely, lovely day] is so nice to start with—it is so positive, and it creates a good atmosphere. (Mother no. 2)*

37 I have used this extract earlier, and I will repeat extracts when they help me to make multiple points.

Most of the parents choose to sing songs that are positive in character; for example, here are the lyrics of a song that mother no. 2 started singing to her children on a daily basis many years ago:

*Det var en deilig, deilig dag,
men tenk nå er den over,
og alle som er riktig snill',
de ligger nå og sover.
Og himlen som var blid og
blå med mange tusen smil i,
begynner først å le igjen
en gang i morgen tidlig.*

*It was such a beautiful day
but it seems now over
and all the kind people,
they now lie asleep
And the bright blue
smiling heavens
start to laugh again,
when the early morning comes.*

This text expresses a positive existential outlook on life and the end of a good day. The mother reports:

— I believe that I started to sing this song because it is so positive and nice. I feel good when I sing it to my children. (Mother no. 2)

The song also signals that playtime is over, all the 'kind' children are now sleeping, and 'heaven will start laughing again tomorrow morning' (my translation). The idea of going to sleep is communicated in a poetic, playful and indirect manner, and the song presents gentle, friendly images for parent and child.

Some of the songs that parents choose are very cute and reflect general goodness; others are playful, illusory or nonsensical; others touch upon ethical or moral issues; others emphasise parental benevolence and good intentions. The following song is exclusive in the sense that it is 'tailor-made' for the children in question, as parents often replace the word 'little boy' with the particular child's name and the focus is entirely on that child's wellbeing. It is future oriented and highlights the loving kindness and good intentions of the parent (Figure 4):

Kjære lille gutten min



Kjære lil - le gut - ten min, kom og rekk meg hån - den din; in - gen er det i
ver - den her der hol - der av deg som jeg. Lyk - kens sol - skinn og li - vets gle - de, gid jeg kun - ne dem
all - tid spre - de o - ver he - le din frem - tids vei, min els - ke - de lil - le gutt.

Figure 4: Kjære lille gutten min

*My dear little boy
 Come and give me your hand
 Nobody in this world
 appreciates you more than I
 Sunshine and joy of life
 May I always be able to spread it out
 on your road into the future
 My darling little boy*

The peace that fills these songs can fill both parent and child as well. The singing of a lovely, positive song mutually nurtures them. It also creates a state of calmness:

7.3.2 ‘Sound of calmness’

All the parents in the inquiry naturally enough emphasize the calming impact of their singing. One of the parents describes her singing as a ‘sound of calmness’:

— I feel that I am just sitting there and then I create a sound of calmness. I am more into finding the calmness in myself. And I think it is contagious. I think I calm myself down first. I centre and rest in my own bubble, so to speak. (Mother no. 2)

— Singing lullabies for me is not only related to bedtime. Whenever it is needed, I use my singing to find the calm spot and to quiet down. I use lullabies during special moments, when there is a need to find a calm and relaxed place within. I feel that the child sometimes needs some sort of sound when it is silent in the

room, so I just add a little sound at that moment to make him calm. As adults we like the silence, but I experience it rather differently with my child. It feels natural to fill the silence with some nice, quiet sounds. (Mother no. 9)

— *I need to calm down before I start singing.* (Father no. 9)

— *The singing calms us down gradually.* (Mother no. 4)

In the first example, the mother admits that, when she sings to her child, she focuses on trying to find the calmness within herself. It seems as though she sings rather effortlessly, and the singing brings about a relaxed state that she is able to share with her child. She experiences her calm singing as ‘contagious’.³⁸ By centring herself, this mother places the focus on herself, rather than on her child, which then has a calming effect on the child. The mother is calmed by the song’s slow rhythm, for example, and the child follows her into this calm inner place, or ‘bubble’. In light of these parents’ statements, it appears as though the dichotomy between internal and external sources can be transcended with lullabies. The particular ‘external’ suggestive, and repetitive melodies used together with the symbolic and ‘taylor made’ content of the lyrics and the personal, emotional and calming ‘internal’ sources of the parents create a unique combination of calmness. This aspect of calm can also precede the singing, as pointed out by father no. 9, or come about gradually, as mother no. 4 puts it.

While some parents ‘fill the silence with sound’, others seek to fill the sound with silence, either by introducing long pauses or singing so softly that they almost mimic silence. All of the parents seem to modulate their voices when they are close to their children, often performing in a soft and intimate manner that reflects the tender emotional quality of the lullaby (and the bedtime moment).

— *I try to sing as softly as possible, because she is so near me.* (Father no. 3)

In today’s society, it can be difficult to find a calm place, inside or outside of oneself. Calmness relates to dimensions of space, time and sound. Parents’ calmness is reflected through the way they are using their voice. Following parents and my own experiences, stress influences the voice as it easily becomes tense, rough and hard, while a calm voice is associated with softness, warmth and flexibility. A free, relaxed

³⁸ This ‘contagious’ experience seems to evoke the musical phenomenon of entrainment. Entrainment refers to ‘a biological process that realizes adaptive synchrony of *internal* attending oscillations with an *external* event’ (Jones 2011, p. 83). For further elaboration of the concept, see e.g. Jones (2011), Hallam, Cross and Thaut (2011). Juslin and Västfjell also include ‘contagion’ as one of the psychological mechanisms that may explain the connection between music and emotion (see Juslin and Västfjell 2008).

voice also appears to be more resonant and spacious. Furthermore, the creation of a calm space depends on the dynamics, time and tempo of the parents' singing.

The question arises to what degree parents need to be calm before they start singing, as opposed to *while* they are singing. Some parents say that they have already 'blocked out the day' when they join their children to sing to them; others, including mother no. 2, need to sing to become appropriately calm and relaxed. She centers herself while singing. It appears as though the song, the setting, the child and the parent interact to further the calming process:

— *It is the whole setting.* (Father no. 1)

— *We experience the act in a rather global way.* (Mother no. 7)

Within this comprehensive contextual interaction, lullaby lyrics that incorporate the theme of sleep and calmness also play an influential role.

*Kvelden lister seg på tå
over kløverengen.
Himlen har tatt stjerner på.
Alle barn skal sove nå
sove søtt i sengen.*

*The night is tiptoeing
over the clover meadow.
The sky is dressed in stars.
Now all children shall sleep,
in their beds sleep sweet.*

When parents sing lullabies to their children at bedtime, the child associates the singing with going to sleep; over time and through repetition, then, singing becomes a powerful index and signal to calm down, thanks to a deep, tacit and mutual expectancy. The lullaby is strongly associated with sleeping time.

Parents in this study also touch upon the *mutuality* of the sleep-related impact of lullabies. While the child is hopefully taken to a calm place through the parent's gentle singing and caring presence, the parent's energy level is affected as well:

— *To have this final countdown is very comfortable for me too. I really appreciate it.* (Mother no. 7)

— *I feel that it is a calm moment for me too. It is not only for his sake that I sing. I appreciate that moment very much myself. It is fun. After a busy day,*

to just sit there, I become incredibly calm myself. If I am very tired and have a headache, this countdown is so enjoyable for me too. When he has fallen asleep, and I have been sitting there, I feel so relaxed and not so tired anymore. It's meditative. (Mother no. 7)

— I feel like I have to find the calm from within, and when I am singing, I centre a little and sit in my little bubble, so to speak, and the feeling of rest and calm comes to me while I am singing. It's almost like a meditative state, and some songs have this meditative character as well. (Mother no. 2)

— The singing mutually calms us down. (Mother no. 3)

Parents observe that the songs supply a common relaxing meeting point and focus. Singing, then, is strongly connected to their relationship with their children, as we will see below.

7.4 Relationship

According to the parents, singing seems to nurture the parent-child relationship in a deep and tacit sense as well as an overt and concrete manner. Themes of contact, relatedness, intimacy and closeness arise, as do observations about the physical and emotional aspects of the act—in all, the diversity of the parents' interactional and parenting styles and relationships becomes evident.

7.4.1 Contact

Many parents report and emphasize the closeness and good contact that their singing creates:

— I sing every night to my daughters, and it is part of our relationship. The singing creates strong bonds between us, and it gives me a feeling of companionship. (Mother no. 10)

Many parents recognise the physical, psychological and social aspects of contact as foundations of the lullaby-singing act. Parents' singing provides an interpersonal arena in which relatedness and interpersonal contact can be experienced:

— *When I start to sing the song 'Kom og rekk meg hånden din' [Come and give me your hand], her little hand stretches out towards mine.*

— *Her little hand stretches out towards your hand?*

— *Yes, it does, even now, when she is thirteen years old. (Mother no. 4)*

— *They only want the song that is there for them and in contact with them. When I had my own world, singing in the shower, et cetera, they didn't like it. Lullabies are so different. I sit and sing for them. My voice is tired and faint, but that doesn't seem to bother them, as long as the singing is for them. It is incredible how parents adapt to their children. I had to stop singing for myself and only sing to them for many years. I sing to the inside, a caring song. (Mother no. 2)*

Mother no. 2 also reports that her singing was not conditioned upon the responsiveness of the children. They only expressed discontent when she was not singing to them. They wanted her attention and presence via the lullabies.

Both physical and emotional intimacy takes different shapes according to the child's age and preferences, as well as the specific parent-child interactive style. Parents even acknowledge an unconscious dimension to the act that lays the groundwork for a deep intimacy that is beyond language and rational thinking. Singing allows for emotional layers that are often hidden in other daily interactions:

This deep wordless dimension is difficult to explain, but I feel it quite strongly. We get in contact beyond the words' significance. Actually, the words are not the most important thing. It is more the bodily anchored dimension that counts, and the breathing connects us to a common human ground. It is so basic, naked. I can feel my own vulnerability when lying together with my child in the bed at bedtime, and we are so close. The song emphasises this closeness, because we both know it by heart and from the heart. (Lullaby diary, September 2011)

Parents like this one consider the act to be highly private and indicative of the closeness that exists between them and their children.

7.4.2 Intimacy and 'touching the pulse of the child'

Many parents, regardless of gender, highlight the closeness and the intimacy of the act. Their focus is on the *good contact* that lullaby singing creates between the parent and the child; they are more interested in this mutual engagement than in the contact between the child and the sounding music as such.

Intimacy and closeness relate to both the self and the other—to the parent and the child, both together and individually. Parents report that they also come close

to themselves in the sense that they recollect moments from the past when they were small children and needed their own parents in order to feel safe and happy. They also relate to movement and being moved, in a very basic way, because their singing is sometimes so strongly connected with their own body or past embodied childhood experiences. Keeping in mind (and body) their own childhood memories, they seem to understand their own children's needs better and how to successfully connect with them:

— I can still remember my mother singing to me. It doesn't seem so long ago actually. I have very vivid memories of my mother singing and lulling me to sleep. I feel like a child when thinking of it. (mother no. 7)

Moreover, it is very moving to be so close to the child via the special intimacy that lullaby-singing creates, and the child in turn expresses appreciation and interest. Likewise, the parent can also experience the feeling of being close to oneself as a human being (and as a parent).

— I feel that we are so close, not only at that time of the day, but this is felt very strongly when we sing together. I believe that the singing creates a positive attachment, and that the children connect the singing to our relationship. (Mother no. 10)

Most of the parents emphasize the closeness and intimacy that is created while singing

— This is a moment when we feel really close, the two of us. (Mother no. 9)

— The lullaby singing invites being close to each other. (Mother no. 5)

— This is a moment of closeness. (Father no. 7)

Parents consider the act to contribute significantly to the process of bonding with their children, and with themselves:

Tonight, I noticed how close I came to my own self when singing for my daughter. When I felt this, I also had the feeling of a special closeness to her. There was nothing in between. The television was shut off, our friends had gone home, there was no sound except for my own singing voice, all the light was off and we both lay in bed. I felt so vulnerable. I reflected on the fact that I was very tired and emotional. It had been a long day with a lot of activities, intermingling fun and duties. My daughter calmed down very easily when I sang this time. She

was tired too. It felt so good to sing. In this silence and darkness, I was able to express something inarticulate. My own little daughter was in bed, eyes shut, with a serene expression on her face. My mission was complete. (Lullaby diary, Nov. 2011)

This interaction also incorporates the parents and their children's mutual love of music, their living and sounding engagement, and their participation. Sometimes the act arises within an already established intimate relationship between parents and children; in other cases, the singing anticipates this intimacy by being integrated from birth. It is very often based upon a particular kind of physical interaction, as discussed earlier, in which the parent and the child are physically close to and usually in contact with one another. Many parents emphasise this physical aspect as an implicit, comfortable form of relating that they appreciate along with their children.

Singing lullabies thus may be considered part of a 'rich' repertoire of responses to the child's 'urge for contact', as one of the parents puts it. Parents' singing is a 'rich' response in the sense that multi-sensory elements are included and their emotional depth is displayed. The mother or father may be considered a 'resonant medium' (both literally and figuratively) in the creation of a sharing moment. The singing bridges separate subjects, and physical contact and dialogue between the parent and the child reinforces this. Parents point out that it is important to listen as well as sing in order to come close to oneself and the child. The singing responds to the need to be close together.

Parents report a shared rhythmic foundation in lullaby singing that is grounded in the creation of an intersubjective space and time:

— You touch the pulse of the child while singing. Then he is safe and the arms fall to the side, together with his legs. Then he lies there in full confidence, as in the womb. (Father no. 4)

The singing facilitates this matching of pulse, which in turn allows the parent and child to better explore how they are getting along with each other. Parents highlight the ways in which they get in touch with their children through their singing and the child's responses and how it strengthens their bond.

7.4.3 Bonding time

— The focus is on our relationship—to do something nice together. (Father no. 3)

— *There is no more things to be done, we can just be together.* (Father no. 4)

— *This is our time, and I need to be alone with one child at a time. My daughter or both of them actually, want to make sure that I have made this song especially for them.* (Father no. 1).

— *The singing is very strongly connected to our relationship and the good time spent together. At that time of the day, he only wants me to take care of him* (Mother no. 7).

It feels as if we are getting even closer to each other at this time of the day, because there is nothing in between us. My daughter wants to share with me her inner thoughts before I start singing, and can even stop me from singing, because there is something she wants to share. When the singing starts, she comes closer to me in bed, and we almost feel like one and the same body (Lullaby diary, Sept. 2012).

On the one hand, the bedtime moment can be a 'biased' one when it comes to parents' responsiveness, accepting behaviour and availability. Parents want this moment at the end of the day to be especially nice, so they make themselves available and responsive to their children in a fashion that is not always congruent with how they 'behave' at other times. Nevertheless, the process of bonding between parent and child happens all the time, and the bedtime moment must not be looked upon as separate, even if some parents state that they feel that it offers a sort of *deep* bonding time.

On the other hand, parents' bedtime behaviour may also be biased by an overriding interest in making the singing routine as quick as possible, due to fading energy and the weight of daily duties and worries. In this case, parents do not always respond to the child's immediate needs, because the parent and the child have different 'goals' for the lullabies. The parent wants to take short-cuts in the hope that the child falls asleep as soon as possible, while the child wants to perpetuate this floating, indeterminate, playful way of being. Then this bonding time can produce conflict.

Conflict may also result because both the parent and the child are tired at this time, and the parent may not be as emotionally available or sensitive. By fixating on sleep, the parent may behave in a way that is counterproductive for the closeness and good contact that is associated with the act.

Parents explain this behaviour by pointing to their own need for rest and relaxation but also the importance of clear boundaries and sufficient sleep for the child. Regardless, this behaviour is part of a larger interactional pattern that reveals important aspects related to bonding and attachment. The predictability and safety that the

parents seem to ensure while singing and by being present, sensitive and available for their children's needs at bedtime, the singing moment gives a positive 'boost' to the parent-child relationship.

7.4.4 Parents' singing as focus and devotion towards the child

This father sings every evening to his daughter, and he reports that he pays special attention to being both present and emotionally stable. He behaves exactly the same way every evening, and his focus is entirely on her. He started to sing for her in the first place because she responded positively right away to both music and singing in very clear physical movements and facial expressions. He also reports that he works less in order to be able to take care of his daughter as much as possible:

00.00.00. The father is sitting on his knees beside his daughter's small cot. His daughter is in the bed, and she is excited, because they are playing together with a small teddy bear. The father helps his daughter to lie down in the bed. 00.00.43. She is babbling, and he starts singing 'So, ro lille mann'. He watches her and touches her with his hand. 00.01.15. She starts laughing and plays with her teddy bear with her legs up in the air. 00.01.20. The first song has finished, and he whispers to her that now she needs to lie down. She is still moving around. 00.01.40. When he starts singing the second song, 'Trollmors vuggevis', she looks more tired, and her eyes sometimes close. He caresses her face and head with his hand, and her eyes close even more, and she gradually calms down. 00.02.18. After the song, he whispers to her that now the day is over, and she puts her fingers on her tired eyes and relaxes in her bed. (Description of the home-recorded video, father singing lullabies to his 3-year-old daughter 2011)

The father tells me later that she very seldom falls asleep when he sings, because after the singing is finished, her mother comes in and says good night as well, and then she falls asleep. The ritual is very settled, with very little variation when it comes to songs and the ways in which the father sings and relates to his daughter. The singing is monotonous and repetitive. The parenting style is a combination of physical closeness, caresses, and face-to-face-interaction. The father sings with a positive, affected voice that is somewhat higher pitched than his talking voice.

The second video session starts the same way, with the father playing with his daughter and the small teddy bear. He asks her to lie down, and then he asks her if he should sing a song, and she indicates that she wants him to sing, but he says that she needs to lie down first. They talk together, and after a little while she lies down and he starts to sing the same two songs. She plays with the teddy bear simultaneously and

calms down, but she still babbles when the singing is over. The ritual takes around ten minutes in all, from when the daughter is put to bed until the father walks out of the room.

The depth of emotional responsiveness and closeness in this particular intimate setting is unique in a person's life history. The father in this example reports that he is highly aware of the importance of being present in his daughter's life, and this strongly relates to the amount of time spent with her. He thinks the notion 'quality time' with children is a misunderstood term, and this is also touched upon by another father. Father no. 1 emphasizes that he soon understood that he had to put much effort in being present in his children's lives, not only on a moment-to-moment basis, but as a whole. Three of the fathers in this inquiry decided to work less in order to spend more time with their children, and they report that their singing comes out of the close relationship that already exist between them and their children. Their singing is a very natural response to the closeness they already feel towards their children and an important symbol and embodiment of how much effort and focus they put on being present in their lives.

Parents' own childhood stories also bear witness to this, as does the degree to which children connect to these songs and make them their own, as we will see next.

7.4.5 A special moment of being together and exploring the relationship

— *Now daddy will hold you, I say when it is time to go to bed. I am the one who puts our daughter to bed, and it is our special moment together.* (Father no. 3)

— *I started to play and sing for him in order to find something we could do together, just the two of us—an activity that his mother was not a part of. And it worked out very well. It is the guitar and the singing in the evening and football during the daytime.* (Father no. 2)

Father no. 2 wants to create something unique and exclusive with his son, and music becomes part of this. It seems as though the exclusiveness of the dyadic form of relation between the father and the child that arises when they sing together is somewhat more important to fathers than to mothers. This may probably be due to the fact that some of the fathers were divorced, and had to put a stronger effort in being present in their children's lives, as the children often lived with their mothers most of the time. But it may also be due to the conventional and traditional picture of the mothers as the primary caregiver, and how the child related differently to the mother and father

at other times of the day or in other situations. Many of the parents also state that lullaby singing represents a significant moment in their everyday lives with their children:

— I experience this moment as being a very special moment that we have together. He loves his father so much, so there are periods when he wants to be together with his father all the time. But when it comes to bedtime and singing, it is me he wants to relate to. I am the one who puts him to bed and sings for him, and especially because I breastfed him when he fell asleep, so it was natural for me to sing to him after I stopped breastfeeding him. So I feel that it is a special moment for him and me even though, the rest of the day, he wants to be together with his father. It is daddy, daddy, and daddy. But the singing is connected with me. (Mother no. 7)

Lullaby singing mostly comes out of positive emotions, not frustration. Parents do not look upon the act primarily as a parental outlet, but rather as a positive expression of their love towards their children and a wish to create a good relationship with them, and because they want to find a way that makes the falling-asleep process nice and easy. The singing is connected to the special bedtime moment, the particular parent-child relationship and to their personal way of relating at that time of the day.

— Bedtime is a good time to be with your children. You get to know them. There are often so many other things to do during the day—eat your food, tidy up, we need to hurry, do this and that. But now we shall do nothing except calm down and fall asleep. It is a very good time to be with your child. When singing lullabies, you share parts of your soul with your child. There can be so many things that they want to bring into this moment, if you just take your time, allow for it and just listen, especially when they are in a flow of free association and creating new words to the songs. You can listen and try to understand where the words are coming from—maybe a dangerous dog or the ugly wolf arises, or a nasty man, some colourful flowers or a good lamb. There can be many variations. You can sense how your child is getting along by taking your time to listen. (Father no. 4)

Other parents draw attention to the moment as a time of confession and surrender. Children want to share what they have experienced during the day, and the intimate setting is a good opportunity for the parent to explore this.

— At this time of the day, you can take the temperature of how your child is getting along. It is a moment when you take your time and listen. Then we

take the day's incidents in reverse, so we get rid of the day. Now we sing the goodnight song, before that we undressed, before that we were eating in the kitchen, before that you were in the kindergarten, I woke you up and you didn't want to get up, and before that you were sleeping and now you sleep, all taken backwards. It is a cleansing procedure. We get things from the day, both you and me, to which we didn't pay attention, but that we need to process openly, or through sleep. It is very good for the child to clean his head a little bit, to take the day backwards. To start right where we are now and then we go backwards to the moment when we woke up. Then the day can be cleared out and put behind. (Father no. 4)

Through bedtime singing, the father introduces a positive and open-minded environment for the child to give further attention to what happened during the day. The singing and setting allow for free association among elements of 'real life' and of the myths and stories of the lullabies.

The father reports that in the singing and bedtime moment, he gets to know his child on a deeper, more existential level. The singing supplies a shared and embodied space and time where the father and the child can explore their relationship on equal terms, exchanging paradoxical and playful viewpoints, regardless of their different experiences of reality and potential practical and verbal disagreements. The father also points out that he can leave behind his parental responsibilities and everyday 'duties' and just be with his child. He can be playful, following the flow of the moment, or he can just listen to the child. Activity and peacefulness are comfortably juxtaposed.

This father's thoughts about what actually takes place in the bedtime moment between him and his child are the product of an observing and listening stance on his part, one which allows a sharing of inner thoughts and emotions. He emphasises the revelatory and unburdened nature of this singing, when the 'flow of free association' gives rise to an intimate and playful sharing of their 'souls'.

7.4.6 The parental role and commitment highlighted and being equally human

Paradoxically, some parents feel that their parental role is highlighted when they sing to their children, but simultaneously they also feel equally human when lying side by side in bed. Parents report that they become more aware of how they sing and what they bring with them from their own past when they share lullabies with their children.

— *When we are lying there, playing and singing together, I feel that we are equal.* (Mother no. 7)

— *When singing to my child, I am only a human being. All daily stress and claims are left behind. There is no more 'brush your teeth, clean your face,' et cetera. I am not in charge anymore. It is a free space for us both.* (Father no. 4)

I feel that my role as a mother is highlighted when I am singing to my child. I feel that I am really taking care of my child at that moment. At the same time, I feel so naked and existentially present—just a human being who shares a song. I think about life and I think about death. Anxiety arises when I think of me not being able to be there for my child anymore. (Lullaby diary, Nov. 2011)

Tonight, I noticed how close I came to my own self when singing for my daughter. When I felt this I also had the feeling of a special closeness to her. There was nothing in-between. The television was shut off, our friends had gone home, no sound except from my own singing voice, all the light was off and we both lay in bed. I felt so vulnerable. I reflected on the fact that I was very tired and emotional. It had been a long day with a lot of activities, intermingling of fun and duties. It felt so good to sing. In this silence and darkness, I was able to express something inarticulate. My own, little daughter is in bed, eyes shut, with a serene expression on her face. My mission was completed (Lullaby diary, Nov. 2011).

Parents also sometimes become bored and feel that they are singing more out of duty or commitment than out of joy, but this is considered to be a natural part of parenthood:

— *I have to admit that sometimes the singing is boring, and I just do it out of parental duty.* (Mother no. 3)

Sometimes I am so tired that I only want to get it over with. (Lullaby diary, Nov. 2011)

Nonetheless, the lullaby singing moment invites to a mutual sharing that are appreciated by both of them.

7.4.7 Mutual appreciation and recognition

Many parents describe the bedtime moment as a moment of mutual appreciation. They also feel that their musicality is recognized, since the children want and like their singing. Children's appreciation of their parents' voices seems to be independent of the relationship parents have to their own voices and musicality.

— It is part of a calming ritual, a way of ending the day that underlines the warmth and closeness between the father and the child that we all appreciate (Father no. 1).

Some parents also emphasize the moment as a moment of listening and openness, recognizing their children's specific needs at that time of the day:

— Suddenly I had somebody who wanted to listen to my singing. This had never happened before. I am not a musical person. It made me so happy to see that they appreciated it, so I did it a lot. I can see that they love music and singing, and especially when I—their father—sing to them. It makes them calm and happy. I sing very poorly and I am very unmusical, but I love music. My children don't care about it, and they would much rather listen to me singing in the evening than listen to a CD. I am surprised about that, because I have a terrible singing voice. Anyway, they like it and they ask me to sing for them, because it comes from me, their father. (Father no. 7)

— My children acknowledge and accept my singing. I can sing. I know that I am not singing very well—I am not a professional singer—but that doesn't matter. I am confident about the way I sing and about my voice. I actually sing quite in tune, and think I have a rather nice singing voice. (Mother no. 1)

— Children are not judging you. I started to sing for my son, and it was a growth for me. Before, I thought of singing to others as something scary, but it felt so natural to sing to my son. (Mother no. 3)

I feel like my daughter gives me something in return. I can feel that she loves me too, and it makes me think that she depends on me. I need to be there for her and this makes me strong and patient. (Lullaby diary, Nov. 2012)

Parents describe lullaby singing as an act based upon mutual recognition. Parents recognise their children's love of music and human capacities and needs, while the children—most often tacitly—appreciate and recognise the parents' musicality, voices

and personal signatures. These aspects are strengthened by the act, which produces a mutual satisfaction and understanding based upon parental feelings of mastery and children's feelings of being seen and held (in every sense of the word). This mutual recognition is also based upon sharing a love of music and affection for one another. It is based upon a 'mutual agreement' as one of the parents puts it. The parent initiates a sharing moment which becomes attractive to the child.

However, there also exists contrasting views, if not a conflicting views, regarding the children's recognition or appreciation of their parents' singing. One of the parents reports:

- *They always took it for granted. I cannot tell if they really liked it. They have just got used to my singing, that's all.*
- *So you don't think they appreciate your singing?*
- *I never hear anything positive about it. They are just used to my singing*
(Mother no. 2)

The mother no. 2 feels that she gives a lot to her children, but very seldom, she says, she gets anything in return. She describes it as a one-way service minded parental act of giving. Nonetheless, she also believes that her children probably have a more tacit way of expressing their appreciation of her singing presence at bedtime. She reports that one time when her daughter went through a difficult time, the latter asked explicitly for her singing, and then she felt a sort of recognition and her singing was considered important. Most of the time though they took it for granted.

Sometimes, as we will see next, parental singing is also a means of 'making up for' conflicts that have occurred during the day.

7.4.8 Singing as compensation and reconciliation

Some parents frame their singing as a compensation for conflicts or communicative failures from earlier in the day. Regardless of the cause, the singing becomes a moment of reconciliation between the parent and the child:

- *The voice is so powerful, and lots of shouting and ugly things come out of my voice sometimes, so I also used my singing as a kind of compensation, I think.*
- *Did the lullaby singing differ largely from what took place between you and your son the rest of the day?*
- *Yes, I think so, at least now, when he is seven years old. It is a struggle, and he wants to separate himself. When he was very small, my voice was soft all the time.* (Mother no. 3)

Singing is here an opportunity for reparations, when this mother can make up for her angry behaviour during the day. This is also strongly related to the communicative aspects of the act:

7.5 Communication

7.5.1 Singing as a medium of ‘good communication’

In the context of lullaby singing, the parent and child create a mutual arena for the exercise of expressivity and common understanding. An exchange between the musical dialogue of lullabies and the practice of parental care is created, and the communication is relationship centred rather than information- or self-centred:

— *Good, authentic communication is crucial, and it is always a matter of response, and I see that my children respond to my singing. They appreciate it.* (Father no. 1)

— *There needs to be a sort of communication between my child and me. This is very important. I have so many fantasies about all the bad things that can happen to him, how ill he can be, and when I see that it works with the singing that he responds to, I think that the future will be all right. He has intelligence.* (Father no. 8)

These fathers feel that their singing is successful because it promotes good communication. The second father expresses his worries for his child and the therapeutic communication that singing enables. The communicative character of the act assures the father that his child understands him—the singing creates a common ground for mutual understanding.

7.5.2 Sharing the love of music and singing

Many parents, fittingly, want to express and share their love of music and singing in particular:

— *My relationship with music is very strong. I love music, and I want to share it with my son.* (Father no. 8)

The father wants to express himself via his love of music, which he thinks is a subtle form of communication. He tells me elsewhere that he enjoys the fact that, when he deliberately alters his singing, the child responds by laughing. Singing is a lovely, joyful and intelligent way of communicating with his child, he says. His son's sense of humour makes him seem intelligent as well, even at a year old:

— *I have been singing the same simple melody for months now, and when I alter the melody a little bit, I can see that my son catches it. He knows the melody very well, too. He even started to laugh when I whistled the same melody. I whistled the melody instead of singing it, and this made him laugh. He showed me that it was not supposed to be performed that way.* (Father no. 8)

With this musical form of communication, they share a preverbal understanding that is based upon subtle nuances of musical humour. The singing also takes shape of being an existential encounter, reflecting the deeper layers of human life:

7.5.3 Sharing the deep dimensions of life

The mother in this example communicates human depth, dark as well as constructive sides of human nature to her children:

— *It has something to do with getting in contact with these deeper layers of reality. We don't have so much of it in our world. So I want to add a glimpse of the deeper aspects of life and not only live from consumer simplicity. Children are very openminded, so they easily accept what we give to them. I see it as a matter of choice what one wishes to relate to. Many people seem to choose to live a superficial lifestyle. I see this in the choices I made. I wanted some depth, and I found some of the lullabies so shallow and trivial. I believe it is important to integrate depth into our lives. This potential can be revealed through lullabies. Powerful forces and images can be accessed. A kind of transformational plutonian atmosphere is available. This is often suppressed and censored in the overjoyous TV programs for children and sweet-tempered lullabies. To deny or avoid this 'deeper' dimension is dishonest to me. These sweet types of melodies become so simple, kind and harmless.*

— *What do you mean by a plutonian atmosphere?*

— *What I mean is the dark, magnetic forces that pulls us towards darkness, a kind of Strindbergian³⁹ atmosphere, where the deep and not always positive*

39 Strindberg is a Swedish author that often wrote about the dark forces of the human nature.

sides of human nature see the light, but it can also be constructive forces in play. I have reflected upon the choices I made, because I found the new lullabies so superficial and light weighted. I think the 'So, ro' song is beautiful and I sang it a lot, together with 'Jeg folder mine hender små' [I fold my small hands], a song about Christianity from the seventies, and 'Det var en deilig deilig dag' [It was a lovely, lovely day]. They are all positive in character. So I picked up those that are 'on the edge of death'. That's what they are. I did it deliberately, not because they were sad, but because I wanted the depth. Not only 'it is a very beautiful day and tomorrow the sun will smile again' and all such sweetness.

— *So lullabies have different qualities?*

— *Yes, really. The song 'Danse mi vise' [Dance my song] is so sad. At times I started to cry when I sang it. I had to stop and rebalance myself, and there were also verses that I couldn't sing. They were too sad. (Mother no. 2)*

This mother wants her children to experience the 'deep dimensions' in life, and her point of view influences her choices of repertoire and relationship to her own singing. Her awareness of the various affordances of the songs she sings is evident. She picks out songs 'with powerful forces and images' so that they might 'integrate depth into our lives'.

As she creates an intersubjective space that makes room for an affective dialogue, she also reflects on her children's openness and acceptance and her responsibility to give them something substantial and real. This means that sometimes she shares human sadness and loss, and she must deal with her own feelings in relation to this. Of course, if the songs are too relentlessly negative, she modifies the text.

In general, parents want to create a positive atmosphere in the context of bedtime. However, sometimes parents sing sad songs, due to tradition, musical taste or force of habit:

— *I sometimes forget and sing songs that are terrible. The songs just come on autopilot. I do not sing them deliberately. Afterwards I reflect upon it, and I say to myself that this was an awful thing to sing to my children. Many of these traditional songs are really sad and scary. (Mother no. 2)*

Unconsciously, some parents communicate 'awful things' to their children, because many traditional lullabies have a rather violent content. Some lullabies also contain religious and spiritual messages as well:

7.5.4 Communicating spiritual beliefs and messages

Some parents make an effort in communicating spiritual beliefs in their children's lives:

— *I don't have any religious background, but I believe that there is something out there, and I think this is a very light way of transmitting this belief to my children, without indoctrinating a specific religious view. I just feel a certain solemn and sacred atmosphere at night that I want to pass on to them.* (Mother no. 10)

The mother describes lullaby singing as an act that is grounded in life values and beliefs, one that can communicate a message about being in a safe place and protected by a higher power.

Many lullabies reflect religious beliefs; some parents take this seriously, while others sing these songs out of habit or as a nod to tradition. Here, the mother experiences strong feelings of gratitude during the bedtime ritual, and she allows them to animate her singing, even when the songs are religious. For example, the Christian song 'Kjære Gud vi har det godt' ['Dear God, life is good to us] reflects and encourages this gratitude towards life. Still, she has misgivings about this spiritual content, noting that her husband is an atheist and would disapprove. Several parents in this study preferred to 'soften' or avoid the Christian messages in these songs, preferring to remain as religiously neutral as possible and cultivate instead the 'playful' and 'free' communicative dimension of their singing.

7.5.5 'Free and playful sort of communication'

When father no. 8 playfully alters his singing voice, he creates a form of metavocal communication. First, he establishes a common code, then he plays with it:

— *I sang a very simple song—not even a song, just a melody. And when my son knew it very well, I started to alter it. He started to laugh, and I got back on the right track, and this continued for some months. It was fun to see how he enjoyed this playful way of singing.* (Father no. 5)

Other parents also seem to communicate in a playful manner with their children:

— *Sometimes I deliberately sing the wrong words, and we all start laughing. Then we create even more nonsense together. I have not been afraid of laughing*

and joking at bedtime. My daughters always calm down anyway. It is nice to laugh together when singing these last songs. (Mother no. 5)

According to the parents, the act of lullaby singing is often characterised by a pleasurable unpredictability. The first phase of singing is frequently described as being more joyful and playful, and the next phase as a more relaxed and calming. Sometimes, however, the first phase overstates its welcome:

— He wants me to sing funny songs, but I know that if I do what he wants, it will take another half an hour before he calms down and falls asleep. (Mother no. 9)

Sometimes the singing is only nonsense, based upon free association. Some parents do not reflect much upon the content of songs or what they want to communicate while singing.

— I don't believe I communicate anything in particular. I just sit there and make a sound of calmness. (Mother no. 3)

— Often I am so tired, so I don't think of anything at that time of the day. It is just a nice moment together. (Father no. 1)

7.5.6 Communicating love and calmness in an open, whispering and sometimes expressive way

In order to illustrate more concretely the nurturing aspects of the act, I will use one of my video recordings to describe aspects of care, communication and contact in a timed sequence. The group of video recordings includes personal singing rituals which take between four and fifty-five minutes.

The following example is a narrative-based and descriptive annotation from the video data of Petter, a two-year-old whose father sang and played guitar for him.

00.00. The father sits on a chair with his son on his lap, relatively close to his son's cot. 00.10. After they have read books, the son takes the initiative to sing and the father puts him in bed. 00.30. The boy wants his father to sing from the songbook and he also wants him to play the guitar. 00.35. The father understands and responds by placing the book and the guitar on his lap. He asks his son which song to sing. 00.40. The son says, 'Bæ, bæ lille lam' (Ba, ba black sheep). 00.45. The father starts singing and playing guitar and switches between watching his son and the musical score. 00.48. The son is lying down and watching and listening to his father's singing and playing. 00.56. The son raises his head and

starts banging his head to the rhythm of the singing, then lays his head down again. 01.20. When the song is finished, the father asks and confirms that they can sing one more song. 01.35. The father chooses the second song. 01.45. He sings the song in an almost whispering way. He looks at his son, who is now lying very calmly, just listening and making only very small movements with his legs. 03.03. The song finishes. 03.14. The father puts his guitar back where it stood, the son says something about the guitar, and the father answers that he put the guitar back again. The son is lying very calmly and quietly in his bed, with his head on his pillow. 03.25. The father kisses his son on his cheek and switches off the light, then walks out of the room. The room is quiet and dark. (Description of the home-recorded video, father singing lullabies to his 2-year-old son 2011)

This singing ritual took about four minutes. The singing activity and initial storytelling seemed to be connected to the ritual of bedtime, which took about ten minutes overall.

The father's singing voice is soft, emotional and rather high-pitched compared to his talking voice, and he sings the song rather slowly, compared to the upbeat tempo he used earlier, when 'Bæ, bæ lille lam' was a play song instead. His sensitive and soft singing appears to be very heartfelt and present. He uses a very steady rhythm, emphasising each beat with his guitar and looking at his son while he sings. The father's singing style makes the moment very intimate and creates a relaxed and calm atmosphere for the child.

The aspect of contact is also emphasised by this father—later, during the stimulated recall, he says that he always looks his son in the eyes, because he wants him to know that he is singing just to him, for his sake, and that he wants to create something special for the two of them. He allows his child to choose the first song to sing, so the singing is based upon a mutual agreement.

The son and the father sit in separate places, but they are connected through the familiar song and the act of singing itself. The physical distance between them does not appear consequential to the interaction, because the father's gaze is always directed at his son (except when he must look at the songbook for the right words to sing). The singing creates a common sound space where they are together even in separate bodies and places. The child eventually lies down and closes his eyes, because this is a familiar way to retire to his own bed, while the father sit on a chair nearby. His father's singing feels safe and calm, and the child moves his body to the rhythm of the singing, as if he knows the song physically as well as musically. The act of singing is received in a multisensory capacity, in the sense that the rhythms of the singing and guitar playing encourage the son's slow movements. These movements, in turn, give the father a sense of how sleepy his son is.

The second song is more emotionally expressive, and this is emphasised by its lyrical message and the father's performance of it. The song is not a traditional lullaby—it is about the stars and how precious the son is to the father. As this second song plays out, it is as though the father adapts to his son, the moment and himself while he is singing. The sound of his voice becomes soft, his gestures become slow and calm, and his facial expressions become fewer as he matches his son's fading energy. He slows the tempo as well, and both father and son are evidently in tune with this performance, which the son demonstrates through his slow movements and soft humming along. The emphasis is on maintaining contact through face-to-face interaction and verbal communication and vocalisation.

During the second interview a year later, this father tells me that he was very emotional at that time, because he and his wife did not know what would happen to their son, who has cancer. He felt this very profoundly when his son went to bed each night, and they were alone together:

— This song has become very special to me. It made me think of the difficult situation we were in at that time. When I sang this song to my son, it evoked very strong feelings in me at that time. I didn't know how this would end, but I surely knew that I loved my son and wanted him to experience all the beauty in the world. The song was about the beautiful stars at night, and how much I love him. I know that all parents sing these kinds of songs to their children, but we were in a special situation. It made it so strong, and I was so emotional.

(Father no. 4)

This father then says that his singing is now less fraught and more 'everyday' sounding, perhaps because his son's prognosis is better at this point. The emotional expressivity of the act has faded, he observes.

Given this difficult situation, the father's singing also revealed his own vulnerability, as if he were expressing his fear of losing his son as he sang. The bedtime moment became especially precious to both of them, and the content of the one song in particular seemed to afford an emotional space where the father could express his strong emotions without becoming overwhelmed by them, and thereby create an open space of relation and mutual participation.

7.6 Nurturing the parent, the child and their relationship: reflective remarks

7.6.1 A context-sensitive micro-cycle of multisensory care

Through its multisensory stimulation and modes of comfort, this particular communicative and nurturing act meets the child's needs. It combines visual, auditory, kinaesthetic and physical aspects into a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts, encompassing personal preferences and styles as well as more conventional and social ways of relating. The singing act is both initiated and fulfilled by the parent in a close interaction with the child. The child's body receives special care, perceives the music as sensuous and felt experience. The particular lullaby is embedded in the intersubjective and cultural dynamics of this particular soft, sensitive, multi-sensory and calm interaction.

Moreover, singing lullabies is a self-determined parental act of caring love and protection as well as a mutually influenced communicative and creative process. This singing not only 'nurtures the self' (Malloch and Trevarthen 2009, p. 1) but also nurtures the child and their relationship. Of course, the child's needs are among the main parental priorities regarding lullaby singing, but most of the parents emphasise the human and spiritual side of the act as well. For them, the act is nurturing in the broadest sense and satisfies our inherent human craving for the mystical, playful and magical. The meanings of parents singing lullabies for their children are 'multifarious', to use a term by Cross and Tolbert (2011, p. 32), and there is no single parental or theoretical approach that can claim precedence for its interpretations of those meanings, and in fact many different and discrete nurturing layers are unified. The act can provide the parent and the child with significant physical, emotional, mental, psychological, existential, spiritual and pragmatic meanings that make it an upward spiral of positive experiences. The parent even enjoys the ability to observe the child while singing.

The Norwegian psychologist Aksel Hundeide (2007) emphasises the reciprocity of the caring act, and this is in line with previous research in the musical field which emphasizes the *reciprocal* nature of parent-child musical interaction (see Custodero and Johnson-Green 2008). The caring act is based upon an adaptive process of intersubjective, sensitive and expressive interplay. Parents' motives and intentions are shaped by their sympathy and empathy for their children, in tandem with what they believe is best for their children and themselves. If singing lullabies is only a small

part of parental caregiving, as mentioned earlier, it is nevertheless a context-sensitive micro-cycle of care that is especially strongly linked to parental identity and role:

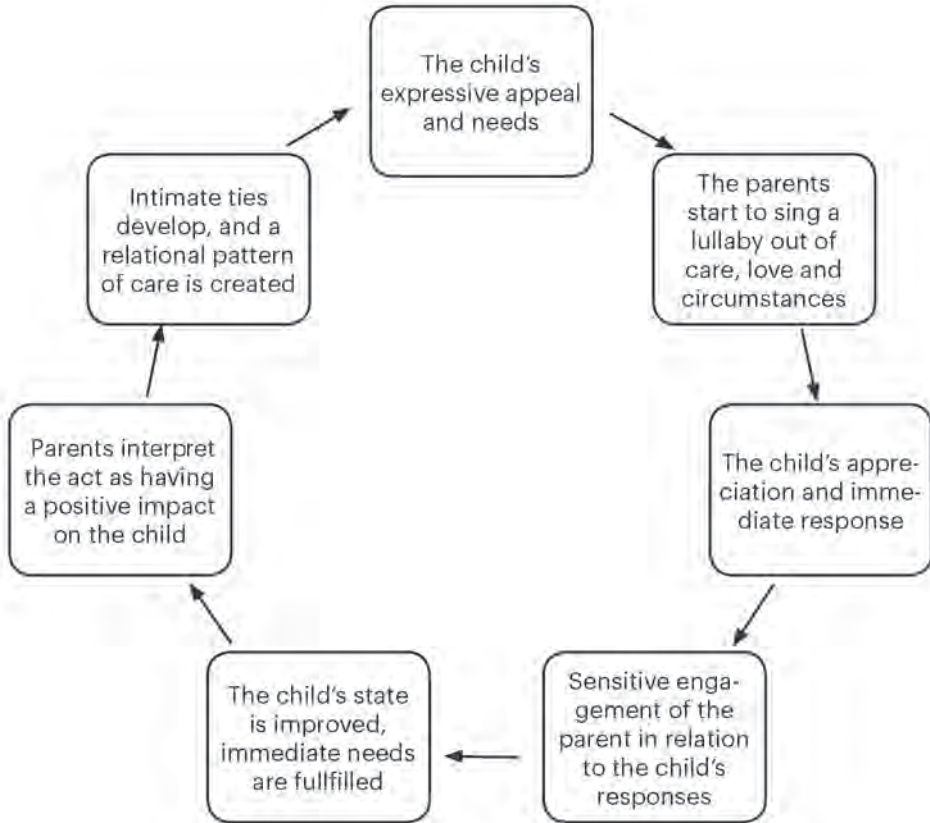


Figure 5: The lullaby act as a micro-cycle of parent-child care

It is, in fact, not always easy to determine who initiates the act, because of the highly intersubjective setting of lullaby singing, which is based upon face-to-face communication and bodily dialogue, imitation and direct participation.

Some parents see themselves as the active, responsible determiner of the lullaby ritual, in the interests of perpetuating a clear pre-bedtime routine and otherwise shaping the evening. Others feel more 'directed' by the child, as the term 'infant-directed singing' implies (e.g. Papousek 1996, Trehub 2001). Parents are aware of their children's sensitivities and preferences and try to respond to them as best

they can. Intuitive and intimate singing becomes an important parental symbol (and manifestation) of their caring love for their children, but singing remains, at heart, a mutual affair. Both parent and child are served by the act—the parent in terms of parental identity, affection and mastery, and the child in terms of feelings of safety and predictability and a mutual sense of belonging.

7.6.2 A triangular sense of subject-subject-object relatedness

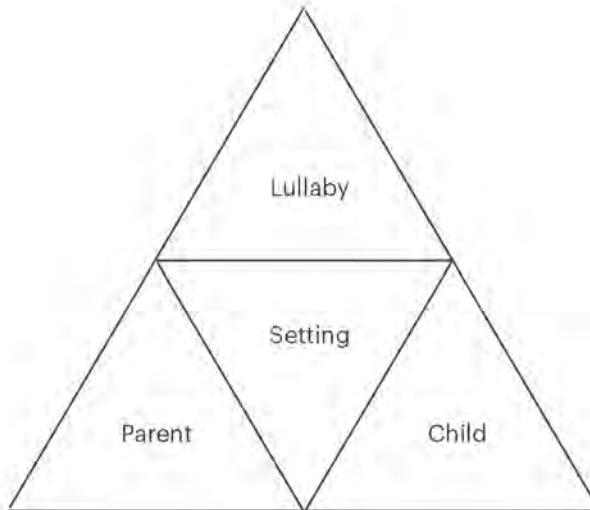


Figure 6: The basic elements in play during the lullaby-singing act

A parent who sings lullabies to his or her child is positioned within a triangle of subject-subject-object relatedness among the parent, the child and the lullaby. The sensory elements are included in the parent-child interactive style. However, in some cases, the parent and the child seem to experience this musical intersubjectivity as exclusively a subject-subject relation, due to what parents recognise as the internalisation of the songs. Lullabies, in short, are not considered or experienced from without, but from within. The aspect that might be positioned right in the middle of the triangle is the lullaby-singing setting—that is, both the particular *situation* and the particular bedtime moment. This particular ‘micro’ bedtime setting strongly colours the interaction. A parent-child interactive style dominated by a focus on daily activities can shift into a more tender or calm mode at the end of the day, when there is nothing more to do:

— *It is the setting that decides and forms everything. It feels like an intimate situation, it calms both of us. It is part of a calming ritual—a way of ending the day that underlines the warmth and closeness between the father and the child that we both appreciate.* (Father no. 1)

Here, the father underlines the particularity of the setting and situation, and its positioning as part of an irreducible whole, rather than a mere physical link between two or more distinct items. According to many of the parents, the singing cannot be separated from its setting.

The concept of intersubjectivity in relation to lullabies has a social-emotive focus and explains the communicative basis of the act. Bedtime singing puts an emphasis on the affective grounds for interpersonal understanding. Parents report that their children seem to know to what degree the parents are relaxed, devoted to the present moment, attentive or focused. For their part, parents emphasise the face-to-face sharing moment—it is all about contact, closeness, tenderness, bonding time and the parent-child relationship. They also appreciate the more conventional object-related communication that takes place, through which the parent and the child can ‘meet in the third’ by focusing on the songs and can play and pretend on a metalevel around shared melodies, lyrics, the daily state of affairs, humour and cultural themes.

In the multi-sensory manifestation of the act, the focus of the song and the singing itself can even fade away as the focus shifts onto a physical sharing of an inner pulse, rhythm and movement.

To this point, I have described an interaction and a relationship, the latter of which Hinde defines as the remembered history of previous interactions (Hinde 1979 in Stern 1995), without paying special attention to the hidden aspects in play and the more overt ritualized aspects of the act. This relational perspective evokes notions of the act as a ritual and protohabitus, as Gratier and Apter-Danon put it (Gratier and Apter-Danon 2009, p. 305), where a variety of past and present elements needs to be taken into consideration as a continuous chain of daily events, including the simplicity of the songs and personal interpretations of them. I will let parents’ statements about the ritualized aspect of the act come to the foreground in the next chapter. Here I will focus on the act’s richness and its hidden elements in play.

7.6.3 The richness of the act and the hidden elements in play

Some of the songs parents choose evoke beautiful images and inner harmonious landscapes, and they present poetic inspiration. Others present a hard reality—Federico Garcia-Lorca, for one, emphasises the often sad and tragic content of many Spanish lullabies (Garcia-Lorca 1928/2008). Sad and tragic songs also exist in the

traditional Norwegian repertoire of lullabies, in addition to more playful ones. There are, however, reasons to believe that parents have a highly selective approach towards religious, sad and tragic songs

Parents attach significance to the content of the songs, which the children might grasp. In addition, the child's imaginative world is a pleasant place to be, for both the parent and the child, and that might be reason enough to sing silly songs. However, some parents do question how meaningful it is to sing a song, every day, about a fox that puts his tail under his head when he goes to sleep.⁴⁰ Yet there are good reasons. The fox that will soon fall asleep resonates with the bedtime setting and the childlike world, and children tend to love domestic as well as wild animals, as well as nature in general. Parents report that lyrics like this also promote a feeling of wonder and gratitude towards life in general.

The 'historical thickening' of the act balances its occasional silliness by adding existential depth in terms of either personal parental history or cultural tradition. And all of this significance is in turn balanced by the individual parent's performativity (or purposeful lack thereof).

Some parents regret the fact that the meaningfulness of the act can fade, and new meanings and dynamics will cease to appear, as it becomes more and more ritualised. Sometimes parents find the melody to be the message, rather than the lyrics. The experience as a whole, though, tends to feel profound, lyrically and musically, as the mother indicates when describing the act as 'getting in contact with these deeper layers of reality'.

O'Callaghan (2008) also emphasises the aspect of truth telling. Rollin (1992) also notes that nursery rhymes and lullabies can contain meanings that parents do not always intend or perceive:

Nursery rhymes are shown to be both the instruments that tell children of the mortal hunger for understanding and the ones that reveal to them the bewildering failure of human beings to control the forces in the natural world that oppose them. Thus, in bearing a double load of meanings, nursery rhymes remove the blinders and push children toward the life of contrasts that abound in their culture. (Rollin 1992, p. 11)

Certainly part of the richness of the lullaby-singing act arises from the unintended or double meanings of sometimes hard lyrics that are sung in a sweet, positive and affective manner. The act's paradoxes, or even duplicity, likewise evoke parents' expressive as well as more instrumental intentions at bedtime. Parents want to express their

40 This image refers to the prototypical happy lullaby 'So, ro'.

loving kindness and but also regulate their children's behaviour and state or condition. Nonetheless, all the elements in play colour the act:

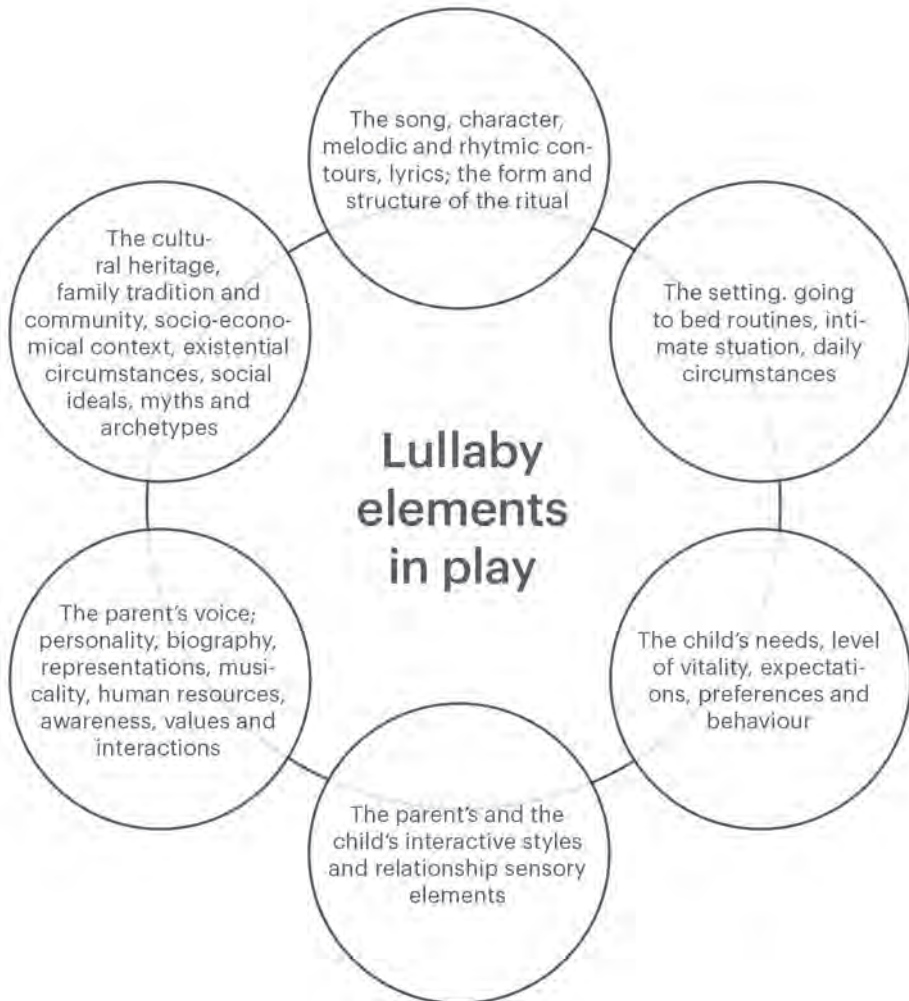


Figure 7: The various lullaby elements in play that influence and form the lullaby act

The shared world of references, traditions, emotions and states of affairs, and the dynamic, mutually influencing parent-child relationship, are forces that are all brought into concert by the lullaby act. Though some of these aspects might dominate, the others are always present and active, via a circular form of interaction that adds

individual nuances to the intersubjective understanding that lies at the core of the act. Yet the relational quality of the interaction is an elusive matter and difficult to explain. A song may be simple and repetitive in terms of structure, melody and rhythmic content but deep and complex in what the singing parent conveys through it, using the song lyrics, personal predisposition, memories and 'historical thickening' (see Gratier and Aptor-Danon 2009, p. 305). A simple lullaby act might 'afford' much more than the actual song and the singing.

Depending upon daily moods, energy level and circumstances, the bedtime setting can invite intimacy and repose or set the stage for struggle and difficulties. It may reinforce existing interactive patterns or it may challenge them. The following diagram tries to capture the relevant interrelations in this regard. The three elements (the parent, the child and the song) work together as a whole, but this does not represent the entire picture of what is in play during the act. For one thing, the act can be influenced profoundly by the past: the parents' predispositions, value systems, attitudes and family traditions, their socio-economic context and actual life circumstances and the child's personality, needs, previous experiences and the expectations that are based on them.

Taking into account all of its hidden and more overt aspects, we might conclude that the lullaby event has a richness that appears limitless. However, from an everyday perspective, a lullaby's simplicity can challenge parents' ability to renew and revitalise their singing performance. As one of the parents puts it, singing the same song over and over again, especially one that 'bites its tail', feels more like reciting a mantra. Lullaby singing, as rich as it is, even evokes a meditative state. It creates a 'predictable frame for the night', and children love the familiarity at least as much as the richness and possibility. Yet the act's expressivity is sometimes surrendered to the onslaught of its predictability.

The parents' intentions also seem to work against the dynamic and expressive potentials of the act. There is a big difference between musical interaction during the daytime and at bedtime, and parents' statements reflect this fact. Even though parents sing songs other than traditional lullabies at bedtime—some might even be categorised as 'action songs'—they tend to reserve them for that occasion, regardless, and they sing them in a particularly calm and slow manner. The purpose of this singing, that is, seems to overrule the innate potential of the songs in other contexts. Some parents even report that when their children are bored by the singing, they fall asleep better.

Nonetheless, a song's simplicity and repetitive form gives the parent a sense of mastery and musical 'control' that make the parent able to focus on different aspects of the singing event, such as the parent-child relationship and multi-sensory interaction more than on the concrete songs and the 'performative' aspects of their singing. This

may give the performance a more organic and living shape, but it very often depends on the parents' presence, openness and receptivity. The video data gives an insight into the contrast that seems to exist between the parent's agenda and fading level of vitality and the child's seemingly endless playfulness and vitality.

The bedtime moment and the lullabies' simplicity may also invite to improvisations, and this inquiry illuminates the high amount of parental creativity when it comes to inventing new songs, creating new lyrics to already existing melodies, adding new verses and stories adapted to the particular child and the bedtime setting. These improvisations ensure the aliveness of the moment, and the parental challenge resides in putting an end to the singing and storytelling ritual, because the main purpose of making their children fall asleep doesn't seem in any case to be lost out of sight for them. One of the parents uses singing cards, and creates a sort of musical play with her daughter. This creates predictable boundaries for the evening, as they negotiate in advance of how many cards to sing.

The psychologist Daniel Stern adds that this complex relationship of past, present and future moments is determined by how an interaction is experienced, perceived and interpreted using the many lenses that are particular to the participants. These lenses include 'fantasies, hopes, fears, family traditions and myths, important personal experiences, current pressures, and many other factors' (Stern 1995/2006, p. 12). Together, these factors form an amalgam of remembered history and personal interpretation that Stern calls a representation (*ibid.*). I use this term in relation to the parent's larger whole of values, influences and past memories and own childhood stories, while I use 'expectancy' in relation to the child. Expectancies are more immediate and seem more childlike in nature, even though they can be strongly internalised and 'representational'. Parents' representations and children's expectancies influence their relationship. Potential clashes between the parents' and the child's worlds often arise from differences between parental representations and intentions and the child's expectancies and immediate needs and preferences at a given moment.

The circularity of the lullaby act derives from the fact that all of the elements mentioned above are present and acting simultaneously, as well as the fact that they are fundamentally interdependent. If one of the elements is altered, it may influence the whole act. These elements together or separately can turn the bedtime moment into a vicious circle or a positive and happy one. Parents highlight this interrelatedness, as mentioned elsewhere, by pointing out the ways in which the act is influenced by daily, present circumstances such as their own state of mind, the child's level of vitality, the child's impulses, the particular setting and the particular lullaby they choose to sing. Previous research suggests that sleeping disorders may have their origins in the parent-child interaction (Valentin 2004). This inquiry seems to make the search

for the origins of sleeping problems an even more complex state of affair as it not only includes the present interaction, but also the more hidden past aspects in play.

7.6.4 Lullaby singing as a holding space and time for the parent and the child

Against this background, Winnicott's concept of a *holding environment* has proved to be useful (Winnicott 1971/1991). Through the creation of a free space and flexible time, parents create a holding environment for their children both literally and emotionally, mentally and spiritually. The underlying importance of the holding environment is its role in the developmental course of creating a self, which involves lasting relationships with others and is closely linked to Winnicott's other notion of the 'significant other'. A lullaby can afford a coherent and clear message and the introduction of the parent's voice into the dynamic—the holding environment, in its most basic sense, includes sensuous experiences for the baby or young child and a sense of achievement for the parent (Winnicott 1960).

Moreover, lullaby singing creates a holding environment for the parent—for example, the song's organisation and structure give both the parent and the child something to rely upon, and the song's words can channel the parent's thoughts and feelings. The singing can 'hold' the moment and avoid bringing the parents' awareness back to a troubled past or to future worries. The singing also shapes the evening ritual and creates a safe and predictable frame for the parent and the child. Parents' regular and predictable caring singing enhances an environment characterised by both psychological and musical holding (see Gratier and Aptor-Danon 2009) for the child as well as the parent. The familiarity of the songs and expressions involved in the lullaby-singing act introduces a 'structural holding' as well (Trevarthen 1999). Gratier and Aptor-Danon (2009) pay special attention to musical parameters like pulse and timing in relation to the concept of holding. I will return to these parameters in the chapter of discussion.

Some parents hold their children in every sense of the word, while others lean towards either the physical holding or the emotional or musical holding in particular. Parents' lullaby singing also seem to describe a sort of communicative holding, as the lullabies contain messages that can be of special importance in order to create human depth and shared, spiritual and existential meaning. The communicative aspects of musicality are also very central in Malloch and Trevarthen's theory of 'communicative musicality' (2009), and this raises the question:

7.6.5 An act that communicates the vitality and interests of life?

Parents communicate their love of music and express this love to their children. Some insert specific messages into this communicative act; others consider it to be simply about the singing and the setting. To them, the vitality in the communicative gesture of singing and touching is sufficient for the creation of memorable moments, or ‘pearls’, as father no. 3 puts it. In general, though, all of the parents experience the act as a holistic, multifunctional communication.

Many of the parents seem to be aware of the benefits of a shared musical world ‘that makes it possible to share time meaningfully together’, as Malloch and Trevarthen put it (Malloch and Trevarthen 2009, p. 1). Parents share their personal interests, convictions, emotions and intentions in accordance with Malloch and Trevarthen’s broad definition of ‘communicative musicality’ as ‘communicating the vitality and interests of life’ (Malloch and Trevarthen 2009, p. 1). In this case, this life vitality encompasses the parents’ love of music, love for their children, spiritual beliefs, creativity, deep life dimensions and positive emotions.

In what respect the lullaby act *facilitates* or *energises* meaning in communication (Malloch and Trevarthen 2009, p. 1) remains to be examined. Gratier and Apter-Danon propose that a sense of belonging arises through processes of musical engagement and attunement. Music opens up new spaces for an intimate form of communication that derives from culturally based personal styles of ‘being together in time’ (Gratier and Apter-Danon 2009, p. 304).

Parents state that their singing allows for a shared understanding that is based upon love, imagination and humour. Singing nurtures their relationships with their children through activated modes of love and calmness; using Stern’s notion of ‘forms of vitality’, singing supplies a quality or shape or contour, intensity, motion, duration and rhythm (Stern 2010). Parents sing in order to create a nurturing atmosphere for themselves and their children.

In the end, the communicative basis of the act is strongly linked to the parents’ ability to enable an attuned communication with their children. This attuned communication is clearly connected to the multisensory, holistic sense of care and comfort that the act encourages and support. Connecting Malloch and Trevarthen’s notion of musicality as ‘communicating vitality’ (Malloch and Trevarthen 2009, p. 1) with Stern’s different forms of vitality (Stern 2010), one could say that through parents’ ‘sounds of calmness’, they communicate a special and musical fading level of vitality. Moreover, this calmness and level of vitality is ‘contagious’ as one of the parents put it. In our context, the contagious aspect is related to the state and the process of calming, and

therefore we might call it 'state contagion' or 'affect contagion'. This term includes not only emotions but also dynamic or energy-levels as well.

Parents differ in the degree to which they express and communicate vitality and emotions while singing. This variability might be partially explained by differences in absorption and levels of presence and awareness together with the (more or less) distinct intention of calming their children down when singing.

7.7 Towards focal points of discussion

The nurturing aspects of the lullaby-singing act correlate with the parent's intentionality and personal convictions in ways that bring about a feeling of fulfilment. All of the parents seem to valorise the relational and multisensory aspect of their singing, and they try to adapt to the child's needs as best they can. They 'make an effort to be present' and 'take the time that is needed', in their words, and they generally try to create a positive, calm, comfortable and relaxed atmosphere in which the parent and the child can explore their relationship and spend a highly valued period of free time together.

In what respect does the act ensure a personal and relational sense of wellbeing at bedtime, based upon its components of positive emotions, satisfaction, responses, engagement and shared meanings? This process appears to be linked to the important aspect of time, and to the balance between stimulation and relaxation, which brings me to the next chapter, on building, and the chapter afterwards, on mastery, each of which will be treated separately before I can finally pursue my discussion of the act's connection to personal and relational wellbeing.

8 **Building**

When parents sing to their children on a regular basis, they create and practice a ritual. Such a process might range from the traditional image of a mother who has fallen asleep next to the cradle to the image of a father sitting in bed with his pre-school daughter, playing guitar and singing barefoot. Parents themselves see the act as highly unique, private and intimate, on the one hand, and conventional, traditional and 'mainstream', on the other. It appears that parents like to apply a personal touch regarding the cultural and common aspects of the lullabies that they want to introduce to their children.

The cultural aspect of the act engages creativity and imagination, as well as recognisable sounds and symbols. It is based upon specific cultural identities and traditions but also the collective, universal and mythological messages that reside within the particular lyrics. Culture is the result of an intrinsic and continuous process, and the child's introduction to it starts when the child is born. Some parents are greatly influenced by family traditions and culture, others by local, national or global iterations.

The term 'building', in the context of parents' lullaby singing, is intended to evoke the formative aspects of this regularly repeated act as it becomes a ritual that shapes the evening in a predictable fashion. These formative aspects encompass what the act might provide in terms of teaching the child about social and cultural skills and behaviours, cultural belonging and social identity. As touched upon elsewhere, some parents emphasise the didactic and educational aspect of lullaby singing more strongly than others, and they stress its pedagogical benefits; others emphasise the importance of social and cultural competences and skills. Still others focus on the importance of creating good routines and pay special attention to the regularity of their singing. Very often there is a mixture of different intentions and objectives that colour parents' experiences of the ritual of bedtime singing.

8.1 Ritual

Parents use the notion of ritual to point to the structural and conventional aspects of lullaby singing in the context of their interest in creating a fixed and predictable musical frame of familiar songs at bedtime that meets the children's expectations, preferences and needs. The ritual aspect also seems to capture the strong parental commitment to the lullaby act. Related notions include ceremony, setting, routine and even 'séance' (in a very neutral sense).

— *You used the term 'ritual'. Do you consider singing lullabies for your child to be a ritual?*

— *When I talk to you or others, I could call it a ritual. It has a ritualistic character, a fixed form, a start and an ending. It is repetitive. It is something that upholds the same structure day in and day out. It starts with brushing the teeth, the pyjamas on, and then we talk and read a little, and it ends with the singing and then good night. Lights off and close the door.*

— *You said something about a single song that you return to over and over again.*

— *'Sov du vesle spire ung'. It is a song that is best suited in the wintertime, don't you think? 'Sleep you small seedling, still it is winter. Still birch and heather, roses and hyacinths are sleeping'. But I need to sing this winter song regardless of the season, summer as well as wintertime. I have tried to change the lyrics, but it is not satisfactory, because the text itself is so complete. We also sing other songs, and it is nice with a set of songs. When you talk about ritual, I think it is about the fact that we sing the same song over and over again. You never read the same story, so this is special and has to do with the ritual character. It is repeated. (Father no. 6)*

It is hardly an accident that parents start singing for their children and create a personal, bodily and relational aesthetic frame of going to bed for their children. During the lullaby act, in contrast to large, exciting, striking ceremonies and events, the parents seek to find elements, which are as normal, natural and calming as possible. They do not exaggerate or embellish their voices as in some traditional community rituals, at least not consciously. They rather stay as authentic, natural and tuned in to the tired child as possible. To put it simply, parents often start singing because their children like music and because they see that singing make them calm down.

Nonetheless, the important aspects, from my point of view, is the unfolding-process of the ritual, and why parents start singing on a regular basis, creating a ritual that

is precious to both the parent and the child. Parents describe how a singing ritual arises, and what its particular characteristics are:

8.1.1 Ritual unfolding

I have been singing the same song for five years now. She always wants me to sing that particular song, over and over again. This happened by itself (Lullaby diary august 2012).

— *I remember it very well, from the beginning, when she was very little. She got very quickly fixed sleeping-routines. I used singing very consciously, we did the same thing every evening for three weeks and it worked out very well. The ritual was then established. I also remember my mother singing to me when I was small. It was so calming, and now I used the same procedure, and she also wants it to be the same, it is a kind of safety related to it. It is not unhealthy. (Mother no.1)*

The unfolding of a ritual is a complex state of affairs. Some parents, like the mother in the first example, highlight it's coming into being as rather naturally and 'by itself'. While others, like the mother in the second example, create a ritual due to the need of and conscious choice for creating good routines, based upon family tradition, positive memories from her own childhood and her own considerations of her daughter's need for safety. Sometimes it is an exchange between what the parent comes up with of songs and how the child responds to this. It starts by a spontaneous musical gesture from the parent and little by little her child expresses clearly his or her preferences, which very often include repetition of some favourite songs.

The first quote reports the child's attraction to one particular song as being a strong motivation force. Other parents build a ritual for the same purposes, but they emphasize certain aspects over other:

— *We started to sing for her when she got a little older, not when she was a baby. I felt that it could be nice, that she would appreciate it. I observed that she very much enjoyed music. And I felt that now she was big enough to understand and appreciate it. I didn't want to make too much fuzz during bedtime; I just wanted her to fall asleep. It has always been very easy to put her to bed. (Father no. 9)*

— *When he didn't fall asleep any longer while I was breastfeeding him, I started to sing. It was not so easy to just put him to bed without doing anything.* (Mother no. 7)

The practicality of the act is paired with the pleasant aspect, and simultaneously they come to the forefront:

— *I do it in order to share a nice time together, but one of the reasons why I always sing the same row of songs, is due to the fact that I am not good at multitasking. And if I have to, I can sing these songs and think about something else. That happens very seldom though; only if I am very busy.* (Father no. 3)

As the father reports, the ritual's highly repetitive character also comes out of his own 'shortcomings'. Other parents create a singing ritual because they consider it gives an important foundation in life and the continuity of the act becomes a manifestation of a parent who is always there for his or her child. This is also related to parental responsibility, consistency and commitment:

— *I have sung a lot for my children, but in the course of time, it became a fixed collection of songs from one melody to the next, and my son became completely 'stuck'. He didn't want anything else to be sung, except from this collection. All other songs were childish. I think this fixed way of singing emerged by itself, but there were, of course, some preferences—at least some songs that he did not want to integrate in the series.* (Mother no. 2)

— *I must sing every day for my children. It is very natural and it is part of the bedtime ritual, which is very important in our family. We have very fixed routines* (Mother no. 1).

The notion of ritual links the lullaby singing to something important, special and natural. Some parents, as previously described, state that singing lullabies is a special thing to do and never feels like a routine:

— *The moment of singing is very special to me and, I believe, for him too.* (Mother no. 7)

— *It is a special moment for us.* (Mother no. 5)

Sometimes singing feels more like a ritual than other times, in the end. The difference between routine and ritual involves attitude, level of engagement, sense of duty versus play, sense of belonging, internal and external motivations, and a focus on completion of a task rather than its performance in the moment. When some of

the parents describe the ritual as a ‘sacred’ and ‘valuable’ moment, their singing is considered to be more than just a routine. Yet many parents seldom draw any clear distinction between ritual and routine, both of which are directed, in their minds, towards sleep.

8.1.2 ‘A handrail down into sleep’

Some parents emphasise the *transitional* value of their singing, and particularly the way in which children are *guided* to sleep by their parents’ singing:

— *It is the end of the day and time to be guided into sleep. It is a ritual of transition. I think he enters the unconscious, sleep and the world of dreams.*
(Mother no. 3)

— *It is a ritual of transition between day and night.* (Father no. 5)

Parents describe the lullaby moment as an in-between state when the child ultimately turn inwards, away from wakefulness, and is left alone to sleep. In general, a child needs to feel safe and secure to be able to calm down and surrender to sleep, and the ritualised nature of the act seems to deepen its transitional and calming impact in this regard:

— *I think the ritual is so great for the children. They get help in entering the state of sleep—like a handrail they can hold. Singing was the way we made them fall asleep.* (Father no. 4)

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a handrail is designed to be grasped by the hand so as to provide stability or support; likewise, most of the parents think of lullaby singing as a support structure that creates stability and predictability for both the parent and the child. Of course, this father relates the ritual to movement as well—to escorting the child to ‘the state of sleep’. This adds a sense of intentionality to the act.

When parents start singing, they signal to the child that it is time to go to sleep, which can produce an increase in energy, as if the child knows this transition is coming and wants to expend the last bit of energy he or she has. This represents a centring around the threshold of sleep, to which the child must eventually surrender. Many parents experience the way children appear to be energetic at bedtime, even though they are in fact very tired. Singing becomes transitional ritual toward deliverance from this state.

This transitional aspect or ‘rite de passage’⁴¹ also reflects a type of mediation between the self and the other that belongs to an intersubjective time and space that is between parent and child, wakefulness and sleep, reality and dream. The transition is of an immediate and temporal character, situated within the intimate parent-child daily life world, in which this intimate mode demonstrates the paradox of simultaneously being together and being alone in one’s own body.

Many parents report that they have difficulties with putting their children to bed and making them fall asleep, and this may be related to the particular nature of this transitional moment between awake and sleep, and being together and alone. A fixed, daily ritual arises out of the child’s appreciation of repetition and familiarity as already mentioned. Parents note that it is very important to the child that they sing the same series of lullabies every evening. The child is the overseer, in this case, and loves familiar songs. Beside, in order to create stability, safety and predictability, many parents sing the same series of songs and thereby create a fixed, larger structure of songs that is based upon mutual enjoyment and expectancy.

8.1.3 Fixed series of songs

This continuous aspect of the ritual also takes a special extended shape and structure through a fixed series of songs without pauses in between the songs:

— *We sing a fixed round of eight songs every night.* (Father no. 3)

— *These songs resonate very well together. It feels very natural to start with ‘Det var en deilig, deilig dag’ [It is a lovely, lovely day]. It feels good to pronounce and articulate these words. Then he breathes more deeply and he relaxes, and we descend into the calmness and into the song in minor ‘Vinden blir synna’. I think this downward feeling has to do with this minor key.* (Mother no. 2)

— *I always sing a series of four songs. This is obligatory.* (Mother no. 10)

41 The notion ‘rites de passage’ or transitional rituals originates from the Belgian anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep, who observed structural similarities between rituals from different cultures (Van Gennep 1908/1977). He refers to this stage as a liminal stage, which in Latin signifies ‘threshold’ (Van Gennep in Ruud 1993, p. 141). It is often characterized by a sense of insecurity and ambiguity. The anthropologist Victor Turner deepens our understanding of this in-between stage by characterizing this ‘threshold-situation’ as being ‘betwixt and between’ (Turner 1974, p. 232). Moreover, Ruud describes liminal states as touched by insecurity, confusion and dissolution (Ruud 1993).

— *I sing the same series of eight songs, day out and day in. (Father no. 3)*

Parents are sometimes surprised by how rapidly the ritual comes about, and by their children's insistence on the same song, over and over again:

— *What is awful is that for the first ten times, it was rather fun. I changed and varied the singing and songs, but suddenly it was locked in. I had to sing and tell the stories in exactly the same manner. If I skipped the chickens, I had to start all over again. The ritual was settled. I remember the same when I was a child. If my mother skipped a sentence, I became wide awake again and said: Hey! Hey! You cannot cheat. (Father no. 4)*

Parents are sometimes able to change the series over time, but some must stay with the same old songs for years. They observe that sometimes their children seem to experience the series of songs as one song, rendering it even more inviolable.

Parents generally sing at least two or three songs, but some sing up to twenty. They sing traditional lullabies, nursery rhymes, folksongs and psalms, songs they have heard on television and on radio programs for children, and songs their children have learned in school. Every child seems to have a favourite song, and sometimes this song is sufficient by itself.

There is a strong parental commitment related to this lullaby act that is based upon a mutual agreement that goes beyond the parent's simple adaptation to the child's needs. At first, of course, the choice of songs is made by the parents, but gradually the child develops strong opinions about which song(s) to sing and how to sing it. This ritualised singing process is a mutual creation that develops over time. It is also strongly related to the parent's awareness of the importance of good routines and regularity in the child's life.

8.1.4 Regularity and bedtime rhythm

The child's appreciation of repetition, familiarity and regularity work well together with the parents' clear intentions of creating fixed routines:

— *His mother and I think it is very important to give him a fixed bedtime rhythm, so he will be able to notice the difference between day and night. For that reason, we only sing at bedtime. We both sing the same song.*

— *You sing together?*

— *Yes, we stand close to his bed. We turn off the light and start singing the song. This is a fixed pattern, so to speak.*

— *You always use the same song?*

— *Yes, I used the same song in the beginning, but my wife sings some Christian songs, and now we sing three songs that we repeat every night. (Father no. 5)*

— *When she was very small, we had a repertoire of several songs.*

— *But now you sing just a few songs?*

— *Yes, she is a creature of habit. She loves fixed frames, and I have to sing the song 'Sov du vesle spire ung' [Sleep, you little young sprig], which is actually a winter song, all year long. (Father no. 6)*

All of the parents interviewed either sing or have sung regularly for their children. They feel a responsibility to continue to do so, but they are very often surprised by their children's clear preference for repetition. While lullaby singing starts from a spontaneous and self-determined parental act or an immediate caring and affective response or reaction to the child's expressive behaviour, it soon becomes a ritual that has its own life.

Parents continue to sing for their children even long after they have tired of the ritual, because they do not want to disappoint them, or they derive satisfaction from continuing to fulfil the musical and cultural potential of the act:

— *The singing is obligatory. That's something both my daughter and I wish to do together. But what kind of form or function it takes is another story. It can vary. She is much calmer when her mother is singing to her. I don't think she plays around with her mother the way she does with me. This is, of course, due to my playful behaviour as well—I am a very playful person—and for her, I believe, it is not so easy to tell when I am playful and when I am serious, even though I sing every evening, and the singing ought to have the same function. (Father no. 6)*

Some parents seem to have a rather flexible way of relating, while others are very 'fixed' and 'settled'. This seems to depend upon the parents' different intentions, which result in different approaches to the present moment and to their children.

— *At bedtime, I am rather strict. (Mother no. 3)*

— *It takes the time it takes. (Mother no. 8)*

However, the majority of parents seem to focus on the convivial aspects of the ritual:

8.1.5 Parents' emphasis on conviviality and the particular bedtime setting

— *It is the setting that makes it. I just want to do something nice together with them before they go to sleep.* (Father no. 1)

— *I sing on a regular basis because I see that my children appreciate it, and it is nice for me too.* (Father no. 10)

Once the lullaby ritual is established, parents feel committed to it, in part because they also know that their children now 'require' it. While the parents are generally steadfast in their devotion to the mutual and tacit agreement of singing, the degree of their expressivity and devotion to it can vary according to their daily mood and level of energy. Yet it remains both sought after and useful:

— *They want my singing. They ask for it, and I keep on going every evening.* (Mother no. 10)

— *I also sing because it creates a fixed frame for the evening.* (Mother no. 1)

The robustness of the act is linked not only to the child's immaturity and needs for safety, but also to its ritual character and implications for the parent-child relationship. This singing can continue for many, many years, sometimes up to adolescence, long past the point where parents pay much attention to its functionality.

However, parents and their children do not always orient themselves the same way:

If I forget to sing my daughter's favourite song, she cries out (when she is still wide awake) or whispers (when she has almost fallen asleep) the name of the song, and I have to sing it. (Lullaby diary, Jan. 2011)

— *There are no shortcuts. I need to do the same things every night.* (Father no. 4)

These ritual constraints can be linked to temporal aspects that are not rational or consciously reflected upon. Children do not want their lullabies or cradle songs to be performed during the daytime or before they are tired or prepared to go to sleep. For them (and for their parents), the ritual is strongly associated with sleep and the time and timing are crucial. It is also a matter of identity and personal 'ownership' to the songs:

8.2 Identity

8.2.1 Musical ownership and internalisation

The contact established by the music and its ritualized character is also evident in the child's feeling of 'ownership' of the songs.

— I have created my own lullaby, based upon an Italian Partisan song but with my own lyrics, and I have turned it into a lullaby. The melody is beautiful and I have integrated the names of my children into it, so it is a very personal and private song. This song has a particular place in my children's heart. They own it and I have to sing it over and over again. My daughter says that it is her song and I am not allowed to sing it to anybody else. My second daughter says the same things when I sing it to her. (Father no. 1)

The two daughters have both developed a strong relationship and 'ownership' of the same song. The father needs to hide the fact that he sings the same song twice a day. Each girl insists that the song belongs to her and acknowledges her father's creative 'invention'. Sometimes the lullaby is so strongly integrated into the child's lives and mode of being that the child does not view it 'from outside' as another parent puts it. Early on, then, songs are integrated and internalised almost as part of the children themselves:

— If I sing 'Trollmors vuggevisé', my son thinks it is so childish. And I wonder why this other one, 'By, By barnet', isn't childish to him. It is just because it has been part of a fixed ritual for years, from the time when he was an infant. He doesn't evaluate it critically. It is part of him. It is internalised. But when it comes to other songs, he considers them from an external perspective and is much more critical. Some songs are very childish, my son says, so he doesn't want me to sing them. Others are, to me, made for infants and babies, but I have always sung them, so he doesn't evaluate them this way—view them from outside—they are part of him. They are so integrated. The songs are part of a fixed pattern of being together, and he doesn't look at them from outside. They are in him. Other songs are different. They are looked at from outside and can be of interest too, or they are just childish. (Mother no. 2)

For children, the singing seems to become internalised, which makes it even more powerful, partly due the physical and psychological expectancy that the act creates over the course of time.

8.2.2 Mother tongue, personal identity and cultural heritage

The lullaby act is closely linked to the parent's mother tongue. The parents in this study mostly choose to sing songs that belong to the Norwegian song repertoire, because this acquaints their children with the particular sounds of their own language and introduces a sense of cultural and national belonging.

— *I believe that he wants this song so much, because it starts with 'Mamma mi' [My mommy]. This was the first word he said to me, and everytime I sang this song, and the words 'Mamma mi' appeared, I could see that he appreciated it.*
(Mother no. 3)

One parent started to sing an English pop song to his son, because this was the only song he happened to know by heart at that time, but he soon replaced it with traditional Norwegian ones. It felt more natural, and his son also seemed to appreciate them more:

— *Initially, I sang a Beatles song, but I soon understood that he was not very fond of this song. He did not understand what I was singing. I then bought a songbook and started to sing and play the more traditional Norwegian songs. It felt very intimate.* (Father no. 2)

Of course, when a close family members comes from another country, the repertoire of songs is often supplemented as previously mentioned:

— *My father is Italian, and I was born in Italy but moved to Norway at the age of 2. I often sing an Italian Partisan song for my children at bedtime. I want them to know where they come from and my origins.* (Father no. 1)

— *My mother is Swedish, and I always sing the Swedish song 'Tryggare kan ingen vara' [Safer than this can no one be] at bedtime. It is very natural for me to sing this song. I am used to it, and so are my children.* (Mother no. 10)

— *My grandmother is from Scotland, and I often sing a Scottish song for my daughter at bedtime. It is part of my repertoire. My grandmother sang it to me when I was a child, and now I sing it to my child too.* (Father no. 6)

— *I sing some Icelandic songs to them, because their father is from Iceland, and they were naturally integrated into my repertoire as well.* (Mother no. 3)

These examples illuminate the strong connection between the parents' cultural background and identity and choice of songs. Picking up on their own influences and intentionality, the parents stress the value of a familiar lullaby, an intimate and familiar mode of singing and the connection between singing and parental and cultural identity:

— *There is a cultural transmission taking place, and I want to give them what meant a lot to me when I was a child, based upon my own good childhood memories.* (Mother no. 8)

— *I try to sing like my mother. She has been a very powerful role model for me. If I can sing as softly and warmly as she did, I feel that I have succeeded.* (Mother no. 10)

— *I want to share our rich cultural heritage with my children. It is part of my parental duty. I had the ambition to sing at least two hundred songs for them. There are so many beautiful songs out there, and they don't seem to learn them in school any more. I have a friend whose children can sing many songs by heart. It is really a treasure.* (Father no. 8)

Parents appreciate the rich cultural and collective material that is evident in many of the songs that they sing. The lullaby ritual activates their participation in the shared practices and patterns of their culture. Lullaby singing is an intrinsic part of those areas of parent's active lives that are instinctively intelligible rather than consciously managed. Nature, nurture and culture are combined in this act:

— *I think I got this deep dimension of life from my own parents, not only related to the songs that they sang but from their storytelling and adventures, moods, the amount of time spent walking in nature.* (Mother no. 2)

Singing is part of parents' cultural background and upbringing, which explains its continuity. However, building a ritual and identity are also connected with personal convictions and beliefs:

8.2.3 Personal inner convictions and signatures and collective Christian beliefs

As already indicated, some of the parents value lullabies for their spiritual and religious content and want to transmit it to their children. Their singing is built upon the belief that this content is both enriching and comforting:

— *I want to share with my children a belief and message that there is something out there. It is about my belief—not that I know for sure. These songs are a very gentle means of transmitting this belief. I think it is a non-intrusive way of sharing with them my own personal faith. I am not religious in the strict sense, as I am very seldom in church, but I feel awe and wonder when I enter one.*

— *So your singing also has a spiritual dimension?*

— *Yes, I try to share with my children a sort of gratitude towards life and a belief that there is something out there. It gave me a sense of safety when I was a child. In this sense, my singing has a spiritual side. My husband only believes in the ‘Big Bang’ and the universe, and he doesn’t believe in God. Introducing the spiritual side of life is my little ‘mission’, so to speak, but I don’t share this with him. It is between my children and me. (Mother no. 10)*

Another parent also touches upon the spiritual dimension of her singing:

— *Spirituality for me has to do with being true to oneself and others. I want to share this dimension with my children, and my choice of songs illuminates this point. (Mother no. 2)*

One particular song that many parents sing to their children reflects traditional Christian religious beliefs about being grateful and praying for protection. In general, the parents consider this song to be relatively innocent and not too religiously ‘loaded’:

*Kjære Gud, jeg har det godt
Takk for alt som jeg har fått
Du er god, du holder av meg
Kjære Gud, gå aldri fra meg⁴²
Pass på liten, og på stor
Gud bevare far og mor*

*Dear God, I am fine,
Thank you for all the good you provide
You are good and take care of me
Dear God, don’t ever leave me
Take care of small and big
God take care of mother and father*

42 A new psalm book (October 2013) has neutralised this line even further as ‘Takk, at du går aldri fra meg’ [Thank you for never leaving me], but this version [came out too late to be incorporated into the present inquiry.

Nonetheless, from outside this song may appear to be quite religiously loaded, but many parents sing this song without thinking of its religious content. The song is part of a strong cultural tradition, a collective Christian belief and 'main stream' repertoire, and is not considered to be too religiously loaded for this reason. Other parents sing the song because it creates a sense of gratitude towards life in general.

Some parents report that they seek to avoid songs which have religious content and or a message that is too strong

— I like the song 'Den ville sauene' [The wild sheep] and sing it to my daughter, but I skip some of the verses, because I found out that the song actually is about the lost son in the Bible, and the lyrics became too heavy for me. I stick to the innocent animal world of the first verse of the song. (Father no. 5)

Parents sing songs that resonate with their own personal beliefs and taste. Interestingly, parents build their own unique and personal identity despite powerful conventional 'forces' surrounding this musical material.

— It is no secret that I prefer classical music, and I use small variations of Haydn and Mozart when I sing to my youngest son—instrumental variations with no text, just a simple melody. My mother also used a simple melody when she sang to me, a melody in a major key. I chose a melody in a major key as well. It has a lot of humour in it when I make small alterations to it. Nowadays, my wife and I sing to him a fixed series of three songs that belongs to the good old lullaby repertoire. It's part of our cultural belonging. (Father no. 5)

The father's strong relationship with and devotion to classical music influences his choices. Parents even shape the songs as they see fit, and try to create their own personal style:

— I was strongly influenced by my mother's singing. I tried to sing the way she did, softly and tenderly, but I also tried to make it my own style. I added small nuances that belonged to my particular world and that my children appreciated. (Mother no. 10)

Some parents make a highly personal selection of songs, so in this way they reflect a sort of personal cultivation and selection:

— Yes, I made a selection of songs. I picked out twelve songs that I found to be meaningful and deep. They did not belong to the traditional lullaby repertoire, like 'So ro' and other cute songs. I found songs that were deeper. (Mother no. 2)

— *I used a simple melody of Haydn, because I believe that the classical music repertoire is the most beautiful, beyond comparison.* (Father no. 5)

— *I use a mixture of creative storytelling and old traditional songs.* (Father no. 4)

When parents ornament their own personal stories through lullaby singing, their identity as mothers and fathers is strengthened and expanded. They create their own signature, and this is especially important for some of them:

— *The voice in the voice is all that matters.*

— *What do you mean by that?*

— *There needs to be a personal signature in it—if not, the meaning is lost on me. I pay particular attention to what I call the ‘voice in the voice’. The voice is in itself personal, but you need to go beyond the more obvious parts of it. There is much more that makes art or singing unique.*

— *Is this related to art in general?*

— *Yes, but also to the singing.*

— *It is of course the actual voice of the parent that matters. But I also believe that our collective cultural traditions and our rich repertoire of songs are very important for my kids. I know a family that sing hundreds of old songs by heart. It is so valuable.* (Father no. 8)

A signature contains both personal identity and will. The notion of identity has cultural and personal as well as parental aspects. Personal will is linked to the intentions underpinning the act of sharing specific cultural content, on the one hand, and managing its impact upon the child, on the other. I will elaborate further on this as part of my reflective remarks. Parents are aware of the benefits of singing in relation to their children’s creative, social and cultural capacities and learning processes, and I will now present a few examples of this:

8.3 Enculturation, learning and skills

Learning about the mother tongue and culture is not always the primary goal of singing to children, but as the parents observe, children are like ‘sponges’ and ‘like to learn new things’. The songs that parents choose tell stories about human desires, hopes, worries and vulnerabilities—often, sadness goes hand in hand with joy and laughter. Lullabies, in this sense, help to shape the child with regard to his or her

culture as well as innate intellectual and imaginative skills and abilities. With the support of parents' sensitive and tender singing, the child learns to be a social human being as the bedtime moment unfolds.

8.3.1 Encouraging and supporting the child's social and cultural learning process

In order to illuminate some of the parents pedagogical focus, style and emphasis, I will present a detailed description of a mother who uses singing cards at bedtime to emphasise the pedagogical benefits of singing:

00.00.04. The mother sits next to her daughter in bed. The mother decides that her daughter can pick out three song cards that they can sing from, but one is already decided upon. 00.00.06. The daughter picks out three more cards, and the mother agrees to four cards. The agreement seems to be very quickly settled, and the daughter decides which song is to be sung first. 00.00.11. In a dialogue-based interaction, the mother asks her daughter if she knows what the song is about. 00.00.14. The daughter knows the song already and says the title of the song. 00.00.16. The mother responds positively with a smile and says, 'You knew it', and they smile at each other.

00.00.18. Then the mother starts singing. She looks at the card while singing and looks at her daughter at the end of each phrase of the song. She holds the card in her hands. 00.00.27. The mother makes sure that the daughter is able to see the picture on the card. 00.00.34. Towards the end of each phrase of the song, the mother pauses so as to give the daughter a chance to fill in the words, but the daughter just listens. 00.00.37. She pauses again, but the daughter continues to listen. 00.00.44. When the mother has finished the song, she turns the card towards her daughter so she can see the picture on the card once more, before she starts on a new song. 00.00.47. Then the daughter is free to choose the second card. 00.00.50. The daughter picks a second card, and the mother responds, almost with an expression of surprise on her face, and asks what the daughter thinks the song is about. 00.01.00. She asks, 'Do you know it?' The daughter smiles and says some words, and the mother helps her with the right title: 'Itsy, bitsy spider'.

00.01.03. The mother starts singing. 00.01.09. The daughter joins in on the word 'spider'. They make movements to illustrate where the spider is walking. The

mother touches the daughter head, and the daughter touches the card, which the mother holds, and the daughter watches the image of a spider while singing. The mother makes movements upward in the air when the sun is coming up. 00.01.24. Then the daughter repeats the words, saying the phrase, 'The sun is shining on the hat'. 00.01.26. The mother stops singing and says, 'Yes, that's true'. 00.01.29. Then they finish the song together. 00.01.34. 'Good', the mother says. There is a small pause, and the girl looks very content and has a smile on her face. 00.01.38. The mother says, 'Which song will you choose now?' The daughter picks out the third card, and the mother says that she doesn't know what that song is about. 00.01.40. 'Do you?' she asks. The daughter says, 'The wheels on the bus'. 00.01.44. 'Oh, you think?' The mother says, surprised. 'So it is not about a church? No, you are right!'

00.01.50. Then the daughter says, 'Shall I sing it?' and takes the card from her mother's hand. The daughter sings the song. 00.02.13. 'You knew the whole song', the mother says. 00.02.15. 'But I don't know this one', the daughter says, picking the fourth card. 00.02.19. Then the mother takes the card and says that then this is going to be the song that you cannot sing. Then the mother looks at the card and says, 'Oh, I do believe that you can sing this too.'

00.02.22. The mother starts singing the fourth song, and after the first phrase, the daughter grabs the card and starts singing the song. Both of them are excited, and the daughter looks at the card and then at her mother. 00.02.28. The mother helps the daughter when she doesn't know the words. Then the mother is unsure of the lyrics herself and tries to look at the card, but the daughter insists on holding it and continues to sing the words she knows. They smile at each other and laugh together. Then they look at the card together. 00.03.05. The mother says that she doesn't know the song. 00.03.10. Then the daughter says that she can sing it and hold the card. They sing the chorus together. 00.03.33. The fourth and last song finishes, and the mother alters her voice and says, 'Good night, good night', and the daughter says, 'Good night'. 00.03.35. Then the mother says that now they are finished, and the singing moment is over. (Description of the home-recorded video, mother singing lullabies to her 4-year-old daughter)

This singing ritual is largely dialogue based and has a strong interactive style that centres upon taking turns. The mother is very pedagogical in her manner, but she is supportive as well. The distinction between play songs and lullabies is irrelevant. They laugh together, and the singing is performed in an animated and joyful manner.

The mother appears to believe that it is important to let her daughter run the show if she wants to, and she encourages her to sing along as much as she can. She gives her daughter a sense of mastery and control through phrases such as the following:

- *You knew it!*
- *I do believe that you can sing this too!*
- *You are right!*

The mother tries to stay in the background when the daughter sings by herself, even feigning ignorance:

- *I don't know this song.*

She also prompts her daughter with questions that she knows she will readily answer:

- *Do you know this song?*
- *Oh, you think?*

The mother encourages dialogue and responds very quickly to her daughter's impulses.

- *Which song do you want to sing now?*

During the stimulated recall, the mother reports that she uses pauses very consciously in order to give her daughter room to respond:

- *I use pauses very consciously, because I know it is very important to her to show me that she can sing on her own, and she really enjoys it when she can tell me the next word. (Mother no. 2)*

Together with other parents in this inquiry, this mother is aware of the instructional aspects of singing, emphasising the opportunity to learn about and play with (and pronounce new words in) the language and culture. At the same time, however, this ritual is quite short, at a little under four minutes long. By contrast, other parents seem to avoid the pedagogical or educational aspects of their upbringing at bedtime.

- *At bedtime, I do not have any focus on teaching or learning new things. (Mother no. 6)*

Moreover, the singing cards used by mother no. 2 also supply clear boundaries for the evening and create predictability regarding when the singing moment will end. The daughter therefore learns about boundaries as well, and the mother's encouragement through singing gives the child a sense of mastering her own language as well as the songs she sings.

8.3.2 Facilitating the child's language acquisition

The connection between singing and language acquisition is touched upon by several other parents as well, as we will see below.

— *I sometimes stop singing in the middle of the song just to listen to whether they sing the words correctly. I hear them sing along, and I am surprised at how easily they learn new songs and how they can pronounce rather difficult words when singing.* (Mother no. 10)

— *I take long pauses so she can fill in the words of the songs when I sing.* (Mother no. 1)

— *She loves music and songs, and she even sings better than she can talk. Yes, I believe that she started singing before she could talk. It is amazing how easily words come to her while singing.* (Father no. 9)

Parents point out that children learn new words very easily through singing, and that the parents' singing facilitates the children's language acquisition. Parents look upon lyrics as a powerful language-teaching tool and try to use the singing process effectively, through pauses, for example.

In general, though, parents encourage learning through singing to different degrees. This process also depends upon the child's developmental phase and personal preferences:

— *There was a period when I had to sing new songs all the time—this one and this one. She loved learning new songs, and this led to singing the whole songbook.* (Mother no. 1)

While the connection between lyrics and emotion seems to be especially salient when singing, parents' expressive capacities also seem to vary a lot. Sometimes reading also starts to replace singing, or at least anticipate it—singing is associated with the last phase of the bedtime ritual (that is, falling sleep), whereas reading is seen to stimulate the imagination more:

Tonight, when we were lying in the bed, my daughter wanted me to read several chapters in her book, and then she wanted me to make up stories. I asked her if I should start singing our regular lullaby, but she didn't want to. 'No', she said, 'I don't want to go to sleep. I want you to tell me another story.' (Lullaby diary, Jan. 2013)

Compared to reading a different book every night, singing the same lullaby over and over again has a more limited effect on the development of the language repertoire. However, if the child learns to sing the lullaby perfectly, word for word, there follows a feeling of mastery; in addition, the parent's singing contributes invaluable to the child's emotional repertoire.

Lullabies sometimes also contain words which are not used in an ordinary conversation, and this may contribute to an enrichment of the child's vocabulary, particularly in relation to a given country's dialects (or, in Norway, the second common language of Nynorsk):

*Den fyrste song eg høyra fekk
Var mor sin song ved vogga
dei mjuke ord til hjarta gjekk
Dei kunne gråten stogga*

*The first song I heard
was mother's song by the cradle.
The soft words entered my heart.
They put an end to my crying.*

Some parents, indeed, focus on the human, positive potential of their singing in particular, as we will see next.

8.3.3 Teaching the children to express themselves in a free, emphatic, intimate and honest fashion

Parents talk about the importance of learning to be at once unfettered and honest, and singing seems to support this mode of expression:

— I feel it is so important to be honest when singing. It needs to be honest, for me—what I express towards my children. I do not say 'I love you' all the time like Americans do, so if I don't feel it, I cannot sing either. (Mother no. 5)

— You need to release and liberate yourself, even if you sing very badly. That is what it is all about, and it is fun. And I want them to be free as well. To sing is to set your soul free. I want my children to learn to express themselves, and music and singing gives this feeling of freedom—you let your soul and personality free and express them. (Father no. 10)

From my point of view, singing lullabies in relation to aspects of learning has first and foremost to do with learning about tenderness, intimacy and an inner calm. I am trying to transfer my own human wisdom to my child, so to speak. I am growing into being a mother day by day, and the singing is part of this process. (Lullaby diary, June 2011)

Testimony regarding the positive empathic influence of the act came from my own daughter:

We went to a birthday party, and one of the boys got hurt and was standing against the wall, crying. My daughter went up close to him and started to sing her favourite lullaby. Afterwards she told me that it was a good thing to do, because the song soothes, she said. (Lullaby diary, May 2012)

Through my singing, my daughter seems to have learned the language (and delivery) of intimacy, meaning that she can talk as well as sing in a soft and tender voice. In kindergarten, children often must talk very loudly in order to be heard, and bedtime singing provides a welcome contrast to this commotion.

Bedtime singing can also enlarge the parents' expressive and performative repertoire:

I can hear that my own voice changes when singing at bedtime, compared to my talking voice. It is not just a matter of longer vocal sounds and phrasing. It has to do with this particular setting, which makes me more tender and sensitive, and the lullabies I have chosen are so innocent and cute that it is almost impossible to sing them in a rude or tough manner. One day I paid attention to my own voice just before I started singing. I said, 'Now you need to go to bed, because it is so late!' My voice was loud and dark. When my daughter finally went to bed, and I started singing, a new, brighter and softer dimension came to life. This makes me think that this tender and soft way of singing to my daughter also influences her way of relating and expressing herself elsewhere in life. (Lullaby diary, March 2012)

Learning to be free, intimate and honest is also linked to parents' confidence about the performing and musical aspects of lullaby singing, and especially their acceptance of imperfection in that regard:

— My singing is far from perfect. I don't have a beautiful voice. Nevertheless, I sing for my children. (Mother no. 3)

— *I am thinking of what I was taking for granted—that’s what singing and musicality is about, to connect and just be in it, without being afraid or put off. Just catch the music and participate in it. The easier this is for a person, the more musical this person is.* (Mother no. 2)

As already mentioned, parents don’t seem to evaluate their singing in aesthetic terms, applauding it instead as the transmission of *imperfection*—a highly organic and human act which allows both the parent and the child to express themselves freely and openly. Parents sing, in other words, even though they are out of tune and use the wrong lyrics. That said, a few of them at least acknowledge the concrete musical dimensions of their singing and their intention to share their love of music, hopefully ‘building up’ the child’s appreciation of the art form.

8.3.4 Encouraging children’s appreciation of singing and music

Some of the parents seem to pay especially attention to the musical building potential of their singing:

— *I want my son to love music the way I did, and I want to share with him the joy that I feel when listening to it, and hopefully he will enjoy music too. Music will be an integral part of him, because it has been in his life from the very beginning.* (Father no. 5)

— *I try to sing relatively in tune. If I start too high and the voice cannot bear it, I restart in a lower voice. You sing better when you stand than when you are lying down, so I normally sit when I sing.* (Father no. 1)

Parents often include pitch and intonation when they talk about the act from an aesthetic and musical angle. This concept of musicality is naturally somewhat narrower than that of Malloch and Trevarthen, who include the energy and interests of life in their own notion (see Malloch and Trevarthen 2009). Parents frame musicality in terms of their own ability to sing in tune, and whether the child also learns to sing in tune.

Parents agree upon the fact that it is more important to sing to their children in the first place than it is to sing well. Rather than using the lullaby as a music lesson, they use it as a ‘human lesson,’ relying upon its calming, supportive influence much more than its musical content. As mentioned, parents are always aware of their children’s need for their presence and support in order to be able to relax and fall asleep, and that is behaviour that they try hard to model for them.

8.3.5 Building the skill of relaxation

Some parents are very conscious about creating a calm and free space, within which there is no more stimulation. They seek to provide an oasis where non-doing is just as important as doing:

— *Poor children! They are not supposed to learn anything new when they are in bed and about to fall asleep. The bedtime moment is not a moment of stimulation and activity. They are supposed to calm down and relax at that time of the day.*

— *You are a teacher, and I thought that you probably had other intentions when singing. So you don't think about the learning potential of singing?*

— *Not at all! There is, of course, a conscious and unconscious transmission of my own values and memories from my childhood when I sing to them—a sort of cultural transmission, because I want to show them what meant a lot to me when I was a child—but I don't want this moment to be turned into a moment of teaching and learning. Quit the opposite. It is a time for relaxation and peace. No more stimulation.*

— *Your father was also a teacher. Didn't he influence you?*

— *No way. He was not a teacher at home. My mother sang to me, and my grandmother. I learned some Christian songs. She passed along the song 'Kjære Gud jeg har det godt' [Dear God, I am feeling good]. But this has nothing to do with teaching or learning anything in particular. Of course, my children learn the songs by heart when they are repeated everyday, but the content of the songs is not very important to me. Rather the opposite. These old songs often have a melancholy, scary or sad character, and from my point of view there is not much life wisdom in them. I don't want my children to feel sad. This should be a nice time to be together. I don't want to prepare them for 'real life events' at this time of the day. More than soon enough, they learn about the hard facts of life. (Mother no. 6)*

This mother emphasises the conscious (relaxation) and relatively unconscious (cultural transmission) benefits of singing to her children. She does not want her singing to have any pedagogical function; like the other parents, she favours the calming impact of singing instead.

— *Through my calm singing, they learn to calm down themselves. This is very important. My calm singing is 'contagious'. I can see that my son turns inwards when I am singing, and that he prepares himself to fall asleep, due to my deep*

breathing and singing, and I should not forget my massage, which contributes to muscle relaxation as well. (Mother no. 2)

— *My singing is a tool that makes him calm down and relax. (Mother no. 9)*

— *It's important that it is melodic and calming—a calm séance. (Father no. 1)*

— *At bedtime, there is no more doing. It is a good time to be with your children. You just need to take the time to listen. The singing was the only way we managed to calm our children down. (Father no. 4)*

Parents report that, in their everyday lives, there are often stresses and strains, and they want to put all of this behind them when putting their children to bed. The singing helps in this respect, allowing the parents to focus on the children and the children to focus on falling asleep.

Many parents report difficulties with putting their children to bed. Through the everyday ritual of singing, the parents counter these difficulties by developing, for themselves and their children, the 'skill of relaxation':

— *We have never been able to have this very calm, 'descending' time into sleep at bedtime. The whole family seems to wake up at night. The singing is the only way to calm us down. (Father no. 4)*

— *She is so active, and she jumps up and down on the bed. She really needs something in order to calm down. (Father no. 9)*

It is as though she wakes up at bedtime. She can be a bit tired after dinner, but when the evening comes, she has a lot of energy. It is difficult for me to put her to bed. (Lullaby diary, Sept. 2012)

Ironically, it becomes apparent from some parents' statements that even this therapeutic application of singing has a pedagogical aspect to it, because children who sleep well also function well:

— *The most important thing, from my point of view, is how the child manages to grow up and become independent. (Mother no. 1)*

— *With my daughter, I had to sing in order to calm her down. I had to create fixed routines. With my son, it was different. I had to teach him how to connect*

physically to others. He was so introverted. I used my singing very consciously in this respect. (Mother no. 2)

Through singing, parents express, and therefore share, their calm state, helping their children to regulate their own emotions and energies.

My singing is mostly connected to an inner state of calmness, but sometimes I also use the singing in order to comfort my daughter when she is crying. Then my singing is more empathically related. (Lullaby diary, May 2011)

— I centre myself and find a calm spot within. I believe that is what I am doing. And then my son calms down too. My singing is contagious. (Mother no. 2)

— I grasp the pulse of the child—that is what I am doing. (Father no. 4)

Most of the parents seem to be aware of the importance of being a role model in this respect:

— If I am not able to calm down and be present, how is the child supposed to be able to it? (Mother no. 2)

— I am their role model. I need to teach them how to become a human. (Father no. 5)

— I can see that if I am a little stressed, the child becomes stressed too. (Mother no. 4)

The balancing between parental role modeling and their adaptation to the child's world, and the connection between the lullaby's positive building potential and parents' choices of particular songs are also illuminated:

8.3.6 The 'poetic quality' of some songs and the 'childish' character of others

Some parents want to share the artistic aspects of certain lullabies:

— The lyrics of 'Sov du vesle spire ung' are perfect. It has a very poetic quality. (Father no. 6)

Others do not reflect much upon their singing and choices of songs:

— *My singing is very unconscious, and the way I sing is too. To be honest, I haven't thought about my singing this way before, but I hope that they feel my love towards them.* (Mother no. 10)

Of course, what parents think about the quality of a song is not always congruent with what the child thinks:

— *I get irritated when I see that my daughter does not appreciate our cultural heritage or listen to my singing—when she is just playing around and I am sitting there, singing this beautiful and poetic song, and she doesn't seem to care.* (Father no. 6)

Other parents laugh about the fact that they might want to sing the beautiful old folk-song 'Min fyrste song' [My first song] but their children favour 'Hjulene på bussen' [The wheels on the bus]. This might be due to the fact that children learn songs in school and stick to them at home, even as they grow older, whatever their apparent lack of gravity or cultural specificity. School affects parents' choices of songs too, because they want to be receptive to the child's life experience:

— *Now he wants to listen to 'Bæ, bæ lille lam', because that is what they sing in kindergarten.* (Mother no. 1)

While 'The wheels on the bus' is not a particularly poetic song, it has a functional value in terms of introducing continuity between school and home.

Lullabies fulfil an important cultural function as part of the child's 'building'—that is, his or her personal as well as cultural maturation. They are linked to self-identity (that is, self-expression, personal judgments, preferences and ways of behaving) and social identity (that is, social and collective perspectives and values). They also help the child to develop the ability to distinguish between imagination and reality. In this regard, lullabies (and the cultures that produce them) offer a range of realistic as well as magical stories that touch upon universal psychological themes of life, joy, misery and death, as well as local cultural particularities. These rich stories widen the world for the child.

8.3.7 Stimulating the creation of inner images and a space in between reality and dream

The powerful messages of lullabies can trigger the imagination and a whole range of feelings:

— *When I start thinking about the Icelandic song I have always sung to my children, it almost gives me chills down my spine. The song is rather scary, and it evokes a very strong image about somebody standing outside the house, watching. I can still see the child's face. What is he doing out there? It is like being in a dream, but it is not necessarily a good dream.* (Mother no. 2)

The lullaby singing creates a special space for making imaginative connections, and the musical associations that the songs enable evoke dreams. Parents and children also create nonsense words and sounds with which to modify existing songs using their imaginations:

— *We create stories together, and this relates to the children's everyday life as well as to their creative world and imagination. I can tell if something has happened during the day, because this becomes interwoven into their free-associative flow. The bedtime moment is very revelatory, and singing provides a moment to take the time to listen and play.* (Father no. 4)

I can see that when I sing, and my daughter turns more and more inwards, the words of the songs seem to be experienced in a different way. They are just sounds, and it doesn't matter what they signify. They almost become a sounding carpet. (Lullaby diary, Jan. 2012)

— *I sing the song over and over again, but my son doesn't know the words of the songs and cannot sing the song by heart. I believe that he listens to the sounds of my voice more than to the words, and he is in a transition state of wakefulness and dream.* (Mother no. 3)

Resuming my engagement with the interview with mother no. 6, we can see next that she touches upon the creation of inner images when singing. This was actually an unintended 'effect' of her own parents' singing; when she did not understand the lyrics, or when she only thought she did, she developed her own personal 'interpretations' and images in relation to the songs. They might have been pure nonsense or little stories that made sense to her. She believes that this takes place when she sings to her own children as well:

— *This is really funny, because when I hear the songs that I listened to when I was a child, I have often misunderstood the content and the words of the songs. They made no sense, actually. I believe it is the same thing that happens to my children. They listen to the same songs over and over again, but they often don't understand the song's message or plot. The words of the old lullabies may be*

very archaic and difficult for them to understand when they are very small, and they start to create their own stories and images that have nothing to do with the actual songs.

— *This is also touched upon by other parents. It is so funny, actually.*

— *Yes, it makes me laugh to think about it. I made up my own words and images connected to the songs that didn't have anything to do with the actual song—pure imagination and misinterpretation. It was part of my childhood world and it took me thirty years to realise that I had misunderstood the lyrics! (Mother no. 6)*

Other parents relate similar stories, sometimes reflecting a more conscious relationship with the inner images that the songs create. They use visualisation, and imagery plays an important part in their singing ritual:

— *I always visualise the songs, and I talk to my son about these images, and we create and elaborate on them together. These images are a large part of the singing. My son probably cannot tell me what the name of the song is, but he certainly knows the images that belong to it. (Mother no. 9)*

— *I create my own inner images while singing. (Mother no. 2)*

Some parents also connect this creative and communicative process to what has taken place during the day, or to the transition time between awake and asleep, an imaginative in-between state where dream and reality meet:

— *This is a time of free association. If you take your time to listen, you get to know how your child is getting along and what has happened during the day. (Father no. 4)*

She lies there half asleep, and I don't think she really listens to what I am singing. (Lullaby diary, Jan. 2011)

— *I have been singing the same song, 'Kvelden lister seg på tå', for years now, and one day my son asked me what the word *Åto* [and two] meant. He connected the words 'and' and 'two', and the phrase was 'And two read light shoes'. It really doesn't make any sense, and this is how he has understood the words for years. (Mother no. 3)*

Some parents do not seem to pay any special attention to the importance of these 'nonsense' words or 'misinterpretations', but they are an important part of a

personal-sounding, imaginative child world that the parents create together with their children at bedtime. The sounds are as important as the semantic content of the words.

8.4 Building ritual, identity and skill: reflective remarks

The development of a singing ritual, initiated by the parents and insisted upon by their children, seems to have one rather obvious and explicit instrumental function or deeper meaning. It does not overrule the others, but it is surely the most central: creating a calm atmosphere and fixed routine or ritual in order to induce relaxation and sleep. Repetitive, even monotonous singing seems to help children to calm down. It does other things as well, and parents single them out according to their own convictions and backgrounds or childhood experiences. Lullaby singing is looked upon as an important vehicle for cultivating socialisation, promoting companionship and allowing for intimate sharing. It is also a tool for the maintenance of cultural and family traditions. Over time, lullaby singing becomes an everyday, even mundane affair, and its performativity or import sometimes fades; parents grow less inspired, even, by the older child's presence than they were by the infant's, at least as regards the lullaby. Nevertheless, the ritualised character of the well-established act has clear practical benefits; through an often fixed series of songs, it supplies clear boundaries, expectations and structures for the evening. It can even be considered a situated learning process, through which the child engages with a particular culture, a collective mentality, local or family traditions, and human identity and depth.

The songs used are strongly connected with the parent-child relationship and may well be an intrinsic part of the parent's own childhood, for better or for worse. Yet oftentimes today's repertoire seems to be more adapted to the child's world than to the adult world.

The lullaby singing act reflects interpersonal diversity in the sense that parents and their children have highly diverse, if not conflicting preferences and personal interactional styles, but it also illuminates similarities or 'sameness' that satisfies the human need for oneness and cultural identity and belonging (see Brandt 2009, p. 34). The lyrics reflect a collective and cultural mentality to which the children are introduced.

I will now dig deeper into the act's uniqueness versus its conventionality.

8.4.1 Lullaby singing as a collective phenomenon versus its unique manifestations

According to Cross and Tolbert, music is generally granted an ambiguous status that falls somewhere between the natural and the conventional (2011, p. 25). There are certain characteristics and stereotypes of lullabies that seem to transcend national borders. Experts have defined characteristics of a lullaby as a slow and steady tempo, a simple rhythm, a regular and repetitive character with relatively few notes, comparatively mild melodic contour changes, and a higher median pitch (or tessitura) than other genres of songs (Unyk et al. 1992, Trehub et al. 1993). Parents' singing seems to respond specifically to these universal qualities, despite the powerfully personal and intimate 'ownership' of lullabies in relation to individual bedtime rituals.

Lullabies are therefore both a cultural, collective phenomenon and a personal, intuitive and unique art form. The concept of meaning in relation to this kind of singing encompasses the act's genuine spirit, the parents' and children's inner lives, their tacit knowledge,⁴³ and their senses of belonging, identity and level of embodied experience. The lullaby act resonates with the way the music therapist Ansdell describes music in general, as 'something intimately tied to human affect, as participatory and inherently social, determined by culture and context, as performed, improvised and lived as well as notated and reproduced, as personal, embodied and deeply human' (Ansdell 1997, p. 37). Some parents dismiss the act's potential for innovation and creativity in favour of its repetitiveness and conventionality. It is, above all else, part of a process of cultural and national identity building or part of their identities as parents or a family.

Idiosyncratic performances arise from both conscious and unconscious mistakes in the interpretation of songs, or the inability to remember them, or acts of creativity. Parents invent words or phrasings when they must, and they become the 'rule'. Sometimes these idiosyncrasies are intended to incorporate the individual child into the song, via a name, hair and eye colour, or gender-related adaptation.

Idiosyncrasy or uniqueness also derives from the distinctive voice of the parent, or what one parent calls the 'voice in the voice'—that is, one's underlying motives, emotion and energy. The 'voice in the voice' appears to encompass both the personal signature and some sort of collective societal or cultural imprint. It therefore correlates with Pavlicevic and Ansdell's 'multi-subjective' experience (2009, p. 369), resonating with or expressing individual parental identity while strengthening cultural bonds and family traditions. According to the educational theorist Etienne Wenger, learning is central to human identity, which we are constantly renegotiating over the course of

43 I borrow the concept of 'tacit knowledge' from Polanyi (1966).

our lives (1999/2008, p. 149). Identity is not merely a category, personal trait, role or label but, more fundamentally, an experience—one that involves both participation and reification and that represents an interplay of the local and the global (Wenger 1999/2008, p. 163). In connection to singing lullabies, identity is likewise an individual and collective phenomenon that is linked to modes of belonging through engagement (an active involvement in mutual processes of negotiation of meaning), imagination (the creation of images of the world and connections in time and space via extrapolation from personal experience) and alignment (the coordination of energy and activity in order to fit within broader structures) (Wenger 1999/2008, pp. 173–74). I will now unpack each of these aspects and what they mean to this particular inquiry and how I see it to be reflected in the interviews:

Based upon the child's preferences (they love music and singing), their genuine engagement and participation and a mutual agreement negotiated on a moment-to-moment-basis, parents create a mode of belonging that is highly appreciated by them both. On the one hand, the meaning of a lullaby is already negotiated, and goes beyond the content of the actual song as it depends on the parent-child personal interactional style and relationship as well. They both know and expect that when the singing starts, a moment of sharing and calmness takes place. On the other hand, parents sometimes need to renegotiate its meanings due to daily circumstances and sensitive periods in their children's lives. Children may start to ask about the songs, what they signify and they also want their parents to improvise and sing new songs. Parents need to recreate new meanings to the bedtime moment that resonate with their children's level of maturity connected to the latter's daily experiences and impulsive behaviour. Following the parents' statements, their daily mutual engagement and communication also contributes to a special 'ownership' and internalisation of songs used, and this forms an important basis of meaningfulness to the parents. They experience that they have created a ritual that is important for their children, and they seem to be able to identify themselves with their children.

Moreover, the creation of inner images contributes to a mutual personal experience that is highly valuable from a creative and developmental point of view. Simultaneously, when children's world is enlarged and they learn new songs in kindergarten and create images from a shared cultural world and tradition, a collective sense of belonging takes place, and their social and cultural identity is strengthened.

Moreover, parents' involvement with their children at this time of the day is experienced as active; they sing to their children and caress them. Parents seem to define who and how they are as parents when they sing for their children at bedtime through their choices of songs (whether traditional repertoire or new/personally adapted), their interactive style (physically close or more distant, emotionally expressive or

neutral, and so on) and their personal convictions about the act. Consistently situated within the rubric of ‘musical parenting’, lullaby singing gives parents a deeper sense of their own humanity—a feeling of personal belonging and cultural identity that is rooted in both tradition and individuality. The meaningfulness of the act seems to be intrinsically connected with an individual and cultural identity building process that may have started when the parents were children themselves and listened to the same songs that they now sing for their own children.

Simultaneously, its meaning is strongly connected to the present mutual process of calmness. This brings me to reflect upon the lullaby act in relation to important theoretical aspects of self-regulation and forms of vitality:

8.4.2 Self-regulation and building a space of mutual relaxation through ritualized, repeated behaviour

Self-regulation may be one of the most central aspects of the parental act of singing lullabies in the context of the child’s falling-asleep process. The self’s capacity to alter behaviours (Baumeister and Vohs 2007) involves emotional, cognitive and physical processing and helps one to cope with life’s challenges via arousal states, emotions, behaviour, and, as the child grows older, thinking skills. Baumeister and Vohs’s definition of self-regulation is closely related to self-control and motivation—that is, to an adult’s mature state of being. On the other hand, the small child’s ability to self-regulate is quite dependent on the caregiver; it is not an act of will. The caregiver is an auxiliary aid and role model in this process (Stern 1985/2000), which involves affect regulation in relation to emotional episodes, moods and stress responses (Gross 1998, p. 275). Lullaby singing is considered to be a normal means of bedtime regulation, not only by all of the parents in this inquiry but also by the culture at large (Ilari, Moura and Bourschiedt 2010, Mackinlay and Baker 2005, Valentin 2004, Trehub and Schellenberg 1995). According to parents’ statements, lullaby-enabled self-regulation generally centers on the child’s vitality affects or energy levels. As mentioned, parents focus on the vitality-related benefits of lullaby singing, because the act seems to foster a state of inner calm and develop the skill of relaxation (e.g. Valentin 2004, MacKinlay and Baker 2005, Ilari, Moura and Bourscheidt 2010).

Self-regulation is a complex process that involves initiating, inhibiting, or modulating one’s state or behaviour in a given situation, in terms of the subjective experience (feelings), cognitive responses (thoughts), emotion-related physiological responses (heart rate) and emotion-related behaviour (bodily actions or expressions) (Siegler 2006). Parents’ singing is often considered to be an attempt to modulate or modify their children’s energetic state. The distinction between two types of affect, categorical

and vital (Stern 1985/2000), seems relevant to this inquiry, since the parents focus is more on the children's energy and vitality levels than their own emotional levels when singing.

Stern draws upon philosopher Susanne Langer's 'forms of feeling', which are connected to vital life processes like breathing as well as the flux of emotions and thoughts. He argues that dynamic forms of vitality are the most fundamental of all felt experiences when dealing with other humans in motion (Stern 2010, p. 8). The act of singing lullabies is likewise a dynamic experience for both the parent and the child, one that is amenable to the regulation of oneself and one's energy and vitality. Basic categories such as time, movement, intentionality, force and space are key factors in unpacking the dynamic nature of this lived experience. By the way in which the parent and the child softly move together with the lullaby's rhythm and shared intentional message of calmness, lullaby singing seems to create one space, the space of mutual relaxation.

Nonetheless, I have found that my own fading level of vitality during the bedtime ritual can make me more responsive to myself but less so towards my child. The lullaby helps in this regard by keeping my focus on the present moment and the parent-child relationship. In this respect, the act enables co-regulation, which here means a mutual, synchronized state of calmness and relaxation.

The cultivation of calmness in this ritual also evokes parents' experiences of everyday parental coping and mastery, which also seem to contribute to their sense of meaningfulness about the act. I will soon return to this parental sense of mastery.

8.5 Towards focal points of discussion

Relaxation, self-regulation and calmness seem to be at the heart of the lullaby-singing act, but secondary areas of particular interest include the role of imagination and creativity, together with the symbolic content of the particular songs that are used. Parents' singing seems to contain important 'building' aspects connected to ritual, enculturation, identity and skills. The educational benefits of singing, according to the parents, are linked to being 'human'; to being musical or singing in tune; and to language, tradition, cultural history and social aspects. This raises important theoretical questions to which I will return in the discussion chapter. How can the act be understood as 'affordance laden' in terms of its structure and living expression? On the one hand, it seems to allow for both social and relational richness. On the other hand, there seems to be particular cultural, personal, social or structural constraints connected with bedtime singing. How do they affect parents' interactive style and

experience of the meaningfulness of the act? Before these aspects can be discussed, however, the third level of complexity of the act needs to be explored: mastery.

Mastery

An engagement with the various meaningful layers of lullaby singing would be incomplete without some knowledge regarding *how* the act is carried out in the everyday framework of parents' and children's lives. While tradition influences the act, the present moment has the surest grip upon it. This chapter focuses on the parents' experiences of coping and mastery in connection to their overall perspectives about everyday challenges, strengths and weaknesses in connection to caregiving tasks, impressions of their own degrees of musicality, and states of calmness and presence.

In particular, I will engage with parents' descriptions of what the act contributes to the balancing act between their own interests and their children's (sometimes rival) interests. The act is greatly influenced by the parents' level of vitality, daily mood, personality and accumulated life experience. It is also influenced by the child's personality, immediate needs and behaviour. But all of this arises within a particular setting, in tandem with particular songs, and it is now time to look at the influential roles both of those aspects play.

By digging deeper into what the singing itself 'affords', and how and in what respect the act might facilitate the parents' everyday lives and interactions with their children, we can begin to unpack the impact of a sense of mastery and control upon the meaningfulness of the act.

— *She had colic, and my song was perfect. From my point of view, it was fun, because I like singing. Second, it worked. And it was creatively exciting. I elicited responses, because I had a small audience. I saw what kind of movements and rhythms worked best and invented new things that induced sleep every night.*
(Father no. 4)

— *I am their father. They want to listen to their father singing to them. It makes me proud.* (Father no. 7)

These extracts illuminate the parents' experience of the meaningfulness of the act as intrinsically connected to not only nurturing and building but also mastery—that is, the act as a practical tool for the enhancement of parents' sense of control and joy in their everyday lives with their children. Mastery also relates best to the relational quality of the moment, which is connected to the parent's levels of sensitivity, sincerity, presence and responsiveness. Parents feel good as parents when they are singing, because they experience fun and effectiveness: 'It was fun'; 'It works'. They are also 'confirmed' or 'recognised' as parents: 'They listen to me'; 'I had a small audience'.

The second extract also touches upon some of the complexity of the parental singing act in relation to mastery: one father acknowledges its attendant musical recognition, which he has never felt before. He is not used to somebody listening to his singing, which he describes as poor. He knows that he sings out of tune, but his children want to listen to him, because he is their father, and this surprises and touches him:

— *I have never experienced somebody wanting to listen to my singing, never in my entire life. But my children want to hear my singing. It is touching and I really appreciate it. This is a new experience for me, and it surprised me. When I asked them if they wanted to listen to a CD instead of my singing, they always wanted my singing. It makes me laugh when I think about it. They wanted my voice instead of Michael Jackson. Oh, during daytime, they preferred him to me, but when going to bed, they preferred my voice and presence.* (Father no. 7)

This father notes that his singing is valuable in the bedtime moment, when he connects with his children, in relation to his parental presence rather than his artistic competence.

Another parent sees that his friends acknowledge and value his singing and playing guitar at bedtime, which gives him a greater parental 'status':

— *My friends who have kids are impressed. They cannot play guitar and sing like I do for their children. I can see that they almost envy me this moment with him.* (Father no. 2)

This father's singing gives him a heightened sense of parental mastery, thanks to his friends' affirmations. His singing and playing has a touch of 'exclusivity', not only in relation to his friends but also in relation to his wife (the boys' mother):

— *My singing is something we do, only the two of us. His mother makes other activities with him. The singing is connected to me, his father.* (Father no. 7)

Some parents report that they do not consider themselves to be ideally suited to the singing task, but they do it because they see that their children appreciate and need it.

9.1 **Parents' reawakening and reinforcement of their own musical abilities and resources**

The empirical material shows a great range of assessment when it comes to parent's singing and musicality. The arrival of a newborn baby into one's life sometimes reawakens one's musicality. When raising children, in effect, parents are also very often raising themselves as well:

— *I started singing again, for my son, after a very long break. I think I haven't sung since the school days. I am not that into music, but I see that my son likes it, so I started to do it for that reason only.* (Father no. 2)

— *But I have not really been singing. I cannot sing, or at least I didn't believe that I could. I never sang. 'Passively musical', you could call it. It turned out that it was only a matter of trying. I could actually sing for my children.* (Father no. 4)

— *I have not sung much, but I have always wanted to express myself through music. Since my children love music and singing, I now have a new opportunity.*

— *So there is something new taking place since you got children?*

— *Yes, I have always wanted to sing, but life has not given me the opportunity until now. I never took the initiative to take singing lessons. But I have always wanted to sing and play music.* (Father no. 10)

— *I think that I haven't sung since the school years, but now I sing every other day to my son.* (Father no. 2)

— *I have always sung, but of course it is special to sing for your own children.* (Mother no. 2)

Parents sing for the first time, or they find their personal singing to be placed in the spotlight for the first time.

Some parents revisit their musicality entirely when their child is born, and they become more confident in their singing to their children. Others, interestingly, find their children to be obstacles to their proper musical ‘realisation’:

— *I feel that my musical abilities have been reduced to a minimum with the arrival of my children. They only want to hear my singing in relation to them. If I sing in the shower or put on a CD and sing along, they shout, ‘No, no, no!’ They prefer to hear my airy, tired, sore-throated singing at bedtime alone.* (Mother no. 2)

Parents’ emphasis on the practicality of their singing at bedtime is reflected in their singing style and song choice, as we will see below.

9.1.1 Singing songs at hand in the present moment

Fathers in particular use the songs that they have ‘at hand’—that is, pop, rock and jazz songs that are normally not associated with a child’s repertoire of songs. Their singing comes across as rather spontaneous:

— *I sing a Beatles song for my son. That was what I recalled at that particular moment.* (Father no. 2)

— *My husband is not so good at recalling lyrics. He just sings what he remembers, and it is not always lullabies. I listened to him the other day, and he was singing a military march song, because he doesn’t know so many child songs.* (Mother no. 1)

Parents, in fact, do not invest much time in interpreting or even learning lyrics, even though most lullabies are easy to understand and master from a musical point of view, with their simple structures, rhythms and melodic contours. It is always the parents’ and children’s positive relating and engagement that matter, always within the familiar and continual bedtime routine:

— *It is the setting that counts. The words mean nothing, actually.* (Father no. 2)

In lullaby singing, the dominance of language as the primary human expressive modality is challenged through the relegation of the lyrics to the sidelines. The child, as well, very often does not listen actively or relate to the words that are being sung. Parents report that even though they sing the same song over and over again, the child still does not know how to sing along. Some songs are not poetic enough, or the language is too complicated and archaic.

On the other hand, during certain periods, the child is very focused on understanding the words that are sung, in the interests of learning new words; at these times, the child stops the parent at every unfamiliar word. Parents tend to perform lyrics in different ways already, and some of them enable these pedagogical aspects by inserting deliberate pauses so the child can fill in the missing words. Lullaby singing, at this point, almost becomes an interactive word game.

Other parents work with the different qualities and characters of lullabies. Some prefer those that are very poetic, even when children tend towards very simplistic play songs that allow for improvisation, such as this one:

*Ri ri på islandshest
 Ri mot øst og ri mot vest
 Ri mot sør og ri mot nord
 Ri mot der hvor Ivar bor*

*Ride, ride on an Icelandic horse
 Ride to the east and ride to the west
 Ride to the south and ride to the north
 Ride to where Ivar lives*

One parent reports that her child likes this song, because she can fill in with her whole family and friends: 'Ride to where my grandmother lives', ride to where my friend Ida lives'. This turns the singing into a present improvisation, governed by the child's impulses. Thus, the ritualized and predictable act sometimes implies improvisations and creative inventions:

9.1.2 Improvisations and creative inventions

— *We do not use ordinary lullabies but invent songs in the moment, or I add new texts to existing songs that I know.* (Mother no. 9)

Parents make up their own songs, and the quality of their invention is stunning. The songs are often created in a very individual and playful manner, and the child often becomes an integral part of the story. The parental sense of mastery does not only relate to creating fixed routines and sleeping time, but also to levels of creativity. However, the intention behind this act is to try to bring the energy level of the child down, not ramp it up, though some parents do invent spontaneously, in the flow of the moment, without thinking about any specific purpose other than mutual entertainment and fun:

— *I have never taken the time to learn the texts correctly, so I only used those I already knew to some extent, then improvised and created words that fit the melody. That means that the songs always had this special, personal touch. I also put in the name of my child and invented songs that could last forever. The tree is sleeping, the pillow is sleeping, and now you are sleeping too. And then I repeated it, with other words. The window is sleeping, the car is sleeping and now you are sleeping too.* (Father no. 4)

These songs, whether original or adapted, often have a very open and repetitive structure that invites the sharing of whatever is happening at the moment, as well as the day's earlier events and the prospect of sleep. Creative variations depend upon the parents' level of creativity and interest. The act of singing lullabies is almost like a 'living musical', as one parent puts it; 'it takes only about a minute', another notes. It may represent the only shared musical activity of the day as well.

9.2 **Everyday coping**

As mentioned, most parents value singing as a means for soothing and calming children, and it is a proven strategy and technique in good times as well as bad. Sometimes, it is hard to distinguish between parental devotion and parental duty. Neither parent nor child is guaranteed to embrace the lullaby gesture every time. The term parental coping seems to imply an emphasis on the parents' everyday strives with their children, and their balancing between making the child fall asleep as fast and efficient as possible and being a warm and available parent that takes the time that is needed:

— *Life is so busy, and sometimes I am so tired that I can hardly sing, but it is a ritual that they want, and it is nice for all of us. I try not to be too presumptuous about it, because sometimes I just want to get it over with, and it is just a tool to get them to sleep, and then I can have some time on my own. Other times, I think about how much I love them, how happy life is together with them, and I almost start crying. Then the singing is filled with a strong engagement. Most of the time, though, I am so tired that I don't think about anything at all.* (Father no. 1)

Parents do seem to be strengthened and motivated by the positive impact that their singing has on their children and their relationship with them. It provides parents with the opportunity to engage with their children in their daily lives, and it is a nice way to conclude the important caregiving task of calming them down and regulating

their vitality. It is also very useful when parents are worried about coping with children's distress and pain:

— *When she had stomach problems and was a little upset, the only way of calming her was my 'holding'. I took her in my arms and walked around in the apartment, singing songs softly in her ear. Then she calmed down and finally fell asleep. This happened several times, and now it is almost a touchstone in my family: now your father will hold you, my wife says, or my daughter says 'Hold!' when she is sleepy and wants to be put to bed.*

— *So you always hold her while singing the songs?*

— *Yes, with very few exceptions. The holding, walking and singing are intrinsically connected. I was especially surprised by the effectiveness of my singing when we spent the night in a strange place. Normally, this would make her insecure and upset, but my singing seemed to calm her down, regardless of the 'strangeness' of the situation.*

— *When you sing for your child, do you express anything in particular? Do you feel that your emotions come through?*

— *No, that's for sure. Primarily I sing because I believe it is a nice thing to do together, and because it is an efficient way of making her fall asleep. The reason I sing the same songs over and over again, I believe, is that I am not good at multitasking. I do not put much effort into being artistic, I have to admit. But it works out fine, the holding and singing. I can even think about other things while singing, because I know the songs so well. (Father no. 3)*

This father points out the practical benefits of singing when the daughter has stomach problems and is upset, or when they spend the night away from home and she is a little insecure. His 'holding-singing' represents a powerful tool for calming his daughter and to make her comfortable under difficult circumstances, and it arose spontaneously from what the father had available to him. This holding-singing ritual started when she was very small and lightweight; as she has grown older, the 'holding' aspect has become less inviting, but it still works:

— *I started singing when she was a very small baby. She had some stomach problems. She calmed down by means of two things: holding and singing. I couldn't breastfeed her like her mother could, so in order to make her calm down and fall asleep, I had these two techniques at my disposal and used them simultaneously. I walked around and sang to her. And we still do this, even though she is three and a half years old now, and she has become pretty heavy. This is how we do it. I hold her, walk around and sing to her—the same series*

of songs every evening. She will be rather excited when I start, but towards the end of the series, she has often already fallen asleep or has grown very calm, so we don't talk—silently, I just put her down in her bed and then she falls asleep.
(Father no. 3)

In this case, the lullaby-singing act was useful in a social-bonding sense and pertinent to the child's practical and physical concerns.

9.2.1 A great tool

Parents report that singing is a great *tool* for them in order to calm their children down and make them fall asleep. The 'dynamic' structure of the act is manifested through an emphasis on movement, calm and quiet in the present moment:

— To me, it is a tool in order to make them fall asleep—to find the calm. This became especially salient with that colicky girl of mine. She was so hyper that I had to help her find the calm within. That's what it was all about. (Mother no. 2)

— It is a great help in the process of calming him down. I used my own musicality as a powerful tool in order to make him fall asleep. (Mother no. 7)

— Singing was the only way to calm them down and put them to sleep. (Father no. 4)

The lullaby's usefulness as a tool derives from the act's expressive, regulative and social qualities and practical values. In fact, the distinction between its physical and psychological aspects is often blurred.⁴⁴

— I cannot separate my physical caring from the actual singing. They are intrinsically connected and make up the whole, together with the setting.
(Father no. 1)

For some parents, singing might eventually give way to storytelling, but there always remains an awareness of music's special calming impact:

— I have come to understand what is important for kids in helping them to fall asleep, or not. You can practically do whatever you want, but it needs to be a

⁴⁴ Vygotsky distinguishes between psychological and physical tools, and the lullaby act seems to be both (see Vygotsky 1978).

ritual that one has agreed upon, and that one likes and appreciates. Music is the best. It doesn't lead on to new excursions. (Father no. 4)

When their children feel safe and content, parents feel confident in their role. Singing is a tool here, as mentioned, but it also seems to represent an integrated *mode of being*:

— Singing lullabies to me is not only related to the bedtime moment but to different phases during the day when there is a need for silence and calm—for example, when changing nappies or other practical things which need to be done. (Mother no. 9)

Singing to my child made me feel good as a mother. (Lullaby diary, Jan. 2011)

— I do it because it feels so right to be with him until he falls asleep and to not force or make him fall asleep on his own when he is so small. It relates to all of the aspects of being a mother, and to how I want to be and behave towards him. (Mother no. 7)

Though parents generally find that if they are calm as they sing, the children gradually calm down too, this is not always the case. The parent does not have complete control over the situation, regardless of his or her level of self-regulation. The energy level of the child very often dictates how long the singing takes and whether the child is ultimately ready for sleep. One of the parents reports:

— I learned this by experience, how to connect with my son through singing. (Mother no. 2)

Some of the parents pay attention to their parental learning experiences, and name it 'a growth'.

9.2.2 Singing as a an emotional 'growth' and a focused state of mind

— It is, of course, very special to sing for your own child. It is a growth. (Mother no. 5)

The use of the word 'growth' points to the dynamic character of the act and draws attention to the ways in which both the parent and the child are changed by one another's presence in the ritual. This mutual appreciation is often tacit or implied rather than overt, but the singing keeps both parties firmly in the present regardless:

— *When singing, I cannot think of anything else. The melody and singing keep me focused.* (Mother no. 9)

This mother experiences singing as a flow that makes the moment come alive. She continues:

— *If I relate this state to wellbeing, I think of mindfulness and presence. When I make myself ready for the singing ritual and the bedtime situation and the singing, I leave behind all that doesn't matter. What has happened and now belongs in the past is left behind—for example, brushing teeth or other trivial matters—and I become fully present. This state creates wellbeing. The singing is, in this respect, a management tool, which is a concept within self-development and coaching. It is a deliberate influence on one's thoughts and feelings. It is a mental aspect, and I experience this when I am singing to my son. I prepare myself before I start singing and enter this state of fully being present.* (Mother no. 9)

In this quotation, the mother refers to a term that is widely recognized to bringing forth a focused state of mind: mindfulness. She also sees a connection between mindfulness and wellbeing. She considers her singing to be a tool in this respect, and this makes her singing powerful and experienced as meaningful. Other parents report:

— *It is a tool in order to be more present and capture the child's attention. Without singing, there is nothing. Then there is no significant moment any longer.* (Mother no. 3)

— *It gives me energy and makes me more present, because it is fun to sing.* (Father no. 10)

Presence, attention and motivation are key terms when parents describe the benefits of their singing. Nonetheless, the parents singing seems to be situated along a continuum of mastery and failure:

9.2.3 Lullaby works?

Parents' singing within the continuum of mastery and failure

The lullaby singing act seems to be situated along a continuum of mastery and failure in relation to parents' everyday coping ability, rather than a continuum of aesthetic attractiveness and aesthetic ugliness. Parents' conclusions about their own parental musical efforts range from deep satisfaction and contentment through simple acceptance to a bad conscience, sadness and regret. Parents are motivated by the fact that

singing lullabies is a gratifying act that does not take much of their time or effort, but it remains a 'mission' of sorts with the everpresent possibility of 'failure' in relation to whatever priorities or goals they might assign to it. Some parents emphasise the value of cultural transmission, while others emphasise the relational quality of the act and its impact upon mutual wellbeing or point to its practical benefits. Parents' statements reveal the risks and complications of the lullaby dynamic:

— *I wanted her to listen to this beautiful song from our cultural heritage, but the only thing she did was fool around. I became very irritated. Imagine this beautiful song, and she did not want to pay attention to it. But it's all my fault. I am a very playful person, and I believe it is sometimes difficult for my daughter to distinguish between my fun and seriousness.* (Father no. 5)

This father describes occasionally 'rival' interests in his singing. He wants to be playful and having a good time with his daughter, but he also introduces an educational and 'cultural' function to it, one that he wants his daughter to appreciate and respect. This is not always the case, however, and his disappointment colours the present moment with his daughter, which in turn determines whether he experiences the act as successful and fruitful or not.

For other parents, the time aspect seems crucial:

— *I remember one occasion when it took over an hour to make my son fall asleep. We were two families together on holiday, and when I finally came out of the bedroom, the other parents had been able to put their children to bed a long time ago. I feel that I almost had to apologise for being so late, but the thing is that I want to be there for my son until he falls asleep. I know he needs it, and I don't want to leave him crying. In our society, some people would say that we have a sleep problem in our family, but I don't look at it that way. However, when I compare my effort to other parents' efforts, I know that it demands a lot more of me. But it doesn't matter. It is all about my son's wellbeing, and I enjoy spending the time with him. But I have to admit that I was a little embarrassed too that day.* (Mother no. 8)

This mother makes her son the top priority at bedtime, however long it takes to settle him down, but she also feels that she needs to defend her own way of doing things in a society that applauds efficiency and time 'on your own'. Another parent also describes her endless singing as a 'living musical' that could go on for a very long time when she sang for her firstborn child. For some parents, in fact, their attendant sense of mastery is closely linked to how long the singing in fact takes:

— *It needs to be efficient. There is not much fuzz at that time of the day. I sing in order to make her fall asleep as fast as possible. And it seems to work out well. We don't have many problems at bedtime. I believe it takes about ten minutes.* (Father no. 9)

— *The singing takes only a few minutes, and it works out very well.* (Father no. 10)

Mother no. 2 acknowledges that the time she spends singing changed from one child to the next:

— *He doesn't get half of what I gave to my daughter. I don't have the energy any more.* (Mother no. 2)

Other parents say the same thing and admit that they feel bad about this:

— *No doubt—I sing much less for him than I did for her. I just don't have time for it any more.* (Mother no. 2)

— *I sang for my daughter, but not for the youngest one.* (Father no. 3)

— *I sang a lot for my two older children, but not the two younger ones. That's a sad story. I had the ambition to sing at least two hundred songs for them, but it all stalled. I believe that I was able to sing twenty. Not more than that. What a shame. I didn't fulfill my parental duty.* (Father no. 8)

Parents have different ambitions and missions when singing at bedtime, and this affects their likelihood of achieving mastery. Often the combination of daily moods and circumstances also seems to influence mastery. Below, I will present one video-session transcript in detail to describe this intricate bedtime moment. One evening, the singing ritual will turn out to be an oasis for both parent and child, and everything will work out well between them. The next evening, the singing does not work at all. It is almost impossible to make the child calm down and fall asleep, even after a seemingly neverending story that takes an hour to tell, and the mother eventually becomes upset, irritated and then exhausted. At first, the singing seems counterproductive. In the end, though, it still creates an intimate and calm space for them. I will begin with a description of the events of the first evening in chronological order, and then I will go more into detail in terms of the ways in which the mother experiences the act as it is happening.

0.00.00. *The room is empty, dark and spacious. There is a double bed in the middle of the room. A lamp in the corner is the main light source in the room, together with two candles on opposite sides of a small bedroom table that is close to the bed.* 00.00.53. *The mother walks into the room with her daughter in her arms.* 00.00.55. *She puts her daughter in the middle of the bed.* 00.00.58. *The daughter says, 'The blanket is cold. I want to sit here.'* 00.01.20. *The mother makes it comfortable for her daughter in the bed and asks if she wants her to read a chapter in her book first.* 01.48. *'Can we read the whole book?' the daughter asks.* 0.01.50. *'We will only read a chapter, as usual', the mother responds. They sit together in bed. The reading takes about three minutes and is filled with a dialogue-oriented interaction. The daughter comments upon the images in the book while the mother is reading.*

0.05.10. *The mother blows out the candles and turns the light off.* 00.05.23. *The daughter says that she believes her mother's room is much lovelier than her own playroom next door. She wants candles there too. The mother agrees with this. The atmosphere is calm and positive. It is dark in the room.* 0.05.48. *The mother get into bed with her daughter and starts singing 'So, Ro, lille barn, nå er dagen over' ['Sleep well, little child, now the day is over']. Her voice is rather high and airy. She sings rhythmically and quite quickly.* 00.06.32. *The song ends, and the daughter starts to hum the same melody.* 00.06.41. *'Now we need to sleep', the mother says. They are now lying close together in the bed, and the daughter is humming the melody once more. The mother says that her daughter's humming is quite loud, as she has her ears very close to her daughter's mouth. The mother starts to laugh, and so does the daughter.* 00.07.00. *They whisper something to each other.* 00.07.03. *'Okay, now we need to sleep', the mother says. 'We don't talk loud now.'* 00.07.24. *'No', the daughter says. 'Now we will sleep', the mother repeats.*

0.07.28. *She starts to sing the song 'So, Ro' once more, in a very whispery manner: 'Alle barn i alle land ligger nå og sover' [All the children on earth are now sleeping].* 0.07.37. *'Himlen har tatt stjerner på' [The sky has put on the stars] / 'Alle barn skal sove nå' [All the children shall sleep now] / 'Sove søtt i sengen' [Sleeping sweetly in their beds].* 0.07.45. *The mother continues with a second song, 'Kvelden lister seg på tå' [The evening tiptoes], which has several verses. She sings so softly that she is hardly audible.* 0.08.30. *When she has finished the second song, the daughter starts to sing a melody that the mother*

recognises—'Lille katt' [Small cat]. 00.08.35. The mother starts to sing this song too, but her daughter interrupts her quickly, saying, 'So, ro'. 00.08.40.

The mother starts to sing 'So, Ro' again. 00.09.20. She finishes the song, then sings it again. 00.10.06. She finishes it again, and the daughter wants to tell her something. 'Now we need to sleep', the mother says to her daughter. The daughter says that she wants to whisper something to her. 00.10.20. 'What are you going to whisper now?' the mother says. The daughter whispers something in her hear, and the mother repeats that now they need to go to sleep. 00.10.36. 'So, ro', the daughter says. 'So, ro', says the mother. 00.10.40. The mother sings the song again, rather loudly this time. 00.11.30. She repeats it in a whisper. This time she also sings it very slowly and inserts longer pauses between the lines. 00.12.37. The mother finishes the song, and the daughter starts moving her legs up and down in the air. Then there is silence.

00.13.17. The daughter whispers 'So, ro'. 'So, ro', the mother answers. 'Do you want me to sing it once more?' 00.13.20. 'Yes, no, yes, no, yes, no, yes, no', the daughter says. 00.13.24. 'Yes, mommy, I want you to sing it once more', the daughter says. 00.13.35. The mother starts to sing 'So, ro'. She sings it in a very calm and light manner, in a relatively high voice compared to her speaking voice. 00.14.19. She repeats the song again. 00.15.20. She finishes singing and the room is silent. 00.15.58. The mother makes sure that the daughter has fallen asleep before she leaves the room. (Description of home-recorded video, mother singing lullabies to her 4-year-old daughter 2011)

The mother is lying in the bed with her daughter, face to face, with her arms around her daughter's body. She sings 'So, ro' every night, she says elsewhere, with varying degrees of success, but on this particular night the daughter falls asleep after about fifteen minutes. The daughter relaxes without qualms when the mother starts singing in her ear; eventually, the daughter turns over, her back towards her mother, and they lay like spoons in the bed. The daughter was very sleepy on this occasion; other nights, she jumps and dances in the bed, and the mother must be rather strict in order to make her stop. In general, they first read a book, and then the singing starts after a small chat about what happened during the day.

The mother easily attunes her presence to her child, because she is usually already tired when the singing starts. Her singing is smooth, with a regular beat and a simple rhythm. She starts singing at a rather low pitch, so when the daughter wants to join in, she has trouble locating the tune. They seem calm each other during the singing,

and by the end of the song, the daughter is just listening. She always asks for the song to be repeated several times and only wants her favourite, 'So, ro'.

The mother's repetitive singing demonstrates her patience and commitment. She considers this 'over-and-over-again singing' to be worth it as long as her daughter gradually calms down. As long as the mother proves to be patient, she feels a sense of mastery. If her daughter pushes the limits here, however, her patience will give way to irritation and indignation. Sometimes, there might be more of a 'fight' or 'battle', as the mother puts it. She notes that daily activities often impact the outcome of the bedtime ritual. When they are able to indulge in a 'gradual countdown' of the evening, and there is no rush, the bedtime is a beautiful time to be together. Unfortunately, the mother is sometimes so tired that she just wants to get it over with. This introduces uncertainty and, potentially, conflict.

The mother experiences these fifteen minutes as slow motion relative to the rest of the day. She enjoys the singing for its own sake but mostly in relation to her daughter, as they connect via the gentle bedtime rhythms of a well-known lullaby.

— *This is the challenge almost every night: to find the right balance and appropriate relationship between structure, play and fun, calm and arousal. (Lullaby diary, June 2012)*

Other parents have similar stories:

— *It was difficult to put him to bed after I finished breastfeeding him. If he became upset or sad, I started to sing songs that had an upbeat and humorous character and tempo, and then I captured his attention, and then I gradually calmed him down by singing more and more slowly and softly. Sometimes he fell asleep after ten minutes, and then there are times when I sing to him for an hour. I prefer singing to him rather than standing outside his door, listening to his screaming. (Mother no. 7)*

— *I have to put much effort into making my boy fall asleep. I sometimes have to manipulate him and I sort of 'channel' him into sleep. (Mother no. 3)*

— *I do all I can to make him fall asleep; I match his energy state and then modulate it down into the calm. (Mother no. 7)*

— *We never managed to initiate this calming-down process in an effective manner. (Father no. 4)*

— *Singing was the way in which we made the children fall asleep. They calmed down during the singing.* (Father no. 4)

I notice that it might take some time for her to relax and calm down, but once the last phase of singing has started, when my timing is good, I see that she turns her back to me, and turns inwards. (Lullaby diary, Feb. 2011)

Lullabies seem to serve a very concrete purpose as a *support* to, an *initiation* of, and a *movement* towards both calming down and falling asleep. On some occasions, the parent needs to soothe the child in relation to physical pain or separation anxiety, but often the child simply needs to unwind from the day. Some parents report that they need to be calm in order to calm down their children, and that they believe their calmness to be ‘contagious’

— *I can feel it while holding her, walking around in the house and singing for her. At first, she is still energised after playing during the day, and over the course of singing to her, I feel that her body relaxes, and then she falls asleep.* (Father no. 13)

While all parents state that lullaby singing does affect their children’s level of vitality, some of them also described points where it was counterproductive in this regard:

— *The child responded to it. I observed which kind of movements worked, and which kinds of rhythm and melodies, but I have to say that I never managed to make my children fall asleep quickly. It took a lot of time, every night. But it was fun though. We were all wide awake.* (Father no. 4)

Many parents refer to the *effectiveness* of the act (‘it works’ or ‘it doesn’t work’). Is this quality of effectiveness in turn related to other aspects of the parent-child interaction which contribute to its success? Success is then connected with relational harmony, positive sharing, good communication and mutual joy rather than calmness and sleep.

To other parents, the act’s success is more strictly related to sleeping. Still, we might wonder whether singing a lullaby in fact makes children fall asleep. While it helps at those times when the child is tired already, there is no guarantee that singing leads to sleep:

— *Sometimes it takes about ten minutes from the time I put him into the bed until he falls asleep. Other times it takes about an hour.* (Mother no. 7)

— *I felt that it worked out so well yesterday. Ten minutes and then she fell asleep. But tonight it ended up with me both impatient and irritated. I continued*

to sing, but it didn't work out at all. I stopped singing and just let her jump up and down in her bed until she was tired enough to sit down. I was exhausted, so I didn't feel like singing anymore. And she didn't want to listen either. Finally, after an hour, she whispered to me: 'So, ro.' I sang it one last time. By then she had fallen asleep. (Lullaby diary, Jan. 2011)

— *We invented more and more, and the singing became more and more fun, and she became wide awake. 'You have not said that the dog is sleeping,' she would say. We would end up singing about two hundred things and animals that were sleeping—except for her. (Father no. 4)*

Sometimes, holding and lulling, combined with the repetitive, trancelike singing, quiets children; other times, it energises them. Perhaps we need to extend the determination of a successful lullaby moment to encompass a happy ending, if not a quick one. Those parents who do so tend to be more confident about the act.

Success in this particular regard is a practical and social matter of singing in exactly the same way in order to avoid much interaction or excitement:

— *I try to sing exactly the same way, so she doesn't pay attention to anything in particular, and just turns inwards. (Father no. 9)*

Interestingly, the aforementioned love of narrative unpredictability on the child's part is able to flourish even within the stability of the singing framework and bedtime ritual. Above all else, though, it is the familiarity that allows the ritual to succeed.

— *She responds to my singing, and I believe she is happy about the fact that things are as they are. She says that she shall only do this and that before she goes to sleep. It takes three minutes, and then I hear small feet walking, and the door opens, and she is still not sleeping. On the other hand, when she is physically exhausted, and very tired, she calms down much more easily. (Father no. 6)*

There are divergent views and attitudes regarding their relationship with their children and the effectiveness of the act. Some parents, in fact, think of the act as merely part of a daily, conventional, 'self-forgotten' existence that is completely subsumed by blind routines and habits—an existence in which no innovation is possible, where parents cling to their role according to given social standards and never assert their true selves.

Social normativity may not be as grim as all that, of course, and it certainly informs the act's structure and contributes to its potential success. Parents' awareness of what singing can afford in an everyday setting is, of course, crucial to this impact:

— *Everyday is life. I am aware of the importance of giving my son love and a feeling of safety, and not only when he needs it or I feel that I really have to take care of him. I know this from experience, because my parents did not always give me love and this sense of safety, either when I needed it or on a daily basis. I do not have this foundation, and I see how important this is, because I lacked it. I want to create this safe foundation for my son. I want to give this to him each and every day, not only on special days, so he can see that this is a natural part of life, and he is not only taken care of when something bad has happened to him. It needs to be present all the time—so clear and so embodied that it will be an unconscious, integral part of him. I want him to know that I am there for him, no matter what. It is not only when he gets hurt that he needs comfort and love.* (Mother no. 9)

In this case, the everydayness of the act is an integral part of a parent's convictions about and philosophy of care. Everyday singing contributes to a natural embodiment of the qualities of safety and love that is above question. It is an unconditional act that creates an important 'foundation' in the son's life.

In this particular case, the parent wants to mirror, respond to and attune to her child. Elsewhere, she says that her behaviour is based upon a conscious way of thinking and acting that accounts for the importance of her own gestures, the intensity of her voice and the form of her singing. She pays special attention to the aspect of timing. This includes both musical timing and ritual timing as the mother pays attention to the rhythm and tempo of the songs and to her child's particular needs at the moment she begins to sing. She shows him that she appreciates his way of being and behaving, no matter how irrational it might be. She notes that she has a reflexive and responsive way of acting, based upon her past negative experiences with her own parents.

Regardless of (or sometimes due to) past experiences, parents treat the everydayness of lullaby singing differently. Sometimes, it appears as though parents respond to their children's needs even though they are not really in tune with them, introducing a rather rigid adult perspective that the child cannot grasp as such. This may create a mismatch, in which the child may think that his or her feelings are being rejected. When parents use the singing as a distraction from the child's frustrations, demands or daily distress, they may be responding to the situation, but not to the child's needs to be recognised or appreciated as such. On the other hand, children also require clear boundaries in order to feel safe, so many parents report that they try to balance their responsive caring with a gesture of parental control.

— *I experience the act differently from one evening to the next. Sometimes it is so wonderful. She just lies there and listens, very, very quietly. But most of the*

time it is chaos. She moves and plays around in the bed. Sometimes she sings along in a silly language, and sometimes I get irritated, because it breaches how it should be, or how I want and think it should be. It should be a lovely, quiet, relaxed moment, and the singing should provide this calm and relaxation. Now the lights are turned off, and the only thing to do is to lie down in bed, and the process of sleep can start. If she gets too silly, I don't like it, but sometimes I play and make jokes too. I try new words, sing very slowly, change the melody or improvise a little. But by and large, one wishes and wants the moment to be quiet and calm. (Father no. 6)

Often parents feel squeezed between the adult work schedule and the children's free spirit and generally out-of-schedule nature. Singing lullabies is a rather calm form of play, but it still has playful characteristics that are reflected both in the songs and in the ways in which the parents sing them. Moments of mutual play often intermingle with the parental goal of bringing about an end to the day. Parents talk about a very fragile balance in this regard, one that can be easily broken and result in more play, not less:

— I knew that we shouldn't do many activities before bedtime, but it was so fun, and lots of play and chaos. The singing helped to calm everything down, but play was also part of the ritual, and sometimes we took it too far. And we had to start all over again. (Father no. 4)

— If I am going to sing 'Ja, vi elsker' [the Norwegian national hymn], it demands, of course, a different kind of expression than if I am singing 'Bæ, bæ lille lam'. If my son starts to sing, I encourage him a little by altering the tempo and making it a little faster. Even though I sing the normal text, and he is singing 'Bæ, bæ lille lam, gikk på restaurant', I participate in his play with the text. We laugh together while we add a ridiculous text to the melody. I don't say, 'Now you need to sing the right words'. (Mother no. 8).

The singing creates a playful space, but this inclination is often tempered by the parent's urge to make the child fall asleep. Hung up in chronological time, the parent finds that it has become too late—the child must get enough sleep, or the parent must have some alone time. This pressure upon the interaction is often visibly and audibly manifested in the videotapes. The child plays freely while the parent tries to modify

the situation in a more-or-less silent 'struggle' that can go on for hours.⁴⁵ The act of singing lullabies in this inquiry has lasted from two minutes to an hour and a half.

The act exists within a continuum of daily and interrelational influences, and parents' descriptions of the act and ways-of-being-with-their-children are rather different despite being traceable to two immediate aspects: the act's simplicity and everydayness and children's and parents' orientation towards its exclusively one-to-one (or *dyadic*) interaction.

9.2.4 The attractiveness of musical simplicity

Parents who share their personal stories about the ritual of lullaby singing acknowledge the appeal of its simplicity.⁴⁶ The fact that lullabies themselves lack musical complexity helps parents achieve a sense of mastery and transcend performance challenges to focus on interactional elements instead. The lullaby allows room for adaptation to children's communicative and perceptive abilities and skills, and to the fading energy levels of the bedtime hour. The distinction between the lullaby-singing act's relational results and material means is very relevant to the parents' derivation of meaning from the practice. Parents' physical, emotional, cognitive and mindful presence is only realised productively in the context of the lullaby's typical structural and temporal segmentation, predictability and stability.

— *The song was like a mantra that went back and forth infinitely. It was not more than that—a refrain, not even that.* (Father no. 4)

— *I have sung to him since before he was born, this very simple song—not a lullaby but just a melody, and then combining it with another one, a small improvisation. I thought it had to be very simple, only thirds. I did the same song every day.* (Father no. 5)

— *Sometimes I just hum a very simple melody very softly; it is just as though I feel that we need to put a little sound on the silence, that's all.* (Mother no. 9)

— *I just put sound in the calm.* (Mother no. 3)

45 These aspects of struggle are humorously commented upon in Mansbach's bestselling book *Go the Fuck to Sleep* (Mansbach 2012).

46 Among the most immediately relevant characteristics of lullaby singing are its simplicity of structure and openness to repetition (Bargeil 2004).

Among the parents involved in this inquiry, this act is characterised by its simplicity—based upon the a cappella performance of a simple song which is easy to master for the singer and easy to listen to for the child. Only two of the parents play guitar while singing. Music as simple sounds, silent pauses and a very basic mode of communication underpins the act.

In some cases, the songs are not even songs at all but simple melodic fragments that parents hum. One father is not sure where the melody comes from that he sings. Parents want the music to be slow, simple in construction, and generally positive—one father describes his sad memories of his mother humming a melody in a minor key when he was young, so he only sings in major keys.

Many of the songs parents sing for their children have a small tessitura and a circular form. They are characterised by regular patterns of melodic and expressive rising and falling that the parents experience as well balanced and soothing for their children. Musical balance is not only heard but also felt in a way that transcends the specific ordering of musical notes. The simple structure of a lullaby, then, directly appeals to children's preferences at bedtime because it does not seem to demand much attention and a large cognitive capacity. It is easy to listen to and master.

Parent and child experience a unity and predictability via the music's simplicity. The music allows them to interact in productive, mutually satisfying ways:

— *The singing has a strong improvised character. It is my child that directs the act and what to sing. She is the conductor, and I follow her impulses and wishes.* (Father no. 4)

Parents also indicate that they may follow the 'drives' of their children when singing as they can put their entire focus on them while singing. However, even though the songs are easy to master, this may not be the case with their children, who are unpredictable and impulsive even at bedtime. These bedtime challenges seem to be reflected through the high amount of parental creativity and diverse 'techniques', strategies and styles:

9.3 How parents sing and act

Singing modes and strategies are both related to caregiving domains and parenting styles. Parents' awareness of the inflections and tones of the voice, the formal structures, melodic contours and rhythms of the songs, and the sense of expressiveness related to the singing all nuance the bedtime ritual as well.

How parents work with the notion of time at bedtime underpins their inclination to whimsy over routine. Their conduct is always in concert with the need for sufficient sleep or with an interest in closeness and joy.

— *I feel that, at night, it is rather strict. There is no play. Now it is over. No dialogue. Talking is for tomorrow. I have very fixed sleeping routines.* (Mother no. 3)

— *We knew that we should do but a few activities before one goes to sleep and calms down. I never managed to do that. There has been playing, much fuzz, chaos and fun. You are taken by the moment, and it is fun, and then you need to start all over again and the child sometimes becomes more awake than before.* (Father no. 4)

Sometimes parents' singing represents a mixture of the lullaby's continuously repetitive form and small, daily, even 'inevitable' variations upon that form. Depending upon the parents' levels of awareness and energy, the focus upon these related aspects will change:

— *Sometimes I focus on my singing, on the lyrics, on the images they create, and then I switch my focus to the child or to the two of us together. It depends on the day, and it changes during the singing as well.* (Mother no. 1)

9.3.1 The singing's everyday mode and mood—global stability and small variations

First, the parents's singing reflects an everyday mode:

— *Singing has an everyday mode. And I have to say that when he finally falls asleep, I get this feeling that, ah, now it's finished.* (Mother no. 7)

— *Life is so busy—it is hectic to be alone with three kids, and sometimes I am so tired that I can barely sing, but it is a ritual that we all want, and it is so nice, so I do it for them every evening.* (Father no. 1)

Parents moderate their emotional investment in the singing, according to their mood and energy level, but they remain convinced that the act is generally meaningful for their children because it is so repetitive. Often, as time goes by, the initial expressivity of the lullaby act is changed, and even lost, to be succeeded by a more moderate emotional expression that is related to the 'everydayness' of the act. It becomes a

mood, here defined as the perpetuation of a given emotion over a relatively extended period of time.

Lullaby singing is not only related to happiness and satisfaction. The common everydayness of the act somehow seems to contrast with the act's possible plethora of expressions and manifestations, as it takes on a repetitious character. Parents emphasise that the act is ordinary.

Parents' levels of expressivity fades as their involvement and engagement in the act diminish:

— *I sometimes sing while half asleep.* (Mother no. 2)

— *I sometimes think about all the things I have to do later while I am singing.*
(Father no. 3)

A lack of expressivity, according to the parents, does not mean that they do not care about their singing or how they relate to their children. It derives instead from the parents' everyday mood, and from a ritual mode that places their focus more on the child, the ritual and the practical issues of bedtime than on their own performative emotions. In addition, many parents sing and use their musicality and expressivity in a highly unconscious way at these moments:

— *The singing has been very unconscious. My musical capacities have been unconscious, I would in fact say.* (Mother no. 2)

— *What I do is rather unconscious.* (Mother no. 9)

In the empirical data, there is a kind of insistence on sticking to the same old pattern of songs that often comes from the children, not the parents. Parents, in fact, are often surprised by the power that resides in the repetitive character of the ritual, or rather the power and will that reside in the child regarding this particularity. When it comes to the songs chosen, children develop an affinity that is not easily shaken. As one parent puts it, there is a kind of 'global stability' regarding the act. Parents play with this fixation in order to enjoy the moment with their children and stay focused on the end goal of sleep. They find, as well, that some degree of improvisation enhances rather than detracts from this fixity, as we will see below.

Sometimes singing in the presence of the child affects the parent deeply; other times, parents block their feelings out or simply 'do not feel anything in particular'. Regardless of their fading level of vitality and other everyday distractions, parents still accommodate the child, however mechanically. They continue to insist that they want music to be an integral part of their children's lives.

— *I sang this simple melody to my son when he was still in his mother's womb. I wanted music to be so integrated that he could not remember the first time he listened to it.* (Father no. 5)

— *Lullabies to me are not only connected to falling asleep at bedtime. They are connected to phases during the day when we need calm and silence, and when it is natural to sing.* (Mother no. 9)

— *Our life was a living musical.* (Mother no. 2)

The word integration evokes aspects of the lullaby's positioning in the daily lives of parent and child, and especially in their general interactive style. However, it also points to the lullaby's function as an integrator of the child into society or culture via the story or language or presence of the music as performed by a sensitive, attuned and mindful parent. So, for some parents, the act is *integrated* as well as *integrating*.

— *I feel the act is blended into our way of being together, and it is a natural extension of how we play and get along.* (Mother no. 7)

— *The singing is an important and natural part of our way of being together. It creates calm for both of us, and it is strongly connected to our relationship.* (Mother no. 3)

The act's quality of integration does not always contribute to a calm atmosphere, however. Lullaby singing can even integrate itself with a stressful or pressure-filled situation:

— *Do you hasten to make him fall asleep too?*

— *Yes, I manage to do that. I am worried about him not getting enough sleep.*

— *So there is stress connected to the going-to-bed situation as well?*

— *Yes, I feel that I really have to lure him into sleep, as he doesn't fall asleep by himself.* (Mother no. 3)

This extract illustrates the paradox of the bedtime moment, which manifests stress in relation to the act of calming down. The lullaby becomes a flashpoint for this paradox, contributing to the calmness but bearing all of the responsibility for the ritual's success. In this case, the mother must block out her feelings of stress, which obviously does not resonate with the notion of relational and emotional integration in the bedtime moment.

Moreover, to her, the act is a natural part of her way of being with her son. At the same time, it differs from how she otherwise relates to her son during the day, so that

she describes it as a sort of compensation. She uses her singing as a tool with which to calm her son down, and she experiments with her voice and singing in order to make the act as efficient as possible. How integrated the act is in relation to her description and experience of it is difficult to determine. Integration happens best when there is a reconciling of the parent's sensitive caregiving intentions and the child's physical, emotional, mental and spiritual processes. First of all, however, the parent must share his or her emotional perspective, as we will discuss next.

9.3.2 Conveying, expressing or sharing emotions

Many parents tend to dismiss their own emotions in this setting of singing lullabies. This recalls the predominance of attunement in relation to vitality affects. I suggest that there is a co-attunement taking place when both the parent and the child gradually calms down. To some parents, this energetic co-attunement seems even to be more important than an emotional sharing. The calming effect of singing brings relaxation to both the parent and the child, unless the child is still awake and not sleepy, in which case this particular energy transfers back to the parent and impacts the act as well. Before long, the particular affective states being transmitted are connected to energy rather than parental intent.

The emotional aspects of lullaby singing, however, seem to be an underestimated and therefore unexplored area for many parents. According to the inquiry's empirical findings, several parents have difficulty expressing what they feel when they sing for their children. This probably means that they have their focus mostly on the child or are otherwise not paying attention to their own inner state.

Sometimes a connection is made, though there is always baggage attached:

— I always want to show that I love them, in one way or another. But I don't like the American style, where they say I love you automatically. The words become empty. I need to really feel that I love them when I say it. I don't manage to sing if I don't feel good, or if there has been too much that is negative going on between us. (Mother no. 4)

This mother demonstrates what I have called an authentic parenting style, where the mother clearly wants to be quite sincere about her own feelings in the interaction with her children. For her, constantly telling your children that you love them has no meaning in the end. It has to be real, and this affects her singing as well. Her case is unusual, in that parents who sing for their children are not always able to describe verbally what takes place when singing. Parents can reflect upon the dimension of love afterwards, but in the moment they are often goal oriented instead. One of the

parents goes even further in this regard, claiming that the best moment is when the children are finally sleeping. At that point, you can watch their sweetness and feel unconditional love.

Most of the parents have both an intrinsic interest motivation and an external instrumental motivation in relation to the act of singing lullabies, but their assessment of what is central to the act and their feelings about it differ greatly:

— *Do you believe that you share your emotional repertoire as well?*

— *Yes, I do.*

— *Do you use your own feelings?*

— *I have not thought about that, but since you ask me, I think I do. (Father no. 2)*

— *I think I sing in a very unconscious manner, but I try to sing soft and sweet.*

(Mother no. 10)

— *I just sing. I don't feel or think of anything in particular. (Father no. 9)*

Most of the parents do not think much about exactly what they are expressing to their children. Lullaby singing is all about the process of going to bed, and the parents are often very tired themselves. Nevertheless, the singing is intuitively very soft and the focus is always on the child in general.

Still, parents reflect human wisdom through their own lullaby experiences.

— *I know this by experience. Over time, I see what works out. I also found out that what worked out for my daughter, didn't necessarily work out well for my son. I had to make new adaptations and changes. He needed much more physical contact, because he was much more introvert and didn't connect so easily with other people. I used the singing for all it was worth in order to come closer to him, because he seemed to withdraw himself from social life when we got divorced, but he still wanted my singing. (Mother no 2.)*

Some parents are afraid of looking silly or overly emotional in their statements about what is going on inside them when they sing for their children. They often block out this dimension, in fact, because they want to protect their children from these strong feelings, or they think that the singing and setting in themselves are enough.

— *I can kill that myth immediately. I do not express any kind of emotions when singing to my children. It is just a nice moment together. That's all. (Father no. 3)*

Other parents let the feelings surface, when they need to:

— *Sometimes I feel a deep gratitude when singing to my children, and then I get so emotional that I can start to cry.* (Mother no. 10)

— *When I sing 'Sov du vesle spire ung', a traditional lullaby, to my daughter, it is as though I expand 'I love you' into many small playful notes between stable bars. I believe she feels the depth of love that comes through most of the time. The song evokes tenderness and love in me. It is as though it almost hurts. I have a strong affinity to the melody. It is so beautiful in its genial simplicity, and it is precious to me.* (Lullaby diary, Feb. 2011)

There is therefore no parental consensus when it comes to the appropriate level of expressivity or the sort of messages that should be conveyed during lullaby singing. What little agreement there is concentrates upon the realisation that singing is most emotionally fraught when the children were youngest:

— *I was so emotional [when I first began to sing]. Sometimes the tears dropped freely.* (Mother no. 4)

— *The act was much more emotional in the beginning.* (Father no. 2)

— *Of course, I was much more emotional when the children were very small. Maternal hormones strongly influenced much of my behaviour, and everything was new.* (Mother no. 6)

The singing, in tandem with the presence of the child, evokes emotions in the parent. In some cases, parents express real feelings when singing in front of their children. The lyrics present opportunities to get in touch with emotions that belong to the parents' childhoods as well as the present moment. Parents may express an air of nostalgia to their children, or they might express something in relation to their daily experiences and preoccupations.

By contrast, through personal interpretations of the songs, some parents may simply relate to the content of the lyrics by *conveying* certain emotions, rather than expressing them directly. Conveying encompasses the notion of serving as a medium of transmission. Many parents are not aware of their own emotions while singing, but they still communicate something to their children in the process. It might be gratitude, which in turn expresses itself in a range of ways:

— *I feel a sort of gratitude when singing.* (Mother no. 10)

— *Oh, I have cried and laughed a lot while singing.* (Mother no. 2)

As previously mentioned, parents sometimes modify the content of the songs in order to make them less sad and dogmatic. It is clear, though, that there are times when it is valuable to express sadness to the child, to develop his or her ability to differentiate among feelings and otherwise develop emotional competence.

When parents sing, they project parental love in an especially soothing, caring and calming way. Through their emotional expressions and communicative gestures, they make their parental love visible, tactile and audible. However, the loving and caring mode of singing has its exceptions and in most of the cases the emotions are then more tied to parental feelings than to action.

Parents seem to have different strategies related to their own present time frustrations. Most want to avoid negative emotions in the meeting with their children at bedtime, but they hold back their emotional past and present with varying degrees of success. The aspects of intrusion and self-boundaries relate to the parent's representation, identity feelings, inner conflicts and unconscious positioning. Regarding the latter, unconscious expressive behaviour is hard to deal with; whether parents like it or not, inner conflicts are externalised in close interrelationships. Some parents touch upon this.

Although lullabies can be a powerful source of emotion, some parents show little interest in it and cannot relate to claims about other parents' reported ability to generate intense emotional expressions and responses while singing. As we will see, this also seems to be due to some parents' more 'manipulative' approaches, but also to an entering into a more balanced meditative state while singing.

To many parents, the meaningfulness of the act is strongly dependent on and linked to this happy ending and positive, harmonious outcome. However, this meaningful way of ending the day does not seem to prevent them from being absent-minded from time to time. Parents' also seem to sense repetition and novelty differently, compared to their children. The data reveal that parents have their own strategies and performing styles in order to compensate for (or reinforce) the repetitiveness of the ritual. This diversity is also connected to being conscious about the possibility of different phases of singing or not:

9.4 Styles, strategies and techniques

9.4.1 The two different phases of singing

Some parents report that they sing differently in the first phase of the bedtime ritual than in the second phase. At the beginning, they try to match the children's level of vitality and attract their attention by singing more playfully and quickly, then they modify this by singing more slowly and softly in order to bring about sleep. Different types of songs satisfy these goals.

— I started with some songs that I call 'action songs', because the children liked this so much. Ride, ride on the Icelandic horse. I call them action songs because they are more active than normal lullabies. I started with these more active songs and ended with some more monotonous songs, which were not as exciting to listen to. The point is to use that difference—to not sing songs that rely on interaction, because the child should not be so interested in the singing, preferably, and should not interact. They should be entering dreamland, not interacting with me any more. So I was rather conscious about the choices of songs I made. Shall we sing songs in order to laugh and have fun, or shall I sing to calm down? However, I didn't only use lullabies. (Mother no. 6)

— I begin to sing the song with love and devotion. Then, the second time, I try to sing it a little less expressively—a more monotonous and simple singing. Then, the third time, I sing it very monotonously to make my boy fall asleep. (Father no. 7)

In the first phase of the lullaby singing, this father overtly indicates his love, and we might say that the lullaby act has an expressive mode. Then he manipulates the act by switching to a more instrumental mode—one evocative of hypnosis—which positions the act as a calculated effort. A mother puts it this way:

— —I start to sing a song that he likes and that he thinks is funny. Then he starts singing with me, and I sing in his tempo and with the same pitch. Then he just glides into it. I catch him this way. It is a sophisticated form of manipulation. (Mother no. 7)

Parents in this inquiry employ this type of strategy highly intuitively and pragmatically, based upon previous experiences related to the children's responses and behaviour. Several parents describe the strategy as different phases of expressiveness. First,

they sing with engagement and passion. Then they start singing in a more neutral and monotonous way. Finally, they introduce longer pauses between the phrases, sing more monotonously, yawn and breathe slowly and deeply.

— *I sing as monotonously as possible—the same songs, sounds and singing style every night. I am rather conscious about doing it this way. It has a clear purpose: sleep.* (Father no. 9)

— *I start to yawn rather consciously while singing, and I take longer and longer pauses between the phrases. It is a sort of manipulation. I exaggerate very consciously. First I attract his attention, and then I try to channel him into sleep by taking longer and longer pauses between the phrases, and by exaggerating my breathing and airy singing.* (Mother no. 7)

9.4.2 ‘Captivating the child by the musical flow and appeal’ and musical manipulation

‘Captivating’ the child describes both what happens and what the parents want to happen via lullaby singing. The notion literally refers to an attempt to achieve or acquire something through focused attention in order to attract and hold by charm, beauty, or excellence. The ‘preverbal appeal’ of lullaby singing fits this need, as parents acknowledge:

— *If he was sad or standing in his bed and didn’t want to sleep, I tried to attract his attention by some exciting sounds or a funny song. And then I tried to modulate the sounds a little when I saw that he was very touched by it, and then I sang more weakly and slowly. I followed his feelings, so to speak. Sometimes I sang the usual songs too.* (Mother no. 7)

This mother tries to adapt to her son’s needs and experiments with sounds and songs, using her sense of humour, to comfort him.

— *Singing makes the moment alive. I feel a flow when singing. It takes me on a new road. I sometimes joke with the words and the child loves it.* (Mother no. 1)

Parents’ feelings of mastery and control over singing lullabies at bedtime allow them to appreciate the impact, even if the songs are repetitive. Some parents use songs that they know their children love to introduce a flow that channels the energy of the children as sleep approaches.

— *I focus on the flow of my singing and keep it alive this way. If I do not, my children are easily bored.* (Mother no. 1)

— *It is a sort of manipulation, in a sophisticated way.* (Mother no. 7)

This father, for example, strategically drains his singing of expressiveness as he goes:

— *I begin to sing the song with love and devotion. Then, the second time, I try to sing it a little less expressively—more monotonous and simple singing. Then, the third time, I sing it very monotonously, to make my boy fall asleep.* (Father no. 7)

This style of singing may be highly manipulative and conscious or it may occur when the parents' fading level of vitality turns into absent-mindedness:

9.4.3 Repetitive, autopilot singing

The act of singing lullabies is as unique as the parent doing it. There are many variables in play during the act. The parent's voice is unique and adapted to the present circumstances. The child might respond and interact differently on different days. Still, many parents experience the act as a repetition and their attitude towards repetition in general seems to contribute to an absent-minded, auto-pilot singing.

— *I don't put much effort into the singing, and sometimes I sing on autopilot. This is life, and they seem to like it anyway.* (Father no. 7)

Children, on the other hand, often say that the act is never the same. Mother no. 5 reports what her daughter said the other day:

— *I feel that I am singing the same way every evening. But my daughter said the other day: 'Mommy, you never sing the song the same way. Last time you were yawning in a different place.'* (Mother no. 5)

— *I sing in exactly the same manner every evening. I don't want to attract her attention, because then I know that I have to start all over again.* (Father no. 9)

— *Sometimes I sing on autopilot.* (Mother no. 2)

— *I repeat the same sequence of songs in the same way every night. Artistically boring, but that's not important here.* (Father no. 3)

Though mother no. 5 sings the same song in the same voice, the child grasps the nuances of her performance differently. This difference in assessment of the act illustrates the fundamental gap between the adult and the child world. The parents' identification with their own childhoods might bridge the gap, to some extent, and the parents' level of flexibility about and awareness of these 'childlike' tendencies is relevant as well. Nevertheless, when parents experience the act as tedious repetition, they will lack the ability to see the subtle nuances that are in fact in play, which limits their experience of what the act might afford. The child can remind them of what has been lost in the particular present moment as a result. The repetitive character of singing may also help the parent to enter a more present and meditative state:

9.4.4 A 'meditative' and present singing style

Parents often make the assumption that when children get bored, they will fall asleep, and song structures can help in this regard.

— *It is rather obvious that the song that bites its tail, which does not even have a text that carries any meaning, becomes more meditative and trancelike. It invites to calm.* (Mother no. 2)

— *It mutually calms us down. It is the same songs that are repeated in the same manner every night. It is supposed to be this way.* (Father no. 1)

Parents compare lullaby singing to meditation and trance. The repetitive, monotonous structure and character of the songs, together with the darkness in the room, the fading level of energy of the parent and the child, and the soft singing all contribute to this aural calm. Sometimes the parent and the child even fall asleep simultaneously, thanks to the attunement and restfulness brought about by the bedtime ritual.

— *Music is the best. It doesn't stimulate the mind to new excursions. No, it tunes your mind to become a little calmer. If you tell your children a very scary story, they lie awake afterwards. I believe that the oscillations in the head tunes into the music. These folktunes are identical, regardless of country. They exist in order to make the children fall asleep. Children are all the same when they are small.* (Father no. 4)

This father observes that the lullaby-singing situation as a whole generates trust and calms the child, thanks to the universal sleep-inducing nature of these songs. Elsewhere, I learn that he has four children and is confident in his paternal knowledge

about what they need. His surety—as much as his singing, perhaps—provides a calm atmosphere for them.

Relatedly, other parents note that difficulties encountered at bedtime often stem from their own inability to stay in the present moment and regulate their own level of energy or tension. Some parents emphasize the songs and the singing's mediative affordance, and sometimes in tandem with their own creative inventions:

— *The song is very simple, meditative and repetitive, circle-like—a song that bites its tail. Of course you get tired of listening to a song that is going in circles. In one of the songs, I add some small ornamentation to the original melody without losing hold of the simple and calming structure of the song. I use the same technique as my grandmother.* (Mother no. 2)

— *I sing a very simple song—not even a song, just a few motives or phrases of a melody that I am fond of.* (Father no. 5)

Parents use different conscious and unconscious techniques in order to modify the act to fit their own intentions, and to make it understandable, predictable, stable and efficient.

9.4.5 A multisensory and yawning singing style

The following sequential annotation from a video describes a mother who is sitting in bed with her son. She massages his whole body while singing the same series of songs. He does not appear tired at first, and they talk for a bit before she starts singing. Her singing is rhythmically connected to her movements. She also sings very slowly and takes long pauses between the phrases. It is as if the breathing, the songs, the singing and the movements are organically connected. Her voice is soft, light and airy as she works through a fixed series of songs that blend into each other. It looks like an act of meditation. During the interviews, the mother tells me that she has sung these songs for years now, first for her daughter and then for her son. The repetitious singing of the same songs over time makes these moments very meditative and trancelike. Also, she focuses more on the related physical contact with her son than she did with her daughter, because it seemed as though he turned away from her when she got divorced from his father, and she uses the singing in order to connect with him physically as well as emotionally. He is not a 'physical kind of guy', she observes, but she wants him to learn to be intimate and close, she puts it:

— *He is just like his father. He has to learn how it is to relate physically—to be close together. This is important for me, as I could see that he very easily turned inwards and did not seek companionship.* (Mother no. 2)

The following sequential annotation will illustrate the situation:

00.00. The son is put to bed. The mother is almost whispering to her son, sitting next to him: 'You need to lie down now'. She gives him his teddy bear and puts the blanket over him. It takes a while for him to be well settled in bed. 03.04. She starts to massage his back, head and neck while singing 'Det var en deilig, deilig dag'. She also touches his hair, and her movements are guiding her singing rhythm. The son has turned his face towards the wall, lying on the side, his back towards his mother. 004.00. The mother almost whispers 'Og himmelen some er blid og blå' [And the sky is blue and smiling]. She continues to sing almost silently. Her breathing is as audible as her pronunciation of the song's lyrics. Her singing flows very slowly, and she takes long pauses between the phrases.

06.40. She continues to sing the next song, the old lullaby 'By, by barnet'. She doesn't pause between these two songs. They seem interconnected. 07.48. She starts to yawn while continuing to massage and sing. 0.8.30. She yawns again while singing. The son lies there, silent and calm. The mother's voice is very airy, and she breathes very slowly between the phrases. 0.9.00. She yawns, massages and sing. There is not much interaction here. The mother is the active one, and the son is passive in the sense that he is just lying there, 'receiving' his mother's singing and massage. 09.24. She yawns again and sing. 'Sommeren er stutt, vinteren er lang' [The summer is short, the winter is long]. 10.20. She yawns again while singing, and watches her son while massaging him. He is very calm and silent. He doesn't move his body.

10.48. She continues to sing the next song, 'Danse mi vise, gråte min sang' [Dance this melody, weep my song]. The phrases are very long, and you can hardly hear what she is singing. The words are almost whispered, and the breathing and yawning are exaggerated. 11.10. 'Noen er rike' [Some people are rich] / 'Og noen er fattige' [And some people are poor] / 'Vegen er bratt' [The road is very steep]. 11.40. She sings: 'Danse mi vise' [Dance my melody] / 'Gråte min sang' [Weep my song]. The boy is lying there without moving. His head is on the pillow. It looks as though he has fallen asleep. 12.05. The last song is finished, and she puts the blanket even more tightly over him. He then starts to move his back and legs a little, and he shows her that he is still awake. The mother says: 'Sleep now'.

13.08. She stands up, then returns and kisses his forehead. 13.50. He says, 'Can you put on some cream?' 14.00. She puts some cream on his hands. 14.08. She says, 'Sleep well,' and tries to walk out of the room, but she hesitates, because he seems to have woken up again, when she stopped singing. (Description of home-recorded video, mother singing lullabies to her 9-year-old son 2011)

Through the mother's singing, the son grows accustomed to being touched, and he seems to enjoy it, in a silent way. The mother says that he takes all of this for granted. She cannot really tell if he appreciates it very much, but he expects it now. The video shows the boy preparing himself for the massage by lying down on his side and moving his legs a little to find the right position.

The mother and son are close to each other in the bed. They have little eye contact or face-to-face interaction; the mother looks out into the room or downwards into the bed and at the son's back while singing. This style of close, multisensory relating, the mother tells me during the stimulated recall, is inspired by African and Portuguese customs, and she has done this for several years now. He listens to her singing, and by the end of the singing he has calmed down but perhaps not yet fallen asleep.

At the beginning of the ritual, the mother says that she attunes to her inner self, connecting more to the song and the evening than to her son as such. Over time, they gradually attune to each other as well, and the mother adapts to her son's small gestures and looks by slightly modifying the tone of her singing and the coordinated rhythmic movements of her bodily massage. The tempo and delivery of the singing seem to match the mothers' fading level of energy and even accommodates her yawns. It is as if she communicates sleep and calmness through her 'yawning singing'.

This communication of calmness and sleep through body and sound goes well. It is obvious that the son knows the songs, even though he does not sing along. He 'comments' with his body movements while the mother sings, as to when the song will finish or when he wants more.

— The singing is an act of giving. I feel that it is an ultimate act of service-mindedness. I give and give, and of course I feel content in the end too, but also very tired. (Mother no. 2)

Both the mother and her child have expectations for this moment, and their tacit agreement about it reflects a deep connectedness that has developed over time. The singing quite literally 'goes without saying', as does the bulk of the ritual until its final moments.

9.4.6 Improvisation, alteration and invention of songs

Some parents emphasize more than others the improvisational nature of their musical interaction with their children and their creative singing style:

— *I sometimes altered my singing and wanted to see if my son responded to it. He laughed, and I saw that he liked it—that I had played around with our song.* (Father no. 5)

— *I experimented a lot with my voice and how to sing, because I didn't want to get bored by singing the same song over and over again. I was curious about what worked out best in relation to calming my son.* (Mother no. 3)

— *I use a lot of improvisation in order to attract my son's attention.* (Mother no. 7)

— *I need to be very present and alive. Otherwise, my daughter would not accept it.* (Father no. 9)

The parents' obscuring of the boundary between predictability and creativity, all without losing sight of the overall calming purpose of the act, involves the 'art of balance'. Sometimes, however, this balance is can be hard to strike:

— *Improvising with my daughter is so much fun. We both love it. But sometimes we go too far, and I see that she gets more and more excited. Then we need to begin all over again.* (Father no. 4)

— *It is a very living ritual that varies a lot. It is absolutely a ritual and it can last for a period of time, and then suddenly it changes. We have been through many different phases and a lot of different songs.* (Mother no. 7)

Even within a ritual based upon stability, then, change has its place, to greater and much smaller degrees:

— *If she wants to climb up into the bed, I sing a little to her while she is lying in the small bed, and I am lying in the large one. But that happens only once a month. Normally I walk and hold her while singing. When I am finished with the last verse of 'Byssan Lull', I put her down in her bed and she falls asleep almost immediately. I normally put her down when I am singing the phrase 'Kjærleken den røda' [The purple love].*

— *So it is related to the text and melody—when to put her down? And you do the same thing every night?*

— *Yes, it is a fixed ritual. (Father no. 3)*

The child welcomes small variations, but parents must create a balance between new features and old ones, because the child will be generally sensitive to change.

— *It is a very living act, and it changes all the time. If we make a ritual out of it, it will take a month or two and then something new is introduced and the ritual has changed. But it is absolutely a ritual that lasts for a long time, and we have been through lots of different phases. (Mother no. 7)*

— *Do you sing the same way all the time?*

— *I sing the fixed series of songs. There are some small variations in the way I do it, but roughly it is almost the same from one evening to the next.*

— *You improvise?*

— *If I feel that she is very tired, I sing a little faster, and if she is very excited, I sing a little slower.*

— *What about dynamic features?*

— *I sing with a very soft voice, because she has her ear close to my shoulder. The biggest difference is related to tempo. I hurry a little if I see that she is very tired. And sometimes I skip a song or two. (Father no. 3)*

The improvisational energy and quality of the interaction is also central to its meaningfulness. The act resonates with, in turn, each participant's inconsistency: the child has expectations about sequence and regularity but also tends towards unpredictable behaviour, while the parent requires structure at bedtime but also takes great pleasure in improvising.

— *Yesterday evening, he wanted to read 'Children's Songbook', and he pointed at one of the songs. He didn't recall the picture on the page, and he wondered what kind of song it was. It was a song from my childhood, and I started singing it. But little by little he came to understand that he didn't know this song, and then he said: 'No, no, not that one'. I think he didn't know this song, and he only wants to hear familiar songs—the songs that he knows from kindergarten. (Father no. 2)*

Some children, of course, are curious about new songs (or new performances of old songs) as well:

— *Sometimes it's like a small happening.*

— *Are you improvising?*

— *Yes, on impulse. And the children know that I do it. It is funny, because I feel that I become so creative, and I see that they like it. I try to invent new words to the song about the famous pirate 'Kaptein Sabeltann', and now there are lots of versions. (Father no. 10)*

Improvisation has many forms. Sometimes the parent improvises in relation to a repertoire of songs that he or she does not know by heart, based upon the child's wishes, using small melodic phrases or lyrics of songs that already exist. Other times, the child takes a more active part, or they improvise together.

— *She often wants to hear different types of songs, and she asks me to sing songs that she doesn't know, and then she invents her own lyrics to them. We have become very fond of singing this way.*

— *So you improvise?*

— *Yes, a lot.*

— *And she improvises too?*

— *Yes, we have done this for a long time now, and she participates very actively. She often wants to decide what kind of song to sing, and sometimes when I start to sing a song, she puts an end to it by choosing another one. At other times, she wants me to sing the same song over and over again. (Mother no. 1)*

— *We have used lots of variations based upon different types of songs. Mostly, he falls asleep after ten minutes, but there have been times when I have sung for an hour. (Mother no. 7)*

In many cases, parents manage to strike a productive and attractive balance between improvisation and predictability, ensuring the success of the act. Parents and children also adjust their behaviour to one another, which becomes particularly apparent when improvisation occurs.

— *Did you experiment?*

— *Not consciously, but I know now that I did it.*

— *You played with your own singing?*

— *I became an improviser. I invented songs too.*

— *You made your own lullabies?*

— *Yes, you have the one that could last forever. (Father no. 4)*

The father finds personal ways of creating songs that arise through improvisation or storytelling.

— *I also start by telling a story. We walk into the woods, and there we meet a bear, and then I start singing the song about the bear. I link the story to songs we already know or I invent a new one.* (Father no. 4)

In this case, dynamic play using meaningful transitions between storytelling and familiar songs produces a fixed bedtime ritual based on a specific pattern of interaction.

9.4.7 Personalised and adapted songs

In order to make the singing personal and tailor-made for their children, the parents often use and integrate their children's name and gender in the songs, and make personal adjustments and unique interpretations of traditional songs:

— *I always put her name in the song, so she really feels that it is a song for her.* (Mother no. 5)

— *I sing the song 'Jeg har ei tulle med øyne blå' [I have a small girl that has blue eyes] simultaneously for my two twin girls. One has blue eyes and the other has brown, so I sing: 'Jeg har to tuller med øyne brune-blå' [I have two small girls with blue and brown eyes].* (Mother no. 10)

— *My boy has blue eyes, so when I sing the song 'Jeg har ei tulle med øyne blå', I change it to 'I have a prince with blue eyes'.* (Mother no. 9)

Parents introduce the names of their children or change the gender of the characters in the songs as it suits them. They replace words to create a personal tone or just for fun in relation to their own life stories, personal tastes and styles. They also exclude lyrics that they find to be inappropriate for their children, either due to changing social conventions and traditions or personal convictions. On the other hand, some parents admit that they just forget about the content of the songs. They say that it is not that important.

However, personalised and otherwise adapted songs have their own goals for providing an intimate and safe space that is based upon familiarity, identity and appreciation.

— *I always put my children's name in it. This makes it very personal, and I know that my children appreciate it a lot.* (Mother no. 4)

As already touched upon, many parents sing a fixed series of songs. This non-stop way of singing different songs also becomes a highly personalized interpretation of

the songs. Parents report that they believe that their children consider the different songs to be the one and the same song:

— *I sing a fixed series of songs. I don't stop between the different songs. They are all connected and you almost cannot tell when the first is finished and the second one starts. I don't think my son even knows that I sing several songs. I believe he thinks that the different verses belong to the one and the same song.*

— *Why did you start to sing this way?*

— *I don't actually know. I think it initially was based upon my own and my child's preferences. I wrote down about twenty songs, and then I started picking out a few of them that were particularly well suited for the bedtime and my son's temper. I started to sing 'Det var en deilig, deilig dag' [It is a very lovely day]. It is a very nice song to begin with. So positive! Then we go down into the 'atmosphère of minor' of the old lullaby 'By, by barnet' [Hush, hush baby], and I can see that my son starts to turn a little more inward. He becomes more grounded in his own body, so to speak. Then it is important for me to just continue singing, even though the song is finished, because my son needs more in order to stay in this calm and relaxed state, and the songs are rather short, so I just add one more song without stopping. (Mother no. 2)*

9.4.8 Singing as co-creation

There is a great diversity of personal expression among different parent-child dyads. Every parent/child interaction has its own signature, and within each dyad is a very private intimacy and personal creativity.

Parents and their children discover each other when singing together, the inquiry data indicates, and they are both co-creators of meaning, perhaps via the 'technique of free association', as one parent puts it, or musical improvisation.

— *I never know how long it will take. Sometimes we sing for fifteen minutes; other times it takes about an hour. The focus is on the present moment. I really could never have predicted that I should improvise songs and be so creative. (Mother no. 7)*

— *We never managed to create a calming moment at bedtime. I knew that we shouldn't play too much, but the singing and story making was fun, and both my child and I got excited, and we had to start all over again. (Father no. 4)*

Some parents encourage playfulness more than others, and they create their own stories with their children that stimulate the development of imagination and creativity.

— *I created the singing routine together with them.* (Mother no. 8)

— *I invented a song that can last forever, and my child brings in new elements that I need to take into account while singing.* (Father no. 4)

— *My daughter wants to sing songs that she cannot sing, and when I start to sing a song, she turns it into a new one. This has been the way we sing recently. An odd way of singing, but this is how she likes it.* (Mother no. 1)

According to parents, lullaby singing is related to caregiving but also represents a sensitive communicative process that is based upon mutually influenced behaviour, play and improvisation. Parents seek approval from their children, and children seek approval from their parents. The singing event is a dynamic, dialogical process in which the child is an active co-creator with regard to the singing and, by extension, the caregiving. Parents describe the child's response and participation in different ways, and they also focus on different aspects of the musical interaction. Some children like to listen to their parents singing, whereas others start humming along before they even know a word of it. Initially, positive responses from the children are traced through nonverbal movements and facial expressions; later on, they will likely verbalise their preferences for some songs over others.

— *When I have finished the first song, she asks for the next one.* (Father no. 9)

— *They have a very strong will and opinion about which songs to sing and how to sing them and where I shall sit and what I shall do.* (Mother no. 10)

— *They don't sing with me. They only listen. He is not that into singing. He doesn't learn the songs in school, and it takes a lot of time for him to learn new songs. He doesn't even listen when I am singing. He is just present, in the calm. He has difficulty shutting his eyes, because he wants to see me. What I recall is that he puts the next part of his body on my lap in order to have his daily massage.* (Mother no. 2)

— *She participates much more now. It is just that it varies according to different phases and periods of time. At some times, there are specific songs that need to*

be sung and repeated over and over again. She has very strong opinions about my singing. (Mother no. 1)

— Suddenly they sing with me. Other times they just listen and enjoy the moment. (Father no. 1)

— Sometimes he hums along. He cannot speak yet, but I hear that he is humming some sounds while I sing. Other times he just listens and turns inwards. (Father no. 2)

Children's participation varies according to their age, personality and daily vitality level, but in general, children feel free to participate or simply watch as they see fit. Parents are moved by the child's presence and the child is moved both in an abstract and a concrete sense by the parents' singing and multisensory caring gestures. Some parents do find it strange that their children do not sing along, even though they know the songs by heart. Sometimes parents seem to be more 'competence oriented' than their children. Children will usually sing along during the daytime, but not as much at bedtime, when they seem to prefer to listen and relax. Also, children's playfulness sometimes feels like it sabotages this co-participation, while other times there is a real sharing, synchronisation and coordination that takes place.

The children's growing will and communicative skills influence the act in terms of the repertoire that the parents 'must' sing. In the beginning, the ritual was based upon the parent's decisions alone, but over time, the child takes over, and the parents' general sense of the child's basic *needs* gives way to the child's wishes.⁴⁷ Soon enough, though, parents find their children to be more 'satisfaction seeking' and clear in their preferences about the entire setting.

— They are so attentive, and they often sing along and have their own opinions about how I should behave and sing and how to sit and hold their hands—'Close your eyes, mommy!' 'Sing this song, not that one.' Sometimes, I am not allowed to sing the song I intended to sing. I just surrender to their choices and will. They have a very fixed idea about how this act should be performed. It is fascinating. My daughters insist so strongly when there is a song she wants, and she starts to sing it simultaneously with a different song, and if I continue to sing the other song, she doesn't stop. She is so stubborn. This duet of different songs doesn't sound so beautiful, though—it is only fun—but in the end I am the one

⁴⁷ Winnicott observes that the wish is part of a 'sophistication that is not to be assumed' regarding earlier, more immature developmental stages (Winnicott 1969, p. 256)

who has to stop singing. I have to modify my song repertoire to be more in line with their preferences. (Mother no. 10)

Do parents, then, use the children's mood and state as indicators of *when* to sing for them (Ilari 2005)? Yes and no. Some parents start singing to their children in the first place because something seems to be missing at bedtime, but when it becomes a fixed ritual, they are less likely to alter it according to mood. However, parents remain sensitive to the timing of their singing in relation to their children's level of vitality. They start singing when they see that the child is ready for it. Moreover, their children's engagement and attention, together with the parent's own mood, always colour the act and determine how long it will last and how many songs will be sung.

Alongside the standardised songs and their narratives and messages, parents and children improvise and mediate new meanings together as well. From a parental perspective, lullaby singing is sometimes experienced as an act of giving (or 'service-mindedness', as one parent put it), particularly in comparison to the singing of play songs.

The notion of co-creation in relation to lullaby singing is, however, not only limited to aspects of caregiving but also involves broader creative and improvisational behaviour. Both the parent and the child are 'creators of meaning'. The singing allows for this form of interaction upon the scaffolding of parental attunement.

— I can feel when my daughter starts to calm down and her body becomes relaxed. It makes me sing even more softly and more silently. (Father no. 3)

The act as co-creation is based upon the creative mechanism underpinning all human interactions, and it is characterised by a dynamic relationship between improvisation and fixed patterns that are developed by the parent and the child over time. Sometimes, the singing takes shape of being a sort of reward or gratification in order to calm down the child:

9.4.9 Singing as a sort of reward or gratification

Some parents touch upon the aspect of gratification in their interaction with their children at bedtime. They know that their children love their singing, and they use it as a sort of reward to make their children calm down when things are challenging at bedtime. This kind of 'negotiation' is not typical for the parents in this inquiry, but one of the fathers report:

— *I see now that I can use my singing as a sort of gratification. I say to my daughter that if she lies down in bed, I will start singing for her. I know she loves my singing, so most of the time it is very efficient.* (Father no. 9)

According to the parents, their singing ‘negotiation’ seems to help both parent and child get ‘on the right track’. A summary of a video session with a father and his three-year-old daughter will further illuminate this point.

The daughter is very ‘busy’ and moves around in the bed, singing or ‘bubbling’. Her eyes are very tired, but her body moves frenetically, and she doesn’t want to lie down. She sits and then she moves around again in the bed, from one side to the other, as if she cannot sit still. The father sits on his knees near her bed, and he says with a very calm voice that if she lies down in bed, he will start singing for her. It takes a little while, and the daughter doesn’t seem to pay attention to him. She just plays around in her own world, so to speak. The father repeats what he has just said, and then the daughter seems to listen to him and signals that she wants him to start singing. She lies down in the bed, still bubbling and talking, and interrupts her father when he starts singing, but at least she has calmed down a little, and she has laid her head on the pillow. The father starts to sing when he sees that his daughter has listened to him. His singing represents a sort of reward once the daughter has chosen to lie down in the bed. (Description of the home-recorded video, father singing lullabies to his 3-year-old daughter)

Even though some parents use their singing very consciously in order to make their children calm down, there is in general no sharp distinction between what the parents do for themselves in this particular setting and what they do for their children. The parents sing for the sake of their children as well as for the sake of their relationship, aiming at creating a good atmosphere. By some parents, the singing is considered to be a ‘gratifying’ act in terms of its calming impact on both the child and the parent, as one of the parents puts it. Others are entirely focused on the child or their parental ‘commitment’ to sing to their child is paramount regardless of its outcome or impact.

9.4.10 A diversity of ‘techniques’ and styles: an overview

The following list collects a range of techniques and styles used by the parents, both consciously and unconsciously. It illuminates parents’ intuitive inventions and creativity as well as their more ‘instrumental’ behaviour:

- ⊕ Two phases of singing: first matching the child's energy level by singing more energetically, then calming the singing down gradually.
- ⊕ Simplification: Humming a melody or singing a song with only a few elements—a song which 'bites its tail' and goes in circles, as one parent put it.
- ⊕ Exaggeration: Very slow singing, deliberate rhythmic and lyrical emphasis, longer pauses between the phrases, jawning singing style.
- ⊕ Manipulation: Suggestive singing by singing very monotonously in order to make the child fall asleep as fast as possible, because it gets bored.
- ⊕ Elaboration: Small alterations and ornamentations of ordinary songs to make them more unpredictable and exciting to sing.
- ⊕ Channeling: Focusing on the flow of the singing.
- ⊕ Captivation: Matching the child's initial level of energy with an attractive, upbeat song.
- ⊕ Formalisation or standardisation: A fixed series of songs in an everyday ritual that is based upon a stable time and place and the same ways of behaving.
- ⊕ Small or larger variations and improvisations: Ensuring the aliveness of the act via small daily variations and improvisations; sometimes old songs are replaced by new ones as time goes by.
- ⊕ Global stability and repetition: Employing the same songs and ways of singing over and over again.
- ⊕ Meditative and trancelike singing.
- ⊕ Personification: Integrating the names of children or family members and friends into the song.
- ⊕ Co-creative singing based upon improvisation and storytelling.
- ⊕ Gratification: Parents use their singing as a sort of gratification—'If you lie down in the bed now, I will sing for you'.

Parents are aware of the benefits of singing and the ways in which they want to relate to their children's particularities and individual responses. Paradoxically, parents demonstrate a high level of awareness regarding what works well with their children but also describe difficulty in helping the child fall asleep easily. Nonetheless, singing helps parents feel that they are doing their best for their children. It gives them a feeling of mastery and satisfaction. However, there are also moments where parental devotion and patience is replaced by parental ambivalence. Some of the traditional

lullabies reflect these bedtime challenges that can turn into parental ambivalence towards the child.

9.5 Parental ambivalence

Very few lullabies mentioned in this inquiry reflect parental ambivalence as such. Still, the act has a double message: now it is time to sleep and I love you. In addition, the lullaby can serve as a double-voiced utterance, in that the lyrics might not resonate with what the parent thinks or feels at the moment, and this can be sensed by the child. Parents' ambivalence about their feelings towards their children and their other day-to-day challenges and frustrations may interfere with their loving tone. The main questions center around the degree to which the act of singing lullabies serves to mollify this ambivalence or, alternatively, exacerbate it.

Unconditional love is a wonderful ideal. That's why it is so disconcerting to learn that my love has limits. Today, I have been very irritated, and that has certainly affected my daughter. When the evening came, I felt very bad, and I had a bad conscience. When I started singing 'So, ro', it reminded me of the big contrast between how I want to be as a mother and how I actually am. The song put me on the path towards this paradox and dilemma. I watched my daughter—I made eye contact with her and she smiled a tired smile before she turned around and fell asleep. At least the day ended well. I got the opportunity to give her this little gift as an expression of my love, modifying the thought that I am not considering her to be a big pain in the ass. I do love her. (Lullaby diary, March 2011).

— *I become slightly irritated. Now you need to stop fussing. Lay down in your bed and listen to this lovely song.*

— *You get irritated?*

— *Yes, and sometimes I think that in twenty seconds it is done. So I calm down again. (Father no. 6)*

Some parents report that lullabies can be a beautiful gift to give at the end of the day, especially if things have gone wrong. It is as though you are putting yourself back on track. It makes you rethink and reflect on your earlier behaviour, which addresses any attendant feelings of remorse. The singing supplies a moment of reflection and

respite, and the appealing sound of a beautiful melody might recall a pleasant place or person.

Sometimes, parents are aware of their own expectations as to how they want their children to respond to their singing. They also find that these expectations interfere with the flow and the details of the actual moment of going to bed. In this situation, a child's playfulness will trigger parental discontent and irritation.

Sometimes, parents feel that they become far too rigid:

— *I regret that I didn't sing beautifully all the time, and that I was far too rigid in terms of sleeping routines. I didn't always listen to his preferences.* (Mother no. 3)

9.6 Changes over time

9.6.1 Ritual changes

When the lullaby-act becomes a ritualized behaviour, parents experience the act as having its own life so to say, based upon repetition and predictability. Moreover, parents' multi-modal information and the act's functions seem to evolve and change with the child's development and age. Some elements of the act always need to be included, while there are other elements, which can be replaced by new ones. The structure is the same, but new songs replace old songs. Changes taking place are sometimes due to the children's age and their new levels of development together with their new impulses from the outside world. These changes also include how parents experience the act, perceive the interaction and modify the act according to the child's age.

The ritual is sometimes coloured by personal creativity and musicality through a mixture of storytelling and singing. Playful ways of relating uphold the vitality of the act and create exciting variations. In a way, the ritual is never the same, but the overall structure and the most important components of the story need to be implemented every time. The child is the one who safeguards the 'correct ritual execution', but also the one who tends to encourage the living aspects of the act as well. Parents meet new challenges, as the child grows older. Children push their parents' limits and parents feel that they need to create clearer boundaries for their children. Mother no. 2 describes a change that is more fundamental in character: from an act characterized by an 'embracing and caring love' to 'a sound on the calm':

— *Nowadays I sing more introvert, focusing more on finding the calm within. I centre myself and my singing is not so much about singing as it is to put sound on the calm. But when the children were smaller, I remember a different state that I was in, because it has been different in periods. Then I am singing more to them, embracing them with my sound and singing, a more caring way of singing.* (Mother no. 2)

9.6.2 The power and influence of the child—from ‘omnivorous’ to selective preferences

When the children are infants, they are more ‘omnivorous’ and accepting when it comes to the parents’ choice of songs. This means that initially the songs are based upon parents’ own preferences, practical circumstances and repertoire of choice. The children later express their preferences within this initial parental selection, based upon their impulsive childlike taste, daily external impulses and moods. Song choices can be modified and changed further according to social or school influences.

Parents are often surprised by the older child’s preferences regarding what they should sing, and more generally by the power that the child wields in the relationship.

Sometimes parents understand the children’s preferences, but other times they cannot tell the reasons behind them.

— *She very often wants to decide which song to sing, but when I start singing it, she will change the song and ask me to sing a new one. At other times, she just wants me to sing that one song, over and over again.* (Mother no. 1)

— *When they were small, there was this one song that they wanted me to sing. And then there were periods when they said, ‘Not that one’, and I started to sing a new one. And they said, ‘Not that one’. Until we found a song that they wanted to listen to. There are so many stories about this. Sometimes I had to sing a variety of songs. They said, ‘One more and one more’. Very often I ended up singing the same five songs, and then, suddenly, not that one. Songs—they come and go like waves in the sea.* (Mother no. 5)

The act is modified in the course of time in relation to the child’s changing needs, but the mother also points to the fact that the act, after 10 years, now is reduced to a minimum, that it is only bits and pieces because she doesn’t have any energy to put into it:

— *My son only gets the 'remnants' what is left from the bedtime-ritual. I was always singing and singing to his older sister. The living musical, my husband called it. I don't have the same amount of energy now, alone with two kids. You can imagine. But I have accepted it. My son gets what he gets and he is content. He doesn't know how much efforts were made in relation to his sister, and she was much more demanding.* (Mother no. 2)

Mother no. 6 on her part focuses more on a change, taking place on an emotional level:

— *Of course you are more emotional in the beginning. You have just become a mother and the hormones are playing around with you. Your cute little newborn baby is a miracle, and you want to do your utmost to please and comfort it. It was so touching the first times when I was singing. I cried a lot. Now it is more a duty, something you do because they are used to it and want it by habit more than by engagement.* (Mother no. 6)

Mother no. 5 highlights a change in her inner state due to new challenges:

— *When they were small, it was so easy to be present and to be close when they should go to bed. Now when they have grown older, I can start feeling a kind of distance to them, due to frustration about things that are not settled between us. Then I am not able to sing for them. I didn't have that presence and calm and the unconditional love in the moment. I have nothing to give. But it was so easy when they were small. Three-years-tantrums were easy to master compared to an adolescence-crisis. The adolescent behaviour sometimes triggers me, and I start to protect myself, and then I am not able to sing for them.* (Mother no. 5)

Changes regarding the ritual itself are also touched upon, when the stable form of the ritual is challenged by the improvisational nature of the interaction, and when the child wants to have more to say about it and wants to decide more about what to sing and not to sing:

— *If I try to sing "Trollmors vuggesang", a song that I have been singing for a long time, he stops me, and says it is too childish. When I start to sing "Byssan Lull", he doesn't want that either. It doesn't seem to be of interest anymore.* (Mother no. 2)

The child's growing communicational skills and stronger will encourage or "force" the parent to be more adaptive and flexible. Parents' 'solo performances' change into a stronger relational and interactive way of singing. However, these changes may not last for long:

— *Sometimes he only wants to listen to my singing and other times he wants me to listen to his singing. (mother no. 9)*

The changes taking place are also on bodily levels:

— *Now you are sitting near the bed. Did you hold them in your arms when they were younger?*

— *Then I sat mostly together with them in the bed, or I was lying next to them. I tickled them on their back. It was more physical contact at that time.*

— *But the physical contact is not there anymore now?*

— *No, I only hold her hand, and pat her on her front, and touch her hair. (Mother no. 5)*

Father no. 5 points out the reasons why the ritual stops:

— *The final stage of the ritual is singing. Until they no longer 'order' it. It changes, the sleep-ritual. They calm down by watching television, talking together and by reading books. There are other things that replace the act. They read better themselves and the television takes over. (Father no. 1)*

— *I stopped two years ago when she was 14. There was too much negativity going on between us, too much of a crash. It didn't feel good to sing for her anymore.*

— *So you stopped because you didn't want to sing anymore or because she didn't appreciate it any longer?*

— *It was not natural to do it anymore. It comes to a certain point. Yesterday evening I asked my second daughter, who is now 13 years old, for how long I shall sing for her. I don't know, she said. You tell me when you don't want me to sing anymore, I said, because you feel when you do not want it anymore. Ok, she said; now you can sing (Mother no. 5).*

9.6.3 The ending of a ritual as part of the child's process towards independence

In the course of time, as the child grows older, the parental act of singing lullabies does not continue to function as it was initially intended to, or its primary purpose shifts from easing an infant to sleep to representing family tradition or a shared sense of belonging and identity. It takes on its own autonomous, unspoken value—it is performed for its own good, or because it has always been performed. In the end,

the children still like it, and it serves the function of perpetuating communication, bonding time and affective ties between parent and child.

— *The singing is strongly connected to our relationship.* (Father no. 1)

— *It is our way of being together.* (Mother no. 9)

The lullaby act's enduring connection to the parent-child relationship is also revealed through its eventual conclusion, as the child walks the path towards independence.

— *It is rather hurtful for me to realise that he doesn't need my singing anymore. He rejects me when he rejects my singing. But I cannot just continue singing because I like it, when he doesn't seem to like it or need it any more. He wants to be independent now.* (Mother no. 3)

Parents are aware of the strong connection that exists between this regular singing ritual and their intimate relationship with their children. According to them, the building of the ritual is also the building of a close relationship.

Sometimes, the child may be driven to reject this bond by rejecting the lullaby singing. Other times, the child may experience the ritual as a positive daily social activity and a way of being together (like mealtime), even though he or she can fall asleep just fine on their own. By adolescence, parents admit, the ritual has naturally run its course:

— *I still sing for the youngest one—she is thirteen years old now—but I have stopped singing to my oldest daughter, who soon turns sixteen. This seemed rather natural, because the oldest one started to become more oriented towards her friends. We don't feel as close as we did. There have been a lot of difficulties. Adolescence is not the easiest thing to master for parents.* (Mother no. 5)

— *When they get older, they don't sit on my lap anymore. They sit on the lap of the kids in school. This is normal. The singing has a very natural end.* (Father no. 4)

As the child grows older, the reasons for the act fade. The parents are left to reflect on their singing 'career' as a process of trial and error that shaped certain of their experiences with their children, in relation to caregiving and enculturation:

— *I have understood the essence of being successful with children. To be able to make them fall asleep or not—you can actually do what you want, as long as it is a ritual that you both have agreed upon and appreciate and love. Then*

you can easily put them to bed. Music is the best. It doesn't stimulate new excursions. No, the sounds tune the mind to be a little calmer. If you tell them a scary story, they lie alert and excited afterwards. I believe that the fluctuations in their mind attune to the music. These folk tunes are the same regardless of the original country they come from, and they exist in order to make children fall sleep, and children are all the same when they are small. (Father no. 4)

— I sing very consciously in order to calm him down. I sing more and more calmly, then with longer and longer pauses between the phrases. I breathe and yawn. (Mother no. 7)

Parents transfer their own experiences to the ritual.

— I know this by experience. I have to be calm in order to make my child calm down. (Mother no. 2)

9.6.4 Differences in singing between the first-born and the second-born child

One mother tells me that when her son's elder sister was small, the mother could sing for hours, endlessly, if her daughter needed her to. Now, with her son, she doesn't have the energy any more:

— I sometimes feel bad towards my son. He doesn't get as much singing as his older sister did. I don't have the energy. He gets only bits and pieces of our past musical life. But I comfort myself with the fact that he doesn't know that. He is used to only a few songs. But in fact there are just bits and pieces left of my endless singing. I cannot continue this way anymore, and now I even sing on autopilot. And he accepts it, because he has to. Besides, he doesn't know of any other way of singing either. He is used to it this way. (Mother no. 2)

Through experience, the mother has learned to limit herself has become more aware of the importance of self-boundaries or she just become tired.

— It is the way it is, and we are both used to this way of relating over time. It is based upon my caring love even though it is much shorter. (Mother no. 2)

Other parents report similar changes:

— I have to admit that there is a difference between how much I sang to my daughter, compared to her younger brother. (Father no. 3)

— *I don't sing as many songs for him.* (Mother no. 1)

Parents point out that the more hectic life with multiple children can explain the difference. The parents do not have the time or energy to spend with later children.

Nonetheless, the meaningfulness of the act seems to depend on a parental flexible behaviour and state of mind. This state or behaviour is also strongly connected with the theoretical concepts of attunement and communicative musicality:

9.7 Singing in tune or singing attuned—reflective remarks?

The psychologist Daniel Stern proposes the notion of 'affective attunement' as the key to opening the 'intersubjective doors' between people (Stern 2003, p. 285). The psychologist Daniel J. Siegel adds that attunement enables people to 'feel felt' by each other, and he sees this state as crucial 'if people in relationship are to feel vibrant and alive, understood and at peace' (Siegel 2007, p. xiv). The concept of attunement in this particular setting refers to parents' focused attention on the internal world of their children (see Siegel 2007, p. xiii).

Most of the parents sing relatively in tune, but the degree to which their singing is *attuned*—to the child, the inner self and the moment—will vary. Parents report that their focus will change from one day to the next. Bedtime singing encompasses a range of priorities and motivations regarding the child, the relationship, and the song itself, with its special contents, metaphors, rhythms and melody.

— *How do you experience the act?*

— *I try to be calm and quiet. I talk very softly before I start singing. I often notice that my daughter is very tired and she closes her eyes. I have the focus totally on her.* (Father no. 9)

This focused singing reflects a level of sensitivity and openness towards the child, whatever the musical results. In other words, parents' focus on their children tends towards an interpersonal rather than intrapersonal attunement. I will return to this state in relation to the concept of musical mindfulness in the chapter of discussion. Parents' difficulty in explaining what they feel and express when they are singing may arise from their focus on their children instead, or it may be that they are exhausted as well.

— *I cannot tell what I feel at that moment. I am just very tired.* (Father no. 9)

— *Sometimes I feel a sort of gratitude when singing to my children. I am happy that things are as they are. Other times I am just very tired.* (Father no. 1)

— *I don't feel anything in particular while singing. There are no feelings involved. We are just sharing something nice together. That's all.* (Father no. 3)

The lullaby is a song form that enables parents and children to enter into an attuned state, an intersubjective space that is produced by the intimate character of the act. Parents report that their children are very sensitive to their parents' engagement in this regard:

— *I always have to put the focus on them while singing. My singing is in contact with them.* (Mother no. 2)

The theory of affective attunement describes the process of singing as a sharing of inner states of emotion between the parent and the child. The parent 'tracks and then reflects back to her infant' (Wright 2009, p. 22). Stern distinguishes attunement from empathy by the fact that the former makes greater use of cognitive and verbal responses. Attunement is an intuitive, continuous response that is essentially non-verbal and spontaneous, as well as relatively beyond the parent's awareness (Stern 1985). It is therefore difficult for parents to say whether they are tuned in to their children's internal state, yet they are able to acknowledge that some special form of *matching*, as opposed to pure imitation, is indeed taking place. Matching is associated with a 'cross-modal' means of relating and highlights the quality of the interaction (Trondalen and Skårderud 2007). The quality of the relation here is due to the specific receptivity and synchronicity enabled by music.⁴⁸ The two different phases of singing bear witness to an attempt to try to match a child's level of vitality in order to attract their attention in the first place.

Parents describe the way they 'hum' a very simple, wordless melody at bedtime when the child is very small. The style is mentioned earlier as simplification. This very simple musical 'performance' reflects the attempt to attune to the bedtime moment with fewer stimuli, so as to match the child's limited communicative and perceptive abilities as well as his or her fading level of vitality.

When the act arises out of a parent's narcissistic needs to feel good as a parent or to sing like a soloist, the attunement goes in the wrong direction. When the children need to recognise and mirror parents' needs; when children's true feelings in the moment are not validated and accepted, or they are even rejected; when the time

⁴⁸ This also relates to the mechanism of entrainment as mentioned earlier, which facilitates this synchronicity and coordination.

schedule dominates the parental focus, or parental absent-mindedness overwhelms the dynamic, the lullaby act cannot be considered a successful attunement.

The data from the video recordings reveal parents who seem to be interpersonally attuned to their children. However, they are also trying to balance the necessity of indicating clear boundaries for the evening with attuning to a tired but often still playful child. Some parents also seem to have their own personal parental agenda that do not always bring free flow to the moment, as they are too preoccupied with their own chronological time schedule.

There also seems to be a cluster of behaviour regarding those parents who emphasize emotional, expressive and relational aspects of the act and the attunement to the child's inner pulse and rhythm. The parents who have a more instrumental intention and style, emphasize the practical and educational benefits of the act and do not seem to pay so much attention to attuning to the child. Some of the strategies and techniques mentioned earlier reflect an instrumental behaviour from the part of the parent, such as the manipulative, captivating and gratifying techniques mentioned. Other parents whose style is more co-creative and improvised tend to have a more attuned and sensitive approach towards their children and the present moment. Parents who sing in a trance-like, meditative manner attune to themselves as much as to their children. In some cases, parents seem to switch between an intra-attuned singing style and an interpersonal attuned singing style or the boundaries between them seems blurred. Those parents who sometimes tend to be very goal-oriented and instrumental do not seem to be attuned neither to themselves, to the moment nor to their children while singing.

9.8 Towards focal points of discussion

In this chapter, parents' singing 'performances'—their strategies, styles and everyday coping techniques—have been taken into account. Many personalised, spontaneous and adapted songs flourish within the confines of the parents' and children's private home world. Parents' musicality is very often strengthened and reawakened in the meeting with their children at bedtime. The act is also highly influenced by the child's presence, to the point of co-creation. Parents sometimes balance between 'rival interests' within themselves as well as between them and their children. Sometimes the act becomes highly manipulative, monotonous and rather rigid; other times it is more flexible, living and creative. This may vary from moment to moment and from parent to parent.

A diversity of ‘techniques’ and singing styles exists that ranges from a meditative and trancelike, self-centred singing to a highly interactive and playful singing, and from a multisensory, close singing to a guitar-accompanied, distant, gaze-drifting singing. Parents sometimes experience the act as situated within a continuum from mastery to failure, depending on what goal of the act they consider to be most important, and to what degree they succeed in realising it. I have touched upon themes of presence and autopiloting, as well as the way in which parents consider the act to be a useful coping tool and practical support in their everyday lives with their children.

The expressive and emotional quality of parents’ singing has been addressed in previous research (O’Callaghan 2008, Trehub, Unyk and Trainor 1997), and singing does seem to facilitate emotional expression, but this focus on expressivity does not resonate with all of the parents’ statements. Some parents do not pay attention to their own feelings when singing to their children. They are sometimes more interested in ‘captivating the child with the musical flow and appeal’, to use one parent’s formulation. Nonetheless, the data tells us that, in this special bedtime setting, many of the parents express in one way or another their loving kindness towards their children, and that it feels very natural to do so.

The aspect of time is also relevant to how the parents behave and perform—they make a concerted effort, for example, to be present and avoid stress in this particular bedtime situation. Ellen Dissanayake points out that the development of sensitivities and timing are shaped within an intersubjective space and interaction (Dissanayake 2001), and Gratier and Aptor-Danon also pay special attention to what they call ‘expressive timing’ (Gratier and Aptor-Danon 2009). I would suggest that the lullaby ‘performance’ quality, in general, and its relational quality, in particular, depend on and encompass the aspects of attention, engagement, presence, time and timing, and the balancing between vitality and variation, on the one hand, and repetition and predictability on the other. I will return to this in the next chapter of discussion.

PART V

Discussions

This concluding part will serve as a field of discussion regarding how the meaningfulness of the lullaby-singing act might be understood in the context of three interrelated levels of complexity—nurturing, building and mastery—that have surfaced in the parents’ statements. I will pursue this discussion by drawing upon concepts previously introduced in the chapter on theoretical framework, including communicative musicality, affordance, mindfulness and wellbeing. In this way, important premises of the lullaby-singing act, such as parental sensitivity and attentive presence, can be linked to its qualities and affordances. I will also incorporate implications from previous research and suggestions for future research.

10 **The basis of meaningfulness in parents' lullaby singing**

Following the Danish professor of music education Frede Nielsen (1994), music represents a deeply situated form of experiential meaning, which tends to be more complex and layered than language can describe as such. Experienced meaning is not simply a surface phenomenon; it permeates the body and psyche of participants. The American philosopher Eugene Gendlin (1997) adds to this experiential complexity by describing the texture of experiential meaning as 'more than conceptual patterns' (distinctions, differences, comparisons, similarities, generalities, schemes, figures, categories, cognitions, cultural and social forms) (Gendlin 1997, p. 3). Following this way of thinking, metaphorical and analogical expressions seem to convey more of the complexity of experiential meaning than literal expressions do.

Parents' diverse statements (including metaphors and unique descriptions of the act (see e.g. points 7.1.2 and 8.1.2) bear witness to the penetration of music's experiential meaning. According to the parents in this inquiry, both lullaby choice and singing are strongly connected to the child's needs, response and appreciation (see points 7.1), and to the parent-child relationship and bedtime interaction more generally (see point 7.4.).

For many of them, the intimate, multisensory nature of the act and its context help it to become an integral, natural, almost taken-for-granted part of their daily lives with their children (see e.g. points 7.1.4 and 7.2.2). Lullaby singing takes on an everyday, ritualised, 'neutral' mode and mood as time goes by (see points 8.1 and 9.3.1) that derives from a tacit, mutual agreement regarding how the act is to be performed. As a mood, interpersonal lullaby singing sustains a given emotion—in this case, love—over long periods of time (see Damasio 1999). It is the quality of this singing mood that seems

crucial, even though the initial expressive nature of the act seems to fade away. The experienced intimate dimension of lullabies seems crucial (see point 7.4.2), including its multisensory character (see point 7.1.4).

The hidden aspects in play also contribute to the actual experiential meaning as the particular lullaby seems to contain particularly 'thick' layers of collective and intergenerational as well as personal and emotional transmissions (see points 7.6.3). Parents claim that their singing serves positive expressive purposes rather than discontent, and many of them are very aware of what they are transmitting to their children at bedtime. The act must reflect and endorse parents' goodness and loving kindness, and parents choose songs based on this dictate. Some of the songs have very poetic and evocative language that allows the parent to infuse them with their own personal feelings and energy. Balancing this drive towards the positive, however, is the unconscious or symbolic transmission of other perspectives upon the situation, the child or the day that has just concluded.

Sometimes the act also comes to represent a 'compensation and reconciliation' in relation to certain daily circumstances (for example, time pressure, parental absence or remoteness conflicts (see point 7.4.8). One parent describes it as a precious oasis in the midst of the daily struggles and worries that accompany their son's cancer (see point 6.6). On the one hand, the act is considered to be an indispensable parental coping tool (see point 9.2.1); on the other hand, the act is integrated into children's lives for the music's own good (see point 6.1.1). Musical, social, traditional and cultural 'building' aspects make this picture even more complex. The experienced meaning of the act also includes the parents' and children's different learning experiences as well. Obviously, parents' interests and background also influence the way in which they evaluate the act and otherwise personally experience meaningfulness in their lives with their children.

Regardless of parents' and children's diverse situations and circumstances, the act seems to nurture the parent-child relationship in a deep, continuous and embodied manner, and it enables a happy, calm and positive bedtime atmosphere in the present moment (see point 7.3). Children's needs, presence and participation and parents' adaptation and response to them (see point 7.1.1) bear witness to a reciprocal process and a context-sensitive micro-cycle that, despite its surface consistency, can vary from day to day, which influences the parents' assessment of the meaningfulness of the act in relation to parental mastery versus failure.

Parents celebrate the closeness and intimacy of lullaby singing, as well as its connection to the wider world and its cultural as well as spiritual aspects. The question then arises as to whether lullaby singing affords a special *conscious* and *musical* way of relating to something or someone that is not necessarily synonymous with

an emotional way of relating but rather evokes or activates the *living* and *unfolding* aspects of being in close connection with creative, intuitive and imaginative forces while singing. Malloch and Trevarthen's theory of communicative musicality, through which music 'communicates vitality and interest of life' (2009, p. 1), specifically acknowledges these vital forces in musical communication in the context of pulse, quality and narrative. Stern's emphasis on different forms of vitality and vitality affects in interaction—for example, the ebbs and flows and contours of energy in human expression (Stern 2010)—adds new 'quality' to this dynamic thinking. Paradoxically, it seems as though the actual intimate, present dynamic and living bedtime singing quality suffice in order to describe its meaningfulness, but at the same time it is its continuity, ritualized character and 'historical thickening' quality that seems to form its most important basis of meaningfulness as well. Singing lullabies is a ritual that parents and their children have performed for ages, and chose to repeat, live through and revitalize every day. It becomes especially precious over time as it symbolizes their close relationship and becomes an amalgam of bedtime moments-to-moments, based upon mutual expectancy. Before I consider this further, I will clarify the theoretical concepts of quality and affordance in the context of the lullaby-singing act.

10.1 Lullaby quality

I use the term *quality* even more broadly than Malloch and Trevarthen, who define it as 'the modulated contours of expressions over time' (2009, p. 4). With regard to the lullaby event as a whole, then, it must encompass its 'multi-modally' performative, living, vital, relational and dynamic aspects (including the parents' level of presence, sensitivity and awareness) as well as the intrinsic characters and structures of the particular lullabies (poetic lyrics, communicative messages and melodic, rhythmic and formal structures and contours), which may in turn enable various diverse expressions (O'Callaghan 2008) and not to forget the continuous and collective layers of the act.

Taking the cue from the Norwegian musicologist Peder Christian Kjerschow, lullaby quality includes spiritual, social, cultural and human depths as well as personal sensibilities, empathic understanding and the loving atmosphere created by a devoted and present mother or father.⁴⁹ Following O'Callaghan (2008), lullabies exhibit specific

49 The Norwegian musicologist Kjerschow refers to a special lullaby quality where these elements are present (Kjerschow 2000, p. 310).

qualities, such as nurturance, care, support, articulated, communicated and embodied love, acknowledgment and truth-telling. Though some parents confine their lullaby singing to a practical and everyday mode and dismiss its particular social and existential ‘qualities’, these possibilities exist. Through them, in turn, meaning arises in the act, manifesting itself in ways large and small: physical signs of contentment, feelings of safety, relaxation, deep breathing, and the sense of an intimate bond.

Lullaby quality depends upon the sensitivity of gestures and movements, the sincere softness of the parent’s voice and the parent’s emotional attunement to the child’s inner rhythm. It is strongly linked to what evokes presence, tenderness, openness receptivity and authentic behaviour. The act invites the parent to balance the aesthetic, existential, social and practical dimensions of his or her life. Moreover, the singing introduces a free flow to the present moment and the dyadic encounter, so that singing lullabies ‘resonates with an ancestral and vital need for communion’, to use Dissanayake’s formulation (2009, p. 315). The quality of lullaby singing suggests a wide range of affordances.

10.2 Lullaby affordances

The concept of affordance draws upon the cognitive psychologist Gibson’s thinking, as outlined in the chapter about my theoretical framework—in brief, affordances are action possibilities that cut across the dichotomy of subjective and objective properties (Gibson 1979, p. 129). Following Gibson’s integrative line of thinking, this chapter engages the parents’ subjective experiences of the affordances of the act in light of its more ‘objective’ potential and possibilities.

The specific notion of *musical* affordance derives from the fact that music is directly perceived as an ‘affordance-laden structure’ that is related to ‘the *qualities* of the music’ (Krueger 2010, p. 1-5, my emphasis). Krueger seems to use the term quality in a different and more narrow way than I use it though, as he focuses strongly on the ‘structure’ of the music. In the context of this particular study, my thesis is that parents’ lullaby singing is in fact an *affordance-laden* event—one that encompasses the structure of the particular lullaby, the parents’ performance of it and the child’s responses to it and participation in it. Krueger’s thinking will help me elaborate upon this thesis.

Lullabies lend themselves to a particularly intimate mode of singing thanks to generally consistent formal, rhythmic and melodic aspects (see Unyk, Trehub, Trainor and Schellenberg 1992). A lullaby represents a dynamic element within an otherwise everyday context. It has the capacity to shape how its bedtime context is experienced

by parents and children as well as what they do as a result of it, all of which resonates with Krueger's notion of musical affordance (2011, p. 319). Of course, the lullaby can only afford its potential range of engagements when there is a sensitive listener who is able to recognise them (Krueger 2010, p. 5), as opposed to those who sing without listening at all. Such a sensitivity must characterise parents' actual performance as well as their relational awareness and attunement; the sensitivity and receptivity of the child as a listener and co-creator, on the other hand, tend to be more or less taken for granted. This accords with Stern, Winnicott and Trevarthen's view of the child as highly receptive and sensitive from birth, though unconsciously so (Stern 1985/2000, Trevarthen 1999, Winnicott 1971/1991). The multi-sensory character of the act may facilitate an integrated bodily experience. However, when the child grows older, their receptivity and preferences may change and a shift of interest and attention may take place.

Specifically with regard to its affordances, I believe that lullaby singing is a practice that can help parents develop a greater degree of awareness and presence in the moment. The lullaby act can even transform the bedtime moment into an everyday oasis that is in fact close to silence and characterised by an open, free space which enables parent and child to 'feel felt' by one another. When parents and their children 'feel felt' by one another, they create an important basis of companionship and wellbeing. This is in line with several parents' reported experiences in this inquiry, which opened their lives up to new possibilities for relational and physiological as well as emotional wellbeing.

In what follows, then, I will first elaborate upon the act's affordances in relation to wellbeing. Second, I will discuss the act's building potential in relation to its cultural background as either a support or a constraint. Third, I will link the most important premises of the act, such as time and timing, to Gratier and Aptor-Danon's notions of 'expressive timing' and 'the dialectic relationship between stability and repetition', on the one hand, and vitality and improvisation, on the other (Gratier and Aptor-Danon 2009). In conclusion, I will introduce the concept of musical mindfulness.

10.2.1 Nurturing, integration and wellbeing

The parents' statement about children gaining insight into their parents' love through their singing (see point 7.1.2) demonstrates the strong connection that exists between our innate musicality and the affective state we call love. According to Ryan and Deci (2001), there has been increasing appreciation within psychology for the fundamental impact of warm, trusting and supportive interpersonal relationships upon wellbeing. They have even defined relatedness as a basic human need that is essential for

wellbeing (Deci & Ryan 1991, cited in Ryan & Deci 2001, p. 154). Assuming that this view is valid, one would expect a powerful and universal association between the quality of one's relationships and one's wellbeing. One of the mothers also touches upon a growth dimension of singing with regard to her own son (see point 9.2.2). On this basis, lullaby singing may be seen to represent an evolving and active parental initiative to connect with their children, and an effort in staying focused and attentive towards the child.

According to Ryan (2009), the premises of a child's wellbeing, human growth and functionality are optimised when internalisation and integration are enabled and children are able to satisfy their basic psychological needs. Internalisation is maximised when children are able to feel non-contingent love from their caregivers, are provided with optimal challenges, and are relatively free from excessive control, all qualities of sensitive parenting (Ryan 1993, cited in Ryan and Deci 2000b, p. 323). In this regard, some parents touch upon the aspect of musical integration or 'ownership'—that is, how children seem to internalise the songs that are sung over and over again (see point 8.2.1). They are aware of the importance of parental consistency and continuity and try to satisfy their children's needs for familiarity and repetition.

When it comes to the act as an *integrated* human means of caring and relating and how this relates to the concept of wellbeing, we need to take into account the parents' experience of caring for themselves as well as their caring for their children. Sometimes, the way in which parents relate to their children before bedtime implies a rather instrumental way of behaving and relating both to themselves and to their children. In retrospect, some parents regret that they did not pay more attention to the present moment, and to their children's specific preferences; in addition, lullaby singing also reminds them that they sing too little in their daily lives, which leads them to the rest of their daily stresses and strains and disrupts the calm, emotionally integrated or well-balanced approach they want to take at bedtime. Much more favourable to the child's integration is the state or mode I have labeled musical mindfulness, within which the parents are more focused and present. I will return to this state of mind later.

The aspect of integration also encompasses a continuous and constant proximity between the mother or father and the child that creates and ensures a secure base to live upon. Though lullaby singing is only a small part of parents' caregiving, it is a powerful one, channeling energy reserves at a time when it is not always easy to stay balanced and calm. It is also a reliable 'reunion' time after what is often a day's absence from the child.

To be a truly integrated part of the caregiving that promotes intimacy and secure attachment, though, lullaby singing must reflect an optimum balance between reunion

and autonomy, and in fact, for many parents, the singing initiates a falling-asleep process that they want their children to conclude on their own. Accordingly, the act can have a positive impact on both the parent-child attachment, through its emphasis on bonding time, and on the child's striving for independence and autonomy.

The lullaby act seems to represent a conduit to the brighter aspects of human functioning. Borrowing the terms 'antecedent' and 'indicator' from Ryan and Deci (2000a), we might well wonder, however, whether it is an antecedent of wellbeing rather than its indicator. Parents' conclusions vary in this regard. Those who do not always bring themselves to sing see the act as an indicator; those who sing regardless of mood tend to favour its impact as an antecedent or even describe it as what I choose to call an incidence of mutual wellbeing—emphasising, as these parents do, the importance of the present moment above all else.

Indeed, two aspects that are intrinsic to the act, love and calmness, actually blur the boundaries between care and self-care, which points towards an emphasis on mutual wellbeing as opposed to some parents' more unilateral focus on the child's wellbeing. I argue that singing lullabies would help parents' to recover from daily stress, as long as they are absorbed by their singing. The meditative stance that some parents have indicates this possibility (see points 9.44 and 9.4.5). The act can reduce bodily tensions and promote the physiological and psychological wellbeing of both parent and child.

The connection between lullabies and wellbeing also includes a relational dimension. As an opportunity for bonding time, the act supports the scholarly notion that secure attachments themselves are indicators of wellbeing (see Simpson 1990, cited in Ryan & Deci 2001, p. 155). Research has shown that family members who have the ability to create attuned relationships promote resilience and longevity (Siegel 2007, p. xiv). This connects wellbeing to the particular lullaby quality, which includes an intrinsic sensitive, soft and attuned character and continuous singing style.

The quality of parents' 'caring love' is hard to evaluate based upon their own statements and videotapes that show only fragments of the parent and child's daily existence. The act may yield joyous and positive moods (hedonistic wellbeing). However, eudamonian, more long-lasting aspects of wellbeing are hard to evaluate and need to be looked upon in relation to various parent-child situations and circumstances. The need to couple the short-term moment-to-moment perspective with a longer term-perspective also relates to attachment style (for example, a secure attachment), which require continuous, long-term evaluation to trace and are not limited only to this particular bedtime interaction.

This raises a question: Does the core of the lullaby depends on its impact on the child and the parents' wellbeing, included its mutually calming effect? I believe that if the act is an attempt to negotiate an interpersonal space for intimacy based upon

mutual agreement and choice, it is, however, filled with its original meaning. Yet, it also depends on its calming impact or outcome. Lullabies are what one mother calls the ‘sound of calmness’, and they move towards sleep (see point 7.3.2). This calm state impacts both the parent and the child’s wellbeing—in some ways, the parents seem to need calming even more than their children. Moreover, the aspect of wellbeing seems to be strongly connected to the acts’ meaningful core, depending not only on calmness, but also on the good atmosphere and contact created on a moment-to-moment basis.

Lullabies invite closeness, and the typically soft and almost whispering way parents sing them is shaped towards this end. The child’s responses are swiftly taken into account by the parent, who adapts as necessary. Parents say that the lullaby is a ‘singing in contact’ (see point 7.4.1), and they feel that their children are well taken care of when they sing to them. Yet they also report being tired, absent-minded and sometimes ambivalent at this time of day (see points 9.4.3 and 9.5). There can be a big gap between real and ideal in this case:

— *I have to say that sometimes I just want to be finished with it. I have nothing to give. I am exhausted.* (Father no. 1)

Sleepy love, of course, is still love, and many parents accept their lack of expressivity at this time as something inevitable, even natural. It is part of the everyday mode of being together, and the act’s positive routines foster mutual wellbeing regardless of the more ‘expressive’ quality of the singing itself.

Together with a sense of mastery and mutual recognition creates a foundation for self-confidence and self-esteem⁵⁰—human features that prepare the ground for existential and psychological wellbeing. For parents, shared recognition or musical appreciation (see point 7.4.7) enhances mutual wellbeing and encourages parents to continue to sing for their children. On the other hand, parents’ experiencing a one-way and limitless act of giving can be exhausted, lose their aliveness and become unhappy and ambivalent towards their children. Sometimes parents do not feel or experience the act as self-determined and based upon freedom and positive impulses, components that are important in forming a basis of wellbeing according to Ryan and Deci (2000b). Then the act may lose its basis of parental, individual wellbeing. Though the act is not always fun and sometimes emerges from a sense of duty rather than spontaneous inspiration, parents observe that it enhances their lives with their children, especially at the end of the day.

50 Trondalen emphasises the importance of an ‘appreciated’ recognition in the therapeutic situation—a state that seems to be similar to what parents here perceive to be important during the bedtime ritual, as opposed to everyday life (see Trondalen 1997).

Parents often observe that their singing creates positive emotions for both themselves and their children. The relational and social wellbeing seems to overrule parents' individual one. Some parents also report that they derive energy from singing, and that their singing has an affective mode; others state that the singing comes out of their existing positive emotions, and only when they are positive. The act, by and large, is a symbol of positive emotions and harmony, and its multisensory nature gives children 'all-inclusive' care, particularly regarding the bedtime need to calm down.

Seligman includes engagement, positive emotions and positive relationships when connecting meaningfulness with wellbeing (Seligman 2011). When parents have an instrumental approach to their singing, their positive feelings and the experience of an extended time seems to be secondary. Some parents don't even want to include feelings when singing to their children. Moreover, instrumentality never seems to fit to the child's playful and sometimes challenging, irrational nature and it may ruin a true moment of mutual sharing. On the other hand, positive relationships seem to grow out of a shared, positive time, based upon good communication and mutual attentive presence, conditions that a lullaby seems to invite to. The relational affordance of lullaby singing, which derives from its specific dynamic and living mode and quality of interaction and communication, rather than from the quality of the singing itself, seems crucial to mutual wellbeing. Many parents are aware of the potential connection between a lullaby and relational wellbeing and they make an effort in staying present and attuned to the moment and to the child in order to work the ground for mutual wellbeing and meaningfulness. In what follows, I will look at the aspects of positive relationships in more detail.

10.2.2 The relational affordance of the act

According to the parents, the relational and social benefits of lullaby singing form an important and meaningful basis for the act (see point 7.4.). This intimate musical setting enables a special form of relatedness and seems to strengthen the bond between the parent and the child. According to one of the parents, it is the particular bedtime setting which allows for such positive and intimate musical sharing (see point 8.1.5). Bedtime is a special sensitive, transitional time where the child seems to need their parents company, and they also need to put the day behind. Parents express their love when they sing for their children, and children respond to this. But it also depends on the parents' listening stance, as one of the parents report in order to be able to explore their relationship (see point 7.4.5). Tempo, pulse, phrasing, loudness, listening, pausing and voice quality can be considered as part of the singing quality, but this is not the entire picture. They are all key elements in the affordance

of interpersonal understanding, together with more 'universal' qualities such as love, reciprocity and sharing. Parents' flexible singing, where they allow for larger pauses and immediate impulses invites to a special closeness and interaction.

Malloch and Trevarthen (2009) suggest that musical interaction is embedded within a continuum between distance and connectedness, where these parameters listed seem to play specific roles in order to create co-attunement or distance. When parents sing softly, slowly and with a tender, affective voice and take pauses in order to listen to the child or breath calmly, they signalizes a willingness to stay tuned, intimately close and present. In terms of the particular lullaby event, the parental expression of what is important in life is a precious manifestation that invite to an intimate relationship or the opposite. Parents who sing for their children report that their children are their top priorities in life. Some of them work less in order to spend more time with their children, and these fathers all see themselves as parents on equal terms with the mothers. The robustness, continuity and frequency of singing, in addition, appear to be closely connected to the relationship between the parent and the child. The relational affordance of the act also seems to be intrinsically connected to the parents' conscious as well as unconscious messages they communicate to their children while singing. If parents are stressed, irritated and just want to get over with their singing as soon as possible, children sense this and the relational space where they can explore their relationship become limited. When parents become too rigid and their personal and more self-centered agenda take precedence over the sharing moment with their children, their singing may create distance. Nonetheless, parents' authentic behaviour and expressions included parental ambivalence and irritation, is sometimes an unavoidable part of the parent-child encounter and interrelationship. Children learn about their parents' self-boundaries while they sing, and what parents want or do not want to share with their children.

One of the fathers reports feeling intruded upon by his own mother when she sang to him when he was a child. She did not acknowledge the boundaries between her adult world and her son's child world. There are several stories by parents who cannot recall any good memories of their own parents' singing to them. Like some of them, I also feel a deep sadness when singing songs from my childhood, which bring up 'old wounds' and create 'an air of melancholy'. Of course, these associations relate to my mother's experiences and frustrations, not mine. It is also true that the daily lives of parents and children are not always filled with positive emotions, and the child's exposure to parents' worries and frustrations can be an important part of their preparation for reality. The lullaby singing's intergenerational transmission seems to work regardless of whether there happen to be positive or negative emotions attached to it. Even the sad and tragic traditional lullabies serve to evoke the

daily challenges that we all must face. Some parents see this and ask themselves, 'Who owns the problem?' Sometimes it is difficult to avoid involving the child, no matter what, especially when the parent is in a bad mood or otherwise easily irritated. Then it is probably more important to distance one self from ones own thoughts and ideas and become more detached.

Parents in this inquiry seem to be very conscious about not sharing their own negative life experiences or otherwise challenging content with their own children at bedtime. They seek to protect them instead, and the strong connection between lullabies and parental identity and role modeling seems to generate a natural distance between the child and the parent.

Some parents are more expressive and emotional than others, and the children learn about their own parents' way of expressing themselves through their singing. Lullaby singing may even open up to an emotional and relational depth that is hard to evaluate or describe, but which invites to an existential human closeness.

Broadly speaking, the lullaby act and affordance also demonstrates the interdependence between the child, the parent and their cultural background and the world they live in. How, then, does it relate to the northern European 'cultivation of independence'⁵¹ that has occupied previous researchers (see Valentin 2004, 2005)? Does this interdependence in turn produce independence, which is here confined to the children's ability to fall asleep on their own at bedtime? Some parents do mention the relevance of being present until their children fall asleep and describe their singing as an attempt to prevent, avoid or ease any separation anxiety. Other parents insist that it is important for their children to fall asleep by themselves rather than become dependent on the parents' presence during this process.

Parents who emphasise the act's formative, structural and educational properties seem to be more oriented towards fixed sleeping routines and the cultivation of independence through them. They leave their children alone when the ritual is finished and report that their children get used to it and know what to expect. These children feel safe, calm and content, according to the parents. As one parent states, 'Four songs, and then the sharing moment is over'.

The video data of the father with his son and the mother with her son indicate that there are also children who cry when the parents leave the room or become restless when the singing moment is over. These experiences do not seem to afford a positive relationship as they seem to be built upon a too rigid parental idea of promoting independence and clear boundaries on the detriment of the child's emotional messages and needs. The cultivation of independence, then, seems less evidently related to lullaby

51 The original term is in French: 'Le culte d'indépendance' (Valentin 2004).

singing as such and more related to an overall parental outlook on life that emphasises self-reliance and self-determination. In the context of going to sleep, mothers point out that sometimes their husbands or other family members and friends tell them to avoid staying with the children for too long at bedtime. The implication is that the children will be spoiled by this treatment, which also will make it difficult for others to put the children to bed. But these mothers tend to feel that society is too focused on sleeping routines and sees problems in the bedtime moment even when there are none. From their perspective, the public advice that comes from Norwegian sleep experts like Naphaug is terrible.

In contrast, other parents describe the act as the perpetual unfolding of a story, where immediate happiness, play, creativity, contentment and a sense of belonging are all emphasized. They do not 'count the minutes' or worry about whether their children are sufficiently independent in terms of falling asleep. They prefer that their children express independence in terms of their trust, creative drive and confidence about the outside world of their daily lives. Only when the ritual ends, which often takes place when the children want to 'break free' from their parents during adolescence, or even earlier, does physical independence become relevant.

Obviously, parents' ideals, attitudes and thoughts colour the act, and a range of sleep routines and parenting styles correlate with each of Stork's (1986) styles—distant, proximal and distant-proximal. Perhaps there is an overemphasis on autonomy in the West, as some psychologists and therapists imply (e.g., Honneth 2008, Valentin 2005). The view that bedtime must be under fifteen minutes, start to finish, is aligned more to the parents than the children. Real time does not always correspond to children's unique inner rhythms, and what is more, energy levels vary according to daily circumstances and situations. Lullaby singing, in all its variations, seems to reflect a more human (bed)time perspective on time passing and an extended and sensitive notion of time seems important in order to bring forth the acts' true affording relational potential.

Some parents emphasise the lullaby moment as one of equality and deep intimacy, when the act seems to blur the boundaries between the two of them. Based upon parents' own reports, the act seems to fall within a continuum of a 'communitas in flow' at one end, and segmented roles in chronological time, at the other. This particular continuum encompasses psychological, intentional, temporal, sensuous and spacious aspects. A communitas in flow is manifested through an extended, immediate felt and sensitive experience of shared time, while segmented roles in chronological time are based upon a distanced, mechanical, goal and future-oriented approach to the lullaby event and the child's behaviour and playful nature.

Parents' experiences of intimacy and the strong connection that seems to exist between lullabies and the parent-child relationship confirm several of the relational

benefits outlined within the heading of communicative musicality. Parents' singing seems to serve the parents and their children's needs for companionship (Malloch and Trevarthen 2009, p. 7), and it engenders a strong sense of dyadic and cultural identity, or what Cross and Morley describe as 'group identity' (2009, p. 70). The lullaby act also seems to 'hold our degree of interrelationship or belonging with other people' (Malloch and Trevarthen 2009, p. 7), both on an individual, one-to-one basis, on a cultural and national basis. The exact degree to which the act structures social relations (Cross and Morley 2009, p. 70) or promotes behavioural and emotional 'coordination' (Dissanayake 2009, p. 533) is difficult to determine. Parents sense of control and mastery might derive directly from the ease of a given daily routine rather than the larger enterprise of lullaby singing as such. Each parent and child seem to have 'a unique set of affordances available' (see Windsor and de Bézenac 2012, p. 110). The lullaby singing is for some parents defined as special and 'clearly distinguishable from everyday behaviour', to use Windsor and de Bézenac's words (Windsor and de Bézenac 2012, p. 108), whereas for others the act is considered a daily routine. These different views, individual dispositions and approaches also affect in one way or the other their experiences of the meaningfulness of the act. Nonetheless, the act seems to enhance positive moments and relationships, based upon a shared mutual understanding and an intimate sense of belonging as it directly specifies an interacting organism (de Bezenac 2007) that derives from personal engagement and mutuality, as we will see below.

10.2.3 Personal engagement and mutuality

According to parents, lullaby-related meaning derives from parents' and children's practical involvement and engagement with lullabies and each other. Here involvement and engagement requires a certain quality or energy. Parents' statements correlate with Pavlicevic and Ansdell's definition of musicality as a 'basic response to an engagement with the human world' (2009, p. 367). Parents' musical impulses and activity is a concrete manifestation of their engagement with their children. In this case, the 'human world' is explored symbolically through a dyadic encounter with the lullabies' collective narratives. It might be said that music, in order to be truly meaningful, demands that we enter into a kind of relationship with it. Many parents have their own personal ties and meanings to the songs used. The ontology of 'my song' is personal, 'deriving from conditions that have individual meanings', and that are unlike the conditions of 'a song' (Bohlman 1999, p. 20).

Meaning in a broad sense embraces what is always already given and what is revitalised through our engagement with it (Binder 2005, p. 58). Both parents and

children develop a very personal relationship to the lullabies they sing, especially when the singing becomes a daily ritual. This ritualized behaviour requires however a moment-to-moment revitalisation. Such daily routines are not always associated with meaningfulness, but the lullaby, depending on the parents' attitude, devotion and presence, includes, among other things, 'the sensing of acoustic data', 'perceptual and cognitive processing structures', 'bodily, movement-related gestural existence', and overall personal, emotional, spiritual and existential intentions, consciousness and sensations (Nielsen 2012, p. 22).

Parents sing their lullabies most often by heart, and children learn to sing them that way too. But the meanings of the lullabies transcend the textual content of the songs, and the multimodal and multisensory act of singing lays the groundwork for an embodied, meaningful experience in both a literary and an abstract sense. The character of the act is greatly influenced by the singer's level of vitality, voiceprint, mood, personality and musicality, as well as his or her affective and mental resources, personal background and life story, in tandem with the child's personality, needs and behaviour and the setting and the character of the song.

When trying to grasp the dimensions of meaning in relation to music, that is, Frede Nielsen draws attention to the peculiar object-subject relation that arises when we try to determine meaning there.⁵² There are object-characteristics as well as act-characteristics that arise when we talk about music's meanings. This means that performative as well as structural aspects of the songs are decisive. The musical object cannot be understood without some kind of integrated thinking that acknowledges that object as well as the actively experiencing subject (Nielsen 2012, p. 20). The musical encounter contains structural, material and dynamic, living features, and in terms of lullabies, then, meaning emerges when we account for the lullaby as well as the parents and children who experience it. However, put another way, it blurs the boundaries between subject and object when the lullaby is internalised and integrated.

Moreover, I choose to call the act of singing lullabies a 'signifying process', which means that meaning derives from a dynamic process rather than a relationship between a structural, lyrical and melodic fixed sign system. Alongside the performance of the lyrics of a well-known song, as manifested in rhythm, tempo, melodic contours and musical mode, the act invokes psychic (emotional and mental) and physical energies that are less precise but equally significant. These energies can tell us something about the parent's inner self in relation to the embodied significations of the lullaby

⁵² This view differs from Small's strong emphasis on music as an activity rather than a thing (Small 1998), as its emphasis is on music's structure as well as its relational aspects.

phenomenon, which encompasses myths, language, symbols and signs as well as both conscious and unconscious moods, drives and emotions.

It is essential to 'dynamise' the lullaby structure by taking into consideration the singing subject and his or her unconscious experience, on the one hand, and the pressures of other, related social structures (culture, the child's preferences, collective identity and so forth) on the other. This line of thinking complements Nielsen's view, mentioned earlier, and produces a fourth position in relation to how musical meaning emerges:

It is in the 'living and breathing' act, related to personal, genuine predispositions and drives and sensitive interactional styles, with a focus on the signifying process that is taking place within the triad parent-child-song and the consecutive experienced quality of this triadic encounter, that the truly meaningful factors can be found. (The author)

From my point of view, the signifying process best suited to lullaby singing transcends the apparently oppositional views of meaning as structurally inherent or socially constructed. It enables both parent and child to share the experience of personally affecting their bedtime world and indulge in feelings that, according to Dissanayake, we feel less and less in 'fast-paced, fast-changing, impersonal and pluralistic societies' like ours (Dissanayake 2000b, p. 116). This signifying process is also connected to musical mindfulness, which I will treat separately.

While many parents' statements seem to imply a sharp division of labor between the passive, listening child and the active, singing and massaging parent, the child's babbling, foot tapping and head nodding in fact 'may not be trivial phenomena in the study of music psychology' (Windsor and de Bézenac 2012, p. 103). In addition, parents' admit to being on autopilot at times while the child might be entirely more active and sometimes even counterproductive in his or her participation. Windsor and de Bézenac observe that listening can lead to actions that may occur during or after a musical experience, and they highlight the relational qualities of music perception and action and the active nature of musical participation and interpretation (Windsor and de Bézenac 2012, p. 103). This is consistent with some parents' experiences of mutual participation, while others do not consider the child to be an active agent in this particular bedtime setting.

Lullaby singing promotes calmness and relaxation rather than action, but it is not static. In fact, when it is successful and the child calms down, the parent feels relief and a sense of mastery, which become motivational factors for future musical engagement. Parental identity is strengthened and the parent is motivated to continue to sing.

10.3 Cultural and social opportunity or constraint?

The collective culture and mentality of the country in which the parents live also seem to influence the parents' singing, and they can be considered a constraint as well as an opportunity for enhancing the human richness of the act (see point 6.2.2). The possibilities and potential of the act of lullaby singing are situated amid cultural conventions and expressions of individual uniqueness (see point 8.4.1). Identity in connection to singing lullabies is both an individual and collective phenomenon. It is also linked to modes of belonging through engagement (active involvement in mutual processes of negotiation of meaning), imagination (creating images of the world and seeing connections through time and space by extrapolating from our own experience) and alignment (coordinating our energy and activities in order to fit within broader structures) (Wenger 1999/2008, pp. 173–174).

If parents throw themselves into the 'busyness' of their routines and rituals and lose hold of their unique ability to put their own personal signature on them, no new meaning for the act is generated and the act becomes poor in the sense that it lacks vitality and personal focus. Consequently, the loving lullaby act can be strongly embedded in social conventionality. When it comes to being personal, true and authentic, some parents want lullaby singing to reflect what they feel:

— I don't want to say 'I love you' the way I say "Hello". It needs to be grounded from within me. I cannot sing these love songs to them unless I really feel that I can express love and that I truly mean it. (Mother no. 5)

Here, the importance of being true towards your children is emphasized. Moreover, the improvisational character of the parent-child musical interaction is also very important. When improvising, the parent's moment-to-moment-impulses can be expressed, and this makes the act personal, creative and alive. As already mentioned, many parents report that they improvise a lot with their children at bedtime, and this is shown through the large number of personal songs and 'creations' in the data. However, parents' free and improvisational behavior differs from day to day and from parent to parent. Some parents seem to feel more free and alive than others, and this seems to be connected with how strongly they are influenced by tight time schedules and our goal oriented collective mentality. According to the video sessions, there is also a great contrast between the child's living being and the parent's way of relating and singing. Very often, the parents' general feeling of responsibility and awareness that it is time to sleep seem to affect the spontaneity of their performances—the lullabies are oriented more towards practical, educational and instrumental ends than towards artistic ends.

Singing lullabies is an acknowledgment of both one's own musicality and one's cultural tradition and heritage. Yet its most important implications, from my point of view, are based upon the 'now'—the present moment and the parent's free and immediate behaviour. The meaningfulness of the act seems to relate to a search for certain basic, existential truths and essential experiences. Some parents search for human depth, truth, harmony, intimacy and imagination and find it in particular lullabies.

As parents, we gain our identity—and so become the humans we are—in the context of the world in which we find ourselves. This holds true for children as well, as American psychologist Lucy Rollin points out: 'In reflecting the complex world of kindness and cruelty, history and fantasy, morality and amorality, peace and aggression, and the multitude of paradoxical forces that permeate human life, nursery rhymes (and lullabies as a distinct group among them) offer vivid truths to the impressionable senses of children' (Rollin 1992, p. 1). But do parents attend to the richness of the here-and-now lullaby experiences with their children? There are overt as well as hidden aspects of the act that seem to work both for and against the richness of the lullaby event. I will develop this view in close connection with parents' experiences of the lullaby act and the possible 'objective' potentials of the act.

First, during their meeting in the Walt Disney movie *Alice in Wonderland* (1978), the hat maker says to Alice: 'You are not Alice. You have lost your muchness'. To me, this observation is relevant to the empirical data of the present inquiry. Many parents do not want to be emotional in the meeting with their children and are afraid of appearing sentimental when talking about their own experiences. They seem to hide or avoid their 'muchness'. They sometimes even cultivate a monotonous and repetitive singing style that is deprived of emotion, because for them, the crucial goal of the ritual is sleep, not emotional expression and sharing. Perhaps this moderate and balanced approach provides the child with the tolerant atmosphere in which his or her self-control might grow. Of course, if feelings are obviously being suppressed or avoided, the child will not develop the ability to regulate his or her own strong emotions, instead tending to adopt the parent's reserve (Bowlby 1979/2005, p. 20). Other parents seem to cultivate their 'muchness' by being expressive and authentic while singing. They report that they sometimes cry and sometimes laugh while singing, and do not seek to avoid strong feelings when they occur. However, this is not typical for the parents in this inquiry, rather the exception.

When parents cultivate clear, fixed routines that emphasise calming or self-regulating aspects of the act, it may lose its 'muchness' or human richness. Some parents do not seem to be aware of the fact that a child has to participate in feelings with them, not simply exchange information about the world they share together (see Bruner 1996, Rogoff 2003), and lullaby singing is a rewarding opportunity to do so. For some

parents, personal convictions seem to overrule cultural and collective ‘forces’ while others are more governed by them.

10.3.1 The cultivation of moderation and efficacy

The lullaby-singing act’s intended balance and calmness can overwhelm its aliveness and vitality thanks to strong intentions or fixed ideas of moderation and efficacy. The parental pace might become too fast and mechanical. Parents sometimes attribute meaning to the act in terms of typically modern-society ‘instrumental’ and ‘calculated’ arguments: ‘It works’; ‘It makes the children calm down and fall asleep’; ‘It is a great tool’, and so on. I find that, in some cases, parents’ singing becomes too predictable because of their investment in a culture that promotes rational, effective and goal-oriented thinking. These parents are aware of their moderate and monotonous delivery, but they believe that this is the way it should be. They want the act to have a predictable (and quick) end, regardless of what might be missing. Again, I find this to emerge from a collective northern Atlantic European perspective focused on introversion and rational behaviour. In this cultural context, one should not cry or express strong feelings unless one has a really good reason to do so. Children’s inherent curiosity and playfulness stand out within this picture—some parents even seem to be afraid of emotion, both their own and their children’s. Tolerance of high energy, irrational behaviour and dramatic expressivity is relatively low, and emotional ‘muchness’ has no place. Because children learn how to express themselves through their parents, this defining moderation can become a rather limiting and even destructive circle.

Relatedly, some parents emphasise aspects of education and learning in their lullaby moment. They favour songs of high poetic and artistic quality, and their mental focus is entirely on the lyrics and the way in which their children might learn new words as part of an ‘enculturation project’. Some use their singing to enhance the process of language acquisition. As one of the parents puts it:

— I know that my singing appears to be very pedagogical, but this is the way we do it. I think it is important to learn new words, and, in fact, to be able to do ordinary things like talking and making yourself understandable is more important than music, I believe. (Mother no. 1)

For this mother, learning and practical mastery is primary, and music, secondary. The interaction with her child demonstrates a pragmatic outlook towards her own singing. Notably, she is a special education teacher by profession, and her singing is influenced by how she uses music at work. In her video material, she appears to be responsive towards her own child, allowing for improvisation and the child’s

initiatives, which gives the mother, in turn, a sense of being a good and receptive parent. This moment, though, is never overshadowed by its motivating pedagogy, and in general, it could be said that parents do not become too fixated on their own agendas when singing because the living interaction with their children is so compelling. And even from a 'building' perspective, when this mother recognises her child's participation and initiatives, and makes room for her in the bedtime ritual, she also promotes the child's development.

Because some parents are absent for much of the day, and children are placed with substitute caretakers, the time that parents share with their children ought to be good, quality time. In this sense, conflict has little place, because the time for 'muchness' is very limited. A certain censorship of one's emotions at bedtime is, of course, necessary in order to protect the children from parental irrationality and ambivalence. Self-control and self-regulation are not solely negative in their implications.⁵³ From their parents' regulatory capacities, children learn to calm down and control themselves, and to avoid being overwhelmed by their own affects. They learn to behave in a civilised manner, in private as well as in public. Lullaby singing can provide opportunities to enlarge one's social competences, especially related to the virtue of patience, the language of tenderness and intimacy, the ability to listen actively and the art of balancing one's self while cultivating emotional and expressive diversity. A central aspect here, which could also be considered an affordance, is the act's potential with regard to 'developing an individual cognitive flexibility' (Cross and Morley 2009, p. 71). I would extend this to emotional flexibility as well.

10.4 Important premises of the act

10.4.1 Balance?

Parents report that they experience lullaby singing as an act of balance, between stability and variation in performance but also among aspects such as the bedtime context, parents' intentions, ideals, everyday life and circumstances, and the parent-child relationship. In Gratier and Aptor-Danon's vocabulary, these aspects form various and contrasting dialectic relationships that require balancing:

53 As Bowlby states, there is no parental task that is more valuable than providing the child with a tolerant atmosphere in which self-control can develop (Bowlby 1979/2005, p. 20).

- ⊕ presence versus autopiloting
- ⊕ flexibility versus rigidity
- ⊕ nonsense versus human depth
- ⊕ play versus calm
- ⊕ enjoyment versus duty
- ⊕ conventionality versus uniqueness
- ⊕ individual needs versus mutuality
- ⊕ love versus ambivalence
- ⊕ sincerity versus manipulation
- ⊕ human imperfection versus parental ideals and ambitions
- ⊕ distance and self-boundaries versus intimate sharing and closeness.

Stern (1985/2000) emphasises how the mother's affective states influence the child's emotional experiences and expressions. When the child is very young, the mother is the one who assigns meaning to the child's experiences through her own interpretation of and attunement to the child's needs and expressions (Schibbye-Løvlie 2009, p. 68). Yet this contribution demands much sensitivity and openness on the part of the parent. In the context of lullabies and their calming impact, there is no easy way to condense meaning, aside from the general direction of the ritual towards going to sleep. And as the child grows older, even this overarching sensibility can prove counterproductive, if it turns the act into an overdetermined moment that spurs a playful response on the part of the child. The multiple meanings of the act are closely connected with its temporal, affective and relational qualities, as well as the qualities of communication and care, which rely not only on love and commitment but also on a flexible and dynamic interplay between the parent and the child. This flexible interplay is built upon the premises of sensitive time and timing and a dynamic or dialectic relationship between stability and variation.

10.4.2 Sensitive time and timing

Gratier and Aptor-Danon emphasise the importance of 'expressive timing' in the parent-child interaction—that is, 'the particular quality or energy of temporal organization in spontaneous mother-infant interaction' (2009, p. 306). The notion also encompasses 'the small deviations from strict metronomic rhythm that musicians use to impart vitality and expressiveness in their playing' (Gratier and Aptor-Danon 2009, p. 306)—those subtle temporal nuances in an otherwise metronomic ('perfectly' timed) interpretation (Trevarthen and Gratier 2005).

Expressive timing is based upon an integrative, sensitive, intersubjective, embodied and personalised way of relating to time and the living other (in this case, to bedtime and the child). Gratier and Apter-Danon note that the loss of expressive timing 'implies an over-predictability in interaction' (2009, p. 306). The term 'expressive timing' therefore draws attention to the importance of temporal nuance in the living and dynamic parent-child interaction. One interesting point is the way in which timing is 'expressed' in the repeated and ritualised musical interaction of lullabies. Based upon the videosessions, there are parents who are 'tuned in' to the moment and are highly receptive and adaptive to their children's predictable and unpredictable needs. Small and large 'deviations' from the routine are often due to extramusical features that are related to the particular setting and the parent-child interaction and relationship. This accords with Trevarthen and Gratier's statement that 'timing' differs when it moves to the background, and to the sources and context of these nuances (Trevarthen and Gratier 2005).

However, from my point of view, there are inaccuracies in the description of *expressive timing* when the notion is applied to the lullaby act. First of all, the dominant connotation of 'expressive' does not fit as such. In the context of lullabies, based upon parents' statements, it might make more sense to talk about 'sensitive' timing, because it transcends the strictest implications of 'expression' and even manages to encompass those parents who specifically avoid being 'expressive' at that time of the day. With reference to the father's singing to his son in section 7.5.6, his timing and tempo seem shaped to fit the particular moment and their intimate vocal interaction and interplay. The father communicates calmness and love in a very tender, almost silent manner. Of course, softness and small temporal adjustments and nuances are also part of any singer's expressive repertoire, but in this case, some parents specifically want their children to know that they will spend whatever time it takes. Sensitive timing, in this context, even extends to parents' self-consciousness about being artistic, regardless of the particular interaction with their children. In order to embrace all of the parents' ways of temporarily and dynamically expressing themselves, then, I use the term sensitive rather than expressive.

Secondly, the term 'timing' itself is somewhat narrow, whereas lullaby singing relates to the concept of time itself as well. The American psychologist Steven H. Knoblach points out that 'a particular cultural perspective, which privileges a linear concept of time and timing, could fail to recognize the generation of subtle affective meanings from the polyrhythmic weave of timing' (Knoblach 2008, p. 414). Our society seems to dismiss these 'subtle affective meanings' related to time and timing, but some parents who sing lullabies are aware of them. The child, after all, lives in more of an

indeterminate, continuous flow of time, and pressure at bedtime does not always produce positive results.

Many parents try to make the best of whatever timeframe they face at bedtime. It is the point in the day when they communicate to their children that there are no more things to be done. Some make a conscious effort to be present, attentive and attuned, in order to create an atmosphere that brings in an element of existential relaxation and true sharing that transcends time:

— *I will never give him the impression that when spending time with him, I have to be efficient, because there are more important things waiting to be done. I always take enough time, although some evenings the singing is shorter than others. Singing to him for a shorter time is fine if he is very tired, but it will never be because I had to do other things.* (Mother no. 9)

As already mentioned, some parents want the bedtime moment to represent an oasis where all of the stresses and strains of the day are put behind them. They do not want their children to feel that they are in a hurry:

— *I have all the time that is needed. I want to use that special time of the day with them. It is precious.* (Mother no. 5)

— *This is a very nice time to be with your children, if you take your time to listen.* (Father no. 4)

In the course of this inquiry, I have found that sensitive time and timing is what transforms the singing moment into a really meaningful experience for both the parent and the child. Parents who practice this take the time to discover their children, and they appreciate the more playful ingredients of their singing. The video data (see section 2.5.8) makes it clear that some parents cultivate a slow, nuanced and calm pulse when singing to their children and attune their own emotional state to them as well. They succeed in being present, even when they feel that they 'have a lot to do when the child finally has fallen asleep', as one parent reports.

This also evokes the Greek distinction between Chronos and Kairos, where the former refers to chronological time, and the latter, the time between. Kairos is the Greek personification of opportunity, who is associated with the moment of indeterminate time in which something special happens. This is in line with how children experience time, as I see it. While Chronos is quantitative, Kairos is qualitative (Løvlie 2006, Freier 2006). While parents no longer mark time in this particular fashion, they seek it when they sing to their children. Quality time seems to find its true signification in the context of lullaby singing.

Parents' sensitive time and timing need not be subtle or musically effective, in fact—examples also include the long pauses that accompany an extended dialogue with the child or story from the child, as described in section 9.3.1. One parent described bedtime as a moment of free association, which points to an improvisational element that greatly extends the sensitive timing of the parent. Some parents breathe so slowly between the phrases that small periods of silence become an intrinsic part of the lullaby-singing act. Sometimes the pulse of the singing is also very slow and organic, and the lullaby sounds different from day to day because the parents do not follow a consistent pulse. Sensitive timing also relates to when parents start and end the singing ritual.

One parent described the way in which her child paid close attention to her yawns during her singing. 'The songs are never the same, because you yawn at different places each time', this mother was told. These small yawn 'deviations' are even consciously applied by some of the parents, because they know that the yawning is 'contagious', and the child will therefore yawn and calm down as well. This deviation is therefore strongly connected to sleep and the bedtime setting and is not of a strictly 'musical' nature. Other deviations are musical. Parents can be conscious of their phrasing, pauses and delivery of certain words. As one mother says, 'I put energy in my phrasing, and the words are flowing so the child does not get bored'.

Gratier and Apter-Danon point to the importance of timing from a long-term perspective: interactive styles will evolve and change as the child develops and matures, but they 'must maintain this sensitive musical quality of timing' (2009, p. 314). Stern refers to the extraordinary mutual ability to make use of all senses of modalities within a 'split-second-world' (Stern 1985/2006). In line with Stern, Gratier points out that the timing of an exchange between adults and children is clearest when the coordination of vocal, postural and gestural expressions is taken into account (see Stern 1985/2000, Gratier 2003). There is also reason to believe that the precise temporal organisation of vocal exchanges represents a necessary condition for emotional, intersubjective communication (Stern 1985/2000, Gratier 2003, Malloch and Trevarthen 2009). The attunement of two people's mental states is attained through the sensitive and precise temporal organisation of their interaction, and small children react and communicate with their whole beings, not just with their voices. Timing and embodied expressions in interaction are perhaps the most salient of the vocal expressions between parents and children.

Connecting these theoretical considerations to this particular study, it seems as though parents are aware of their children's holistic way of experiencing, and the multisensory lullaby-singing act is a manifestation of parents' effort to make this exchange as relevant to their children's needs as possible. The lullaby ritual becomes

an intersubjective meeting point that both parent and child appreciate, internalise and intergrate. Sensitivity, in this context, seems to be a relative measurement. As one of the parents puts it:

— *My son doesn't know of any other way of performing this singing ritual. This is the way we do it, and he accepts it.* (Mother no. 2)

Sensitivity in this context may signify the parents' awareness of the importance of a continuous time line and predictable emotional expressions and practical frames in the child's life, more than a moment-to-moment-sensitive awareness of the expressive and performative timing potentials of the act.

10.4.3 The dynamic balance between stability and variation

Gratier and Aptor-Danon's (2009) emphasis on the dialectical relationship between stability and repetition, on the one hand, and improvisation and variation, on the other, adds a new perspective to the nurturing, building and mastery dimensions of musical interaction. But what is this 'dialectical relationship', exactly? What makes the moment actually work?

Following Gratier and Aptor-Danon's line of thought in relation to meaningfulness, we must reconcile lullaby singing as a stable, predictable relational ritual with lullaby singing as a vital, improvisational, living and unpredictable act. The way in which parents perform on an everyday basis, 'day in and day out', contributes to what Gratier and Aptor-Danon label 'a historical thickening' of the act (Gratier and Aptor-Danon 2009). This 'historical thickening' can turn the singing into a rather static, monotonous performance or allow for a deepness that makes the act very rich, alive, dynamic and powerful.

Gratier and Aptor-Danon's focal point is balance, and if the interaction lacks variation it becomes 'overly predictable' and loses its significance and meaning. On the other hand, the interaction must not be too complex or lack stability or familiarity. In a literal sense, music's meaning appears to be less stable and consensual than that of language—it has been described, in fact, as 'floating intentionality' (Cross 1999, cited in Cross 2011, p. 7). Parents' singing is therefore inherently less likely to be 'predictable' in comparison to their talking. When parents start to sing the ordinary and familiar lullabies, it is time to sleep. The lyrics also often revolve around the themes of sleep and bedtime. This content, then, is not floating but distinct and clear.

Gratier and Aptor-Danon clarify the notion of narrative when describing the communicative aspects of parent-child interaction. To them, narratives are 'vectors of intentionality' and, whether they have a linguistic content or are based upon 'lived

non-verbal stories' (Stern 2004), they derive meaning from the 'existence of a tacitly acknowledged stock of assumptions and expectations about the nature of reality that are agreed between tellers and hearers' (Bruner 2002 in Gratier and Aptor-Danon 2009, p. 310).

What seems to be of importance in this context is that the parent and the child have made a tacit *agreement* as to how the singing ritual shall be performed. The parents' monotonous singing therefore meets the children's expectations. The child gets used to the particular parents' limited (or apparently unlimited) expressive repertoire and 'narratives' and accepts them as they are. Mother no. 2 notes that she was much more vital and dynamic with her first child than with her second, and this is a general tendency within the data. Of course, the second-born children are not aware of the 'deterioration' of their parents' singing, and they seem to be content with the singing anyway.

However, the parents' *intentions* in terms of making their children fall asleep sometimes become too apparent, and children reject the lullaby process as a means of asserting themselves at bedtime. I believe that this is because parents' 'instrumental' intentions affect the quality of their singing and the dialectical relationship between repetition and variation. In some ways, this effect is even more profound than that of fading energy at the end of the day. Mother no. 2, who now only performs 'remnants' of her past singing ritual, is still present in mind and body when singing to her second-born son, as the video sessions indicate. The pulse and pauses in her singing are flexible and living. She takes her time, and she is centered on herself and with her child at the same time. The temporal aspect is crucial. When parents are stressed and start to rush their singing, the moment becomes too goal-oriented.

Gratier and Aptor-Danon note the 'loss of variation and vitality' in a mother's singing performance when she is depressed. I suggest that a similar loss occurs when parents are too preoccupied or fixated on the outcome of their singing, whether due to personal or to cultural 'constraints'. Parents' sometimes overly predictable calming intentions do not always accommodate attunement, or what I label 'musical mindfulness', in the context of a lullaby. Nevertheless, the lullaby's requisite balancing act between different interests and goals depends greatly on this particular state, which is the lullaby act's ultimate affordance.

10.5 Musical mindfulness

Parents' statements reflect a focus on calmness, bedtime rhythm and affect regulation, the latter referring more to energy and vitality than to emotions (or what Stern [2010] calls 'categorical affects'). This particular focus resonates with parents' own levels of vitality and presence, which they 'express' in conscious (yawning and meditative singing) and unconscious ways. Parents' and children's nonjudgmental attitude towards parents' musical shortcomings and imperfections also belongs to a particular accepting focus and mode of singing, and this particular nonjudgmental attitude is often included when describing mindfulness (see Kabat-Zinn 1994, p. 4). Moreover, parents search for balance and equanimity while singing also describes a special mode of being. I suggest that this conscious balanced, communicative and vital dimension of the lullaby act represents a uniquely musical sort of mindfulness that encompasses sensitive time and timing, dynamic movements, nonjudgmental behaviour, attentive presence, social awareness and openness. Musical mindfulness is not intrinsic to the lullaby, but it is something that lullaby singing affords in terms of rhythmical integration, flow and movement, emotional and communicative depth and holding and multisensory elements.

Many interpersonal studies highlight the importance of the parents' presence and attentive awareness in any parent-child interaction (e.g., Malloch and Trevarthen 2009, Siegel 2007, Stern 2004, Winnicott 1971/1991). This parental state is crucial if the children are to feel vibrant and alive, understood, and at peace (Siegel 2007, p. xiv). Mindfulness, in its most general sense, is about 'waking up from a life on automatic, and being sensitive to novelty in our everyday experiences' (Siegel 2007, p. 5). Recalling the definition of mindfulness from the chapter of theoretical framework, a mindful state brings 'complete attention to the present experience on a moment-to-moment basis' (Marlatt and Kristeller 1999, p. 68). A mindful parental approach to lullaby singing adds important meanings to the act. A personal and intimate lullaby provides the parent with an opportunity to attune to the child, and this in turn distinguishes the genuine lullaby act from the rote fulfilment of its potentially habituated, regulated and automated ritual context. It also introduces a clear distinction between singing actively and reproducing passively.

I suggest that we think of this balancing between repetition and novelty, stability and improvisation, and this attuning to one's inner self and to the child, as a state of *musical mindfulness*. In this sense, we can see that the lullaby act affords 'the self-regulation of attention' as a lullaby's simplicity allow the parent to focus on a particular lullaby and the child. Musical mindfulness depends on the given parent's ability to make use of his or her musical resources and to exploit the implicit melodic,

rhythmic and formal features and qualities of the lullaby. In this way, the parent adopts a reflective, self-observant and interpersonal listening stance while also performing. Musical mindfulness blurs the boundaries between intrapersonal and interpersonal attunement (see Siegel 2007). The parents' focus can shift very quickly, as stated by the parents themselves. Stern's concept of affect attunement is shown to highlight the importance of parents' presence, adaptability and sensitivity. Following the parents' statements, musical mindfulness reflects a higher degree of social attunement, and it is dynamic, process-oriented and movement-oriented rather than static. Malloch and Trevarthen's (2009) fundamental aspects of pulse, quality of melodic and rhythmic contours and narrative are integrated in the act. Musical mindfulness also encompasses the energetic levels introduced by Stern (2010). The act seems to fall along a continuum between activation and deactivation. In contrast to affective attunement, seen as outside the mother or father's awareness (Stern 1985/2000), musical mindfulness depends upon parental awareness of the fluid nature of both the interaction and the singing.

It is based upon the *living and flowing act* of singing, which also, from my point of view, transcends the dichotomy between being and doing, between you and me, as it transports the parent and the child to an 'awareness of their intrinsic connectedness', to use Pavlicevic and Ansdell's formulation (2009, p. 42). It allows them to 'connect in the third', as one of the parents put it. Musical *mindfulness* means to forget, at least temporarily, chronological time and enter the realm of a perpetual state that is more in line with how children experience time. It demands a sensitive approach to the child's inner rhythm. If a parent's face is an emotional mirror of the child's face, I propose that lullabies represent an aural or even multisensory analogue to the child's inner state. However, musical mindfulness is not only mirroring as it seems to move the child towards integration.

Several parents in fact describe the intersubjective and intimate space that is created when they sing to their children, and one even used the term mindfulness when describing the way in which she *centres* herself. Another used the word when describing how she *tunes herself in* on the particular bedtime situation. This state represents a way of being with her son, when they need peace and quiet, as she put it. According to Winnicott, 'It is possible to seduce a baby into feeding and into functioning of all the bodily processes, but the baby does not feel these things as an experience unless it is built on a *quality of simple being*, which is enough to establish the self that is eventually a person' (Winnicott 1960, p. 12; my emphasis). Musical mindfulness is the manifestation of this quality.

The transcendent or meditative state of musical mindfulness in turn affords co-attunement and shared agreement and wellbeing. For parents who have a hard

time expressing their love, the symbolism of the lullaby's simple and poetic language can create a bridge to the parent's emotions in the context of musical mindfulness. Musical mindfulness can create a detached state of mind. An emotionally available parent, through singing, can create stories that are full of 'emotional images based on autobiographical richness' (Siegel 2007, p. 204).

I suggest the following hypothesis based upon the concept of musical mindfulness:

Singing lullabies, as a communicative, multisensory act of care and an interpersonal event, has the potential to create (a) a higher degree of presence and awareness on the part of the parent; (b) a fading level of intensity; and (c) physical and emotional integration, richness and mental clarity, elements which may facilitate meaning in communication and create a nurturing atmosphere and a relationally significant moment for parents and their children before bedtime.

A mindful approach is a commitment that parents must make before they start singing. 'They need to take their time to listen to their children', one parent said. Siegel observes, 'Mindfulness is a very important, empowering and personal internal experience that blends a personal way of knowing along with an external vision of science' (Siegel 2007, p. xvi). It could be considered an ideal state that is, in fact, out of the parents' reach, but as Siegel notes, 'Each of us has a mind with great potential' (Siegel 2007, p. 96).

While singing, some parents open up to their own inner world of images, memory and imagination. Their voice timbre becomes richer and more colourful, and their human vulnerability and tenderness are exposed. Parents' inner time and space is expanded in this interaction with their children and these traditional lullaby melodies. Singing lullabies provides parents with stories that evoke an autobiographical richness, and this also helps the child to learn to visualise and develop the ability to create his or her own inner images. According to Krueger, musical affordances 'are the qualities of a piece of music that a sensitive listener both perceives and appropriates in the process of constructing and regulating different emotional experiences and in organizing different social contexts and interpersonal relations' (Krueger 2011, pp. 4-5). According to the inquiry data, parents demonstrate various styles and appropriations in their singing, which necessitates a nuanced picture of what a lullaby affords its performer. The act is a manifestation of a certain kind of parental attitude and intentional behaviour, which, for better or for worse, influences the lullaby's affordances. Some parents emphasise the importance of bonding time and contact, looking the child in the eyes while singing or otherwise creating a very physical ritual, while others are satisfied with a pleasant atmosphere in which the child feels good.

Still others attach importance to an interactive style that privileges the participation of the child. In each case, the voice of the parent and the voice within the voice (the loving-kindness energy, intention and emotion) are paramount.

10.6 The meaningfulness of the act—recollection and development

The 'lullaby quality' and 'affordances' seem to build upon different dimensions of the act and are connected to parents' levels of awareness and sensibility towards the moment, themselves, the child and the musical, structural, melodic and poetic qualities of a lullaby. Parents' lullaby singing is indeed 'affordance laden', in line with Krueger (2011), but this quality is not limited to its structural aspects. In fact, I would term it an 'affordance-laden event', because it also emerges directly from the actual parents' living, communicative, expressive and sensitive 'performance', the parent-child interactive style and actual relationship, and the child's preferences and responses. The affordances that result are individual and mutual (calmness and wellbeing), as well as cultural, practical, educational and social (building a ritual, developing one's language and creative skills, enabling individual satisfaction, positive emotions and relationships and a sense of mastery).

Based on the data from parents in the present inquiry, I will propose the following definition of a musical affordance in relation to the lullaby act:

A musical affordance is a communicative, interactive, subjective, social, cultural, practical, spiritual, creative or multisensory (visual, kinesthetic, auditory, and so on) possibility within a given event that moves the sensitive and attentive performer to express herself and realize a musical encounter, and the receptive, co-creating listener to be affected and engaged by it and invite to a musical sharing for its own good or for individual or social purposes.

In the listing below, I have tried to articulate the overarching aspects of the act that illuminate its positive influences and form the basis of its meaningfulness. For reasons of space, I have not been able to discuss all of the aspects outlined, and they should not be taken to represent as a comprehensive taxonomy. However, they do reflect parents' understanding of the meaningfulness of the act, as refracted through the lullaby quality and its many affordances. In the end, the meaningfulness of the act depends on the parents' ability to musically place themselves and their children within 'the possible', 'the actual', the 'existential' and the 'magical': The act

makes possible an intimate sharing, it reflects the actual closeness that already exists between the parent and the child and illuminates their everyday 'existential' concerns and interrelationship. Finally, it transcends the distinction between reality and dream with evocative and 'magic' and imaginative pictures and allow both the parent and the child to see the 'vast spectrum of experiential possibilities', to use Nielsen's formulations (Nielsen 1994, 2012). The act's particular quality and affordances derive not only from its particular structures and ritualised features but also from its living manifestation and immediacy. Its meaningfulness emerges moment-to-moment from a depth created over time spent interpersonally, intrapersonally and intergenerationally. Continuity is a key word when describing the act's meaningfulness.

Moreover, parents report that they do not consider the act to be a parental outlet, as they try to avoid negative emotions when singing. However, a lullaby may open up to emotional layers and a depth that the parents normally do not have access to or express in their daily life with their children. This may enlarge and enrich the emotional and expressive repertoire of the parent and the child and their interaction.

Below, I have divided the aspects into three main groups in accordance with parents' intentions, experiences and orientations towards the lullaby-singing act's meaningfulness:

NURTURING

Care and self-care:

- ⊕ A multisensory encounter that nurtures the child and the parent and creates mutual satisfaction and contentment
- ⊕ Fulfilling the child's needs
- ⊕ Ensuring safety
- ⊕ Promoting sounds of calmness and mutual calm
- ⊕ Personal engagement and musicking based upon a signifying process
- ⊕ Creating a warm and positive atmosphere
- ⊕ Supporting musical mindfulness, which enables the parent and the child to 'feel felt' by one another
- ⊕ Physical and emotional wellbeing

Relationship:

- ⊕ Fostering conviviality and a positive relationship
- ⊕ Sharing through a personal and intimate dialogue
- ⊕ Strengthening bonds and fostering bonding
- ⊕ Promoting mutual enjoyment
- ⊕ Promoting and facilitating love and affection

- ⊕ Compensation and reconciliation
- ⊕ Facilitating good communication
- ⊕ Promoting mutual and relational wellbeing

BUILDING

Formative and ritualised aspects

- ⊕ Communicating life values and beliefs
- ⊕ Enculturation and maintenance of tradition
- ⊕ Building cultural, family and parental identity
- ⊕ Vehicle for language acquisition
- ⊕ Development of human sensitivity and empathy
- ⊕ Social competence
- ⊕ Learning the skill of relaxation
- ⊕ Stimulation of imagination and the creation of inner images

MASTERY

Coping, control and practicality

- ⊕ Parental coping, sense of mastery and control
- ⊕ Shaping the evening and creating boundaries
- ⊕ Captivating the child's attention through musical flow and appeal
- ⊕ Ritual that creates predictability and continuity
- ⊕ Vehicle for transition and temporal structuring
- ⊕ Co-regulation

These overarching aspects reflect the way in which certain contingent parental meanings and intentions initiate the act, colour or begin to colour its context and ritual, and then become the main focus of attention and interest. The nurturing aspects apply to the relationship between parents and children as experiencers within themselves, their individual love of music, parents' need to express their love for their children, self-regulation, the singing ritual as a free space, release and relaxation. The focus is on promoting subjective wellbeing—an individual sense of safety, satisfaction, self-worth and validation. The relational aspects within the nurturing dimension refer to an emphasis on social sharing, bonding time and the enhancement of feelings of belonging and companionship. The ultimate goal is mutual, relational well-being, creativity and enjoyment. The building aspects refer to the act seen as an aid to general language development for children, to their initiation into and education about their culture, and to the parental focus on social competence, spiritual and human values, and growth. The mastery aspects point to parents' focus upon their singing as an

important practical tool with regard to inducing sleep and creating calmness, clear boundaries and a predictable structure and context for the evening.

Moreover, these aspects very often overlap and interrelate. The meaning of parents' singing needs to be reconciled to the particular setting in which it occurs. Many parents, in the end, do not seem to be flexible in their interpretation of these songs because their interest in calming the child supersedes their interest in the present moment or the performance as such. Their behaviour becomes rather instrumental and insensitively goal-oriented. Some of them feel bad about this. Moreover, the balance between these different layers can also vary according to individual personality, parent-child interactive style, the child's age, and daily circumstances and moods.

10.7 Psychosocial implications

The implications of the present study impact the individual (the parent or the child), the social matrix (the parent-child relationship and interaction) and the lullaby act as a whole. As pointed out previously, however, the shared world of reference, traditions, emotions and state of affairs, and the dynamic, mutually influential parent-child relationship join forces to constitute the whole that is lullaby singing. These aspects and implications cannot be considered apart from one another. The following lists represent highly selective summaries of what the parents consider to be the most important meaningful aspects of the act, together with its more 'objective' psychosocial implications.

Lullaby singing and the parent

- ⊕ Strong connection between parental identity and lullabies that takes shape through musical commitment and positive tone of voice.
- ⊕ Musical manifestation of parental love and care.
- ⊕ The songs provide parents with the opportunity to get in touch with deep emotional layers that they normally do not access in their everyday lives.
- ⊕ Recognition of the importance of music in children's lives.
- ⊕ Parents' considerations about their own parental musical efforts vary from deep satisfaction and contentment to resignation, guilt, sadness and regret.

- ⊕ In the musical parent-child encounter, parents receive insights regarding what they consider most important in life.
- ⊕ Coping strategy that provides parents with a sense of mastery and control. Embodied and emotional parental resource and tool for parents in good as well as bad times.
- ⊕ Parents' ambivalence regarding their own feelings towards their children and their daily frustrations can interfere with their loving tone.
- ⊕ Discrepancy between the negative ways in which they regard their own voice and singing and the positive impact they believe that the singing has on their children. Aesthetic evaluations are generally secondary and do not hinder parents from singing. They are confident of their singing as such, even though many of them evaluate their own voices and singing negatively.
- ⊕ Family and musical background play an influential role.
- ⊕ No parental consensus regarding the appropriateness of songs. Parents use what they have at hand at the present moment.
- ⊕ Censorship of songs with violent or overly religious content.
- ⊕ Fathers in particular use a variety of songs, included pop and rock songs that are not primarily associated with children.
- ⊕ Close, physical and distant parenting styles and spontaneous, intuitive parenting.
- ⊕ The lullaby act is valued for its dual nature as a practical tool and as a social sharing and enrichment opportunity.
- ⊕ Reinforcement and reawakening of parents' musicality in the lullaby-singing meeting with their children.
- ⊕ There is an expressive emotive quality in the beginning, but when the singing turns into a ritual, the emotional expressivity diminishes.
- ⊕ The cultivation of familiarity and predictability seems to be many parents' top priority.
- ⊕ Some parents' singing mode and style illuminate their cultivation of moderation and independence.
- ⊕ Sensitive timing has a global as well as nuanced character and relates to the singing ritual as a whole, as well as to small nuances of the particular songs that are sung. It also relates to the parents' timing of when to start and end the singing moment, and to the flexible style of singing that is required, whereby parents can stop in the middle of a phrase in order to explain a word or listen when the child has something to share.

- ⊕ Frequency, robustness and consistency of singing are greater for first-born and younger children.
- ⊕ The assumption that bored children fall asleep more easily seems to be a typical way of thinking for some of the parents.
- ⊕ Parents' singing seems to have similarities with a meditative state, and some parents even try to sing as monotonously as possible.
- ⊕ Predominance of regulation of vitality affects.
- ⊕ Some parents use singing as a teaching resource, while others tend to avoid 'pedagogical purposes' at bedtime.
- ⊕ Some parents make a conscious effort to be present and attentive in order to create an atmosphere that brings in an element of existential relaxation and true sharing.

Lullaby singing and the child

- ⊕ Modulates and facilitates affect regulations and the child's engagement.
- ⊕ Promoting the child's feelings of safety and contentment through the musical, multisensory, psychic and affective parental act.
- ⊕ Facilitating and strengthening the child's capacity for self-regulation and development of the ability to relax.
- ⊕ Gaining insights about their parents' love.
- ⊕ Stimulating and encouraging children's love and appreciation of music.
- ⊕ Connecting the child to a wider cultural and collective world.
- ⊕ Protecting the child when life is difficult.
- ⊕ Children seem to love their parents' repetitive and familiar singing.
- ⊕ The child's strong influence on the act through his or her expectations, songs and singing preferences from a very early stage.
- ⊕ Participating in different ways by choice and parental stimulation.
 - Singing correctly or humming along.
 - Disrupting or 'sabotage'.
 - Passive, active or attentive listening without singing.
 - Moving the body to the rhythm of the song (e.g., foot tapping or head nodding).
 - Turning inward and inattentive listening.
- ⊕ Rejection of parents' singing often an assertion of independence and autonomy.
- ⊕ Enhancing and stimulating children's learning opportunities, language skills, social competence and 'language of tenderness'.

- ⊕ Stimulating children's imagination, imagery and the creation of inner images.

Lullaby singing and relational and social aspects

- ⊕ Aural bonding time and the strengthening of family ties and bonds.
- ⊕ Promoting positive relational experiences, human enrichment and nurturing.
- ⊕ Promoting companionship, a sense of belonging and relatedness.
- ⊕ Promoting mutual enjoyment and sharing.
- ⊕ Facilitating emotional and effective communication and positive messages.
- ⊕ Affording a rich emotional repertoire
- ⊕ A temporal structuring of the parent-child interaction.
- ⊕ Playing an important role in identity formation, both for the child and for the parent—cultural, family and parental identities and ties are strengthened.
- ⊕ A symbolic and intrinsic part of the close and intimate parent-child relationship.
- ⊕ Genuine and intimate contact and communication between the two of them is established through physical and multisensory interaction, dialogue and mutual recognition.
- ⊕ Parents are focused on their children while singing because the simple structure of a lullaby allows them to be performing, available and observant at the same time. This results in a child-directed and dialogue-oriented singing.
- ⊕ Relational and intersubjective lullaby quality linked to a free space and time where the parent and the child can explore their relationship and share their inner states and rhythms.
- ⊕ Cultural and familial intergenerational transmission that strengthens family bond, continuity and cultural belonging.

The lullaby event as a whole

- ⊕ A holistic sense of care and comfort, based upon multisensory stimuli, nourishment and comfort.
- ⊕ Suggestive and meditative structure and mode of singing that may foster a sense of inner calm.

- ⊕ Two aspects that are intrinsically connected to the act, those of love and calmness, seem to blur the boundaries between care and self-care.
- ⊕ The act enhances relational and mutual wellbeing through positive emotions, mutual satisfaction and fulfilment.
- ⊕ Parents' temporal structuring and their continuous, predictable and regular caring singing reflects a holding environment both for themselves and for their children.
- ⊕ Parents' important balancing and sensitive skills and awareness are related to time and timing, to the relationship of stability and variation, and to the act as a whole, the bedtime context, parents' intentions, ideals, everyday life and circumstances, and the parent-child relationship.
- ⊕ The act of singing lullabies is described as a sort of fulfilment of parental care and love before the child falls asleep.
- ⊕ Promoting mutual calm and relaxation.
- ⊕ Manifestation of intersubjective diversity.
- ⊕ Mutual agreement and influenced behaviour.
- ⊕ Parents' simple or simplistic musical 'performance' relates to parents' attempt to attune to the bedtime moment with fewer stimuli, and to the child's limited communicative and perceptive abilities, as well as to their fading level of vitality.
- ⊕ Parents' singing is an example of co-creation, where the child's presence and participation strongly influence the act.
- ⊕ Practical tool for calming the child, shaping the evening and promoting beneficial routines.
- ⊕ Lullaby singing creates a predictable frame for the night.
- ⊕ The striking global stability of the act derives from the particular and individual way of relating and the establishment of an evening ritual based upon a known series of songs. Variations seem to occur in line with children's preferences and development.
- ⊕ A song's simplicity and repetitive form give the parent a sense of mastery and musical 'control' that allows the parent to focus on different aspects of the singing event, such as the parent-child relationship and the multisensory interaction, rather than on the concrete songs and the performative aspects of the singing.
- ⊕ Lullaby quality relates to a familiar structure, an affective tone of voice, few melodic contours, a stable rhythm, low volume and intensity and

higher pitch, facilitating the parent and the child's finding of their 'inner calm spot and centre'.

- ⊕ Parents use the songs they have at hand, and this is not limited to traditional lullabies. The way in which the songs are performed seems to be the decisive element.
- ⊕ Parents' physical, emotional, cognitive and mindful presence and the way they interact with their children are crucial.
- ⊕ Lullaby singing is seen as a context-sensitive microcycle of care, based upon mutuality, initiatives and responses, and influenced behaviour.
- ⊕ Singing is a transitional vehicle on the threshold of sleep.
- ⊕ The act has a variety of affordances, and parents stress similar as well as diverse aspects of the act.
- ⊕ The traditional survival function of the singing ritual seems to be replaced by a focus on creating a relational, convivial atmosphere.
- ⊕ The lullaby act is experienced as an act of balance. Parents try to balance between the necessity of creating clear boundaries for the evening and of adapting to their children, either calming them down or attuning to their vitality level.
- ⊕ The bedtime moment becomes the point in the day when they communicate to their children that there are no more things to be done.
- ⊕ Parents seem to be aware of the importance of being focused and present, but they also acknowledge their own distractions and shortcomings. Their everyday time constraints seem to influence the time and timing aspects of their singing.
- ⊕ The act seems to be embedded within a continuum of bedtime failure and success. Lullabies work as long as the children are happy and *easily* fall asleep, and parents also feel good about themselves as parents. However, sometimes the act turns out to be counterproductive.
- ⊕ The act contributes to positive relationships, and the relational ties between parent and child are strengthened.
- ⊕ Interpersonal diversity, but also 'sameness'.
- ⊕ The cultivation of moderation and efficacy.
- ⊕ The predictability and mastery of well-known songs, along with the familiarity of the bedtime routine and the living, present, dynamic interplay between the parent and the child, can turn the singing into a powerful practice of musical mindfulness.

10.8 Confirmation of previous research and alternative thoughts

This study supports several of the research findings introduced in the chapter on related research. The use of lullabies was described as being a positive experience for one's own emotional and physical wellbeing (e.g., MacKinlay and Baker 2005), which correlates with the findings of this inquiry. Moreover, singing can foster a state of inner calm and regulate a child's arousal level, in line with Valentin 2004, MacKinlay and Trainor 2005, and Ilari, Moura and Bourscheidt 2010).

Even though there are a few songs that seem to be more popular than others (that is, used by many of the twenty parents in this inquiry), there is not much uniformity to repertoire, which does not correlate with previous findings (Young 2008). In addition, parents do not always make the clear distinction between play songs and lullabies that other researchers have noted (Trainor 2002). Still, the lullaby list does include the most popular songs of previous studies (Wetlesen 2000)—'So, ro', in particular, seems to be the ultimate lullaby at bedtime. Traditional lullabies are now supplemented by other popular songs, and by Norwegian nursery school songs, but not replaced by them, as reported in previous research (e.g., Young 2008). The songs manifest parental expressions of love and affection, in line with previous research (e.g., Wetlesen 2000, Valentin 2004 and O'Callaghan 2008).

10.8.1 The dual affordance of being a practical and mindful tool and an opportunity for social enrichment and sharing

This inquiry confirms the range of parents' uses and applications of lullabies (MacKinlay and Baker 2005), but the lullaby act's dual function of simultaneously soothing the child and allowing the parent to express emotions, as described in previous research (e.g. Trehub and Trainor 2001, Friedman, Kaplan, Rosenthal and Console 2010), has grown to encompass practical matters as well as more delicate, even spiritual aspects of the parent-child relationship itself.

My use of the term 'affordance' instead of 'function' embraces parents' concrete experiences, felt sense and awareness of the act's potentials as both a practical tool and a means of social enrichment, because the latter term seems to be too instrumental and narrow in this regard.

Some parents report that their singing sometimes acts as compensation for what went on between them and their children during the day, in terms of both conflicts and communicative failures. This is not entirely in line with previous research, which hints at singing as compensation for parental absence during the day—that

is, 'maximizing the quality of time they [parents] spent with their babies' (Ilari 2007, p. 655). Some parents' views reflect 'the cult of independence' which is, according to Valentin, characteristic of the ways in which mothers take care of their children in North European countries (Valentin 2004).

In this inquiry, it seems as though the traditional view of lullabies as being a parental outlet (e.g., Trehub 2001) is not supported. Parents do not want to share their frustrations with their children. They want a happy ending for their children, despite being provoked by their own parents' more 'narcissistic' and 'intrusive' ways of behaving.

10.8.2 The multisensory, continuous, positive and bonding quality of the act

Parents seem to emphasise the multi-sensory quality of the act and do not restrict it to the emotional dimension but extend it to sensuous and physical aspects as well. This bodily quality of the act relates strongly to the children's appreciation of and need for physical closeness and tenderness. The importance of parent-child physical interaction is also emphasised by previous literature, especially in relation to the establishment of mutual meaning and social functioning (e.g., Dissanayake 2000b, Brady 2005, Malloch and Trevarthen 2009). As the Australian musicologist Robin Brady puts it, the lullaby's success is also partly due to its 'whole multisensory-communication event' (Brady 2005, p. 191). This correlates with parents' view of the act as having physical, expressive, social, communicative and instrumental goals and affordances.

Regarding the emotional and expressive quality of singing, as discussed in the previous research (Trehub, Unyk and Trainor 1997, O'Callaghan 2008), some parents report that the act affords the expression of positive feelings rather than the existential worries reported by previous research (Trehub and Schellenberg 1995). They use it to indicate their love towards their children as they try to make the falling-asleep process pleasant and easy.

This inquiry, in general, supports other researchers' views that musicality in interaction is highly communicative in nature and is a 'fundamentally humanizing activity through which we continually live' (Gratier and Apter-Danon 2009, p. 322). The lullaby facilitates communication and provides bonding and a sense of companionship. Some parents seem to highlight relational aspects that are strongly dominated by a first-order mode of intersubjectivity that is characterised by a mutual attunement to one another's emotive states and expressions (Stern 1985/2000, Trevarthen 1993, Bråten 2006). The act doesn't only nurture the parent and the child as individual beings, but it also nurtures their relationship and creates an intimate sense of companionship.

Other parents seem to stress the more conventional object-related communication that takes place, where the parent and the child can 'meet in the third' and the focus is on the songs. These parents even play and pretend on a metalevel around common melodies, lyrics, daily states of affairs, humour and cultural themes, which is referred to as the second mode of intersubjectivity (Trevarthen 1993).

Singing lullabies relieves both loneliness and separation anxiety and instead creates a nurturing atmosphere of mutual belonging, in both a cultural and a personal sense. Parents create a warm and pleasant atmosphere via the human voice, which is an extremely rich, multifaceted and flexible expressive instrument that reflects aspects of personality, physiology, temper, emotions, energies and forms of vitality through timbre, dynamics, force, resonance and intonation. Research points to how mothers and fathers adjust their voices to their infants while singing, raising the pitch of songs, slowing the tempo and increasing the level of emotional engagement in comparison to simulated singing versions (Trehub, Unyk, Kamenetsky, Hill, Trainor, Henderson and Saraza 1997). This inquiry supports the premise of parents' vocal adjustments in relation to a speaking voice. The different phases of singing that parents report correlate to the sequence that MacKinlay and Baker apply in their six-week treatment programs for mothers, 'sing, soothe and sleep', whereby the first phase is an attempt to match the baby's the level of intensity to make an emotional connection, and the second phase involves gradually modifying and changing the style of singing to encourage mother-infant intimacy (MacKinlay and Baker 2005, p. 72). In this inquiry, the two phases of singing seem to be strongly connected to the process of calming the child.

The level of emotional engagement can also vary, according to daily moods and life circumstances. Parents' statements and experiences also confirm MacKinlay and Baker's study of the musical interaction of first-time mothers with their babies (MacKinlay and Baker 2005), which described lullabies as a positive experience for both parents' and children's emotional and physical wellbeing. Parents in the present study also emphasise relational and social wellbeing in addition to individual wellbeing, and the study includes second and third children as well as parents of both sexes.

The importance of the lullaby act resides in the personal tie it creates between the parent and the child. Following attachment theories, a safe attachment-style means an emotionally available, consistent and responsive mother or father who encourages and supports the child's own 'going on being' (Winnicott 1971/1991) and promotes his or her care and survival. Children with firm attachments will explore from a secure base and eventually develop the ability to form their own intimate relationships and successfully rear their own children. The lullaby act provides a small but important, predictable, secure and continuous base for attachment to develop.

Most of the parents are aware of the fact that their singing creates a safe space for their children. The predictability of well-known songs and the familiarity of the bedtime routine make the singing a powerful practice in this regard.

10.8.3 The overt and hidden aspects in play

Brady describes lullaby singing as a communicative and multi-sensory event that encompassed five elements: the parent, the child, the song, the setting and multi-sensory elements (Brady 2005). I think it is important to account for the less-visible elements of the lullaby act as well, such as parent's predispositions and representations of the act, past memories and family traditions, actual life circumstances and interactional patterns, children's personalities, and expectations in relation to the ritualised aspects of the act. These less-visible elements complement Brady's more simplistic model, which encompasses only the more overt aspects of the act (see Brady 2005). Parents' own family traditions and musical preferences, in particular, seem to be important in determining their practice, which is consistent with Ilari's study (2007) of Canadian mothers' singing to their children.

Moreover, all parents, and I would say especially parents who were not sung to during their own childhood, reveal a self-determined way of musically enriching their life with their children, which is also consistent with previous research (O'Callaghan 2008).

10.8.4 The ritualised, 'global' stability of the act and 'periodic' changes over time

Eckerdah and Merker report that while the ritualised aspects of action songs can be modified and adapted according to the child's age and development, their global form remains consistent (2009, p. 252). This correlates with the parents' statements that the lullaby act undergoes both small and large modifications over time but is still characterised by a 'global stability' in terms of singing on an everyday basis and sticking to a soft and multi-sensory singing interaction. This inquiry supports Gratier and Apter-Danon's emphasis on the dialectical relationship between stability and improvisation in the parent-child interaction. However, this inquiry focuses on parents' efforts, 'techniques' and possibilities of keeping the interaction dynamic and balanced.

Merker points out that a presumption of efficacy is deeply embedded in the performance, independent of its outcome (Merker 2009, p. 46). Interestingly, this does not seem to fit into the picture of what parents describe. Parents do not think that this

is 'the one and only proper and efficacious way of achieving the external purpose of making the child fall asleep' (Merker 2009, p. 9). They also seem to continue to sing over the course of time for relational reasons more than for the act's efficacy. This seems to be a different way of looking at the value of the ritual, because the lullaby ritual seems to both dependent and independent of its outcome, but always strongly connected with the child's present social, physical or psychic needs.

There is no evidence that parents perform different versions of the same song to the same child over time, but there are songs that are adapted to the given child's name or character, and changed when sung to a sibling; some songs, in addition, are replaced by others, or new ones are added to an already existing 'series of songs'. When the child is small, the act is characterised as infant-directed singing. This means that the parent's focus is on the child, and the intention to calm or soothe the child strongly colours the act. The child thus dictates the parent's attention and singing style, hence the term infant-directed singing (Papoušek 1996). This notion reflects the asymmetrical relationship between the parent and the child—the focus is not so much on the kind of songs that the parent sings, but on the way the parent lives through the songs in the interaction with the child. Over time, the singing becomes strongly associated with the parent-child relationship, and the children develop an 'ownership' of particular songs.

10.8.5 The long or short life of the bedtime singing ritual and the robustness of singing to first-born children

The reasons why parents stop singing lullabies to their children range from the birth of a sibling to the child's personal preferences for books or conversation instead of songs, the parent's sense of 'having had enough', or the parent's impression that the child does not need the singing any more. Additional factors might include the child's refusal of the singing and general expression of autonomy or the parent's literal exhaustion.

For many families, the lullaby-singing ritual has a very long life and does not slow down until adolescence, due to its strong connection to the parent-child relationship, its perpetuation of a feeling of belonging, or the force of habit. It is powerfully integrated into their daily routines, and children do not question it until they want to be completely free and independent of the mother or father (as they normally start to feel during the period of adolescence). The strong parental commitment to establishing and sustaining a singing tradition is highlighted in this inquiry and confirms previous research (e.g., Custodero 2006).

10.8.6 Primary and secondary reasons for singing

Parents report that they start singing lullabies for both primary (induce sleep, express love, create calmness, good atmosphere and everyday structure) and secondary reasons (educational and cultural) as shown in previous research (e.g., MacKinlay and Baker 2005). They sing because of children's immediate need for a soothing, predictable and safe frame for the night. Singing is considered to be an important regulating tool, which is consistent with previous research (Ilari 2009, Longhi 2009, Custodero 2008, Brady 2005, Valentin 2004, and DeNora 2000). Lullaby singing is part of parents' intuitive, natural and learned adaptation and attunement to their children, and it satisfies the parents' and the children's love of music.

Family background and memories also play an influential role, which is also in line with previous research (e.g., Custodero 2006). It is part of a cultural and inter-generational process of transmission (e.g., Custodero and Johnson-Green 2003). The parents' observations about the different qualities of the songs align with previous research regarding parents' levels of awareness.

Parents also start to sing because they think that infants appreciate their personal voice; this also correlates with previous findings (e.g., Trainor 2002).

The diversity of performance and parenting styles supports 'the multidimensional and specific nature of parenting' (Bornstein, Hahn and Haynes 2011). Parents touch upon the relationship that exists between improvisational vitality, on one hand, and a stable, continuous musical and bedtime structure, on the other (see also Gratier and Apter-Danon 2009).

10.8.7 Parents' musical reawakening and children's learning

Parents make up their own songs all the time, which correlates with previous studies (Custodero and Johnson-Green 2003, Street, Young, Tafuri and Ilari 2003).

Ilari, Moura and Bourscheidt (2010) emphasise the changes that occur in a mother's musical habits when a child is born. Singing is closely related to parental identity—more precisely, a musical reawakening, reinforcement and rethinking of parents' own musical capacity take place.

The many strategies that parents use at bedtime highlights parents' singing as a strategy for coping that recalls DeNora's studies of music from an everyday perspective (DeNora 2000). However, the act is not only an important part of the parental 'repertoire for coping but also a practical necessity and a pleasure.

Among some parents, there is a discrepancy between the negative ways in which they regard their own voices and singing and the positive impact they think singing

has on their children. Previous research has looked at these aesthetically various evaluations in relation to parents' *insecurity* about singing and the ubiquitous musical and singing activities that nonetheless take place at home (Street, Young, Tafuri and Ilari 2003). Parents in this inquiry seem to be more confident about their singing, at least in this particular dyadic setting.

Parents also point out that their singing facilitates their children's language acquisition. Parents look upon lyrics as a language-teaching device, which reflects previous literature (Longhi 2009).⁵⁴

10.8.8 Lullaby singing as a mutually influential process and co-creation

This inquiry confirms previous research that illustrates the reciprocal influences between parent and child in musical parenting (Custodero and Johnson-Green 2008). Parents are greatly influenced by the presence of the child, as has been pointed at in previous research (e.g., Trehub and Trainor 2001, Trehub, Unyk and Kamenetsky 1997, Papoušek 1996). This was made evident by the large amount of spontaneous and improvised singing that has been investigated in previous studies (e.g., Custodero, Britto and Xin 2002).

Children's participation varies according to their age, personality and daily vitality level; sometimes they also just relax and turn inwards or watch their parents. This is consistent with previous research (Wetlesen 2000).

Previous research in the field indicates that the eventual success or failure of lullaby singing is greatly dependent on the parents' energy level, interest in singing, and attentiveness (MacKinlay and Baker 2005, p. 130). The present inquiry has complicated this picture by emphasising the aspects of sensitive time and timing. Moreover, the parent's level of awareness or musical mindfulness on a moment-to-moment-basis, together with the child's energy level, or 'level of vitality', to use Stern's notion (Stern 2010), are crucial. Sometimes parents' monotonous, autopilot or absent-minded singing even works, because it invokes calm and meet the child's expectations of familiar songs and singing style.

54 This also correlates with speech act and communication theories that pay special attention to shared extra-linguistic aspects and allow for the primacy of interpersonal and emotional aspects in the ontology of thought and language (e.g., Vygotsky 1934/1986, Mead 1934, Habermas 1970, Tomasello 1988 and Wittgenstein 1953/1978).

10.9 Implications for early childcare and education

Parents' self-evaluations about and attributions regarding lullaby singing help to explain how and why they musically parent, use music in their childrearing and provide further insight into the broader cultural contexts of parent-child relational wellbeing. When parents discuss their successes, failures and impact regarding their lullaby singing, they draw upon personal and cultural insights. Children learn how to behave through the role modelling of their parents, who learned from their parents. This inquiry has extended the domain and vision of childcare and education to encompass the existential human need for meaningfulness, simplicity, calmness and predictability, as well as the importance of self-regulation, musical holding and attunement in the upbringing of children.

Musical mindfulness broadens the notion of musical parenting, which has generally focused on aspects of stimulation, play and development. It advocates for a heightened attentive presence towards both oneself and one's children, and for the importance of timing and dynamic sensitivity in the parent-child interaction. Musical mindfulness also transcends competitiveness and goal-orientation, because its perspective is non-judgmental regarding musical shortcomings and imperfections. Still, the lullaby act is situated on a continuum between mastery and failure, but this relates more to the everyday temporal and relational aspects of the situation than to musical competence as such.

Musical mindfulness can also be connected to what I have labelled the 'cultivation of moderation', whether one approaches the act via rational, use-oriented and practical thinking or more intuitive, expressive, flexible and value-oriented thinking. This inquiry underlines the parental act of singing lullabies as an emotionally nurturing, formative, imaginative and social vehicle, as well as an enculturation and coping tool and a personal resource for the promotion of both the parent's and the child's wellbeing (e.g., DeNora 2000, MacKinlay and Baker 2005, O'Callaghan 2008).

Parents in this inquiry report that the establishment of a singing ritual is a wonderful addition to the dynamics of their everyday lives with their children, as it shapes the evening in a meaningful and relaxing manner. Moreover, in a relational context, the lullaby act fosters bonding, facilitates coordination and successful communication and helps parental coping efforts. I would argue, then, for cooperation between childcare centres and musical institutions in order to demonstrate the benefits of singing and encourage the development of musically based programs and projects that enhance and support everyday musical practices among parents and caretakers. Emotional-educational programs with a musical focus can facilitate the free flow of expressivity, moods and emotions in the daily life of the parent and child, on the one

hand, and facilitate affect regulation and balance, on the other. Such programs have had great success in England (e.g., Mackinlay and Baker 2005), and the absence of such programs at healthcare centres in Norway should be investigated.

10.10 Implications for future research

The broad approach of this inquiry suggests further investigation into the benefits and affordances of lullaby singing in daily life, as well as its possible connection to existential health and wellbeing on the part of both parent and child. I have introduced several concepts in order to describe and differentiate parents' way of behaving and responding towards their children, such as communicative musicality, musical holding, attunement and mindfulness. Yet there is a need for an even more systematic investigation of the correlation between the parent's level of awareness and sensitivity and the child's experience of being well taken care of from a long-term perspective that might incorporate the child. Researchers are beginning to examine the attentional networks that may be involved in mindful awareness (e.g., Siegel 2007), but they have not yet taken into account the particular musical features that might support a focused, nonjudgmental and present state of mind. At this point, we do not have definite data to analyse how focusing one's attention in the present moment might improve physiological, psychological or interpersonal wellbeing. Further studies could investigate the appropriateness and impact of singing and music in relation to relational wellbeing. Longitudinal inquiries would also verify more systematically the act's affordances and look at the necessary and fruitful changes that take place within the act in relation to the child's age and the respective periods of development.

Quantitative studies could uncover further general implications of the act, such as how many parents sing for their children in Norway today, what kinds of songs are used the most, how traditional lullabies are renewed, or how geographical and gender differences or trends and conventions influence the act. In addition, I did not consider how the lullaby act and parent-child interpersonal relationship might be affected if one of a child's two parents does not sing. I also did not allow for divorce or single-parent situations.

While every parent has his or her own reasons for singing, there are profound similarities among them. Further research is clearly needed in this area, in order to elaborate on various parental attitudes and value orientations and social influences. Comparative studies between parents who sing and parents who do not would impact

the conclusions reached here. Additional studies might also investigate parents' singing to their children in relation to the child's development of symbolic understanding.

The terms 'infant-directed speech' and 'infant-directed singing' have been used for decades, but it is past time to differentiate among the particular communicative gestures, emotions and actions that arise between the caregiver and the child. Perhaps we might integrate them into an even more dynamic and broad, dialogue-oriented and intersubjective perspective that foregrounds the idea of mutuality but not at the expense of the individual 'otherness' and asymmetry of the parent-child relationship.

Much attention has been paid to how an emotion becomes visible through facial expression (e.g., Ekman 1994) and mother-to-infant face-to-face interaction (e.g., Stern 1985, Trevarthen 1999). However, little focus has been directed towards how emotions become audible through vocal expressions and communicative actions and gestures within the parent-child interaction, along the lines of the close relationship between facial expression and emotional experience described by Ekman (1994). Scherer and Zentner's works on various emotions evoked by musical listening might be an interesting point of departure (see e.g. Scherer 2005, Scherer and Zentner 2008). Stern's (1985) concept of attunement seems to address the more aural or musical aspects of human interaction. But further research is needed to ensure the relevance of the qualities that foster strong, healthy interpersonal bonds, successful communication, authenticity, companionship and a sense of coherence in a world that appears to be fast-paced, superficial and fragmented. I propose that parent-child musical interaction offers a fruitful arena for discussions and inquiries regarding the potential of a parental sense of achievement, positive emotions and relationships, creativity and engagement.

10.11 Critical comments in relation to the research process

10.11.1 Reflexivity applied

To be reflexive in this particular setting means, at minimum, to be able to see the 'otherness' in parents' experiences by being critical towards one's own preconceptions about singing and parenting. It also means maintaining enough distance during the process of interviewing, especially from other mothers in connection to maternal identity issues. What does this mean in actuality? I will answer this question by describing a particular interview session.

During an interview with a mother who has a four-year-old daughter (as I do), I asked her what her own musicality meant to her. She admitted that she has always been shy when it comes to validating her own musical abilities in front of people with a music-education background. I asked myself whether this included me as well, which might in turn indicate that she would not be able to answer my question properly. It appeared to be difficult for her to say something about her musical abilities, and I reassured her that I had a very broad perspective upon my own musicality as well. I pointed out that I was often very tired, for one thing, and that my own voice was far from perfect. This inspired a more mother-to-mother form of conversation, where I used my own experiences to reduce the distance between us. She acknowledged that she felt that she had musical abilities—she really enjoyed music and loved to learn new songs. She also reflected on the fact that it was rather strange that she hadn't pursued her singing interests by taking lessons. Then I asked her what she thought about singing to her child? She said that she tried to follow the melody, and that she was aware of its ups and downs. Apart from this, she simply tried to remain in a flow and liked to pause before certain words in order to allow her daughter to sing and interact with her.

In the meeting with parents such as this mother, I found that musicality was a rather loaded concept. Often it was linked to talent, perfect pitch, intonation, beautiful singing and ambition within a professional frame of reference of some sort. My initial approach was to find out more about how parents related to their own musicality in the lullaby interaction with their children. But the parents' experiences with and articulation of musicality seemed too basic to suit an academic context. Were my own preconceptions and musical arrogance interfering with my analysis? I decided to delve a little deeper, paying attention to what parents emphasised and dismissed. I concluded that what parents valued most was their children's appreciation; when they decided they had nothing to prove their children musically, they felt good. This important finding was 'hidden in plain sight', in fact.

On the one hand, then, my own experiences as a mother deepened my understanding of the use and characteristics of singing lullabies in parenting. On the other hand, my professional background as a singer supplied me with a very different lens. Empirical research into musical meaning is, as Cross and Tolbert insist, still at an early stage, and it is important to take into account multiple perspectives (Cross and Tolbert 2011, p. 32). There is much left to do in order to grasp the full potential and meaningfulness of everyday singing involving parents and their children. For example, I was surprised by the fact that so many parents created their own songs for their children, even as this fact reinforced my sense of music as a mode of interaction rather than an object of auditory perception. In this inquiry, I have emphasised

creative, prosocial and constructive tendencies; others might look at the issues and challenges inherent in the act.

While some might argue that the interdisciplinary nature of this inquiry has produced a lack of focus, from my point of view, there have been clear benefits to the richness generated by this quality in comparison to other inquiries in the field. This richness admittedly complicates discussion of the act's implications in relation to specific parameters and findings from previous research, and further investigations are needed in order to achieve statistical significance in this regard. Thus far, the interviews and observations have been of an exploratory nature and have allowed me to (1) document three levels of complexity in the act (nurturing, building and mastery); (2) confirm some of the theories already established regarding parent-child musical interaction and explore the qualities and affordances of lullaby singing; (3) describe how parents experience the meaningfulness of singing lullabies in different ways and look at their differences of opinion regarding which aspects are important (some parents stress contact and communication and the importance of basic confidence in life, while others stress the appeal of sleep, fixed routines and mutual calm, or a love of music and singing); (4) devise a data collection procedure that is systematic and focused on the interesting aspects that have emerged from the interviews. These aspects, in turn, include (1) the correlation between the parent's sensitivity, presence and positive responsiveness and the child's conduct during this dyadic bedtime interaction; (2) the influence of parents' attitudes, value orientations and past musical experiences on the lullaby act; (3) the observation of different parenting styles and affordances during the act; and (4) a hypothesis regarding the lullaby act's affordances.

10.11.2 The importance of methodological triangulation

I will now give an example that illustrates the importance of methodological triangulation to the process of analysis.

From the interview session with a father of a three-year-old girl, I had the impression that he was singing to her in a rather mechanical way, without displaying any emotion or taking any pleasure in it himself. He focused on doing exactly the same thing over and over again. He confirmed my impression of being goal-oriented in relation to the lullaby act by saying that he wanted her to sleep, without making too much fuss, and that he was not an emotional kind of person but instead rather realistic and rational. He noted that he sang in exactly the same way to avoid attracting her attention through 'new and interesting sounds and words'. Several weeks later, he gave me video recordings from their 'goodnight ritual', and as I watched them

with him, I found myself in fact quite touched by his presence, patience and genuine contact with his daughter, and by the ‘real’ way he sang to her.

My initial impression, then, was altered, and in this ‘stimulated recall’ setting, I told him so. He responded that he had to focus—to give from the heart and leave the stress of the day behind—because if he did not, his daughter would not accept his singing and refuse to listen. He had to make a renewed effort to be real and present every day. In the initial interview session, the father had underestimated his own singing and understated what was actually going on between his daughter and him at bedtime.

The inquiry findings are therefore constructed from a dialogue between the researcher and the researched phenomenon. Given the discrepancy between what the father said and what he did, and between what he said and how I interpreted it, triangulation between the interview, my initial impressions and my later observations produced new, interesting and substantial information

10.11.3 Adequacy of theoretical concepts in relation to the data material

The inquiry’s theoretical bases served as important correctives, clarifications and modifications to my habitual application of common sense. The theory of communicative musicality draws upon decades of research within the field of infant development studies with a focus on the mother-infant dyadic interaction. As a relatively new concept, it had not been applied to lullabies as such and appeared very relevant. I challenged myself to adapt it by creating a consistent and clear functional meaning for the concept and adapting it to the content of this particular study. The *relevance* and the *application value* of this theoretical concept were compelling reasons for using it.

I will now give an example of its usefulness in relation to parents’ statements:

— *Sometimes, when I am singing to him, he just listens and turns inward. I want him to know that I am singing it for him, and I look him in the eyes. Other times he sings together with me—although he doesn’t know the words yet, he hums and sings the melody. (Father no. 2)*

This father wanted to initiate contact with his son and establish a sense of ‘exclusive’ companionship through his singing. He experienced the act as very communicative, whether his son participated or to turned inward. The communication aspect transcended the son’s active versus passive interaction. They were sharing the moment together either way.

The challenge here was to apply the theory in order to expand or isolate the parental intentions for and impressions of the act. In this particular example, the aspects of

communication and companionship were obviously relevant, but what did that mean in this particular personal context and pre-bedtime setting? In order to communicate with his son, the father sought to cultivate a normal frame of relating and a common understanding, in line with the theory of communicative musicality. He drew upon the conventions associated with singing lullabies in order to enable communication during a very challenging time, because his son was undergoing cancer treatments. He used lullaby singing because it helped him express his love and devotion, and because 'it created something normal just for the two of them'.

The theory made me aware of the importance of narratives and quality of their interaction in relation to the video recordings and to see how this predictable pattern of communication through melodic and rhythmic simple contours and poetic images evoked by certain songs created a sense of mastery and belonging, mutual expectancy and predictability.

Gibson considered the affordance to 'cut across the dichotomy of subjective-objective'—it is 'neither an objective property nor a subjective property. Or it is both' (Gibson 1979, p. 129). This particular notion, then, allowed me to look at the lullaby act both from the parents' points of view and in relation to the actual possibilities that reside within it but were not isolated by the parents as such. In addition, the concept of musical affordance helped me to differentiate among important features of the act that were highly musical in character, therefore putting me on the track towards musical mindfulness.

10.11.4 Normative pitfalls

Among the risks of presenting models and overviews related to the act of singing lullabies are their normative implications. It is not always clear that these models communicate needs that merit reflection, and some aspects of their singing may be salient to some parents while others reside below the surface. Some aspects might altogether transcend what the subjects have said. Reality is multilayered, and the theoretical models must be looked at as hierarchies or parallels that exist in a multimodal micro-universe. Tensions in the inquiry's key findings illustrate the act's balanced nature and personal intersubjective variations. Recent research, but also to some degree the parents themselves, places great emphasis on the relational aspects of the act as well as the parental role, perhaps to the detriment of the value that resides in the songs, and in the singing itself.

The individual part of parents singing may have had too much influence. However, the inquiry's results are a consequence of subjectivity—an account of subjectivity, in fact—not a subjective account of the data. Themes have not disappeared but possibly

made the presentation more complex, as I included the individual and unique as well as the social and cultural aspects of the act. Triangulations has compensated for possible normative exposures. And I was particularly vigilant not to let my own subjective opinions, which were included in the material, overwhelm the other parents' views. My role as both an insider and an outsider was challenging in this regard. As parents, we all talked both indirectly and directly about our lives, values and identities in order to describe the act of singing lullabies, and the normative aspect was integrated into the study in this respect. Caregiving is not a neutral domain. Each time I spoke to someone about my project, they voiced their own opinions about it. Using myself as a research tool, I tried to cultivate the transparency of the empirical data in relation to my own personal views and convictions. This might have created certain tensions and contrasts in the material, but I looked upon this effort as a process of enrichment rather than a methodological weakness.

10.11.5 Critical evaluation

In this inquiry, I explored the act of singing lullabies through discussions of various related concepts and categories, such as communicative musicality, mindfulness and affordance, to mention just a few. There are other concepts, such as mentalization, entrainment, joint attention, communicative functions, emotional contagion, embodied cognition and flow that could have contributed. Yet I had to make some choices. The theoretical methodology supplied points of discussions in relation to the parents' own statements and narratives, and these points were admittedly broad and diverse. This breadth hopefully makes sense in light of the deliberate task of unpacking this extremely powerful parent-child relationship, not according to a given disciplinary field but on its own terms.

Other scholars advocate breadth: 'Studies that assume conventional demarcations of activities such as live singing may be failing to recognize how these activities are being modified, integrated and hybridized in everyday music to an extent that they barely exist in separate forms' (Young 2008, p. 43). This observation raises an important question regarding the degree to which the lullaby act reflects the realities of the parent and the child's life or transcends them as an anachronistic little ritual that sits apart from reality.

In this particular study, the 'demarcation of live singing' was both necessary and fruitful. Parents report changes and modifications to the act of singing lullabies over the course of time and according to particular phases in the child's development, without losing hold of this conventional and fixed bedtime ritual. A focus on personal and conventional changes over the course of time is also part of this inquiry's

elaboration of the moment. Sometimes storytelling and singing exist side by side there, as well, but a focus on live singing supplied me with the opportunity to delve deeper into the characteristics, affordances, values and meanings of lullaby singing. This effort produced valuable insight into the particularity of the act in relation to its setting and its situated meaning—insight that went beyond disciplinary limits.

The emphasis on the parental act rather than the communicative event as the object of study here could be considered part of an 'individualized and somewhat asocial, acultural perspective', as Pavlicevic and Ansdell put it (2009, p. 359). I would argue that the parental perspective is based upon the belief that the responsibility of caregiving after all rests with the parents and their interest in providing an adequate environment for the child to grow and blossom in. To keep an eye on their interaction and relationship remains relevant as long as we live in an individualised society where the basic family structure consists of parents and their children alone. It also sheds light on parents' personal orientations and beliefs, so it is only indirectly a study of children's perspectives and experiences.

Nonetheless, parents' musical capacities and activities derive from a larger collective and cultural ground through the common cultivation and appropriation of music and singing (see Pavlicevic and Ansdell 2009, p. 362, Stige 2003, p. 173), and the act cannot be explored without taking into account the primacy of social influences and the mutuality of parent-child dialogues and interaction. This broad, holistic scope has made this thesis very extensive and rich.

10.12 Concluding remarks

There is no need to question lullaby singing's place and persistence in the historical context of human caregiving. Music in general terms, and lullabies in particular, can shape, strengthen and channel intuitive, instinctive, social, personal, linguistic and religious behaviours. The connection between modest means (e.g. a lullaby's simplicity, the parents' good enough singing) and richness (e.g. present, unpredictable interaction, the child's expectancies and the parents' representations, childhood memories, intergenerational historical and ritualized thickening) is in no way incompatible in this context. Based on the expressive potential of the human voice, the structural simplicity of a lullaby, the lullaby's collective and mythological depths, and the parents' personal communicative skills and sensitivity, the act becomes an important communicative event in the lives of parents and their children. Whether we consider it a special form of musical communication or a universal expression

of communicative musicality, its meaningfulness is grounded in security, familiarity, physical and emotional comfort and the extended, relaxed commitment of time.

In addition, this inquiry highlights the interdependence of all of the elements in play in order to be able to explore the basis of this meaningfulness. When parents raise their children musically, they also raise themselves in this way. Their musicality is reawakened—they improvise and invent new songs with their children. They then develop an everyday ritual that soon takes on a life of its own, based upon mutual expectation and appreciation. When the children are very small, they are ‘omnivorous’, so the parents sing whatever songs they have at hand, based upon their own choices and tastes. As children grow older, they introduce their own personal preferences and otherwise colour the act in unpredictable ways. When the ritual finally fades away, it is generally thanks to the child’s drive towards independence from any such parent-child interaction.

A lullaby is an ‘affordance-laden’ event which depends on the parents’ levels of awareness and sensibility towards the moment, the child and the structural, melodic and poetic qualities of the lullaby, and their ability to adapt and attune to the child’s unique and spontaneous physical intentionality, openness and interest in novelty versus predictability. The act of singing lullabies has the clear potential to be an embodied, expressive, meaningful movement at a shared, purposeful time, one that enables socio-emotional engagement, bonding and companionship. The act has the power to fulfil many needs and promote both relational and mutual wellbeing, as well as a true and vital sense of belonging to a family and culture. Contrasting aspects, such as intuition and tradition, necessity and joy, real and ideal, often act together through the lullaby ritual.

The act may even reveal a transformative potential for both parties. It is a ‘growth’, as one of the parents put it. From a developmental perspective, it can have an affect regulating function (encompassing both dynamic and categorical affects) that is especially appropriate before bedtime, or it can have an emotional-education function for the parent and the child, touching upon happiness, love, loss, loneliness, separation and sorrow. Lullaby stories are very valuable to the child; through them, they get to know their parents as *humans*. The singing creates a potential space for mutual understanding and meaning, and it enhances various kinds of perceptions, included fantasies, dreams and illusions.

Parents think of singing to children as a natural, important and necessary part of a parent’s role and identity. It just makes *sense* to sing lullabies to children, in three ways. Parents *guide* their children into the land of dreams, *initiate* them into their native culture and share parental love and care through their own personal *sensibilities*. Likewise, the children experience, through their *felt sense* that they are being

well taken care of. The parent and the child become sense makers together, and the boundaries between active and passive listening and participation are blurred. The parent and the child together ensure the right balance between stability and variation, and ritualised and caring lullaby singing seems to instil in the parent and the child a sense of meaningfulness, based upon personal experiences of bodily and sound-oriented shared meanings and nourishment, social competence and family companionship.

Inquiry data indicates individual variation in the ritual, but there is also 'sameness'. The musical dimension marks time, provides a positive and warm atmosphere and gives a rhythmic and temporal structure to experience. Of course, the meaningfulness of lullaby singing is not given or preconceived but dependent upon the particular parent-child interaction and interrelationship—how they experience the act, together and individually. To reduce the act of singing lullabies to a material base and to say that its success depends only on the parent's innate ability to sing and take care of the child, or on the child's readiness for sleep and level of vitality, is to trivialise it in the service of misplaced concreteness.

Parents consider the act to be a powerful symbol of parental love and identity that is based upon a parent's sensitive attunement to the child and the bedtime moment. It also allows for a humanness that places the child and the parent on more equal terms. While singing, they explore together the paradoxes and contrasts of life—of being close but in two separate bodies, of equality and otherness and autonomy and interdependence. The lullaby act is biologically, socially and culturally lived out by both, at once appreciated and taken for granted, consciously and unconsciously situated between demands and devotion, enjoyment and duty, nonsense and human wisdom, variation and stability, love and ambivalence.

I have sought to shed new light on a potentially exciting and fascinating phenomenon related to parents singing lullabies to and with their children. I have not isolated those concrete traits and methods that represent prerequisites for success in making children fall asleep as quickly as possible, but I have found factors that support a connection between lullaby singing and relational and existential wellbeing and meaningfulness. I have engaged with the nurturing, building and mastery dimensions of the falling asleep process that reside in care, calm, communication, contact, safety, co-creation and human depth, as manifested by parents' 'good-enough' singing. These dimensions are also based upon important premises, such as parental availability, attunement, sensitive timing, an emotional and physical caring presence, and an honest devotion to bedtime, to the inner self, and to children as playful, emotional and physical beings on their individual paths towards sleep.

The meanings and affordances are also embedded in the relational stability and continuity of the act, regardless of daily personal modes and moods. This relates to

the strong parental commitment to the basic existential foundations and ritualised character of the act. Musical mindfulness is linked to a certain kind of commitment to the present moment. In the context of lullabies, this commitment is even extended. Most of the parents were aware of the fact that their continuous singing creates a nurturing space for their children and themselves. The predictability and easy mastery of wellknown, simple, circular songs, the familiarity of the bedtime routine, and the living, present, dynamic interplay between the parent and the child all turn the singing into a powerful everyday realisation of musical mindfulness.

Lastly, singing lullabies represents a sharing of a resonant form and a precious and intimate dwelling on the threshold to sleep that has nothing to prove. Yet it can lead to physical, psychic, social and spiritual fulfilment and improve the human condition through its creation of a free space and time for personal and interpersonal meanings to emerge.

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Filmography

- Bonnár, L. (2011). Home-recorded video, father singing lullabies to his 3-year-old daughter, video, c. 15 mn.
- Bonnár, L. (2011). Home-recorded video, mother singing lullabies to her 4-year-old daughter, video, c. 10 mn.
- Bonnár, L. (2011). Home-recorded video, father singing lullabies to his 2-year-old son, video, c. 10 mn.
- Bonnár, L. (2011). Home-recorded video, mother singing lullabies to her 9-year-old son. video, c. 30 mn.
- Bonnár, L. (2011), Home-recorded video, mother singing to her 4-year-old daughter, video, c. 55 mn.

APPENDIXES

- 1 The process of analysis
- 2 List of songs used by the parents in this inquiry, with scores and lyrics
- 3 Information to informants in Norwegian
- 4 Informants' consent
- 5 Interview guide in Norwegian
- 6 Approval from NSD

Appendix 1: The process of analysis

These preliminary concepts represent the initial building blocks of my analysis of the meaningfulness of the lullaby act. Emerging themes, such as parental love, meeting the child's expectations, affirming value and calming the child were all categorised within this 'formal' initial classification:

CARE	Include any data where the primary parental intention is on the child's needs and wellbeing.
MUSICALITY	Include any data where the primary parental interest is connected to the musical dimensions of the singing
CONTACT	Include any data where the primary parental intention is on the parent-child relationship and their interactions
SLEEP	Include any data where the primary parental intention is sleep, calmness and related themes
TOOL	Include any data where the parents' singing is an identifiable target or object, regardless of whether the singing 'works' or not.
RITUAL	Include any data which seems to relate to the ordinary, everyday mode of the singing, or its fixed structure or regularity.

The connections between the concepts were 'formal' in the sense that they refer to logical relations of similarity and difference, or inclusion and exclusion. This classification gave me information about what falls within categories, the boundaries and connections among them, and the ways in which the categories were ordered in relation to one another. Some categories were subdivided and other subsumed under more abstract categories. These categories needed to be sensitive in order to capture the subtleties of data, and I had to define and redefine the boundaries and connections between the categories more precisely. The analytical structure and process depended on how fine-grained I wanted my analysis to be, and how broadly focused my categories were. I was wary of including too much information within a single bit of data, 'leading to a proliferation of assigned categories for each databit' (Dey 1993, p. 124). On the other hand, I was reluctant to adopt too narrow an approach for fear of losing some sense of the overall meaning of the data.

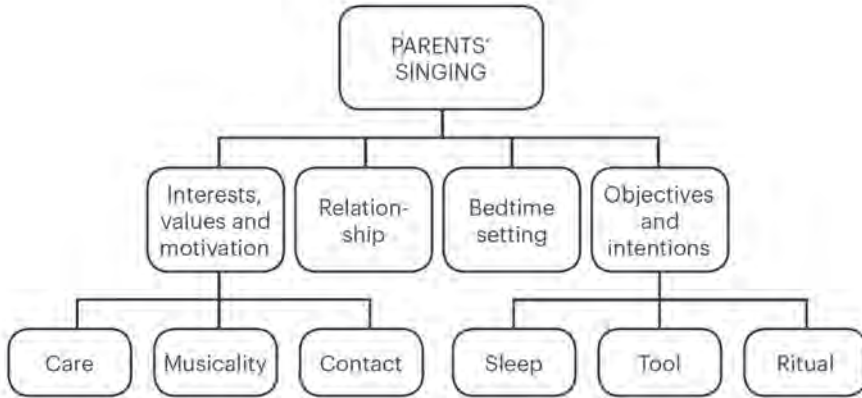


Figure 8: Formal connections between preliminary concepts during the initial stage of analysis

Databits	Categories
1. It is a great tool for me. That is what it is. I centre myself while singing.	Tool
2. I have to say that I am not resting in my own bubble all the time either. The singing is actually an act of caring love. I embrace my child while singing.	Care
3. I believe I take my musicality for granted. I know that I am musically gifted and I love singing. It feels so natural and it came so easily to me. I just connect to the flow.	Musicality
It all happened very fast. I had found some songs that I started to sing, and then my son was completely stuck. He wanted me to sing the same songs over and over again. Every night.	Ritual

Table 3. Categorising parent no. 2, first interview

Databits assigned to the category of 'ritual':

- 1 It is a fixed series of songs that I need to sing every night.
- 2 The act has a global stability, and I sing every evening.
- 3 I created a fixed routine that we stick to every night.
- 4 It is part of the going-to-bed ritual—first reading a book, then singing.
- 5 The singing is obligatory. I sing on a regular basis.
- 6 When I talk to you, I would call it a ritual, but I don't say it this way to my daughter. It doesn't have any name. We just sing. But it has a ritualised character, with a fixed form and based upon repetition.
- 7 It is a ritual of transition.

I weighted up the degree of refinement in the initial category set and produced a more extensive category list:

- ⊕ Ritual - routine
- ⊕ Ritual - regularity
- ⊕ Ritual - structure
- ⊕ Ritual - stability
- ⊕ Ritual - repetition
- ⊕ Ritual - transition
- ⊕ Ritual - tradition
- ⊕ Ritual - culture
- ⊕ Ritual - learning

In order to classify all of the emerging themes and categories, I followed the different steps of analysis mentioned earlier. From a research point of view, I was more interested in the overall picture of the parents' singing and musical interaction with their children in connection to the concept of meaningfulness. This encouraged me to define the overall categories according to three broad, inclusive areas: nurturing, building and mastery. This holistic interest also brought me to code and classify manually and 'organically' rather than apply standardised computer-processing of the data. The radical criticism of the role of the computer is that the computer encourages 'data fragmentation', and the overall sense of the data can be lost (Dey 1993, p. 79). Furthermore, from my point of view, the computer encourages a quantitative mentality. On the other hand, these problems reside less in the technology than in the use we make of it, and we simply need to acknowledge its limitations (*ibid.*).

The overall categories are exemplified in the three following boxes:

NURTURING

1. Identifying main emerging themes	LOVE, CARE, RELATIONSHIP
2. Identifying different components and categories (the process of coding)	Protection, touching, massage, happy time, good atmosphere, comfort, help, kindness, all the best, child's needs, positive memories, relationship, dialogue, connecting, upbringing, parental love, love of music, the child's love of singing and songs
3. Connecting themes and categories with theoretical frameworks	Communicative musicality, basic needs, emotions, and caregiving categories, relationship, attachment and bonding
4. Synthesising themes and categories	Care, safety, comfort, contact, communication
5. Final meta-revision of themes and categories in relation to theoretical framework and findings	NURTURING (THE PARENT, THE CHILD AND THE RELATIONSHIP)

The nurturing aspects related to the child and the parent-child relationship. Parents' focus was on the child's wellbeing.

BUILDING

1. Identifying main emerging themes	ROUTINE, TRADITION, IDENTITY, CULTURE, LEARNING, UPBRINGING
2. Identifying different components and categories	Regularity, structure, habit, everyday mode, daily seance, ordinary, taken for granted, affirming value, steadfastness, commitment, predictability, education, transmission, meeting expectations, mother tongue, tradition, family, spirituality, beliefs, role models
3. Connecting themes and categories with theoretical frameworks	Communicative musicality: ritual and learning, the dialectic relationship between stability and variation
4. Synthesising themes and categories	Ritual, identity, skills, enculturation, learning

5. Final meta-revision of themes and categories in relation to theoretical framework and findings	BUILDING (RITUAL, IDENTITY AND SKILLS)
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The building aspects relate to the process and structure of singing that developed over time, the formative benefits for children of being introduced to their own culture and thinking, and parents' own family and cultural background and identity. Parents' statements indicate the important role of singing to their upbringing of their children.

MASTERY

1. Identifying main emerging themes	CALMING, TOOL, CONTROL
2. Identifying different components and categories	Tool, handrail, technique manipulation, transition, support, calming, resource, expectations, pride, success, it works, control
3. Connecting themes and categories with theoretical frameworks	Communicative musicality, regulation, self-regulation, entrainment, mindfulness
4. Synthesising themes and categories	Regulating, structuring, coping
5. Final meta-revision of themes and categories in relation to theoretical framework and findings	MASTERY (COPING, EVERYDAY, ELEMENTS IN PLAY)

The mastery aspects included the parents' experiences of being in control, and how the act facilitates the parent-child interactions before bedtime, reinforcing the parents' own musicality and the experience of the act in terms of coping and support. They also included how the singing act was performed and its different components and characteristics.

For example, the themes of calming and calmness could easily be incorporated within the two categories of nurturing and mastery, depending on parental focus, intention, objective and interest. I asked myself: Should I assign other categories? Should I create a new category? I had to distinguish among parents' subjective, aesthetic, social and practical assessments and children's preferences in order to categorise the theme of calmness within the broad category of mastery, connecting it to parental

coping, tool and support and within the category of nurturing, in terms of describing how calmness nurtures the child and/or the parent.

Even though the parents were all guided by the particular setting of going to bed and the practical purpose of making the child fall asleep, I ranked the individuals according to the degree of interest they processed in singing, education, culture, relational aspects, practical matters, competence, routine, wellbeing, and so on.

In studying the parents' statements, I also found implied connections between the parents' orientations and interests and the meanings that occurred to them while singing—those parents who emphasised the relational value of their singing also tended to express particular interest in the psychological and 'deep' benefits of singing. Furthermore, those parents who emphasised the practical and more instrumental benefits of singing tended to express particular interest in the educational and pedagogical benefits of singing. By studying such correlations between different categories, I built up a picture of the data which was both clearer and more complex than my initial impressions. This made it easier for me to construct illuminating narratives out of the data, initially presented in the chapter of parent profiles.

Cultural factors were incorporated as well, such as the inherently Scandinavian cultivation of independence, the contemporary instrumental and goal-oriented approach to life, and the powerful influence of prevailing social expectations. These connections and patterns were discussed when I explored the contrasts between the ordinary setting of going to bed and parents' individual and unique stories.

An example of an annotation of a two-minute segment of videotape

I also designed a set of behavioural categories and comments to supply overall descriptions of the type of situations, qualities and interactive styles in a given recording session that were relevant to the emerging themes of the inquiry. The categories classified sequences containing nurturing, building and mastery aspects. They gave brief statements of the overall behavioural situation, and of apparent categories, such as contact (that is, dialogue, singing style, touching, watching, smiling, laughing), learning (singing cards, turntaking, encouraging, language acquisition, the content of songs) and mastery (time aspect, parental focus and effort, the child's behaviour).

An example of an annotation of a two-minute segment of tape under the heading of 'contact' was as follows:

The child is put to bed, and the father sits down on a chair nearby. He starts playing the guitar and watches his son while playing and singing a song. The child's attention is on his singing, and he doesn't watch his father—he only

listens to his father's singing and playing by moving his own body to the rhythm of the song. When the father has finished the first song, he asks his son to choose a new one. The son chooses a new song, and the father starts singing it while still watching his son. When the father has finished the song and is about to put his guitar back against the wall, the son comments on this by saying the word 'guitar'; and the father confirms this by saying yes, then puts back the guitar as usual. Then he kisses his son and says good night. The son lies calmly in the bed, and the father leaves the room.

This category was used in order to be able to have a more detailed and concrete conversation with the parent during the second conversation and stimulated recall. Sonograms for vocal behaviour or the detailed plotting of interactive movements in active singing sequences were not used, as the primary purpose of the recordings was to validate parents' statements during the interviews, and to give more detailed descriptions of their bedtime interactions with their children without losing track of the focus of the inquiry: the basis of meaningfulness of the act as viewed, experienced and described by the parents themselves.

Appendix 2: List of songs

Aftensang om våren

Det var en dei - lig, dei - lig dag, men tenk nå er den ö - ver, og
 al - le som er rik - tig snill, de lig - ger nå og so - ver. Og him' - len som var blid og blå med
 man - ge tu - sen smil i, be - gyn - ner først å le i - gjen en gang i mor - gan tid - lig.

Blomster små

Blom - ster små spi - rer nå, det er vår i lund og li. Blom - ster små spi - rer nå, vin - ter - ti - den er for - bi.
 Blå - ves, hvit - vois og kon - vall tit - ter frem i ti - sen - tall. Blom - ster små spi - rer nå, vin - ter - ti - den er for - bi.

Blåmann, Blåmann

Blå - mann, Blå - mann, buk - ken min tenk på ves - le - go - ten din!
 Bjør - nen med sin lod - ne fell kan deg ta - ka - seint i kveld.

Byssan lull



Bys-san lull, ko-ka kit - te-len full. där kom-mer tre van-drings-män på vä - gen.



bys-san lull, ko-ka kit - te-len full, där kom - mer tre van-drings-män på vä - gen, den



v - ne ack, så hålt, den an-dre, ö, så blind, den tre-dje sä-ger alls in-gen ting.—

Byssam, byssam barnet



Byssam, byssam bar-net! Gry-ta hen-ger i jar-net, ko-ka full av rönn-me-graut åt det ves-le



bar-net. Far, han sit og har-par korn. Mor, ho blæs i vak-kert horn Sys-ter, ho sit og



spin-ner gull. Bro-ren går i sko-gen, ja-ger al-le vil-le dyr. Er han kvit, så



køyr han hit, er han grå, så lat han gå, er han brun i bo-gen, så lat han gå i sko-gen.

Bæ, bæ lille lam

Bæ, bæ, lj - le lam, har du nã - e ull? Já, já, kjø - re barn,
 jeg har krop - pen (ull) Søn - dags - klær til - fær, og søn - dags - klær til
 mur, og to små strøm - per til bit - te - lil - le brød!

Bånsull

Ved mur-pi-pa sitt en bræin-ne-te katt, ei hem-pe her og ei hem-pe der, hu spør om å få lå-ne
 kjo-len din i natt, før kat - ta skal ut og dæin-se. Kat - ta ska gå seg må - ne - skinns-tur,
 smøy-e og dra i stubb-kjo-len da kat-ta ska bli så fin som ei brur, det ska dom snart få sein-se.

Danse mi vise

Vin-den blæs syn-na, og vin-den blæs nor-da, ly-set og skug-gen er sy-skjen på jor-da.
Som-mam er slutt, og vin-tern er lang. Dan-se mi vi-se, grå-te min sang.

Den fyrste song

Den fyr-ste song eg høy-ra fekk, vår mor sin song ved vög-ga, dei
mju-ke ord til hjar-ta gjekk, dei kun-ne grå-fen stog-ga.

Det står ein friar

"Det står ein fri-ar u-ti i ga-r'e mor lil-la, hau hau. Det står ein fri-ar u-ti
ga-r'e mor lil-la, hau hau." "Kor man-ge pen-ger he-ver han, du mi dot-ter Da-li-
a? Kor man-ge pen-ger he-ve han, du mi dot-ter Da-li-a?"

Eg veit ei lita jente



Eg veit ei lí-ta jen-te, ja ég kjen-ner ho sá vel, eg veit ei lí-ta jen-te nord í sko-gen, með



rau-de kí-n-er, au-go blá, með lí-ne hen-der, (ø-ter små; eg veit ei lí-ta jen-te nord í sko-gen.

Ellinors vise



Ka æ det som æ drøm-me om at æ en dag ska' vák-ne opp á



ví-te at ar-bei-det æ le-ve med e' my-kje, my-kje meir em det á sli-te.

Fader Jakob



Fa-der Ja-kob, fa-der Ja-kob, so-ver du? so-ver du?



Hø-ter du ei klok-ka? hø-ter du ei klok-ka? Ding, dang, dong! Ding, dang, dong

Fager kveldsol

Fa - ger kveld - sol smi - ler ø - ver hei - men ned,
jord og him - mel kvi - ler stilt i hei - lag fred.

Fola, fola Blakken (I)

Fo - la, fo - la Blak - ken! Nå er Blak-ken god og trett. Blak-ken skal bli
god og mett. Å Fo-la, fo-la Blak - ken! Uff, den le - ie bak - ken og den län-gé styg-ge
hei! Den var rik-tig dryg for deg, du gam-le, gam-le Blak - ken. Drøm om det, du Blak -
ken. Bå-re e - te, bå-re stå, kan-skje rundt på tu-net gå med ves-le - gutt på nak - ken.

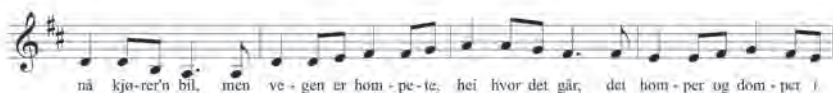
Fola, fola Blakken (II)



Hjulene på bussen



Hometitten



ru - ta vlt. Å hom-pe-tit-ten, hom-pe-tat-ten, hom-pe-tut-ten tei - a, mjøl-ke-ru-ta kom-mer i fra

Stom-pe-tud på hei - a, hold deg i stol - kar-men, lek du er med, og der - med så hom - per vi

opp og ned, vi hom-per opp, vi hom-per ned, vi hom-per opp, vi hom-per ned.

Jeg folder mine hender små

Jeg fol - der mi - ne hæn - der små i takk og bønn til deg. La

al - le barn i ver - den få det li - ke godt søm jeg.

Jon Blund

Hvem er den-ne ka-ren med sekk og lu-c på? Han lig - ner litt på nis-sen i-grunn.

Det er ik-ke han, det er Jon Blund. Han be-so-ker sto - re og små. —

Kjære Gud jeg har det godt

Kjæ - re Gud jeg har det godt. Takk for alt som jeg har fått! Du er god, du
 hol - der av meg. Kjæ - re Gud, gå al - dri fra meg! Pass på li - ten og på stør!
 Gud be - va - re far og mor og al - le barn på jord!

Kjære lille gutten min

Kjæ - re lil - le gut - ten min, kom og rekk meg hån - den din, in - gen er det i
 ver - den her der hol - der av deg som jeg. Lyk - kens sol - skinn og ll - vets gle - de, gid jeg kun - ne dem
 all - tid spre - de ø - ver he - le din frem - tids vei, min els - ke - de lil - le gutt.

Kvelden lister seg på tå

Kvel - den lis - ter seg på tå ø - ver klø - ver - en - gen. Him - len har tatt
 stjær - ner på. Al - le barn skal so - ve nå, sø - ve søtt i sen - gen.

Lille katt

Lil - le katt, lil - le katt, lil - le sø - ta kaa - ta.
 Vet du att, vet du att det blir mørkt om nat - ta!

Lykkeliten

Når lyk-ke - li - ten kom til ver - den var al-le him - lens stjer - ner tent. De blin-ker
 "Lyk-ke til på fer-den", som til en gam-mel, god be-kjent! Og som-mer - nat-ten var så stil-le, men bå-de
 trær og blom-ster små, de stod og hvis-ker om den lil - le, som i sin ly - se vug-ge lå.

På havets bunn står skutene

På ha - vets bunn står sku - te-ne med svæ - re, svar - te seil. Ma - ne - ten pus - ser
 ru - te-ne og bru - ker dem som speil. Men stak - kars tor - ske - smu - te-ne, de tar be - stan - dig feil!

Ri, ri på islandshest

Ri, ri på is - lands - hest, ri mot øst og ri mot vest,
ri mot sør og ri mot nord, ri mot der hvor I - yar bør.

Ro, ro til fiskeskjær

Ro, ro til fis - ke - skjær! Man - ge fis - ker får vi der! En til far og en til mor,
en til søs - ter, en til bror og to til den som fis - ken fikk, og det var lil - le Fre - de - rik!

So, ro lillemann

So, ro, lil - le - mann, nå er da - gen o - ver, Al - le mus i
det - te hånd, lig - ger nå og so - ver. So og ro og tipp på tå,
sov min ves - le po - de. Re - ven so - ver og - så nå, med ha - len un - der ho - det.

Sov du vesle spire ung

Sov, du ve - sle spi - re ung, en - nå er det vin - ter,
 en - nå so - ver bjørk og lyng, ro - ser, hy - a - sin - ter. En - nå er det langt til vår,
 langt til rogn i blom - stringstær. Sov, du ves - le spi - re, en - nå er det vin - ter.

Sov Dukkelse

Min el - ske - de duk - ke så søt du er, det be - ste jeg ei - er på
 jord. — Du lig - ger så stil - le i vug - gen her og smi - ler så pent til din
 mor. — Sov Duk - ke - li - se, sov og bli stor, og mens du so - ver, vå - ker din mor.
 In - gen - ting vondt din vug - ge - skal nå. Mor er jo liøs deg, hun pas - ser på,

Sov i ro

Sov i ro, slum-re inn, lil-le hjer-te-ven - nen min, når du leg-ger deg
 ned skal du til drøm - mens sted. Di-ne tan - ker fly hen til du
 vek-kes i - gjen, di-ne tan - ker fly hen, til du vek-kes i - gjen.

Sulla meg litt

Sul-la meg litt, du ma-ma mi, skal du få snor til trø - ya di. Vil du ha gu - le?
 Vil du ha blå? - Vil du ha blan - ke, skal du det få på trø - ya di, du ma - ma mi.

Så rart

Så rart _____ å væ-re flag - ger - mus og flak-se rundt fra hus til hus og
 gå til sengs i trær-ne. Men er det no - en som for - står hvor - dan den
 kan få so - ve når den hen - ger et - ter tør - ne? _____

Trollmors vuggesang

Når troll - mor har lagt si - ne el' - ve små troll og bun - det dem fast i svan -
 sen, da syn - ger hun sak - te for el' - ve små troll de vak - re - ste ord hun kjen - ner: Ho
 aj aj aj buff, ho aj aj aj buff, ho aj aj aj buff! buff! Ho aj aj aj buff.

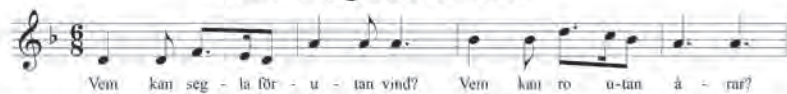
Tryggare kan ingen vara

Tryg - ga - re kan in - gen va - re än Guds lil - la bar - na -
 ska - re, stjer - nan ej på him - la - få - stet, få - geln ej i kän - da näs - tet.

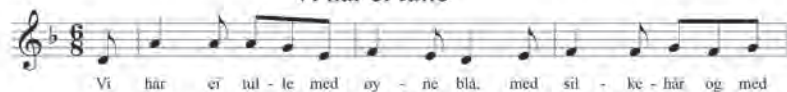
Vente på far

Tre so - te små - barn med øi - ne blå stil - le i skum - rin - gen sam - men stå,
 fol - ge med øi - ne - ne al - le dem, som i - fra by - en nu ven - der hjem. Ven - te på
 far, ven - te på far, tryk - ke sig mot ru - ten, ven - te på far.

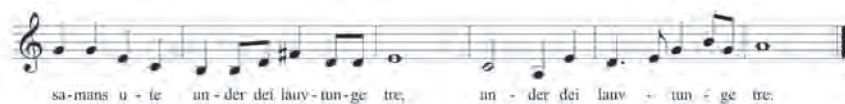
Vem kan segla förutan vind



Vi har ei tulle



Vi skal ikkje sove burt sumernatta



Vinden rider

Vin - den ri - der højt på sky ø - ver hav og land og by.

Stor - men ra - ser tung og hvi - t. Sorg og død, kom ik - ke hit. No - en kom - mer

no - en går. No - en dør i li - vets - vår. Stjer - ner ly - ser hvi - te.

Appendix 3: Information to informants (in Norwegian)

FORESPØRSEL TIL FORELDRE OM Å DELTA I FORSKNINGSPROSJEKTET:

LIFE AND LULLABIES

Exploring lullabies as a communicative event in early childhood

Prosjektets bakgrunn og formål

Prosjektet ønsker å undersøke foreldres bruk av egen musikalitet som del av omsorgsprosjektet for egne barn, spesielt før leggetid. Min antakelse er at vuggeviser spiller en viktig rolle i tilknytningsprosessen mellom foreldre og barn og gir økt velvære og tilstedeværelse både for foreldrene selv og deres barn. Jeg vil undersøke hvordan de bruker sangene, uttryksregister, fortolkning og holdninger og psykososiale og filosofiske vurderinger av dette. Prosjektet er et forskningsprosjekt ved Senter for Musikk ved NMH, der musikkbruk blant annet blir vurdert i et helseperspektiv.

Hva innebærer deltakelse i prosjektet?

Som deltaker blir du en av 20 intervjuobjekter som skal svare på spørsmål i et semi-strukturert livsverden-intervju, der det er viet rom til oppfølgingsspørsmål på bakgrunn av et åpent spørsmål innledningsvis og med rom for improvisasjon underveis. 5 deltakere vil også bli spurt om å gjøre videoopptak av vuggevisestunden med minimal tilstedeværelse av intervjuer. Det vil bli brukt håndholdt kamera som forberedes før barna skal legge seg, og kun foreldre og barn vil være tilstede i rommet under opptaket. Opptaket vil så bli gjennomgått av foreldre og intervjuer i et "stimulated recall", der foreldre kan komme med kommentarer underveis og etter.

I løpet av et semester ønsker jeg:

- å gjennomføre 20 intervjuer
- å gjøre 5 videoopptak
- samtaler og kommentarer til videoopptak i etterkant

Det vil bli gjort lydopptak av intervjuene.

Hva ønsker jeg å undersøke?

Jeg ønsker å undersøke foreldrenes bevissthetsgrad rundt egen musikalsk kommunikasjon og deres vurdering av barnets respons og velvære tilknyttet dette i vuggevisestund. Det vil bli lagt vekt på å få fram deres synspunkter, holdninger og tanker omkring vuggeviserbruk og egen musikalitet.

Bruken av opplysningene

Opplysningene vil bli analysert med hensyn til

- karakteristika ved den enkelte forelders bruk av egen musikalitet
- likheter/ulikheter mellom foreldrene og bevissthetsgrader
- musikalsk adferd vil bli vurdert med et psyko-sosialt, filosofisk og tverrfaglig rammeverk

Appendix 4: Informants' consent

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt informasjon om prosjektet:

"Life and Lullabies. Exploring lullabies as a communicative event in early childhood"

og ønsker å delta i prosjektet.

Dato: 

Signatur: 

Appendix 5: Interview-guide (in Norwegian)

INTERVJUGUIDE FOR "LIFE AND LULLABIES"-
PHD-PROSJEKT PÅ NORGES MUSIKKHØGSKOLE,
SENTER FOR MUSIKK OG HELSE

Fase 1: Rammesetting	<p>1. Løst prat (5 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uformell prat og spørsmål om vedkommende synger for sine barn om kvelden før de skal legge seg, og om vedkommende, som gjør det, eventuelt kunne tenke seg å være med i en undersøkelse om vuggeviser. Gjør avtal om å gjøre intervjuet umiddelbart eller lager ny avtale av de nærmeste dagene. <p>2. Informasjon (5-10 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sler litt om temaet for samtalen, nemlig at bakgrunnen for undersøkelsen er å avdekke karakteristiske trekk ved vuggevisepraksis i Norge, sett i lys av foreldrenes egne historier og erfaringer. Formålet er å rette søkelyset mot musikk i barns oppvekst og bruken av egne musikalske ressurser i møte med barna og foreldrenes forestillingst, holdninger og perspektiver rundt dette. • Forklarer at intervjuet skal brukes til et doktorgradsprosjekt om vuggeviser og forklarer taushetsplikt, konfidensialitet og anonymitet. • Spør om noe er uklart og om respondenten har noen spørsmål • Informer om opptak, sørger for skriftlig samtykke til opptak • Starter opptak
Fase 2: Erfaringer	<p>3. Overgangsspørsmål: (15 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hva slags erfaringer har du med vuggeviser? Fortell så detaljert som mulig om en gang du sang vuggeviser for ditt barn, med fokus på egen opplevelse av dette. • Oppfølgingsspørsmål: hvordan responderer barnet? • Bruker tre minutter til å skrive ned stikkord for hva vedkommende mener kjennetegner vuggevisestund med eget barn.
Fase 3: Fokusering	<p>4. Nøkkelsspørsmål: (40-50 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-5 nøkkelsspørsmål basert på det informasjonen til nå har sagt. Ber om utdyping av enkelte tema; Egen musikalitet, konkrete vuggeviser/sanger som blir sunget, barns velvære og respons, relasjonen forelder-barn i sammenheng med vuggevisene. Personlige synspunkter på sangene og situasjonen og egne minner fra de selv i barn. Intervjuene har to dimensjoner: 1. Perspektiver på egen musikalitet. 2. Beskrivelser og observasjoner av barna, hvordan de responderer. (Dette er et semistrukturert intervju som bærer mer preg av å være en samtale med åpenhet for improvisasjon underveis). • Oppfølgingsspørsmål: Kan du si mer om hva du følte, tenkte og gjorde konkret i denne situasjonen og hvordan barnet responderer? Hva er dine holdninger til dette? Synes du det er viktig og/eller gjør du det av ren plikt eller glede?
Fase 4: Tilbakeblikk	<p>5. Oppsummering (ca. 15 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oppsummere funn • Har jeg forstått deg riktig? • Er det noe du vil legge til?

Appendix 6: Approval from NSD

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES



NSD
Norsk Samfunnsvitenskapelig
Datatjeneste AS
Postboks 1047
Blindern
N-0407 Oslo
Tlf: +47 22 82 52 11
Fax: +47 22 82 52 10
nsd@nsd.uib.no
www.nsd.uib.no
Orgnr: 885 321 884

Lisa Bonnér
Senter for musikk og helse
Norges musikkhøgskole
Slemmåsveien 11
0369 OSLO

Vår dato: 01.02.2011

Vår ref: 25851 / 3 / B

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

KVITTERING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 20.12.2010. All nødvendig informasjon om prosjektet forelå i sin helhet 29.01.2011. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

25851	<i>Life and Lullabies: Exploring Lullabies as a Communicative Event in Early Childhood</i>
Behandlingsansvarlig	<i>Norges musikkhøgskole, ved institusjonens øverste leder</i>
Daglig ansvarlig	<i>Lisa Bonnér</i>

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger er meldepliktig i henhold til personopplysningsloven § 31. Behandlingen tilfredsstiller kravene i personopplysningsloven.

Personvernombudets vurdering forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, eventuelle kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven/helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/fornk_stud/skjema.html. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal ske skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, <http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/prosjektoversikt.jsp>.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 01.07.2014, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Bjørn Hennrichsen

Inga Brautaset

Kontaktperson: Inga Brautaset tlf: 55 58 26 35
Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

Lisa Bonnár's study furnishes opportunities of understanding Norwegian parents' lullaby singing, a social and musical phenomenon that has been hidden, until now, within the confines of private homes. Despite the vast research by psychologists and sociologists on parent-child interaction, little is known about the parental perspective of singing lullabies.

This study explores the meanings of singing lullabies in parenting and their significance in parent-child interaction. It also gives an important insight into the parents' experiences and values regarding their use of their own musical and creative resources.

The new concept of musical mindfulness is used and seems to fit to parents' experiences of the lullaby-act as it encourages a present, open, non-judgmental and relaxed state of mind. A reawakening of the parents' own musicality occurs in the meeting with their children at bedtime. However, the Scandinavian "cult of independence", where parents seem to expect and push their children's towards a very early independence, is partly confirmed.

Allowing the lullaby-event to come to the surface in its authentic, contemporary and genuine setting, the stories add nuance to our understanding of how parents and children relate to one another today. In using a largely untapped source of parents' own perspective on singing lullabies - in relation to their own and children's sense of meaningfulness, companionship and wellbeing - this project offers an input to the benefits of musical parenting.