

Children's clapping games on the virtual playground

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Abstract

This study considers children's informal musicking and online music teaching, learning, playing, and invention through an analysis of children's clapping games on YouTube. We examined a body of 184 games from 103 separate YouTube postings drawn from North America, Central and South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, and New Zealand. Selected videos were analyzed according to video characteristics, participant attributes, purpose, and teaching and learning aspects. The results of this investigation indicated that pairs of little girls aged 3 to 12 constituted a majority of the participants in these videos, with other participant subcategories including mixed gender, teen, adult, and intergenerational examples. Seventy-one percent of the videos depicted playing episodes, and 40% were intended for pedagogical purposes; however, several categories overlapped. As of June 1, 2016, nearly 50 million individuals had viewed these YouTube postings.

Keywords

children's musical play, clapping games, online music teaching and learning, YouTube

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Worldwide, children play clapping games, unmediated by adults, on playgrounds and in private spaces, wherever they may be. Clapping games are an oral tradition, shared from child to child from generation to generation, passed on by word of mouth. These games require no special equipment or space, and children from age 3 through teens play, learn, collect, and improvise in the seams of their structured activities. Games typically incorporate repetition, improvisation, coordination, memory, and tests of skill. They invite cooperation among friends and competition among peers. In North American and other English-speaking cultures, this pastime tends to be the domain of little girls, although, in some cultures, both genders play.

Bishop (2014) referred to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) when she noted that, “Like all play, clapping games are multimodal ... they incorporate verbal text, music, movement and touch” as well as “other modes such as proxemics and gaze” (p. 53). Played in groups but most commonly in pairs, the actions and clapping may accompany a chant, a counting out game, or a song. Gaunt (1997) recorded various ways of clapping, using not only hands but other parts of the body (e.g., chest, thighs, head) either simultaneously or in opposition with a partner: “A variety of variously-pitched percussive tones and timbral variations result and are structured into skeletal musical textures and patterns that emulate contemporary music” (p. 46).

While music educators inspired by Kodály, Orff, and others typically integrate childhood rhymes and chants into their music lessons, the ways in which children informally teach and learn their games persist alongside of the music classroom. Previously, scholars such as Douglas (1916) collected and documented clapping games, along with other childlore, with the underlying assumption that such ephemera might fade under the onslaught of modernity. For example, the American collector Newell (1883) wrote that of his compilation:

The vine of oral tradition, of popular poetry, which for a thousand years has twined and bloomed on English soil in other days enriching with color and fragrance equally the castle and the cottage, is perishing at its roots; its prouder branches have long since been blasted, and children’s song, its humble but longest flowering offshoot will soon have shared their fate. (Newell, 1883, p. 1, cited in Hubbard, 1982, p. 246)¹

However, current and continuing research by Marsh (2008), Harwood and Marsh (2012), Campbell and Wiggins (2013), and Burn and Richards (2014) has illustrated the liveliness and persistence of traditional clapping game practices. Indeed, Countryman (2014, p. 15) noted that understanding children’s self-chosen music-making as sociocultural activity, or “musical sociality” (Harrop-Allin, 2011, p. 162), heightens our awareness that children are already musicians, and that the adults with whom they share their lives are obliged to respect and enable children’s self-initiated musicking.

Various researchers have addressed the functions of clapping games and other such musical play in terms of fun, reinforcing social connections (Curtis, 2004; Lill, 2014), gender bonding, ethnic identification, explorations of power dynamics among players (Gaunt, 1997; Lanuza, 2011; Merrill-Mirsky, 1988), a means of exploring taboos (Ackerley, 2007; Knapp & Knapp, 1978), and preparation for life (Moore, 2013). As Marsh and Richards (2013) wrote:

Through their games, rhymes and playground rituals, [children] explore cultural and social values and practices, seeking to reinforce normative discourses but also to question them ... culture becomes a subject of parody as well as a site for imitation. (p. 11)

The current study draws upon and furthers this scholarship through an examination of the ways in which children choose to continue their musical play with others online; specifically, through YouTube.

YouTube and music learning

Since its inception in 2005, YouTube has grown at an exponential rate as a cultural, social, and political medium for consumers (Burgess & Green, 2009; Manghani, 2007; Milliron, Plinske, & Noonan-Terry, 2008; Webb, 2007; YouTube, 2016). Through its accessible and ubiquitous platform, YouTube has become a participatory space for individuals to view, upload, and circulate original content, which ranges from amateur videos to professional productions (Jenkins, 2006; Waldron, 2013; Whitaker, Orman, & Yarbrough, 2014). The multiplicity of these participatory aspects was captured holistically in Waldron's (2013) cyber ethnography on the music teaching and learning practices of an online banjo community. In addition, the YouTube community is one in which reflexive and democratized content, material, and comments are presented to an international audience for display and consumption (Strangelove, 2010; Whitaker et al., 2014). Individuals who post videos increasingly are in control of their expression and image, while consumers increasingly are in control of the videos they choose to view, which points to both the promises and limitations of YouTube as a form of social transformation (Kellner & Kim, 2010; Thompson, 2007). Still, YouTube continues to be a cultural force that shapes how consumers interact with one another online and offline, and continues to be a digital vehicle for social, educational, and musical change (Cayari, 2011; Kellner & Kim, 2010; Kruse & Veblen, 2012; November, 2007; Snelson, 2011).

YouTube has been a frequent topic of interest in the fields of education and psychology (Bosch, 2009; Dreon, Kerper, & Landis, 2011; Haugsbakken & Langseth, 2014; Lin & Polnecki, 2009; November, 2007; Snelson, 2011; Tan & Pearce, 2011; Thompson, 2007). Of particular interest are the ways in which YouTube and other forms of entertainment media have challenged or reinforced cultural norms (Thompson, 2007), and how teachers and students can use the positive aspects of digital storytelling (Dreon et al., 2011) and YouTube as a way to promote lifelong learning in K–12 settings (Haugsbakken & Langseth, 2014; November, 2007) as well as college contexts (Snelson, 2011; Tan & Pearce, 2011).

Haugsbakken and Langseth (2014) argued that YouTube is a viable platform for connectivism in K–12 settings. The authors determined that under the right conditions, students “make connections between sources of informal and formal content; they bond and bridge information and knowledge in order to construct new meaning in sense making activities significant for them, like oral discussions, writing and skills development” (p. 148).

Tan and Pearce (2011) explored the growing trend of open education resources by examining the changing roles of teachers in the university classroom as well as student perceptions of online and offline learning. The authors discovered that open-access videos, like YouTube, can reinforce student learning, and that students may not view videos as substandard educational resources, as long as instructors facilitate learning and embed videos into their teaching that are appropriate and logical. In a similar vein, Snelson (2011) conducted a literature review chronicling the rise in YouTube scholarship at academic conferences and in peer-reviewed publications. Snelson conducted a search of the word “YouTube” across 14 academic disciplines, to highlight the beneficial aspects afforded through teaching and learning online.

YouTube continues to be of special interest to music education in particular. Several studies have indicated the power and potential of social media and digital technology in the school music classroom and beyond. Some of the many topics have included facilitating collaborative and interdisciplinary learning among music students (Olson, 2011); describing constructivist, student-centered approaches among secondary music students (Wise, Greenwood, & Davis, 2011); exploring music consumption, creation, and sharing as it relates to maintaining a YouTube channel (Cayari, 2011); determining music faculty members' perceptions of implementing YouTube videos in their courses (Dougan, 2016); exploring the nature of online music communities (Salavuo, 2006, 2008);

examining the characteristics of YouTube instructional videos (Kruse & Veblen, 2012); and addressing the ethics involved in conducting research in online communities (Veblen & Kruse, 2017). Whitaker et al. (2014), however, conducted one of the most holistic studies on YouTube instructional videos to date.

Whitaker et al. (2014) analyzed a total of 1,761 YouTube videos that emerged following a keyword search for “music education.” The research team analyzed the videos through an inductive process in order to ascertain the general characteristics of these videos, and to develop video content categories across the collection of tutorials. Results showed that there is a diverse, international community that is interested in sharing musical content with its participants, as 58 countries and 698 usernames were represented. Because the performance quality of postings varied considerably, the authors argued that music educators who “use and contribute to YouTube content should be thoughtful about how music education videos are designed” (p. 56).

While these sentiments might be applicable to online teaching and learning in terms of pedagogical soundness, they might not apply to children’s games, which typically are uploaded freely by participants themselves. Hine (2016) made the case for understanding the Internet as embedded in everyday contexts. Hine’s suppositions would seem more applicable to clapping games on YouTube, if they are seen as an extension of children’s everyday activities embedded in informal contexts such as playgrounds and home settings.

Online communities can be formed spontaneously, as seen in Waldron’s (2011, 2013) work. This principle echoes Atay (2009), who argued that technology can “erase or collapse time and space differences” between individuals, and that participants “can organize communities whenever and wherever they wish” (p. 2). It is in this spirit, then, that children’s clapping games, and the virtual playgrounds from which they come, could be considered a community, with its own purpose, genre of music, and codes of conduct. While Whitaker et al. (2014) conducted one of the most extensive studies related to music education videos on YouTube, no known studies have focused specifically on the characteristics of international children’s clapping games on YouTube. Such an examination could lead to a greater understanding of the musical games that are uploaded, viewed, and perpetuated online.

The purpose of this research was to examine children’s informal musicking and online music teaching, learning, playing, and invention through a content analysis of children’s clapping games on YouTube. The specific research questions were formulated (a) to describe the characteristics of YouTube clapping games; and (b) to determine the traits most displayed in these games.

Method

This investigation of online music teaching and learning through an analysis of clapping games on YouTube began in late 2014, and collection was halted in spring 2016 as data analysis was initiated. Video clips were chosen randomly, using search terms on YouTube such as “children’s clapping games,” and were then pulled into a loop of related videos. Occasionally, popular games such as “Down, Down, Baby” and “Miss Mary Mack” would trigger a series of variants. Multiple variants were included in the composite data set, but there was an emphasis on variety and international representation. Video selection criteria included (a) self-produced modes of production; (b) non-commercial intention; (c) richness of presentation and context; and (d) accessibility in the moment. The latter criterion was of particular interest, since this medium is in constant flux, as old postings disappear and new ones take their place.

A total of 184 clapping games were collected from 103 separate YouTube videos. Samples were drawn from every continent and included games posted by participants or with help from parents. Selected videos were analyzed according to video characteristics (e.g., length, number of viewings,

location), participant attributes (e.g., age, gender, relationship of players), purpose or intent of videos (e.g., simple play, teaching others, showmanship), and teaching and learning aspects (e.g., framing lessons, repetition, tempo variation, psychological prompts, how participants taught each other). Musical analysis differentiated between chant and melody, while textual analysis was restricted to listing the most popular game choices. Because some videos contained multiple clapping games but maintained the same participants, each video ($N = 103$) was used as the unit of analysis, rather than each game.

At the outset of the project, several discussions took place among the research team to define and select appropriate content categorization criteria and procedures, in order to strengthen inter-rater reliability in subsequent stages of the project. A researcher-devised spreadsheet, based on Kruse and Veblen (2012) and expanded for the current study, was used to tally, organize, and analyze data. Content was examined according to the attributes mentioned above: (a) video characteristics; (b) participant attributes; (c) purpose or intent of videos; and (d) teaching and learning aspects. To facilitate analysis, the videos were divided further into six categories by age and perceived gender of the participants (e.g., girls only, boys only, girls and boys together, teen girls and boys together, adults, intergenerational), as well as a seventh category, spoofs and parodies, that served as an independent genre that relied on neither age nor perceived gender for analysis. Authors independently observed videos multiple times to increase inter-rater reliability, and to counterbalance the ephemeral nature of the videos (i.e., arbitrary uploading and removal of videos). Intermittent peer review among authors reinforced the consistency of categorizations across viewings. The iterative process of collecting, sorting, and tabulating data progressed in stages, separately then collectively, with each author sharing analysis and revision until composite findings were confirmed. Kruse and Veblen's (2012) and Whitaker et al.'s (2014) reliability protocols served as models for strengthening data verification.

Frequency counts and corresponding percentages of video attributes are presented in the following section. For the purposes of streamlining information, low-occurring frequencies sometimes do not appear in tables but are reported alternatively in resultant prose. Also for reporting purposes, percentages were rounded to the nearest percentage point.

Results

The composite characteristics of the YouTube videos selected for this study are shown below in Table 1. When considering the context of play itself, the length of videos and the location of play become important qualifiers that reflect the essence of how games unfold in real time. While the entire body of YouTube videos ($N = 103$) clocked in at nearly 4 hours, individual videos were short episodes, ranging from 0:35 to 2:49 minutes in duration ($M = 2:05$). The aggregate collection of videos received nearly 50 million views.

In terms of location, the majority of videos were filmed in homes, occurring primarily in living rooms (30%), bedrooms (18%), and kitchens (8%). Few videos were filmed in outdoor locations, although some open-air settings were indeterminable due to narrow or restricted camera angles. Video locations that were less common included the interior of schools (5%), unspecified location in homes (4%), orphanages (3%), playgrounds (2%), studios (2%), a church (1%), and a beach (1%). To complement location, several videos included a soundtrack, although no subtitles were provided. In a handful of cases, a parent posted historical context for clapping games. With regard to geographic location, videos overwhelmingly were filmed in North America (63%), with most coming from the US and Canada; there was a small number of contributions from Mexico. Following North American locations came videos from Australia and New Zealand, Europe and the UK, Central and South America, Asia, and Africa.

Table 1. Video characteristics.

Total duration (N = 103)	3:59:16
Mean duration	2:05
Total number of views	49,709,090
Location of game	
Living room	31 (30%)
Outdoors	27 (26%)
Bedroom	19 (18%)
Kitchen	8 (8%)
Geographic location	
North America	65 (63%)
Australia/New Zealand	15 (14%)
Europe/UK	8 (8%)
Central/South America	6 (6%)
Asia	5 (5%)
Africa	4 (4%)

Table 2. Participant attributes.

Number of participants	252
Gender	
Female	204 (81%)
Male	48 (19%)
Group(s) featured	
Girls only	66 (64%)
Boys and girls	11 (11%)
Intergenerational	10 (10%)
Teen boys and girls	5 (5%)
Adults	4 (4%)
Boys only	1 (1%)
Relationship to players	
Best friends	98 (39%)
Peers	69 (27%)
Siblings	56 (22%)
Parent	13 (5%)
Unspecified others	10 (4%)
Relatives	4 (2%)
Teacher	2 (1%)

Finally, many individuals posting videos included them as part of a series, either for teaching, entertainment, or documenting family life and other relationships. Earliest videos in the collection were posted in 2008; the most recent videos were several months old. Two were professionally produced re-postings of a 1972 documentary filmed on a Los Angeles playground by Bess Lomax Hawes, and a Sesame Street clip from the 1980s. Having been linked to YouTube in the past few years, both videos have found new audiences. Correspondingly, more recent postings showed higher quality audio and video, even though the games remained the same.

Table 2 below shows participant attributes. Of the 252 total participants who were seen in clapping game videos, 81% were female, with 69% of them being girls aged 3 through 12. Boys were

Table 3. Purpose of clapping games.

Play	73 (71%)
Teaching/learning	41 (40%)
Display of expertise	34 (33%)
Connoisseurship	18 (17%)

Table 4. Teaching aspects.

Modeling	103 (100%)
Repetition	45 (44%)
Framing	37 (36%)
Varying tempo	22 (21%)
Psychological prompts	9 (9%)

represented in 19% of the videos. Most of the videos ($N = 103$) focused on action, with little instructor talking-time, save in a few teen and adult clips. Although little girls posted the largest number of videos (64%), this category received over 9 million views as compared to more than 36 million views for the spoof category (5%), which included satirical skits, flamboyant videography, and cute cats. While some videos featured boys and girls together (11%) and teen boys and girls together (5%), videos that featured boys only were rare (1%). Self-identified best friends (39%), family (29%), and peers (27%) frequently participated in clapping games with the main players ($N = 252$). Overall, the sampled videos consisted of a predominance of presumed majority-white players, which most likely reflected the English-language orientation of the researchers. However, children and adults of all ethnicities were represented, not to satisfy a pre-determined quota, but rather, as further evidence of the universality of these clapping games.

Table 3 below reflects the purposes of the videos ($N = 103$), based on perceived or expressed presentation and content. The categories of teaching, playing, connoisseurship, and expertise overlapped, and some videos exhibited all four. The frequencies and percentages reported in Table 3 illustrate the overlying, superimposed relationship between content and video purpose. While the majority of videos were intended simply to capture childhood play (71%), teaching and learning videos (40%) were used to teach viewers or other participants a particular clapping game. In contrast, other videos were designed to showcase the skills of an expert player (33%), who was displaying her (mostly her) competence. Finally, the connoisseurship category (17%) included those players who seemed to be collecting games in an attempt to expand their clapping game repertoire. These participants appeared to be interested in chant variations as well as learning their provenance.

Largely, the games were taught and learned in their entirety, that is, from whole to part, and through immersion in the social experience. The kinesthetic components of the games supported spoken patterns, which in turn reinforced the clapping cadences. In a typical teaching video, the lead performer announced what would be played, played the game at full speed, then broke down the parts into short fragments, usually at a slower tempo. Sometimes a verbal, instructional component accompanied the shorter fragments, but not always.²

Table 4 below shows aspects of teaching across videos ($N = 103$), which, as in the case above, reflected overlapping frequencies and percentages. All of the videos featured modeling (100%), and almost half (44%) contained repetition. Several participants framed their instruction by introducing the activity and describing the actions that were needed for performing a particular clapping game (36%). Nearly a quarter (21%) of the participants varied the tempo when repeating the

games. Only 9% of the videos contained psychological prompts for encouragement or reinforcement. Such phrases included sentiments such as “You can do this!” although these were overwhelmingly from adults or older players.

Discussion and conclusions

The purpose of this research was to examine children’s informal musicking and online music teaching, learning, playing, and invention through an analysis of children’s clapping games on YouTube. The specific research questions were (a) to describe the characteristics of YouTube clapping games; and (b) to determine the traits most displayed in these games. Based on an analysis of 103 videos containing 184 games, an overwhelming majority of clapping games featured little girls, followed by some mixed gender and adult participants, and a few videos that featured boys. Most games were recorded in living rooms and other indoor spaces, and a vast majority of videos were from North America. As suggested above, additional video sampling could inform whether clapping games tend to be transmitted among English-speaking regions—both online and offline—or how variants of games in multiple languages are perpetuated worldwide.

Clapping games on YouTube tended to feature friends, peers, and siblings, which aligns with previous research on childhood play and interaction (Lill, 2014; Marsh, 2008). The overwhelming majority of children viewed in this study played with children their own age; if intergenerational players were involved, they tended to be family members. Video participants also engaged in play and teaching others more than showcasing skills or collecting clapping games. Modeling was a chief aspect among video participants, who were aiming to teach games to other participants or viewers. Repetition and framing the game with introductory remarks and instructions were additional hallmarks of children’s clapping game videos. These findings suggest that YouTube serves as a viable medium that enables children who had never met to interact, share, and further evolve children’s music traditions.

Broader discussion points and implications that stem from these findings include the fluidity of children’s aural transmission conveyed through YouTube, enduring practices related to music learning in informal contexts, and children’s enthusiasm for sharing musical messages through YouTube postings. All of these factors tie into a larger discussion of continuity, change, and creation demonstrated in this oral tradition.³ These and other findings might help to address, in part, the role that technology plays in accommodating virtual playgrounds.

First, the fluidity of children’s clapping games on YouTube was apparent. Postings emerged and disappeared constantly. This social medium in particular could lend itself to instant inclusivity. In response to searches, YouTube provides instant links to similar content. As YouTube learns what the user is interested in, it generates a web of related postings. Since repetition is one of the key factors in learning, it is likely that players might view a game and its variants multiple times, perhaps playing along with the demonstrations. Additionally, children may start their own videos or channel depending on what they find. The videos viewed in the current study reflected similar features as documented in Bishop’s (2014) survey: “The videos evidence a range in the degree of spontaneity in the performances—some are visibly stage-managed while others are more haphazard. Almost all of them comprise straight footage without subtitles, subsequent editing or special effects” (p. 58). When the frame of reference is novelty and play, coupled with endlessly available technology, the result can be a musical diaspora. Marsh (2014) addressed the fluidity in online and offline play, stating that:

It is not possible, in contemporary play practices, to separate online and offline domains. Children move across these spaces in fluid ways and genres of offline play ... these virtual spaces are part of the narrativized semiotic system that is embedded in children’s use of media texts and children draw on their understandings and experiences with narratives across a range of media in their online play. (p. 411)

Another example of fluidity was found in the disproportionate number of views. While some videos had thousands of views, some only had 200. There could be many factors at play here, ranging from adorability factors of young children playing with grandparents to the teen couple handshaking with over a million views, to particularly fast-paced renditions, scandalous texts, adaptations of pop culture, and so forth. Thus, the number of viewings may not relate consistently to the number of years a video has lingered on YouTube, or what viewers might consider to be quality playing or teaching.

Second, enduring practices related to music learning were perpetuated online, notions also echoed by Marsh (2008), Bishop (2014), and Harwood and Marsh (2012). Bishop documented online and offline learning at one UK school site to chart the stability and variation of a clapping game, “Enny Meeny Dessameeny.” She observed two girls learning from a YouTube version, correcting themselves when they got it wrong, then creating a hybrid version from the online melody with a familiar clapping pattern and known text. Children in Bishop’s study transmitted games in much the same way they had received them, from each other and from YouTube, thus reproducing their sources. As such, it can be assumed that players might pick up games quickly utilizing online video content, depending on their age and stage, just as easily as they would in face-to-face contexts.

Persistence in games over time may be illustrated by the fact that several of the games examined in the current study were named “Patty Cake” as a catch-all label for this kind of activity. In fact, one cat spoof⁴ featured cats batting out a dysfunctional “Patty Cake.” Riddell (1990) described hand-clapping games as pre-dating literacy, going on to write: “One of the earliest documented hand-clapping games printed in English is ‘Patty Cake’ (‘Pat-a-cake, Pat-a-cake, Baker’s Man’). The game was described in 1698 in a book by Thomas D’Urfey, *The Campaigners, or the Pleasant Adventures at Brussels*.” She noted that Froebel⁵ singled out “Pat-a-Cake” to use in the core curriculum of his newly founded kindergartens in Germany (1990). Clearly, there is much continuity in this tradition even as it embraces innovation.

Third, children expressed an impulse for sharing through these video postings. Hine (2016) documented similar inclinations in other online gifting communities of practice. Social relationships appeared to be an important part of play, which is consistent with Curtis (2004), Harrop-Allin (2011), and Countryman (2014). Games in the current study were played with friends, peers, and within families. Several of the games evoked “best friend” status, as a number of the YouTube videos featured girls who indicated that they indeed were best friends. In one example, a pair of players was playing cooperatively, finishing a game with rock/paper/scissors. The winner then chanted: “I win, you lose, now you get a big bruise!” She ceremonially thumped the loser’s arm, whereupon the loser responded: “No fair, no fair, now I get to pull your hair!” taking a tiny tug of the winner’s hair. However, as several girls explained earnestly, “This isn’t real, it’s just a game.” In another example, several variants of “Apple on a Stick” ended with a pair of girls counting to 10, eyes closed with a complicated pattern: “Close your eyes and count to 10 / If you don’t mess up, you’re my best friend.” Even if there was a small error, the girls chanted and clapped: “You didn’t mess up so you’re my best friend!” A variant of this game for older teens featured an elaborate handclap/handshake between boyfriend and girlfriend that ended in a hug or kiss. It is quite possible that the social relationships that are acted out during these games are motivating factors in children’s impetus for sharing games on YouTube. While a first layer of sharing occurs during the initial act of playing (and recording) games together, friends and peers initiate a second iteration of sharing by uploading recordings of their clapping games to YouTube. Consequently, a game between friends in one space can become a public expression of affection—and education—seen online. The ubiquitous custom of posting videos and other media online may be a natural step for clapping game participants, as YouTube, then, can be used as a teaching and performance space.

The YouTube videos of children’s clapping games examined in this research contain much to provoke thought. It is fascinating to speculate on the purposes for the videos. Who did the players

imagine would view their video? Because technological mediums of exchange like YouTube have become so prevalent in many parts of the world, this has helped to afford participants of all ages direct access to larger groups. Even with the innovation of technological mediums and newer trends in music teaching, clapping games have persisted without much help or hindrance from adults. They have persisted over time, and over distance, and continue to be stable elements within childlore traditions.

Still, the function of these games is inherently participatory. While it may be difficult to determine entirely the nature of players' relationship to one another—be they peers, friends, or best friends—it stands to reason that children most likely play with people who are familiar to them, and that the distinction between peers and friends may be invisible to the casual observer, in both online or offline contexts. The clapping games viewed in this study tended to reflect friendly peer relationships. To that end, while the current study combined several ethnographic and summative tallies, the researchers did not have focused data on the issue, aside from videos that included introductory disclaimers from the players themselves. It is possible that the social, participatory nature of clapping games mitigates the need for such distinctions, since children's roles can shift between and during games. Competitive play between children and the practicing of adult roles are couched unassumingly in many clapping games. Future research could explore such relationships between players, and could include closer examinations of (a) international contexts; (b) the cultural meanings that are associated with particular games; and (c) the curating of online/offline clapping games in regions where access to the internet, and, subsequently, YouTube, may be limited. Larger video sample sizes akin to Whitaker et al. (2014) could reveal additional attributes related to children's play. The perseverance of clapping games calls for innovative and varied ways of conducting research in this realm.

YouTube continues to serve as a platform for uploading, viewing, and propagating clapping games online. While the longevity of clapping games has been documented extensively throughout the literature (Bishop, 2014; Campbell & Wiggins, 2013; Douglas, 1916; Lill, 2014; Marsh, 2008; Minks, 2002), it is nevertheless important to consider the ways in which players reach out to each other through YouTube, as well as future directions in online music learning and sharing. As indicated in the findings of the current study, the vast majority of these individuals simply were recording their play. A compelling notion for music educators to consider is that 40% made their YouTube videos to teach others their games.

The very scale of this phenomenon is striking: Individual videos receive tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of views, with comments from viewers correcting their version, suggesting other postings, providing variations, and posting remarks that are both disparaging and praising. At the time of this writing, nearly 50 million individuals had viewed these YouTube postings. This may be further evidence that speaks to YouTube's ability to engender, support, and connect online communities of practice. In the case of handclapping games, it is possible that YouTube creates an ideal space in which children and others are free agents in their own learning and sharing of musical traditions within a virtual playground.

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Notes

1. William Wells Newell was the founder of the American Folklore Society and first editor of the *Journal of American Folklore*. His *Games and Songs of American Children* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1883) is the first American collection of traditional childlore and is available open-source online.

2. The clapping games in this study tended to lie somewhere on a spectrum between chant and simple melody, often in the same games. The most popular games were “Miss Mary Mack” (11), “Apple on a Stick” (10), “Miss Suzie Had a Steamboat” (10), and “Boom Snap Clap” (9). A comprehensive analysis of melody and text variations was beyond the scope of this study.
3. See Minks (2002) and Campbell and Wiggins (2013) for historical context and current perspectives on these themes.
4. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X3iFhLdWjqc>.
5. Friedrich Froebel (1782–1852) was a German pedagogue who profoundly influenced education with his then radical belief that children have unique capacities and needs to be active in their learning. He devoted his energies to preschool education; he coined the concept and term *kindergarten* for young children, devising play materials for their use.

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