





# Inclusion in the community: a study of community music centres in England and Portugal, focusing on the development of musical and social skills within each centre

Sonia Blandford  & Stephanie Duarte

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## Abstract

This article explores the potential of an inclusive approach to community music outside the classroom, to develop both technical and social skills of participating students. The research focuses on case studies of music centres in Portugal and England. Through participation and leadership, the researchers were uniquely placed to examine the social impact of the centres on the lives of current and past members. Over a period of six months, data were obtained via questionnaires and interviews, carried out face-to-face, and across the Internet. The specific social skills investigated were the development of trust and social bonding. Musical skills observed were ensemble playing, aural training, and sight-reading. The researchers studied the effects on students regarding transference of skill to other disciplines, social mobility and students with special needs. Cultural comparisons are made to determine the impact of the inclusive ethos that exists within each group. Overall, results suggested that musical and social skills were significantly developed through participation in a musical community. Inclusion was evident through the tolerance and acceptance current and previous members had experienced in the International Music Centre/ Community Music Centre. Recommendations for strategies to develop and support similar centres are made at the end of the study followed by suggestions for those wishing to set up similar enterprises.

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